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CHURCH SCHOOLS AN EXPENSIVE ABSURDITY

The National Secular Society has stepped up the campaign against religious indoctrination and segregation in the classroom by publishing a forthright attack on church schools. The author of *The Cost of Church Schools* is David Tribe, president of the NSS, and together with Christopher Price—former editor of *New Education*—he introduced it at a press conference in London last Saturday. Mr Tribe claims that the education of children on the basis of their parents' credal beliefs is financially wasteful and socially harmful, and quotes the tragic example of Northern Ireland "where only the British Army prevents the sects from going at one another's throats in the name of Gentle Jesus". Christopher Price, writer on educational affairs and former Member of Parliament for Perry Barr said: "There is a tendency among representatives of religious organisations and politicians to present the current situation as the best of all possible worlds, and prevent serious discussion about the future of church schools in what is a fundamentally secular, national educational system. I think this is particularly dangerous since there are in many urban areas communities growing up more and more pluralistic in nature. This makes church schools a positive disruptive and divisive influence". Mr Price went on to say this is particularly true of our large cities with large immigrant community, where under the present system "they have every right to demand schools of their own, and make the problem of integration even more difficult".

Edward Blishen writes: It's no good calling Mr Tribe's pamphlet timely: though in relation to the present wave of discussion, which begins to be vaguely visible on the huge surface of our national indifference, it does appear at an important moment. In fact, it has long been timely to draw attention to the anomaly of the church schools. They bear as much relation to the present real needs and common convictions of our community as would schools based on our old divisions into Mercia, Northumbria, Wessex and so on. And indeed, it is a kind of spiritual tribalism that they represent—a primitive organisation in the field of belief that takes no heed of the scepticism and open-mindedness that have long formed the real outlook of the nation. A study of the series of historical tricks by which the churches have maintained their grip on education is matter, perhaps, for someone even more Voltairian than Mr Tribe. The awful thing, when one runs into the ecclesiastical establishment, is to discover how very unreal its thinking has become in these matters. The tricks have been so successful that a word from outside, even the gentlest word of protest, causes holy eyebrows to soar with simple astonishment. Try pointing out to those responsible for, or in support of, the recent Durham Report that there's something not quite intellectually healthy about the conclusion that religious education should cease to be compulsory and instead should be a matter of statutory obligation! Voltaire, thou should'st indeed be living at this hour!

Mrs Margaret Knight, in her foreword to the pamphlet, is of the view that Mr Tribe is a little too much in the tradition of that awkward philosopher who said "those who believe absurdities can commit atrocities." She pays tribute to Mr Tribe's power as a pamphleteer, and adds that she has "sometimes wished that he would be a trifle less pugnacious", and that his "combative attitude makes him a dangerous ally." Mr Tribe's answer, I imagine, would be that a perilous disease is not to be cured with soft words. And it is indeed an account of a disease, this pamphlet. As Mrs Knight says, the case against the church schools is not mainly economic: and, rightly, Mr Tribe comes last to matters of money. First, and powerfully, he

is concerned with the cost in terms of psychological and communal harm. Having, with little difficulty, disposed of the claim of the churches to be educational pioneers in any even mildly liberal sense, he turns to an examination of those many forms of segregation that arise out of the existence of the church schools. On the way, he looks at the character of the sectarian, and points to the obvious truth that "anyone who in all matters of controversy defers to traditional authority" is bound to be conservative in all directions, with "tendencies to authoritarianism . . . conformism, and sometimes sexual and other neuroses." Maybe such a person represents, without being able to do much about it, an immemorial human type: and maybe the radical atheist is but another. But it is the first, and not the second, who demands schools of his own.

Defects in Church Schools

Mr Tribe then examines the character of schooling in the church schools, and does not need to make hostile judgements of his own about the authoritarian quality of much of this schooling: the emphasis on corporal punishment: the often poor buildings: the loaded approaches to history and science, and the censorious retreat from much in literature: the cultivation of zealotry: Catholic obscurantism in the matter of sex education and family planning: and so on. I should, for the benefit of those who'd like to come to their own conclusions about Mrs Knight's unease, quote Mr Tribe here: a typical swingeing passage.

We often read advertisements for church schools . . . which refer to their all-pervasive "spirit of Christ". This is the standard euphemism for Christian brainwashing. One is hardly surprised to find that a sectarian act of worship and period of religious instruction is a daily custom in most of them. Under the 1944 Education Act county schools are almost as bad. But, we are told, every period in the voluntary school day, from physical education to needlework, is impregnated with Christ. What precisely this may mean is an interesting matter for speculation, but from time to time one comes across an arithmetic book where computations with apples and oranges give way to

(Continued overleaf)

Freethinker

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Editor: William McIlroy

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calculations involving ave marias and paternosters. Till less than twenty years ago Catholic schools taught evolution as a phantasy of Protestant and freethinking examination boards, and even today it is taught as applicable only to the physical nature of man . . .

