

Freethinker

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ESSENTIAL REFORMS

ON September 9, at the Labour Party Conference, Miss Alice Bacon, the Minister of State for Education and Science announced that a government bill is being prepared to enforce nation-wide comprehensive education. The need for this bill is contained in the reluctance of certain local authorities to accept the implications of the Plowden report and the consequent delays in the production of plans for going comprehensive. Miss Bacon was by no means explicit about what form the bill was to take and there are also two main factors, which will hinder the government from taking effective steps.

First, the bill cannot be drafted until after the Maud report on local government can be taken into account. Thus it will not reach the government until the end of this year, and will not be published until early next year. This means it is most unlikely to be on the statute book before the end of 1969. The problem for the government will be the difficulty of enforcing it by the start of the following school year in September 1970, because if it is not enforced by then the whole scheme would be lost if the Tories were to win the election in 1971. The second difficulty is purely financial. The estimated cost of going comprehensive throughout the country is £1,300 million. The government seemed unable to find money to raise the school-leaving age. Can they find this vast sum?

So the intention is there, and greatly to be welcomed, but there are two stumbling blocks, time and money, which must be overcome in order to rescue our children from the trials of the 'eleven plus' and the subsequent obloquy born of failing it, or the false intellectual snobbery born of passing it.

Public Schools

On the question of public schools Miss Bacon was not definite. She said, amid cheers, that the national executive committee had rejected the Newsom committee's report on the public schools. (The main recommendation of the Newsom committee was that at least half the places in certain public schools should be reserved for pupils to be educated at public expense.) The rejection of these proposals is also to be welcomed, but one wonders exactly what Miss Bacon and her colleagues intend to do with the public schools.

On September 8, the day before Miss Bacon's speech, David Tribe, President of the National Secular Society, issued a press release concerning education. It dealt almost entirely with the public schools, urging that they should be totally integrated into the state system. This is, presumably, what the government would like to do. But, despite their rejection of the Newsom report, the immense forces of opposition who will do all they can to obstruct this change, so essential to progress, may turn them towards compromise.

To quote from David Tribe's press release should help to make it apparent of what supreme importance it is that there should be no compromise.

"In terms of equipment, rolling lawns, laurel hedges, rhododendron groves, vistas of playing fields where the Battle of Waterloo is annual refought, swimming pools with baby-talk names and staff classics degrees, they the (public schools) often compare favourably with the State sector. Endowed with the national wealth of past ages, they can afford to. Their academic results may or may not excel those of the best grammar schools and comprehensives, and the suspicion remains that the Oxbridge selection committees have an eagle eye for the right old school tie. They claim to inculcate 'character', but it is the character of the



embryo proconsul, the ability to rough it for a while in draughty dormitories on stodgy food before a life of well-heeled luxury, to be bashed by prefects in the glorious anticipation of eventually having fags of one's own, to worship the great God Conformity in compulsory chapel and give hell to misfits and 'bolshies' (shell-pink intellectuals). It is a world contemptuous of democracy, artistry and intellect—save in the crudest success-gear orientation. But it is not a success of genuine achievement and real distinction, but of placemanship and gamesmanship.

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Freethinker

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Editor: David Reynolds

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Now, short of money by aristocratic standards, they are trying to get rate subsidies by graciously 'admitting' a percentage of little local beasts. Of course these will be the brightest one—to buck up their jaded examination results—and if these new boys aren't made thoroughly wretched as the weekend Bentleys and Fornum and Mason hampers for their form-mates roll up, they will simply be 'bought over' to the Establishment and come to despise their families. In a democracy there is a place for flannelled fools and for élite retreats, but let them be paid for by those who hanker after them. All PUBLIC schools should be integrated into the public sector of education, and if Britain is to compete economically and grow morally unearned privilege must be swept aside."

As one of those 'shell-pink intellectuals' perhaps I can testify to the accuracy of this statement and ask why a place where one sex of a small privileged section of society is forced to pay lip-service to a religion, whose validity they are not permitted to question seriously, should be considered by anyone to be a place of education. That they should continue to exist in any way remotely resembling their present form will serve only to perpetuate within our

ANNOUNCEMENTS

National Secular Society. Details of membership and inquiries regarding bequests and secular funeral services may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High Street, London, SE1. Telephone 01-407 2717. Cheques, etc., should be made payable to the NSS.

Humanist Letter Network (International) and Humanist Postal Book Service (secondhand books bought and sold). For information or catalogue send 6d stamp to Kit Mouat, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch NSS (The Mound)—Sunday afternoon and evening: Messrs. CRONAN and MCRAE.

Manchester Branch NSS, Platt Fields, Sunday afternoon, 3 p.m.: Car Park, Victoria Street, Sunday evenings, 8 p.m.

Merseyside Branch NSS (Pierhead)—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.; Sundays, 3 p.m. and 7.30 p.m.

Nottingham Branch NSS (Old Market Square), every Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

INDOORS

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1, Sunday, October 13, 11 a.m.: "Levels of Human Aggressiveness", Professor T. H. PEAR. Admission free; Tuesday, October 15, 6.45 p.m.: Discussion, "The World's Hungry Millions", LESLIE ALDOUS. Admission 2s (including refreshments), members free.

