

# Freethinker

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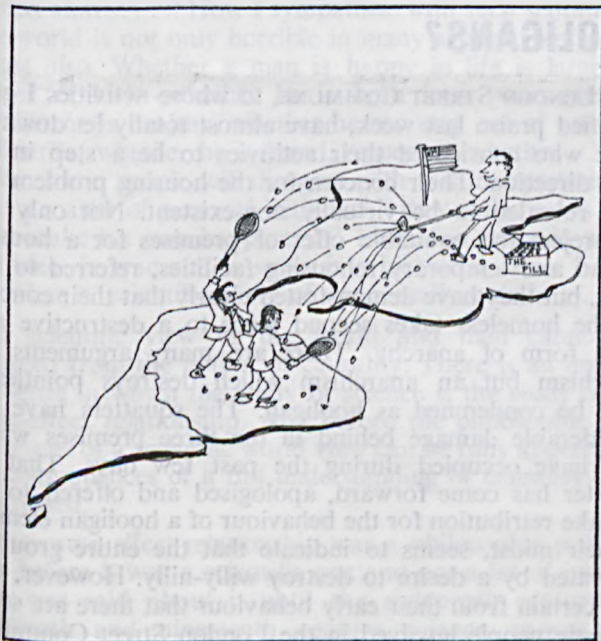
Saturday, October 4, 1969

Sixpence Weekly

## BRAZIL . . . WHERE THE NUTS COME FROM

IN RECENT MONTHS, in his position as President of the World Bank, Mr Robert McNamara has made some surprisingly spirited calls for a positive world programme for population control. Against this the reaction from Catholic countries has been correspondingly surprisingly restrained. However, last week at the United Nations General Assembly, Dr José de Magalhaes Pinto, Brazil's foreign minister, voiced a strong criticism of McNamara and the World Bank in a speech which included a thinly disguised attack on the government of the United States. It is a pity that Dr Margalhaes Pinto lacked both the courage and inclination to attack the US government for its economic exploitation of his country, instead of grousing about: "certain scientists, stimulated by some governments and some international agencies, who insist in wishing to demonstrate the perils of a population explosion, deducing from it alarming generalisations unconnected with the specific situations of each country . . .".

He went on to trot out the familiar Catholic battle cry-cum-banalities: "Life must for us continue to have priority over death". The horrifying paradox that life in Brazil will become increasingly short, agonising and empty-bellied as long as it is given priority over what Catholics mistakenly consider to be death, completely escapes the foreign minis-



ter of a country whose population is expected to double within the next twenty years. Magalhaes Pinto's declaration that Brazil will "resist any pressure whatever against its demographic growth" provoked a reaction from President Nixon, who is of course only too willing for the United States drugs industry to help increase his economic power over the South American states with the aid of contraceptives. Despite his motives he enunciated the truth: "international co-operation is . . . indispensable for the reduction of the population growth".

One could sympathise a little with the eleventh-hour naivete of the Brazilian government, were it not for the fact that their opposition to birth control results solely from the Pope's notorious misnomer, *Humanae Vitae*. Prior

to the Papal pontification, Brazilian doctors had made substantial inroads towards ending the maleducation, malnutrition, unemployment and resultant early death in their country, by teaching contraception in the slum areas of the big cities in the North East. They had gained the support and valuable aid of various private international family planning organisations. This activity received tacit governmental approval. However, the Pope's encyclical caused official scotching of any proposals for a nationwide population control programme, and the government stated its official support for the ban on artificial contraception.

The amount of suffering to be laid at the doors of the Vatican, is belied by Brazil's annual birth rate of 3.4 per cent. For the poverty stricken North East has a considerably higher rate than the richer South. In the poorer, predominantly negro and mulatto areas, wages are disproportionately low and jobs horribly scarce. The demands from the working and middle class Brazilians that their children's education be improved cannot be met from the taxes, leaving a reduction in the birth-rate as the only realistic means of improving the standard of living, and the expectancy of life. In such circumstances Magalhaes Pinto's equation of death with reducing the birth-rate, is a very sick, gruesomely paradoxical joke.

## DIVORCE—BRITISH AND ITALIAN STYLE

THE DIVORCE REFORM BILL, which was passed in the last parliament, provided cause for concern amongst its supporters as well as its opponents. The chief reason for uncertainty was the question of financial safeguards for divorced women, because the new law permits a divorce after five years separation even if one party does not wish it. Naturally the welfare of the children of a marriage broken in such a way also caused some of the bill's supporters to think twice.

It would appear that this weak link in the new laws will be strengthened, if the government adopts a draft bill prepared from a Law Commission report, which was published

(Continued overleaf)

# Freethinker

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Editor: David Reynolds

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last week. It is virtually certain that the bill will be passed as a matter of course. The report proposes that the courts should have wide powers over property rights and that when making financial arrangements, the courts should take into account the means and needs of the parties and

## 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.

Buy British and African Stamps from Humanitas Stamps and help Swaneng Hill School, the Agnostics Adoption Society, and the Humanist Housing Association. Send for list to Mrs A. Goodman, 51 Percy Road, Romford, Essex, RM7 8QX (sac please).

### 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

**All Ireland Humanist Conference**, Hotel Nuremore, Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan: October 25 and 26: Brochure from Mr S. Potter, Swains Hill, Ballykeel, Holywood, Co. Down. Tel. Holywood 2863.

**Cardiff Humanist Group**: Bowchier Memorial Hall (Cardiff Institute for the Blind), Newport Road, Cardiff: Wednesday, October 15, 7.45 p.m.: Public Forum on Moral Education. Speakers, Peter Price, The Rev. B. Duckworth—Chairman, Robert Presswood (Director of Education, City of Cardiff).

