

# Freethinker

Registered at the GPO as a Newspaper

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

VOLUME 89, No. 16

Saturday, April 19, 1969

Sixpence Weekly

## BACKLASH OR PROGRESS

IN A SPEECH to the Annual Conference of the National Union of Teachers, Mr Edward Short said that all those concerned with education were facing what is probably the greatest crisis this century. Stressing that the forces of reaction were at work to an extent which could no longer be ignored, he made reference to the central manifestation of the educational backlash, the so-called black paper, *Fight for Education* whose authors include such pundits as Kingsley Amis, Enoch Powell and Lord Snow. Short suggested that the aims of these men and other reactionaries could only be countered with other ideas of progress, innovation, compassion, social purpose and professional freedom, and that the threat must be met by every teacher and by the great teachers' organisations, involving a massive effort to explain to the public the purposes and methods used in schools.

Some will consider this progressive outburst from the Secretary of State for Education to be solely a defence against the many critics of his narrow-minded policy on religion in schools. Others, a little less cynical, will see the speech merely as upholding the government's policy on comprehensive schools, which is in danger of being undermined by reaction. However, it would also be possible to construe Short as genuinely progressive, within the limitations imposed on a politician in power, but a progressive hog tied by his belief in Jesus Christ's supernatural powers. Whatever his motives his speech has to be welcomed and it is to be hoped that not only the teachers but also the government will reflect it in the coming education bill. The government must apply more pressure to the local authorities who are resisting the comprehensive system, and, as has already been mooted, review the entire examination complex.

Another enlightened suggestion as to the content of the government's next education bill came from Mr Christopher Price, Labour MP for Birmingham Perry Bar. Speaking to delegates from the National Union of Teachers' conference at a meeting of the Socialist Education Association, Mr Price urged that a charter of rights should be drawn up, which would protect junior teachers from dictatorial headmasters, give students and parents a right to take part in decision making and for the first time give parents the right of access to the teacher of their child. Laying stress on the democratic spirit of our age Mr Price pointed out that the legal status of the head teacher was one of the few remaining instances of absolute autocracy in modern institutions. Rather than this though, it is perhaps his emphasis of the need for student and parent participation in decision making that is more important and far reaching.

That school-children, as well as university students, have something to complain about is undeniable. That they have to worship a God to order each day is only a small slice of the stale cake, on which at last they are beginning to choke. Our children are being educated not to live but to fit into the machine which itself has evolved quite arbitrarily. Many children leave school having studied no history beyond 1850 but having spent a year studying the events which took place while the Stuart kings were on the throne. This, in order to pass 'A' level in order to go to university,

and for the same reasons one is liable to find teenage experts on Wordsworth who know next to nothing of Keats. More broadly there are immense numbers of school leavers who know all about Calculus, can translate Virgil and Voltaire, and can bowl a googly; yet the same people have scarcely heard of Tom Paine or Karl Marx, let alone Freud, Ramsay Macdonald or Che Guevara, nor do they know anything of Buddhism, anarchism or Keynesian economics, nor can they tell a carburettor from a fluid flywheel.

In short the present educational system as it is manifested in the classroom is a combination of what was taught in monasteries five hundred years ago and the result of the successful attempt in more modern times of those in authority to teach children only what they considered to be right. For this reason we have legions of apathetic pseudo Christians and unthinking capitalists turned out by a system little different from that in the 'communist' countries.

Most radicals over twenty-five years of age probably saw nothing wrong with their education until some time after it was over, by which time they were not in a position to take any action. Now, at last some of the brighter schoolchildren are beginning to realise that they are not being educated to think and act freely.

There are many reasons for this relatively sudden increased awareness in school-children. Their parents are generally a little better educated than their grandparents and some of these doubtless express dissatisfaction with the system. Television enables children to discover more things at an early age. For example many children will ask their parents what the Vietnam war is about and then perhaps wonder why they aren't told about it in school. The so-called underground papers, *International Times*, *Oz* and others, attract teenagers and these papers to their credit discuss many topics which should be covered in schools.

Thus with the recent formation of the Free Schools Campaign the revolt of the school-children is just beginning, and is to be welcomed for it seems little else will shake Short and his colleagues into a proper realisation of

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Published by G. W. Foote & Co. Ltd

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the ludicrousness of a system which will turn out an adult who knows when Henry VIII married his fourth wife but not when 'D' day took place.

Of course the biggest direct influence on the school-children has been the activities of their seniors, the university students, whose activities are inspired by the same system taken a stage further. Last week the National Union of Students took the significant step of electing as their new president Mr Jack Straw in place of Mr. Trevor Fisk, the president in office who was seeking re-election. Mr Straw is known to be more militant than Mr Fisk and said on being elected that the NUS would have to adopt a more trade union like attitude and that he saw a close analogy between industrial and student disputes; many union disputes were not over pay but over conditions and authority. He intends therefore to make the NUS "more active" and "to transform it into a real student movement". This is to be done by putting the Union in closer

## COMING EVENTS

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.

### INDOOR

Aberdeen Humanist Group: The Saltire Room, Provost Ross's House, Shiprow, Aberdeen: Friday, April 25, 7.30 p.m.: Annual General Meeting, followed by a Wine and Cheese Party.

Havering Humanist Society: Harold Wood Social Centre: Tuesday, April 22, 8 p.m.: "India", Vijay Sinha.

