

# Freethinker

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## CREMATION

IN THE FACE of the population explosion and the increasing shortage of housing and recreational facilities in this country, the major and irrefutable argument for cremation of the dead, as against burial, has become that of using the land for the living. It is interesting to reflect, however, that when the cremation movement first started in the latter half of the last century the principal argument in its favour was that of hygiene. And of course this is as strong an argument as it ever was. However, it is a reflection of the irrationality which pervades our society that arguments such as these are needed at all.

Surely it is preferable for one's bodily remains to be disposed of quickly and completely, than to steadily moulder over hundreds of years. Again is it not preferable for the mourners to see the coffin which contains the corpse of their friend or loved one, disappear through an ornate hatch and to know that the remains will be quickly disposed of, than to stand over a yawning grave and watch the earth being piled on to the dead person's coffin and to know that hundreds of years will pass before the remains are fully disintegrated? Rationally, and quite apart from the arguments of land wastage and hygiene, there is little argument for burial as against cremation. Cremation is even a good deal cheaper.

Thus, we find that burial continues as a major method of disposing of the dead for totally irrational reasons. This form of irrationality has two causes. One is directly religious. The other, force of habit—habit which has its origins in religion. Thus religion underlies the continuing waste of badly needed land, the continuing acceptance of the second best standard of hygiene, the continuing waste of money and the continuing undue suffering caused to mourners.

Yet the Church of England has long accepted cremation as a proper form of disposal of the dead. Several Anglican bishops and archbishops have been cremated and as early as 1910 the Dean and Chapter of Westminster Abbey ruled that the remains of Sir Joseph Hooker should be cremated before interment in the Abbey, and the ruling has persisted ever since. In July 1963 the Pope lifted the ban on Catholic cremation. And so the way is open for almost all Christians to be cremated if they want to be.

In 1968 51 per cent of the total deaths in Great Britain were followed by cremation. This is the first time that cremation has been the majority choice and the credit for this, in a year in which there were more deaths in peace time than in any year since 1918, must go to The Cremation Society.

This year The Society celebrates its ninety-fifth anniversary and in the May edition of its quarterly magazine, *Pharos*, the fascinating story of those years is described together with the ancient origins of cremation. The first and most famous mention of cremation is in the book of Genesis, where Abraham is commanded by God to construct a funeral pyre for the sacrifice of his son, Isaac. Though this cremation never came to fruition, many more instances of cremation follow in both the Old and New Testaments, and by the time of the ancient Greek and

Roman civilisations, cremation had been generally adopted as a method of disposing of the dead. "With the advent and spread of Christianity, however, and its concomitant belief in the resurrection of the dead, cremation fell into disfavour and by the fifth century the practice had become almost completely obsolete."

Interest did not revive until the middle of the seventeenth century when isolated physicians and essayists throughout Europe began to advocate the practice. The next two centuries produced many discussions on the subject, but it was not until 1869, a century ago, that anything effective transpired. In that year at the Medical International Congress of Florence, Professors Coletti and Castiglioni urged the use of cremation 'in the name of public health and civilisation'. There followed the publication of several papers favouring cremation, and the experiments of Dr Polli and Professors Gorini and Brunetti. In 1873 the last named exhibited a working model of his cremating apparatus at the Vienna exposition. This "attracted great attention, including that of Sir Henry Thompson, Bart., FRCS, Surgeon to Queen Victoria, who returned home to become the first and chief exponent of cremation in this country. Thompson wrote a paper entitled *The Treatment of the Body after Death*. A good deal of interest was shown in his ideas, and on January 13, 1874, he called a meeting of a number of his friends at his home, 35 Wimpole Street. A declaration was drawn up and signed by those present, who included Frederick Lehmann and Sir T. Spencer Wells, as well as John Everett Millais, John Tenniel and Anthony Trollope. "By this simple act The Cremation Society of England came into being."

Having elicited the legal opinion that cremation could be performed in this country, the society quickly raised a large sum of money in order to build a crematorium. "A piece of ground was offered to the Society in the Great Northern Cemetery of London and the building would have immediately been erected had the Bishop of Rochester, within whose jurisdiction the cemetery lay, not prohibited the establishment of a crematorium on consecrated land." Instead the Society bought an acre of land adjoining the cemetery at Woking and the Italian, Professor Gorini supervised the erection of apparatus of his own design. However, led by their vicar the people of Woking protested to the Home Secretary, who prohibited cremation until such time as parliament should pass an act permitting it. Thus The Cremation Society was forced to become a pressure group.

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(Continued from previous page)

Two eccentric characters aided the campaign. In 1882 a Captain Hanham asked the Society to cremate his wife and mother, who had both left instructions that this was their wish. The Society having been refused permission by the Home Secretary, Hanham built his own crematorium and cremated his deceased relatives. The Home Office did not intervene.

A year later when 83-year-old Dr William Price attempted to cremate his five months old son, who incidentally had been christened Jesus Christ, he was immediately arrested and subsequently tried at Cardiff Assizes. "Dr Price claimed to be a Druid High Priest and performed the rites dressed in a white tunic over green trousers." The result of his trial was announced in February 1884. Mr Justice Stephen ruled that cremation is legal provided no nuisance is caused in the process to others.