**Glasgow Humanist Group**: George Service House, University Gardens: Wednesday, October 8, 7.30 p.m.: "Ingersoll", Jim McCurdie.

**Kingston and Merton Humanists**: The Community Centre, St George's Road, London, SW19: Thursday, October 9, 8 p.m.: "Scientific Humanism", Ernest Seeley.

**Leicester Humanist Society**: Vaughan College, St Nicholas Square, Leicester: Tuesday, October 7, 7.45 p.m.: "Mental Hospital and the Community", J. H. Hoare.

**Leicester Secular Society**: 75 Humberstone Gate: Sunday, October 5, 6.30 p.m.: "The Law v Religious Liberty", F. H. Amphlett Micklewright, MA, FRHistS.

**Luton Humanist Group**: Carnegie Room, Central Library, Luton: Thursday, October 9, 8 p.m.: "The Homeless", R. C. Ebbs (Secretary, Luton Shelter Group).

**South Place Ethical Society**: Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1: Sunday, October 5, 11 a.m.: "Man—Moon and Social Responsibility", Dr John Lewis. Admission Free. Tuesday, October 7, 7 p.m.: Discussion, "What's Been Happening in the Universe?", J. M. Alexander. Admission 2s (including refreshments), Members free. Tuesday, October 14, 7.30 p.m.: Conway Memorial Lecture—"The Alternative Society", Dr James Hemming. Tickets 2s 6d from the Society.

**Sutton Humanist Group**: Oak Room, West Hill House, West Street, Epsom: Wednesday, October 8, 7.45 p.m.: A meeting.

the children, the former family's standard of living, the contribution of the woman in looking after the home, the conduct of each party, and the loss of any chance of the woman's becoming entitled to a widow's pension. That all parties are to be considered is perhaps indicated by the provision that illegitimate and adopted children are to be treated as "children of the family". Given the unwelcome truth that divorce must be as freely available as possible, the proposal that the draft bill should be passed so that it can come into effect alongside the new divorce regulations in 1971, seems to give us as fair a law as can be expected.

Meanwhile in Italy the first Bill to allow divorce in any circumstances, seems to be nearing success, after three years of filibusters and frustration. Signor Louis Fortuna, the bill's pilot, has said that the bill should be through before the Christmas recess. This may prove to be over-optimistic since the ruling Christian democrats may give priority to other legislation. Nevertheless, there is very little doubt that when the bill does come to be voted upon, it will receive a majority. For Signor Fortuna, a socialist, has the support of the Liberals, Republicans, and Communists as well as that of his own party, while the minority government of the Christian Democrats will be joined only by the Neo-Fascists and Monarchists as they register their votes against the bill. The bill provides for divorce in a number of circumstances, many of them obscure, but including five years continuous separation and non-consummation of marriage.

## HOOLOGANS?

THE LONDON STREET COMMUNE, to whose activities I gave qualified praise last week, have almost totally let down all those who considered their activities to be a step in the right direction. Their concern for the housing problem has been revealed to be virtually non-existent. Not only did they reject the equitable offer of premises for a housing bureau and temporary rehousing facilities, referred to last week, but they have demonstrated clearly that their concern for the homeless takes second place to a destructive and futile form of anarchy. There are many arguments for anarchism but an anarchism which destroys pointlessly must be condemned as hooligan. The squatters have left considerable damage behind in the three premises which they have occupied during the past few days. That no squatter has come forward, apologised and offered to try to make retribution for the behaviour of a hooligan element in their midst, seems to indicate that the entire group is motivated by a desire to destroy willy-nilly. However, one feels certain from their early behaviour that there are some altruistic people involved in the London Street Commune. If none of these comes forward to declare that the damage has been done by an irresponsible and unrepresentative element and was not the Commune's policy, there is little hope of legitimate squatting campaigns gaining the support they deserve in the future.

## VISION AND REALISM

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# THE SCIENTIFIC VIEW OF MAN

G. L. SIMONS

WE'RE all scientific these days. Even astrologers have been heard to introduce ideas about cosmic rays to explain astronomical effects on human personality, and the struggling theologians have long been obliged to mug up a bit of science to show how up-to-date they are. In fact theologians have tried this game for a few decades now: they quickly latched on to Heisenberg's Indeterminacy Principle to 'prove' that free will exists, and de Chardin thought that by dishing up some pseudo-science with a new pseudo-terminology he could show the essential unity of science and religion. Of course the poor theologians are not much good at this game and even their best efforts are rather pathetic.

The scientific view of man is not much comfort to the theologian, and for that matter it is not always of comfort to the rationalist. Bertrand Russell found the world 'horrible, horrible, horrible' and we all know what he means: a horrible world that fitted into some justifying plan might seem less horrible but for the rationalist there is no such get-out clause. What we get out of life is largely a matter of luck—I am not over-impressed with the quality of an all-pervasive 'Cosmic Justice'. One of the *Carmina Burana* (poems written by wandering monks in the thirteenth century) is called *Fortuna Imperatrix Mundi* (*Luck, Empress of the World*) and characteristic lines read: "The wheel of chance spins; one man is abased by its descent, the other carried aloft; . . ." How I sympathise with such sentiments. The world is not only horrible in many aspects, but totally unjust also. Whether a man is happy in life is largely a matter of luck—whether he is born in a poor country, whether he is healthy, whether he can stay out of war and civil strife, whether he is loved, respected, whether . . . Of course some people will disagree with this interpretation—"It's a matter of personal initiative!" they will cry, "A man must make his own happiness!" There is a sense in which this view is true and a sense in which it is false. Let us see what a scientific view of man really entails . . .

