

Freethinker

Registered at the GPO as a Newspaper

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

VOLUME 89, No. 6

Saturday, February 8, 1969

Sixpence Weekly

THE NEW EDUCATION ACT

AN EDUCATIONAL SUB-COMMITTEE set up by the National Secular Society has produced a report entitled *Submissions for a new Education Act*. Naturally some considerable mention is made of the need for an end to compulsory religious education. Secularists will be familiar with most of the arguments against RI. However, the report points to a disadvantage of the present system not often recognised as such: "With compulsory religion in all maintained and public schools the principal is likely to be a person of unusual piety or humbug, with all that this implies in authoritarianism, rigidity, sanctimoniousness and bureaucracy". The sacking of Michael Duane from Risinghill would tend to bear out this view. The report continues: "With removal of the religious provisions of the 1944 Act and an extension of school democracy involving staff and pupils, we should expect an opening out of the whole structure of the school, a balancing of the various influences and ideologies of its members, and greater confidence that freedom to experiment wouldn't be abused". Thus the bad influence of compulsory religion is shown to have consequences more far-reaching than the indoctrination of innocent children, an undesirable enough consequence in itself.

The abolition of compulsory religious education is only one of a number of recommendations made in the report, which covers the whole educational spectrum of this country. It begins by condemning the 1944 Act, which "under the umbrella of 'parental choice'" permitted many provisions which segregated children "according to the social class and religion of their parents". But then: "With the central institution of the 11-plus examination and its *sequelae* 'parental choice' was thrown to the winds and 'suitable education' erected in its place". The stock arguments against the system created in this way are put and a call is made for "the replacement of this dual system by a unified one". It is stressed that no divisive factors can be tolerated on any grounds that are not strictly educational. "Educational" here is used in a very limited sense. The report condones special schools or special classes only for those children who are for one reason or another sub-normal, those children of immigrants whose command of English is not yet sufficient to enable them to join their contemporaries and finally the report concedes that in a subject "like secondary school mathematics, where capacity may range from utter incomprehension to instant insight and attainment from 0 to 100 per cent, there are good pedagogic grounds for 'setting' children within the school according to ability". The report recommends that: "Outside these special cases it is *desirable* (my italics) for children to be comprehensively educated whatever the race, colour or creed of their parents". They do however, admit that the time is not yet ripe for the abolition of all private schools, but suggest that there is "no case for public subsidies, direct or indirect", since these "imply community approval".

The report points to the desirability of children being able to attend schools as near as possible to their homes. This is another ideal, which they recognise cannot be attained immediately basically because some areas are poorer than others. It is therefore "desirable for the exchequer to redress the balance between schools in rich and poor areas".

This leads the committee to their most important conclusion: "Much private education exists at the moment because it is supported by rating and taxation relief and

actively encouraged by covenants and similar devices. All these problems are beyond the control of the Department of Education and Science. Economic and other factors may intervene to frustrate useful provisions written into education acts. *Urgent as it is have a new Act which more fully reflects the insights of 1969, it is even more urgent to implement the constructive or moderating clauses of the current statute* (my italics)." This is a sadly realistic assessment of the likelihood of the next education act to put into effect any great changes. The reasons for this are not so much the religious conservatism of such men as Edward Short, but rather purely financial. The country simply is not rich enough to pay for the alterations to the educational structure needed to make a comprehensive system, workable and worthy of its name. One begins to understand what leads the LSE students and others to their impotent revolutionary activities, when one considers the amount of money spent on armaments alongside this depressing fact. However, as the NSS sub-committee no doubt had the maturity to accept, the present world situation is unlikely to change appreciably in the near future, and we must continue to eat what is set before us. However, the report does show that improvements could be made in the cooking.

As well as the expected recommendations with regard to religious education, a paragraph is accorded to 'Moral Education' and it is concluded that it is not desirable to make this compulsory on syllabuses, but for the pupils to learn from "stories . . . discussion of personal problems as they grow older, and above all by staff example". The committee consider that this is likely to become integrated with social studies and also with "suitable sex instruction, which we think should be universal in both the primary and the secondary school".

Practically all "voluntary" schools are denominational and it is recommended that all these be abolished, so that all "maintained" schools be county schools. "Those denominations which run voluntary schools should be given the alternative of handing them over to the State in return for compensation for their own investment, or taking them over themselves on mortgages representing the State's

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Published by G. W. Foote & Co. Ltd.

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capital investment and running them at their own expense as private schools". It is proposed that all schools not run by the local Education Authority should "require a licence showing that they are recognised as efficient by the Department of Education and Science". The older public schools which were originally established on public money, and which are in fact those which foster the old boy network should be taken over by the LEA. Only the modern schools which were established with private money, and are either secular or sectarian, should be regarded as ordinary private schools and not aided in any way.