London Young Humanists: 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London, W8: Sunday, April 20, 7 p.m.: "Militant Humanism", David Tribe.

North Staffs Humanist Group: Cartwright House, Hanley (near Cinebowl): Friday, April 25, 7.45 p.m.: Meeting.

South Place Ethical Society: Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1: Sunday, April 20, 11 a.m.: "Tolstoy Today", Richard Clements, OBE. Admission free.

West Ham Secular Society: Wanstead and Woodford Community Centre: Thursday, April 24, 8 p.m.: Meeting.

touch with local colleges and be defining procedure for settling disputes.

Mr Straw's more positive approach may give some people visions of wholesale student disorder and violence. Let such people first ask themselves whether it is students who smash up railway trains and telephone kiosks and then be further comforted by Mr Straw's assurance that his union will only back disputes which are non-violent, in line with NUS policy and which have the support of most students in the college.

At the same time as the NUT and NUS conferences the Headmasters' Association was convening and there too distinct signs of progress were apparent. In his presidential address Mr S. C. Thompson gave strong support to the idea of school or college councils. He said that headmasters should be willing to listen to their students seriously and sympathetically, however extreme their views might seem. He went on to say that the era of the school cap and the gym slip had ended amid cries of "woe" from diehard staff, but there had been no disaster. And nor would there be a disaster if the rules applying to school uniform were relaxed as he said they certainly should be in the sixth form anyway. Pointing out that the implementation of the Latey report on the age of majority would mean that schools would contain pupils, with the right to marry, to own and dispose of property, enter binding contracts, and probably vote, Mr Thompson said that if heads were to retain their authority they must recognise the changing conditions outside schools.

Thus we have on the one hand an admission both on the part of the government and the headmasters that the educational system must progress further, and on the other a build-up of the activities of students and school-children. As yet little of a concrete nature has been heard from any body of university dons. However, let us hope that the overwhelming numbers of those concerned with education who realise the need for change, can both render impotent the harmful activities of the reactionaries and thrash out a system which produces aware individuals—and produces them so that they are as well equipped as possible to assess the world and to live in it. Only then will we have a society which practices, as well as preaches, freedom of thought.

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# MAHER-SHALAL-HASH-BAZ

PHYLLIS GRAHAM

NEEDLESS TO SAY, I do not attend church services. Unfortunately one cannot always avoid overhearing pious utterances, if one is so rash as to turn on the radio programme at the wrong time. My instinct is to switch off promptly, in order to prevent rising nausea from developing into something worse. However, I admit that I do occasionally eavesdrop for as long as I can hold out. Why? I suppose because the thing has a sort of pornographic fascination that appeals to the lower nature—like the peep-hole at 'What the butler saw' or an injudicious trip through the Old Testament. The amusement obtained is dubious, and quickly corroded by disgust.

The most sick-making ingredient, like the lushness of oil in a continental diet, is the unction used in addressing the deity. Never did man sound less like a man than when engaged in a feast of devotion. Do not ask me *what* he resembles: the sound has not remote counterpart in the animal kingdom. Or so I firmly believe: I have too much respect for the animals to think otherwise. This applies even to he-men of the first order embarked on man's premier flight to the Moon. A sad blot on a noble escutcheon, enough to make athletes weep. But only to be expected, I suppose, of a nation wherein—as Alistair Cooke proudly informs us—ninety-eight per cent of the people 'believe in God'.

To return to the BBC, whose statutory support of the Established Order is also beyond reproach. Here the pompous solemnity is naturally less spontaneous than the revivalist fervour of chanting *Genesis* out in the wilds of space. The *dénouement* of each peroration occurs with meticulous monotony, and somehow has the effect of anticlimax, falling as it does on unresponsive silence; for no one seems to have the courage to add 'Amen' or the fervour to shout 'Hallelujah'. Such ejaculations, customary throughout more primitive forms of worship, would sound offensively Non-U in the Higher Echelons. Thus, 'Through Jesus Christ Our Lord . . . etc. etc. trails off in minor key to the Holy Ghost, in a manner painfully suggestive of boredom—or, perhaps, a surfeit of devotional unction. (The metaphors are mixed, I know, but not more so than everyone concerned.)

Now supposing, instead of this rather feeble form of conclusion, they were to substitute the resounding syllables, 'For the sake of Maher-shalal-hash-baz . . .' The very thought starts tambourines clashing in the brain! The congregation, electrified, would leap to its feet and respond with loud cheers; drums and guitars would be in order; all the paraphernalia of pop would break out in a deafening roar of devotion. The sickly atmosphere of stunted piety would be swept into vigour by fresh winds straight from the very Source of all Truth: the inspired Word of God.

And why not? Inquire of the prophet Isaiah, who will cheerfully lend his affirmation to the procedure. The most cherished prophecy of the Redeemer, as we all know, came from his God-guided pen. What has perhaps become obscured is the fruit of that prophecy, provided with promptitude and divine approval by the holy prophet himself. On such a delicate point of exigesis I dare not employ my own untutored words. Let the great Voltaire speak for me, in the person of Zapata, the perplexed professorial inquirer into the mysteries of Holy Writ.

'It will be my duty to explain the great prophecy of Isaiah in regard to our Lord Jesus Christ. It is, as you know, in the seventh chapter. Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah, kinglet of Israel, were besieging Jerusalem. Ahaz, kinglet of Jerusalem, consults the prophet Isaiah as to the issue of the siege. Isaiah replies: "God shall give you a sign: a girl (or woman) shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the child shall be able to refuse the evil and choose the good the land shall be delivered of both the kings . . . and the Lord shall hiss for the fly that is in the uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria."

