

Freethinker

Registered at the GPO as a Newspaper

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

VOLUME 89, No. 35

Saturday, August 30, 1969

Sixpence Weekly

AND WHERE DID YOU GO TO SCHOOL?

IT IS NOT AT PRESENT certain whether the government will introduce a Bill in the next session to compel local education authorities to institute comprehensive schools. It is expected that a small Bill on the subject will be announced in the forthcoming Queen's Speech, but it may do no more than 'request' that schemes be prepared for comprehensive education. Such a law would impose little more pressure on local authorities than does the existing law, and, as is well known, many authorities have as yet done little or nothing.

There are few people who do not now appreciate the undesirability of a system, which relies on the eleven plus examination. And thus the major argument against the implementation of comprehensive education throughout the state system, is that it denies to parents the right of a choice of schools for their children. Those who use this argument must surely ask themselves which is more important? A free choice for parents, or the fullest opportunity to develop their talents for the greatest number of children. Before attempting to answer this question various factors should be taken into account. First, how free is the choice within the state education system at the moment? There is often in fact no choice at all for the parents of the large numbers of children who fail the eleven plus. And for those who pass there is often only a choice in those areas where comprehensive schools have already been set up and provided parents with the choice between comprehensive and grammar. In the areas where progressive local authorities have done away with the eleven plus, there is more often than not virtually no choice for parents, since the complicated systems of streaming allow for little parental interference.

Secondly, it must be considered just how much benefit a child gains, if he is lucky, or in some cases unlucky, enough to have a parent who is in a position to make a choice. The parents who chooses grammar rather than comprehensive may in some instances get for his child a slightly better education in conventional academic terms. But even this cannot be proven, and it takes no account of either the more modern amenities, or what many would consider to be the more healthy social atmosphere of a comprehensive school.

The argument that a comprehensive system would restrict parental choice would seem therefore to have little basis. The parents who have such a choice are in a distinct minority, and even for these it is by no means certain that the choice itself is liable to benefit their children.

It is thus galling to hear of Mr Heath's pledge to repeal any law which the Labour government may pass compelling local education authorities to adopt a comprehensive system, should his party win the next general election. He gave this pledge in a letter to Mrs Myra Fitzsimmons who is the secretary of a group who call themselves the Liverpool Parents' Protest Committee, and who campaign vigorously against schemes to introduce comprehensive schools in their city. Mr. Heath's letter said: "I can assure you that if the Government introduces legislation to make

INSIDE: TO REPEAL THE OBSCENITY LAWS

Professor R. G. PETERSON
looks at the recent Report of the Arts Council's
Working Party

comprehensive schools universally compulsory, we will not only oppose that legislation but will also repeal it when we return to office. The situation will then once more be as it was when we were last in office".

The Conservatives are not, of course, against comprehensive schools as such. Many were opened during their years of rule and no new grammar schools were permitted during their last few years in office. But they are opposed to exercising compulsion over the local authorities.

This would seem to be a woolly policy with little foundation. A government either governs the whole country or not at all. If all wishes of the government were made non-compulsory, there would be no point in their making laws and the result would be anarchy. There would appear to be a lot of sense in the widely held view that the Conservatives are endeavouring to avoid a confrontation on the principle of comprehensive schools, by adopting a policy of opposition to any control of education from Whitehall.

No polemical justification has been put forward for this policy of allowing local authorities to do what they like. And it is very hard to see that there could be any. However various arguments could be put up against such a scheme. If the systems of education in the country are to differ from town to town, and county to county, a situation will eventually arise where people with children will move to an area where the educational system appeals to them. The result of this would be that certain areas would have a large majority of progressives, while others would be dominated by reactionaries. In a country which holds the two-party system of government dear, this would be unhealthy for both the individual communities and the country as a whole. Also a time would come before very long, when to have lived in a certain town and therefore to have been educated in a certain way would command respect in some circles and ignominy in others. The conservative policy is in the long term quite impractical. Imagine an advertisement in London's *Evening Standard* for a machine minder born and bred in Ross and Cromarty.

Freethinker

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

Editor: David Reynolds

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

CHRISTIAN CHARITY!

IN AMERICA it is not uncommon for ordinary citizens to sue their local authorities for ill-use of public funds. At present a fairly spectacular example of this is the suit filed by Kent R. Meyer, a ratepayer and citizen of Oklahoma. He is endeavouring to get the courts to compel the city authorities to remove a 50 foot illuminated cross from one of the city's parks. He contends that the cross is symbolic of the Christian religion and that maintenance of the emblem at the taxpayer's expense is in violation of the constitution of the state of Oklahoma, which contains the clause: "No public money or property shall ever be appropriated, applied or donated, or used directly or indirectly for the use, benefit or support of any priest, preacher, minister, or other religious teacher or dignitary or sectarian institution as such".

Meyer is lucky to have a law, which would seem to give him a good chance of winning his case. In Britain, though crosses are not often found on public land nor maintained at public expense, more subtle methods of aiding the clergy are sometimes used by town councils and the like. A favourite ploy is to sell public land to churches at give away prices. This gives freethinking citizens no legal grounds for complaint.

