

Freethinker

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PROSECUTED FOR OFFERING HELP TO THE SICK

President of the NSS lays himself open to prosecution

ON FRIDAY, MAY 8, Richard Branson, the editor and publisher of *Student* magazine, was tried at Marylebone Magistrates Court for offences under the Indecent Advertisements Act of 1889 and the Venereal Diseases Act of 1917. Together with his magazine, the circulation of which is 100,000, Branson runs an Advisory Centre aimed at young people. The Centre is advertised largely through the distribution of leaflets, which offer advice on 'abortion, adoption, contraception, drugs, educational problems, homosexuality, lesbianism, marriage, pregnancy testing, psychiatric help and venereal disease'. Branson was acquitted on the second charge, while on the first which alleges that he 'did by an advertisement offer to give advice in connection with the treatment of venereal disease', the magistrate has delayed judgement while he seeks further advice as to whether the leaflets are in fact advertisements.

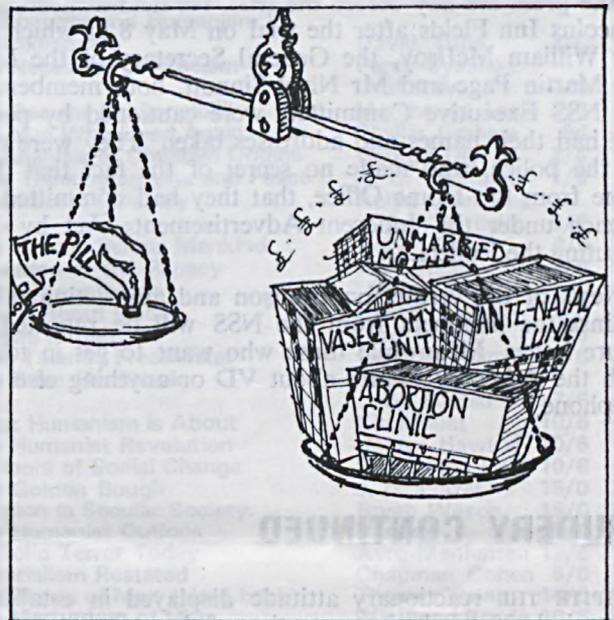
It is quite shattering to learn that the police are endeavouring to enforce an Act which will restrict the dissemination of medical advice. Branson's Advisory Centre is known to be of great value to a large number of young people and was said in court to provide advice to 600 people every week. Those suffering from VD have been consistently referred either to University College Hospital or to the Margaret Pringle Clinic. Why should anyone desire to restrict this valuable service? Do the police really consider the spiritual well-being of those, one imagines fictitious, young people who find the words 'venereal disease' offensive to be of more importance than the physical well-being of those who suffer from a disease which can lead to death? I quote from the April issue of *Student*:

At the end of last year a member of the *Student* staff went to Marylebone Police Station where a young man was in custody on charges that we are not yet allowed to discuss. Before leaving the station, he indicated that he intended to bring charges against the police for what he believed to be irregular conduct. Seven days later two policemen from the same station, one of whom had been present when the incident took place, came to *Student's* offices and cautioned *Student* that unless distribution of Advisory Centre leaflets offering advice on venereal disease ceased within three days, charges would be brought under the Venereal Disease Act of 1917. There were implications that since most of the other problems on which the leaflet offered advice related to sexual intercourse, *Student* was also liable to charges on several counts under the Indecent Advertisement Act of 1889.

Student asked why officers from Marylebone Lane Police Station should deliver this caution rather than the neighbouring Paddington Green Station. The officers replied that it was they who had noticed the offence. *Student* then asked why the caution should be given at that particular moment in time when the same leaflets had been distributed every day during the previous nine months. The officers replied that it had only just come to their notice.

After a meeting with solicitors, *Student* decided to change the wording of the leaflet from 'venereal disease' to 'social disease' to avoid the risk of prosecution

and adverse publicity for the Centre; but 'social disease' was interpreted as acne and the number of people seeking advice on VD each week dropped from over sixty to less than five. *Student* saw no alternative but to return to the original wording, and in the weeks that followed, 300,000 leaflets were distributed by 20 volunteers.



The police's absurd action has united *The Guardian*, *The Daily Mirror*, *The Sunday Times*, *The World This Weekend*, *The International Times* and *The New Statesman* behind Branson. John Mortimer, QC, came forward and defended Branson free. Tom Driberg, MP, appeared at the trial as a defence witness and described the *Student* Advisory Centre of which he has personal knowledge as 'an admirable group of young people doing very useful work. Laudatory letters from John Trevelyan, OBE, the Secretary to the British Board of Film Censor, and Dr

(Continued overleaf)

Freethinker

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(Continued from previous page)

Catherall of the Margaret Pringle Clinic at the Middlesex hospital were read out by Mr Mortimer. Mr Barrahan, the vicar of St Stephen Walbrooke church in the city and Director of the Samaritans, the organisation which helps potential suicides and others, appeared on Branson's behalf as did Dr Nicholas Malleson, the physician in charge of the Student Health Centre at London University.

Much will depend on the magistrate's final ruling. Such organisations as the Family Planning Association, who were preparing a similar leaflet, may have to reconsider their policies, Branson, however, has announced that: "The Advisory Centre will continue to distribute leaflets offering advice on this disease until such time as the actions of the police render it physically impossible".