Belfast Humanist Group, NI War Memorial Building, Waring Street, Belfast, Monday, October 14, 8 p.m.: "Imperialism, Humanism and Hunger", Miss BETTY SINCLAIR.

Leicester Secular Society, 73 Humberstone Gate, Sunday, October 13, 6.30 p.m.: "North Sea Gas and its Social Significance", EDMUND TAYLOR (Nottingham).

The Pierre Teilhard de Chardin Association of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, St Pancras Assembly Rooms, Euston Road, Camden Town Hall, London, NW1, Friday, October 18, 5.30 p.m.—10 p.m., and Saturday, October 19, 9.30 a.m.—7 p.m.: Third Annual Conference, "Mankind Evolving: China and the West". Talks by Dr BERNARD TOWERS, Dr JOSEPH NEEDHAM, Dr ROBERT JUNGK, Professor WILLIAM G. SEWELL, Professor JOAN ROBINSON, Professor STUART R. SCHRAM, plus discussions. For tickets (only obtainable in advance) or further information write 3 Cromwell Place, London, SW7, or telephone 01-584 7734.

society a group of people notable only for their egoism, their lack of awariness, their sexual inhibitions and their contempt for those who did not have such disadvantages bought for them.

The only point in David Tribe's statement that I would query is his assessment of public school boys as privileged. The present public school set-up must be done away with, not only because of its effect on society as a whole but also because of its effect on the unfortunates whose parents send them to such places. The parents of public school boys, incidentally, fall into two categories. The misguided—misguided because they went to a public school, and those with a desire to maintain the *status quo*—a desire made manifest because they did not go to a public school.

It may be said that nevertheless these children are privileged because the academic standards are higher at a public school. The figures conflict on this point. What is certain is that the atmosphere in these schools is horribly conducive to apathy. A boy who does more work than just enough to avoid punishment is often regarded as peculiar. A boy who speaks his mind in a debate is greeted with titters and patronising smiles. Those who get to Oxbridge are very often the most unpopular boys in the school, or else are very good at something as meaningful as rugby or rowing. Few succeed at being both popular and successful academically. Such boys could perhaps be described as privileged, but they are privileged anyway, for to equate these two qualities at a public school requires an immense amount of character and the ability to laugh off criticism. Those who really succeed at a public school would succeed at any school. This the government must not be allowed to forget.

OLIVE BRANCH

THE Vatican has issued a thirty-two page document entitled *Dialogue with Unbelievers*. This calls on Anglicans, other Protestants, Jews and Moslems to join with the Catholics in 'establishing a dialogue with those who do not believe in God'. This expression of 'brotherly love would bring about a greater grasp of the truth'. To mention that truth depends on proof is perhaps old hat but anyway the 'brotherly love' is not to be spurned. We must seize every opportunity to sow the seed of doubt and do away with the costly illogicality of religious belief.

The document is reminiscent of King Henry's speech before Agincourt, or a mother haranguing her daughter before her first date. It advises Roman Catholics to treat any encounters they may have with caution, largely because communists might try to exploit such meetings for political ends. It draws a distinction between public and private dialogue. To take part in public dialogue a priest must have the permission of his own bishop and the bishop in the dioceses in which the meeting is to be held. Priests laymen participating are exhorted to excel not only in doctrinal preparation and moral authority, but also in 'efficiency of speech and presentation'. With regard to private dialogue it suggests that those taking part must possess sufficient knowledge of the subject under discussion and they *must not betray the content of their faith*.

This last phrase is extraordinarily ambiguous, even for the Vatican, but why all these provisos and warnings anyway. Haven't they got God on their side? Haven't they got the divine knowledge that they are right? . . . or have they?

REMEMBERING FRANCISCO FERRER

ELIZABETH COLLINS

"Towards no crimes have men shown themselves so cold-bloodedly cruel as in punishing differences of belief."
(James Russell Lowell).

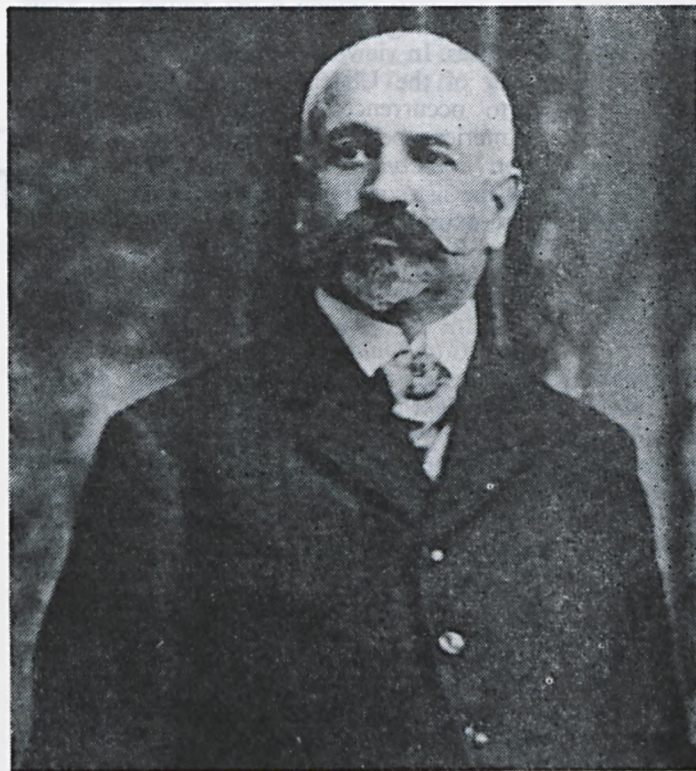
ON October 13, 1909, Francisco Ferrer a Spanish teacher and radical Freethinker who held reformist views on education was condemned to death by a military tribunal on a trumped-up charge of treason and shot. Human memories are short and it is too often forgotten what a terrible price has been paid by courageous men and women in the cause of liberty, freedom of thought and the pursuit of truth. The history of Christianity—especially that of its Roman Catholic branch—bristles with incidents which, at the time they were committed, horrified the civilised world, and Ferrer's execution was one such.