'Then, in the eighth chapter, the prophet, to ensure the fulfilment of the prophecy, lies with the prophetess. She bore a son, and the Lord said to Isaiah: "Call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz (Hasten-to-seize-the-spoil, or Run-quickly-to-the-booty). For before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father and my mother, the power of Damascus shall be overthrown."

The inquirer adds, with pathos, 'I cannot plainly interpret this prophecy without your assistance'.

But the Orthodox have no such need. The prophecy applies to Jesus Christ, with perfect lucidity and beyond question, even if there be some slight doubt as to whether a young woman is synonymous with a virgin. So that obviously Maher-shalal-hash-baz is the more appropriate name for the Promised One, seeing that God himself substituted it for his original idea of 'Immanuel'.

Well, there it is. I offer the suggestion free of charge and no copyright to any of our worshipping friends who care to make use of it. Personally, I think it would liven things up considerably, besides being far more accurate as to meaning. What could be more aptly descriptive of the Christian spirit than the splendid militancy of 'Hasten-to-seize-the-spoil', or 'Run-quickly-to-the-booty'?

In conclusion, may I express the hope that well wishers will see to it that my humble proposal is conveyed to Lord Hill and the Archbishop of Canterbury. Through the all-powerful media of this dual control system, results could be obtained which would electrify the world, and rocket the Glad Tidings in the jolliest way throughout the immensities beyond. For as the cohorts of the Lord ascend into space, on their exalted mission to the Solar System, our multi-communications may yet send forth a triumphal shout to the dust and gas of the whirling galaxies . . .

'In the name of Maher-shalal-hash baz . . .  
Run quickly to the booty!  
Hasten to seize the spoil!  
Amen! Hallelujah! CHEERS! . . .'

Unless the Russians get there first.

## TOWARDS HUMAN RIGHTS

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Annual report of the  
National Secular Society

# I BELIEVE . . .

G. L. SIMONS

I BELIEVE that all knowledge starts with sensory experience, that any credal framework that men construct is grounded in a direct awareness of the physical world. This applies to empiricist philosophies and to religious philosophies; it seems to me that any supposedly religious system can be accounted for in empirical terms. I believe that the concepts of mathematics and logic derive solely from sensory experience. Without sensory experience, such logical concepts as "or", "and", "not", "all", "some", etc., would have no meaning, and similarly with logical variables. At the same time I have to concede that any scientific philosophy rests on assumptions that are unprovable—such ideas as a past and the experience of other minds. The sensory impressions of any individual are consistent with a universe a microsecond old and with the sole existence of his own mind. Thus, with the best empiricists, I am driven to believe that complete epistemological scepticism is the only secure philosophical position. However, again with the best empiricists, I must also admit that such a position (solipsism) cannot be defended with sincerity—and so I am driven also to make the assumptions that beg the whole scientific structure: an external world exists; other beings perceive and feel roughly as I do; the world has a past and will have a future; the procedure of logical induction yields useful results, and helps us create a concept of truth. But if I am to make assumptions I will keep them to a minimum. I will assume temporal continuity, perception, induction, other minds, and little else. I will try to keep my assumptions simple and self-consistent. If anyone tries to introduce assumptions which I do not share I will ask for credentials.

My assumptions allow me to believe in the world of science and common sense. I believe that men exist and have feelings. I believe that the feelings they have are solely due to the process of evolution, and that this applies equally to instinctive feelings and the "higher" feelings of idealism, vision, and aesthetic appreciation. I believe that the feelings we have are due to our current bodily state, its chemistry and electrical characteristics. With drugs or surgery we can alter emotions at will.

An important type of feeling is moral feeling. From this feeling alone derives our concepts of right and wrong, justice, worth, etc. From this feeling alone derives our political commitment (if such exists). Our moral position and our political commitment is a reflection of our bodily state. It is impossible to argue a moral or political position unless the same moral feelings exist, or can be evoked through an emotional appeal, in both the disputants. When a man proclaims boldly about the injustice of society he is in fact describing himself. He is saying nothing about society that can be objectively verified, or even given meaning, without taking his own emotional state as a reference. And this emotional state is contingent, not necessary. I do not like this conclusion, but I see no way round it. Moral views are a matter of taste, just as is a liking for striptease, Schoenberg or fish and chips. But although I have to admit this, I still have views on justice and right and wrong.

I dislike hypocrisy and flippancy. I dislike insensitivity and the inability to translate statistics and seemingly remote facts into the relevant human terms. I detest the attitudes of people who get worked up about student demonstrations but care nothing about starving children

with bark-filled bellies or children with their skin and flesh burnt away by American napalm. Our moral indignation should be proportional to the suffering caused or allowed by human beings. Correct moral priorities consist in such an ordering of our emotional reactions. Few people see the need for such an ordering; fewer still manifest it in their outlook and behaviour. But I cannot condemn them; I cannot blame them for what they are. If my condemnation will change them towards what I hold is the correct priority sequence then I will condemn them. But I have no logical grounds for causing them to suffer, whatever they do, whether they torture and rape, whether they run a Nazi concentration camp or a napalm mission. My action against such men must be preventive, reformatory, deterrent. If I cannot achieve anything in such fields then I can achieve nothing that I am logically entitled to attempt.