The National Secular Society has also joined the fray. Its President, David Tribe, announced his intention of distributing The Advisory Centre's leaflets in a statement to the press the day before the trial. He held a meeting in Lincoln's Inn Fields after the trial on May 8 at which he, Mr William McIlroy, the General Secretary of the NSS, Mr Martin Page and Mr Nigel Sinnott, both members of the NSS Executive Committee, were cautioned by police and had their names and addresses taken. They were told by the police, who made no secret of the fact that they came from the Home Office, that they had committed an offence under the Indecent Advertisements Act by distributing the leaflets.

News of the verdict on Branson and any action taken against the members from the NSS will be reported in future issues. Meanwhile those who want to get in touch with the Advisory Centre about VD or anything else can telephone.

PRUDERY CONTINUED

DESPITE THE reactionary attitude displayed in establishment circles towards the protection of the population from venereal disease, a little progress has been made in the field of contraception. The Secretary of State for Social Services has announced that men may have vasectomy operations under the National Health Service.

It seems odd in view of the drasticness of this operation, the fact that other methods of contraception are considerably more popular and indeed in view of the population explosion and the social disaster of unwanted children, that the relatively rarely demanded vasectomy should be provided free while other methods still have to be paid for.

We would appear to be suffering from the same prudishness that attempts to ban public offers of help for those

suffering from VD. Vasectomy will only be sought by older men, whose prime objective can be construed as a desire not to have children. Those who use other methods are not making the sacrifice of denying themselves offspring and therefore their primary objective can be construed as having sexual enjoyment without fear of unwanted children. Those who plump for vasectomy are making a sacrifice which to an extent alleviates the idea, which appears to appall so many, of the government subsidising something so horrifying as sexual pleasure.

In a recent press release David Tribe asks the question to which the answer is supplied above, why are not the pill and the condom available free under the NHS? Tribe says:

"The Secretary of State gives the extraordinary reason that the country could not afford this. We have now, for a couple of years, been trying desperately to see Mr Crossman to put to him—to say nothing of the social cost and human misery—the astronomical cost of abortions, maternal services, juvenile courts, children in care, approved schools, borstals, and the infinite progression of social ills as unwanted children become, in all too many cases, unwanted adults.

When will Mr Crossman make time to hear us?"

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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 Postal Book Service (secondhand books bought and sold). For information or catalogue send 6d stamp to Kit Mouat, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

Humanitas Stamps: Help 5 Humanist charities. Buy stamps from/ or send them to Mrs A. C. Goodman, 51 Percy Road, Romford, RM7 8QX, Essex. British and African speciality. Send for list.

Humanist Holidays: Details from the Hon. Secretary: Mrs. M Mephum, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey (Tel.: 01-642 8796).

COMING EVENTS

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.

INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society: Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1: Sunday, May 17, 11 a.m.: "The Uses of Philosophy", H. J. Blackham. Admission free.

BERTRAND RUSSELL. A meeting in his honour at the Central Hall, Westminster, London, SW1, on Monday, June 8, 7.30 p.m. Speakers include Sir Alfred Ayer, Sir Edward Boyle, Lord Brockway, Michael Foot, MP, Professor Joseph Rotblat, Baroness Wootton, Rupert Crawshaw-Williams (chairman). Admission free. Tickets available (5d stamp) from the sponsoring organisations which include the National Secular Society, 103 Borough High Street, London, SE1.

A HUMANIST'S ATTITUDE TO DYING

PAUL ROM

THE THEME "Dying" stimulates a memory which has often occurred to me. During my middle teens I earned a small sum of money and went to an art shop to buy the lithograph which for a long time I had been admiring in the window. On it a little child, seen in profile, held in his hands a human skull, also seen in profile. He smiled lovingly at this memento mori, as though it were the head of his mother or father.

At about the same period, I was proud to be able to translate the Latin words over the clock of our town hall: *mors certa—hora incerta*.

I am inclined to connect these events with a dream I had in my mid-forties and which I have told on various occasions. By no means displeased, I ran my fingers through my fine long beard, saying to myself, "That was quick; last night you were still clean-shaven".

The associations which I produced were (1) an old lady, a centenarian, whose photograph I had seen in the previous day's paper and who had quite a beard; and (2) my hairdresser who, during my last visit to him, had pointed out that I was "getting rather thin on top".

Considering my dreams as an expression of wrestling with a problem to be faced, I understood this one as an attempt to submit with good grace to the fact of getting old, and as mental training in braving this inevitable event.

A few years previously, I had been rather upset when noticing my first grey hairs. A lady friend had consoled me by saying that younger women often give their preference to men who are greying . . .

It now seems to me that by often looking at the lithograph of the child with the skull which I had proudly hung in my room, I was already strengthening the rational attitude that death, when it comes one day, may be accepted stoically.

Now I also remember my mental training in 1933, when, after the outbreak of the Hitler interregnum, I was held as an enemy of this regime in a prison cell, never knowing what the next hour might bring. But I had learned that this dictator had reintroduced the block and axe for the execution of his enemies. I quietly pictured myself in those hours being led to execution and behaving as calmly as possible . . .

The same line of intellectual and emotional training to accept old age and death seems to be inherent in my special liking of a passage from my teacher Alfred Adler's work, *Über den Nervösen Charakter* (1912). It is in chapter one of the Practical Part, where he deals with old-age neuroses.