It seems particularly appropriate at this time to remember Francisco Ferrer when the subject of religious instruction in schools is under serious consideration in this country, as he had devoted himself to the founding of schools that he intended to be entirely secular—and not without reason. In Spain for centuries the Catholic Church had controlled and dominated every aspect of life, economic, cultural, social and political. With its enormous wealth and power it could even dictate to the Court, and any sign of liberal thought was anathema to it. In the Concordat of 1851 the State pledged itself to maintain Catholicism as the sole religion and to ensure that all education was carried on in accordance with Catholic teaching. However in the new Constitution of 1876, although declaring Roman Catholicism to remain the sole State religion, the Conservative leader Canovas ignored Papal threats and inserted a slightly modified clause by which no one in Spain could be prosecuted for his religious opinions or worship. It is important to remember this in connection with the Ferrer incident. Pressure from Liberals who were persistent in demanding an end to religious instruction in all state schools and universities, as well as more Press freedom, was probably responsible for the small concession in the Constitution.

Ferrer, being concerned at the backward state of education in Spain under Catholic control, and relying on a slowly emerging liberal climate, determined to do something about education for the workers' children. Having received a substantial legacy from a French source, he established his first 'Modern School' in Barcelona in 1901 and by degrees founded fifty others throughout Catalonia province. These schools were completely secular, allowing no religious teaching but giving sound and intelligent instruction in other subjects such as science and history.

Being in the interest of the Church to keep the masses ignorant and illiterate thus rendering them more docile and subservient, this enlightened educational reform of Ferrer's could not be tolerated, so the authorities watched for an opportunity to crush him and close his schools. An accusation that the schools were anarchist was quite untrue—certainly they were ideologically Socialist but Ferrer was absolutely opposed to violence in any form and held only anarchistic views in the Tolstoy sense. However both Church and State combined against him so that in the 1906 plot to assassinate the king the authorities tried to involve him. That accusation was found to be so palpably false that the judges in the case dismissed the charge.

In 1909 a workmen's strike in Barcelona led to a violent revolutionary outbreak with which Ferrer had no connection although he was accused of instigating it. In fact he



Francisco Ferrer.

was at the time in England dealing with family affairs, to which the late Joseph McCabe testified, and on Ferrer's behalf offered documentary evidence in support of that to the Spanish Prime Minister. But Ferrer's clerical enemies had determined to destroy him. Catholic papers worked up a violent agitation against him, and leading Churchmen in Barcelona urged the Government to deal severely with the anarchist founder of the 'Modern Schools' which they asserted were the sole cause of the revolutionary trouble. (Ignoring the true cause which was extreme poverty of the masses.) False evidence was presented at the subsequent trial including the production of forged documents, and the result was a foregone conclusion. A military tribunal found Ferrer guilty of treason and he was sentenced to be shot. The execution was carried out on October 13, 1909. On the wall of his cell in Montjuich prison he had written, "Let no more gods or exploiters be served, let us learn to love one another". His schools were all closed and so ended a brave experiment to release Spanish children from the medieval straitjacket of the Church.

A wave of great indignation swept over Europe and was loudly expressed in France and throughout the English speaking world. After a personal conference with Joseph McCabe (who had just written *The Martyrdom of Ferrer*) the Australian Government sent an official inquiry to Madrid, while Professor Simarro of Madrid University fully supported the charges against both Church and Army in his subsequent work *El Proceso Ferrer* 1910. The Catholic Church had been once more apparently victorious in its suppression of freedom—yet today there stands in the city of Brussels a fine memorial to Ferrer, witness alike of Catholic intolerance and a lasting tribute to an enlightened and courageous freethinker, though his most worthy memorial has still to be fought for—secular education for all children.

THE CHRISTIAN PRESIDENT

G. L. SIMONS

AT a recent public meeting President Johnson made appropriate Christian noises. In view of these and the well-known religious character of the US cabinet I have decided to draw attention to occurrences in Vietnam which arise directly out of American policy. *I have taken care to select the excerpts from non-communist sources.* The excerpts here are few, but the list could easily be extended. Perhaps after reading these extracts people will more readily understand why Bertrand Russell decided to create a War Crimes Tribunal.

"... They get a VC and make him hold his hands against his cheeks. Then they take this wire and run it right through the one hand and right through his cheek and into his mouth. Then they pull the wire out through the other cheek and stick it through the other hand. They knot both ends around sticks. You never seen them prisoners like that? Oh you ought to see how quiet them gooks sit in a helicopter when we got them wrapped up like that."

(NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE, Sept. 29, 1965.)

"Supposedly the purpose of the fortified villages is to keep the Vietcong out. But barbed wire denies entrance and exit. Vietnamese farmers are forced at gunpoint into these virtual concentration camps. Their homes, possessions and crops are burned. . . . In the province of Kien-Tong, seven villagers were led to the town square. Their stomachs were slashed, their livers extracted and put on display. These victims were women and children. In another village, a dozen mothers were decapitated before the eyes of compatriots. In still another village expectant mothers were invited to the square by Government forces to be honoured. Their stomachs were ripped and unborn babies removed..."

(SWORD OF FREE VIETNAM, extract quoted in DALLAS MORNING NEWS, Jan. 1, 1963.)

A report has been issued marked Secret because of the gory pictures in it. The story of what happens to Vietcong guerrillas who get hit with the AR-15 is being kept under heavy wraps. But, aware that the enemy already knows what the AR-15 does, you can find an occasional returnee who will tell you what he saw:

"When I left out there it was the rifle. The effect is fantastic. I saw one guy hit in the arm. It spun him round and blew the arm right off. One got hit in the back and it blew his heart literally out of his body."

"A man hit in the buttocks lived for five minutes. All others died instantly. . . . The fellow had his head blown clean-off—only the stump of the neck left."

(LOOK, December 23, 1963.)

"The purpose is clear: when the US and puppet troops cannot control a region, all the crops must be destroyed in order to starve the people into surrender. But the population is also poisoned by the spraying: rice turns yellow; banana trees, cocoa trees and other fruit trees wither; poultry and fish die; women, children, old and sick people are affected by cholera, diarrhoea, vomiting and often frightful burns. The weakest victims often die because of this poisoning."

(VIETNAM COURIER, October, 1966.)



Vietnamese agony.

"Many a news correspondent has seen the hands whacked off prisoners with machetes. Prisoners are castrated or blinded. A suspect has been towed, after interrogation, behind an armoured carrier across the fields. The subjects of interrogation so often die after questioning that intelligence seems to be a secondary matter."

(Malcolm Browne, THE NEW FACE OF WAR, 1965.)

"This guy from Intelligence had all three lined up. One was a woman. He stripped her down to the waist and stripped the two men all the way. He had a little gadget. I thought it was a walkie-talkie or something. He stuck one end of this wire to the lady's chest and it was a kind of electric shock because she got a real bad burn. From what she was screaming my buddy and I could figure she didn't know anything. Then they took the same wire and tried it on the lady's husband and brother but on their lower parts. One of the guys from another platoon said he saw this happen before a few times and once the guy was killed by it. . . . Ever since that day I've been sick to my stomach. . . . My sergeant tells me I'm suffering from battle fatigue..."

(Letter quoted in the Chicago WOMEN FOR PEACE BULLETIN, 1965.)

"One American helicopter crewman told friends he had become infuriated by a youth, and pushed him out of a helicopter at 1,000 feet."
(NEW YORK TIMES, July 7, 1965.)

"In a delta province there is a woman who has both

arms burnt off by napalm and her eyelids so badly burned that she cannot close them. When it is time for her to sleep her family put a blanket over her head. The woman had two of her children killed in the air strike which maimed her last April and she saw five other children die."
(NEW YORK TIMES, September 5, 1966.)

IS EDUCATION REALLY EDUCATION?

IAIN SAUNDERS

MANY of the great world problems arise out of a 'lack of education', but this is not education as it seems to be considered today and a radical re-thought of the role of education will have to be made before anything can be achieved. As long as people are concerned with weighing up the social benefit against the cost: with trying to align the graduate output with the needs of the economy: and with all these other purely materialistic considerations, while ignoring the essential meaning and purpose of education then this anomaly will continue to exist. It is not surprising that under these conditions unrest exists. Students are people, not investments and one can hardly blame them when they try to make this clear.

An excellent example of student reaction to such bureaucratic impositions occurred at Hornsey Art College where the insurrection was triggered off by the actions of ministers, who were concerned solely with uniformity and status rather than the more fundamental function of the effectiveness of the education thereby administered. It was felt necessary in Whitehall that the art college qualification should be brought into line with a degree and this necessitated having a minimum academic standard and specialised courses. In fact, as Hornsey's publication *No. 11* shows in much more detail there is even a marginally negative correlation between academic qualifications and artistic ability. Of the students admitted in the years previous to the new ruling, those with qualifications below the now statutory minimum of five 'O' levels and two 'A' levels actually achieved a higher average grade than those with qualifications above that level. The insistence upon specialisation also appears equally artificial when one considers the high degree of integration between the accepted artistic divisions that characterises much of modern art with the use of cybernetics, concrete poetry and so on. This ministerial confusion has resulted from a lack of communication with the art colleges themselves as well as an over-concern with economics and the standardisation of education. It is possible to understand this policy in the light of W. A. Lewis' economic definition of progress being the attainment of greater control over environment, but not to excuse it, as both approaches seem to misunderstand the basic purpose of education.