A scientific view of the world and man cannot be divorced from the notion of causality. There is an important sense in which the study of science is the study of the cause-effect relationship. And before the philosophic consequences of a scientific world view can be fully appreciated the consequences of a full understanding of causality must be stressed.

The cause-effect relationship was a philosophic problem long before it was a scientific one and not a lot of importance was said about it until the eighteenth century. In eighteenth and nineteenth century science, causes and effects were regarded as discrete entities, definable independently and in a sense separate. A cause was an event which must inevitably lead to another event, the effect. Science had largely become the study of this inevitability. It needed David Hume (1711-1776) to show that there was nothing inevitable about the cause-effect relationship, that it was contingent and not necessary. A salient Hume text reads: ". . . that the simple view of any two objects or actions, however related, can never give us any idea of power, or of a connection betwixt them: that this idea arises from a repetition of their union: that the repetition neither discovers nor causes anything in the objects, but has an influence only on the mind, by that customary transition it produces: that this customary transition is, therefore, the same with the power and necessity, which are consequently felt by the soul, and not perceived externally

in bodies . . ." Or in short, we only imagine, by viewing the regular sequence of cause to effect, that there is an inevitable connection between them.

Modern empiricists rarely argue with Hume over this and the *contingent* nature of scientific truth has been generally recognised among modern philosophers. Some religious people have taken this to mean that the old sure faith of the scientist in a determinist universe has been overthrown. This seems to me far from the truth.

With quantum physics and relativity, causes and effects are viewed differently. They are no longer discrete, like billiard balls, jolting one another into further causal consequences. Rather they merge imperceptibly: cause runs into effect runs into cause . . . And in atomic physics it is sometimes not convenient to talk about causes and effects as such. But the maintenance of a broadly causal philosophy of nature is not impaired by these admissions. Causality has become largely the study of movement, the running of one arrangement of matter/energy into another—and it is no longer convenient in all instances to delimit the 'arrangements'. Thus the causes and effects have in reality become infinitesimal—a cause has no sooner sprung into existence than it is its effects, which in turn are further causes. The infinitesimal view of causality, as it can be understood in terms of modern science, makes it well suited to treatment by calculus, the mathematics of the infinitesimal. The differential equation merely links variables changing in definable relations, and changing infinitesimal by infinitesimal.

The modern view of causality in no sense undermines the deterministic nature of the universe (and man, a part of the universe). In fact the reverse is the case. Modern mathematical technique has shown that the world is predictable *in principle* in all its particulars. The limitations on this predictability derive not from any random element in nature but from the limitations of human technology and human intellect. The Indeterminacy Principle *may* be a reason why total predictability may never be possible, but I feel that human resource will overcome that one. What strikes me as a much more difficult barrier is the sheer complexity of natural events. To this problem I see no answer. Nature will remain predictable in principle but not in practice in every detail—so those who fear that a deterministic world would become increasingly dull with the advance of science need have no qualms. In fact most of what gives human life its richness would not be predictable in any conceivable technology. This is true, but *in no sense whatever does it undermine the mechanistic, deterministic view of man in the world.*

Whether the theologian or the rationalist like it or not, man is a mechanism, albeit of the most complex type we know. He is complex for two reasons—because he is alive and because he is intelligent. Human complexity resides solely in the human cell (the basic animal cell) and in the organisation of the brain and nervous system. Few rationalists would deny that thought derives from brain activity and that the brain can be understood, *in principle*, in purely physical terms. In fact, already, two-state logical devices, based on the building blocks of the modern digital computer, have been arranged to model the building blocks of the brain. Brain cells 'fire' in a logical two-state fashion, suggesting a digital mode though the peripheral brain centres may be analogue-based.

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# PATTERNS OF LIVING AND LOVING

MAURICE HILL

*Maurice Hill and a small group of people are hoping to set up a commune in the near future. The following two-part article, which is to be concluded next week, is a summary of their thinking to date.*

THE ORGANISATION of society into small family groups is not necessarily the best arrangement mankind can devise. The family as we now know it is certainly not the best arrangement for some individuals. We should surely re-examine this institution in the light of modern knowledge, and ask whether society might do better to allow greater freedom in patterns of living. Such an idea is likely to be opposed by many who have been brought up in the tradition of permanent one-to-one bonds. What we are going to suggest, however, is not that everyone should be compelled or conditioned to adopt a new system (as all are conditioned now to accept the old), but that everyone should be free to do as he pleases, provided no harm is done to others.

This would mean escaping from the old repressive "morality", removing the stigma attached to "living in sin" and illegitimacy, and learning to accept pre-marital sex, homosexual behaviour, and sexual freedom for children and adolescents. It would also mean accepting the need for free and general availability of contraceptive advice and equipment, efficient sex education in primary and secondary schools, and the encouragement of a more adventurous attitude to life in the young. Most of this has been and will be opposed by the churches, but most of it is already in prospect, and these suggestions merely extend a current trend towards the rationalisation of personal relationships.

## The Family

"The family looks inward upon itself; there is an intensification of emotional stress between husband and wife, and parents and children. The strain is greater than most of us can bear. Far from being the basis of the good society, the family, with its narrow privacy and tawdry secrets, is the source of all our discontents."—Dr Edmund Leach, *Reith Lectures, 1967*.

". . . the ultimate and most lethal gas chamber in our society."—Dr David Cooper.

"Its cardinal function is as a factory for authoritarian ideologies and conservative structures."—Wilhelm Reich: *The Sexual Revolution*.

"The family that prays together, stays together."—Christian adage.