Like Goethe's Faust, who after a walk in the country enjoyed translating the Greek gospel of Saint John into his beloved German (changing the expression "word", which was said to have been in the beginning, into "sense", then "power", finally "deed"), I now translate Adler's sentences from my German mother tongue into that of my second fatherland Great Britain. (The first American translation of Adler's basic book (1917) is unfortunately far from satisfactory . . .)

"However much poets and philosophers have attempted to beautify old age, it is really given only to a rare few to maintain their balance when in the distance they notice the gate that leads to their death. Nearly always, the personality-feeling will be diminished through the privations and limitations which naturally go with old age, and also by the noticeable preponderance of younger people and relatives which often, unintentionally—or appearing so—leads to the disregard of older persons. The radiant readiness to give up life, which Goethe expresses so

refreshingly in his poem 'To Father Cronus', can be assumed to be for most men an unattainable ideal; and those can be deemed happy who survive the loss of their best time of life without depressions."

As for the philosophers, Adler may have thought of Cicero's *On Old Age*. When reading it, Montaigne said Cicero "gives one an appetite for growing old". And in the poem mentioned, Goethe pictures himself, sitting beside Father Cronus who, as coachman with the horn, drives him through life. As an old man he says to him at the end of this poem:

*"Blow, then, coachman, thy horn!
Speed on with echoing trot,
So that Orcus may know we are coming;
So that our host may with joy
Wait at the door to receive us."*

I have never seen a human being dying; nor have I seen a dear one dead. I do not know how I shall experience the process of my dying—but being thus prepared for the end, I believe I shall put up a fairly creditable performance.

[This article first appeared in *Voices*, 1969, 5. 40-42. Reprinted by permission.]

FREETHINKER BOOK LIST

TITLE	AUTHOR	Price	Post
RI and Surveys	Maurice Hill	1/0	4d
Religion and Ethics in Schools	David Tribe	1/6	4d
Religious Education in State Schools	Brigid Brophy	2/6	4d
Ten Non Commandments	Ronald Fletcher	2/6	4d
Humanism, Christianity and Sex	David Tribe	6d	4d
103: History of a House	Elizabeth Collins	1/0	4d
Freethought and Humanism in Shakespeare	David Tribe	2/0	4d
The Necessity of Atheism	Percy Bysshe Shelley	1/6	4d
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The Golden Bough	J. G. Frazer	15/0	2/6
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The Humanist Outlook	Various	35/0	2/2
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THOU SHALT NOT . . .

DENIS COBELL

THAT LIST of injunctions inscribed on tablets of stone at Mount Sinai, popularly known as the Ten Commandments, are presumably rather out of fashion in our so-called permissive age. But it is remarkable how few things are actually permitted as a result of this permissive surge: a great many laws still exist to enable the temporal powers to keep us in our place. In many cases the law is not clear enough, and is subjected to a variety of 'ifs' and 'buts'. At least some of Moses' ten were clear, and we might all be better off if some of them were abided by; for example, 'thou shalt not kill'—this would make a good start for any free thinker—it has always been carefully avoided by the Church!

Despite the dilution of the demand 'Thou shalt not' by the translators of the *New English Bible* to 'You shall not', I doubt if we shall see any diminution of activities by Nosey Parkers who always seem to have a soured legal ace up their sleeve.

Like all good law-makers, Moses recognised that there were always two manners of interpreting a law. One law for your own side, and another for the others. If your head was crowned King of the Amorites, then the sixth commandment went to the wall and that was just bad luck when Moses came down your way!

So today, if you're a 'homo', but under 21, it's illegal wherever you do it. If you're a reputable literary pornographer, you stand a chance, but if it's pulp filth, then the Bishop of Woolwich will be along with his exorcizer's kit of bell, book and candle, rather than praising your literacy from the witness box.

Not that I'm eulogising either of these subjects; just pleading that Mrs Grundy leave people alone. It's all very well calling it a permissive epoch, or a civilised society as Mr Roy Jenkins prefers, but unless people are permitted individual freedom, provided this places no restriction on other's freedom, then it is plainly a misnomer. Incidentally, it was interesting that it should fall to the Chancellor's lot to pronounce our's a 'civilised society', when his own jungle has created a higher level of unemployment, and consequent *uncivilised* misery, than we have seen for more than two decades.

Commenting on the 'massive' increase in crime during 1969, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir John Waldron was widely reported as claiming: "This is the age of permissiveness . . . everyone living up to the hilt, with very little pride or honesty". Now I have nothing against a police chief making subjective morality judgements, though one has to admit it used to be the prerogative of bishops to make these inane remarks; but when it is really a matter of statistics within his own department, then it is quite another matter.

One could always laugh at the bishops, who at least had the excuse of ignorance. But Sir John Waldron should know better. In the small print under his ridicule of permissiveness readers received the knowledge that the 'Thou shalt not' brigade had spread their talons: "Under the Theft Act 1968 a number of crimes were included under the heading of indictable crimes, which did not appear before the 1968 Act". Who mentioned honesty?

The psychedelic's own magazine *IT* has also been the subject of police persecution recently. Although the sexual offences act of 1967 legalised homosexual relations in private between consenting adult men, it apparently did not allow for those who might wish to advertise for a homosexual friend. *IT* used to have a so-called "campers' ad. column" in its classified section, which was operated for just this purpose. But this magazine has been charged with conspiring to debauch and corrupt public morals, and to outrage public decency, both of which offences were apparently committed by the publication of such adverts, and both are also apparently contrary to the common law.