I believe that the bulk of the human race is cruelly exploited. I believe that private vested interest motivates most national power groups, that to preserve a certain standard of living, privileged and well-placed individuals will readily work to preserve deficiency diseases in children, to guarantee premature death for adults through malnutrition. Compared with what the world could be if its resources were organised rationally and humanely it is a horrible, horrible place.

About human nature I am neither pessimist nor optimist. I find much in human nature unpleasant, but to me human nature is simply human potential realised in a particularly social framework. If the framework is just and sensible then people will be co-operative, sensitive, industrious and responsible; if the framework is irrational and unjust then people will be avaricious, greedy, ruthless, selfish and insensitive. The task is to break out of the circle—either to change human aspirations and consciousness so that a different social framework is demanded, or to shatter the existing framework and rebuild another to generate a civilised human nature.

The most important things about human beings are that they have feelings and intelligence. Their world *can* be remade so that basic wants are met for all, and so that the finer elements in man's intellect can be allowed to flower. But I cannot believe that such a transformation is in fact likely to take place. About the future of mankind I am a pessimist, and about my own future I am a pessimist also. I see my life slipping away. There are experiences I have not had, people I have not met, books I have not read, places I have not visited. I have a tremendous appetite for immortality, but of course to believe in it would be absurd. Many freethinkers adjust well to the prospect of death. I do not. I bitterly resent the fact that in a relatively short time I will be extinct. I will have no feelings, no experiences; I will no longer be. But how ridiculous it would be to erect a metaphysics on my pessimism. Set next to our ideals and hopes the world is a cruel place—but it is the only one there is.

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## THE FINAL CRUSADE

F. H. SNOW

"We live a thousand deaths before we die."

—Logan.

THIS METAPHORICAL TRUTH will be endorsed by those who have fought in the savage conflict which the Paris peace talks are aimed at ending, after fifteen of the bloodiest years in history. How many of its active participants finished as idiots; how many were shot for cowardice in face of the enemy, we shall not be told. We are informed only of the heroes, however reluctant, of the American and allied forces, in the murderous Vietnam strife.

The blame for its beginning and continuance—on whom does it rest? I am well aware of the cultivated opinion of the *soi-disant* Free World—not nearly so cultivated or positive today—and I am well aware of the inflexible opinion of the North Vietnamese. But we should concern ourselves, as Freethinkers, mainly with fact, in trying to arrive at a fair judgment of the war guilt of the belligerents.

Who was it that put the Roman Catholic Diem in the position of ruler of the vastly preponderating Buddhist population of South Vietnam? Certainly not the North Vietnamese or Vietcong. Which conquistadoring force, having violated its undertaking to quit the Siam Peninsula, abetted Diem in his persecution of his identifiably communist countrymen, and in prevention of the free elections provided for by the Geneva Agreement of 1954? It did not operate from Hanoi. Who installed Ky who claims Adolf Hitler as his *sans reproche* hero, as South Vietnam's president, well aware of his insatiable cruelty and determination to wipe out all its non-Catholic institutions—Ho Chi Minh?

God's sanction of a great Catholic crusade, under the guise of a liberating campaign, did not avail to save that sainted advocate of religious intolerance, Cardinal Spellman—the same that counselled total war on the bastion of Vietnamese communism—for a triumphal conclusion, nor even the frustrating finale that the Paris Peace Conference hopefully visualises, now that it has got a bargaining table of accommodating shape. *O tempora! O mores!*

What part has religion played in the crimson drama, unrelieved by any interval, which has held the South East Asian stage since 1964? That it has been an equally dynamic driving force to the paranoia that colours the American view of Socialism and Sovietism is certain. The Church of Rome has been solidly behind the United States

in their stubbornly sustained effort to destroy the ideological kinsmen of Mao Tse Tung, and behind the only recently abated bombings of towns, with their awful toll in suffering and death despite His Holiness the Pope's encyclicals breathing benevolent sentiments of peace and goodwill. Very feasibly, now that the heads of the Hanoi government are still 'bloody but unbowed', he desires a compromise solution of the campaign desperately carried on at a much greater cost in American lives than has been admitted, and immense damage to Uncle Sam's military and moral prestige.

Let us not exculpate the other religious denominations from complicity in the projected crushing of communism's horrid head in Vietnam. Its threat to belief in the extraordinary deity that apparently hadn't noticed that there was war on between His children and the Devil's disciples, worried Anglicans, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Wesleyans, Congregationalists, Christian Scientists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons and the rest, though perhaps not more than its threat to their capital and incomes, which their ignoring, save in verbal adulation, of the precept of their lowly Christ, allowed them to muster, even whilst poverty afflicted a tremendous number of their brothers in Jesus.

Such, then, was the case in 1964, and such is the case in 1969. As worship of God and the worship of Moloch continue to influence motives and machinations, so long will the cauldron of conflicting conditions bubble and boil, and the Red Lion and the snow-white—I had almost said lamb, but a far more ferocious animal figures in the situation—will refuse to lie down together. At present they are facing each other guardedly across the conference table, whilst the stutter of greatly lessened fusillades sounds in the forests and across the rice-fields of far-off Vietnam.

At least the controllers of the warring parties have come to recognise the insanity of maintaining this physical and psychological murder, the upshot of which could well be the unleashing of the major nuclear dogs of destruction, and the reducing of the remnant of humanity to the condition of animals.

