

# Freethinker

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## WHEN IS A LAW NOT A LAW?

Now THAT enough time has elapsed since the Abortion Act became law to enable its real effects to be gauged, it seems that the enthusiasm displayed at its passing was in many ways premature. It appears that many doctors are refusing to implement the new act, which permits women to have National Health Service abortions on the grounds that they cannot afford another child or have too many children already. Any doctor who disregards the law in this way should surely be dealt with in the same way as anyone else who disregards the law, for there seems little difference between these men and for example, corrupt policemen.

When the Act first became law, there was an initial rush of women, who expected an abortion on demand. They found the solution to their problem was not that simple. Some hospitals were unable to spend the money to provide the service, while doctors who disagreed with the law refused to recommend the operation. The Pregnancy Advisory Service was set up in London and Birmingham to help cope with the problem. Mr Alan Golding, its chairman and co-founder, threw some light on the actions and motives of the rebel doctors in a recent interview with *Evening News* reporter, Barry Simmons: "Most Catholic doctors are very humane. They explain their views and advise their patients to see a colleague who could be more helpful. Other doctors are not so kind. If they oppose the law they simply turn the patient away, and refuse to help in any way. Some like being God, and become arbiters of a patient's destiny. Women just believe they cannot get an abortion, and go away when this is not so". Mr. Golding illustrated the harm being done by these doctors by giving a few case histories. A fairly typical example was Mrs X, a married woman of 42 whose husband is 60. Their family was already grown up when Mrs X found to her horror that she was expecting another baby. "I will not be able to cope. I can't face having another child." She grew depressed and when she was refused an abortion, threatened suicide. Hospital after hospital turned her away. Eventually she went to the P.A.S. clinic in London but she was 23 weeks pregnant—too late for an operation.

Apart from the danger to individual families, caused by this wilful refusal to observe the law, there is the danger that another of the main objects of the law will be negated. Women will return to the back-street 'syringe and carbolic' abortionists—the very people the new law was intended to stamp out.

However, far graver even than this is that the situation has given new life to Mr Norman St John Stevas and his supporters, whose blatant filibustering has already caused an intolerable delay in the passing of the law. Mr St. John Stevas, the Conservative MP for Chelmsford and Roman Catholic, who despite his widely-publicised opposition to the Papal Encyclical is unable to tolerate abortion for any reason which is not strictly medical, is liable to ask for the law to be tightened. "I am waiting for a bit longer to see how the law is operating, but I think it should be tightened." He preceded this remark with some others which presumably were supposed to contain his grounds for wanting to change the law back again. "One of the weak-

nesses in the law is that it must be administered by a medical profession which in the majority opposes it. I don't think doctors should be forced to go against their own convictions." Is he making doctors out to be a special class who can override the law, or does he mean that the large body of people who by conviction are opposed to the seventy mile an hour speed limit should be permitted



to hare round the countryside at any speed they choose, and, indeed, that those who consider that they pay too much income tax should pay however much their convictions tell them to pay? It would seem that Mr St John Stevas is either coming out in favour of anarchy or else his reasoning is catastrophically awry. Choose which you will, but bear in mind the effect religion tends to have on men's reason.

Mr Golding's final word was "I think that the public should realise that legislation ordered by Parliament is not being carried out by people appointed to do so. This, basically, means that many mothers, poor both mentally, physically and financially, are not being helped as the nation ordered".

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# Freethinker

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## JUDGE NOT BY APPEARANCES

A MOST entertaining description of Christmas in London appeared recently in *Izvestia*, the Soviet Government newspaper, written by its London correspondent, Vitaly Kobysh. Many may doubt the sincerity of Russian journalists, but few can disagree that much of what he says is justified. Spending his first Christmas in London Mr Kobysh saw little rejoicing, save in the latest company reports announcing record profits. "I wandered the streets of London on Christmas night, but met no one, heard no human voice, not even the sound of a distant song, the cry of a baby, or the barking of a dog. It was as though a plague had fallen on the city." This much is undoubtedly true. Due to there being no public transport on Christmas night I had to walk about three miles in central London. I passed no more than three people. (I forget whether any of them wore Russian hats). For one moment I thought church bells were going to ring to remind me that this was the most important day in the year in this 'Christian' country. It turned out to be Big Ben about his usual business.

Mr Kobysh also described how he attended a church service in Westminster Abbey on Christmas Eve. He heard a "businesslike" sermon, which "in passing" mentioned the homeless, the sick and the suffering. "And then the congregation, wearing the same bored expressions with which they had arrived, and throwing a coin each into the dishes, left by the cathedral entrance and drove comfortably home to their Christmas turkeys and puddings." He

## 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

Aberdeen Humanist Group: The Saltire Room, Provost Ross's House, Shiprow, Aberdeen: Friday, January 17, 7.30 p.m.: Special Members' Meeting—To prepare evidence for State enquiry into Religious Education in Scottish Schools.

Belfast Humanist Group: NI War Memorial Building, Waring Street, Belfast: Monday, January 13, 8 p.m.: "Parents and Children", Mrs Seth (Department of Child Psychology, Queen's University).

Leicester Secular Society: 75 Humberstone Gate: Sunday, January 12, 6.30 p.m.: "Influence of the Age of Reason", Peter Wyncoll (University of Hull).