A case in point is the town of Bicester in Oxfordshire. Ten years ago Bicester Council sold a quarter of an acre site to the Congregational church for the nominal price of £65. This piece of religious unscrupulousness, which doubtless the council considered to be Christian charity, has now received its due. For the council now wants the land back. The Congregationalists no longer have any use for it, but want £2,050 plus solicitor's and surveyor's fees. The Council clerk, Raymond Bainton, has described the Congregationalist demand as "sheer robbery". He went on: "We were empowered to sell at this low price because the land was for religious purposes. The

church put up a small hut but interest died. We would have thought that, as we were so generous to them, they would not demand this fantastic price now". Though this is fair reward for the council's unethical handling of public land ten years ago, it also testifies to the speed with which the sanctimonious priestly talk of Christian charity is forgotten when the prospect of making a bit of money presents itself. "After all", said the Reverend William Simpson at the Congregational Church's London headquarters, "as trustees we are obliged to get the best possible price for the land". One wonders whether these men don't really believe in a day of judgement after all, or perhaps they've simply forgotten about it.

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

A National Trust property which contains one of the finest collections of trees and flowering shrubs in the country

Coach leaves Central London at 9.30 a.m.

Total cost: 28/6

Bookings and enquiries:

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

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.

SECULAR EDUCATION APPEAL

Sponsors:

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

All donations will be acknowledged

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY
103 BOROUGHS HIGH STREET, LONDON, SE1

HUMANISM IN PERSPECTIVE

DAVID TRIBE

ON AUGUST 9 the editor directed his comments to this theme. By and large I agree with his main points, but there are details, emphases, directions where I take a contrary view and on these I shall concentrate. Whether or not humanism should be 'against' things, the most effective journalism usually is.

The important thing to remember about the humanist movement of 100 years ago is that, effectively, it was the NSS and the NSS was it. There were one or two other bodies but they made little impact on British life. It is not therefore true to say that at that time the NSS was more interested in politics than philosophy. It combined the two. It had to. The church couldn't be ignored at the time of Vatican I. If popular education—an important aspect of secular humanist work at the time—be included under 'philosophy', that section slightly dominated. It was customary for accredited NSS lecturers to speak three times on Sunday, and generally they devoted two to philosophy and one to politics. This was true quite often of Bradlaugh then. Gradually however his interests turned more and more to politics. He came to reverse the proportion of his lectures and, under his influence, Besant, Foote, Watts and Aveling—at slightly different times—did the same. In the field of social reforms the important battles were won. With the exception of the Oaths Act 1888 little secularism was put on to the Statute Book of an ideological nature. The effect of secularism on the churches was indirect. People stopped going except for the *rites de passage*, which, as David Reynolds says, still exert a mystical fascination. To ordinary citizens the churches also offer 'authority'—another viable commodity.

By the time of Bradlaugh's retirement in 1890, a year before his death, the pattern was beginning to change again. The great wave of law reform springing from Bentham's philosophical radicalism and view of the law (that statute should replace common law) was petering out. Partly people were coming to realise that social change was more difficult than political change—as the proponents of race relations legislation are slowly finding out. As far as the movement was concerned there was then a basic political difficulty. Freethinkers had throughout the Bradlaugh days been almost unanimously Liberals. In the time of Foote this was no longer true. Nor, except as a campaigner for Bradlaugh, had his successor shown great political interests or abilities. The secularist who retained a strong political motivation tended to concentrate on it completely. Freethinking trades unionists concentrated on narrow union matters; freethinking educationalists turned to the ordinary academic world; and so on. The trend was just another manifestation of the specialisation of modern life. It was a trend that Cohen and his supporters despised. They also tended to despise—or to dislike—politicians. So during the Foote-Cohen era the secular movement could in fact be said to be more philosophical than political.

In the meantime the humanist movement had fragmented and polarised. Rationalism continued the philosophical traditions of secularism in parallel with it. The split was more a matter of personalities than principles. Many leading figures left secularism for rationalism simply because they quarrelled with Foote. Another fact was that the old secularists had been so effective in politics (both party and law reforming) because they were as skilful at speaking as they were at writing. This remained true in the secularist movement even when the philosophy of freethought (largely

Mill, determinism and atheism) became the dominant topic. The rationalists were, on the whole, better writers than talkers. This is true of Bradlaugh's old lieutenant, Robertson, although he became a junior minister and a Privy Councillor.

The ethical movement came from quite a different stable. In the first place it was American in origin. Like Christianity it asserted that the world was to be changed by a moral change in the individual. Asserting the autonomy of ethics it turned its back on law reform. And it turned its back on traditional freethought philosophy. Its teaching was really an attenuated theology, as any perusal of the writings of Coit clearly brings out. This outlook is one strand in the BHA and accounts for the interest one wing of that body has in a 'humanist philosophy' which isn't atheism or anthropology or psychology. Another strand has followed the NSS in its nineteen sixties return to the political concerns of ninety-odd years ago. One of the things that have made this possible is the development of 'consensus politics' among liberally-minded people, whatever their political label. (And, even in a narrow political sense, there has been of recent years an increasing and controversial tendency for the humanist movement once again to support one party, albeit unofficially.)