Secularists must unite to show the world that the swift education of its multi-hued peoples as to the fallacy of God and gods is the pre-requisite for the emergence of science as the only deity worthy of worship, and the supreme factor in the harmonious co-existence of races and nations.

## A SEXUALLY EMANCIPATED SOCIETY?

MICHAEL CREGAN

DISCUSSIONS take place on television and radio; journals and magazines publish unconventional views; students study it, writers dissect it, sociologists investigate it. Sex, after long imprisonment behind locked doors and pursed lips, is now recognised as a valuable and shameless human activity. "Repression" is a thing of the past. In sex, at least, we have an open society.

Or so we are told. But are we really as "emancipated" as we think, and as the press likes to tell us? Certainly there has been a distinct change in sexual habits, but it is not to this that I refer when I use the term "open society". It is easy to confuse sexual *mores* with attitudes, and to say that the more permissive a society, the more honest its

attitudes; but I would make an immediate distinction between the two, and argue that one can envisage a society where the most rigorously Catholic ethics are adhered to, and yet where sex, its morality, psychology and social importance are freely discussed without embarrassed whispers. It is the latter which interests me here; and incidence is no guide to attitude.

C. S. Lewis makes an interesting comparison between the appetites of sex and hunger. "Now suppose", he asks, "you came to a country where you could fill a theatre by simply bringing a covered plate on to the stage and then slowly lifting the cover so as to let everyone see, just before

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the lights went out, that it contained a mutton chop or a bit of bacon, would you not think that in that country something had gone wrong with the appetite for food?" Now, it may be misleading to press this analogy too far, but I consider that in this instance it is warranted. The centre of London is littered with strip joints where the sexual appetite is used in a certain way; but is this use any healthier than the use to which the eating appetite would be put by the corresponding "food joint"?

In fact, much of our society's "frankness" about sex is nothing but an adolescent desire for titillation in any form which is available. Certainly one can conduct a serious investigation into the subject without incurring any stigma: but given the choice between, say, Alex Comfort's *Sex in Society*, and a popular press "resumé" of the book, complete with banner headlines, pointed sub-headings, and large portrait of an attractive woman, with a caption

nothing to do with the book, which would the vast majority of people prefer to read?

And again, as a measure of the status which sex holds in our society, it is considered fair game to use it to sell anything from cigarettes to soap.

Examples of the cynical abuse of sexuality could be enumerated *ad nauseam*; the newspaper which finds certain activities "disgusting" and feels obliged to print every lurid detail which they can dig up, with the usual erotic photograph. The "adult" and "unashamed" novel on some sexual topic which turns out to be nothing but a conducted tour around pornographic techniques. And so on. Anyone who cares to look around him cannot but form the opinion that in our society, sex is debased, exploited and degraded. Yet we go on hearing rapturous eulogies about our new honesty about it. The term "sexual emancipation", applied to our society, has become nothing but a dishonest euphemism.

## LONDON FESTIVAL OF FORBIDDEN FILMS

BOB CREW

THE ANOMALY between the complete uncensored stage theatre which has recently come into existence in Britain and the keenly censored film theatre which is still a tiresome characteristic of our public life, is unworthy of the mature and sophisticated society of the type to which the efforts of minority groups, such as the New Cinema Club, are a contributory factor. There is much to suggest that London audiences are currently among the biggest and most appreciative in the world and it is particularly impertinent, therefore, that they should be denied some of the most interesting and exciting new work in world cinema, because of the absurd and juvenile activities of a handful of censors, who appear to have more fire in their bellies than grey matter in their heads.

In the course of a year, there are many films which never reach London audiences, either because they cannot get past the censors, or because they cannot get a West End opening due to the enormous pressure of the more popular and widely-publicised films. It is the object of the very good theatre clubs which exist in London today to provide the means with which to break through the idiotic and bigoted hypocrisy which discriminates and legislates against the censored film without having to provide any evidence whatsoever. It would be interesting indeed if one of the more enterprising of the censored film producers sued the censors for defamation, or whatever.

By far the most striking and promising development in club theatre to date is the New Cinema Club's Festival of Forbidden Films which is in London this month. This festival is historic in terms of world cinema in that it is the first of its kind anywhere in the world and, as such, reflects well the progressive nature of the London art world. It is also ironic that such a tribute to the advancement of world cinema should be held in just about the only place in the world where the establishment seeks to deter that advancement; which simply proves that British film censorship is fatuous and failing, while film art in London is alive and well despite those who would arrest its development.

The Festival, which will become a permanent fixture in the London arts scene, will introduce premieres of banned films, cut-films and complete and unabridged versions of films otherwise delayed by the arbitrary demands of the censors. Additionally, it will endeavour to bring film-makers face to face with those people whose decision it is that the films cannot be shown. Debates are promised, the first of which is between the maker of the festival's first film, *The Trip*, a psychiatrist who recommended that the film should be banned in its uncensored form. This aspect of the festival is, of course, as important as any other, for it will provide a platform on which to discredit the humbug of which the censored film is victim and to attract publicity to the makers and those who wish to wield the kind of influence necessary to remove the censorship laws.

All films will be shown on Friday evenings—Forbidden Fridays no less!—and the New Cinema Club says that it will continue the festival "until the film censorship goes the same way as the theatre censorship" (i.e. *out of existence*). The films will be shown at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (Nash House, The Mall) and the Hanover Grand (Hanover Street, near Oxford Circus).