Freud attributed neuroses to early experiences of the child within the family, from developmental fixations to the Oedipus situation (a family problem widely recognised in man's history). It is of special interest to freethinkers to consider the parental figure becoming the super-ego becoming the voice of God.

Adler based an analysis of life-styles on the position of the child in the family, the eldest, the youngest and the middle child all having their special problems. Today the family is tending to become smaller and more isolated, and this intensification of the problems makes the institution even more dangerous than before.

We do not accept the idea of "original sin" and we are aware of the vital part played by the early environment in the social development of the child. Some of the damage done is no doubt unavoidable in an imperfect world. But

if in our society there are increasing numbers of cases of theft, assault, mental breakdown, escape to drugs, drunkenness, suicide, despair and callous violence, then the responsibility lies at least in part within the family system in which the child's patterns are set.

The increasing demands of the young for independence, the revolt against parental authority, and against school and university authorities presuming themselves to be *in loco parentis*, are partly a revolt against this family structure. The young are instinctively rebelling against being shut up in little boxes with possessive and demanding adults whose unconscious purpose is to keep them in a state of immaturity and dependence. The indignant and punitive reactions of some adults to these struggles of the young are the reactions of parents whose authority and dignity are cast in doubt, and who mean to re-establish them by self-assertion, discipline, punishment and "law and order".

Such reactions can lead only to violent conflict and the attempted suppression of the young individual. How can conflict and suppression be avoided?

## Some Alternatives

Aldous Huxley, in *Island*, portrays a happy society that has broken away from the rat-race and organised itself according to the psychological and social needs of its members. The book is full of fascinating ideas, and should be read by anyone interested in the problems of social organisation and personal freedom. But in the end it fails in the conflict with harsh reality.

In *Walden II*, the behaviourist Dr B. F. Skinner has invented a community closer to our present society, but still withdrawn from the competitive madness. It is based on his own psychological principles; the pros and cons are thoroughly discussed in the book, and one is left wondering whether the answer to a corrupt society is to break away from it entirely and establish a sane and self-supporting community.

Both books, like most other Utopias, tend to minimise difficulties. Their societies are perhaps too good to exist within human bounds. Nevertheless they are a rich source of ideas for the establishment of a community which, though not aiming at perfection, might be far more desirable than the present mess.

Most people would probably prefer a compromise: a position where the group was in full contact with the rest of society, yet emotionally independent of it; contributing work and ideas in exchange for the usual services, but based on co-operation not competition, love not hostility, moral principles not commercial expediency or dogmatic authority. It would be a rational community, carefully based on facts as far as we know them, always ready to adapt to new discoveries, democratic in organisation, free of personal power and compulsive competition—a community, in Russell's phrase, "inspired by love and guided by knowledge".

## The Commune

We presume that the final form a commune would take would depend on the wishes of its members. Decisions on details of organisation would be the commune's to make and change as they wished. These suggestions are therefore tentative, and are not to be taken as dogmatic assertions about what should happen to other people. There are already many communes in existence, even in this country.

So far as we know, none of them is quite like the one we propose. This is how we would like to see our own commune work.

### 1. Organisation

The commune would begin as a group of (say) 12 adults, some already in couples, others single. Accommodation would be in separate apartments, where each individual or pair could have absolute seclusion when required, with their own furniture and possessions and the possibility of entertaining their own friends privately.

In addition there would be communal rooms: a lounge, dining room, music room, library, TV and games rooms, etc. Children would have their own sleeping and playing rooms. Clearly, a very large building or a cluster of buildings would be necessary. This is possible in built-up areas, but would preferably be a country house or farm, secluded and well provided with gardens and playing-space.

Evening meals would be taken together, preparation being by rota. At weekends, volunteers might take turns to provide their own cordon bleu menu, with a selection of wines from the cellar.

All decisions of importance affecting the community would be made democratically by all members (including children) discussing together and voting. This is considered vital not only for the satisfactory running of the commune, but also for the social development of the children. It is certain that our present society is failing to produce a social conscience in many of the young. The authoritarian family structure, mirrored in other institutions of the state, serves to hand on the commands and expectations of state and church, producing in our competitive community a condition of institutionalised selfishness. The aim of the commune (and of education) should be to shift direction away from this selfishness, and towards co-operation and social inter-dependence.

Some members might like to take on permanent responsibility for various aspects of community life. One might supervise the vegetable gardens and orchards, another the wine cellar and bar, others would look after the accounts, the shopping, maintenance and repairs, transport, and so on. Any special talents or interests could be put to general use.

Necessary daily duties and chores would be shared. All possible mechanical appliances would be used to make this easy. On this scale, commercial-sized washing-up machines, freezers, washing machines, etc., would be suitable and economical.

*(Continued from page 315)*

Unless we are very confused—and surely no FREE-THINKER readers are that—we have no choice but to admit that a scientific view of man renders him a machine. I do not know how any other interpretation can be presented intelligibly. The only people who have consistently attempted to present another view are the theologians and their sad efforts have been less than successful.

The view of man as a machine is potentially very fruitful. Machines are understandable—when they go wrong we can study them and try to mend them. When human beings go wrong historical moralists have rushed to incarcerate them, burn them, or consign them to a more permanent heavenly flame. I cannot feel that modern man is such a glowing tribute to the successes of the historical moralist. Perhaps we should try the scientific approach universally. Perhaps by 'demeaning' man to the level of a machine we shall discover the key to his immeasurable improvement.

Members would also be earning money, generally outside the commune, though some might prefer to find profitable home occupations like dressmaking, pottery, writing, painting, etc.