Britain has always been an empirical rather than an ideological nation; and in this technological age the tendency has grown. What the humanist movement has to do is to show it is 'relevant' to the needs of society. Increasingly this demand is made of the churches, though their original (and for some still their main) function was to distract attention from the world. We have to show that by the exercise of reason to which the editor referred we can make helpful suggestions to improve society. Where they are helpful they are, in a sense, 'negative', that is, they recommend the removal of particular grievances or injustices. Reforming proposals that are purely 'positive' are, in fact, *a priori*, utopian and, I suggest, disastrous when anyone tries to carry them out. Nor would I agree that there is 'greater satisfaction derived from a life ordered by reason'. This was the Edwardian version of the Victorian myth of 'progress', which seduced many otherwise sensible people inside and outside the movement. Its nearest modern counterpart is the 'happy man' of post-ethical humanism—a ludicrous fiction if ever I heard of one. One need not accept every pronouncement of the behavioural psychologists to admit that the capacity of man for reason is limited, that mental and affective processes have little relationship, and that if we are going, in the humanist movement, to offer 'happiness' we shall become as bogus as Christian Science.

What we can offer is freedom from that fear which still burns at the heart of Catholic and Protestant fundamentalism in the furnace of hell-fire. In this modest sense we are offering happiness, or rather, less unhappiness. But that can only be done by draining the philosophical and organisational fuel it draws on; that is, by 'negative' siphons like anti-free will, atheism and anti-clericalism. The important thing is not to become personally negative in the sense of being embittered, rude, uncouth, paranoid. It may sound complacent to say so, but I think the NSS has something like the right balance of priorities to face the 1970s. The masses aren't flocking to join us, I know, but a large number of people are working in one or other of the causes we have championed, and sometimes pioneered, in the last 103 years.

TO REPEAL THE OBSCENITY LAWS

R. G. PETERSON
Associate Professor of English Literature
at St Olaf College

ON JULY 15 a Working Party set up by the Arts Council's Conference on the Obscenity Laws issued its *Report*—a document which has already provoked much discussion in the press and elsewhere. Elegantly written and treating with remarkable clarity a subject loaded with the cant and confusion of more than a century, this *Report* represents a strong attack on the use of the coercive power of the state to enforce attitudes and behaviour which arise not from social utility but from principles of manners and morals originating for the most part in Victorian Christianity. Although few today would argue that the state ought to force its citizens to behave as if they accepted the Anglican creeds or the Articles of Religion, many think it entirely appropriate that the state should force its citizens to behave as if they accepted Christian injunctions about lusting after women in their hearts, about avoiding 'occasions of sin' (situations in which one is *likely to be tempted* to commit lust or some other sin), and about private morality in general. What, after all, are the Obscenity Laws but attempts to compel everyone to avoid certain categories (variously and vaguely defined over the years) of words and images which are supposed to give rise to lustful thoughts?

'It does begin to appear', the *Report* suggests, 'that the case for legislation against obscenity rests, ultimately and solely, not upon any hard factual analysis of anti-social consequences but on a vague generalised residual apprehension . . . to the effect that sexual desire is a form of depravity and should be repressed by law' (p. 12). The convinced Christian may choose to view sexual desire as a form of depravity punishable after death, but that the coercive power of the state (i.e., laws, police, courts) should be used to repress or attempt to repress such desire is surely an outrage against reason and justice. Indeed, in nearly every other area of social and private life, civilised states have recognised the impropriety of attempts, however disguised, to regulate thoughts as well as deeds. It is one thing to wish to kill a man, or to write a book about someone who does, and quite another actually to attempt or to do the deed. The old theory, known as 'constructive treason', about the criminality of imagined murder has long been thought unreasonable and unjust, but we have still with us in many countries a similar theory about the criminality of what might be called 'constructive' fornication, or masturbation, or voyeurism, or rape, or whatever. Although the Christian may consider such mental acts to be crimes against God and worthy of punishment, he should leave that punishment to God and not seek to use the secular arm to enforce attitudes and behaviour for which the *only* ultimate authority is divine command.

The Obscenity Laws as now written and applied attempt to punish those who produce words or images which lead people to lust in their hearts. Not only is such thought *assumed* to be criminal but there are also *assumed* to be regular causal connections between certain words and images and the thought, and again between the thought and various anti-social deeds. This much emerges from the *Report*, as does the fact that the application of the laws is extremely difficult, inconsistent, and unfair. In one of the appendices to the *Report*, David Tribe, President of the National Secular Society, observes that the Obscenity Laws 'are demonstrably not working' and comments both on the difficulties in fair enforcement of each of the relevant laws (including in some instances confusion between

religious and secular values and unwarranted invasion of privacy) and on the illogical and unscientific assumptions behind such laws (pp. A-42-A-44).