South Place Ethical Society: Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1: Sunday, January 12, 11 a.m.: "Attachment and non-attachment", H. J. Blackham, BA. Admission free. Tuesday, January 14, 6.45 p.m.: Discussion—"Economics and Politics (India Today)", S. K. Das. Admission 2s (including refreshments), members free.

goes on to say that this year the British had been looking forward to Christmas more than ever. "The festival, which for the majority has lost all its religious significance, gives the workers two or three days of long-awaited rest in the struggle for their daily bread, for a roof over their heads, for a place in the sun. . . . The cost of living has noticeably grown for families where they count every penny—and in welfare Britain that means the vast majority. . . . In the cheap department stores in Oxford Street, they bought up socks and scarves, cuff links and children's shirts . . . from Fortnum and Mason's in Piccadilly, chauffeurs carried out box after box of champagne and caviare to their master's Rolls Royces or Bentleys."

It may be asked why it should need a Russian to make these points. It doesn't but nevertheless what he says is well put and can by no means be condemned as misrepresentation of the facts. It also enables the point to be made that were a British journalist permitted to really penetrate the scene in Moscow over Christmas or at any other time, he would no doubt be able to produce equally farcical examples of the situation there, because where any dogma is only adhered to officially, laughable anomalies are bound to be created. Basically the difference is that here those who conform do so because they fear either God or the neighbours, while in Russia they fear the authority of the state. The Russian state machine being more powerful than either of the British defenders of appearances, there is more scope for disagreement here. This comparative freedom serves to accentuate the ludicrous position, which is nevertheless bound to exist wherever dogma is supported by authority.

## LONGER WORDS IN 1969

IN THE midst of the intensifying debate on censorship, the gradual relaxation of the laws governing the same and the current bandying about of four-letter words on the FREETHINKER Letters page, a prediction for 1969 made in the *Evening Standard's* Londoner's Diary by Anthony Hern one of the paper's chief book critics, seems both appropriate and intensely sane: "Now we all know how to spell them, those four-letter words will start to disappear from the novels of 1969. They have made their point sometimes to the point of nausea. Now novelists will get on with their business of writing about the human condition in *all* its aspects."

## SPACE

OPINIONS are formed as much through debate and discussion as through pure thought. Since the publication of last week's FREETHINKER more than one person has taken verbal issue with me, over the question of the moon and the starving millions. Though I still believe that it is important for us to explore the universe, I have been brought to realise that I did not emphasise that I in no way condone the treatment that is accorded by the powers that be, namely the comfortable leaders of the industrialised nations, to the vast numbers who are suffering malnutrition and its accompanying ills.

At the present time there may well be resources on the Earth, enough, if fully exploited, to feed the whole world. That these are not exploited to the full, is a crime consciously committed by the governments of the industrialised countries as a whole. Profit and national prestige is regularly given priority over suffering humanity. It is indeed true that the exploration of space suffers from the same distorted motives as does the distribution of the world's

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## THE DEAD HAND OF STALIN

OTTO WOLFGANG

WHEN Stalin's monumental statue overlooking Prague was dismantled, a Czech poet wrote that only one-tenth of this extravagant iceberg would be melted down whilst nine-tenths of it "slumbers within us".

Analysing the trends in Socialism-Communism these days, Dr Moshe Sne, Secretary of the Communist Party of Israel, remarked that although mistakes of the Stalinist era were pointed out (and partly corrected) new ones were made, among them the attitude of Big-Brother hegemony in relation to other socialist states and communist parties. Stalin's "cult of personality" was only one of many distortions of socialist theory which is still pragmatically being bended to fit considerations of Power-Politics, e.g. the support for Pan-Arabic chauvinism in order to occupy the Mediterranean basin and attempts to organise the communist parties according to the criterion of obedience to the Russian Party.

"The communist movement won't be helped by denying or blurring the negative phenomena in the socialist countries", he said. Since Stalin's days, the leaders rule unchecked and without heed of public sentiment. Criticism is not allowed. Dissident voices are silenced behind the bars of prisons or lunatic asylums.

"The answer that bourgeois democracy is only democracy for the advantage of the minority and disadvantage of the majority, that it is limited, hypocritical and corrupt, that it permits fascism and racialism and that it doesn't have any moral right to complain about the lack of democracy in the socialist regime—this answer, too, for all the truth it contains, does not answer the charge, since we are not dealing with the complaint of the opponents of socialism but with the criticism by supporters of socialism who . . . desire the full and faithful realisation of socialist theory from socialist society." (*Information Bulletin No. 10 of the CPI*).

It is no valid excuse for the distortions in the socialist regime to point out that the great bourgeois Revolution in France also showed a balance of blood, the scaffold and wars, distortions and the restoration of the monarchy and the perversion of Bonapartism.