Childbirth would be planned. On the broad scale, inevitable famine and disaster loom unless population growth is controlled. If each family pair continues to have as many children as it wants, we face chaos. But if groups of 12 adults have 6-12 children, a vital contribution to this problem is made, without depriving any adult of the care and presence of loved children. On the smaller scale of the individual commune, such a ratio of adults to children has great advantages, as will be shown later.

Mothers would of course be released from duties and financial obligations for as long as necessary.

### 2. Finance

Capital for this rather bourgeois commune would have to be raised jointly by the founder members. It is expected that any loan could be quickly repaid, leaving an annual commitment to the community of (say) £400 for each adult. At this stage it would be a simple matter for anyone wishing to leave to do so, preferably giving three months' notice to enable a substitute to be found. This means that any acceptable person able to contribute £400 a year to the common fund could join the commune. In special cases, this amount could be reduced or waived. Members would have to pay in addition for their own clothes, travel, outside entertainment, etc.

Children would be an expense upon the community.

Allowing for childbirth, nursing and other non-earning periods, the total fund should be about 10 by £400, that is £4,000 per annum. This should be enough to cover running expenses while living at a more than comfortable level, and a fairly rapid settlement of any initial debts incurred. As soon as possible a reserve should be built up to allow for future expenditure on growing children, group holidays, extensions and improvements, etc.

One of the advantages of the system is the great saving through the grouping of overheads, bulk buying, and the sharing of amenities. This enables people to live at a high standard and in ideal surroundings without being rich. There is no comparison between a five-acre farm with home produce and unlimited play-space, and a closed little box for two adults and one or two children in the smoke. However, there are more important advantages than the material and financial.

*(To be concluded next week)*

## SECULAR EDUCATION APPEAL

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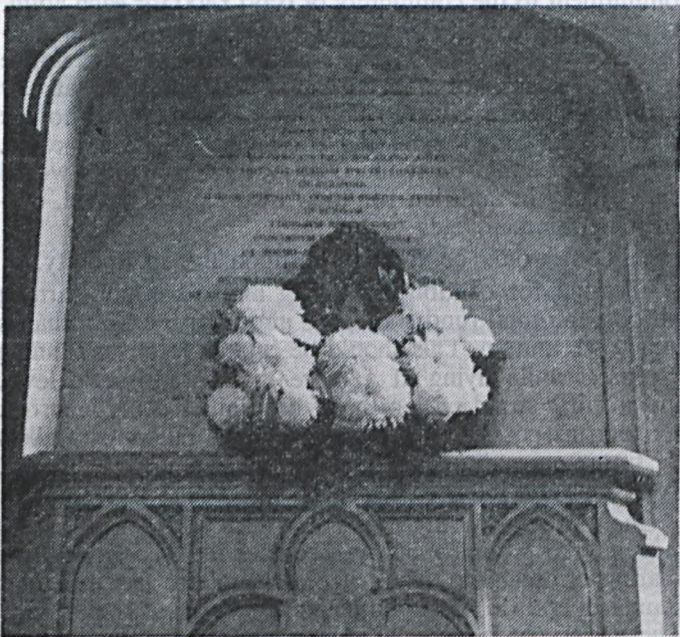
## THE DAY THE NSS WENT TO CHURCH

ERIC WILLOUGHBY

TRIBUTE was paid to the lives of two great freethinkers when a party of National Secular Society members and guests spent a day in Sussex, on September 21.

Almost fifty met the coach at Trafalgar Square and were deposited at the Bull's Head restaurant, Lewes, where Thomas Paine lived for several years, and where he helped form the "Headstrong Club".

After David Tribe, the NSS president, had given a brief introduction to the life of Paine, Christopher Brunel, chairman of the Thomas Paine Society, outlined Paine's life and in particular his connection with Lewes and the Bull's Head. Mr Brunel emphasised that, while Paine was not an orator but a writer and revolutionary, his great asset was "his ability to be a sponge", able to draw into himself ideas and then to be interminably squeezed by those thirsting for rational knowledge.



Edward Gibbon's tomb.

Among lesser-known facts about Paine's life, Mr Brunel revealed that the great man was, in fact a scientist, in that his analytical prowess was unsurpassed in his day. After he moved to America, said Mr Brunel, Paine became a magazine editor, but his interest in politics and human rights did not decrease. He began to campaign for equal rights for women, and to oppose cruelty and slavery in all its forms.

Mr Brunel expressed the opinion that Paine's *Rights of Man* had the effect of "uniting America against Britain" and suggested that this could well have contributed to the outbreak of war. He added that there was a distinct possibility that Paine actually wrote the Declaration of Independence for Benjamin Franklin.

After the war, Paine's scientific bent came to the fore again when he became interested in bridge construction, and on his return to England he pursued this occupation, although he met with little success, with the exception of a bridge over the river Weir, which was completed. Paine's departure to France, concluded Mr Brunel, was encouraged by the poet William Blake.

Mr Brunel then presented the landlord of the Bull's

Head with a cartoon depicting Paine symbolically setting fire to a pair of straw-stuffed breeches. The cartoon had previously hung in a House of Commons lavatory.

After lunch, the party moved on to Fletching, where a wreath was laid on behalf of the Society by David Tribe, in the parish church, where Edward Gibbon is buried in the Sheffield family's mausoleum.

During his description of the church, which preceded the wreath laying, the Rev. O. W. Thompson-Evans welcomed his visitors and said he was glad to see they had come to pay tribute to "one of your patron saints". He said he had regard for Gibbon, and indeed had read *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

A church of the same structure as at present had stood on the site since 1238, he said, and it had many historic connections. Concluding his remarks, the vicar stated, with a penetrating look at his audience, that the church funds now stood at £9,000, which would be used "to keep the old place going".