One of the least talked about but most important grievances to many minds is the existence of single-sex schools. The committee proposes that co-education be written into the statute as a requirement for all *maintained* schools. There seems a small anomaly here. If private schools are to require a licence of efficiency, cannot the issuing of that

licence be made dependent on the school coming up with an acceptable date by which time they will have made their establishment fully co-educational. To cause children to be brought up substantially apart from the opposite sex is to create an atmosphere almost as unnatural as that born of the instillation of unfounded faith as fact. It is anomalous that the committee took this incomplete line on co-education while recommending that compulsion should be removed from participation in the school cadet force in *all* schools.

A phasing out of the use of corporal punishment is suggested. This is only practical since secondary school masters in difficult areas would be placed in a tricky position were it to be abolished overnight.

Attention is paid to the recent demands of some school children, inspired by their seniors at university. A fairly exact programme is put forward to further the democratisation of schools, on the basis of the suggestion that: "From the earliest years children should be given as much classroom responsibility as they are able to accept". With regard to the examination system the committee recognises that it has a great many disadvantages but cannot see that examinations can be totally done away with in the foreseeable future. They would however, like to see their number reduced and suggest that the Ordinary level of the General Certificate of Education could disappear "now that there is the more flexible Certificate of Secondary Education".

It may be hard to swallow that the new education act will only be an amended version of the 1944 Act, but given that this is a severe probability the NSS sub-committee must be applauded for their realism and thoroughness.

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

Belfast Humanist Group: NI War Memorial Building, Waring Street: Monday, February 10, 8 p.m.: "The Individual and the Community", Professor Scott.

Glasgow Humanist Group: GS House: Sunday, February 9, 2.30 p.m.: "Divorce Reform", Donald Dewar, MP.

Humanist Teachers' Association: Friends' House, Euston Road, London, NW1: "The Ultimate Hypocrisy (Religion in Schools)", Edward Blishen (Author of *Roaring Boys*).

Leicester Secular Society: 75 Humberstone Gate: Sunday, February 9, 6.30 p.m.: "Any Questions on Council Affairs", Alderman Marston and Councillors Mrs H. Roberts, Mr H. C. Williams and T. Baguley.

Luton Humanist Group: Carnegie Room, Central Library: Thursday, February 13, 8 p.m.: "A Hundred Years of Free-thought", David Tribe (President of National Secular Society).

South Place Ethical Society: Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1: Sunday, February 9, 11 a.m.: "Ethics and the City", J. Stewart Cook, B.Sc. Admission free. Tuesday, February 11, 6.45 p.m.: Discussion, "Pakistan Today—Economics and Politics", Begum Razia Sirajuddin. Admission 2s (including refreshments). Members free.

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RESTIVE YOUNG PRIESTS

P. G. ROY

SEEING the dreadful muddle and impass our generation has created in the world, youth has become scared of the future they will inherit; therefore they, and in particular their intelligentsia, the students, demand a say in shaping the society they will have to live in.

"After finding disappointment in Europe, people seek in Soviet Russia or in Communist China the sacredness they need. After more disappointments, the search continues. LSD is brought into play, but it does not answer the need adequately. Must one then take one's own life? Some do so", writes Norbert Lacoste in *One Church, Two Nations?* a collection of articles on the impact of ecumenism on Canada (Longmans).

More and more people have come to see that Religion is the mealy-mouthed handmaiden of Reaction. Education once was the privileged domain of the Church: "... now the organisation of students, the decrease in vocations to the priesthood and the religious life, and the democratisation of education have caused young people to have a vision of the Church very different from that of their elders". (Ibid).

In June last, 85 younger priests attended a stormy three-day study meeting in Montreal and issued a manifesto to the younger Roman Catholic priests inviting them to take part in decision-making by forming an association to represent them. "For many of the younger priests this is the last chance", a source said in an interview. "If this report doesn't lead to action I can't predict what many of the younger priests will do. There will probably be defections from the priesthood and disillusionment." (*The Globe and Mail*, October 12.)

When the published results of the Second Vatican Council were greeted with cries of excitement, I immediately warned that only formal face lifts were given to the Roman Catholic Church which did not alter the essence of Christianity. The publication of *Humanae Vitae*, the Pope's Encyclical on birth control, brought this home to all and sundry.

The October issue of *Saturday Night*, the Canadian magazine, interviewed Charles Davis—who, it will be remembered, left the Church, married, moved to Canada and was appointed Professor of Religious Studies of the University of Alberta. Even he does not wish for any change in the traditional Christian orthodoxy on such points as 'God', the divinity of Christ, the authority of the 'Word of God'. He merely opposes papal mystique and references to the standards of Christ with an out-dated anthropology of a fixed human nature, in which every act is judged by a divinely built-in purpose. Acting against the advice of his own commission on birth control and the convictions of a substantial proportion of bishops, laymen and theologians, Pope Paul was prudent enough not to make it an infallible pronouncement, but claimed to interpret, as a "divinely appointed teacher", a moral law. Had he done otherwise, it would have been well-nigh disastrous, Davis thought.