The *Report* itself tells us that juries must decide whether a given set of words or images does deprave and, if so, how many people have been depraved and whether the total amount of depravity has been compensated for by sufficient artistic merit and whether there has been even unintentionally an incitement to crime (pp. 9-10). All this adds up to what is called a 'phantom crime' (p. 14). Sexual desire alone may not now be criminal, but it may be criminal to produce words or images which *may tend* to induce sexual desire in others. No one really knows where he stands or what, if anything, he is supposed to have done: 'a man can at least know in his heart whether he is guilty of embezzling; he cannot possibly know whether he is guilty of depraving and corrupting' (p. 14). John Calder, a publisher, and Jean Straker, a photographer, are, as readers of this journal know, examples of how the uncertainty and injustice of the laws entangle particular individuals; and many readers will also know that although these laws have made serious difficulties for the legitimate artist, they have not inhibited very much the illegal trade in out-and-out pornography. The *Report* shows that because the object of the laws is neither reasonable nor clear they cannot be effectively enforced. Legitimate artists and writers and their publishers may well complain, when the more honest and co-operative they are, the more likely they are to be involved for years in expensive and tangled legal proceedings. The pornographers continue to produce and prosper; the buyers, of course, pay more, and the prudes get more angry. How much time and money would be required really to enforce the Obscenity Laws and remove from London alone every word or image that might tend to deprave and corrupt?

Surprisingly enough there are some who think that such a campaign would be worth its cost. Certain words and images, no less than the typhoid bacillus or the polio virus, are supposed to be the chief causative agents for specific social ills. Reading pornographic books or looking at pictures is supposed to cause persons to commit assaults, rapes, sex-murders, or other crimes. This argument is based on social utility and would if true be compelling indeed. But what is certain is that the cause-effect relationship between pornography (whatever that is) and crime is not as clear as that between exposure to bacteria and contraction of a disease, or even as clear as that between consumption of alcoholic drinks and road accidents. The *Report* gives careful attention to this problem and concludes that 'there is a complete lack of evidence to suggest that sex in the arts, even when aphrodisiac in intention, has criminal or anti-social repercussions' (p. 17).

Included among the *Report's* many impressive appendices is a statement from Dr G. B. Barker, Medical Administrator and Consultant Psychiatrist at a large London psychiatric hospital. This statement should be required reading for those who believe that repeal of the Obscenity Laws would lead to an epidemic of sex-crimes. On the bases of his own experience and a documented familiarity with the research on the subject, Dr Barker observes that 'there is absolutely no solid evidence . . . that any person has ever been depraved or corrupted solely by the effect of literature or exposure to the arts' (p. A-13). The general burden of his statement is that pornography is not a cause

of delinquent behaviour, crime, or mental illness but rather a symptom of a more deep-seated unhealthiness in the individual and society. His reference to *The Other Victorians* and his claim that he has 'never met any patient whose condition was caused by "exposure to sexuality"' suggest that any attempt to restore Victorian morality would also restore 'the shambles of repression, conflict, and neurosis' (p. A-14) which are hidden by the outward purity of that era. The point is that for the psychiatrist there is nothing to be gained and much to be lost by the retention or tightening of the Obscenity Laws. Similar views are expressed by another psychiatrist and by the Danish Forensic Medical Council. The latter concluded that 'no scientific experiments exist which can lay a basis for the assumption that pornography or "obscene" pictures and films contribute to the committing of sexual offences by normal adults or young people' and that some beneficial effect on sexually shy, neurotic people, though doubtful, 'cannot be completely ruled out' (p. A-55).

Improbable as it may seem, the Obscenity Laws have no good foundation in social utility; and unless one takes the rigorous view that the laws of the state must enforce what God has commanded simply and solely because He has commanded it, one cannot ignore the scientific evidence without getting mired in a confusion of commonsense, manners and morals, social conventions and legal sanctions, custom, and majority opinion. Many, put off balance by the *Report's* forthright conclusions, may respond in this way—just as Samuel Hynes, Professor of English at Northwestern University, did in the *Evening Standard* for July 26, 1969 (p. 11). Professor Hynes does not want to seem illiberal, and least of all a convinced Christian, but he does seem to be offended by the *Report* and he does want to have his standards of sexual morality and what is 'obscene' (anyone can recognise it, he says, without explaining how) enforced by law. He tries to refute the *Report* by ridiculing the evidence: everyone who really wants pornography can buy it in Soho bookshops, as we all know (so who loses by the Obscenity Laws?); without the Obscenity Laws sex would become a 'bore' or a 'spectator sport', having (presumably) lost the delicious tang it gets from ignorance, fear, and repression; the state, he admits, should not be a custodian of *manners*, but 'one can surely argue that the State should protect generally held conceptions of morality against violation', meaning (presumably) those of Professor Hynes; that the present laws are vague and ineffective is an argument for revision rather than repeal, meaning (presumably) that Professor Hynes overlooked item 6 in the introduction, the Working Party's statement that they had been unable to formulate satisfactory revisions. And so on. 'Certainly', Professor Hynes concludes, 'obscenity should be so defined that serious works like Jim Dine's paintings and Hubert Selby's fiction cannot be identified as criminal'. 'Certainly', indeed, but Professor Hynes does not provide the definition and does not seriously attempt to understand the difficulties faced by the Working Party. Nor does he explain what he would do in the event of a difference of opinion between himself and a magistrate over the 'obscenity' in *Last Exit to Brooklyn*.