"In the capitalist world (and the former colonial countries are part of it and their underdevelopment is the heritage that capitalism left them)—according to United Nations statistics—no less than 1½ billion people, that is to say approximately 75 per cent of the entire population, suffer from hunger or undernourishment. In the United States alone, according to Vice President Hubert Humphrey, 36 million people live in want, far below the subsistence minimum; it is an 'awful shame', in the words of President Johnson, that today 20 million people in the United States live in slums. Mass unemployment has not skipped any developed capitalist country and at the end of 1967 there were 3 million unemployed in the United States, 1½ million in Argentina, 1 million in Italy, 600,000 in Great Britain, 526,000 in West Germany and 500,000 in France. That is the way 'society of prosperity for all' really looks." (*Ibid.*)

According to Marxist theory, Socialism would have to replace a system which had become a brake to material progress; but economic development in the 'Socialist' sector of the world has not shown any betterment of the people's living standard, however much the workers were driven into increasing production. The intelligentsia is being treated with suspicion, thought control is being exercised (also in regard to people who have not yet been able to free themselves from religious superstitions) and democratic practice has no tradition, since the Czarist regime in

Russia did not leave any democratic heritage. But Lenin (Volume 22, p. 133, 4th Russian Edition) wrote:

" . . . just as there cannot be victorious socialism that doesn't realise full democracy, so the proletariat cannot prepare for victory over the bourgeoisie without waging an all-sided, consistent and revolutionary struggle for democracy."

Before this is realised, the transition to communism is unthinkable, since there can be no "withering away" of the state.

Nowadays, literacy and education are on a very high level in the USSR, but

"Millions of the intelligentsia cannot advance and develop their branches of research and creation except by the free challenge of old and accepted truths and free discussion between people with different and opposed ideas. In short, the intelligentsia cannot make its contribution to the building of socialism and communism without full democracy."—"Communism stems from humanism and its goal is humanism."

The illustrated weekend magazine of the *Daily Telegraph* of November 22 carries a report by Paul Neuburg on how the young generation in the so-called Socialist countries—taught to recoil from foreign ideas, to accept rhetoric as fact and to cringe before authority—falls back on God as the heavenly reflection of Stalin and his successors on earth.

"The number of students at the orthodox seminary in Bulgaria is very much on the rise again, and in the Sofia churches I visited last Easter, a good half to three-quarters of the people breaking their painted eggs to welcome Christ's resurrection at midnight, were under 30. In Bucharest, young Rumanians were seen queueing up throughout the same night and into the next day, waiting to confess. In Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland, Catholic masses, celebrated with beat music and blues, have drawn capacity crowds, and the group singing *Go Down Moses* after the Easter Sermon in Mathias Church, overlooking Budapest, is said to have included the Communist Secretary from the city's Secondary School for Music. The wheel has come full circle."

Staunch party-liners who consider Russian State Capitalism as Socialism and the uninhibited rule of a bureaucratic hierarchy as an end product must be reminded that Dialectical Materialism never considers anything in a state of inertia, but everything in continuous flux. Nowadays it is this degenerated Soviet system which has become a brake to progress and must be toppled by another revolution, this time on a higher level from the outset. Lenin (Volume 23, p. 361) wrote: "The great honour of *beginning* a series of revolutions brought into existence by objective necessity via the imperialist war has fallen to the lot of the Russian proletariat. But the idea of viewing the Russian proletariat as the revolutionary *avant guard* superior to the workers of other countries is entirely false; we must be aware of the fact that our proletariat is less organised, less ideologically up-to-date than the workers of other countries. Merely special combinations of historical conditions have made the Russian proletariat the vanguard of the revolutionary proletariat of the entire world and this only *for a certain*, perhaps only very short, time." And as if he had foreseen the rape of Czechoslovakia, he wrote two years later (Volume 30, p. 88): "This dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia must inevitably have created certain attributes different to that of the dictatorship of the proletariat in more advanced countries, as a result of the very great backwardness and petty-bourgeois character of our country". Mental shackles must and will be broken.



## FAITHFUL AMBRIDGE

KIT MOUAT

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE psychic to detect signs of anxiety in our established church of England. Mind you it is an anxiety somewhat alleviated by its considerable bank balance (and by being so well established) but the gods *are* falling. When I say 'gods' I am thinking of Helvetius (and who doesn't constantly think of Helvetius?) who said that 'from the moment priests take upon themselves to announce the will of heaven, they are no longer men, they are gods. People believe in them, not in God . . .'

Meanwhile the process of resurrection (or is it propelled ascension?) is being promoted enthusiastically by the BBC Religious Broadcasting Department (euphemism for Christian Advertising Department, or CAD), in the radio fairyland of Ambridge. Listeners have lately been stunned by script writing for the Archers of which this is perhaps a fair, if not verbatim rendering:

NEW VICAR: 'Hallo, Tom!'

TOM: 'Hallo, Sir!'

N.V.: 'Now, Tom, you don't have to call me "Sir". Of course being a priest sets me apart from ordinary people, to some extent, but when I'm not actually laying down rules for your marital behaviour or intellectually blackmailing you into agreeing with me, I, too, am an ordinary chap! I know I can rely on you to use the correct title on appropriate occasions, but my friends, you know, call me "David" or (heartily) just "Dave" . . .!'

In the brief silence that follows one tries to imagine the dazzling light fading behind the priest's head to reveal an ordinary "Dave", but it isn't easy. Tom (smiling lovingly) struggles up from his knees.

N.V.: 'Good heavens, it must be about opening time, eh, Tom?'

TOM: 'I should think it is, Sir, just about. I mean I should think it is, Da . . . opening time, I mean.'

