

Freethinker

Registered at the GPO as a Newspaper

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

VOLUME 89, No. 34

Saturday, August 23, 1969

Sixpence Weekly

"MADNESS"—CHICHESTER-CLARK VARIETY

THE CURRENT SITUATION in Ulster may well be described as "madness". This was the word used by the Ulster prime minister, Major Chichester-Clark before anyone had been killed and before it was felt necessary to call upon troops to maintain peace. However, the word sounds decidedly inappropriate coming from the mouth of the man who had it within his power to cancel the march of the Apprentice Boys through Londonderry. Of course he could not predict the extent of the Catholic reaction against the Protestant march, but that there would be a reaction he must have known. His inability therefore to prevent certain trouble reveals the weakness of his position as prime minister. He did not dare offend the Orange Order on whose support his government so strongly relies. *This* is "madness".

And a further example of "madness" is revealed by a work entitled *Burntollet*¹ which was published last week. Seven months in preparation, conscientiously documented and researched it serves to prove empirically leaving no doubt whatever, what many people have been certain of but have been unable to conclusively prove. Namely that both the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the 'B' Specials, the 9,000 strong force which serves as an auxiliary police force, have in the recent past shown extreme prejudice against Catholics and Civil Rights campaigners. The publication proves not only this but also that the government at Stormont has continually avoided any admission that the activities of either the regular police or the special constabulary are in question or are in any way a cause of disturbance in themselves, despite the inarguable fact that the government must be in full possession of the truth. In short the Unionist government either is not inclined or will not dare to admit and redress a major grievance of which they are only too well aware.

All this of course was well known long ago, and it is undeniably "madness". *Burntollet* spells it out in over sixty pages, which constitute a thorough enquiry into the progress of the four-day Civil Rights march from Belfast to Londonderry in January this year. Photographs give visual evidence of police violence directed towards the marchers and further evidence of the police fraternising with the protestant opponents of the march when in fact their job should have been to protect the marchers.

Is it then in any way surprising that Catholics in Londonderry throw petrol bombs at the police—that Bernadette Devlin, MP, should appear in dirty jeans, throw stones and do all she can to keep the Catholics in the Bogside fighting? Is it surprising that people have been killed? Is it surprising that British troops have been called in? Is anything surprising in a country where the government relies on a body of men, whose partiality is well known by everyone, to 'keep the peace'? But the government is not overtly fascist. It is merely powerless to exercise any reasonable restraint over the religious grouping which keeps it in power.

Mr. Chichester-Clark is right, "madness" indeed. But can he really utter the word without blushing? Presumably

he meant that the fighting was mad. But in fact he must realise that the violence is only too understandable. It is the ludicrous political situation which is mad. His government dare not offend Protestants, but at the same time it will never institute a lasting peace without making considerable concessions to the Catholics. It is clear that any "madness" which exists was brought on by religion. The cleftness of the religious stick which holds the Unionists is great indeed. And they can only be extricated by an external force.

The British government have it within their power to accelerate the progress towards peace and equality. They can do two things. They have an opportunity now that Ulster has appealed for and been granted the use of British troops, to insist that the Unionist government concede to all Ulster citizens, rights in accordance with those enjoyed by all other citizens of the British Isles.

However, this would only be an interim solution which would restore peace for the time being. There would continue to be the great religious divide and there would continue to be a border across what historically, geographically and practically is one nation. In the long term there seems little hope of lasting peace unless that border is removed. In 1920 the British government was pressured into protecting the protestant minority which lived in the north of Ireland. The Union was set up by Act of Parliament. Were that Act repealed in the short term some Protestants would be thrown into the melting pot, but in the long term violence and hostility would be averted. For the protestants would be in such a minority in a united Ireland that politically they would pose no threat. This would remove the need for them to be persecuted or made the objects of discrimination. And for this they should count themselves lucky if they care to consider the way in which they have treated Catholics over which the Act of Union gave them a majority. Such a solution may sound like "madness", but none can deny that the kind of "madness" exemplified by the helplessness of Major Chichester-Clark will be ended by anything which initially is not explosive.

¹ *Burntollet* by Bowes Egan and Vincent McCormach, LRS Publishers, 48 Notting Hill Gate, London, W11. Price: 10s. Also obtainable from the Freethinker Bookshop.

Freethinker

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

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

UNDERGROUND POPERY

THE IMAGE of the Roman Catholic church, and Pope Paul in particular, received a serious jolt last week when Professor Hans Kung, the Roman Catholic theologian, writing in the French newspaper *Le Monde*, revealed a quotation from what he terms a secret draft resolution prepared by the Roman Curia for the World Synod of Bishops, which is to be held in October. The resolution demands "that episcopal conferences, before making a statement on an important matter, seek the opinion of the Apostolic See in good time".