Not surprisingly, when there is still so much official condemnation of homosexuals, the hooligan element look on them as prey to be hunted down. Last year, Wimbledon Common was the scene of two murders involving homosexuals. In one case four teenagers bashed a homosexual to death, and in another a policeman was murdered by a homosexual. I have heard it alleged that this particular bobby, who was off duty at the time, had gone on to the Common for a giggle at the queers.

Strangely the Tory MP for Wimbledon, Sir Cyril Black, is a staunch puritan seeking out any legal means open to impose his prohibitive opinions on the lives of others. He was a prominent opponent of the change in the law favouring homosexuals when this was being debated in the House of Commons in 1966 and 1967. He is also a leading exponent of the Lord's Day Observance Society's policy in parliament.

Black's Christian charity must have run dry when he accused me of libel in 1968, and was awarded damages through the High Court. I had naively written of his opposition to human and social progress and labelled him a racist. The following year Black announced his intention not to stand at the next general election, for amongst other reasons, it was publicly stated, "to travel more often to South Africa and other countries where he has business interests" (*Daily Telegraph*, 1.3.69).

Sir Cyril Black is a considerable force to reckon with, and anyone wishing to publish a book which they think might offend him would be well advised to write to him before publication, or they might hear from him very soon afterwards to their cost. The *Last Exit to Brooklyn* case was only won on a legal technicality Black reminded us. Paul Abelman's book *The Mouth and Oral Sex* may not finally be so lucky. How can we listen to accusations condemning the permissive society—for example such rubbish as the *Daily Telegraph's* recent suggestion that switching on the radio is tantamount to risk having the living room invaded by nudes—when we see the censorial wing of the 'Thou shalt not' brigade so busy, and so successful?

Of course, even if you can get a book published without attracting this censorial abuse, there is no guarantee that Britain's biggest bookseller, W. H. Smith, will stock it. And if it can't be distributed, then it can hardly be read. Smith's technique, though, is only vaguely based on moral estimates: in most cases if it's good for business, without risk, they'll sell it. When *Lady Chatterly's Lover* was 'cleared' in 1960, Smith's sold it from plain brown boxes under the counter, I'm told by a former member of their shop staff.

But lesser known works, or papers such as *Private Eye* and the hordes of left-wing journals, which are libel-prone, aren't even in the running as far as Smith's is concerned.

Richard Branson's students' advice service on VD, has been another subject to catch the watchdog eye of a not very permissive Metropolitan Police Force. Branson edits *Student* and apparently his connections in high places have allegedly assisted the release of too many pot smokers for police happiness. His publication of 'advice' on VD may be wrong technically; but a law devised many years ago to stop quacks peddling non-efficacious remedies, is surely only invoked with malignity and vindictiveness on a man whose sole offence is to broadcast geographical information about the nearest pox clinic! Pot smoking is of course illegal, but if we can allow lung cancer promotion so much freedom then why not . . . , oh, I forgot the tobacco lobby and the tax man have that certain air of respectable acceptability!

All the cases cited add up to a not very permissive society—a picture vastly removed from the one painted by the 'law and order' stompers. This is not the society sought

HOLIDAY SUGGESTION

CONTEMPORANEOUS WITH the foundation of the National Secular Society in 1866 was that of the Ligue Française de l'Enseignement. Both bodies have worked strenuously for secular education ever since. Having long achieved its aim at home, the French League has been able to become the nucleus of an International League for Child and Adult Education (3 rue Récamier, Paris 7).

This summer the league is to sponsor an important International Congress on Education in what will, for most readers, be an exotic setting: Senegal in French West Africa. It is appropriate that black Africa should be host to this congress at a time when those of its citizens who are striving to enlighten and liberate their great continent are faced with a new upsurge of Christian missionary activity and Western imperialism. An upsurge, by the way, which British ratepayers and taxpayers are doing much to assist as the Catholic Church siphons off a proportion of home subsidies (e.g. to salaries to teaching monks and nuns in maintained schools) into its African missions.

I have been to a league congress before and can vouch for the efficiency of formal arrangements, including simultaneous translations in English, French and Spanish, the generosity of hospitality and the friendliness of delegates. This year the congress has three themes, "Towards universal civilisation", "Education and Development" and "Youth in a world constantly young". There will, as usual, be excursions to parts rarely visited by tourists, cultural activities, both local and international, and visits to historical sites and educational establishments in Senegal.

A special return flight from Paris is being put on for delegates. For this, congress fees and accommodation from July 26 to August 4 or 5, including an official reception the total cost, is just over £100. Not a small sum, it is true, but a sum which discounts a heavy subsidy. On a recent visit to England the league's secretary, M. Albert Jenger, stressed how anxious he was to have representatives from Britain present to tell the congress the struggles we are

by progressive humanists over many years. Religion may only play a small part in banning activities and publications today, but it is often upheld as the historical base for much that prevents freedom now.

A police officer who wrote anonymously in *Spearhead* said he was not alone in the force when supporting the fascism of the National Front. I don't find this hard to believe.