Nearby Sheffield Park Gardens, laid out by "Capability" Brown, were then visited, before returning.

Many members present expressed the opinion that the NSS should organise more outings of this nature since such an excellent opportunity for the exchange of ideas was afforded.

## THE WAR GAME

KATHLEEN BAL

VOLTAIRE SAID that the pen is mightier than the sword, but try to convince a man with his guts spilling in a Vietnam battlefield. We have not learned. We are still those same barmy apes that clobbered one another over territorial rights aeons ago. Perhaps brutes can only learn by brute force, yet the weak and the innocent still have to suffer.

What is war? War is a game of 'Let's Pretend' in which there are two sides, the Goodies and the Baddies. We are always the Goodies. There are all kinds of weapons we can use against the Baddies. Most of them are conventional which means they are OK, and old-fashioned like guns, bayonets, grenades, bombs, napalm, food poison, water poison, crop poison, animal poison, poison gas and paralyzing gas. When we come up with something new and great to use against them, gee we hold champagne parties and whoop it up because it means we can make 'em suffer a bit more. It gets you in the belly sometimes when you think about the kids, but aw, well, we can always send 'em crutches, and food parcels and old clothes and dollars, 'tho' you can't give 'em new eyes or arms or brains and things. But heck its THEIR fault. They should ha' let us make them FREE.

All that talk about convention, its just gas 'cos there's always the H-bomb to fall back on. That's great for premature foetal deliveries and slow roasting, diarrhoea and vomiting which gets bloodier and bloodier until you've had it! And if you're right in the middle of it, well there ain't nothing left of you but your shadow in radio-active ash. But there's the BIG ONE, the one that nobody dare use 'cos if that blew, geez, there wouldn't be *nothing* left, 'cept perhaps millionth parts of millions, billions and trillions of atoms all chasing each other around in space. But if we did drop it, then we can look down from the Happy Land and feel proud after all because *we didn't let them win*.

## REVIEW

MERLE TOLFEE

WHY WE SHOULD KEEP RELIGION IN OUR SCHOOLS: Peter Cousins (Church Pastoral Aid Society, 1s 6d).

PETER COUSINS, who is Senior Lecturer in Divinity at Gypsy Hill College of Education, writes in this way:

"In 1944 it seemed obvious to men and women who were fighting and suffering to preserve values and liberties which they regarded as sacred, that Christianity was the foundation of our values and that it should be taught in the nation's schools. Only one MP, the solitary communist, voted against this section of the Bill."

In actual fact there was an Amendment which would have removed the compulsion from school religion, and the voting was 20 for, and 121 against. The names of the valiant 20—they are all in Hansard—include Acland, Driberg, Bevan, Maxton, Clement Davies. What is more, there are pages and pages of excellent discussion, in which all the arguments against compulsion in religion are well and even eloquently put. The Amendment was lost, of course, but the situation was not quite as Mr Cousins would have us believe. In the statement quoted above there are other assumptions and implications which are highly questionable. But this is the sort of generalised remark which puts the author's opinions in the place of reasoned enquiry.

Not that Mr Cousins doesn't like figures. He makes great play with the findings of those Opinion Polls which are supposed to prove that the great majority of parents, teachers and pupils want compulsory religion. In the face of this universal desire, it is rather surprising to find that there is actually a shortage of specialist teachers of this subject. And again rather surprisingly, Mr Cousins puts this down to lack of sufficient financial incentives. Come! Come! Mr Cousins. Surely people do not need anything so vulgar as money to persuade them to pass on the faith in which they all believe so much. It seems to me in any case that this playing with figures is unworthy, not to say phoney. Religion was not made compulsory in 1944 because most people wanted it. Most people at that time were not consulted. What there was in 1944 was a desperate desire for a better educational system. Everybody wanted a better chance for the kids. Up to that time, something like 50 per cent of the nation's schools were in the hands of church authorities, and church schools were a by-word for inefficiency, with their coal fires and poor equipment. After the passing of the Act a number of these schools were taken over by the State, and a price was paid—the introduction of compulsory religion in the State schools. It is true that the number of children in church schools (apart from the Catholic schools) has gone down since then, but I personally cannot see why it was necessary to ransom the country's educational services at the expense of the nation's honest conscience. It is a matter of common observation that the movement today is away from the churches. Why must our schools always reflect the ideas of yesterday instead of those of today?

Amongst the other hackneyed arguments used in this pamphlet is the one which says that children need an understanding of religion in order to understand society. They certainly do. Witness Ireland. Mr Cousins also mentions art and literature, pointing out that these contain so many references to Christianity that instruction in this subject is necessary for cultural reasons. There are also many references to Greek myths, but we don't consider it necessary to organise services of worship to the Greek gods that children may understand a poem by Keats. Moreover for the three English Christian writers mentioned by Mr Cousins, Bunyan, Milton and Grahame Green, we could mention at least ten times as many who were agnostic or atheist. The main tradition of English literature is not after all pietistic. Christianity lays claim to the arts, to morals and to philosophy, but these claims can often be disputed. There was a period in the Middle Ages when all the arts centred on religion, and for a very good reason. But since then, and particularly since the Renaissance, the arts have become increasingly secular. The debt to religion is frequently exaggerated. And while it is certainly true that certain forms of religious art are sheer joy, whatever one's point of view, there are also certain highly neurotic religious pictures that I should not be sorry for children not to see, at least until they are emotionally and mentally mature enough for them to cope with scenes of cruelty and suffering. In short it is hardly necessary to have daily acts of worship for children to enjoy all that should be enjoyed of Christian art. This religion should take its place along with all the other great myths to provide historical background. In this way we should all be the better equipped.