This, in Kung's words, attempt "to muzzle the bishops" is clear indication of the increasing helplessness of the Pope brought about by his increasing difficulty in reconciling a centuries old set of moral laws, founded upon faith with the discoveries of modern science. For many Catholics Papal infallibility has already become a thing of the past and that the Pope realises that his power is fast decreasing is strongly borne out by Kung's revelation, which comes at the end of a lengthy article in which he depicts his model Pope. Though he asserts that this is not a reflection on Pope Paul, one is powerfully reminded of those people who say, "I'm not a prude but . . ." and then go on to prove that they are. Kung borrows the description of an ideal Pope made by the progressive Belgian Cardinal Suenens in his widely reported interview last March. Suenens' Pope would be: "Not against the law, but against legalism: not against order, but against immobilism; not against authority but against authoritarianism: not against unity but against uniformity."

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: At Giles Wright's, 9 Old Square, Lincoln's Inn, London, WC2: Thursday, August 28, 8 p.m.: Coffee evening.

North Staffs Humanist Group: Cartwright House, Broad Street, Hanley (near Cine bowl): Friday, August 29, 7.45 p.m.: "Modern Humanism", Roy Beardmore.

"He would be a man elected not by a cardinalate college dominated by a certain national group, but by an organ representative of the universal church." Elsewhere in his article Kung, whose influence with the Catholic hierarchy is well known, warns that the church will suffer heavy losses if the conservatives prevail. Referring to the birth control issue he writes: "Those churches who have taken sides for freedom of conscience have rendered a greater service to the Pope than those bishops, especially in North America, who have tried to suspend priests disagreeing with the encyclical, and who are themselves largely responsible for priests by the dozens, and soon by hundreds, abandoning their service in the church".

This cannot be anything other than a criticism of Pope Paul, and serves to underline the paradox which confronts any liberal outsider when viewing the situation. For despite the fact that Pope Paul has prolonged and will prolong the misery of starving Catholic millions, not to mention amorous Catholic priests, one cannot get away from the fact that the longer he remains Pope the quicker and more decisive will be the deterioration of Catholicism. For even if he gives way to the progressive element, his stance hitherto will render such a gesture an open confession of weakness and indeed fallibility. If he remains as he is endeavouring not very successfully to appear to have a firm and Godlike hold on the situation, the activities of such men as Kung and Suenens will force him deeper into the mire of woolly compromise and hopefully secret machinations, none of which inspires confidence either in him or his church.

An early successor to Pope Paul could on the other hand improve the image of the Vatican and Roman Catholicism by taking a progressive attitude on birth control, priestly celibacy and the other current contentious issues. One thus finds oneself with a strong urge to let forth the bizarre cry "Long live Pope Paul".

A DAY IN SUSSEX

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 21st, 1969

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STILL ON ITS KNEES!

DENIS COBELL

SOME TIME AGO I came across a comment about railways in the Victorian days which splendidly exemplified the spirit of that age; written by C. Hamilton Ellis, doyen of train enthusiasts, it read: "Francis W. Webb came to style himself Chief Mechanical Engineer of the London and North Western Railway, and fully lived up to the title. Not only the design and building of the locomotives at Crewe were his. So were rail-rolling mills and the manufacture of steel itself. Under him Crewe was a principality and his word was absolute law. His brother Canon Webb was vicar of the parish, and those in the works who were not impeccable Conservatives and members of the Church of England could not expect much when it came to promotion".

The aphorism 'the Church of England is the Conservative Party on its knees' was amply demonstrated in many novels and works of a sociological nature written during the nineteenth century, not least in *Charles Booth's London*, where he describes how religion had given up its interest in the poor through its alliance with the general interests of the better-off. Many people may suppose that these twin ideologies had long parted company, and in certain respects they possibly have; but where religious belief has shown a resurgence of interest in socialism, it has also revealed a shrinking adherence to theological dogma—usually tending towards a so-called Christian humanism. Those who maintain a more rigid Anglicanism and respect for the thirty-nine articles, are normally inclined to conservative opinions and the Conservative Party.

In his study *The Psychology of Politics*, H. J. Eysenck discovered that "Conservative attitudes are found most frequently in the Established Church, least frequently among atheists, and non-conformists: Radical beliefs, on the other hand, are found most frequently among non-conformists and atheists, least frequently in the Established Church".

It would be better if opponents of the idea that a ruling-class exists as an inexorable right examined the psychology of those who obsequiously worship at the shrine of the establishment, before attempting to abolish the system in a piecemeal and disjointed manner. They will find that the inherited environment of most people—sometimes mistakenly referred to as human nature—determines their actions throughout life.

Thus the triad of historically defined pillars of Conservatism—religion, patriotism and individual freedom—are still very much alive. Despite the decline in number of communicants, there is plenty of evidence provided in the speeches of leading representatives of modern Conservatism to remind us that the Party is still on its knees.

Mr Harold Macmillan spoke at Archbishop Tenison's Grammar School in South London on fears which have been constantly and hotly denied by many voices in the humanist movement. He said that without the continuance of church schools and religious instruction, the world may sink into paganism, and moral and intellectual nihilism.

Mr Heath's ecclesiastical connections may be confined to organ playing, but the clever art of political seduction can be seen at work in a recent aside from Mr Quintin Hogg. He suggested there could be "no genuine Conservatism which is not founded upon a religious view of the basis of civil obligation". To which one feels inclined to add, 'long live the parson and the squire!' Again in seduc-

tive vein, but more blatant in his ballot-box appeal, Sir Alec Douglas-Home reminded the Tories in 1963 that they would do electoral battle with God's hand on their shoulders.

