

Freethinker

Registered at the GPO as a Newspaper

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

VOLUME 89, No. 25

Saturday, June 21, 1969

Sixpence Weekly

POWELLMANIA

ENOCH POWELL is currently receiving more attention than any other political figure—attention which ranges from near hero-worship to deep-seated hatred and fear. One is loath to accord him any more publicity, but unfortunately it would be patently unrealistic to ignore his existence. Powell's latest speech at Wolverhampton was greeted by Canon Collins, the President of the Martin Luther King Foundation in Britain, with the words: "It is to be hoped that everyone in this country with any shred of human decency will, by every possible means, publicly repudiate Mr Powell's views". A number of other prominent people issued statements which revealed a similar degree of alarm. Christopher Bland, Chairman of the Conservative Party's Bow Group called for Powell's resignation from the party. A group of Labour MPs, led by William Hamling, urged Mr Heath to withdraw the party whip from the member for Wolverhampton South West. All this is, of course, perfectly laudable and it is impossible to fault the motives or the logic of those who instantly issued statements repudiating Powell's latest speech.

Despite this, it is certain that we are all playing the game by Powell's rules. The obloquy which is showered upon him comes, of course, as no surprise and in fact enables him to rise to Ciceronian heights as he harangues his open-mouthed supporters with such phrases as: "Like Themistocles, I say to my colleagues and my countrymen, 'Strike me if you must, but hear me' ". That he can say this sort of thing without blushing is a testimony not to the thickness of his skin, but to his political brain, which has planned every move minutely in what is now fast becoming a campaign "fraught" to use Mr Powell's own words "with danger and disaster". Powell clearly anticipates an increase in the emotiveness and force of the reaction against him, and it quite ready to use the mud slung at him to build more firmly the reputation he is carefully constructing for himself, as a man who is not afraid to say what he thinks—a man who is prepared to suffer, both physically and mentally, in order to further the well-being of his fellow white Britains. In short the more foaming enlightened mouths his speeches engender, the brighter shines Powell's halo and the more heroic appears his stage-managed martyrdom.

Perhaps therefore we should all remain silent. But history has shown that to deliberately ignore the machinations of such men does nothing to halt their progress either. The Labour party pursued a policy of sightlessness in the thirties hoping thus to dampen the enthusiasm with which Sir Oswald Mosley was received. The results of this policy speak for themselves.

Thus Powell presents a dilemma. Both the urgency of the need for a solution and the solution itself are to be found in the fact that the majority of the white population of Britain is potentially susceptible to the entreaties of Mr Powell. Shrewdly Powell is not attempting to woo them with reason, but with delicately calculated appeals to their hearts. Those who saw the televised clips from his most recent speech will recall the expressions on the faces of those women with hats and fly-away spectacles—not thoughtful expressions, but expressions of adulation and admiration, of the kind more often found on the faces of teen-age girls at pop concerts. Powell's progress cannot be halted by playing the same game. Not Canon Collins, nor Tony Smythe, nor Trevor Huddleston, nor least of all



Edward Heath, can hope to create the same kind of hysteria, however much impassioned rhetoric they use to put across the *facts* which refute Powell's beliefs.

On the contrary the susceptibilities of the British public will only be steered away from the shining knight in white armour, by a series of cool, straightforward, reasoned dis-proofs of every untruth and loaded statement that he makes. Such a policy would deny Powell the fuel on which to set his martyr's stake, and would at the same time redress the injustices, which his speeches impose on the minds of the British public. Facts and facts only are all that are necessary to return men's heads to their rightful supremacy over their hearts. Facts like: there is no reason why coloured immigrants should be treated differently from white ones; Powell's assertion that half of the coloured people in this country would like to be sent back to their countries of origin is based on one survey conducted by the BBC; if coloured people are to be actively encouraged to leave the British Isles, the same logic would suggest that white people should be actively encouraged to leave Rhodesia, South Africa, India and every

(Continued overleaf)

Freethinker

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

Editor: David Reynolds

The views expressed by the contributors to FREETHINKER are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Board.

(Continued from previous page)

country where coloured skin is the ethnic norm; it was the policy of the Tory government in the 1950s to encourage state and private industry to recruit coloured labour from the West Indies; the racial hostility in the USA is not caused by the volume of coloured people there, but by the lack of privileges accorded them by the white Americans throughout history; large sectors of the British economy, particularly transport and the National Health Service, are utterly dependent on coloured workers for their continuation; taking into account the proportion of coloured women who are of child-bearing age, coloured people do not breed any more prolifically than white people—whether white people “breed like rabbits” is questionable; Powell quoted the Milner-Holland report when asked on the Frost programme to substantiate his allegation that coloured people had pushed excrement through an old lady's letter-box. The Milner-Holland report provides no support for such an allegation; if as Powell predicts, half the immigrants in this country were to avail themselves of the offer of repatriation, the remaining half would certainly be subjected to more prejudice than at present and would react both accordingly and understandably, thereby increasing the race relations problems; if black people are to be

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

Bristol Humanist Group: 45 Fernbank Road, Redland: Saturday, June 28, 6.30 p.m.: Mid-Summer Family Party.