We will continue to hear statements of this nature until the advice of the National Secular Society's working party report in 1969 is taken: "The common law offences of obscenity and indecency (and blasphemy) should be statute barred and relevant statutes repealed". If this occurs there is a chance for the formation of a better climate of public opinion. Removed from the cloak of legality's protection—reasonable people will think differently. This is more important than legal alterations *per se*, which cannot completely stop the harrassment of minorities as race relations legislation has shown; therefore we must surely pursue this better climate?

DAVID TRIBE

having for secular education here. So fierce are these struggles that many of us will be unable to get away to talk about them. Those who can will be made very welcome. Please book as soon as possible, preferably before the end of May.

PUBLIC FORUM

SHOULD THE STATE SUPPORT CHURCH SCHOOLS?

BRIGID BROPHY

THE LORD BISHOP OF DURHAM
(Dr Ian Ramsey)

ARCHBISHOP ROBERTS, SJ

DAVID TRIBE
(President, National Secular Society)

Chairman: MAX WILKINSON
(Editor, *The Teacher*)

CONWAY HALL, Red Lion Square, London, WC1
(Nearest Underground: Holborn)

FRIDAY, 19 JUNE, 7.30 p.m.

Admission free; reserved seats 5/-

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

Book Review

NIGEL H. SINNOTT

The Scottish Insurrection of 1820, P. Berresford Ellis and Seumas Mac a' Ghobhainn (Foreword by Hugh MacDiarmid) (Victor Gollancz, 72s).

*I've liv'd a life of sturt and strife;
I die by treacherie:
It burns my heart I must depart,
And not avenged be.*

(Robert Burns, *MacPherson's Farewell*)

BY THE CLOSE of the second decade of the nineteenth century Scotland had reached political boiling point, culminating in an armed uprising in the Glasgow area of the Lowlands in April of 1820. In their book the two authors attempt to give an account of the rebellion, together with a detailed examination of the events leading up to it, and, to a lesser extent, its consequences.

The British government of the time was in the hands of a Tory administration which had, to put it mildly, over-run its time; Scotland, especially following the defeat of the Jacobite '45 Rising, had been treated by the London Establishment and their cronies as a colony, in contravention of the Act of Union. The old Clan system of society was disintegrating and the Gàidhealtachd (Gaelic-speaking) areas were being systematically destroyed by the "clearances" and the educational policy of the SPCK schools. The dispossessed inhabitants of the countryside, if they did not emigrate, tended to move to the Glasgow area where the industrial revolution offered work—of a kind. And it was here, especially, that the resentment of the "lower orders" crystallised out. Scottish nationalism now dropped its former Jacobite associations, and a generation well read in the works of Burns and Thomas Paine turned to the original ideals of the French Republic for inspiration; republicanism and radicalism were born.

The Scottish radicals of 1820 were the successors of the earlier United Scotsmen, whose equivalent, the United Irishmen, had unsuccessfully rebelled in 1798 (see McIlroy, *FREETHINKER*, March 21, 1970). The United Englishmen (at least in the South) had been largely undermined by disillusionment with Napoleon and by the effects of the Government's spy system, although the Corresponding Societies and the Peterloo radicals lasted a good deal longer. At first, owing to their use of elaborate codes, secrecy, and the employment of go-betweens, the Scots had been more successful at resisting the investigations of the authorities, but even they were no match for well-paid, full-time Government agents such as John King and Alexander Richmond. When, on April 1, 1820, posters appeared all over Glasgow and the outlying counties in the form of an "Address to the inhabitants of Great Britain and Ireland" issued by the "Committee of Organisation for forming a Provisional Government", the members of this Committee had already been under arrest for ten days and the "proclamation" was the work of King and his fellow *agents provocateurs* who sought to draw the radicals into the open. For the most part the latter, taken in by the proclamation (despite its references to *English* history, e.g. Magna Charta, as opposed to the Declaration of Arbroath) and by rumours of French aid, fell for the trick and took up arms. They were finally put down in a series of skirmishes (particularly the Battle of Bonnymuir) and a wholesale policy of military repression, though they retained enough fighting spirit to storm Greenock jail and release the political prisoners there.

As soon as the fighting had sufficiently died down the London Government set up a Special Commission as a result of whose findings eighty-eight people were indicted for high treason (and were tried under English law to render their defence the more difficult); many of those convicted were transported to Botany Bay, but three of the leading radicals, James Wilson, Andrew Hardie, and John Baird, suffered death by slow hanging, decapitation and quartering. Ten years later a Whig Government was elected to Westminster, and the activities of the former spy network came to light; free pardons were issued to the surviving convicted radicals, though nobody seems to know the fate of the members of the Committee . . . for forming a Provisional Government". Circumstantial evidence suggests that at this time many of the "incriminating" documents relating to the Richmond-King spy ring and the transcripts of some of the trials were destroyed; the authors have, nevertheless, made intensive searches for evidence and their thoroughness is impressive, to say the least.

In view of the number of trials for treason arising from the 1820 rebellion, it is curious how little known the event has been hitherto. Mr Ellis and *Maighstir* Mac a' Ghobhainn suggest the explanation lies partly in a deliberate "hush-up" policy (in order to protect Government *agents provocateurs*) and partly in the English public's preoccupation with the Cato Street conspiracy and the trial of Queen Caroline.