"Actually, I think the way the Pope has handled the birth control question has really been destructive of authority. I don't think the Roman Church will ever regain the authority it had over ordinary people's lives. . . . The first possibility is that the forces now present in the Catholic Church have their way . . . (and) lead to the break-up of the present system. . . . (Then it's) possible that . . . one will see the Roman Catholic Church transformed into something different, essentially different. That

is one possibility. The other possibility is, however, that the institutional, official side of the RC Church becomes increasingly tenacious and excludes these forces. I think there are signs that the second is more probable. I think institutions are tenacious, and I don't think there can be a gradual evolution within the church . . . (and) the present official side will harden into a rigid conservatism."

Five days after the Pope's publication of his opposition to artificial birth control, fifty-one Washington priests issued a "statement of conscience" expressing their opposition. At the Vatican Council, the bishops—in the words of an article issued by the New York Times Service and printed in *Globe and Mail* of October 5, ". . . endorsed pluralism and religious liberty. They accepted the principle of involvement of the church in secular affairs and moved towards a degree of internal democracy. While reaffirming papal infallibility, they took the idea of collegiality or shared government, that was implicit in the 1870 decrees of the first Vatican Council and made it explicit. In doing so, the council made it clear that both the church's inspired teachings and its ecclesiastical authority continued to be set against the wisdom and customs of this world."

However, younger priests and laymen, "sensitive to the swirl of events outside the church and eager to relate them to their religious experience, have begun to challenge at least three assumptions that even Vatican II regarded as sacrosanct". And the foremost of these assumptions is that priests and laymen must have a say in modern ecclesiastical matters, which Patrick Cardinal O'Boyle hotly denies. Upon which the dissident priests called for the formation of advisory councils of priests, laymen and nuns. And the Rev Charles Curran of the Catholic University, a leader in the anti-encyclical protest movement in the USA, declared: "I don't regard my bishop as a father figure. He's a traffic cop who keeps things moving, so that I can do my job".

Young theologians nowadays openly question whether 'objectivity' and 'certainty' are any longer permissible terms. "The modern physicist talks about probability rather than certainty", said Rev David W. Tracy, a 29-year-old theologian at a Catholic University. "Likewise, as a theologian, I cannot describe any theological definition as universal in any sense." It is clear that young Catholic theologians, following the lead of their Protestant brethren, have begun to 'de-mythologise' their church tradition.

In his interview with *Saturday Night* even Davis was uncompromising: "One must leave the institutional church, certainly the Roman Catholic Church, perhaps any and all of them. He at least, having left one, will not join any other. In their present form they are obstacles to Christianity and must die."

In a recent Frost programme, Cardinal Hecnan, that old fox, avoided the trap by putting a person's own conscience above "priest and Bishop". He hoped he would never be elected Pope, but if so, "I will be very careful about writing encyclicals", he said.

TOWARDS HUMAN RIGHTS

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Annual report of the
National Secular Society

EFFECTIVE BIRTH CONTROL - THE NEW ATOMIC BOMB R. READER

"The Vital Square" (FREETHINKER, 13.5.60) and other articles appearing between 1954 and 1961, predicted that, whatever improvements effected in distribution of world resources, world land surface would never support the present world population without provoking:—

1. Violent and premature death (war, riots, road accidents).
2. Physical disease (starvation, malnutrition, industrial pollution of air, soil and water; the destruction of natural vegetation to make way for buildings and roads).
3. Mental disease (irritation, frustration, noise, overcrowding, neurosis, psychosis, insanity).
4. Criminal violence by the young (forecast for this year as long ago as 19.12.58).
5. Sacrifice of some sections of the community to make way for others (the plight of the aged, the unemployed, and the "disguised unemployed" of conventional military forces).

"Beyond Malthus" (FREETHINKER, 25.5.56) predicted and gave the real, not the ostensible, reasons for the present official opposition by religious neurosis to effective birth control. The rational limitation of births—mankind's only alternative to extinction—is, however, also bitterly opposed by many who stand outside the sphere of the religious influence. Why? Because effective birth control, or the acceptance of the existence of an upper limit to human numbers, would inevitably lead to the awareness of an upper limit to the capacity of the planet to support human life. And from this, to the general realisation that all quantitative human expansion has come to an end, now and for all time, would be only a short step, producing changes in human affairs as far-reaching as those of the chain reaction of the atom bomb.

First, the resultant halt in expansion and reduction of human numbers would begin an entirely new phase of human living. Relieved of the necessity for providing a miserable travesty of existence and violent death for ever-increasing numbers of the unwarrantably born, like a mad dog chasing its tail, humanity would be able to concentrate instead on providing a better existence for ever-decreasing numbers of a human élite. Effective birth control, therefore, would be like the thin end of a wedge, splitting the crazy financial and economic edifices of all human living, East and West alike, from top to bottom. Politicians, financiers and economists of all racial and political hues—white, black, brown, yellow, pink and purple—babbling of expansion, rates of economic growth, development, increasing turnover, and so forth, would automatically become candidates for the criminal asylum: the demented search for profit by the suave book-keepers of the West and productivity drives by the taskmasters of the East; the pipe-dreams of financiers—phantasies born in sick brains a century ago, before the world filled up and reached over-saturation; the intricate computerised calculations enabling a few more tens of thousands to be squeezed in somewhere, somehow; the prostitution of science to serve wholly

unscientific ends; the juggling and speculating with living resources and existing human misery in order to cram yet more life into the world and later aggravate the problem—all these things and thousands more, would become fit occupations only for the mentally deranged. Is it any wonder that not only religious, but also other interests oppose effective birth control? Or that all mankind with the inevitability of a nightmare, is drawing closer to the precipice of "Journey's End" (FREETHINKER, 27.7.56)?