It would be a platitude to say that the ultimate concern of all people is happiness but this serves to divert attention from mere material considerations towards the essence of education. The original Latin derivation of education means to 'bring out' and this refers to the development of the inherent potential within each human being. If progress is to be defined at all it would have to be in these terms which are very much more abstract but meaningful and intelligible, instead of being virtually political propaganda. It is through education that we are given the power of reflection and the ability to tabulate our experiences coherently. On a still more humanitarian level it involves the conception of allowing a man to construct his total

being and his personality which allows him to exist independently amongst his surroundings while providing him with the intellectual and emotional equipment to deal with them.

This interpretation of the function of education is that indicated by the utilitarian dictum 'The ultimate criteria of worth lies with the individual'. That this must be the choice can be illustrated by the pertinent example of what was recently achieved under the opposite, totalitarian, justification. Here, the well-being of the state as a whole forms the ultimate criterion for decision-making, meaning that the individual is totally subordinated. This was the creed behind the Nazi movement. Apart from entitling them to exterminate the impurities out of their race structure it also allowed them to infiltrate the German educational system with Nazi propaganda, indoctrinating all the youth of the country. To consider education as an economic variable is a less harmful but more insidious usage of the same principle. One may educate people so that they can produce more in order to consume more, but they can only benefit if they consume more and so it always reduces to the individual.

Applying these humanitarian principles to our own system of education shows up a number of inconsistencies, the most glaring being the use of examinations to provide the core of the structure. Each course is orientated towards an exam which then entitles you to another course. Failure closes all alternatives. Examinations were considered essential for the most efficient allocation of resources as they were thought to provide a simple, rigid system of grades. However, people are at last beginning to realise that even this is erroneous while the harm done to the development of the mind is incalculable. If exams can be removed then much of the misdirection of our educational system will disappear.

This problem has been very clearly and concisely discussed in a booklet by Tom Fawthrop, *Education or Examination* published by the Radical Student Alliance. It is a very well reasoned summary of the arguments for and against exams and it also suggests a number of very feasible alternatives, a combination of which would seem to make a superior system to the exam system in every way.

The principle argument in favour of exams is that they provide qualifications that direct people towards positions that they would fill best. This falls down when one considers whether exams are actually a true representation of ability and this is clearly not the case. The very existence of 'exam technique' illustrates the divergence between the intended function and actual function of exams. The qualifications are also not very useful in helping employers in that they may indicate the degree of training acquired but this is vague and it ignores all the other attributes necessary

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for a job. As a result a large number of institutions, the Civil Service, business, schools, etc., are introducing their own system of qualifications. The other defence is that they encourage people to work but this is probably a self-induced defence in that if these people were allowed to develop in their own way then there would be no question of working or not working. They would be interested, which removes the need for any false incentives.

Exams are thus inadequate even for the functions they are intended to fulfil. They also create severe emotional tensions, encourage an artificial course structure and cause a totally unwarranted feeling of inferiority amongst a vast proportion of people. There are six possible alternatives that could serve to cover the transition period between the removal of exams as they are now and the ideal state where education is a much freer process of self-development under guidance, and available for all. These consist of open-book examinations, free-time examinations, the voluntary offering of an oral, general assessment, objective tests and theses. Most of these are self-explanatory and they are essentially adaptations of the current system but they do help to minimise tension and strain while allowing a more individual approach to study. They thus shift emphasis away from speed to creative ability, a far more desirable attribute.

All have been implemented to some degree and they have all proved to be more successful but it is symptomatic of many of our society's problems that even when agreement has been reached over the need for change, very little is done about it. The students, though, are more impatient with this unsatisfactory state of affairs and it is to be hoped that this enthusiasm will penetrate the upper echelons of the power structure where such problems are resolved. The longer the change is delayed, the greater the harm that will be incurred and the larger the number of those who 'opt-out', a convenient gauge of the degree of neurosis within a society.

A JUST CAUSE FOR CONCERN?

ON October 2, fifty-five Catholic clergy sent a letter to *The Times*, the gist of which was simply, 'we cannot give loyal internal and external obedience to the view that all 'means of contraception are in all circumstances wrong'. Three of the signatories gave a press conference on the same day. Father Kenneth Allan, parish priest of St Aidan's, Coulsdon, Surrey, said that the letter was intended to make people think about the problem and not to regard the matter closed.

He went on to say that they would teach the Pope's encyclical, but not exclusively of their own views. His teaching on the encyclical would not carry his own conviction unless he had the freedom to express his own views. He added that he and his colleagues had 'gone public' because of their concern for those priests who had been silenced or were considering leaving the church; their concern for doctors who found it difficult to maintain their professional standards in the light of the encyclical; and their concern for married couples. Though these can be called just causes for concern, it is a pity that Father Allan is not concerned for the starving, homeless, and all the others suffering from overpopulation.

BOOK REVIEWS

SIMON HAMMOND

KARL MARX—FOUNDER OF MODERN COMMUNISM, Dr Arnold Kettle. (Weidenfeld and Nicholson).

ONE of the immense problems that face books written on subjects of some complexity is the difficulty of communicating to the reader the essence of the problem which it seeks to describe; in fact the aspirant reader will tend to throw up his arms in despair and conclude the subject to be beyond his intellectual confines. And thus it is that a book written on an ostensibly complicated subject, which achieves a simplicity of explanation and hence does not dumbfound the average reader and lose him in complex argument, is to be heralded as an achievement. Just such a book, I believe, is this analysis of Karl Marx by Dr Arnold Kettle.