Glasgow Humanist Group: Sunday, June 22, 12 noon: Meet Botanic Gardens for outing to Ben Ledi near Callander—return early evening. For transport phone Sheila Milburn, MAR 4305.

North Staffs Humanist Group: Cartwright House, Hanley (near Cinebowl): Friday, June 27, 7.45 p.m.: Meeting.

South Place Ethical Society: Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1: Sunday, June 22, 11 a.m.: “Erskine for the Defence of Thomas Paine”, Richard Clements, OBE.

Thomas Paine Society and Norwich Public Library: Central Library, Bethel Street, Norwich: Until July 5: Exhibition in commemoration of the 175th anniversary of the publication in Great Britain of *The Age of Reason*.

West Ham Secular Society: Wanstead and Woodford Community Centre, Wanstead, E11: Thursday, June 26, 8 p.m.: Meeting.

assisted to return to their countries, the same logic would suggest that white immigrants should be assisted to return to their countries. Mr Powell has not suggested this; there are a large number of coloured people whose birthplace and country of origin is Great Britain.

And there are many more similar facts but, perhaps the most fundamental, but nevertheless the most important that should be put before the public is: if the world is to continue to exist in the twenty-first century and if progress is to be made away from war, bloodshed, starvation and malnutrition, progress must continue towards the day when all men treat each other as equals—when the world acts in unison. In most quarters this progress is being made. To divide the world into two—black and white—is a regressive step, and the adoption of any policy which is not intended to promote racial understanding is, by the same token, a step away from the cessation of man's suffering—a step towards disaster.

TV DISCUSSION ON RI

MAURICE HILL'S booklet *RI and Surveys* opens with the paragraph: “In the *Durham Research Review* of April 1967 appeared an account of a survey on ‘Parental Attitudes to Religious Education in State Schools’ conducted by P. R. May of the Durham University Department of Education and O. R. Johnston of the Newcastle-upon-Tyne Department of Education. Mr May has since been seen or quoted on television, radio and in the Press as an expert on religious education whose views should be accepted as final; indeed, they often go unchallenged and undiscussed”.

The various television authorities have paid little attention to appeals from several organisations and groups of prominent people, for the reduction of the time allotted on the air for religious broadcasting. Humanists are only invited to appear in discussion programmes with the religious, and all too often the odds are loaded heavily against them.

However, on June 29 it would appear than an even contest is to take place. On Independent Television at 6.35 p.m. *Against the Tide* is to screen a discussion between P. R. May, the gentleman referred to above, David Tribe, the President of the National Secular Society, Professor Eric Hawkins and Clifford Jones. The discussion is to be about ‘Religion in Schools’ and will be chaired by Ludovic Kennedy.¹

That the survey conducted by Mr May in association with Mr O. R. Johnston, has now become a stock argument for retaining the provision in the 1944 Education Act for compulsory religious education, will, one hopes, makes the discussion a lively one, particularly as there are many grounds on which the results of the survey can be disputed.

To quote Hill's *RI and Surveys* again: “In a letter to the *Times Educational Supplement* on January 19, 1968 Mr May writes: ‘Since there is such general agreement between the parents and the teachers, should not controversy over the religious provisions of the Act rest for a time so that religious education may be made more effective?’

“Here is another clear statement of the view of religious people that discussion should be closed on all matters where they are thought to be in a majority. The prospects for democracy are grim if criticism of majority views is to

(Continued on back page)

A WAY OF ACTING

ISOBEL GRAHAME

TWO EVILS stare civilised humanity in the face inviting concerted attack. The first is dishonesty—self-deception and deceitfulness in all its forms, from craftily purposeful suppression and subversion to witless apathy, ignorant addle-headedness. The second evil is ineffectualness resulting from failure to apply approved knowledge—not doing what obviously needs to be done.

Costly public and private inefficiency wastes resources in stultifying procrastination and prevarication as well as hard cash. Is it possible that the increasing incidence of procrastination and prevarication in public affairs is coming to be used as a kind of compulsive displacement activity to release thwarted energy when drive flags in the face of confused or unattainable aims? Like a cat will busy itself with elaborate grooming when the bird it was stalking flies away!

Individual self-deception may be indulged in, or group self-deception acquiesced in, as defence against some hopeless situation. Also there is romanticising to make things or people seem better or more exciting than they really are. These are responses to realities we don't like to face.

Those who are powerless because of ignorance, poverty, disease, war or natural calamity *must* hope. When practical human aid is exhausted or withheld, wishful belief in supernatural intervention is a natural consequence of despair.

The perennial success of panacea peddlars reflects our desire for simplification and quick results rather than the slow grind necessary to work out and eliminate root causes of human ills, buried deep as many are in the microcosms of the universal process.

Deliberate deception is often motivated by desire to exploit for money or power. It has thrived under the pseudonym "promotion". There is the technique by which some kind of red herring is insinuated between the victim and his reason, in order to manipulate judgement and choice, so that for instance, a commodity may be preferred not on the basis of nourishment or flavour but because promotion has conditioned us to covet some Purple Plastic Dinosaur lurking at the bottom of the package.