However the Church is not only associated with the Conservatives in propagandistic vote-catching. Mr Enoch Powell is noted as an ardent churchgoer of the High Anglican variety. In a broadcast last December he sought to ally his views on immigration with Christianity. He must have found this somewhat difficult in the face of rebuke from the Archbishop of Canterbury; nevertheless he persists with his views on immigration and neither the Church nor the Conservative Party have excommunicated him. His position is typical of those who defend their ostensible backing of Christianity, while ignoring all its ethical values. They are allowed to remain members of the hypocritically corrupt organisation, the Church of England. Indeed, Conservatism really ran wild a few years ago, when a thanksgiving service was held in the City on the occasion of Courtauld's victory over ICI.

Readers of this journal may not sympathise much with the views of celibate bachelor Norman St John-Stevas on the subject of abortion law, but as a Roman Catholic even he found difficulties within the Tory Party. Prior to his election as Conservative member for Chelmsford, Mr St John-Stevas says he was asked by the local party big-wigs whether it would be a disadvantage for him to be a Catholic.

One of the more interesting aspects of the link between the Tories and the Church is the support obtained from people whose own best interests would seem to be best served if they cut their allegiance to both. Fear of losing the few possessions and privileges they have, coupled with an inborn respect for established authority, probably accounts for a large portion of this support—how else can one explain the continued wish for 'hatches, matches and dispatches' to be commemorated at the foot of an altar? Though lack of intelligence cannot be entirely ruled out. The head of Dutch Mensa (the society for people with high IQs) was quoted earlier this year as stating that she does not expect to find members of her society believing in God.

I am sure those freethinkers who seem to delight in Powellism, and complain at the entry of politics into the pages of the FREETHINKER, must feel a bit sheepish once they have realised that for Powell, as for so many Tories, religion and politics go hand-in-hand, as part of an unwritten process to suppress real freedom of thought, in favour of widespread acceptance of traditional beliefs. To be an atheist is obviously insufficient unless allied to a questioning of all forms of authority. As Bertrand Russell wrote concerning the practical remedies offered by one famed sceptic who unfortunately was politically Conservative, David Hume: "while they may lead to acquiescence in the *status quo*, they cannot, unaided, lead a man to advocate this or that scheme of reform".

The history of reform throughout the last century runs parallel to the history of anti-liberalism within the Church of England. Anyone looking at the statements and beliefs of modern Conservatives, must clearly recognise the role they have cast for themselves, and how subtly they set about the job—even to the point of successfully deluding some individuals who style themselves freethinkers!

TUC "LEADERSHIP"

G. L. SIMONS

MANY FORMER Labour supporters have become disenchanted with the Labour Government. Economic crises have been persistent under Labour, and only the traditional measures have been adopted to overcome them—high bank rate, increased unemployment, credit restrictions, incomes policy and the rest. In all this there is little to distinguish the Labour Government from its Tory predecessors. An additional piece of legislation, so far not implemented because of the TUC pledge, would make possible the fining of workers for "unofficial" strikes. Quite apart from the disproportionate attention being devoted to this one industrial aspect—less than 3 million days lost in 1968 owing to unofficial strikes compared with 301 million days lost through sickness—the situation is quite extraordinary. The very idea that the principal workers' organisations on a national level should be pledged to take action against workers at the behest of the CBI and a reactionary government almost descends to the level of farce. What makes the situation somewhat less amusing is its gravity.

Legislation against workers who choose to take industrial action is of course nothing new. Perhaps the Combination Acts introduced at the beginning of the nineteenth century and the legislation enacted immediately after the 1926 General Strike are the best known examples. Now the Tories are pledged to introduce penal legislation and if the present TUC promises prove to be empty the Labour Government may be forced to legislate first. The remarkable situation whereby the TUC itself can be enlisted on the side of the capitalist against the workers' struggle for a decent living can be more easily understood by looking at the historical performance of the TUC. What may be dismissed as a curious and distressing aberration can be seen to be part of a well-established behaviour pattern. Repeatedly the TUC, through incompetence or fear, found itself driven to support reactionary policies representing Establishment interests; and even when committed to a "workers' line" it generally managed to pursue it with ineptitude.

Our first example is the General Strike. Early in 1925 it was clear to everyone that a big strike was likely. By May 1926 the Government had built up a nationwide organisation to cope with any eventuality: 200,000 vehicles were at its disposal through a subsidy agreement with private operators; coal had been stockpiled to last six months; special constables had been increased from 98,000 to 226,000; military, naval and police forces had been given extensive briefings. And during this period what did the TUC do to prepare the workers for the inevitable coming conflict? Nothing! In the words of one writer (Michael Hughes) "Between October 1925 and the eve of the General Strike the TUC did not meet once to plan support for the miners. . . . Of plans to feed the strikers, to develop communications, organise transport, prepare publicity, plan a newspaper—there were none". A. J. Cook, a militant, was virtually the only member of the General Council of the TUC who tried to prepare the workers for the struggle; his main opponent on the Council was J. H. Thomas, a moderate, who was said to be a companion of "press lords, noble dukes and gentlemen" and who was quoted as saying "I don't complain when I see myself in my evening clothes—that draws attention to my importance".