This was the all-important break-through and from that point on real progress began to be made. Woking Crematorium was opened and comprehensive forms drawn up outlining the strict conditions under which the Society would undertake cremation. Official regulations were desirable and a bill was introduced into parliament "to provide for the regulation of cremation and other means of disposal of the dead". The bill failed, but in the meantime on March 26, 1885, the first official cremation had taken place at Woking. "Mrs Pickersgill, a well-known figure in literary and scientific circles, was the first of three cremations that took place that year". Steadily the numbers grew. In 1888, 28 cremations were undertaken. In 1892 by which time a chapel, a waiting room and other amenities had been added to the establishment in Woking the number rose to 104.

In 1892 a group of public-spirited citizens formed a company and built a crematorium in Manchester. In 1895

## 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

London Young Humanists (13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London, W8), Sunday, August 17, 7 p.m.: A discussion on Secularism. Enfield and Barnet Humanist Group, 66 Lavender Hill, Enfield, Wednesday, August 20, 8 p.m.: Derek Marcus reports on the BHA Annual Conference.

Glasgow, and in 1896 Liverpool followed suit. The first municipal crematorium was opened in Hull in 1901, a year in which the Darlington Cremation Society also opened a crematorium. In 1902 Parliament passed the long hoped-for Act: 'for the regulation of burning of human remains, and to enable burial authorities to establish crematoria'. The same year saw the opening of Golders Green Crematorium by Sir Henry Thompson, the President of The Cremation Society. In 1904 Thompson the founder of the Society and initiator of the movement died. In 30 years under his leadership the Society had reached the point where nine crematoria were in operation, two of which were municipal. In the year of his death 504 cremations had taken place. In 1911 there were over a thousand cremations including 542 at Golders Green. In 1917 a member of the Royal Family, HRH The Duchess of Connaught was cremated. And in 1923 two Anglican bishops were cremated. In the following three years the movement began to spread abroad, primarily to South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

In 1930 "The Cremation Society of England" changed its name to "The Cremation Society" in order to exemplify its application to the whole country. In 1934, 8,337 cremations were recorded and the same year saw the founding of the Society's quarterly magazine, *Pharos*. In 1936 cremationists from eleven European countries met and in the following year the International Cremation Federation was founded. Twenty-five new crematoria were built during the three years preceding the war, while perhaps the most outstanding event to take place during the war was the cremation of Archbishop Temple, the Archbishop of Canterbury.

In 1946 50,000 people were cremated, and the process was becoming commonplace. Progress has been steady since then, despite frustrations caused by the restrictions on new building following the war, and in 1968 327,000 people were cremated at 203 crematoria. Though this figure was significant in that it was the first time that over 50 per cent of those who died during a calendar year had been cremated, this percentage shows the amount of apathy still shown towards the use of earth resources. It is clear that the Cremation Society deserves our support, not only because of its worthy history, but because of the amount of vital work it has still to do.

## A DAY IN SUSSEX

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 21st, 1969

### LEWES

Lunch at the Bull's Head where Thomas Paine lived for several years

### FLETCHING

Visit to the historic Parish Church where Edward Gibbon is buried

### SHEFFIELD PARK GARDENS

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Total cost : 28/6

Bookings and enquiries :

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY  
103 Borough High Street, London, SE1  
Tel.: 01-407 2717

# SALVATION AMERICAN STYLE

JOHN SHEPHERD

THE FLOOD of American films of the years, has created in the minds of people in this country, an image of our cousins across the Atlantic, as slick, smart, wise-guys, quite incapable of being beguiled by the smooth talk of confidence tricksters and the like—in short, hard nuts to crack. But, over a number of years I have accumulated overwhelming evidence that, in the field of religion, at any rate, there must be millions of American people, equally as gullible as those in this, and other countries—who listen, spell-bound, with mouths wide open, to the arm waving, crescendo-ing and diminuendo-ing, ranting and raving, of the professional “mouthpiece of the Lord” (self-styled) who, *at a price*, can guarantee his—or sometimes her as in the case of Aimee McPherson and others like her—audiences, safe transport into Eternal Bliss, after this life’s span is run. This evidence can be obtained by any interested reader owning a fairly sensitive short-wave radio receiver, tuneable to 16 metres and thereabouts, who will find much that will amaze and amuse him, emanating from American stations, which apparently exist solely to spread the gospel. I regularly pick up transmissions from two such stations, at various times between 6 and 10 p.m. (our time) on weekdays, and 5 and 10 p.m. on Sundays, and according to the imitation ‘Billy Grahams’ on these stations, there are many more such broadcasts going on elsewhere in the United States.

Ironically enough, I receive these two broadcasts on a Russian built receiver, which is incidentally exceptionally efficient—I say ironically, because one of the broadcasters, a Doctor Karl McIntyre, of the 20th Century Reformation Hour, Collinswood (pronounced ‘Carlinswood’), New Jersey, USA (pronounced Yoo-Essay, with a long drawn out accent on the ‘Yoo’) mixes a devout love of Jesus Christ with a devout and burning hatred, hysterically and typically American, of the Communists! This love-hatred phenomena, is called Christianity! Incidentally, I wonder what his ‘doctorate’ implies. Also the ‘doctorate’ of Karl’s ‘echo’, one ‘Amen Charlie’, who is part of Dr McIntyre’s broadcast, and faithfully chimes in with a fervent ‘Ay-men’ or ‘Yes-sir’ or, occasionally ‘Halleluyah’, at the end of each harangue from his superior. Dr McIntyre, during his tirades, always refers to himself in the first person, giving the impression of one set apart by God, and always starts with a prayer, gabbled through at an alarming rate, and addressed half to the Almighty, half to his audience, on the theme of what he intends to say afterwards in his ‘sermon’. Here is a sample “Ah - Father - we - do - thank - thee - that - thou - hast - sent - Dr - McIntyre - to - arouse - these - people - to - the - danger - of - atheistic - Russian - Carmunism - please - look - after - our - boys - in - Viet - Narm - and - please - God - send - someone - who’ll - give - us - million - darlars - or, - if - not, - a hundred - thousand - folk, - who’ll - send - Karl McIntyre - and - the - 20th - Century - Reformation - Hour - a - darlar - each, Blesusall - Ay - men.” (To be followed diligently by ‘Amen Charlie’s’ devout ‘Ay-men’.)