Cornered, trapped in a snare largely of its own making, religious neurosis and its allies are fighting desperately to find some alternative to their own disappearance. And here they have found inspiration from the tricks of certain leaders who have, in many countries, succeeded in "pre-fabricating" humanity—that is, in producing beings which, although still incontestably homo sapiens, have a fixed, pre-determined pattern of reactions, thoughts, emotions, ambitions, hates and loves—and consequently a fixed, pre-determined pattern of behaviour, directed solely to serving the ends of unlimited quantitative expansion.

Physically, these unfortunates are already fulfilling requirements admirably, eating mini-steaks, living in mini-flats, wearing mini-clothes, working in mini-offices, and consuming the advertised brands of mini-cigarettes and medicines, and drugs. Mentally they are almost as satisfying, being quite happy with mini-art, mini-science, mini-music, or just noise. They are, in fact, caricatures of human beings, modelled along the lines determined by religious neurosis and the expansionists, in order ultimately to breed a humanity which, however far removed from the classical conceptions of the ideal of religious neurosis, is yet still unconsciously subservient to the expansionist theme, even if such a theme involves the ultimate disappearance of all mankind, dupers and duped alike.

And so the last events of this biological drama unfold themselves. Religious neurosis fights, back to the wall, to conserve its dominance. The financiers and economists rush frantically to patch up the crumbling walls of the Vital Square. But their activities are quite irrelevant to the inexorable imperatives of that square. Already ominous cracks are appearing in all monetary systems, East and West alike—an inevitable consequence of the fact that too many human beings are on the earth—and one that any schoolboy could appreciate.

The intelligent young have been momentarily appeased, but, as was forecast in "Towards Journey's End" (FREETHINKER, 23.8.68) governments are finding it impossible to meet their demands (again, a perfectly natural consequence of over-stress on the vital square) and it is inevitable that, little by little, the innocent, misled young will begin to really understand the hideous situation in which they are placed: that of having been unwarrantably born. What is going to happen then?

It is perhaps only so much wishful thinking, but we must hold fast to the hope that, out of this turmoil, something will arise to change the situation—perhaps a coalition by the élite of the mature and the élite of the young—to set mankind on a saner path and avert the last drama of Journey's End.

THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

MICHAEL GRAY

THE GREATEST PART of our lives is devoted to the pursuit of happiness, consciously or otherwise. Yet none of us is really aware of what would constitute true happiness for us, how we might best achieve it, or even if it is possible to achieve it. Many maintain that it is to be found in a particular creed or philosophy—religious philosophies offer anything from instant bliss to the promise of paradise in the life hereafter, while Humanism is claimed to be the best way to achieve happiness for mankind in the here and now. All political parties assure us that their policies alone can cure the world's ills.

Happiness is not to be found in any particular set of beliefs, objects or material conditions, and it is futile to attempt to relate it to any tangible circumstances. It has best been described as an attitude of mind, and as such its absence or presence is determined to a far greater extent by temperament than environment. It is therefore impossible to find happiness by a deliberate seeking after it for it is something that lies within oneself, not without. Generally speaking then, we are either born with a disposition to happiness or we are not. It is not something that can be achieved, although at times it may appear so because a man who is by nature of a contented temperament may be made miserable by some unfavourable circumstances. The removal of these obstacles, however, will immediately assure his return to happiness, whereas the man of a naturally melancholy disposition will remain unhappy whatever his circumstances. He may rationalise this discontent to himself by attributing it to some particular problem, but when this problem has been solved he will find other troubles to explain away the fact that he is still unhappy.

To tell a man he should be more contented with life than he is serves as much useful purpose as advising somebody suffering from an anxiety complex not to worry, and is about as logical. We must admit that there is no panacea for unhappiness; for many it is simply impossible to be happy. Naturally enough, if we hold a certain philosophy of life very strongly we will try to convince others of its merit—and since we instinctively appreciate that the only method to obtain converts is to appeal to self-interest (however much we might consciously deny it) we always attempt to persuade people that our way of life would make them happier. (Unhappiness is almost regarded as a crime—we boast of our joy, but are ashamed to admit to sadness.)