Indoctrination by bribery encourages the get-something-for-nothing ethic, which may be responsible for the almost global habit of pilfering which costs the economy so dear and creates so much distrust and the proliferation of rules and regulations.

People owning their own homes, keeping expensive cars and having holidays abroad, etc., steal cheap mugs and chain-store teaspoons from works and office canteens. They bring screwdrivers to pinch hooks and locks from work doors. They put canteen staff under suspicion by pilfering tea, coffee, sugar and even bread from kitchens and then complain self-righteously if Management or Security wants to look in their lockers.

This is an area of dishonesty in which adult workers in factories, shops, offices and commercial transport services set a disgraceful example to the young.

We force deceptions on ourselves by way of badly framed or outdated legislation and the kind of rules which, if honestly worked to, bring the whole concern to a standstill, and the whittling away of local and personal responsibilities produces situations in which it is necessary to be deceitful in order to get an honest day's work done.

To the admirable slogan "Tell it like it is", I would like to add "Get it done like it needs to be".

How long have we known that bad housing is a self-perpetuating social evil? Yet today we need an organisation called "Shelter".

My grandfather used to complain about the accumulated backlog of social legislation which either needed to be enacted or ought to have been repealed, but it is still done piecemeal, if at all, and by means of lucky dip.

At the end of the last world war there was no lack of prompting for the government to change the rule of the road while there were few cars and fewer road signs. Now it is too late.

In 1943 and 1944 the publication of Abercrombie's County of London Plan and Greater London Plan encouraged forward-looking people to warn against allowing bombed or twilight city centres to fill with giant blocks of offices without parallel provision of homes. But domestic building was banished to the suburbs and public transport curtailed, creating the present urban road congestion and the waste of land for car parking.

On at least one Hemel Hempstead housing estate, recently planned and not yet finished, little account seems to have been taken of domestic refuse disposal. Tiny terraced homes back on to minute patches of garden too small to accommodate compost frames and in such box-like proximity that a private bonfire becomes a public nuisance. Long before the week is out their giant bins are overflowing. Cleansing departments are reluctant to clear garden rubbish so people dump it on the building sites. What happens to it when the scheme is completed?

New Messiahs proliferate, offering everything from effortless doorstep salvation to the purification by new magical ingredients in toothpaste and household cleaning agents. But the elderly, trying to look after themselves and "keep off the parish", need services which are now in the price range of the rich. Laundry, home-help, gardening, general maintenance and repairs—even the replacement of an out-of-reach light bulb or valve washer can be a costly enterprise subject to long delay or execrably bad workmanship, for those who cannot do it themselves.

We are exhorted to eat this, drink that, smoke the other and suck or nibble these if there happens to be a gap between meals. New products and recipes are blatantly advertised as "tempting" as if we are a nation of sickly invalids. A secondary range of products is offered to keep down the weight we put on eating the first, and toothpaste and water must be medicated to counter dental caries.

Obesity in babies and schoolchildren is a new disease, yet every supermarket pay desk is surrounded with head-high stacks of sweets and chocolates all within easy grabbing distance of the merest babe waiting with its mother in the long, long queue. Those babies have watched from their trolley seats how Mum takes what she wants from the alluring shelves and, even when she must pay at last, there is a bribe of stamps—all for free, so help us!

CAXTON HALL, CAXTON ST., LONDON, SW1

Wednesday, 2nd July, 7.30 p.m.

ROGER MANVELL

introduces

HIROSHIMA MON AMOUR

Directed by ALAIN RESNAIS

Presented by the NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY
103 Borough High Street, London, SE1

RUSSELL'S EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

G. L. SIMONS

FIFTH OF NINE ARTICLES

IN EDUCATIONAL THEORY Bertrand Russell was a progressive. I say "was" deliberately. A number of his progressive ideas on education have now been adopted; many have not. Other opinions on the subject would not necessarily be supported by modern progressives, and some of his ideas, as represented in his early writings, would be definitely refuted by modern progressive educationalists. But at the onset it should be stressed that Russell's views on education were in part based on very practical experience.

In 1927, Russell and his second wife, Dora, decided to found a school for the education of their own children and others whose parents wished to send them. The Russells were strongly opposed to various elements in traditional English education and would have been prepared to educate their children themselves. They believed however that the companionship of other children was desirable and so decided to create a school which would be run without prudery or religious indoctrination, which would avoid the repressive measures common in education, but which would include a degree of discipline for the sake of "scholastic instruction". The school was called Beacon Hill School and was situated on the South Downs, between Chichester and Petersfield.

The school ran into a number of troubles which Russell candidly outlines in Volume 2 of his *Autobiography* (p. 154). In the first place there was the sheer financial burden. When Russell was not in America on lecture tours he was obliged to write books to pay for the running of the school. For Russell-readers this was fortunate but it meant that he was able to spend less time at the school than he would have wished.