One can only regret that Gaia Servadio's essay in the next *Evening Standard*, though it urges repeal of the laws and contains eloquent praise of a kind of polymorphous eroticism, does not attempt to deal with the smooth but specious reasons of Professor Hynes. More fruitful, however was the Arts Council Conference at which the *Report* was made public and at which, under the balanced and patient guidance of Lord Goodman, some of the important

issues were ventilated. Lord Goodman rightly reminded members of the Conference that they had come together not to discuss what Parliament might be likely to do or not to do but what Parliament *ought* to do. Most of the discussion did keep to this question. Perhaps the most cogent objections to the *Report* were those already mentioned—pornography as a cause of crime or even of the fall of nations—and the additional problem about its effect on children. The *Report*, in fact, proposes only the repeal of those laws dealing with what adults can or cannot read or look at; children would continue to be protected from exposure to pornography, as they are now from buying alcoholic drinks and certain other things available to adults. The general public would also be protected from 'offensive displays or behaviour in public places' (p. 18). Apparently satisfied that all but the strongest doubts had been answered, the Conference approved the *Report* and urged the Arts Council and members of the Working Party to press for its implementation.

Political action had, in fact, begun with the bill introduced by William Hamling, MP, and Mr Hamling informed the Conference about that bill (introduced as a test of Parliamentary opinion) and about his intention to see that there would be introduced next session legislation in full accord with the *Report*. Still more recently, Ben Whitaker, a Member of Parliament who took an early interest in the movement to abolish the Obscenity Laws and who was chairman of the first public teach-in on the subject organised by Freedom of Vision in Hampstead in 1966, asked the Home Secretary whether he had considered the *Report*. As might have been expected, the answer went in all directions so that the Government could stand still. But the Home Secretary did invite more research on the question, and the *Report* and its appendices provide a great deal of concrete evidence. It can supply the facts for additional study, comment, and discussion.

Reason and enlightenment were again on the move, both at the Conference and some days later at the London Co-operative Society's Summer School on *The Social Revolution—Today and Tomorrow* held at Easthampstead Park College in Berkshire. Both lecturers for Sunday, July 27, William Levy, former editor of *IT*, and Jean Straker had had personal experience of censorship and the Obscenity Laws. The discussion following the lecture of Mr Straker (who had contributed to the *Report* an eight-page account of his own involvement with these laws) was directly concerned with the *Report* and its recommendations. Most who spoke, spoke in support. A primary school teacher gave voice to a common feeling when he expressed indignation at the possibility of some government official telling him what he could or could not read, and he spoke from his own experience when he said that he had never seen a child corrupted by the sight of the nude body. A magistrate gave personal testimony to the extreme difficulty of applying, or even understanding, the Obscenity Laws and expressed the opinion that magistrates and everyone else would be better off without them.

A gentleman who identified himself as a civil servant and a human being raised once again the question about pornography as a cause of crimes and suggested that we ought to be cautious about repeal, but his most serious objection was based on the fear, not uncommon among intense idealists, that without even stronger and more effective Obscenity Laws the quality of human life will become more and more degraded and that, in effect, we dare not

(Continued on next page)

(Continued from previous page)

liberate the Natural Man lest the animal in him overcome the human. Based as it is on the Augustinian Christian view of human nature as fundamentally depraved, this argument cannot be answered: only the assumption can be criticised as probably unwarranted. For those who accept the *Report's* conclusions the most important question was the one asked (by a middle-aged lady) at the end: what can we do to help get these laws repealed? The answers are simple but demanding: think about the *Report*; discuss it formally and informally; write to local officials, Members of Parliament, Ministers, and others in positions of authority. A rational society will not be born without labour.

To this end I hope that the *Report* will soon be printed and generally available. It is a great step, one that will be important not only in England but wherever the power of the state is used to limit freedom of expression. Our gratitude must go to all the members of the Working Party,

A POINT ABOUT POWELL

PERHAPS THE MOST squalid phenomenon in British politics today is Powellism. That racialists should have a platform in this country is something that shames the very name of Britain. Our cities grew fat on the slave trade; we looted the colonies for their raw materials and food; on naked oppression and exploitation Britain grew 'Great'. And yet many people in this country are still not satisfied with our historical crimes and wish to add to them with further persecution of coloured people.

When Powell first started his racist tirades many of his supporters, not understanding the racialism in their own hearts, argued that he was only concerned with overcrowding, with inadequate school and hospital facilities, with over-stressed social services. There is nothing of the racist in Enoch Powell, his supporters piously claimed, and even the FREETHINKER felt able to carry an article in praise of 'Enoch'. In similar vein, Verwoerd and his co-racialists argued that *apartheid* did not mean racial discrimination but allowed for the simultaneous development of the various races in South Africa in a way that suited them all. And Ian Smith, in African Zimbabwe, has remarked with unblinking gaze that the Africans fully support his tyranny. But at last most British observers have seen through Smith and the South African racialists—although far be it from any such Christian gentlemen as the Tory Front Bench to suggest that we actually stoop to doing anything about a racist regime in a British territory. And now of course a few eyes have been opened to the true nature of the squalid sentiments uttered by that other Christian gentleman, friend 'Enoch'.