N.V.: 'Well, why don't we go down to the Bull together? (under his breath: I must get used to being seen with gamekeepers, and after all John Robinson had nothing to say against Lady Chatterley). What I always say is the village pub and the village shop have taken the place of the market place. And I can do my job best in the market place . . .'

Indeed (the spellbound listener may be tempted to murmur) where better to peddle quack Cure-for-Alls? Presumably next evening Dave will be found ingratiating himself with the cricket team (isn't life one long, dreary game of cricket with Heaven as the longed-for tea-break for those who thirst?) But it takes stamina to listen more than once every two weeks.

When we next tune in we have reached the merry ritual of Dave's (sorry, the Reverend David Whatever-He-Is) induction. Everybody is there (to make sure that no one suspects Ambridge of harbouring an infidel), and it is (as the script writer points out) a 'festive occasion' for hats. Never has the definition "the Tory Party at Prayer" seemed a fairer description of the Anglican Church.

And the Archers and their friends chitter-chatter over the buns. One gathers that the ceremony that has just taken place must have been something like the blessing of

motorbikes (or warships) before being sent into action. There is no mention at all, of course, of the Thirty-nine Articles of Anglican Faith to which the New Vicar has just given his assent. Articles which have been called 'a fossil imbedded in the C of E'. I am sure that readers who use the C of E label know those articles word for word, but they can come as something of a revelation to the outsider, dealing as they do with the inevitable sinfulness of those who may try and live good lives but do not hold the Christian faith. And even the Vatican would find it hard to find a more thorny obstacle to Christian unity than the Article which states that Romish doctrines are 'repugnant' to the Word of God. "A new vicar" (complained another Reverend David—"Edwards") "has to mislead his most innocent parishioners into believing that his teaching will be based on the Articles . . .", but who *forces* the vicar to mislead anyone is not clear. All we can be sure of is that being misled is an occupational hazard for an Anglican congregation.

Pity the poor progressive, stuck with these Articles; faced with them every time he opens his prayer book, and 'forced' to say he agrees with them (even if he doesn't) every time he gets a new posting. Pity him even more if he realises that if you discard the fossil of a dinosaur in 1968 there is nothing left of it to marvel at. Pity all priests, reactionary or progressive, for, as Voltaire said (more or less) their wisdom lies in our credulity. The gods are bound to fall when people stop believing in them, or, for that matter, when they themselves stop believing, and the purpose of the large Anglican bank balance is not to help fallen gods find work as untrained mortals. At least men going into the armed services these days are warned that they may have to be ready to start a completely new career at the age of forty. But no one warns the young man going into the priesthood that he may find it impossible to give his assent to articles which he no longer believes in in order to get a job, or that he may even lose his faith. The 'loss of' faith is still considered to be an unmentionable disaster; only Brigid Brophy dares talk of the 'liberation from' faith. How could ecclesiastical authorities advise their would-be servants to consider well a future when they may find it impossible to swallow their daily bread?

D'Holbach wrote of priests who were obliged to make 'an apparent and pretended peace with the liberty of thought which their hearts detest'. But you won't find any such liberty in Ambridge any more than you will find incest, and for much the same reason. D'Holbach blamed the sovereign who, he said, was so flattered by priests who talked of the royal 'divine right' that he did not object when the interests of society were subordinated to those of the church and its officials. What would he say now, more than two hundred years later, about priorities: society, the church and its officials?

Apart from the infiltration of Ambridge and other family favourites, CAD is busy trying out various sales techniques. Its aim seems to be:

1. To suggest that Christianity and Theology are quite different commodities, and that the BBC is really only interested in selling the first. This is done by avoiding any mention of basic Christian doctrines or sectarian peculiarities like the Articles, and by denying freedom of the air and TV to those who would draw attention to them and to the excellent reasons for rejecting them outright.



2. To suggest that only Christians know anything about love, altruism, generosity, beauty, do good, or die successfully, and that if you don't want to live a mean, ugly, immoral, selfish life and die screaming, it is best to go along with the Christian label;

Or, as an alternative approach on the same theme . . . To admit that Jews, Buddhists, Communists, Anarchists, Marxists, Secular Humanists and so on are not wholly wicked, but imply that this is only because they are all virtually Christians at heart and just too stupid (young, or obstinate) to realise the fact.

3. To put Malcolm Muggeridge over as often as possible to demonstrate that whereas keeping our cake and eating it is the Modern Miracle, the switched-on State of Grace is revealed in a blend of extreme mental confusion and spiritual hypochondria.

4. To imply that primitive Jewish thought and customs can be made relevant today if set to pop music.

5. To protest that atheists are not really denied any freedoms for one simple reason; *there are no atheists*. As 'Our Father God which art in Heaven' is out of date, and 'God' now only means the 'ultimate something-or-other', then no one can possibly disbelieve in him (sorry 'it').