In *General Strike* Michael Hughes comments: "The first day at Strike Headquarters was a shambles. The TUC was

almost completely unprepared for the largest-ever strike and its efforts to direct the fortunes of two million strikers were ludicrous". A gift from Russian miners was ostentatiously rejected, as money could not be accepted from communists; and the first bulletin to Strike Committees underlines how seriously the TUC took the workers' struggle: "The General Council suggests that in all districts where large numbers of workmen are idle, sports should be organised and entertainments arranged. . . ." Little effort to organise pickets or disrupt government plans! In fact the TUC struggled to run the General Strike with moderation! In a *Short History of the TUC*, Lovell and Roberts talk (p. 91) of the "success of the Government in maintaining essential supplies" and the "repudiation by the (TUC) Council of a more radical policy in combating this achievement (efforts were made to keep strikers off the streets)". In their view it was this Council policy that "ensured the defeat of the unions". After little more than a week the General Strike collapsed: the TUC Council capitulated abjectly and confused workers wrongly thought their case was won. When the truth filtered through it was met by incredulity, and on the day after the Strike was called off, the numbers on strike increased by 100,000. But it was of no avail. The TUC had failed its supporters and men drifted back to work. The miners struggled on for eight months and then were forced back to the pits to accept heavy reductions in wages and a longer working-week. Anti-strike legislation followed. This was a turning-point for the TUC—its membership fell and its influence waned. In the slump of the thirties it achieved little.

In October 1947, Cripps and Isaacs, on behalf of the Attlee Government, asked the TUC to hold wages down as far as possible, and the TUC agreed to co-operate. In December 1947, an Interim Report of the TUC General Council was circulated to the unions, demanding amongst other things, the exercise by union executives of "even more restraint" in wage claims. In 1949 the General Council issued a similar statement urging that wages be kept stable; and in 1950 also the General Council put to Congress a policy of wages restraint, which was defeated by 3,898,000 to 3,521,000. At the 1950 Congress the General Council also opposed equal pay for women, and was defeated. And at this Congress the issue of "Order 1305" came up—the legislation enacted as a war-time measure making strikes illegal; many unionists naturally wanted the Government to repeal the Order, particularly since it had been invoked by the Government in the London gas strike in 1950. However, Sir Tom Williamson of the General Council argued for the retention of Order 1305 on the grounds that strikes may otherwise take place and "destroy the policy of full employment".

And the negative and defeatist attitude of the TUC is well shown by paragraph 382 (page 283 TUC Report 1951): "It is apparent that in the present situation trade unions must endeavour to maintain the real wages of their members by demanding wage increases. Some favourably placed sections may be able to achieve this, but it is not likely to be possible for workers as a whole". Four members of the committee who drew up this report were later knighted: *the English Establishment looks after its own*.

The 1959 report to the Blackpool Congress is also illuminating. In respect of the claim for the forty-hour week the TUC leadership wrote (p. 287) that the way it was to be

achieved was "primarily a matter for individual unions" and a "TUC campaign might well be an embarrassment to the unions . . ." And many Congress opinions were never taken up by the TUC leadership and used in representations to Governments and to the leadership of the Labour Party. For example, in the fifties, Congress after Congress carried resolutions instructing the TUC leadership to prepare a programme for the extension of public ownership, and yet nothing useful ever emerged—and in the 1959 Labour pamphlet, *Britain Belongs to You*, we read that "We have no other plans for further nationalisation . . ."

Of the modern TUC leaders, Bryn Roberts writes in *The Price of TUC Leadership* (pp. 53-54):

COLLISION WITH THE STONE AGE

OTTO WOLFGANG

MILITANT ATHEISM has put Israel's Supreme Court in a quandary.

As is known, only religious marriages are legal in Israel, neither mixed marriages nor civil weddings are possible. However, young Israelis travel nowadays and non-Jewish volunteers, who came to help, find their partners and want to marry. Marriages concluded abroad according to the law of foreign countries are, however, recognised as legal, but failing conversion of the non-Jewish partner they are refused recognition as Israeli citizens and their children are debarred from legal marriages.

This theocratic atavism has now been challenged by Benjamin Shalit, 33, a Major in the Israeli Navy, who married a Franco-Scottish girl, a staunch freethinker. They have two little children who are refused registration because the main requirement for a Jew is to have a Jewish mother. Anne Shalit, however, remains adamant; Sir Patrick Geddes, her grandfather, had been an atheist and she would consider it a farcical hypocrisy to profess belief in any god. Her husband, a secularist himself, was born in Israel, so there can be no doubt about his Jewishness, but he stands by his wife and demands the separation of Religion and Nationality. He challenged the nine High Judges of the Supreme Court to support Nuremberg Race Legislation in reverse and in order to show how nonsensical the religious definition of a Jew is, he quoted Mimri, a sentenced Arab Terrorist leader, whose mother was Jewish.