Perhaps all this is making too heavy weather of a little pamphlet which is intended to give arguments to those who think things should stay as they are. But when these arguments are built on false assumptions, they are no help to clear thinking.

One good point is however made by Mr Cousins. He comments on the fact that so many secularist teachers are reluctant to make a personal stand on this issue, preferring to violate their own consciences by attending acts of worship in schools. I think this is a valid criticism.

## LETTERS

## Communism and religion

PETER CROMMELIN in his article "The meaning of meaning" informs us that "communism is not a religion". This is a moot point. It certainly has all the trappings of a religion, and displays the same fanaticism, the same intolerance of dissent, the ruthlessness, cruelty, and persecution of heretics which are so characteristic of most religions. Karl Marx is their God, Das Capital their Bible, Lenin their Saviour, and Stalin their apostle Paul. They have the same Pantheon of saints and heroes, most of them ruthless tyrants of unbelievable cruelty, Lenin, gruesomely embalmed in his tomb is the obligatory place of pilgrimage for the faithful, as is Marx's hideous tomb in Highgate.

Episodes of religious history such as the Inquisition, which the church tries to forget, pale into insignificance beside the millions of victims of communist tyranny. I would say that Communism is a religion, and one of the worst. Much depends on how religion is defined.

It is the most inhuman of all the creeds and as such it is ludicrous to regard it as a form of humanism, which one hopes is based on respect for one's fellow humans—not utter contempt for them, so characteristic of communism! CLAUD WATSON.

## Powell

I HAVE frequently expressed astonishment at the use of sneering terms by professed rationalist, when criticising articles and letters by members of their fraternity. One more instance of this occurs in H. Rich's letter commenting on mine of July 12. How he can read into it support by me of compulsory repatriation of coloured immigrants, I can't imagine. Mr Powell did *not* tell our dusky friends, "You are not wanted here, and we will pay you £2,000 each to get rid of you". My article definitely indicated that the proposal he made was to the 47 per cent who had stated their wish to return home. Mr Rich said he was surprised that I claimed to be a freethinker. What kind of freethinker is he to distort my letter as he has, and sneer at me as 'pure white' in consequence?

Mr Rich objects to his money being used to repatriate immigrants. Amongst our teeming millions of ratepayers, it would be extremely little each would be required to contribute. Would Mr Rich deny coloured folks the privilege of going home because of the mite he would need to furnish? His statement that the housing problem has been with us as long as we can remember, seems to indicate that he is rather young. Before World War I, there were many more houses than tenants. In my London district one could find a house to rent for the asking, and some people actually lived rent free by flitting from one district to another. It was as easy as that. The position was not much dissimilar in our industrial and commercial centres everywhere. If Mr Rich wants a battle of facts, I am prepared for it. And I shall not resort to sneers.

The deplorable housing condition was a result of two world wars, during which building virtually stopped, and was, of course, no fault of our immigrants, but their advent in shoals made it dreadfully worse, and the bad smell which Mr Rich attributes to my raising was raised then, and has become a positive stench. Has he been on a waiting list for ten or more years, and would he perpetuate it rather than that those immigrants who have stated their desire to go home, should be helped to do so?

Please read my letter again, Mr Rich, and with greater care than you evidently have. I reiterate my view that coloured immigrants have cause to be grateful to Enoch Powell for his advocacy of a policy of voluntary repatriation. Mark the word 'voluntary'. Anyone worthy of the title of freethinker would be glad to lose a shilling or two, to help the poor devils concerned to get back home. Your assertion that, as a supporter of Enoch Powell's scheme, I want to force our dusky guests out of the country, is unworthy of a straight-thinking person. Those who want to, I want to help go. That surely, is a compassionate intention? If, despite this, I thought that most freethinkers were of your mind about myself, I would drop out of the movement tomorrow. I am quite sure that they are not. F. H. SNOW.

## Malcolm Muggeridge

YOUR REVIEWER of *Jesus Rediscovered* is really too kind, too indulgent to its author, Mr Malcolm Muggeridge.

If Mr Muggeridge is admirable to a freethinker, it can only be

(Continued overleaf)

for what he might have been, not for what he actually is. Muggeridge might have been and might have remained one of the leaders of the Humanist Revolution. He has ended up as a popular preacher of a pseudo-mystical, pseudo-moral "Christianity" of his own somewhat restricted imagination. No man certainly has been more successful in exploiting the moral confusion of our times to his own personal advantage. No preacher has less right to point the finger of scorn at those who choose to turn a deaf ear to his sermons. He has done extremely well out of the Society he affects to despise.

Your reviewer, John L. Broom, tells us that "however much one may disagree with or even deplore his views, one cannot but admire his courage". There is certainly one who feels no such admiration. It requires no remarkable courage to "espouse unpopular causes" so long as you are sufficiently rewarded for the risks you run. Mr Malcolm Muggeridge has always been well paid for his work. His attacks upon Royalty or the Sins of Society have not demanded from him any personal danger or self-sacrifice.

Mr Muggeridge has a very good opinion of himself as a preacher, an orator and a writer. But even this vain and self-opinionated man cannot be quite so vain as to imagine that he can do what the First Resurrection failed to do, by bringing the dead Jesus back to life.

PETER CROMMELIN.

### Party line ?

I WILL CONCEDE one point to Brian Khan. I should have written 'a freethought position' instead of 'the freethought position'. But, letters of support for the editor should never be misinterpreted as a 'party line'. The contents of the FREETHINKER contradict this, and isn't this due to the editor's editing. Surely this is not beyond Brian?