His most recent broadcast was upon the elevating and inspiring subject of circumcision ‘without which one cannot enter into God’s presence’! A detailed account of this pagan operation was given—though Karl had to admit, why it did not apply to women, was just beyond his ken! This sermon, too, closed with an appeal both to God and man ‘for darllers for Dr Karl McIntyre’s ministry all over the world’. I can recommend this particular broadcast for an excellent laugh—around 8 p.m. every night of the week—

and when one realises that, to my knowledge, this has gone on for at least five years continuously—this is ‘some’ propaganda. At 8.30 p.m. (our time) Karl’s programme is followed on the same station by ‘WINB’ America’s Friendly Companion to the World, transmitting on wavelengths of 16 and 19 metres, with a power of fifty thousand watts’. This introduction, word for word, and the following dialogue, which has been unfailingly emitted daily from WINB ‘Red Li-yon’ Pennsylvania, for at least the last five years, must surely be taped, not live—though the announcer does his best to give the impression that it *is* live. “Good morning everybody, this is your old friend *Doctor* (my italics—yet another doctor) Curtis Springer, coming to you from the Sisex Springs in the sun-drenched Mahami Desert of California, where we have twelve thousand acres which belong to God. We want you come here, with or without money, and take the mineral waters, and our health foods in abundance, and see whether we can make your lives worthwhile. Now we are going to have sung for you, some of the songs you love, but before I begin, will you get pencil and paper ready, for in about 29 minutes time, I want you to take down particulars of my special one-day offer of a new product of Basic Foods—that’s spelt B-A-S-I-C Foods, which I can positively guarantee, will grow new hair on the baldest head. But now let us hear the ‘Sky Pilots’ singing the beautiful old number ‘The Old Ragged Cross’—my, my, how we all love that number—come in girls, and God bless you.” Then follows the usual homily on Christ’s death on the cross, with frequent mention of his dear old mother, and, of course, side references to whatever commodity of Basic Foods he is trying to sell. The above reference to hair restoration is true and typical, believe me or not! Then, after one or two more tapes or records—and I’ve heard ‘The Old Ragged Cross’ and ‘It was a miracle’, so many times that I cringe every time he announces them—Dr Springer announces “I’ll leave Patsy Peabody’s record on the turntable for about 30 seconds while I make my one-day offer of Basic Food’s Hair Restorer, which I will send *free* (my italics) for a subscription gift of 15 dollars, for a container for six months’ treatment, which I usually sell for 20 dollars, or a whole year’s treatment for only 25 dollars, normally 50 dollars, as God makes possible, but I will send it free if you can’t pay and thank God for the privilege!” (This last ‘free’ business is usually gabbled almost unintelligibly.) “Now are you ready, Patsy, with your lovely number, ‘It was a miracle’—come in now—Oh! How I love that beautiful number!” This parody of ‘religious’ preaching has gone on I repeat, practically word-for-word for over five years, to my certain knowledge. And our American friends must fall for it, or it would never survive.

There is a further station HCJB—“Heralding Christ Jesus’s Blessings”, of Quito, Ecuador, South America, which is almost solely run as a religious concern—mainly, like the others, of the Fundamentalist kind—in at least six languages including English, nightly between 9 p.m. and midnight. Here we have such programmes as ‘Morning Sunshine’, run by a gentleman with the most sickly, pious, nasal drawl imaginable, ‘Songs in the Night’, a sloppy sentimental dirge of hymn tunes and five-minute sermons, fit only for those suffering from acute religious mania. Then there’s Victor Glenn (who has a branch in Britain)—a cheap imitation of Billy Graham, but without his now fast-fading magnetism, and other similar programmes—all, however, with the main theme somewhere in the broadcast—the Almighty Dollar!

## JBS: SCIENTIST AND REBEL

RICHARD CLEMENTS

An extended review of "The Life and Work of J. B. S. Haldane", by Roland Clark. Hodder and Stoughton, 50s.

THIS BOOK is about a remarkable man: one who was very near to genius. In its pages the reader will find that the story of Haldane's life and work has been told honestly and sympathetically. It shows him to have been one of those *unusual* men to whom mankind owes so much.

He was so richly gifted that—as Sir Peter Medewar says in his Preface: "He could have made a success of any one of half a dozen careers—as mathematician, classical scholar, scientist, journalist or imaginative writer. To an unequal degree he was in fact all these things".