A second difficulty was of finding staff who were intelligent or enlightened enough to apply the Russellian principles in the handling of the children. A further handicap was that parents felt inclined to send the Russells a fair number of problem children: other schools had failed, perhaps the Russells would succeed. Russell himself remarked that when the children were not at lessons continual supervision was necessary to prevent cruelty. The boys were divided into bigs, middles and smalls. One particular middle perpetually ill-treated the smalls. Russell asked him why and he replied: "The bigs hit me, so I hit the smalls; that's fair". The position was complicated by the belief among some of the boys that the Russell children, John and Kate, were unduly favoured. It was probably untrue but the belief existed. Russell's practical experience in this field led him to doubt a number of Freudian theories, and it seems that Russell was partly disillusioned by what was after all a very limited experiment in very difficult circumstances. When Russell was divorced from Dora he lost his connection with the school, but it continued until the onset of the Second World War.

The perennial theoretical problem that Russell considered was how education could be conducted so that the needs of the individual could be squared with those of the society. To what extent can individuals be allowed independent development without threatening the stability or cohesion of society. This dilemma can be seen in much of Russell's social writing (and in particular the Reith lectures, *Authority and the Individual*—1948). The first chapter of *Education and the Social Order* is entitled 'The

Individual Versus the Citizen', and here the dilemma is outlined. Russell himself comes from an intellectual tradition and a nonconformist family that esteem individualism highly: on Russell's twelfth birthday his grandmother gave him a Bible in which she had written: *Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil*—a clear exhortation to the individuality that young Bertrand was later so remarkably to embody.

With such a background it is scarcely surprising that Russell erred—if he did—on the side of individuality against the side of citizenship. He had the traditional Whig notion that social excellence would flow out of individual excellence and it is for this sort of reason that he held the educational views he did. Of course much in Russell would be embraced by any liberal or progressive, and I will mention a few of these aspects before giving one or two qualifying strictures.

On sex education Russell is splendid. The emphasis is always on treating the factual side of sex education just as the factual side of any other subject—simply, honestly, and without fuss. In 1926, in *On Education*, Russell wrote: "Answering questions is a major part of sex education. Two rules cover the ground. First, always give a truthful answer to a question; secondly, regard sex knowledge as exactly like any other knowledge". In *Education and the Social Order* (1932) he wrote: "It is important that information on sexual subjects should be given in exactly the same tone of voice, and in the same manner, as information on other subjects. And it should be given with the same directness". Most of Russell's attitudes to sex education is accepted today in progressive educational circles, but there are still too few schools that follow his early recommendations—and there are even fewer homes.

Russell suggests that history also be taught honestly, that is—without patriotic bias. In the *Principles of Social Reconstruction* he gives "a simple and almost trivial example":

"... the facts about the Battle of Waterloo are known in great detail and with minute accuracy; but the facts as taught in elementary schools will be widely different in England, France and Germany. The ordinary English boy imagines that the Prussians played hardly any part; the ordinary German boy imagines that Wellington was practically defeated when the day was retrieved by Blucher's gallantry."

This was written in 1916 but who can doubt that the same bias remains?

In other fields also Russell is opposed to the widespread representation of facts in such a way as to further political, ideological or religious ends. Russell is opposed to the *dogma* in education, and he sees this in many fields, even in logic and science. (A persistent complaint is that Aristotle has been esteemed too highly, and to such a degree that the development of logical method has been needlessly retarded in universities and elsewhere.) Russell believes that teachers have little (or no) right to *mould* the minds of children; the duty of the teacher, as Russell sees it, is to teach the child to think, to assess facts, to reach conclusions in an independent and rational manner on the basis of evidence. And not many thoughtful people would argue with this emphasis. But now the strictures!

On the basis of his early writings (and he has not written much on education in his later years), Russell would be opposed to Comprehensive Schools. He is equally opposed

to competition in education, but believes that there should be elite schools for superior pupils. I personally do not accept this. That there should be adequate *facilities* for talented children no-one can deny, but this is quite a different thing from the provision of separate educational establishments. Such an arrangement seems to me to be socially divisive, and in any case academically unnecessary. Remarkable academic results are coming out of the Comprehensive Schools, and perhaps in the light of these Russell may have modified his earlier views. To me Russell

seems to wish to develop individual intellect at the expense of other equally desirable attributes, such as social awareness and commitment. Few men could be more socially committed than Russell himself, and it is paradoxical that some of his educational recommendations would reduce the social commitment in others. There is an element of elitism in Russell's educational outlook, and to this I cannot subscribe, but the rest of his educational philosophy—and perhaps this is the bulk—is largely sensible, honest and progressive.

THE MEANING OF FREE WILL

PETER CROMMELIN

EVER SINCE a contributor to the FREETHINKER accused "Free Will" of being "Meaningless" I have felt the urge to clarify the meaning of this most human of all human properties. The most obvious way to give a meaning to free will would be to say that it is the sum total of voluntary actions in any one life. It is precisely this sequence of voluntary acts that constitutes the life history of a free will. There would certainly be no point in attributing free will to a life totally void of voluntary acts. There seems no point in attributing free will to the purely physical life of a wild beast. It is when animals have been to some extent "humanised" that they seem to acquire habits and perform acts that might almost be described as "voluntary". Circus animals no doubt are "compelled" to perform their tricks, but domestic pets and even farm animals, where the farmer is humane may acquire their habits by methods that do not seem entirely to contradict the notion of voluntary co-operation.