The authors make no secret of their personal preoccupation with the nationalist aspects of the rebellion, but its radical elements are also adequately represented, so too are the sentiments of the anti-radical poet, John Goldie. The book contains detailed appendices of poetry of the period, together with letters and declarations made (or purportedly made) by the condemned men; there is also an exhaustive bibliography and a wealth of illustrations. Typographical errors are few, and then largely confined to quotations from the French. To their credit, the authors do not attempt to gloss over some of the less attractive historical details: they mention how the French, despite offers of aid for the Scots and Irish against the British, were quite prepared to crush the semi-autonomous Celts of Brittany; the book also relates the case of chief Alistair MacDonell, who set up a society to "promote" the Gàidhlig language, Scottish music and dress, whilst at the same time actively "clearing" his neighbours from their homes.

It is tempting, nowadays, to dismiss risings like the 1820 (or the innumerable Irish rebellions) with the words of the old Scotsman: "Behold! The British Government, the strongest on yerth, is to be over turned wi' five bawbees worth o'cheap poother!" It should not be forgotten though, that the rebels counted on promises of reinforcements, and, despite the handicaps under which they laboured they put up a commendable fight against a ruthless spy system and professional troops. The 1820 rebellion certainly helped pave the way for the 1832 Reform Bill, and from the remnants of those proud old radicals, eloquently defending themselves from the dock, developed Chartism, from which, in turn, the Freethought movement is partly derived.

Despite Hugh MacDiarmid's foreword (the redeeming feature of which is its brevity) this is an excellent book which should be read by anyone interested in the history of radicalism, whether north or south of the Cheviots. *The Scottish insurrection of 1820* is another valuable antidote to the "jingo" version of British history; it does much to fulfill James Wilson's last wishes: "My gory head may in a few days fall on the scaffold . . . but I appeal with confidence to posterity. When my countrymen will have exalted their voices in bold proclamation of the rights and dignity of Humanity, . . . then, and not till then, will some future historian do my memory justice."

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Art

GUY CHAPMAN

Exhibition of the work of Julie van Duren at the Woodstock Gallery, Woodstock Street, London, W1—until May 16th.

JULIE VAN DUREN'S work, on exhibition, falls into three basic approaches in the use of materials. There are two driftwood pieces of statuesque nature, ten or so 'sculpted' pieces—some tall objects and some basically representational seated figures—and lastly a large number of compositions—mostly of small slabs on flat bases, all in aluminium although occasional use is made of other materials such as perspex.

It was a warm gusty spring day.

There was limited space for many of the works which were rarely displayed to best advantage.

Julie van Duren was born in London before the war and moved to a married life in the Medway Towns of Kent—"and it is the mud flats of the Thames and Medway estuaries with their fascinating and strange space that have formed the strongest element in her present work. . . ."

I found myself neither immediately excited nor drawn to the works themselves. I was perturbed by the 'distance', scale and feel of them. Most of them seemed to have been conceived *visually* at a great distance; almost beyond a point where it is possible to even feel *tactually*. In the compositions with slabs and sticks of aluminium on flat bases I found expression of space and mood inspired by the source quoted, but this was not complemented with a sufficient feeling of communion with the specific source of inspiration or the materials of the work. I felt something of a lack of understanding of the ecology of one's environment and of the essential sensory response to that environment in detail.

'Down to the hollow and there let us wallow in glorious mud.'

Nonetheless there was sensitivity of handling in the seated figures; this was in contrast to clichés in other parts of the very same pieces. The majority of this group of 'sculpted' pieces were tall, thin, somehow endless in texture and seemingly so in number. I was unable to find any of the sensitivity promised in parts of the seated figures.

Save for its lack of consistency the exhibition could have been a personal cry of concern at the dislocation of man and woman from their environment and from their own essence. While on the contrary this exhibition could equally be an inevitable produce of this very situation.

This enstrangement exists. Start by making love on a mud flat next time you have the chance.

LETTERS

The Social Morality Council's Report

SOME MISUNDERSTANDING, reflected in Mr Hill's letter, persists as well as a genuine difference of view and of policy. I think it is worth while to try to reduce the misunderstanding.

The Report is quite explicit in saying that rights of option must remain; but the aim should be to have nothing in the curriculum from which parents might reasonably want to have their children excused because of their beliefs.

Mr Hill quotes out of context 'RE, whose first concern is the relationship between God and man'. The context shows that the working party agreed that in a plural society such as ours in which a large section of it is non-believing it is not legitimate for religious communities to assume and teach this relationship as necessarily true. It takes its place as what some people believe. The point of the statement was to show what should *not* be taught in the county schools.

Without further detailed comment on Mr Hill's paragraphs, perhaps I can indicate the basis of justification for RE in the county schools, apart from tradition. Human life is in the end pretty enigmatical. Millions of human beings accept and live it in terms of some religious faith. These include some of the ablest and most highly educated. The uncertainties involved do not warrant dogmatic teaching. The situation does warrant education of a kind that will help a young person 'to think about what he believes and about what others believe; so that he feels required to justify himself in what he holds and also in what he rejects'. This is what the Report is after, and what was meant by a 'sympathetic understanding of a religious approach to life'. 'What makes this kind of teaching impossible is a narrow refusal, whether by Christians or non-Christians, to afford full significance to beliefs held by others.' Am I wrong in seeing in Mr Hill's last paragraph this 'narrow

refusal'? I feel my atheism is more secure.