In Powell's last speech there was little attempt to mention such irrelevancies as overcrowded schools or hospitals. At last the naked truth was out—and is anyone still blind to it? What Powell fears is that there may be one day a coloured majority in an English city. I know that the mind rebels at any such horrible prospect, but here was the noble 'Enoch', courageous to the last, defying the petty little politicians who would mislead the great English people. Here was the great patron of humanity, struggling to awaken us to the doom that would surely befall us all—if, of course, we didn't round up the blacks and ship 'em out somewhere, anywhere. What a squalid performance! But this is not the only distressing aspect in the whole miserable episode.

especially Benn Levy, MBE, who did much to make it a very readable document, and, of course, to the Arts Council whose generous and fair-minded support made the Conference possible. But the *Report* is only a first step. Some reactionaries will attack it on the grounds that it is anti-Christian or that repeal of the Obscenity Laws will cause crime, lead to a permissive society, and hasten the social revolution or even communism. Some progressives will attack it on the grounds that repeal will increase preoccupation with sex and divert attention from such important problems as the war in Viet-Nam and the creation of a socialist society. Many, like Professor Hynes, will fall between the two stools into unreasoning defence of the *status quo*. All, however, who want the state to stop trying to enforce a private sexual morality useful only for keeping its citizens out of the Christian Hell, who want instead a society that is both rational and humane, should get the *Report* and do what they can to help.

G. L. SIMONS

What is very disturbing is the degree of racialism that Powell has revealed by his pronouncement. And here I am not specifically referring to his nasty little supporters but—surprise, surprise—to the vast majority of his opponents. For it has been characteristic of his opponents that in the majority of cases they have argued in such a way as to reveal the latent prejudice in themselves. For when 'Enoch' tells us that the calamity of negro-dominated English cities is just around the corner, our liberal, righteous and 'well-meaning' protagonists of racial justice reply "Surely not! He must be exaggerating! Let's look at his figures!" And with sighs of relief all our virtuous liberals unite in a holy chorus—"Enoch is misleading us. He is extrapolating on dubious premises. His figures are in error. His logic is wrong". And so we are all told that the forecast disaster will probably not come to pass, that 'Enoch' is worrying needlessly, stirring up trouble where there is no cause. And the second phase of the intellectual exercise can be embarked upon—"Let us now consider what Enoch's motives are. Can he be hankering after the leadership of the Tory Party? Is he going mad? Does he believe the odd things he says?"

And so the main premise of the Powell racialism is rarely (if ever) questioned—that a black-majority in, say, Birmingham would be a disaster. Instead of arguing that this would be no 'disaster' most liberal spokesmen have argued that it will not happen, that we can sleep soundly in our beds because 'Enoch' cannot think straight. But it is the liberal attitude that is bent. What we should all be saying is—"So there may someday be a negro majority in Birmingham. So bloody what!"

When anyone argues a position that we find purports to establish unwelcome conclusions we strive to show the fallacy of the logic or the falsehood of the premises on which the argument rests. If an ideological opponent is threatening dire consequences if we do not act quickly we can either attack his reasoning or argue that the consequences are not dire. The former case is the one that public-spirited liberals have been adopted regarding Powell; they should have been adopting the latter one.

I remain totally unmoved at the prospect of a Birmingham with a fair-haired majority—and fair hair was of course once a peculiar racial characteristic. Why should I

—or you!—tremble at the thought of a dark-skinned majority. But I have yet to hear someone stand up on television or be given a column in a mass-circulation paper to reply to Powell in the way he should be. Exchanging figures, trading statistics, quoting one's pet authorities—all this may have a place, but it does not get to the root! The root is that Powell and the Powellites attack colour *because it is colour*, not because it overcrowds hospitals or lowers educational standards. These latter things, even if true, are quite secondary. Large numbers of coloured faces offend Enoch Powell if he happens to witness them in English streets. And this is the root!

If a man lies publicly to make a point we can expose the lie, but if we do this in such a way as to concede his main premise, then we make his point for him. And this is the distressing feature of the Powell episode that few liberal

speakers or writers seem to have noticed. The shameful thing about Powell is not that he uses figures in a misleading way (this is happening all the time in Britain) but that he uses them to demonstrate a conclusion which, if we concede its fearsome nature, makes us racialsists. The conclusion he seeks to establish—that there may be large numbers of families in this country of African or Asian descent—is not fearsome. Nor (unless it furthers racial harmony) is it particularly delightful. *It is irrelevant*. Skin-colour is irrelevant. And the sooner our pious liberals realise this, instead of playing the statistics games with 'Enoch' and at the same time accepting his main premise, the worthier they will be.

One of the problems is that half the racialsists in this country don't know they are racialsists. Let us try and point it out to them!

FORSAKEN WOMEN

CHARLES HENNIS

"THE IDEA dies hard that there is something sinful in failure and we deserve what we get. Perhaps we do but our children don't and our men-folk get away with a few pounds maintenance for having their children cared for with none of the worries."

I quote from a letter written by a woman whose marriage ended in divorce and who, like a number of other women, was living—until her marriage broke up—with her mother-in-law. The mother backs up her son so immediately the wife is made homeless.