Certainly in attempting to clarify the meaning of free will, it is important to make it clear that free will does not exclude the necessity of co-operation with things that are in themselves completely and absolutely "determined". We have no reason to believe that free will exists outside or independently of human nature. There is nothing free about the movements of the elements, whether they be ocean waves or radio waves coming in from outer space. But even in the major sciences of physics, chemistry, or astronomy, free will must surely be a necessary stimulant to the worker in these fields of exploration and research. To understand the cosmos, it is not enough to possess intelligence; it is equally necessary to have the will to learn.

It is in our dealings with real human beings that we become aware of free will as a factor in the making of human character and personality. As we go through life, we become ever more sure that the majority of individuals are what they have chosen to make themselves. There are, of course, exceptions to the rule, as indeed there are to every rule. But the majority of persons who bemoan their fate have only themselves to blame if they fail to make full use of their natural intelligence and free will.

It seems quite reasonable to suggest that free will and moral responsibility may be acquired habits. But unless there exists some innate capacity for the acquisition of such habits, they could never be acquired as the result of training or compulsory education. "Compulsory Education" sounds rather like a statement that contradicts itself. Children are forced to go to school, but without voluntary co-operation on their part they cannot be taught anything. Compulsory education is a complete waste of time and money for those who have no will to learn.

Free will begins to assert itself at a very early age. Quite young children, mere infants in fact, can offer a surprising

amount of resistance to anything they do not want to learn or absorb. This is a point to remember in connection with the religious instruction of children. What is in theory a violation of human rights, becomes in fact a somewhat vain attempt to destroy free will and personal responsibility. If the will to believe is necessary to an act of faith, it is quite certain that the will to believe must be free whether the act of faith is made by a Christian or a Jew or a Mohammedan. Only a minority of those educated in these religions retain the will to believe all through life. The most that can be said is that free people tend to retain some respect for the faith of their childhood. I would not like to guess how many follow the advice of "Saint Paul" to stop thinking as children when they cease to be children. But since there is no God to make people good and no Devil to make people bad, it would seem to follow that people must be free to regulate their own lives. It is precisely in their refusal to acknowledge the realities of human free will that the Religions of Mankind have betrayed human nature. It is precisely here in this matter that humanism must never fail.

I know a man who in early youth acquired a will to believe in the Holy Catholic Church. His will to believe seemed to be quite impregnable. Yet in the course of time his will to believe came to be totally defeated by the facts of life, the facts of history, and although he is no scientist, by the facts of science. Although the mind of this man had been completely captured by an illusory Faith, he had never really lost his free will, and when the time came, he was able to assert his will by the correction of those errors that had caused him years ago to submit to dogmas and disciplines that he could no longer regard as morally binding.

In conclusion therefore, unless the will is free nothing is free. Unless the will is free, it is useless to make any effort to overcome a natural inertia, to conquer a prejudice, or to correct a fault. Like everything else, the freedom of the will has its limits; it is not unrestricted. But within its own proper field of physical and psychological action, the freedom of the will is by far the most important factor in the formation of human character and personality, especially in those matters where a moral choice is called for. Free will is the inner citadel of freedom, and it is infinitely more important to possess a free will than it is to live in a Free Society.

THE BOUND VOLUME OF THE FREETHINKER for 1968

is now available at 30s (plus 4s 6d postage)

From THE FREETHINKER BOOKSHOP
103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1

HOW NOT TO FIGHT RELIGION

OTTO WOLFGANG

"Ideas cannot be conquered by violence."

(From a Russian letter of protest.)

ANATOLI E. LEVITIN, writer on civil liberties including questions of religious freedom in the Soviet Union (released from a concentration camp in 1956), when 'grilled' in 1965 by members of the KGB (State Security Committee) and Political Publishing houses, complained: "What do you actually mean by 'Democracy' (in Soviet Russia) when the most important and principal document that has been *signed and ratified* (in the UN) has not only not been put into practice here but has *not even been published?*" (my italics). Whereupon his opponent sneered that the United National Declaration of Human Rights was an imperialist document, "adopted by the delegates of Eisenhower and Churchill".

This cynical attitude must be borne in mind to understand the following.

Words and Deeds

In No. 204 of 1966, *Izvestia* printed a statement by the Chairman of the Council for Religious Affairs of the USSR Council of Ministers, saying:—

"The ideological struggle against religion must not violate the rights of believers. A series of decisions of the party and government very clearly points out the inadmissibility of (arbitrary) administrative measures. . . . Strict observance of the laws on religious cults is equally incumbent upon religious organisations and local government bodies."¹

In an "Open Letter" sent to the United Nations and broadcast by the BBC on December 16, 1967, the Evangelical Christians and Baptists said *inter alia*: "Good laws in any country do not of themselves guarantee legality and law and order. Only if there is control by the public over the activities of judicial and administrative bodies can legality and law and order be ensured . . .". In fact, believers have hardly ever been condemned on the grounds of their belief in God, but under the pretext of hooliganism, parasitism and fictitious political crimes, such as spying, foreign connections and the like.