WOLVERHAMPTON FREETHINKER.

### Ulster

IN YOUR LEADER, 'Madness . . .' (August 23), you say, "In 1920 the British government was pressured into protecting the protestant minority in the north of Ireland". Then, referring to a desirable repeal of that Act, you continue with, "the protestants would be in such a minority in a united Ireland that politically they would pose no threat". May be, politically; but *religiously* the same position would exist as existed in 1920! Then what? 'Madness' exploding again? Anyone's guess.

Certainly, civil rights should be accorded to *all* citizens, everywhere, and on *both* sides of the religious fence, not just only in Ulster.

Catholicism, however, does not tolerate any other religion, or non-religion: and where there is no tolerance, there are precious few civil liberties. Belloc, a Catholic writer, said, 'the Catholic church is, in its root principle, at issue with the civic definition both of freedom and authority . . . religion must be for the Catholic, first, a supreme authority superior to any claims of the State'. What Freethinker is going to tolerate a Roman-Catholic-Church-run State? Is the knowledge of this intolerant attitude, and its well-known ramifications the world over, the basic reason for the troubles in Ulster? If so, is a geographically united Ireland a likely solution? Who dares answer?

Get rid of religion by destroying the idea of God in men's minds. A slow job, Iconoclasm, but still necessary.

JAMES JACKSON.

I AM SORRY if I have misjudged Bernadette Devlin's adherence to the Roman Catholic Church in my article 'Opium of the People' (September 20), although I still maintain that the religious bogey is the major diversion for both Catholics and Protestants in true Marxian manner. But to set the record straight, Miss Devlin has been quoted as saying: "Although I personally believe there is very little Christianity in this country, there is a lot of religion, and the one way you would unite Protestants and Catholics is by trying to get rid of both churches at once". I entirely concur with this view, of course.

DENIS COBELL.

### Smoking and alcohol

MR WILLOUGHBY in inviting me to 'think again has quite misunderstood my letter. I am a heavy smoker and moderate drinker and deny the right of the government to advise me on how to spend my income. All I said was that since excessive smoking and drinking are, all agree, a danger to ones health and in the case of drinking a greater danger than smoking to the health life and livelihood of others, it is absurd to compel only cigarette manufacturers to inform their clients that their products are a danger to health: all manufacturers of noxious products (e.g. drink and drugs) should be obliged then to brand their products as dangerous to health. I object to both and do not want to be spoon-fed and

told, what we all know already, every time I buy a packet of cigarettes that I am endangering my health. Although I enjoy my drinks, and live in a country where wine is cheap (and alcoholism very prevalent), I tell my son that the letters VSOP on my bottle of cognac, mean, to me, 'Very Strong Obnoxious Poison (or product).

J. W. NIXON, Geneva.

### Powell

IN REPLY to Mr Higgitt I would make the following points:

(1) Birmingham social problems exist because the government is not prepared to order its economic priorities rationally and humanely. British governments and industry encouraged immigration after the war as a source of cheap labour. Now the government is using immigrants as a scapegoat for its inadequate social programmes.

(2) Mr Higgitt may have 'slaved' for his country. Very commendable! But it was precisely the coloured races in the cruelly exploited British Empire who slaved (literally!) to make Britain 'Great'. And Mr Higgitt has the gall to say that "It's our country!" The coloured commonwealth citizens contributed more through sheer economic exploitation than ever did Mr Higgitt and his cronies.

(3) Neither Mr Higgitt nor friend 'Enoch' enjoys being called racist. Perhaps in time their dislike of the word will effect the racialism of their attitudes. A specific point of the article to which Mr Higgitt objects is that Powell spoke of *colour* primarily—the social conditions were only an excuse!

Whether a man is a racist, Mr Higgitt, is determined by his attitudes and his behaviour, not by whether he likes the sound of the word.

G. L. SIMONS.

I AM DEEPLY DISTURBED that the columns of the FREETHINKER should increasingly be used to propagate race hatred and religious bigotry. The latest supporter of Powell is A. Higgitt (September 13) who objects that his kind should be "dubbed racialists" by G. L. Simons, and yet babbles on about being "overrun with dark skins" and "thrust aside by foreigners" who are bringing down the value of his property. Well, Mr Higgitt, it is your own irrational prejudice that brings down the value of your house, and your own words that dub you racist. Thank goodness for the excellent informative articles of G. L. Simons which expose these rationalisations of intolerance for what they are.

In the same edition A. Bonnett's diatribe against Catholics, apart from its literary worthlessness, is more suited to the bigoted Northern Ireland Protestant Press than the FREETHINKER. It is not surprising that a man who talks of "dirty dago degenerates" is not able to understand why this paper attacks Paisley. As Secularists we should oppose intolerance and oppression wherever it reveals itself. I as much as anyone recognise the traditional role of the Catholic Church as one of the foremost instruments of oppression, but it is this policy of oppression which we should resist, not Catholics *per se*. Where Catholics are the victims of oppression, as in Northern Ireland, it is just as much our duty to support them as it is to defend the victims of Catholic oppression elsewhere.

Many people will judge Secularism by what they read in this paper, and if it is to survive as an organised movement Secularism *must* attract the support of the militant youth who can further its aims. It will not win their sympathy by advertising the presence of racialists and bigots amongst our ranks. It is *not* the job of the FREETHINKER to "embrace all shades of political opinion" as A. Higgitt maintains—should we open these columns to Nazis and other fascists? The supporters of Paisley and Powell can find plenty of scope for their intolerance in other papers. I beg the editor to think very seriously before again publishing this type of letter and bringing the FREETHINKER and Secularism into more disrepute.

MICHAEL GRAY.

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