At a recent illustrated talk given at the Royal Festival Hall, entitled "Censored and Why", the secretary of the British Board of Film Censors, John Trevelyan, put the case for censorship. The New Cinema Club's reply and challenge to the Board, as demonstrated by the festival, is "Uncensored—And Why Not?"

Quite apart from the artistic merits of the Festival, it is well justified in terms of asserting socially democratic principles in the examples it provides of what the British Board of Film Censors refuses to let the public see.

The first three films to be shown are *The Trip*, *Trans-Europe Express* and *The Wild Angels*. These films are concerned respectively with the hallucinatory world of LSD, with sexual sadism, and with young people who create an orgy out of the burial of a friend. They have been described by critics as good film art whilst the following statements are typical of the Board of Censors' reasoning for its refusal to grant certificates to the films. "The Board was concerned about the portrayal of sexual sadism" and "the film might be harmful to young people".

Two of the three films in the festival (*The Trip* and *The Wild Angels*) are by Roger Corman who says "The public needs jolting occasionally", whilst the remaining film (*Trans-Europe Express*) is by Alan Robbe-Grillet who has commented "Art consists precisely of going too far".

### Other Films Outside The Festival

Other films outside the Forbidden Festival, which are currently being shown by the New Cinema Club, include *No Laughing Matter* and *Never Strike a Woman—Even with a Flower* (Czechoslovakia), *La Collectionneuse* (France), *Last Summer Wont Happen* and *Walkover* (Poland), *An Evening with Steve Dwoskin* (USA), *The Theatre of Mr and Mrs Kabal* and *Weekend* (France), *Warrendale* (Canada), *Man is Not a Bird* (Yugoslavia), *Echoes of Silence*, *Scorpio Rising/Relativity* and *The Chelsea Birds* (USA). Also, in April, May and June, one "all-night orgy of new underground movies" will be shown per month on Friday nights and Saturday mornings.

## BOOK REVIEW

MARTIN PAGE

THE ENIGMA OF ENOCH POWELL: V. S. Anand and F. A. Ridley (Medusa Press, 356, Northampton Buildings, London, EC1: 4s).

THIS ESSAY in political realism is dedicated to the memory of Martin Luther King, "the prophet and martyr of racial integration", a Spartacus of our own time. Our two authors point out that Enoch Powell enjoys the unenviable distinction of having given his name to racialism and of having made the racial question a powerful and abiding factor in British domestic politics. Even while he claims to be rational, Powell the professional politician renounces the fundamental belief in reason expounded by those very writers whom Powell the classical scholar is so well qualified to appreciate. In his now notorious Birmingham speech he made a calculated appeal to the basest emotions and prejudices of his listeners; and his speech was clearly designed to further his progress towards the leadership of the Tory Party and, in due course, of the nation.

Enoch Powell is in fact another potential Hitler, and "in 1928, on the eve of the world-wide economic crisis that was ultimately to provide him with a viable road to power, Hitler was no more than a plebian adventurer and his prospects of ever ruling Germany more remote by far than Powell's chances today". Mr Powell has not (yet) put forward proposals so drastic as Hitler's "final solution"—but neither did Hitler in his early phase. Just as Hitler climbed to power largely on the backs of the working-class unemployed, so massive support in Britain for a Powellite "socialism of fools" has come from dockers and bumarees. In an economically vulnerable Britain, where the coloured man is commonly regarded as a threat to the white man's job, Mr Powell has successfully fed on the deep-rooted disillusionment with "four years' hard Labour" and placed himself at the head of the rising tide of British nationalism, which may or may not become channelled through the Tory Party. Doubtless as a result of Britain's precarious post-imperialist situation, the two major parties are engulfed in a process of transition, if not of active disintegration, and it is precisely in such an environment that Enoch Powell's chances of gaining power are heightened, not diminished. He aims, no doubt, to revitalise a bewildered Tory Party on the basis of "English nationalism, cemented by racial and colour prejudice" so that class and privilege are replaced by colour and race as the major dialectical forces in British politics. His ultimate objective is "wholesale and unrestricted reaction" under the cover of Tory democracy.

According to Mr Powell, Britain will soon cease to be a white man's country (rather as, according to Mr Short, Britain will soon cease to be a Christian country): "By a kind of law of geometrical progression, the odd million coloured immigrants in Britain will increase and multiply like a veritable Cadmus crop of subterranean warriors, ultimately taking over the country at some undefined but not very remote date". But, our authors add, "Britain has always been and will, presumably, continue to remain a white man's country". This no more excludes the continued presence of coloured minorities in Britain, *on terms of personal equality* with the white majority, than the recognition that the African continent is predominantly black man's country excludes the viability of white minorities there. On the basis of his own logic, Mr Powell should dissociate himself from the illegal Smith régime and declare his solidarity with the black majority in Rhodesia. But does he? Mr Powell, who like Mr Muggeridge, has such a flair for working out in public the promptings of his Christian conscience, appears to believe that the Pauline maxim "we are members one of another" is inapplicable to the African continent.

The consequences of Mr Powell's studiously emotive outbursts on race are perhaps incalculable. He may be at least partly responsible for a future upsurge of Black Power in Britain, by the same process of dialectic, he may also be instrumental in the revitalisation of the British Left. His discredited *laissez-faire* concept of economics is a threat to the rational extension of the Welfare State—yet, as Minister of Health, he was responsible for a growing volume (in absolute terms) of governmental expenditure.