When Israelis destroy houses where Arab terrorists have been sheltered, there is an outcry in the Soviet press; but there are instances when Soviet militiamen arrived at the homes where believers held services, "cut their way through the door, carried out all the household effects, and demolished the house with a bulldozer". (Appeal to UN Commission on Human Rights and U Thant.) Five Baptist women who signed added: "Meetings . . . in private homes cannot in any way disturb public order; neither can religious services held in the woods, for the simple reason that the woods are not a public place". They mention the case of a man who, when he was 21, turned believer and now, at 32, he has spent 22 years in camps and prisons and has newly been sentenced to another five-year stretch. Pavel Overchuk, in the camp of Dniepropetrovsk Province, was placed in the punishment cell before his old mother arrived to visit him. She was told by the camp commander that her son had been deprived of visits and food parcels for six months because he kept on praying morning and evening. He had been told he had "no right" to pray or observe religious practices despite the fact that this poor soul² sincerely believes he could not live a single day without them. He complained to the Procurator of the UkrSSR:

" . . . through no fault of mine I had not had a visit for five months and had not received a food parcel for three months despite the fact that as a prisoner under a normal regimen I was entitled to have both a general visit and a food parcel once every two months: and (I pointed out that) it is nowhere stipulated that a person who prays to God may not receive visitors."

It was aggravating—he was told—that he prayed in the barracks, in the presence of other prisoners with whom he couldn't help being imprisoned.

Has this mental violence stopped him from praying?

"On the contrary, I value all the more the divine gifts of air and light, and I have witnessed the baseness of the atheistic campaign, which is not an ideological struggle with believers but is deliberately designed to destroy them physically . . ."

This is not Marxism

In a previous article on this subject I quoted Marx and Engels as opposed to treating believers in the way we have been treated in priest-ridden countries. In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels wrote it was nowadays easy enough to be an atheist. In certain countries, however, this kind of atheism recalls the Spanish Bakuninist who said: "To believe in God, that is against Socialism. With the Virgin Mary, however, this is quite different and it is only natural that every proper Socialist has to believe in her".

To come back to the discussion mentioned at the beginning, the only opponent of Levitin who treated him as an equal was Grigorian, Assistant Director of our contemporary, *Nauka i Religia*, who even afterwards had a long private conversation with him. In his report, Levitin wrote how much he agreed with Grigorian's view that one has to distinguish between various forms of atheism. If there were full freedom of religion all artificial barriers between atheists and believers would fall giving room to an atmosphere of friendship and trust. Therefore:

" . . . the struggle for religious freedom is also a struggle for the freedom of atheism—for the methods of compulsion (direct or indirect) compromise atheism, depriving it of all ideological meaning and all spiritual fascination."

In other words: State-directed, obligatory atheism is not free.

¹ All quotations from the Special issue of "Problems of Communism", 1968.

² "Religion is but the false sun which revolves around him, while he is not yet fully self-aware" wrote Marx. The persistence of religion is the expression of unbearable conditions "which make illusion necessary". (From the "Introduction to a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law" (1844).)

³ "The Dead Horse is still kicking", FREETHINKER, March 15, 1968.

SECULAR EDUCATION APPEAL

Sponsors:

Dr Cyril Bibby, Edward Blishen, Brigid Brophy,
Professor F. A. E. Crew, Dr Francis Crick,
Michael Duane, H. Lionel Elvin,
Professor H. J. Eysenck, Professor A. G. N. Flew,
Dr Christopher Hill, Brian Jackson,
Margaret Knight, Dr Edmund Leach,
Professor Hyman Levy, A. S. Neill, Bertrand Russell,
Professor P. Sargant Florence,
Professor K. W. Wedderburn, Baroness Wootton

All donations will be acknowledged

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

103 BOROUGH HIGH STREET, LONDON, SE1

SHAKESPEARE IN REGENTS PARK

BOB CREW

THE ACID TEST of cultural sincerity is, it seems to me, to partake of Shakespeare in the Regents Park Open Air Theatre on a cold night in June, draped in blankets (which can be hired at the entrance) and sipping warm mulled claret (purchased from the wine tent) to keep relatively warmer, or less cold, than otherwise. Thus it was that I found myself at the invitation of the New Shakespeare Company whose main function in life, I am told, is to present a so-called "summer" season of plays in the park (most of which but not all, are by Shakespeare), and to take the memory of the immortal bard on tour occasionally to such far-flung corners of the earth as the University of North Wales (arts festival) and to similar happenings in the obscure provinces of Portugal; where the weather is, of course, more clement than in London and the pleasure derived from an open-air production less masochistic no doubt.