As I say, in this section Mr Tribe does not, for uneasy judgements about the effect of all this, have to rest upon his own opinions: he has in nearly every case found critics to quote who speak from within the ranks.

Segregation and Waste

He points to incidental nonsenses: for example, that many of the schools are wastefully small, incapable of installing modern equipment or recruiting a reasonable range of teaching talents. But, as it seems to me, the most urgent and passionately important point he makes is the one about the multitude of segregations which arise from the existence of sectarian education. Sexual segregation is among them ("one of the many forms of segregation that appeal to the devout"); but worse is "the exclusive fostering of different world views, which may have academic or spiritual significance but no relevance for the ordinary lives of the pupils and teachers. It is the fostering of a complex pattern of social attitudes and *mores*, dietary and calendar tabus, views on marriage and divorce, birth and death, work and play. It seeds a growth of habits and prejudices which, even when cut off from the soil of conscious faith, continues to draw nourishment from the air of unconscious memories." What, Mr Tribe asks, is to prevent the Muslim from asking for his own school, or any of the groups professing oriental faiths that now form part of our community? Why should not the flat-earthers, or those who practice Voodoo, demand separate establishments for education? The churches might argue that this is a mere *reductio ad absurdum*. "But anything which can so readily be reduced to an absurdity is likely to be itself absurd."

It is powerfully said, and it seems to me fantastically important that it should be said and heeded. How can we possibly afford, in the world of the second half of this dangerous century, to cultivate such tribalism in matters of the spirit? The church schools have as their very reason for being the intent of nourishing the most doubtful of differences between child and child, man and man. When Mr Tribe turns to the actual cost of this anachronism, we seem indeed to be attending to the insult after examining the injury. He shows that inquiries about the national bill for sectarian education have been constantly balked by an apparent sudden failure to do simple arithmetic on the part of both church and state. Mr Tribe demonstrates that the calculations are not, after all, very difficult. It seems

that we support sectarian education to the tune of some £300 million a year. And the schools we build or help to build, and the sites they stand on, remain *mirabile dictu*, the property of the church. Perhaps it is not Voltaire but Lewis Carroll we need.

Meanwhile, Mr Tribe will do very well. I think this closely argued pamphlet is none the worse for being extremely impolite, incorrigibly witty and notably passionate. It is worth seeing what such a fierce voice can do where there has been, perhaps, far too much genteel whispering.

PROCESSIONS BAN

Any action to calm the situation in Northern Ireland is to be welcomed, but it remains to be seen if the ban on processions for six months will keep the comic opera Apprentice Boys and similar organisations off the streets. The fact that the ban was not imposed on 1 July when the annual merry round of Orange marches commence is not just an indication of the Northern Ireland Government's reluctance to tangle with the Orange Order; most Unionist MPs and Government ministers are members of the Order, so it can be assumed that it was not only fear of the consequences that made them wait until after the Twelfth of July processions were over before imposing the ban.

Predictably, the ban caused the Rev Ian Paisley to fluminate, but it will win him hundreds of new supporters. Ulster Protestants are incredibly arrogant and will bitterly resent any restriction on their demonstrations. The *Daily Telegraph* claimed that a large body of moderate opinion in Ulster "is sick to the teeth of processions and their attendant disorders". One of the myths for which many outside journalists and politicians have fallen is that of "moderate opinion" in Northern Ireland. It is almost non-existent; certainly there are moderate and rational people to be found there, but Northern Ireland is one of those places where the extremists are the majority. Anyone who thinks otherwise should recall the fate of Terence (now Lord) O'Neill.

The recent Twelfth of July processions passed without serious incident, although this was entirely due to the presence of 11,000 British troops. But will they be on duty every Twelfth? The prohibition on processions may temporarily calm the atmosphere, but it cannot be extended indefinitely. How long will this mad and dangerous situation continue? Basically, as long as Britain continues to support the Stormont regime with arms and money.

British taxpayers will eventually realise that union with Northern Ireland is financially and politically disastrous. Even before troops were sent there we were subsidising Northern Ireland to the tune of £100 million annually. Added to this there is the damage being done to Britain's good name by her close association with Stormont. Chichester-Clark and his colleagues may have been on the carpet when they came to London. But on returning to Belfast they have to face a Unionist Party and Government that are firmly controlled by raving bigots.

One thing is certain; the lives of British soldiers should not be endangered in Northern Ireland. Chichester-Clark and his friends should be left to stew in their own Orange juice.