If Enoch Powell is a kind of latter-day Burke, Thomas Paine has had worthy heirs in F. A. Ridley and V. S. Anand; and a reading of their brilliant pamphlet prompts numerous thoughts. How far did Mr Powell, in his own words, "stir up trouble and inflame feelings" on the question of coloured immigration before the Tory administration, of which he was a member, imposed limits (in 1962) on the rights of Commonwealth citizens to enter this country? Inside and outside Parliament, before and after the passing of the Commonwealth Immigration Bill in 1968, Mr Powell indicated his support of policies that involved a deliberate breach of faith, a deliberate breach of obligations, by Britain in

its relations with Commonwealth citizens. At Birmingham he talked of "generous grants and assistance" to encourage re-migration, and later he proposed the creation of a Ministry of Repatriation to deal with this: but where is the money coming from? Higher taxation, for example, on cars? Or massive rise in National Health Service prescription charges? Could an economically vulnerable Britain, with Mr Powell in the saddle, afford to be so generous towards Commonwealth immigrants? It would be cheaper to incinerate them. Besides, how does Mr Powell know that large numbers of coloured emigrants from Britain would be accepted by their countries of origin? Moreover, he has made no detailed proposals regarding the terms and conditions under which the remaining immigrant population are to live in this country; and it is more than likely that the residual immigrants will be more insecure and more victimised after their fellows have voluntarily returned. His proposals thus open up the possibility of compulsory repatriation.

Mr Powell seems impervious to the contribution, potential or actual, of Commonwealth immigrants in rejuvenating and enriching an existing culture and in supplying a welcome labour-force of muscles and brains, rather like the Flemings, French Huguenots, and Jews before them. Indeed, who are the "English" of Powell's Burkean rhetoric—the Celts perhaps, or the Angles, the Jutes, the Normans, conquerors and refugees from every land under the sun? His Birmingham speech was condemned by the leader of his own party as "racialist in tone and liable to exacerbate racial tensions". The racial "problem" is supposed to be particularly acute in Wolverhampton and yet the only practical instance of the problem in that locality that Mr Powell could cite in his speech was a letter from a lady in Northumberland purporting to describe what was happening to another lady in Wolverhampton!

Indeed, Enoch Powell's Birmingham speech was riddled with non-sequiturs, ambiguities and absurdities. His estimates of the likely population growth of the "alien element", which at present constitutes a small minority, have been questioned, to say the least. Mr Powell was either naive or disingenuous when, in the following remarks, he implied that the indigenous white majority were not—or were not likely to be—discriminatory towards the coloured minority: "The discrimination and the deprivation, the sense of alarm and of resentment, lies not with the immigrant population but with those among whom they have come and are still coming". For Powell to describe the Race Relations Bill as "a one-way privilege . . . a law which is not intended to protect them or redress their grievances" [i.e. of the white majority] was a gross distortion on a par with the scrupulous concern for truth shown by totalitarian régimes. Some would say of Enoch Powell, who was profoundly influenced by his experience of the British raj, what Stanley Baldwin (prompted by his cousin Rudyard Kipling) said of the press-baron Lord Rothermere: that he has aimed at "power without responsibility—the prerogative of the man who, faced with a great social experiment, talks of excreta, "grinning piccaninnies", "strangers in our midst" and "the Tiber foaming with much blood", must be emphatically repudiated by all those who strive towards a world where the martyrdom of man and the alienation of man from man have ceased to haunt the consciousness of the only race that matters—the human race.

## LETTERS

## China

I WISH to congratulate Mr G. L. Simons on his articles on China, her ideology and cultural revolution. They appear to me to present a correct picture, and should act as a corrective to the very uninformed views of so many people. As with the USSR, China and her aspirations are greatly misunderstood. On this subject I can agree with Mr Simons, despite his disagreement with me on the racialist question, and his strong terms for what he believes to be my inhumanitarian attitude towards immigrants. He was never more wrong than in that. I am glad that he sees as I do about Russia and China, and hope that he will make more contributions in the same able way.

F. H. SNOW.

## Trading Stamps

WITH THE second collection of trading stamps, it is proposed to get light-weight garden chairs for the Humanist Housing Association—to replace some of those much used at Burnet House. Unwanted trading stamps will continue to be collected. Please send to:—

MARGARET SIDDALL, 2 Hutchings Road, Knotty Green, Beaconsfield, Bucks.

## LETTERS (Continued)

## Paisley

ALL HAIL Paisley, bastion of freedom! After Joe Naseby's letter of April 5 in support of this much misunderstood gentlemen, are freethinkers supposed to rush out to buy "King Billy" flags and enroll in the Orange order? Are we supposed to welcome religious discrimination when it is exercised *against* Catholics, and object to it when it is exercised *by* them?

Mr Naseby mentions the sympathy for Mussolini in Eire. Fair enough; this is a very black mark against the republic. But how much of that sympathy was pro-fascist, and how much anti-British? One would be hard put to it to defend the record of imperial rule in Ireland; apart from the privileged protestant-commercial elite of the North-East, the Irish were simply dispossessed. "John Bull's other island" was very much John Bull's. And eventual independence brought with it partition, thanks to the intrigues of the Ulster "loyalist"-Tory Party alliance. "England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity" had long been a watchword of the separatists; and Britain's defeat would have been seen as the defeat of an occupying power. In view of the Nazi pastimes in Europe, this attitude was of course callously parochial, and I am not defending it. But it should be remembered in assessing Eire's attitude to the war.