Non profit-making, the New Shakespeare Company employs distinguished professional players and producers and is subsidised by The Arts Council, numerous councils of the Borough of London, and several private patrons from



Alison Fisk and Barbara Bryne in a scene from "The Two Gentlemen of Verona"

the business sector who are apparently not so far-removed from the ghetto of the theatre world as it would seem; such as Marks and Spencer and The Metal Box Company, no less.

Two Gentlemen of Verona

The play in question was *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, which can be seen there until July 9th when it is succeeded by *The Merchant of Venice* which runs until August 16th.

A romantic comedy, taken from the Italian fairy tale, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* uses the not-unfamiliar theme of faithful and unfaithful lovers, intrigues and dark forests illuminated by moonlit nights (and flits and rendezvous) to create a situation in which to highlight and examine the similar characteristics of those opposite qualities, love and friendship. All this, within the context of frivolous philosophical whimsy and a great deal of earthy humour,

comprises the chemistry of the play. A particularly funny scene, I thought, was that of *Launce*, the strolling workman (played by the celebrated comedian, Bernard Bresslaw) who, in order to save his dog from execution or whatever, when it was accused of relieving itself on the feet of a nobleman, claimed responsibility for the action himself and, after convincing everyone of his guilt, proceeded to take his dog aside and lecture the animal on the reasons why it was not the done thing for dogs or humans to go around cocking their legs and piddling where they chose!

But the primary preoccupation of the play was not with piddling but with the following consideration, quoted from the script, "in love, who respects a friend?"

Beautiful and Well-Appointed Theatre

The Open Air Theatre is very well appointed in the park, surrounded, of course, by some of the most beautiful garden and architectural scenery in London, and next-door to a very contemporary restaurant for those who do not fancy the salads, hot soup, strawberries and cream served in the Theatre's wine tent, which is a vast canopied affair fitted with an exotic bar, complete with warm mulled claret and Irish coffee. The decor inside the tent is very good fun, with a solitary chandelier hanging in the centre and a colour scheme of an entirely festive nature. For those who like to drink late, the bar is open until midnight, and the food and table wines good. Also, the props and light effects on stage (and among the trees behind it) are both realistic and enchanting, while, even on a cold night, the professional and indeed spirited performance of the players appeared, to me, to be by no-means impaired. In short, an ideal atmosphere for open-air theatre, given that the weather isn't too contrary. Best approached from the Bedford College side of the park—walking distance from Baker Street—those with either humour, or spartan passions for culture, will surely find it worthwhile visiting the Open Air Theatre at least once and, perhaps more often, during a heat-wave.

LETTERS

Smile of desperation

THIS MORNING I received a specimen copy from you (why did it have to be over two months old? Why not send out current specimen copies?) and there are some points I would like to make.

(1) Far from freethinking, I think your article on China's Social Philosophy (the fourth) gives evidence of bias. One of the most terrifying things I have ever seen on television is the ritual performed in schools by children expressing hatred towards the Western world. 'Kill, kill', they chanted. No society can be moving in the right direction when it instills hatred into children.

(2) Compulsory moral education? The only way in which children in schools can learn morality, that is, the liking and understanding of themselves as beings and this insight then applied to others (love, I suppose) is for the removal of compulsions in schools, not the imposition of more. I can just envisage the sort of people and the sort of methods that would set up these compulsory lessons. Until a school is a place where children can meet each other and teachers on a level of a freedom and honesty, really explore what it is to be alive and have feeling, no real morality will ever grow, however well organised the curriculum may be, however high-sounding the lessons may appear. I smile in desperation at people who wish to remove the greed and fear of capitalism and substitute it for the greed and fear (of another sort) of communism, who wish to remove the imposition of religion in schools and substitute imposed morality lessons instead.

PAT VAN TWEST.

LETTERS—continued

Free speech

WITH REGARD to Mr Simon's "reply" to my letter of 10.5.69: challenged to justify a typical Simons' misrepresentation, he has neither the guts to try nor the grace to apologise. He has not repudiated his implied proposal that the British working-class should be urged to end exploitation by force of arms; nor has he attempted to refute my assertion that to so urge the British workers today is to preach revolution in a non-revolutionary situation. But the critic of capitalism who could not grasp the difference between dividends and gross trading profits is clearly a very confused person and popularisation, for a mass market in Britain, of works by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, Mao Tse-Tung, Che Guevara and Cohn-Bendit". It is therefore ludicrously illogical for Mr Simons to assert: "Mr Page believes that the masses are diligently son. In my previous letter, I made one reference to "the public-devouring the writings of Marx, Engels and Co." Mr Simons has thus vindicated my assertion that he lacks a scrupulous regard for accuracy and rational argument.