Of JBS's actual achievements Sir Peter adds:

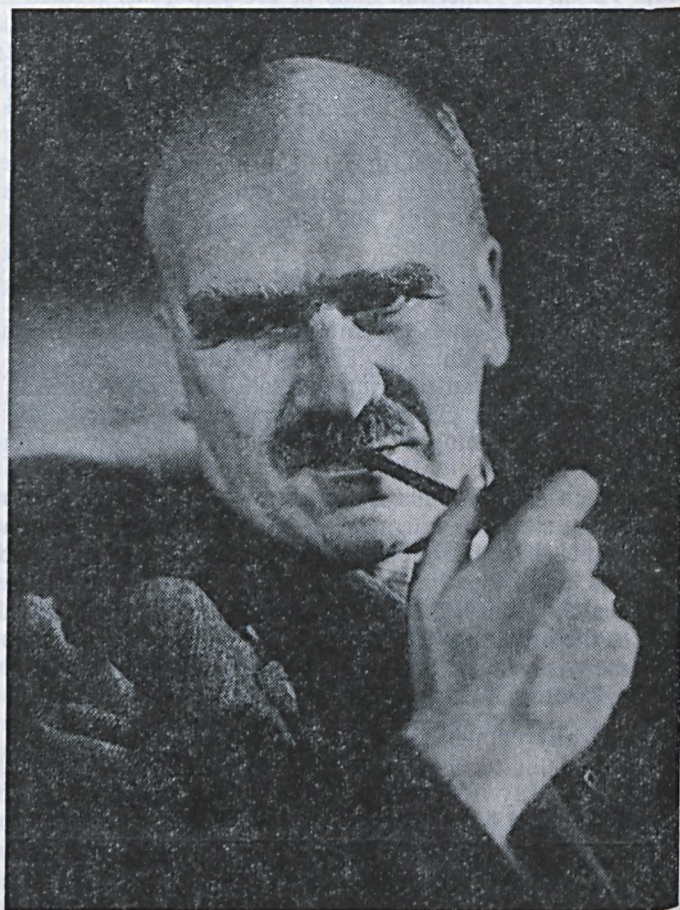
"He was the cleverest man I ever knew. He had something new and theoretically illuminating to say on every scientific subject he chose to give his mind to—on the kinetics of enzyme action, on disease as a factor in evolution, on the relationship between antigens and genes. . . . Haldane was the first to describe genetic phenomenon of linkage in animals generally, and the first to estimate mutation rate in man. His greatest work began in the 1920s, when . . . he undertook to refound Darwinism upon the concepts of Medelian genetics. . . . This is 'classical work' assimilated into all the standard texts. If he had done nothing else, he would still be classified as a Grand Master of modern evolution theory."

The literary portrait traced by Mr Roland Clark has both light and shade. The author awards the great scientist his due share of 'wants'. The outcome is an honest account of a life that yields the student both knowledge and inspiration. The work is a *must* for Freethinkers and Humanists. Here, then, was a life crowned by many achievements and worth writing about. The opportunity was seized by Mr Roland Clark, an experienced writer on science and scientists, to give the public a book that will surely take rank as the definitive *Life of JBS*, one of the most brilliant of British scientists and a daring social rebel. To read and understand this work is to come near to the mind and heart of modern man.

The layout of the biography is excellent. Its fourteen chapters are grouped under four main headings, namely: Training; Testing Time; Into Battle; and The Green Fields Beyond. And thus a picture begins to form in the reader's mind of a man struggling with a strange destiny, and bravely groping his way through the tumultuous years between 1892 and 1964. The details are skillfully set out in the various chapters.

### Early Life

John Burden Sanderson Haldane was born on November 5, 1892. He came of an aristocratic Scottish family many of whose members had rendered distinguished service to the nation. For generations the family had occupied a small fort at the foot of Glenderon, which commanded one of the routes from the Highlands to the Carse of Perth. JBS delighted to relate stories about his soldierly forbears, and once wrote this of them: "Our main job was to stop the tribal people of the hills from raiding the cattle of the plainmen; but perhaps once in a generation we went south to resist an English invasion, and at least two of my direct ancestors were killed while doing so". Towards the end of his life, he could write of himself: "I am a man of violence by temperament and training". Then, too, he would sometimes remind his associates that he had been born on Guy Fawkes day, and seemed to see in that fact a symbolic



link "with the dynamiting of authority". The lure of violence he found attractive throughout his lifetime.

Many tales are told, some of them apocryphal perhaps, to illustrate JBS's precociousness in early life. He was able to read by his third birthday; German lessons began when he was five; and he scribbled notes and scattered them about the house during his childhood. Seen in retrospect these first signs of mental energy appear to herald the promise of things to come.

### Social Heritage

It must be remembered that the boy belonged to a remarkable family. His father, John Scott Haldane, early awakened in his son's mind an eager interest about science and the pleasures that came from observation and experiment. But there was more to it than this. As time went on there grew up between father and son simple forms of co-operation in scientific work.

Later in life JBS recalled his father's dislike of experiments on animals and preferred to work on himself or other human beings who were sufficiently interested to ignore pain or fear". The influence of Dr J. S. Haldane, who after graduating in Medicine at Edinburgh became a veritable "prototype of the Victorian scientist, dedicated to his laboratory", and whose quiet work as a physiologist brought about a revolutionary change in "men's theories about the human mechanism", was decisive in determining the formation of his son's mind and future career as a scholar and as a scientist.