To these purposes the men in god collars apply themselves with unflagging energy, both in fiction and in fact. But outside the sacred portals of the Corporation and the Fleet Street Editorial Offices (where Christians ply their wares like money lenders in the famous temple), the clergy is losing weight. The body of the priesthood is showing signs of malnutrition as the gods leave Olympus for Oxfam. And with fewer and fewer young men wanting to take up a career of being a professional amateur in a world of

specialists, or a minor deity in an increasingly disbelieving society, I suspect that it will be no time at all before the all-male Anglican hierarchy decides that even women are better than nothing in the pulpit. ('Nothing' is about all women have been better than in the Christian tradition.) However if expediency once again shifts the church away from theology towards Secularism, sex will inevitably raise its ugly-Muggeridge head. As Dr Hobson (of the University of London) discovered, the average person finds the idea of women priests 'disgusting', and is revolted by the idea of women giving food at Holy Communion with the words, 'this is my body'. (Just their luck when it's about the only food that doesn't have to be shopped for, prepared or cooked and washed-up-after). It is just a question of what the 'average person' can get used to. I don't think the church need worry too much. After all, it manages already to persuade children from the age of five to believe in so-called "facts" of which even Bertrand Russell can't make any sense. Given our present system of Religious Indoctrination, Mr Short in the Ministry of Christian Education and Non-Science, and CAD in the BBC, who can doubt that even the revolutionary idea of women priests—goddesses—will be equally as thoroughly absorbed by the average child. And even if teenagers are sometimes tempted to doubt with Russell, we know that the result of such indoctrination is more often the aforementioned 'state of grace' than any comfortable alternative.

We do have to face the fact however that the Archers of Ambridge are not average anything. They merely reflect the wishful thinking of the propaganda pressure groups like CAD, and it is very hard indeed to imagine the arrival of yet another new vicar asking Tom Forrest to call her, 'Marjorie' or, even more intimately, 'Marj.'

## SCIENCE, SUPERSTITION AND HUMAN SURVIVAL

ISOBEL GRAHAME

FOR THE RATIONAL, secular, freethinking human being a mixture of science and supernaturalism just won't wash.

Psychiatrists have long recognised compulsive washing as symptomatic of severe neurosis in our species and the ad-men have exploited this generic weakness to promote all kinds of cleansing agents from skin creams and washing powders to encapsulated car shampoo. For the record, I was using a detergent powder as long ago as 1936, I can remember no ballyhoo connected with its introduction and I still use it.

We have survived the snow-white, crisp-white, glowing-white and whiter-than-white periods, as well as the less-for-the-same-price-in-bigger-packets, same-for-less-price-plus-plastic-bribe, and two-for-the-price-of-one era. This last selling point seemed scarcely rational since few mentally balanced people actually *want* to wash more dishes and more clothes just for the hell of it, and as a Humanist I think one way to make it good to be alive is to need less and less washing materials and eventually throw the whole darned lot away with the other newer-than-new disposables.

Next came the biologicals, cunningly appealing to the current vogue for the sciences of life.

Yesterday—what do you think?—just when I had climbed up into the loft for some more apples, the door bell rings insistently and a kind lady gives me a free sample claiming to be a biological washing miracle which digests dirt that ordinary powders don't.

Wow! Here's the whole psycho-scientific-homely-supernatural gamut plus direct appeal to our schizoid characteristic of running down the neighbours all neatly packaged in a dozen words. (Unfortunately the packet topples over if the wind blows and spills its contents just as maddeningly as the 'ordinary' ones do.)

Thinks . . . Just as weeds are plants in the wrong place, dirt is matter in the wrong place. Is a miraculous substance selective enough to stop digesting when it meets my hands in the sink? Of course the whole cosmic problem might be solved if rinsing were inadequate and the gastric juices got to work on the bodies of subsequent wearers we could quietly fade away like old soldiers, then only the cat would be left to do her washing, and ethologists have long recognised that compulsive washing is merely a harmless displacement activity when it occurs in *felis catus*.

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It is up to us all to help stop this injustice. If we come to hear of any doctor, who is not doing his job *as he is required to do by the law*, we should write to the Department of Health and Social Security and demand that they take action. Further, the irrational views of Mr St John Stevas must not be allowed to wreak any more harm. If he presses for another change in the law, MPs will be lobbied to ensure that no more suffering is caused to the women and families, whose troubles St John Stevas has already helped to prolong for far too long.



# CULLED FROM FOREIGN PAPERS

OTTO WOLFGANG

*La Ligue des Droits de L'Homme* (November)

THE FRENCH HUMAN RIGHTS LEAGUE received the following letter from the Soviet Russian writer, Madame Gorbanevskaja, who on August 25 had taken part in the protest demonstration against the rape of Czechoslovakia:

"We were seven. At noon, we assembled in Lobnoie Place and unfolded our slogans, reading 'Long live Independent Czechoslovakia', 'Shame on the occupants', 'Hands off Czechoslovakia' and 'For yours and our liberty'."

"Immediately whistles went and from all sides of the place police in mufti pounced upon us; they had been on duty for the departure of the Czechoslovak delegation. Running towards us, they shouted: 'You dirty Jews!' . . .

"We remained calm and did not try to resist. Our banners were torn out of our hands. Victor Fainberg was hit in the face until it was blood covered and his teeth broken. Pavel Litvinoff's face was punched with a heavy satchel. I held a small Czechoslovak flag which was wrenched from my hands and broken; they screamed: 'Scram, you criminals!'

"Soon the Black Marias arrived, everybody was pushed in, save me who had with me my baby of three months. . . . It took another ten minutes until they came for me. Inside the car I was punched. My baby son too was taken to the police station and for six hours I was not allowed to feed the child.