Whether Dr Kettle believes, as I do, that the way to reach people and stimulate them into becoming interested in a topic of education is to create, in a readable and entertaining fashion, a basic understanding of the study at hand, and then to elaborate from this basis, or whether he just happens to see the subject very lucidly I am not sure. However what is certain is that in his book he succeeds in creating a very clear, simple, and intelligent exposition of Marx in all his many aspects. His simplicity, however, does not stem from a deliberate suppression of what is complex in Marx's mentality, but from a careful dissection and presentation of the important truths about Marx in an extremely clear prose style—this I am sure is the essence of the success of the book.

The presentation of the book is under six main headings: Marx's life, Marx as an economist, Marx and History, the Revolutionary, Marx's philosophy, and 'Do Marx's ideas matter today?' together with a list of important dates and a suggested bibliography. The six titles appear rather clear and absolute but just as Marx was a strong believer in the inter-communication or fundamental inseparability of History, Economy, Science, Philosophy, etc., and collectively thought of all groups of systematised knowledge in a broad sense as Science, so Dr Kettle shows each aspect of Marx's theories to be interdependent with the others as he traces Marx's beliefs, and his actions resulting from his concept of fundamental truths.

Marx is depicted firstly as a Human whose family was a great source of strength to him, and then, in the larger part of the book, as a great worker, thinker and fighter for the working classes whom he considered to be exploited by the Capitalist classes. Dr Kettle recalls that on Marx's gravestone in the Highgate cemetery are the words: "The Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it", and also "Workers of all lands, unite"—these two sentences of Marx seem abstractly to indicate the two main features of Marx's greatness which come out as Dr Kettle proceeds to build up his picture of Marx's life. He explains Marx's basic line of thought by pointing out that he was able to analyse Capitalism with its inherent class struggle, and to indicate what he considered to be its glaring faults and consequences, at the same time showing how in history it had come about; and most importantly of all, because of this, he was able to show the workers of the world (for he believed this to have application to all oppressed working classes everywhere in the world) that Capitalism had not always existed and that the workers themselves, if united, were in a position to change their situation by establishing a new society in which the workers were the controlling faction, and there was no class struggle to hinder progress or enforce exploitation. Thus in other words he translated a dream in which the ruling society was for the benefit of all its members, such as was envisaged in Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*, into a tangible reality—just as Feudalism had been superseded by Capitalism, so Marx believed that a Worker's society, firstly in the transitional stage of Socialism and then finally in the form of Communism, could supersede Capitalism. It was this belief that made him not only a revolutionary in thought but also in action. Dr Kettle goes on to show how Marx's Philosophy reflects his life's experience and then finally to analyse what is the worth of Marxism in today's world and to what extent Marx's ideas have come to fruition in the present Socialist and Communist societies.

This is a book I can thoroughly recommend to a reader who has little or no knowledge of Marxism, or perhaps to one who is muddled in his concepts, for the very reason that it establishes a good foundation about the man, his ideas and his actions, which, if followed into more advanced studies, will stand him in good stead.

RICHARD CLEMENTS

JOHN TOLAND: FREETHINKER (1670-1722), by Ella Twynam (31 pp., Privately printed, 5s). Available from the Freethinker Bookshop. THE growth of Humanism in our time has quickened public interest in the lives, ideas and writings of the pioneers of Free-thought, and this has led to the publication of some notable biographical and critical studies in recent years. Such tributes to the thinkers and fighters of earlier times, particularly those written by competent writers and truth-seekers, are to be welcomed.

An excellent example of such research and writing is to be found in Ella Twynam's pamphlet on John Toland. Her sketch of this resourceful and daring pioneer of rationalist thinking about religion and human life, brings before the mind of her readers a clear idea of the man and his work. Her pamphlet pays a deserved and generous tribute to a neglected thinker and writer.

She stresses at the outset the character of Toland and his contribution to the cause of Free-thought. He was, she writes, "one of the most daring, unorthodox and original in outlook of eighteenth century Deists. He is credited with having been the first to use the term 'Freethinker' by applying it to himself in advocating his principles". She quotes the appreciative references made to Toland's literary and public services by Locke, Voltaire, Lange and Bury.

The main biographical facts about Toland may be briefly stated. He was born on November 30, 1670, near Londonderry in Ireland, and was brought up in the Roman Catholic faith. His baptismal name was Janus Junius. It has been suggested that he was the illegitimate son of an Irish priest. Ella Twynam mentions that when the boy was enrolled in his first school register under his baptismal names, and on his answering to them at roll call, "much merriment was provoked among his class-mates, the master ordered that in future the newcomer be called John. Henceforth he used and was known to the world as John Toland.

When he was sixteen years of age he became a Protestant, and to the end of his life was opposed to any form of papal authority. He was admitted to Glasgow College in 1687, and in the next three years acquired a reputation as a dedicated student of the classics and of ancient and modern languages. He continued his studies at Edinburgh University, and received his diploma in 1690. Later on he went to Holland, and at Leyden University worked under the renowned scholar Frederick Spanheim. It was in those years that he became a sceptic in regard to the claims of orthodox religious believers.