Meir Shamgar, General-Advocate, retorted that the Law required certain ritual acts on the part of the mother, and this cannot be altered for the benefit of one party; to do this would split and adulterate the nation.

This of course is a racist, therefore, anti-scientific view, since nowhere among civilised peoples do 'pure' races exist. In antiquity, when prisoners or slaves took up the religion of their masters, they were released and adopted, regardless of their 'race'. Until the early Middle Ages, the Jews too kept—or bought from Norman slave traders—slaves of 'Arian' origin who, after conversion to Judaism, were set free and adopted as full members of the Jewish community. It has been estimated that the East European Jews (the "Ashkenazim"), in this way, received a Caucasian 'blood transfusion' of up to 70 per cent (the Spaniolish sector only 30 per cent). This ethnical change is less noticeable in the Arabs, who kept mostly Negro slaves; these when released, could marry in the lower classes only.

Anyway, the Supreme Court wanted to get rid of this hot potato and recommended the government to deal with the

. . . They are more conservative than the Tories.

To these trade union leaders the past is heroic, and while the present bewilders them the future frightens them.

History has endowed them with a great heritage. In their rare public speeches they pay tribute to the movement's pioneers and rebels, provided they are dead and secure in their graves.

As these leaders conceive it, the historic mission of the trade union movement and their position as leaders have already been realised. We are living in the best of all possible worlds.

The social furniture is now nicely arranged and anyone seeking to disturb it is a disruptionist or an irresponsible militant and should be sternly disciplined.

These lines, written in 1961, have a sadly familiar ring.

question of immigrants of mixed parentage as second class citizens. However, in the case of any relaxation in the religious requirement of Israeli nationality, the religious wing of the Coalition threatened to contract out of the government and in order to avert a crisis the Cabinet played the ball back to the lawyers.

This was last November and now the Supreme Court has to come to a decision. Where unnatural laws exist—like the divorce regulations in Catholic Italy—farcical roundabout ways are found. Israelis who are against (or being refused) a ritual marriage by the Rabbi, go to nearby Cyprus and have a Registry Office wedding. Another possibility is the "Mexico Wedlock": in a certain Mexican city marriage is possible by proxy. Lawyers in Israel and Mexico get in touch and on presentation of the couples' documents and authority receive a Mexican (civil) Marriage Certificate, which must be recognised even in theocratic Israel.

Recently an Opinion Poll put the question: Who is to be considered a Jew? 23 per cent answered: He who feels to be one; 13 per cent said whoever lives in Israel and identifies himself with the State; 29 per cent maintained the religious definition of the Jewish mother and another 13 per cent restricted Jewishness to the observance of the strict ritual. After the break-down of all the various definitions it became clear that only less than a third of the population connects Jewishness with Religion.

So will a thaw be possible?

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WHY I MUST TAKE YOUR BLANKET

ERIC WILLOUGHBY

This article is intended partially as a reply to Margaret Green's article 'Let me take your blanket', published in FREETHINKER on May 31.

IT WOULD be interesting to know whether Margaret Green intended her remarks to be taken on face value or whether the article was purposely designed to provoke discussion or such answers as I hope to provide in this article. For my present purpose I have taken it on face value.

Let me first make two points. Unlike Margaret Green I am not a Humanist, I am an atheist. However, I agree that all humanist principles, with the exception of agnosticism, are in concept praiseworthy. Second, it would take a series of articles *a la Simons* to provide a satisfactory philosophical reply to Margaret Green's offering.

What we have to decide is whether the principles in which we believe, and this of necessity must embrace our various disbeliefs, are worth passing to others, or whether our basic axiom is that freethought in its purest form is so overpowering that it would be unthinkable to try to persuade others to our way of thinking.

Rightly, I believe, we decry the performances of Billy Graham, Doctorian, Ron Hubbard, and street corner disciples of doom, but would we be so critical if some mass evangelist hired Earls Court for a week, and established a nationwide television network throughout Britain, as Mr Graham did in 1967, and preached Humanism, or atheism? This is the question we must seriously ask ourselves.

If we answer "Yes", in other words, that we should keep our thoughts to ourselves and let the religious cling to their various blankets, then what does Humanism, atheism or secularism stand for? Secularism would surely have no meaning and for bodies like the various Humanist societies and the National Secular Society to endeavour to increase their memberships, for me to lend by copy of Paine's *Age of Reason* to a religious fanatic who may accost me in the street and try to persuade me that the Bible is true, would be the greatest crimes against humanity we could commit.

For anyone to say "Ah yes, but what we try to propagate would make the world a better place", is simply answered by the fact that every sincere evangelist, be he Christian, Marxist, Buddhist, transcendental meditationist, Jehovah's Witness, *ad infinitum*, believes precisely the same ideal, that his message will bring perfection in the world.

In this respect, then, either we are all correct or we are all wrong. The crucial factor is what we preach, not what we preach against, and this is where I think Margaret Green has gone wrong.