Let's follow what happened to this particular woman—I quote again from her letter, "I went to a Community house that folded up after six months, had au-pair jobs that came to an end through changes in circumstances, rented a room from friends until they wanted it for their newest baby . . . on the open market what can I do? Private landlords want 'business couples' or 'would consider one child'. More than one child and you're beyond the pale anyway and they always steer clear of lone mothers in case you fall back on the rent. Even one agency on hearing I was divorced said, 'You'll have to find someone who'll guarantee that you'll pay the rent then'. Or there are the big impersonal agencies who ask nothing except a large fee or deposit and several weeks rent in advance, usually coming to about £50—and where would I get that money from, no one would give me a loan."

Take another case, a woman with a two and a half year old boy separated from her husband. She writes, "I saw an unfurnished flat last week somewhere in Harlesden. It had on the ground floor an 85-year-old woman who was senile and the flat was dreadful—holes in the walls and, on top of everything, the creature who was the landlord made it quite clear he wanted to take me to bed. Naturally, I belted him across the face and couldn't help laughing for two days."

One cannot help admiring the courage of a woman who can still laugh even when up against this near hopeless quest for accommodation.

Then not only are these women often looked upon as easy prey by lecherous landlords, there is also the colour problem, or rather, colour barrier.

I quote from another letter, "I am one of the unfortunate women about marital life; I am an African woman separated with two young daughters aged 2½ and 1½. I am earning good money for my work which is sufficient for me and for my children but I cannot get any accommodation.

For this reason I have to give out my children for another woman to take care of them and, since I've done this, life has become worthless for me because my poor children are the only company I have got in this country. I am prepared to pay any amount just to see that I can keep my poor children and see someone else to talk to."

One could go on for ever quoting from letters like these but I will content myself with one further example—I quote—"I am at present living in a house owned by my ex-husband; I pay him rent and pay rates and all upkeep myself. This has worked well, as I let 3 rooms furnished and this covers a large part of these expenses. I am teaching part-time in an art school four afternoons a week and am an examiner for Cambridge exam papers in art at Christmas and in the summer, and have occasional free lance work, painting and writing. I have two daughters, ten years and one year. I am earning just over £10 a week, during term time only, and pay £2 weekly to someone who looks after the baby while I go to work. Now the house has to be sold and, apart from the difficulty of finding flats, or anywhere, I have really too small an income to meet any of the rents of ordinary lettings. I have asked the Council for a mortgage on this house, wondering if I could persuade my ex-husband to sell it at low price to me, but what I earn is not enough security. My elder daughter has eczema and asthma, and both for her treatment, and schools, I hope to find somewhere in North London. She now needs a lot of care and treatment but, in spite of difficulties, she has now settled in and is doing well at school and so I would like to avoid further changes of school and friends, if possible. I am seeing a solitictor to get advice and protection from eviction."

Humanists have been fighting for—and are continuing to fight for—marriage to be regarded in a rational way so that, if two people are not happy together, then the marriage can be ended but we still have to face the fact that the ending of a marriage nearly always brings far more problems to the women than to the man. To start with, she is usually saddled with the children and then she very often has to find a job (the man usually has one) and then, nearly always the hardest thing of all, she has to find accommodation for, surprsing though it may seem, numbers of these women were, until the ending of their marriage, living with their in-laws.

One woman, a Greek, Mrs Nina West, has set out to tackle this problem by founding Nina West Homes Ltd.

(Continued at foot of next page)

BOOK REVIEW

JESSE COLLINS

THE VATICAN EMPIRE, Nino Lo Bello (Trident Press, 630 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10020. \$4.95).

"THIS IS THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL" (Vatican coin).

Other people's money and what they do with it is ever a fascinating study. Here we are directed to the Vatican State under the guidance of a specialist writer on economic affairs. This is in no sense a hostile book. The author makes it quite clear that he is not one of those anti-clerical dogs, known to so many of our dear readers, but an investigator into "the Vatican's relationship with the sign of the dollar, a symbol as powerful in today's world as that of the Cross". He is professionally well equipped to carry this out, and would need to be, because, among other things, the Vatican is perhaps the most secretive organisation of its size on this planet. Its huge financial manipulations are often in deep shadow and complicated beyond belief.

Starting with the vast, Vatican-owned, construction company, Società General Immobiliare and working through The Montecatini Edison Co., also vast; Italcementi, cement, second largest in Europe; CISA-Viscosa Co., artificial textile fibres and rayon; the huge Ceramica Pozzi Co., ceramics, mostly sanitary ware, and here the Vatican seems to have lost its touch for a loss of \$14 million has accrued over the five years to 1967—but let it pass. The Gas industry, mining, pharmaceuticals, cars, electrics, tourism, insurance and, of course, banking together with many offshoots of all kinds, in Italy and abroad, in which the Vatican has "financial association in either a major or minor degree" and which take up a solid 34 pages of this excellent book merely to outline. Some notion of the non-ecclesiastical activities of this small State begins to emerge. As Nino Lo Bello dryly comments "The Apostolic Palace and Wall Street are singing a remarkably similar tune".

So much for the strongly-flowing streams of money coming in, much of it untaxed, but what goes out? These are dealt with in considerable detail, admitting always the difficulty of getting accurate figures. The Vatican's annual payroll, for instance, comes to about \$7.25 million and the Pope's total expenses are put at something like \$20 million a year. This for upkeep of many buildings, maintaining an "army", as the author amusingly calls some 200 Swiss Guards. A decorative matter. Ammunition costs would be low, but eat they must. The Diplomatic Corps, sixty cars, a powerful radio station and a newspaper; "an incredibly dull one". The rest on charities, funds for the mission field and help in disaster areas. The figures are astronomical both coming in and going out.