Is it any more ethical to embrace Humanism rather than supernaturalism if we do so simply in order to make ourselves happier? Is it not more moral to acknowledge Humanism as the best method of assuring *justice*, at least for our own species, and this is more often than not unrelated to happiness? Men are too selfish to settle for the equality of justice; they must have more than their neighbour—a better home, a bigger car, a higher wage. This degrading competition between men, this 'free enterprise', forms the firm foundation of capitalist society. It is ludicrous to pretend that Good will always triumph over Evil, that the 'goodies' are always happier than the 'baddies'. The just man cannot rest contented as long as injustice still exists in the world; the unjust man cares nothing for the rest of mankind as long as justice does not catch up with him. A concern for justice is therefore more likely to lead us away from happiness than towards it, and it may be maintained that there is some correlation between the

temperament that seeks justice and the melancholy disposition.

Humanists are often as guilty as religionists in appealing for support for their beliefs on the grounds of increasing personal happiness rather than of justice and truth, but the Humanist is at a disadvantage. However much he tries to rationalise it away Humanism incorporates some tragic admissions. Unless we are supreme optimists it is difficult to enthuse over the prospect of man having to solve the problems of war, hunger, over-population, etc., by his own unaided efforts. He has spent millions of years getting into this mess, what reason is there to expect a sudden miraculous transition in his nature? It is alleged that Humanism leads to despair by denying that there is any (inherent) purpose in life. This is certainly true inasmuch as it takes away the false hope of eternal salvation and exposes life for the futile process that it is. It makes very dubious the possibility of any after-life, for which many (including myself) hope. And it is certainly no comfort to me to know that the world will still be here when I am gone, that my 'good works' or memory will live on after me, or that the atoms of which my body is composed will be dispersed to serve some other 'useful' purpose and so achieve a kind of immortality. All these are attempts by the Humanist to reconcile man to the fact of personal death, and I for one will not be reconciled. I am angry that the pointlessness of life should be exceeded only by the futility of death.

Nevertheless, although these criticisms of the consequences of adopting the Humanistic position are valid, there is no need to attempt to disguise or hide them away. All that they prove is that the truth is unpleasant—and men prefer not to believe what they do not like—but it is none the less the truth. Like justice it has very little to do with happiness, but I believe it to be more important. This is something which every one must decide for himself.

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PLUS CA CHANGE . . . ?

KIT MOUAT

More extracts from Bradlaugh's National Reformer. These come from the editions of 1887.

Daybreak: "An earnest Freethinker writes to me to explain why many Freethinking parents do not withdraw their children from religious instruction. She urges that children suffer from being made conspicuous by withdrawal, and that it raises difficulties between them and their teachers. Her own eldest girl has taken a prize for knowledge of the Bible, a knowledge largely gained by perusal of the *National Reformer* and *Freethinker*. It is perfectly true that children withdrawn from religious instruction are likely to suffer small annoyances, but, personally, I do not think that this is reason sufficient for sending them to the religious lessons. A very little tact and encouragement on the part of the parents will make the children brave, and even proud of doing their duty. And this important result of general acquiescence in the inculcation of superstition ought to be remembered; that so long as a strong public feeling is not shown against it, so long will it be imposed. Every Freethinker who does not withdraw his child from religious instruction, directly supports Bible teaching and prolongs its retention in our national schools." Annie Besant (February 13).

Summary of News: ". . . For the second time within twelve months the borough of Croydon has been polled, with reference to the adoption of the Free Libraries Act. When the mayor announced that the adoption of the Act had been negatived by a majority of seventy-three, the announcement was received with uproarious cheers, those in favour of the adoption being hooted and groaned at . . ." (April 3).

Daybreak: "A very significant case of the mischief done by our 'Christian laws' has just occurred in Hackney. Mr R. W. Harding, an Atheist, desired to adopt a child, named Walter Martin, from the workhouse, and having obtained the consent of the child's relatives he applied in due form to the Board of Guardians." (The boy's father was himself an Atheist, or at least a Freethinker, and was in the habit of denominating himself as a Bradlaughite.) "Mr Harding wrote . . . 'I must decline myself to instruct the child in what I believe to be error, but I will pay for his instruction by any person you may name, and I will bind myself to take him once every Sunday (serious illness only excepted) either to Mr Henry Varley's chapel in this neighbourhood or to the chapel of Mr Whitehead in this street. Under these conditions I submit that the child would not be out of your jurisdiction. . . . Several guardians expressed themselves opposed to Mr Harding having the child, and it was decided by an almost unanimous vote not to entertain his application. . . . Little Walter Martin must remain a pauper child, when he might have been made happy in a comfortable home . . . bigotry and Christian law condemn him to remain in workhouse slavery . . ." Annie Besant (April 10).

Summary of News: ". . . The bands will commence playing in the London parks next Sunday, May 15th" (May 8).

". . . in 1877 there were about 80,000 persons confined in asylums."

"The London School Board has voted £50 of the ratepayers' money for a ridiculous Jubilee address to the Queen. . . . I pay an education rate, and pay it very will-

ingly; but I strongly object to being taxed for testimonials to a lady whose great merit is that she has lived on the taxes for an exceptionally long period." (Annie Besant (June 12).