JBS's mother, nee Kathleen Trotter, a beautiful and talented woman, with strong views of her own on public

and social questions, was a supporter of the Victoria League and "a passionate Feminist", who guided her precocious son with both affection and discipline throughout his boyhood. So much for his family and social background. To this heritage—in childhood, youth and maturity—Haldane owed much. At the age of six the boy began attendance at the Oxford Preparatory School, then known as Lynams, and quickly developed into "a near-prodigy". He reached the top of the school in Latin, arithmetic and geometry before the age of twelve; and only two pupils were ahead of him in Greek or Latin Verse. He was a wizard in maths: his examiner declared him to be "in a class by himself". There were, of course, both advantages and dangers in these academic successes. They were perhaps responsible for "the prickly discomfort" he experienced between himself and people he regarded "as being intellectually sub-human": a strange attitude of mind for an opinion maker.

### Eton and Oxford

However, he carried off the First Scholarship to Eton; and, a few years afterwards, he was introducing to one of his companions Haeckel's *Riddle of the Universe* and circulating to others Metchnikoff's *The Nature of Man*, and at one time he claimed that the Master in College had in consequence "tried to get me taken away". It was in those years that he began his long association with the Rationalist Press Association. Then, over a period of forty years, the student may follow, with profit and pleasure, the collection of essays on Science, Philosophy and Religion which he wrote for the *Rationalist Annual*.<sup>1</sup> These writings are marked by clarity, wit, wisdom and warm human sympathy.

He went up to New College, Oxford, in the autumn of 1911. Then began 'the legends' about his intellectual powers. For example, Mr Clark writes: "His reputation travelled ahead of him, and it was soon believed that he had entered for a Classical Scholarship, had gone into the wrong room, and triumphantly answered the mathematical paper which faced him. He lived up to the legend, gaining first class honours in Maths, Mods. within the year". The full story of his Oxford life must be read in Clark's own words.

It was expected by JBS's family and friends that he "was now set fair for a purely scientific career". But the student-prodigy, with his father's consent, switched from mathematics and Biology to "Greats", i.e. from science to the arts. Thus it came about that the man who carried out such brilliant scientific research and writing for half a century, did so without a science degree or technical qualifications.

His biographer is of opinion that Haldane found "immense personal pleasure in the companionship of the Classics", and that it was to be a solace in an otherwise aesthetically black life". But was it not also another glaring example of a man with too many irons in the fire? The fact remains that the "switch" met some urge of his own mind and, as always with him, action followed swiftly on thought.

### Academic and Science Populariser

He became in due course a Fellow of New College and a teacher of physiology; and moved on to Cambridge where he was Reader in Biochemistry. He later entered upon his work as a geneticist at the John Innes Horticultural Research Institution, where for ten years he made an outstanding contribution to its work.

He became a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1932; and five years later was appointed to the Chair of Biochemistry,

University College, London; which enabled him to continue his study and teaching on the application of higher mathematics to biology. His colleagues and his students were helped and inspired by him, and many have acknowledged the debt they owed him; others have told of him in weaker moments, when he was struggling for a place in the limelight, or indulging his irascibility, or vanity, or playing the role of lone wolf. (In a masterly understatement his biographer describes this less likeable side of the man, as his "almost endearing bloody-mindedness". But the reader will miss much if he allows himself to be put off by this.)

It remains to stress two of his shining successes. First, his mastery of the art of writing: this he achieved by incessant practice during his years in Oxford. "He learned", writes Roland Clark, "the hard way; years later, when a colleague commented that he had a very lucid prose style, he turned on her fiercely: 'D'you think I didn't have to work for it.'" He certainly did work. On the subject of mutation in evolution his work is recorded in some zoo scientific papers; and his yearly output of such work may be glimpsed by the reader if he turns to the Bibliography of JBS's papers printed at the end of Mr Clark's book.

Much of this work, in one way or another, has been published in book form. His capacity to link up the theories and findings of modern science with the discussion about individual and social was unrivalled. For some three decades he was the scientific populariser *par excellence* in the English speaking world: the greatest since Professor T. H. Huxley.

### The Rebel

Then, secondly, there was his impact as a rebel on the customs, conventions and institutions in Britain during his lifetime. Quite early he figured in a *cause célèbre* in connection with a divorce case; he was dismissed from his appointment at Cambridge by the *Sex Vivi* after being cited in the case, but on appeal he won reinstatement. His attitude and bearing throughout the trial, showed pluck, self-assurance and will power.

He fought and was wounded in the first world war. His experience "confirmed what he had learned at Eton that authority, here represented by the staff, warranted all the suspicion it drew; and that revealed religion, represented by the chaplains . . . was an object of scorn". His political views at that time were those of many middle-class Socialists. ("If I live to see an England in which Socialism has made the occupation of a grocer as honourable as that of a soldier, I shall die happy.") He moved towards the left in the post-war period. By the thirties he was a Marxist and a staunch support of the Republican Government during the Spanish Civil War. The conditions then existing in the Western countries—economic, social and political—in the years before, during and after the second world war drove him, as it did other sensitive and able minds, into the Communist Party.

His thinking in those terrible years found expression in his Muirhead Lectures, which were published under the title of *The Marxist Philosophy and the Sciences* in 1938; and in the scientific work he did to save human life and to care for the victims of the second world war. Then, during the last year of the existence of the war-time *Daily Worker*, he became chairman of its Editorial Board. It is said that he contributed 345 articles to that newspaper and more than another 100 to *Reynolds News* and other papers and journals. So that, both as a scientist and rebel, JBS became a precursor of a new outlook on man, society and the world.