Considering that the Vatican was almost broke in 1928 due to somewhat reckless giving away of none too ample funds by Pius XI and his immediate predecessor, how did this enormous 'business', for such it is, get started? "Mussolini was the man sent by Providence", said Pius, for when he signed the Lateran Treaty he gave the Church such quantities of cash, bonds, and other privileges that, skilfully managed as it was, this Vatican-Fascist friendship led to the solid entrenchment of the Church in the Italian economy. A most lucid account of this Treaty is given here embodying some surprising and little-known details.

The political background, the rise and, until recently, the dominance of the Christian Democrat party and its 'intertwining' with the Vatican is clearly set out and, oh yes, some sizeable scandals almost inevitably embroider the busy scene. This is a most useful book for the reference shelf, very well produced.

No estimate is made here of the effect on finance of present-day troubles; the very bad world press following the "pill" encyclical; the priestly and lay pressures for reform in many areas; the closures and difficulties in maintaining 'Religious Houses', colleges and schools; the dwindling church attendance. Perhaps the industrial and commercial funds will flow for the present but how about the necessary bodies?

LETTER

Heythrop College

AS A MEMBER of the NSS and a member of the Senate of the University of London, I wish to protest against the ill-informed and misleading attack on the University in respect of the admission of Heythrop College as a School of the University in the Faculty of Theology, and particularly against the "press statement" issued by Mr Tribe on this subject and published on August 2.

The resolution passed at the AGM (which did not appear on the agenda at all as circulated to ordinary members) "urges the Senate to recognise the interests of academic impartiality". What on earth does this mean?

Whether we, as freethinkers, like it or not, Theology is accepted by most people as a proper branch of study in a University and has always been so accepted in London. The purposes of London University, as defined in its Statutes, are to "hold forth to all classes and denominations . . . without any distinction whatsoever, an encouragement for pursuing a regular and liberal course of education".

It would thus be a direct and fundamental breach of its statutory obligations if the University, which has long had Anglican, Methodist and Congregationalist schools in its theological faculty, refused on purely denominational grounds to admit a Catholic college as a School of the University.

At its meeting on July 16, the Senate had before it a lengthy report from the four Inspectors who visited the College on its behalf. This report examined all aspects of the College's academic activities, including its accommodation and equipment, its Library (about 160,000 volumes), the courses it runs, the qualifications and control of the College. Nobody who studied the information given on these matters with an open mind could have any doubt as to the high academic standing of Heythrop College.

In his "press statement" (ought not these effusions to be numbered for ease of reference?), Mr Tribe referred to "collapse before sectarian pressure". I challenge Mr Tribe to produce any evidence of sectarian pressure in this case. I have not been able to find any member of the Senate who is aware of any.

Mr Tribe also says that "ratepayers would be subsidising trainee priests". The University of London is not, for the most part, financed out of rates and—in any case—Heythrop is admitted as "a non-grant-receiving school", which means that no public money allocated to the University will be used to finance Heythrop.

Mr Tribe also alleges a "secret deal" in this matter. Just what is this supposed to mean, I wonder? So far as I can ascertain, there has been no undue secrecy in dealing with the Heythrop College application. The authorities may not have thought it necessary to keep Mr Tribe informed but I can find no evidence of the sort of discreditable suppression of information from those entitled to receive it that the words "secret deal" seem to imply. Here, too, therefore I challenge Mr Tribe to produce evidence to justify these accusations.

I believe that the issue of these irresponsible and quite irrational statements by, or on behalf of, the NSS can only bring the Society into serious disrepute. I hold no brief for the Roman Catholic Church in any way but Catholics are surely entitled to the same academic freedoms as anyone else. Can't Mr Tribe leave this sort of narrow, bigoted and emotional nonsense to the Rev Ian Paisley? J. STEWART COOK.

(Continued from previous page)

This is a registered charity formed to help the divorced and separated mother and her children and has the three aims of establishing homes with self-contained flats at cost rent with day nurseries attached, staffed with qualified nursery teachers; to help train or retrain mothers for jobs that suit their qualifications and to support the Divorce Guidance Council which gives a divorced mother legal, welfare and financial advice.

At 19 Nina West was separated from her husband but she did not let that get her down; she trained as a kindergarten teacher and later opened a nursery school. This is just a first step, she now has a potential site in North London where ten mothers could be housed plus a day nursery and is hoping that the flats will be built within the next eighteen months.

I have quoted from letters written to her which I have had the privilege of reading, let me now quote Nina West herself: "You can recognise these divorced women when you get in the Underground. You see it in their eyes. There is that look of a hunted animal. A total emptiness. They couldn't even protest if they were beaten up."

Women in desperate need of a helping hand. They feel themselves forsaken. Humanists can show that they are not without friends.

There is so much more I could tell you but space forbids, find out more for yourself by writing to Nina West Homes Ltd., 12 Hampstead Gardens, London, N3.