"Several people who had gathered around us and showed their sympathy with our protest were also arrested but were discharged in the late evening. The dwelling places of all those arrested were searched during the night; they were charged with 'conspiring seriously to disturb public order' . . .

" . . . As a matter of fact, ours had been an entirely peaceful demonstration not in the least disturbing public order. Not only did I, therefore, refuse to accept the charge of having 'conspired', I deposited complaints against the brutality of the Militia and am prepared to prove it before the public opinion of the world.

"My comrades and I are glad to have mounted this demonstration and so to have interrupted, even if only for a moment, the torrent of shameless lies and cowardly silence, thus showing that not all citizens of this country support the oppression and invasion committed in the name of the Soviet people. And this conviction gave us strength and courage."

After receipt of this letter, the International Federation of Human Rights requested Kosygin not to condemn these people for their conviction.

The same issue carries a protest issued by Bertrand Russell on behalf of several Polish students who have been in prison for months waiting trial, charged with having taken part, on January 30 last, in a demonstration against the banning of a patriotic play by the Polish classic writer, Mieckiewicz. Those being considered Jewish were immediately expelled from the University of Warsaw and when others demanded their re-integration, they too were arrested. It is characteristic that the play in question dealt with the persecution of patriotic Poles by the former *Tsarist* Police!

*The Swiss "Freidenker"* (November)

The Bible, translated into 197 languages, is no longer the most translated book: Lenin's works in 1966 boasted 201 languages.

The "Bund" (Berne) complains about the atrophy of

religion in the German Democratic Republic and furthers the following figures:

<i>Inhabitants according to plebiscite</i>	<i>Protestants</i>	<i>Rom. Catholics</i>	<i>Without any Church affiliation</i>
1950 18.4 mill.	14.8 mill. (80.5%)	2.0 mill. (11%)	1.4 mill. (7.6%)
1964 17.0 mill.	10.1 mill. (59.4%)	1.4 mill. (8.1%)	5.4 mill. (31.8%)

During the same period the number of practising Jews fell from 3,319 to 1,600 and the membership of the Free Churches, comprising 0.9 per cent of the population, fell to 0.7 per cent.

*La Ragione* (Italy, November)

An ex-priest, Volunnio De Angelis, sent the Italian Parliament a memorandum on the persecution by the Church—and consequently the secular authorities too—of former clerics. In the name of some 8,000 former priests he accuses the Hierarchy of a campaign of vile calumny and slanderous defamation of all dissenters. "This monstrous community, indifferent to human pain and sorrow, ruthlessly persecutes her opponents today just as she used to in the Dark Ages when she accused and burnt alleged witches for having had carnal intercourse with the devil. . . . In public, we are being made despicable and called immoral heretics. When I approached people in highest authority, they immediately withdrew into faint-hearted silence, dreading the might and influence of the clerics."

Parliament is requested to make illegal all acts of slander and defamation from religious organisations and grant ex-priests the right to their legal pension for the years served in 'Holy Orders'.

And in England—I would add—we also need protection against the activities of religious pressure groups who threaten boycott and blackballing of producers and publishers who dare to show or make public anything these self-appointed censors disapprove of.

## Profile on

# RACE RELATIONS

### Speakers :

JOAN LESTOR, MP

(Labour MP for Eton and Slough)

JOHN LYTTLE

(Chief Conciliation Officer, Race Relations Board)

Dr DAVID PITT

DAVID TRIBE

(President, National Secular Society)

### Chairman :

JOHN ENNALS

(Director General, United Nations Association)

Alliance Hall, Caxton Street, London, SW1

(St James's Park Underground)

Thursday, January 30th, 7.30 p.m.

Organised by the NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

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## BOOK REVIEW

IAIN SAUNDERS

**THE STUDENT REVOLT** (The Activists Speak), compiled by Hervé Bourges, translated by B. R. Brewster, 144 pp. (Panther, 6s).

*The Student Revolt* is an attempt to portray the nature and implications of the recent French crisis which is made more difficult by the amorphous intangibility of the movement itself. The medium Hervé Bourges has chosen consists of interviews with some of the more prominent students, including that between Daniel Cohn-Bendit and Jean-Paul Sartre, supported by group manifestoes and a brief chronology. By avoiding analysis and introspection he has preserved the spontaneity at the expense of a degree of comprehension particularly for the uninitiated English reader. The structure of the French educational system, an essential part of the environment that nurtured the attitudes, is only briefly mentioned which tends to take the ideas out of their context. This is probably because the book was originally intended for a French audience and so this is more a criticism of the translation.

In choosing dialogue as the main means of communication Hervé Bourges throws light, perhaps unintentionally, on one of the problems that surrounds student activity, the lack of contact between the students and the rest of the population. This has the effect of making the student's answers seem rather evasive when it is frequently the irrelevance of the questions that is at fault. The students are primarily concerned with opposing the increasing rigidity to which society is subjecting itself as it attempts to become more and more materially efficient. A rigidity that is expressed in privileges, specialisation and lack of independence over the control of one's own life which stifles thought and creativity. The atmosphere generated by the students is one of criticism both of the general acceptance of the structure and the structure itself, and this is why they are so concerned with trying to avoid identification of their leaders and why they have no concrete idea of an alternative society. It would be no solution to replace one kind of oppressiveness with another and it is important to realise, as they have, that Russian communism and American capitalism are similar in this respect.