<sup>1</sup> See *Science and Life: Essays of a Rationalist*, by J. B. S. Haldane. (The Humanist Library, 15s.)

## SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC DIFFICULTIES

G. L. SIMONS

THE CENTRAL DIFFICULTY of a Social Democratic government is that it is obliged to function in a capitalist economic system. The philosophy of Social Democracy does not include provisions for the overthrow of capitalism, and it is this situation that entails its main problem. For if the establishment of egalitarianism, the creation of fully adequate social services, the fair distribution of wealth, the rational and just utilization of national resources demand the building of a (truly) socialist system then the Social Democratic government is powerless and ineffectual. Any party that comes to power in a capitalist system has to decide whether to co-operate with capitalist vested interest or to create an alternative economic structure. The central fallacy of successive Social Democratic governments in various countries is the belief that a just society can be built without the need to give economic power to the people.

Some people, with little understanding of political realities, point to the degree of nationalisation in Britain as evidence of movement towards socialism. It is worth looking in more detail at British nationalisation to see just how superficial this judgement is. The performance of the Labour Government of 1945-1951 is the case usually cited, as it was in this period that most Labour nationalisation occurred.

In the first place much of the nationalisation carried through by the Labour Government had already been recommended by Royal Commissions or similar bodies on which the Labour outlook had been represented by a small minority: consider the Macmillan Report on the Bank of England, the Reid Report on coal, the Heyworth Report on gas, and the McGowan Report on electricity. This means that official bodies largely stacked with capitalist-oriented individuals believed that a degree of nationalisation, *carried through in the right way*, was the best way to serve capitalism in the instances mentioned. Let us examine some particular points.

The first Chairman of the nationalised Bank of England was Lord Catto, who was previously Governor of the Bank of England before it was nationalised. The rest of the board was composed of bankers and others from big business; to show that the "new" board was truly "Labour" the government drafted in *one* right-wing trade unionist.

The question of compensation was settled by giving stockholders enough government stock to ensure for them the same income they had been receiving for many years, namely 12 per cent per annum on the Bank's capital. The *Economist*, ever strongly pro-capitalist, remarked (1/10/45): "From the City point of view . . . this is plainly nationalisation in its most palatable—or least unpalatable—form. The stockholder, certainly, has no legitimate ground for complain . . . It is plain that the present government does not contemplate revolutionary changes in personnel . . . The recommendation of Lord Catto—and his willingness to serve—as the first Crown appointee are sufficient proof of that". And even Winston Churchill felt obliged to remark that "the national ownership of the Bank of England does not, in my opinion, raise any matter of principle".

The nationalisation of coal reads in similar vein. The first chairman of the nationalised industry was Lord Hyndley, who had been managing director of the Powell Duffryn coal-mining giant; he was—as was Lord Catto—a director of many other free enterprise organisations. A managing director of a colliery company was another board

member, as were four other people drawn from the upper classes; a part-time member was a former director of colliery companies, and a director of a bank, a railway company, and insurance company. To offset this lot were two trade unionists.

Compensation for the previous coal-owners was set at £164,660,000, a figure based on the net yearly revenue that all the owners might be expected to earn in the future if the industry was left in their hands.

And the sorry state of the railways had made it clear the national railway service would have soon collapsed without government support in some form. Because of the bad state of repair of the rolling stock, 769 locomotives were broken up in the first year of nationalisation, and in the first three years 85,000 mineral wagons suffered the same fate. And everything that the Transport Commission had to supply to keep the service operating had to be purchased by borrowing at current rates.

It is highly significant that with the exception of the steel industry (and some parts of road transport) the nationalisation legislation introduced by the 1945 Labour Government was largely uncontroversial. The case of steel can be considered in more detail.

It is interesting that Labour nationalised steel in such a way as to make its subsequent denationalisation relatively easy for the Tories. The structure of the industry remained unchanged after nationalisation: George Strauss, the Minister of Supply said that it was proposed "to keep intact the identity of the individual concerns. Their personnel and internal organisations . . . will be unaffected . . . The companies will continue to win ore, produce iron and steel and sell their products as before". The companies continued under the existing directors and managements. Compensation for stockholders was set at the market prices of their shares as they stood in the period the October 1-25, 1948, or on certain dates in the first half of 1945, whichever was the higher. As soon as the Bill was presented to Parliament *the shares in iron and steel companies rose sharply*.

This sort of information could be extended but by now the point should be clear. Social Democratic nationalisation broadly means taking under the government wing industries which would benefit national capitalism better if they had access to government money; it means running them with capitalists in charge, with men in control who identify closely with City interests or other big business connections; it means setting compensation at levels fully acceptable to the previous capitalist shareholders; it means keeping the workers in the industries as excluded from control as ever they were. In short it means that the industries are run by capitalists and milked by capitalists pretty well as they were when a part of free enterprise.

The structure of the Board of Trade under the Labour Government of 1945 is also illuminating. The main industrial adviser was Sir William Palmer, chairman of the British Rayon Federation; the Board's leather controller, G. R. White, was an official of the United Tanners' Federation; the match controller worked for Bryant and May and his office was conveniently situated on the firm's premises; the Board's paper controller was Sir Ralph Reed, chairman of the Reed paper company; the shoe controller, F. J. Stratton, was a director of Dolcis; the controllers for hosiery, furniture, tobacco, cotton and timber were similarly drawn from big business. The Board of Trade, under Labour, was run by capitalists.