Rough Notes by CB: "Those who write to me letters requiring answer by post must really enclose a stamped and directed envelope. I have no means save my earnings by pen and tongue to meet the very heavy tax which my large correspondence imposes." (August 14).

The Channel Tunnel: ". . . I am personally in favour of the Channel Tunnel because I believe it would promote peaceful relations between the peoples of France and England . . ." CB (August 28). ". . . if in time of 'profound peace' we are always to treat neighbouring nations as ever ready without provocation to suddenly assail our shores in order to rob and destroy, all intercourse between nations would be impossible and life would be unendurable . . ." (September 4).

Rough Notes: "It may interest the Sunday Society and National Sunday League to know that the extra cost of keeping open the British Museums on Sundays would not—in the opinion of those best qualified to know—exceed £1,000 extra per year." (September 4).

The Essence of Freethought: ". . . It would be absurd so to define Freethought as to exclude Voltaire, Paine, and Mazzini from the list of Freethinkers. . . . For ourselves, we may confess, that, if Freethought is to be the power for good in the world's future which we hope and believe it will be, it must mean some more than the sweeping aside of the dead leaves of the religions which are dead or dying. Let us breathe into it the breath of principle, and it will become a living faith." D. (September 18).

Report of the International Freethought Congress: Mrs H. Bradlaugh Bonner, who expressed her deep interest in questions of education, thought they were all agreed that the education of Freethinkers' children should be secular. She was sorry, however, that many did not secure this in the public schools to the extent to which the law made it possible. . . . On the question whether education should be hostile or neutral to religion, she was inclined to agree with neither side. She could not see how they could be indifferent; but except in the statement of facts which told against religion she thought there ought to be no express hostility. Her view was that all religions should be treated alike on the footing of comparative mythology; their growth being explained, and their origin shown to be in primeval ignorance; but this without any assault on contemporary religionists." (September 18).

Rough Notes: Mr C. E. Ford, a candidate for election to the Brighton School Board, says, in his published address: "I am in favour of science classes. But in the interests of truth and purity I am strongly opposed to religious instruction for the young, and should you honour me with your confidence, I will pledge myself to use every legitimate means in my power to exclude the Bible . . ." (September 25).

From the Edinburgh Evening News: "Sir, The burning of Newsome's Circus on Monday night is a visitation from God caused by the impious action of the proprietor in letting the building to that arch-infidel and blasphemer, Charles Bradlaugh, who was announced to speak there at

the end of this month. See Proverbs 6:12 and 19:29." (September 25).

Daybreak: "A terrible story of destitution comes from Sunderland. An inquest was held on the body of a little girl, aged three months. The evidence given before the coroner showed that the child had died 'from want of proper nourishment, owing to the poverty of its natural food'. The mother was starved and the baby at her breast died. . . . On how many unknown graves should be written the legend 'Murdered by Society'?" Annie Besant (October 9).

From Correspondence: "Being summoned to attend the City Coroner's Court on Thursday last as a juror on an inquest, on the jury being sworn, I felt it right to inform his honour that I was an Atheist, and understood that I was therefore *legally* incapable of taking any oath. Mr Langham at once said, 'We can do without you', and asked for my name which I gave. I at once stepped from the jury box, and sat down until the jury departed to view the body, when I quietly left the court." W. Hardaker (October 16).

Rough Notes: Re the new members of the NSS: ". . . I shall be specially glad to see female members enrolled." CB (October 23).

Mr Gladstone's Christianity: "It is not quite clear what Mr Gladstone meant to advise in regard to the Christian campaign against scepticism. . . . But one inference from his speech does seem unavoidable—that the closing up of the Christian ranks, so to speak, is to be with the view of stamping out the unbelief which he pronounces to be so calamitous. The implied methods, of course, must be understood to be peaceful and not violent: . . . the motive of the union is to be, not real brotherly feeling, but a common enmity to something outside.

Vaccination: Professor Huxley—who is rapidly becoming almost as calm and philosophical as Professor Tyndall—has been telling us how science, acting in the dark, through Jenner, accomplished wonderful things, how Pasteur is doing more for us on the same lines, and how the whole of this amazing progress of science is in danger of being stopped through misplaced consideration for the lower animals. . . ." D. (November 20).

Trafalgar Square: ". . . I consider the conduct of Sir Charles Warren and of the Home Secretary in prohibiting the meetings in the square utterly illegal, and I entreat such working men as trust me not to allow themselves to be made victims of ill-judged conflict against the armed force of the present Tory ministry. . . . To resist an illegal government by force is a most serious step. When men deem it right to measure themselves against a government, they must be prepared to replace it." CB (November 20).

Vaccination: ". . . Lay persons *must* decide when doctors disagree; and the only alternative to deciding on the merits, as they decide equally difficult and important cases of economics and politics, is the blindfold handing over of their votes to the majority of the profession. . . ." D. (November 27).