May I add that the reason for the letter in *The Times*, referred to in your editorial columns, was that *The Times* had given contradictory headlines to the two Reports, and Mr Whitfield was committed to both of them. The 'similar conclusions' merely referred to a provision in both documents for opportunities of worship. In my opinion, the Board of Education Evidence is a very confused document; it was drafted some time ago, and will be generally superseded by the forthcoming Bishop of Durham's Report.

H. J. BLACKHAM,

Chairman, Social Morality Council Working Party on Moral and Religious Education in County Schools.

MAY I ADD one or two practical considerations to the important controversy on RE/ME going on in your columns?

1. It is mere Utopianism to suppose that there is any prospect whatever at the present time of money and manpower being set aside for Moral Education in our schools if it is totally divorced from any study of religion. The real choice before us is between RE/ME, freed from the legal obligation to inculcate Christian belief, or old-style RI, or that the whole area will get squeezed out by the pressure of the academic rat-race and the cost efficiency accounting of the keepers of the purse. Which of these three possible choices do Humanists want? Any other choice is merely academic.

2. It seems to be assumed by some of your correspondents that, unless RE is legislated *against*, all the RE teachers will reach jubilantly for their Bibles and drum holy writ remorselessly into the kids. This is miles from the classroom reality. Even under the prevailing law a basically humanist approach to ME called "the situational approach" is increasingly replacing Bible teaching because the children just will not tolerate inculcation. In an age when no one can any longer explain the meaning even of "Our father which art in heaven", let alone the dogma in general, inculcation produces revolt, not conversion. If RE teachers wanted to hammer at the scriptures—and many are themselves bored by the approach—sheer self-defence would force them to think again.

3. There has never been a time when adolescents were more interested in all things mystical: Zen, inner space, witchcraft, voodoo, magic, scientology, Jehovah's Witnesses, "presences" from outer space, sudden conversions this way and that, and the rest. To take up the position "We will not deal with this area in school at all" is as obscurantist as was driving sex from the classroom in former times. We shall not get the open approach, which is the educative one, either by legally imposing, or by legally excluding, but by *insistence on openness at all stages of education*.

4. The monstrous intention of many who framed the religious provisions of the 1944 Act was thought-control—making children into good little believers by a daily drip-drip and regular RI. The fact that the 1944 Act was, for others, just a bargain does not remove this underlying intent. The Report of the Social Morality Council recommends openness in place of the iniquity of planned inculcation. Surely Humanists should show their solidarity with such a tremendous advance?

JAMES HEMMING.

THOSE FREETHINKER readers who have not had the opportunity or the enterprise to read the Social Morality Council's report *Moral and Religious Education in County Schools* may be confused by the editorial comments on the subject.

First, one must distinguish between the Church of England Board of Education, and the Social Morality Council which are quite distinct bodies, although the former is represented on the working party of the latter.

I have not as yet been able to obtain a copy of the statement made by the C. of E. Board of Education, but I would expect it to consider daily worship essential in county schools, and as a Humanist I disagree.

However, I have read the Social Morality Council's pamphlet several times and think the time has come to quote the relevant passages verbatim:—

p. 9, para. 14.—Indoctrination is in effect the exclusion from serious examination of all but one set of opinions or convictions. None but the doctrine inculcated is assumed to have any justification. RE by contrast makes comparisons and requires judgements to be justified; religion is studied, rather than taught, in an atmosphere of discussion and inquiry . . .

p. 9, para. 15 (a).— . . . "A genuine act of worship will hardly be able to comprehend the whole school, and will have to be optional. The situation will vary in different schools. There could be special group assemblies or acts of worship for religious groups. There might also be general assemblies on religious themes conducted by members of different religious groups, open to the whole school but optional. We think that sometimes an assembly of the whole school is valuable—sharing an attempt to find and affirm a corporate identity in an act which can be joined in or appreciated by all.

Such a corporate act would not be a syncretistic act of worship for it would not be an act of worship, although it would be a corporate celebration of common values. . . . But we do think that what is done should be genuinely done, and therefore that an assembly for worship need not be held for all children every day, and that Christian worship as a daily act imposed on the whole school is no longer justifiable."

There follows a warning about the general confusion between *School Assembly* and the *Act of Worship*, the first being both verbally and actually construed as being inclusive of the second, which it need not be.

Personally I can find no harm whatsoever in the above quoted suggestions. The art of the possible takes into account the inevitability of gradualness. It seems reasonable, therefore, to work towards the removal of the statutory requirements relating to religion in secondary schools and leave the subject open to individual interpretation from school to school. To replace the 1944 Statutory requirements with other imposing total abolition of worship or of religious discussion would be as dogmatic and absurd, as autocratic and narrow-minded and as anti-educational as the existing provisions of the 1944 Act.

Dogmatism from our side will merely serve to deliver the liberal religious movement back into the clutches of their own dogmatists.

Actually, from my experience of speaking to a number of schools during sixth form liberal studies courses, whatever the new Act may stipulate, there is already no going back, the pupils won't stand for it. Senior boys and girls attend religious assemblies out of courtesy to their Head Teacher and for the sake of the secular social value of whatever follows the worshipful part of it, but they will not join in singing, saying prayers or reiterating Amen.

What our movement ought to be having a very serious look at is the rising tide of youthful involvement in black and white magical cults and their apparent abandonment of reason in favour of fantasy. I suspect something very wrong in the teaching of science underlies this intellectual regression. ISOBEL GRAHAME.