What are the lessons here? The first is that simply because something is called "nationalised" it does not mean it is any nearer to socialism; presumably the Nazi extermination camps were "nationalised" but few people would claim that they rendered Nazi Germany any nearer to socialism. The tests as to whether a "nationalised" concern is "socialist" are the extent to which the people working in it have control over its running, and the extent to which its financial policy and commitment relate to the good of the mass of the people and not to that of the former large shareholders. A further important test, about which we have as yet said nothing, is the extent to which the whole industry is nationalised: in Britain there are private banks, and all the machinery and equipment for coal-mining, coal-transportation, for the railways, for the gas and electricity industries are manufactured by private enterprise. In one important sense, *there is no completely nationalised industry in Britain today.*

The second lesson is that the formal assumption of

## PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

ONE OF THE prized traditions of the British universities is that, in contrast, for example, with those of America, they are public and not private institutions. When an organisation recently proposed to call itself the "Free University" it was advised that without a Royal Charter it could not adopt that title. In this way it is ensured both that academic standards will be maintained in the awarding of degrees and that higher education will not be biased, as so much lower education is, in favour of special interests in the community.

There have, of course, always been anomalies. The colleges of Oxbridge and Durham are, in effect, modified Anglican theological colleges and although their divinity faculties are supposedly objective and open to lecturers of any and every persuasion, they are clearly stacked with clergymen and other convinced Christians, mostly Anglican. There are also, I believe, one or two Congregationalist foundations dating from the Commonwealth which have a special status.

The existence of these Anglican strongholds is one feature of Establishment and is clearly partisan and unjust to other denominations and ideologies. But the way to remove the injustice is not to extend the partisanship but to disestablish and disendow the Church of England.

It was only by reading the current *Universe* that I discovered that the Jesuit college of Heythorpe has, after pressure from that skilled and indefatigable Catholic negotiator Archbishop Beck (who has won millions of public monies for his church), been incorporated in the University of London. Since this university was established by Jeremy Bentham with the avowed intention of being a secular foundation (though King's, an Anglican establishment, was later included), it is particularly ironical and regrettable that in this post-Christian age it should sponsor a deplorable departure from academic impartiality and collapse before sectarian pressure.

The result of this secret deal will be, I suppose, that studies slanted towards academically exploded Thomism and heaven knows what other superstitions will be rewarded by degrees carrying the full authority of the University of London, and ratepayers of all and no religious beliefs will be compelled to provide grants for trainee

legislative power is quite inadequate in isolation. If a Labour government's advisers are capitalists or men with a capitalist-oriented philosophy—e.g. Aubrey Jones, chairman of PIB—if important sections of the Civil Service and important government departments are run by capitalist-oriented individuals, then Labour cannot hope to introduce policies that are in the interest of the broad mass of the people.

To vote into power a nominally radical party is only the first step. If such a party is not prepared to Nationalise for the People, if it is not prepared to put people in charge who identify completely with the interests of the masses—then its reforms will be built on shifting sand, and its followers will become disillusioned and apathetic. Social Democratic parties are *not* prepared to take the necessary steps—and so, with grants, financial inducements, taxpayers' money to lubricate mergers, loans to industrialists, they struggle to make capitalism work. The present British Labour Government is only one example among many.

DAVID TRIBE

It is on occasions like this that those of us who have fought for university autonomy look round helplessly for public redress of an educational scandal. I hope that dissident voices in the Senate of the University of London will call for a full enquiry with a view to restoring the *status quo ante*, and that the University Grants Committee will, if this is not done, give tangible expression to its displeasure.

## NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY AGM

THE annual general meeting of the National Secular Society was held at Conway Hall, London, on August 3, and Mr David Tribe presided. The Executive Committee's report—which is to be published soon—dealt with many of the social questions of our time, and problems facing the Secular Humanist movement, and also reviewed the work of the NSS during the year.

Mr G. N. Deodhekar, the Hon. Treasurer is at present in India, and the financial report was presented by his predecessor, Mr William Griffiths. Mr Griffiths spoke of the great financial difficulties which faced such organisations as the NSS, and appealed for more membership subscriptions, donations and legacies.

Mr David Tribe was re-elected President, Mr William Collins and Mrs Ethel Venton Vice-Presidents, and Mr G. N. Deodhekar Hon. Treasurer. The following were re-elected to the Executive Committee: Messrs. A. G. Brooker, R. Condon, M. Hill, K. Hyde, S. D. Kuebart, W. Shannon, N. H. Sinnott, Mrs M. McIlroy and Mrs E. Warner. (Messrs. Michael Lloyd-Jones and Martin Page also serve as co-opted members.)

Motions before the meeting included a demand for the removal from State schools of all acts of worship since these may force many children to worship a God they do not believe in or to segregate themselves from the school community. A resolution was also passed calling on the Government to outlaw the employment of all children under 13 "except when it can be shown that it is in the cultural or educational interests of the children themselves". A resolution was passed urging the Government to make the provision of family planning clinics mandatory on all local authorities and to subsidise their establishment where necessary. The meeting called on boards of manage-

(Continued overleaf)

ments of hospitals to instruct consultant gynaecologists that the exercise of conscience granted to them personally in the 1967 Abortion Act does not entitle them to deny facilities to women needing abortion in wards over whose beds they exercise patronage.