In 1694 he went to Oxford and for some two years was engaged in writing and publishing the book which ensured his fame, *Christianity Not Mysterious*; the first edition (1696) was anonymous, but a second being called for in the same year, bore the author's name. Then, in 1702, there was a third edition, which carried an *Apology for Mr Toland*.

The story of this book is a revelation as to the state of mind of Religionists during the life-time of Toland. I quote Ella Twynam's admirable account of the reception accorded this rare work:

"The book caused a great commotion—it was presented by the Grand Jury of Middlesex, condemned by the Lower House of Convocation, brought before Parliament as heretical and ordered to be burnt by the common hangman. That very year, T. Aitkenhead, a youth of 18, had been hanged at Edinburgh for blasphemy, so Toland returned to Ireland. His book however had reached there first, and was being attacked by priests, parsons and ministers of all the Christians sects—those who most violently abused the author and denounced his propositions being rewarded with honours and singled out for preferment . . ."

"The Irish House of Commons ordered the burning of the book and the arrest of the author. Toland managed to escape arrest and arrived in London before the work was burnt by the common hangman with Sheriffs and Constables in attendance outside the Parliament and outside his own door, on September 11, 1697."

Professor J. B. Bury in his *History of Freedom of Thought* described Toland's work as a "sensational book", and provides the reader with a brief and lucid analysis of its main line of argument.

It is well-nigh impossible today to put one's hands upon Toland's theological writing, because they were so ruthlessly destroyed and there has been no republication of them. It is to be hoped that the mass of facts Ella Twynam has packed into this pamphlet of 31 pages will awaken, particularly in free-thought circles, a renewal of interest in this pioneer thinker and critic. The publication of a selection of his writings would be a welcome addition to the bookshelves of all students of the history of Rationalism in Europe.

FILM REVIEW

QUENTIN SEACOME

CHARLIE BUBBLES (Odeon, St. Martin's Lane).

THIS film is lethargic, slow-moving and highly recommended as good entertainment. It sees Albert Finney in the difficult role of actor-director, and how well he copes with it. The story is as 'kitchen-sink' as 'Saturday Night and Sunday Morning' and the action as ordinary as 'Tom Jones' was bawdy.

Finney is Bubbles, a north-country lad who has made a fortune through his writing talents, but has tired of his wealth and looks for an escape from it all. The opening sequence sees Charlie sitting boredly listening to business men discussing filming of his books and his financial affairs. He wanders off and meets another self-made friend of his, Smoky, brilliantly played by Colin Blakely, and together dressed like labourers they go out on the drink. Charlie has obtained some kind of finesse, although still beautifully irresponsible while Smoky retains all the qualities of his northern background.

Charlie heads north with his secretary, a star-struck Americanised teenager, nauseatingly well portrayed by Lisa Minelli, to see his ex-wife (Billie Whitelaw who gave a suitably bolshy performance), and his son, both of whom are totally unimpressed by being related to him. Timothy Garland was excellent as his son.

The theme of rags to riches was so well brought over that this film would make anyone with ambition to get out of a rut become more ambitious to do so.

Many scenes were shot in total silence and proved more powerful than if they had dialogue. The silent envy of an ordinary middle-aged man towards Finney and his Rolls-Royce was beautifully filmed in the middle of the night in a deserted service station.

The totally unembaarrassed camaraderie of the airman hitch-hiker (Alan Lake) was perfect, even at the meeting of the jet-set, ironically enough, in a transport cafe. In his home town Charlie has to cope with the 'bowing and scraping' of ex-acquaintances who now consider him a close friend. Wealth and success do almost anything, except give happiness. So in an unsuspected and abrupt ending Charlie takes to the freedom and bliss of the skies in a balloon.

The direction was excitingly different, especially the extended close-circuit television sequence of the happenings in Charlie's automated house, and the filming of the ultra-smooth car journey up the M.1.

Despite being a character study of a wealthy man supported by well played cameo-parts, the film was a success, for me anyway. Tom Jones may have made Finney a rich man because of its commercial qualities, Charlies Bubbles has succeeded artistically, although it may not break any box-office records. But then artistic things rarely do.

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LETTERS

Protestant priority

WHEREAS the RC priest contemplating leaving his church has to contend with countless inhibitions about excommunication, the ostracism and contempt he must expect to receive from his fellow Catholics, as well as the financial problems of making a new life for himself, there are not so many McCabes, Crommelins and McLoughlins. Most ex-priests, surely, settle in the arms of Protestantism? Anglican clergy, however, are much more likely to want to join our own Secular-Humanist forces, once they can find some way of coping with their family and financial responsibilities on leaving the church. Agreed that we should do all we can to help any priest trying to escape to a greater freedom of thought, but this immediate Roman and emotional upheaval should not let us forget the Protestants who may have almost as difficult a battle to win if they are to start living according to their consciences rather than expediency. Of course if the churches practised the 'love' and 'charity' they preach, they would themselves want to look after the welfare of these men who have served them so well, even if their honesty prevents them doing it for life. But that is too much to expect.

KIT MOUAT.

A number of letters have been received as a result of the publication of R. Reader's article 'The Animal's Revenge'. James Crosby's is being printed in full, because it seems to cover all the points covered by other correspondents, and sums up the general criticism in the most concise way.