In this connection Mr Naseby cites the exemption of Ulster from conscription, "to please the Roman Catholics". Is he unaware that conscription was also resisted in the first war, and the threat of it was one of the main reasons for the rise of Sinn Fein?

The Ulster protestants have a right to be bigoted, so Mr Naseby tells us, because they don't wish to be ruled by a foreign Pope, an Italian. The original unionists were not so sensitive about the nationality of their rulers when those rulers were English.

Irish independence is written off as a change of rule from Westminster to Rome. But what of the elements of self-determination and republicanism? The socialist leader Connolly, who took part in the 1916 rising, declared: "We are republicans because we are socialists". (And for those who need the sanction of a holy prophet, it is worth pointing out that Lenin decried those who dismissed the rising as an aberration, of no relevance to the struggle for socialism.)

Mr Paisley and his fan club are quite happy at the use of police brutality to quell demands for civil rights, at the denial of jobs and houses to citizens solely because of their religion, and at the existence of a Special Powers Act of which even a South African Minister of Justice could declare himself envious. Perhaps Mr Naseby would be happy to stand under a Union Jack singing "God save the Queen" in the company of these people; for my part I would not.

Don't be "soft" with Catholics, Mr Naseby advises; that is "synonymous with suicide". Well then; how are we to preserve ourselves? Repeal of the Catholic Emancipation Act? Injections of Mr Naseby's serum of bigoted Jews, protestants, freethinkers (!) and Buddhists? Religious apartheid? Or does Mr Naseby have something a little more ambitious in mind?

MICHAEL CREGAN.

## Sex education

ISOBEL GRAHAME is quite justified in finding present sex education so shocking. No wonder many children are confused and frightened by what their teachers tell them about sex—it is all about rabbits and armies of spermatozoa battling up the uterine canal, lashing their tails in a race to be first to puncture the ovum . . .

But adolescents are not particularly interested in the "mystery" of impregnation—they are vitally interested in the "mystery" of their own sexual feelings. Our teachers, however, are not content with viewing the prime purpose of sex as procreation with pleasure coming a poor second—they seek to exclude pleasure altogether.

When teachers are not talking about sexual intercourse as though it were some kind of operation—best performed under antiseptic conditions—they talk to youngsters about their sexual "responsibilities", and forget that it is the inadequate nature of sex education that is responsible for adolescents being driven, through fear and ignorance, to furtive and usually unpleasurable, sexual intercourse in cars, behind fences and in derelict buildings.

Wilhelm Reich in *The Sexual Revolution* characterised sex education in this way: "It is always too late and it always evades the essential point, sexual *pleasure*".

Why is it that in discussing sexual matters with adolescents any mention of pleasure is excluded? The answer is that if as part of a full and honest sex education, we were to admit to adolescents that the primary purpose of sex is pleasure, we would no longer be able to insist that they refrain from intercourse.

We must reform our sex education, which at the moment is scandalously misleading. We must give children all the information and help they need to form satisfactory relationships in adolescence, and this includes freedom to experiment.

The time has come to get rid of those old arguments against intercourse—risk of pregnancy and VD. We must, for example, give education in contraception. But it is not enough to say what the best methods of contraception are; we must ensure that these methods are available to adolescents, and we must help them if one of these methods should fail.

Moralists claim that to give sexual freedom to adolescents would result in a great increase in the number of teenagers suffering from VD. In fact the exact opposite is true. Sexual freedom in the early years would tend to foster the establishment of deep and lasting relationships, and would largely eliminate recourse to prostitutes, not only in adolescence but in later life too.

It has been argued that boys and girls are physiologically ready for sex long before they are emotionally mature enough, and that copulation before this 'emotional maturation' will result in psychological damage. This assertion is not supported by any evidence from any one of the many societies with no major restrictions (excluding incest regulations) on adolescent sexual activity. Indeed, it is probable that the emotional immaturity of some of our young people is the direct result of that very deprivation of information and experience which Isobel Grahame is now recommending.

MICHAEL LLOYD-JONES.

## The Church's Crucifixion

THE POPE lashed out against the defection and scandal of certain priests and religious people who today crucify the church.

But, if he would look up the life-history of his own namesake, Pope Paul III (1534-49), he would find that the latter had a mistress who bore him four children (see *The Popes* by Edward John, latest edition published by Burns and Oates). In those days, there was no pill! Incidentally, that was the Pope who excommunicated King Henry VIII in 1536. It looks uncommonly like the pot calling the kettle black.

GEORGE R. GOODMAN.

## No Civic Recognition

A LETTER by Vera Sheppard, published in your recent issue, has just come to my notice.

In it she refers to the revolting amusement of making one terrified animal run for its life before a pack of hounds. Like this correspondent, I always deplore the presence of any civic dignitary condoning this 'sport' by attending Meets.

I was very glad to learn that at least one such person—Alderman Kenneth Morrison, the Mayor of Tunbridge Wells—declined an invitation to offer the traditional stirrup cup to huntsmen of the Eridge Foxhounds on Boxing Day.

Congratulations to this good gentleman! I only hope that other Mayors will take note and follow his excellent example.

KATHLEEN GRAHAM.

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