Persecutions of the Malthusians: ". . . The General Medical Council of the UK has, after hearing evidence for two days, and mature deliberation, on Friday last, decided to erase the name of Dr H. A. Allbutt, of Leeds, from the register, on account of the publication by him of a 6d pamphlet, the *Wife's Handbook*, which details some of the innocent checks to population made use of in France. . . .

For my part, sir I candidly say, I don't understand my medical brethren of the GMC. . . . Is it just possible that, as Mr J. S. Mill has it, they share the wish of the richer classes to which they belong, that the poor should not be too well off, in case they should become too independent? . . ." C. R. Drysdale, MD (December 4).

The Euthanasia of Theism: ". . . the religious situation in the near future will be made up of a relatively large body of entirely unintelligent belief and a relatively smaller section of logical unbelievers who have permanently dismissed the untenable notion of Deity. In short, the philosophy of educated men will be Atheism, tempered to some extent by hypocrisy, the moral product of centuries of faith." J. M. Robertson (December 25).

BOOK REVIEW

G. L. SIMONS

THE VIETNAM WAR AND INTERNATIONAL LAW, edited by Richard A. Falk (Oxford University Press, £7 2s 6d).

THIS is a good, big book. It is divided into four sections: A Framework for Legal Inquiry; Legal Perspectives; World Order Perspectives; and Documentary Appendices—and there are 633 pages in all.

The main purpose of the volume is to collect together legal papers examining from every conceivable angle the legitimacy of the American involvement in Vietnam. It is clear that the Vietnam debate is dividing American lawyers as it is dividing Americans in other fields, and this all-pervasive division is set out beautifully in these pages. The volume begins with contributions from Emmerich de Vattel (1758) and John Stuart Mill (1859); and it ends with the pertinent Vietnam documents—the Geneva Accords, the SEATO Treaty, the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, etc. The work also includes writings from U Thant and Dean Rusk: for the rest, and this is the meat, the lawyers have their say.

The merit of the volume is that all positions are represented in a comprehensive, scholarly and readable fashion. Professor John Norton Moore, for example, believes that American involvement is legitimate: Professor Quincy Wright disagrees. Clearly it would be futile to attempt a summary of over two dozen detailed and un-padded papers. I will only remark that *here is the Vietnam Issue*, its legal aspects specifically, and its history, morality and strategy incidentally. As a single volume on Vietnam it is the best I have come across. It is a platitude that every controversy has two sides: after reading them both carefully and at length my opinions are unchanged—and perhaps FREETHINKER readers will know what they are. The US case cannot stand.

I unreservedly recommend this book: at one go it conveys all the essentials of Vietnam. At the price it will not have many buyers, but why not get it into the local library!

LETTERS

Immigration

MY ATTENTION has been drawn to your issue dated December 28 when F. H. Snow claims that I "have now come very nearly round to Mr E. Powell's repatriation proposals". I have made this perfectly clear many times in the press and on the radio that I reject completely all Mr E. Powell's racist proposals, including his so-called "Ministry of Repatriation".

It is high time all of us realised that the undoubted problems caused by the Tory Governments' refusal to plan and prepare properly for immigration when they allowed it to begin in the early 1950's can only be resolved by tolerance and generosity. As Mr Heath rightly said character assassination of a minority is no solution and can lead to great misery for all our people, white and coloured. What is needed now is massive Government help to build the houses needed so that a voluntary dispersal programme can be carried out and a phasing of dependents to an annual figure that would be easily absorbed.

F. H. Snow's emotional nonsense is no solution at all.

RENEE SHORT, MP Wolverhampton North East.

Free Will

SINCE Michael Cregan, in his article "The New Moral Pessimism" (January 18) criticising my own "Is Man Moral?" appears to accept psycho-analytical ideas about the origin of morality I cannot understand why he finds my position of "egoistic hedonism" (his term) untenable. Freud called the initial principle of life the "pleasure principle", which it is the sole function of the id, the primary constituent of personality, to fulfil. Only when the internal processes of the id prove insufficient to discharge this primordial principle, because of conflict with external prohibitions, are the two other major systems of personality, the ego and the superego, formed. The basic aim of all three systems of personality is the satisfaction of personal desires and instincts and any benefit accruing thereby to any other person is merely incidental.

The example of the mother sacrificing herself for her child was cited as an illustration of that instinctive behaviour which is common throughout the animal world, in order to show that it was invalid for "free will" proponents to claim this as evidence of man's unique moral nature. I do not understand why Mr Cregan is so confused as to why such behaviour is not prevented by "the self-preservatory instinct". Opposing instinctual forces are continually in conflict and inevitably the stronger triumphs.

Mr Cregan's "rescued comrade" would of course be justified in refusing to show gratitude for his rescue. Where "free will" does not exist there is no place for credit or blame, but this will not stop people from acting as if they had "free will". His man who "envisages a better society altogether" wishes to make society conform to his own ideas and thus benefit himself, since it is he who decides what is "better". There is no conflict here between "egoistic hedonism" and "genuine moral innovation".