If her blanket-grasping character not only believes in a set of out-dated and ridiculous edicts but also demands that others should believe it too, surely Margaret Green's concern for the right of personal opinion should be incensed. Does not her defence of the believer's right to believe work in reverse, and come to the rescue of the person whose right not to believe is being threatened? If not it should. At least that is my belief.

I feel that the combined forces of Atheism, Secularism and Humanism should be protecting our children and indeed everyone else (but especially our children) against those people from whom Margaret Green would not take the blanket. We can do this to some extent by pressing for

legislation, by staging campaigns, writing letters to the press and broadcasting media, in other words, by counter-attack; or we can take the more direct and probably more effective action of attacking the root cause, and showing the religious gossellers how misguided they are. And this is where we must decide within ourselves whether our freethought principles are more important than the battle for the minds of our children, and it may well take time and heart-searching. It is as well to remember that while we are thinking about it, schools throughout the country are indoctrinating hundreds of children daily, scores of Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons and all other daft sects are visiting houses everywhere, bemused flocks are marching in and out of churches and numerous religious propaganda programmes are being put out on radio and television.

Now if the "blanket" was authentic, in other words if Margaret Green's character clung to a religion based on any speck of truth, or which carried with it any benefit to mankind, would it then be right to take this away? I don't believe so in theory but naturally each case must be decided on its merits. But her character is obviously an adherent to one of the Christian sects, and Christianity has been proved wrong time and time again; so have all other world religions but in Britain we do not hear that much about them. What Margaret Green does not seem to realise is that a person freed from the grip of doctrinal tyranny is a very happy person. It does not disappoint a believer to be convinced that his belief is based on myth, superstition, and downright lies and forgery. Like the writer to whom I reply, I enjoy the beauty of the world, the tranquility of the countryside, the joys of music and poetry, art and human endeavour. Does not Margaret Green wish others the same pleasures. Where is her concern for her fellows then?

I may be totally wrong, but I believe that we must be on our guard against letting our humanist principles get the better of our secularist ones. Not only is religion undeniably discredited, it is also a proven menace and danger to decent society. Not only does it vehemently oppose progress, it is the supporter and indeed instigator of war; every army has God on its side. It is the grasper of pennies from the poor, it is the wooer of the sick and the dying (and indeed the dead), it is the bane of those concerned for the future of the world and it is the terrorist of its indoctrinates.

Are we to let this continue for fear of the consequences of blanket-snatching? Does a psychiatrist receiving a patient who believes himself to be Napoleon refuse to cure him for fear of breaking his illusion?

Chapman Cohen said that freethought meant the absence of authority in matters of opinion. By patronising the authority of opinion manifested in her blanket-grasper, Margaret Green has forfeited her own freethought and is depriving her companion of his.

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Annual report of the

National Secular Society

REVIEW

WILLIAM McILROY

ONE OF THE most factual and balanced documents on the situation in Northern Ireland I have read has just been published by a group of Quakers. *Orange and Green: A Quaker Study of Community Relations in Northern Ireland* (Northern Friends' Peace Board, 3s 6d), is a report which arises from discussions held by Quakers in both parts of Ireland, England and Scotland, and it merits the widest circulation.

There have been clashes and bitterness between Roman Catholics and Protestants since Northern Ireland became a separate political unit, although there was some easing of tension during the 1960s which was welcomed by the less sectarian members of the community. But the barrier between the religious groups is formidable and will not be demolished by isolated acts of goodwill and co-operation. In October 1968 a Civil Rights demonstration was organised at Londonderry, a city notorious for gerrymandering and discrimination, and Mecca of the ultra-Protestant Orange Order. Mr William Craig, Minister for Home Affairs, decided it should be stopped, and the demonstration was broken up by the Royal Ulster Constabulary acting with unprecedented brutality. Craig and others did their best to defend the RUC, but on this occasion—thanks to the presence of British MPs, journalists and television cameramen—Ulster police methods were exposed to the world. The spotlight was on Northern Ireland, and much has been written about this corner of the United Kingdom during the last year.

The Quaker report includes a useful chapter on the background to the present crisis, and the authors pinpoint many of the causes of Northern Ireland's social and economic problems. They show how these are aggravated by the divisions caused by religion; "Protestants and Catholics are produced as inexorably as Gilbert and Sullivan produced little Liberals and little Conservatives in their comic opera *Iolanthe*". This is a very apt comment, and the result is that every aspect of life is poisoned by sectarianism.

Segregation begins before children go to school. There are even "Protestant" games and "Catholic" games, and children are not encouraged to mix socially outside school and develop common interests. Divisions are fomented by hard-liners on both sides. Social, cultural and sporting organisations are usually church based, and in most areas these are duplicated. It seems that there is mixing of Catholics and Protestants only in the universities and the more superior drama and music groups.

There are many obstacles to good communal relations such as the fear of mixed marriages, priestly insistence that social activities should be channelled through the church, and the activities of the Orange Order and its offshoots. This secret society dominates the ruling Unionist Party—it would be extremely difficult for a Unionist to become a candidate unless he were a member of the Order—and the Special Police get their recruits from the more lumpen elements of the Orange Lodge. Most Orangemen are so unbelievably narrow, arrogant and naive that Mary Whitehouse and Alf Garnet appear as radical libertarians by comparison. It is not surprising that curiosities like the Reverend Doctor Ian Paisley (Pioneer Theological Seminary, Rockford, Illinois, Burton College and Seminary, Manitou Springs, Colorado, and the Bob Jones University, South Carolina) command wide support.