READING SOME of the contributions to discussion of the recent Social Morality Council Working Party's Report on Moral and Religious Education in County Schools, I wonder whether the correspondents have studied the actual Report, or are content merely to quote the versions given by some critics and your recent editorial. I do not know why the NSS was not represented on the Working Party in question, but the fact seems to have led to misrepresentation of the findings.

The great concern of the Party was to foster the spirit of moral awareness in schools, supported by enlightened public opinion, and they welcomed the growth of voluntary associations spreading information on the subject. There was no attempt, as far as I can see, to "appease" religions or to concede that their "points of view . . . were paramount". The conceding appears to be on the part of the religious members of the Working Party, who agreed without exception that religion should not be compulsory as at present in state schools. We know that the reason why Christians of this type are with us in wanting RI removed from schools is because they believe it is not, in general, done well enough. Fair enough—it is not our purpose at this moment to attempt to prevent parents from sending children to receive tuition from "experts" in extra-school subjects, out of school hours.

To refuse to allow children to learn something about "the nature and claims of religion", which are part of our cultural heritage, would be as rigid and limited a stand as any we criticise on the "other side". One can criticise inclusion in this joint report of the sentence "we welcome the Schools Council's Project on RE in primary schools", but it goes on to "hope that the Social Morality Council will appoint a working party to consider the questions best for primary education in a plural society", so our constructive criticism could be made if and when such report is published. None of this in any sense means religious beliefs being "included among the official objectives of the BHA"!

James Hemming, one of the Humanists on the Working Party, has said elsewhere, he regards "compulsory worship, . . . as an intolerable denial of democratic and developmental principles—as morally and educationally wrong". At the same time he sees "periodic assemblies as socially valuable functions", and he does not object if in a school one assembly is given a Christian flavour, another a Jewish or Hindu, a third uses songs from 'Hair', and a fourth celebrates some great achievement; that is all in order so long as everyone knows what is going on and no claims to absolute truth are put forward."

(On tactical grounds, apart from any other, it must be remembered that empty ranting opposition provokes rigidly dogmatic responses.)

As another of your correspondents says, we can feel confident that familiarity with the Bible "should soon result in a reaction

against it when seen in relation to the science sessions with which it would have to be compared". This is surely a more convincing way of quietly demonstrating the falsity of the belief that the chosen religion would solve all problems, "if only you did what I preached"—if only! It has had its chance, including a hundred years in state schools, without converting any noticeable number of people to a perfect way of life! The onus is on religion.

It would be amusing to note, if not bordering on the tragic, that a body of eminent people, including the formerly-liberal-minded Lady Stocks, have recently formed a "National Association for Teachers of Religious Knowledge (NATORK)", organised by a Miss D. C. Howlett in Birmingham, with the object of petitioning the Minister of State for Education and Science to uphold the RE provisions in the 1944 Act, and asking members of churches to offer full or part-time service to qualify in Bible study and go into state schools "to tell the children about Jesus Christ, and all He has meant and means to this country and the world".

So, while the religious factions quarrel over whether or not to keep RI, we freethinkers might resolve our petty differences, for at least we are all on the 'abolitionist' side, and need to conserve our energies for convincing the Secretary of State for Education.

MARJORIE MEPHAM.

MR G. F. WESTCOTT rightly denounces the "rigid dogmatism" of religious faith which precludes compromise—but at the same time demands of the Humanist movement a similar rigid dogmatism and preclusion of compromise! And when he says: "The Report appears to justify my fears", what does he mean by "appears"? That he is judging it only by the criticism in your editorial, without bothering to read it for himself? If so, I suggest he begs, borrows, or buys a copy (available from the BHA at 3/6), or even steals one if necessary, so that the opinions he states are at least his own and founded on fact. He might be surprised to find that it is not so "one-sided" as he has assumed on the evidence of a one-sided critique of it!

BARBARA SMOKER.

A World Language

THE correspondence on Celtic nationalism and language prompts me to draw the attention of your readers to the role which Esperanto is playing in safeguarding minority national languages.

Here we have a planned auxiliary language specifically designed for use as a neutral medium between nations. With justification, it can be claimed that Esperantists are in the forefront of those fighting linguistic imperialism.

Their standpoint being . . . "to each nation, its own language and culture—but, for inter-national communication, let us use Esperanto!"

It behoves every person who loves his native tongue, be he Celt or non-Celt, to support the language which belongs to all peoples equally—Esperanto.

Incidentally, Mr Ellis might be interested to know that Esperantists are, in fact, publicising throughout the world an ancient Celtic language. I refer to the recent publication, in Esperanto, of the work *Konciza Historio pri la Kornvala Lingvo* (Concise History of the Cornish Language) by Geoffrey H. Sutton.

BASIL J. EDGEcombe.

When should we Debate ?

SURELY MR PARKER is not the moral idiot he pretends! Would he not act if someone started beating up his children? Does he in fact make no moral distinction between the perpetration of genocide and people who try to help the victims. If he *does* distinguish and would act, on what basis other than feeling?

I understood your simplistic attitude, Mr Parker, without the need for tiresome repetition. But I challenged you to give grounds, other than feeling, for moral judgements, and you did not attempt to do so. Why not?

G. L. SIMONS.

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