As Mr Simons now claims he is not a Marxist, I challenge him to define the working-class he so persistently champions, and to reveal to us all the ideological source and basis for his contentions that class-war is a "reality in most human societies today" and that "the only effective force of social dynamics is class war, and unless we have it, in some form or another, the social advancement of the mass of the people will be neither adequate nor secure in the long term". Having written five articles for the FREETHINKER in which he praised the Maoist regime to the skies, Mr Simons now tells us that he is not a Maoist! I therefore invite Mr Simons to define a Maoist, and I challenge him to explain to us: (a) in what respects he dissociates himself from the policies of the Maoist regime; (b) why he has studiously avoided answering my questions regarding free speech and freedom of expression in China; (c) why he has not condemned or even mentioned, in his five articles, the Chinese Government's attempts to coerce intellectuals; and (d) why he did not even refer to the appeal by the four leading provinces of Tibet to the United Nations against the Chinese invasion and breaking of written pledges.

MARTIN PAGE.

Religion in space

AFTER THE Christmas Message of Verses from Genesis from Apollo 8, and the Horoscope the Apollo 10 Astronauts had read to them, one wonders with no small consternation what the Apollo 11 mission will spring on us.

The possibilities are almost endless. Maybe the Astronauts will refuse to photograph the Earth for fear of offending the International Flat Earth Society. If Apollo 10 was anything to go by it is more likely that Astronauts will be instructed to take bearings of the border lines of the constellations of the zodiac, unhampered by atmosphere, for the use of Astrologers to be able to 'predict' events more accurately. Perhaps the Apollo 11 crew will take on where Apollo 8 left off, quotations from Genesis from the surface of the Moon, the divine word of God.

I am all for a bit of light-hearted fun, but it is to be hoped, by most Freethinkers I should think, that in the historic Apollo 11 mission the Astronauts will act as befits this great scientific feat.

MICHAEL HUGHES (aged 15).

Free . . . thought

RECENT ISSUES of the FREETHINKER have shown that Free Will and Free Speech are controversial subjects among (supposedly) freethinkers. Perhaps G. L. Simons should now start the ball rolling (no bias!) on the subject of Freethought.

CHARLES BYASS.

Venereal disease

MICHAEL LLOYD-JONES asks for my rational proposals for the elimination of illegitimacy and venereal diseases (May 31). As far as the first is concerned, 'illegitimacy' is a purely subjective judgement by our society on the results of extra-marital intercourse—which an increasing number of people no longer accept anyway. Venereal disease eradication is a matter which still eludes the highest medical authorities in the land, so far be it from me to comment!

Mr Lloyd-Jones asks if I read an article he wrote in January (incidentally my letter referred to one he wrote in April, but never mind): the three-point plan he put forward then contains no suggestion for lowering the incidence of venereal diseases. He merely states that young people should be educated regarding the symptoms, which is quite different from reducing its spread. In fact one

could say that young people who contract gonorrhoea, and discover the treatment with penicillin is so simple, will be less frightened of the disease than someone who is ignorant of the signs and symptoms, and in consequence more wary of casual intercourse. I have lectured to many groups of young people about VD, as also have others, yet the incidence of cases of gonorrhoea continues to increase each year.

Mr Lloyd-Jones also continues to believe that venereal diseases are not caught by people other than the promiscuous. It was my point in the letter I wrote on May 17, that modern contraceptive techniques have encouraged more young women to have intercourse freely—but this does not imply that they are prostitutes or promiscuous. If one removes the risk of pregnancy, but not of VD, then no amount of education will prevent some people catching these diseases; this is why I condemned his original remark "the time has come to get rid of the old arguments against intercourse—risk of pregnancy and VD". The facts are that venereal diseases still exist, and must of necessity be a deterrent to intercourse until medical science has eradicated them.

DENIS COBELL.

EDITORIAL—continued from page 194

be silenced, since an exact 50/50 split on any question is extremely improbable. The attempt to inform and persuade through public discussion on all topics of importance is a basic necessity of a democratic and of a rational way of life. It is interesting to see that many Christians are opposed to it."

One hopes, and indeed confidently expects, that Tribe will be able to steer the discussion along democratic lines, and thus ensure a fair hearing for both sides in the argument.

¹ Check *TV Times* and National Newspapers for confirmation of screening time.

DIVORCE REFORM SUCCESS

AS WE GO to press news has just come through of the success of the Divorce Reform Bill at its third reading in the House of Commons.

In a press statement David Tribe, the President of the National Secular Society expressed what must be the opinion of the majority of those unaffected by a religious belief in the sanctity of a contract made between two people: "We congratulate the government on providing sufficient time for the Commons to make its long-awaited decision on this issue.

"It is noticeable in what a small minority the critics of the government and opponents of the bill turned out to be. Their idea of democracy—and of the confession which most of them seem to adhere to—is the domination of the majority by their own special interest. On this occasion they have failed, but we know from past experience they will continue the fight in the Lords. We hope their Lordships will be as active in dealing with filibusters as their colleagues in the Commons."

FREETHINKER subscriptions

and orders for literature . . . The Freethinker Bookshop
01-407 0029

Editorial matter . . . The Editor, The Freethinker
103 Borough High Street, London, SE1 01-407 1251

POSTAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES

12 months: £2 1s 6d 6 months: £1 1s 3 months: 10s 6d

USA AND CANADA

12 months: \$5.25 6 months: \$2.75 3 months: \$1.40

The FREETHINKER can be ordered through any newsagent.