The section on the Republic of Ireland (Eire) is the least satisfactory part of the report. The authors do not help anyone by saying it is difficult to substantiate the charge that the Roman Catholic Church interferes in the government of the Republic. Surely they must have known of the enforced resignation of Dr Noel Browne, Eire Minister of Health, because he had sponsored a maternal and child welfare scheme. This affair demonstrated only too clearly that the Church can and does interfere with matters of internal government and administration in the Republic.

Northern Ireland is one of the last strongholds of Christianity in the British Isles. Britain is no longer a Christian country in legal or practical terms; watching the antics of the followers of the gentle Jesus on the other side of the Irish Sea one can only say "And a good job too!"

Orange and Green: A Quaker Study of Community Relations in Northern Ireland is obtainable from the Freethinker Bookshop, 3s 11d, including postage.

LETTERS

Alcohol

YOUR ATTACK on smoking (July 19) is all very well but why are Mr Tribe and others silent about a much greater evil namely "drinking". Smoking affects only the smoker while alcoholic drinking affects not only the drinker but other persons. Homes broken up, acts of violence committed, sexual assaults, traffic accidents, etc., are caused by persons "under the influence" of alcohol, but are any of these caused by a person "under the influence" of nicotine. Apart from deterrents such as high taxation, restriction of hours of public drinking, private drinking is as free as private smoking. If cigarette firms are to be obliged to brand their products as dangerous to health, why should not "the trade" be compelled to brand its advertisements with a warning. Yet we are told that "— is good for you", "— is best", "What we want is —", "Don't be vague ask for —", etc.

J. W. NIXON.

Intelligence in Space

G. L. SIMONS, in his otherwise good article, "This space to let" (a pleasant change from dreary politics) states that on the planets Mars and Venus there might be life, possibly highly intelligent.

Venus can be ruled out at once. Mariner II which was sent to Venus in 1962 found that its temperature is about plus 800 F so water in a liquid state cannot exist there, and few scientists now doubt that Venus is sterile.

Mars has always seemed the most likely candidate for life. This belief had its hey-day in the 19th century when G. V. Schiaparelli and Percival Lowell charted narrow artificial looking channels. It was thought that these were artificial canals which were built by intelligent Martians to bring water from the polar caps to the equatorial regions. Nowadays however we know better. The canals were probably an optical illusion. There is no running water on Mars and the polar caps are barely a frosty deposit.

The final blow to the idea of intelligent Martian life came in 1965 when Mariner IV went to Mars and found that the atmospheric pressure at the surface of Mars is no greater than at 18 miles above sea level on Earth. Also there is not enough oxygen to support intelligent life as we know it.

But we need not completely despair. There is still a fair chance that we shall find low forms of vegetation (in its broadest sense!) though pictures from Mariner VI which is near Mars now have shown Mars to be even more grim, looking very much like the Moon.

Come what may, one thing is fairly certain, we shall not find God out there!

MICHAEL HUGHES.

THE SUGGESTED changes in our obscenity laws approved at the meeting of the Arts Council on July 15 may appear, at first glance, to be of so little importance as to be hardly worth troubling about when compared with the great problems which confront mankind. But, it seems to me, that these great problems are unlikely to be solved until all those adults who can influence national governments are able to examine all the facts of life openly, free from taboos and legal restrictions—except, unfortunately in our existing society, in certain matters, such as those involving national security, libel and, perhaps, business secrets.

There is another important condition necessary for rational adult thinking, which is due to the fact that children and young people require guidance and, sometimes restraint, until they have developed sufficiently mentally and have adequate knowledge and experience of life and society to be able to choose and create their own basic ideologies to suit their particular natures and circumstances. In this process of guidance (education) it is most important that they should not be so deeply indoctrinated as to induce strong irrational ideological compulsions and prejudices which may, later, interfere with the development of their own basic ideologies. Should not this freedom from excessive indoctrination (regardless of the wishes of their parents) be incorporated in a Declaration of Children's Rights?

Though human minds have not been evolved for dealing with life solely by pure reason, as for example the numerous conflicting religions clearly show, nevertheless, if the two methods of produc-

(Continued overleaf)

ing irrational mental fixations mentioned above—excessive indoctrination of defenceless children and censorship of knowledge (even for adults)—were to be eliminated, voters would be better able to influence their Governments to govern rationally and, if the number of more rationally-governed peoples increases, international problems should become easier to solve, ideological conflicts reduced and the use of war for settling disputes less common.

G. F. WESTCOTT.

Revolution in thought?

PRESUMABLY David Petrie's letter of July 19 is to be taken as a product of that 'revolution in thought' which he sees as 'the only hope'. If so, then it would seem that David Petrie is participating in a kind of thought process that may be just as liable to mislead the 'minds of the masses'.