Two emergency resolutions were passed; the first called attention "to yet another controversial Anglican consistory court decision involving an individual clergyman's reputation, livelihood and prospects, points out that no other private organisation has full legal status for its internal disciplinary bodies, and calls for the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church of England". The second resolution was "This AGM is deeply disturbed by reports that the University of London has granted university status to the Jesuit college of Heythrop and urges the Senate to recognise the interests of academic impartiality and scholarship and reverse this decision".

After the meeting officers and members of the Executive Committee answered questions, and Miss Palmer, Mrs. Venton and Mrs Warner served refreshments.

## LETTERS

### Immigrants and Housing

THERE is no room (and I have no time) to quote statistics which put the housing-cum-immigrant problem into perspective, but I do suggest that Charles Smith should contact SHELTER, the National Campaign for the Homeless, 86 The Strand, London, WC2, who will provide facts to discredit any suggestions that our housing problems are the fault of our non-pink fellow citizens. Readers who are committed to the Humanist ideal of integration and an open society should make their commitment known to ACCORD, 25 Euston Road, London, NW1, who can also supply facts which certainly make Mr Smith read like a racist, even if he protests. The fact is that the current anti-non-pink-immigrant hysteria today is dangerously like the anti-Jew fevers of the 1930's and we have every need to be vigilant. No amount of attributing blame helps us to get to the root of a problem from which newcomers to this country suffer as much as anyone. Some of my friends were quite 'white' in June, but are now 'coloured' as the result of a deliberate policy on the sands. But perhaps Mr Smith is as lacking in pigment as I am, and just plain jealous! KIT MOUAT.

### Freud and hypnosis

WILLIAM WELSH'S article, *Development of the super-ego and its variations* (July 5), contains an inaccuracy, in the paragraph, "Originally Freud believed that the uncovering in itself of hidden sex desires and repressions assisted the patient to use his reason, or ego, with a view to bringing these under control; ultimately, Freud relied more on suggestion and hypnosis".

In fact Freud employed hypnosis only in the early stages of his work, borrowing the therapeutic technique from Breuer, with whom he was working. He was later to abandon its use, for "I soon came to dislike hypnosis, for it was a temperamental . . . ally". (Freud: *Two Short Accounts of Psycho-Analysis*.)

Hence hypnosis came first, and was discarded, not the other way round as Mr Welsh states. MICHAEL CREGAN.

### Free Speech

WITH REGARD to Mr Simons's "reply" (26/7/69) to my letter of a month before: I should doubtless be eternally grateful for the edict of the self-avowed 'Pope Simons I' that I am not wholly beyond redemption. But Mr Simons has conspicuously failed to answer the specific challenges I made—as any reader of the FREETHINKER may see for himself—and he has striven to hide his intellectual nakedness with the filthy rags of personal vituperation. As a diversion, Mr Simons makes five "points", the first of which is an irrelevant quibble. I did not assert, Mr Simons, that the British people "refuse to acquire" mass-produced editions of works by Marx, Engels and Co.; nor did I say that such works are avidly devoured by the British public. I merely pointed to the fact that such works are readily available to the public relatively cheaply. Mr Simons repeats that he is not a Maoist; yet he admits he has written a series of articles praising the Maoist regime in the FREETHINKER, and he has ignored by earlier challenge that he should define a Maoist and explain to us all in what respects he dissociates himself from the Maoist regime. I congratulate Mr Simons on his ability to derive some of his moral and political ideas from *Noddy in Toyland*: this revelation does much to explain his touching intellectual *naïveté*.

"I do not have to defend freedom in China to argue for its limitations in Britain". As it stands, this assertion confirms our suspicion of the totalitarian and anti-libertarian characteristics of 'Pope Simons I', who, being infallible and not at all humble, can brook no criticism, however mild. Despite my previous challenges, Mr Simons persists in telling us nothing about the attempted coercion of Chinese intellectuals (which he has not denied). He quotes from Dick Wilson's *A Quarter of Mankind*, yet he omits the following part of the footnote to the very passage he cites (p. 269): "Unfavourable items in the Chinese press are always, of course, accompanied or followed by an official refutation"; and he fails even to attempt a refutation of Wilson's well documented account of the Chinese Government's harrying of intellectuals. Mr Simons's remarks about India are irrelevant to the point at issue; but does Mr Simons want to suppress Indian intellectual life on the assumption that University research does not—or indeed, could not—contribute to the alleviation of Indian social distress?

Mr Simons apparently believes that the "justification" for the continued Chinese occupation of Tibet lies in the claim that, for centuries, Tibet has been considered a part of China. On that basis, the Irish were quite wrong to seek independence and throw off the centuries-old domination of the English occupying forces. Logically, there appears to be no difference between Mr Simons's attitude and that of an out-and-out imperialist of the capitalist school he despises. Besides, if Tibet has generally been accepted as part of China, why did thousands upon thousands of Tibetans flee when the Chinese invaded, and why did the leading provinces of Tibet protest to the United Nations against the Chinese invasion and breaking of written pledges to the Tibetans? Moreover, Mr Simons has ignored my earlier challenge that he should define the working-class he so persistently champions; now he claims big business can only be threatened by "a militant working-class". Congratulations, Mr Simons, on your ability to champion something you cannot even define! Reading Mr Simons's "reply" in the FREETHINKER (which he doubtless considers part of the capitalist press he so heartily despises), I was inexplicably reminded of Bertrand Russell's dictum: "The opinions that are held with passion are always those for which no good ground exists; indeed the passion is the measure of the holder's lack of rational conviction". MARTIN PAGE.

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