Guinea pigs

I WAS frankly astounded by R. Reader's article entitled 'The Animals' Revenge' (FREETHINKER, September 28)—in my opinion it is riddled with misconceptions, outrageously inaccurate statements and emotional argument. In allowing himself to become directed by an emotional reaction to vivisection he has lost all sense of rational thought, and consequently has argued (for want of a better word) his heavily biased case on a platform of half- and non-truths.

He concludes quite rightly in the second paragraph that 'Man is above Beasts' but arrives here for the wrong reasons: surely Man is in this state because he is the most advanced stage of evolutionary development or, in other words, he has the greatest mental capacity to adapt himself to the environment on this planet. However R. Reader sees it differently; he firstly postulates that this conclusion results from the "religious neurotics" belief that Man is the unique possessor of 'Soul', a metaphysical quality which had its origin in Man's mind anyway (besides Soul is not a measurable quality when it comes to scientific analysis). His second contention is that Man differs fundamentally in both structure and function from the Apes, our nearest relations in the animal world; firstly this is absolutely untrue since Man is fundamentally similar in both those respects to the Apes, and secondly his implication of Man's physical superiority over the Apes is also erroneous since Man has regressed in this respect rather than advanced. Man's superiority over the Apes is his very advanced cortical development, and not as R. Reader implies because he possesses Soul (which, if he does, is secondary to his mind anyway) or because his body, excluding his exceptional brain, is in any way superior to the Apes.

He goes on to intimate that Man exploits lesser animals because they have no soul, and anyway it is a waste of time because the animals experimented on are so far removed from the human being that the results obtained are useless anyway. Using as his point of argument the guinea pig, the original and now standard symbol of experimental animals, he asks what is the point of subjecting such an animal to the painful indignation of vivisection when its lack of soul and its removal from the human state, confers unreliability and uselessness, respectively on the information obtained. The most important truth which seems to have evaded the author is that human beings, apes, guinea pigs, dogs, rats, rabbits, etc., are all mammals—the reason that they have been classed in this way is because they have distinct physical and functional similarities which are exclusively common to them. Hence the assumption is that when subjected to experiment, all the animals in this particular class will react in basically the same way. The logical conclusion of this is that information obtained from an experimental animal will be applicable to humans as well. Does R. Reader seriously consider that scientists and doctors would spend the vast amount of time that they do on animal experimentation if they did not believe this, and if in fact it did not show itself to be consistently true? R. Reader assumes them quite obviously to be misguided fools.

As for the pain and suffering that seems to be his total concept of vivisection . . . well, I have to admit that on occasions the animals do suffer—unfortunately there is no other way to obtain valid and beneficial results; but in most cases the experimental animals live their lives in no physical pain at all—the nature of the experiments is very varied indeed, and in a large number of them there is no question of pain being involved. Even when death of the experimental animal is required, this is carried out in a most humane manner. An important fact to remember is that the Home Office has very strict rules on the treatment and welfare of experiment animals, and also keeps a close check on the experimenters and their methods, using a system of inspectors. If any suffering is incurred then it is deemed absolutely necessary by the experimenters, and is known to the Home Office. In my experience I must say that I have never come across any abuse of these terms.

I accept as true his observation that Man has in history been the subject of some rather dubious experiments but where he gets the idea that the fundamentals of Medical Science have been based on this evidence I dread to think—I suspect that it is from his own head. Taking his specific examples; poisons are a very small part of pharmacology, and the knowledge derived from history about them is largely empirical; anyway as for dissection of the human body, this only reveals gross internal appearances, which, although very important are only a small part of understanding the body workings; and lastly, did the Germans really help to plant the foundations of Medical Science through their dubious experimentation in the last Great War? I doubt it very much. None of this is particular convincing evidence to my mind. The major advances in Medical Science have, in spite of what R. Reader would have us believe, been made in the last part of the 19th and the 20th century through constantly advancing techniques in experimentation and observation, and our own increased ability to interpret the results obtained. While realising that R. Reader was attempting to discredit animal experimentation by trying to prove that our basic knowledge of Medical Science was obtained through human experimentation, one wonders whether he is considering, in the light of that, the possibility of advancing our medical knowledge by further human experimentation. I hope not for his sake.

He also suggests that the expansion of the drug industry through animal experimentation is merely an economic exercise, just another part of the 'unrestrained quantitative expansion' as he calls it. Obviously such projects have to be financially beneficial otherwise how can expansion ever occur—but surely the financial success relies on the product being a worthwhile and necessary one. Thus the point which he fails to see is that this process is directed towards the benefit of society, not for the purpose of making money merely for the sake of it.

He finishes with an emotional appraisal of the situation as he sees it today—all Man's efforts have been in vain: medical science has failed to control disease and suffering, and instead we have an ever worsening situation of overworked doctors, vast sums of money being wasted on useless drugs, men 'swarming' over the world killing themselves off, etc. Here he reaches the height of his emotional irrationality. Granted there are some heavy problems to be solved, but can he honestly look at the world today and say that we have not advanced from, say, 100 years ago? I do not think that if he looked at the situation rationally that he could. And to implicate animal experimentation as a major factor in what he considers to be a constantly worsening position, and then finally to apply the element of sadism to the practice of it, is absolutely without justification in the light of the known facts.

JAMES CROSBY.

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