Advocacy of 'mass participation' often seem to forget that 'real problems' which arise from the relationship between human beings are applicable to people of whatever so-called 'class'.

CHARLES BYASS.

Powell

I WAS SURPRISED to learn that the writer of the letter headed "Powell" (July 12) claimed to be a freethinker, to wit, F. H. Snow. It is possible that some subconscious influence is being exerted on him by his own patronym. Pure white Snow supports the policies advocated by Mr Powell, namely, to tell coloured immigrants "You are no longer wanted here. We will pay you £2,000 each to get rid of you". Not with my money you won't Mr Snow. If any problem has been created it is due to the incompetence of past and present Governments and they are the ones who should be told to get out and paid for doing so if necessary. Immigration and emigration cannot be dealt with on the same lines as useful and unuseful imports and exports. May I also remind Mr Snow that the housing problem has been with us as long as either of us care to remember and if the solution is to send people back to where they came from, why did not Mr Powell or Mr Snow think of it before? Our industrial and commercial centres were overcrowded by people who at some time came from all parts of the world, including Great Britain, long before the advent of our coloured brethren. No, Sir, your denial of prejudice is not good enough. The rose is still a rose under any pseudonym and that bad smell is of your own making.

H. RICH.

Humanism in Perspective

THIS "disorganised humanist" is at least non-apathetic enough to question one of the implications in your editorial "Humanism in Perspective" (August 9).

You seem to imply that if we were all "totally reasonable" and utilised this power, we would then all be in total agreement. Surely the decisive factor is not reason but the sense of values to which the faculty of reason is applied.

Isn't there a sense in which human values may save us from inhuman rational prejudice?

Perhaps what F. H. Snow (letter August 9) describes as "Russell's shocking departure from his characteristically great humanitarianism" was, after all, a flight from certain values in the name of reason. We should do well to try to understand Russell's dilemma.

CHARLES BYASS.

I READ with interest the article 'Humanism in Perspective'.

As against Humanism as an organisation I would like to point out the fact that there are as you say people who call themselves Humanists yet disagree totally on questions such as capital punish-

ment, capitalism, etc., etc., even on nuclear war, apparently. You cannot have an organisation where the members disagree violently with each other. Therefore I think you will find that this is one reason why "organised humanism is severely lacking in appeal".

LILIAN MIDDLETON.

Marx

WITHOUT WISHING to be partisan, I feel that Martin Page has given a distorted account of Marxism. Since he gives no references to Marx's works it is difficult to trace all the quotations, but may I make the following observations?

(1) The use of the word 'metaphysical' in the first quotation is obviously ironic. Marx often used irony. It was a useful weapon. Failure to recognise this can of course lead a critic wildly astray.

(2) In a rather confused sentence Mr Page questions the theory of the relativity of values, i.e. that values change according to the social and economic conditions of the period. The alternative to this is to postulate some sort of absolute. Does Mr Page think there is an abstract quality of Beauty to which works of art conform and which stays unchanged throughout time? Absolute Beauty is not far from Absolute Good, which is God. It is a static religious conception. The fact that we admire works of art of bygone ages may be due to the inexhaustible curiosity of man. At any rate if we admire them we don't copy them. Each period of time produces its own forms of culture.

(3) Mr Page refers to Marxism as a "Christian heresy", promising a secular "Redemption". The word 'heresy' again suggests that there is an absolute truth, which is Christianity, and that Marxism is an offshoot of it. This is a familiar line of Christians—only nowadays they try to make out that *Humanism* is an offshoot of their religion. In neither case is it true. Marxism is a materialist philosophy based on a sociological study of conditions on earth. It has no super-terrestrial implications whatever. The Christian idea of redemption is based on the idea of sin, and the dual nature of soul and body. These ideas have no meaning to a philosophy that considers all men's powers, intellectual and physical, as materially based.

(4) Marx is accused of being contaminated by German nationalism. But in *The Communist Manifesto* in a famous passage beginning, "The working men have no country", he describes the ending of all nationalisms. Here he was decidedly optimistic. He did not foresee how the various nationalist governments would succeed in harnessing their people in fratricidal wars. He overestimated the internationalism of the working class. But he was writing in 1848, a year of revolutionary unrest throughout Europe. Marx, like everyone else, was a man of his time.

Finally may I ask Mr Page to read *Class Struggles in France?* It will correct any impression that Marx was prejudiced against the French workers. On the contrary he understood only too well how they were crushed.

In order to assess the truth of anyone's criticism of a writer, it is necessary first of all to know the writer.

MERLE TOLFEE.

Robertson versus Marx

WITH REGARD to my article on "Robertson and the Case against Marxism", Part 2 (9/8/69), there were a number of printing errors, but as the following materially affected the meaning involved, I would be grateful if you would draw the attention of your readers to them. (1) "religion in line two, paragraph one, should have been "relation"; (2) in line three, paragraph two, "Eleanor Marx" was inexplicably altered to "she"—Eleanor Marx was, of course, the great man's daughter, and not his wife; and (3) in line five, paragraph eight, "or" should have been "of".

MARTIN PAGE.

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