The theory of morality I put forward was merely an opinion based on experience and observation, not a dogmatic truth. I would like to be proved wrong, but Michael Cregan has certainly not provided any such proof.

MICHAEL GRAY.

Humanist Uniform?

DAVID REYNOLDS, in his article on the SHF conference, remarks that one would not expect humanists to pay attention to such frivolities as fashion, and then expounds on how humanists ought to create a fashion for the non-wearing of suits on Sunday. Believe it or not, the difference between humanists and others lies in their beliefs, not in the uniform they wear. Insofar as a humanist has views on clothes, he will consider dressing as a self-regarding action, harmless to others (except to David Reynolds) and therefore entirely a matter for his own taste.

JOSEPHINE BEATON *Chairman, SHF.*

Rationalism and Animal Slaughter

WHEN I joined the Humanist movement I was happy to hear that the obloquy attached by the Christians to the word 'pagan' was not only absent but that the word when used to compare the pagan beginnings of Humanism with Christianity was actually a term of praise. I was puzzled to see an article in the FREETHINKER by Otto Wolfgang entitled "Pagan Survival in Judaism" deal not with the essentially humanistic character of Judaism as compared with its debased Greek orientated deviation—Christianity—but was actually knocking the pagans in the good old Christian way. Perhaps, I thought, the change in party line would lead to a further, companion article, "Pagan Survival in Secularism".

When the discussion about ritual slaughter first began I was as ignorant of present methods as most people who have not witnessed such unpleasant procedures. The Act of 1934 was intended to stop the cruelty to animals involved in Christian slaughter which was up to that date indisputably far more cruel than the method in use by Jewish ritual slaughterers—a method largely unchanged for two and a half millenia. Your own contribution to the discussion was to quote with approval the abolitionist case alleging cruelty, which may well have been true—but the evidence offered, "veterinary surgeons and doctors say it is cruel", was not very good. Those against abortion law reform made similar claims. I wrote to you sending a letter from *The Times* giving the case of the Jewish religionists hoping you would comment.

The Christian case against ritual slaughter rests on alleged cruelty. Your contributor, Otto Wolfgang rests his case on its being ritual. I prefer the Christian case. Where on earth did I get the impression that secular humanists were not dogmatic but were prepared to consider each case on its merits?

In return for asking for an objective comment and discussion on this one topic I am attacked by Otto Wolfgang in your columns

(25.1.69). Herr Wolfgang attacks me for being Jewish ("characteristic") and the Jesus of the Christian Gospel is quoted in the correspondence columns of the FREETHINKER to support a personal attack by one secularist against another! Whoever suggested that secular humanists attacked tyranny and ignorance but not people? And *Jesus* wept?

GERALD SAMUEL.

Education and Democracy

YOUR EDITORIAL and Mr Hill's article (both 25.1.69) ably expose the ludicrous posture of the Secretary of State for Education.

I suggest a telegram in the following terms be sent to Mr Short: "Congratulations on your persistence in fostering the degradation of the education system for which you are responsible. Your persistence heightens the necessity for wholesale education reforms by the democrats".

I suggest Mr Tribe issue a challenge to Mr Short to debate publicly with him the whole question of religious education in schools. Such a challenge should test Mr Short's Christian valour. But no doubt Mr Short would be too busy with his good work to spare the time to emulate Daniel entering the lion's den.

MARTIN PAGE.

Sex and Freethought

I WISH to praise Maurice Hill's article 'Surveys on Religion in Schools' (25.1.69). It is admirable, in my opinion, and nails the official excuses for continuing Religious Instruction, to the wall convincingly.

This brief letter is unprejudicial to my published views on the use of the FREETHINKER as a general medium for the ventilation of sexual instructional propaganda, as Mr Hill so strongly desires, and my opposition to which he slates in intolerant language.

Thank you, Mr J. S. Wright, for your letter supporting mine on the same subject. Let the quite numerous journals obsessed with sex instruction, be the vehicles for Mr Hill's views on the matter in question, and let the FREETHINKER's scant pages be mainly employed in educating the abysmally ignorant general public in the host of intelligent reasons for rejecting belief in the sky god that still heavily clouds our horizon.

F. H. SNOW.

J. S. WRIGHT has my respect for being for fifty years a reader of the FREETHINKER. This comparative babe respectfully suggests that the FREETHINKER should not use outworn themes of freethought to attack outworn themes of religion—if freethinking wants to win the fight.

The recent Papal Encyclical and the continuing religious-moral basis for censorship in our society calls for vigorous freethought. How can these themes be attacked without propagating views on sex? Both J. S. Wright and F. H. Snow have yet to give readers a rational explanation for freethought reservations concerning the theme of sex and religious belief.

CHARLES BYASS.

I HEARTILY agree with J. S. Wright's letter in this week's FREETHINKER. I too, have been very disappointed for some considerable time now to find so little space devoted to matters for which the FREETHINKER was founded. I think that at least one article each week should be devoted to debunking religious beliefs, especially those held by Christians.

S. C. MERRIFIELD.

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