The aims of the students are difficult to follow and one of the great dangers that this creates is fear and resentment of the apparent irresponsibility of an unknown force. *The Student Revolt* is an attempt to exploit the opposite potential, that of promoting thought through understanding and enthusiasm and it is certainly one of the less melodramatic products of the French movement.

## FILM REVIEW

AL SCHROEDER

**IF . . .** (Paramount Cinema, Piccadilly Circus)  
*If . . . I was Che Guevara!*

THE MAGIC 'if', the password to dreamland. "If I was a rich man", says the title of a song. And "If I loved you", says the lyric of another. "If I knew then what I know now . . .", says everyone. "If only things were different!" If only, if only, if only! The magic if? Alas, no! More correct to say the impotent, ineffectual if.

The ultimate expression of the impotent and ineffectual is, of course, savage ferocity. And in this film of life in an English public school during its Spring term, 1968, the last scene is the heartless massacre by machine-gunfire of the school's staff, boys, parents and friends by a group of boys perched like Central American revolutionaries on the roof of the school chapel. The film is not dissimilar in presentation to a glossy documentary and has many sympathetically presented characters, but the main character and plot development concerns itself with the trio of senior boys whose malcontentment and undisciplined behaviour lead them to their act of mass murder. The writer of the screenplay has christened this group 'The Crusaders'.

Are we intended to see heroism and nobility in this small gang of delinquents? For a motorcycle gang with 'The Crusaders' elaborately proclaimed in white enamel on their black leather jackets it would be possible to allow some degree of sympathy and understanding. But it is not sympathy or compassion that the milk fed pups of this film arouse, but simple and common charity. The kind of charity, anyway, that would prompt us to purchase Christmas cards from them.

The director, Lindsay Anderson's picture of life at an English public school is not totally without affection, but there seems to be no consistency in his shifts from idyll to mockery, from brilliant colour to bleak black and white, from reality to fantasy, and so it is impossible to divine his message. Had the film been set in say, some progressive school in Islington a pertinent comment might have been made. Among the stiff wing collars and cutaway

coats Anderson betrays too many mixed motives and too much divided loyalty to be able to give any real satisfaction. But there are moments of rare and genuine beauty in this film which I have not seen before in any British film. And there are one or two fascinatingly erotic sequences.

## THE FREETHINKER FUND

OUR THANKS are due to all those listed below, who with their generosity have greatly furthered the continuing publication of the FREETHINKER. As is widely known, the paper has very little money. We are very lucky to have a printer, who will produce the paper to such a high standard at a very low cost. Nevertheless, as everyone knows inflation creeps steadily on and the illustrations and photographs, which the weight of opinion seems to consider worthwhile in that they add a lot to the appearance of the paper, do cost a certain amount. Thus, all donations to the Freethinker Fund, to help keep the world's only Freethought and Humanism weekly really alive, will be more than welcomed.

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(Continued from page 10)

food. Any material benefits will, unless something epoch-making happens soon, be distributed by men using the wrong criteria. However, the internal combustion engine was first produced for the wrong reasons, and yet the benefit to mankind is incalculable. In the future something beneficial may be found in space—something which would benefit us more cheaply or more quickly than the same benefits if obtained from the Earth. Further it is not inconceivable that one day the resources on the Earth, even if exploited to the full would be insufficient to support the population. In this light to disregard the possibilities of space because it is being explored for the wrong motives would surely be culpable.

It is absolutely imperative that we strive to set the world in order, to impose the right priorities on our rulers, to feed the starving and to allay the population explosion. But for the sake of the not so distant future let us at least discover the potential of space.



## LETTERS

### Selfishness, sinfulness and latterly sex

SINCE the printing of the originally omitted concluding paragraph to my article "Is Man Moral?" may not satisfy all Kit Mouat's queries perhaps I can clarify my position. I reject completely the concept of "sin", and certainly did not intend my description of man's selfishness to be interpreted as "sinfulness". I am not handing out blame—as a determinist I regard man as amoral—he acts as his nature determines he must, and morality cannot exist without freedom of choice. The point I emphasised, however, was that those who insist on retaining the concept of man's "free will" must accept in consequence that he is the only animal capable of acting immorally, which he apparently does with such consistency. I doubt very much if I have retained enough "Christian conditioning" to affect my opinion on the nobility of man—in fact I had more faith in man when I was a Christian. Perhaps I might be more optimistic about "the creativity, inventiveness, ingenuity and imagination that enriches human life" if only I could induce myself to forget the creation of napalm, the invention of the atom bomb, the ingenuity of the anti-personnel "lazy dog" bomb, and the imagination that devised chemical and bacteriological warfare.

I must also take the opportunity to support Maurice Hill's excellent letter on "where not to draw the line" against F. H. Snow's attack. I regret having to oppose so strongly Mr Snow, with whom I am usually in agreement. Mr Snow may not like Maurice Hill's use of such a blunt commonplace word as 'fuck', but this does not entitle him to demand the censorship of the FREETHINKER to accommodate his prejudices. (I am sure Mr Reynolds will not take such a request seriously.) Factual education on any subject, whether F. H. Snow deems it 'salacious' or not, is certainly entitled to a place in these pages. Undoubtedly the FREETHINKER should be used for "the propagation of atheist principles", but not exclusively. A man can be a freethinker without necessarily being an atheist (Voltaire, Paine) and freethought is concerned with opposing not just religious dogma but all dogmatic morality, including that applied to sexual matters. This cannot be achieved by censoring words of which we do not approve and deliberately suppressing factual information.

MICHAEL GRAY.

### Sexual permissiveness

MR SNOW (December 21) claims that freethinkers should not concern themselves with sex. This view is not supported by the history of our movement, as Mr Snow would know had he read, for example, David Tribe's book *100 Years of Freethought*—he will even find the word 'fuck' there.

Mr Snow's desire to keep sex secret and to suppress sexual information is nineteenth century in its outlook. Far from demonstrating his 'decency', his wish to prevent people from openly discussing sexual matters merely shows that his inhibitions are stronger than his reason; he is sick.

MICHAEL LLOYD-JONES.

### J. M. Robertson

I APPRECIATE the extremely well-informed articles dealing with that too little appreciated scholar, J. M. Robertson, especially the most recent on his role as a literary critic. As an authority on Shakespeare JMR won a sound reputation, and as a human encyclopedia on a dozen other subjects he was well-known to older freethinkers, but I for one, had no idea that he also had the considerable knowledge which Mr Page's article reveals. Like the erudite schoolmaster in *The Deserted Village*, 'Still the wonder grew that one small head could carry all he knew'. And in addition to his amazing range of knowledge on a huge variety of subjects, JMR had a critical intellect as sharp as a razor all the more impressive as, starting to work for a living at the age of thirteen, he was denied the education so accessible to teenage children of today.

Just as if I were a criminal the last person I would care to have on my trail would be the fictional Dr Thorndike, so if I held views to which he was opposed would I dread JMR making them the subject of his critical scrutiny.

Mr Page refers to Robertson's comments on Shaw's novels and to his book on Shaw's *St Joan* which I have recently read. But I was puzzled by Mr Page speaking of Shaw's 'success' in the theatre. Why the inverted commas? Surely there is no doubt that Shaw's success was astoundingly real. I wish JMR had made a full-scale study of Shaw, important and provoking enough to win a reply. That would have been a clash of the controversial giants almost equal to the platform debate on socialism which unfortun-

ately, although contemplated, never took place between Shaw and Bradlaugh.

I missed in Mr Page's closely packed article any indication that Robertson had ever included in his literary coup so important a novelist as Arnold Bennett, so redoubtable a propagandist as Robert Blatchford, and so colossal and mischievous a bore as Karl Marx. Reference is made to Robertson's opinion of Voltaire as a dramatist, but not to the critic's statement that were he limited on a desert island to the works of one author, More and Voltaire would have been chosen in preference even to the plays of Shakespeare. Finally I recall that when some friend remonstrated with Robertson for not having written his autobiography the latter suggested one should be written only after all other work had been completed and apparently this extraordinarily busy man was too much engaged with other men and other subjects to ever get around to himself.

GEORGE WHITEHEAD.

### Immigration

YOUR ARTICLE in the December 14th issue dealing with the speeches of Mrs Renee Short is hardly likely to achieve its title 'Towards racial harmony'. As a Member of Parliament with a higher proportion of coloured immigrants than Mrs Short may I say how deeply I disagree with her and with your defence of her proposals.

To say these proposals combine idealism with realism is really a misrepresentation of what is taking place. Dependents of commonwealth immigrants are already staggered; 50 per cent of those coming in now are the dependents of immigrants who came here before 1965. If Mrs Short, Enoch Powell and Duncan Sandys keep misrepresenting the position on dependents they will create a Kenya/Asian situation over again. People will panic and they will bring in their dependents far quicker than they had intended because they will be afraid that soon they will be prevented from doing so.

You also refer to those who advocate total freedom on immigration? Who are these people? Where do they express their views? I thought the rigid control on commonwealth immigrants was sometimes contrasted with the different methods of control for aliens. The fact that there is a ceiling on commonwealth immigrants and not on aliens is avoided by those who seek to blame commonwealth immigrants for social problems because they are so easily identified. And as soon as people begin to criticise the views of Mrs Short and others they are told they are in favour of complete freedom of entry; so the arguments are rarely fully discussed.

The restriction on vouchers would contribute nothing to the social problems of housing, and education. Firstly, many of the annual allocation of 7,500 coloured immigrants come here with a particular profession or skill and they are not allocated a particular job. They go where they please. And, of the rest, the numbers in each area are so small they make very little difference to the social situation. Of course areas are overcrowded and many of them have immigrants. Many of these areas have a history of social deprivation; many are suffering from the concentration of work where there are not enough houses and where there have never been enough houses or schools. Even if one took Mrs Short's proposal as worth considering how do we do it? Do we have a pass system? Do we build walls around Wolverhampton?

To make a scape goat of a minority has the most dangerous social consequences and those who do it out of ignorance or the search for power must be challenged. I am sorry that the FREETHINKER did not find the facts before offering support to Mrs Short, Enoch Powell and the rest. This was hardly freethinking; it was decidedly conditioned.

JOAN LESTOR, MP, Eton and Slough.

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