THE THREAT TO PRIVACY

TONY SMYTHE

In his recent book Anthony A. Thompson succeeds in cracking the veneer of the liberal mythology that has, in the past, often saved British institutions and bureaucrats from serious critical assessment. He flays tax inspectors and judges, credit companies and MI5. Government secrecy is contrasted with a personal exposure of the ordinary citizen that puts *Oh! Calcutta!* in the shade. The castle of the Englishman has become a goldfish bowl. The freedom of the press dims in the shade of the Official Secrets Acts and the D Notice system. The five-yearly vote, even for the party of one's choice, is of doubtful relevance under a system where minority support can produce a Government where the representation of minority parties is a pale reflection of their numerical strength. The back bench MP, even if not a slave to the party whips, is starved of the access to information and the resources which are needed to make use of it. The doctrine of ministerial responsibility provides a convenient excuse for cover-up operations when anything goes wrong, while even a Minister himself may not be informed because he is not entitled to have access to the files in his own Department. The checks and balances which provide the basis of confidence in the parliamentary system are riddled with so many escape routes for the career bureaucrat that if injustices or maladministration ever come to light, it is more by luck than judgment.

Occasionally the reality is exposed. In giving evidence at a recent Official Secrets Act trial a permanent official with the Foreign Office said: "The only reason for classifying a document is for reasons of security . . . a Government official who thought that the disclosure of a document might cause embarrassment to HMG might well classify it as confidential . . . naturally you mean politically embarrassing. It is not the business of any official to try or allow the Government to be embarrassed. That is what we are working for. Embarrassment and security are not really two different things."

Of course, covering up is not always blatantly deliberate. It sometimes arises, as the National Council for Civil Liberties recently discovered, from rules whose intention has been lost with the passage of time. We recently made public our evidence to the Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration on the subject of immigration control. We had not been told of any restrictions and were reluctant to bury the findings at the demise of the Select Committee itself following the announcement of the General Election. As a result we were soundly ticked off by the Committee's chairman, Arthur Bottomley, who implied that we should have been aware that in 1837 the House of Commons had resolved that documents submitted to such committees should not be published on the initiative of their authors.

New Threats to Freedom

If the framework of rules and regulations governing the relationship between the citizen and the State has not developed to the citizen's advantage, we must now, as Mr Thompson shows, take into account the additional threats created by new techniques of surveillance and data storage which are now being applied with great enthusiasm by the professional snoopers from both public and private sectors. The book is a civil libertarian's ammunition dump for,

while it has the characteristic defects of all exposure-type journalism, it has also the virtue of bringing together basic information in an easily digestible form. Without it the ordinary citizen, even if he suspected what was going on, would find it necessary to refer to the NCCL's more modest publication *Privacy under Attack*, and information which lies scattered through the less accessible pages of HMSO publications and specialist journals such as *Computer Weekly*.

One man's Enoch Powell is another's Mao Tse-Tung—thus we personalise our fears. Big Brother is largely, I suspect, "the by-product of the search for efficiency" and to resist efficiency is to invite all the ridicule that could be heaped on a modern Canute. In Britain at least tyrants as people are out of date. Progress itself, particularly in the realm of technology, is, in an uncritical climate, the most likely source of tyranny. It is all the more dangerous because changes are imperceptible and invariably justified by the argument of administrative convenience. Well-meaning, if unimaginative civil servants and politicians will, as time passes, find themselves masters of a technology-dominated machine which has been described as "the infra-structure of tyranny". It would take an incurable optimist to maintain that the State, given power over the individual, will draw back from using it and observe the niceties of the past.

The Right to Privacy

This book is about power and our failure to control it. In searching out invasions of privacy over the last year or so, the NCCL has become aware of issues which transcend the individual's right to privacy. To the public the computer is simply a machine for doing sums, to the computer industry it is a product to be sold, to the purchaser it will save time and tedium, but to the sophisticated planner it may yet become an instrument for control and decision-making. Even at this point, the computer's ability to store and collate massive quantities of personal information and to provide a ready access to it, brings us to the threshold of a new kind of totalitarianism—the manipulative society. Deviation, discussion and protest may well become irrelevant if a central authority, commercially or State dominated, has the means to predict the desires and responses of individuals and groups within the community. We may all end up very satisfied and getting what we think we want but we will hardly be in a position to participate in the decisions which are made for us. Add to this a touch of genetic engineering, referred to in the concluding chapter, the discriminating use of socially acceptable drugs and the infinite capacity of authority to assert itself and you have a society which will rival the worst predictions of a Huxley or an Orwell. I would not suggest for a moment that anything on this scale can be tackled solely by conventional political pressure or the imposition of protective legislation. But the first priority is to become aware of the threats both long and short term. The second, which this book ignores, is to promote and force government to implement codes of conduct for those attempting to probe into and control our private lives and to establish rights and remedies for citizens who are not prepared to put up with such intrusions unless they can be justified in the interests of the community as a whole.

(Continued on page 245)

PUBLICATIONS

| 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 |
| The Cost of Church Schools | David Tribe | 4/0 | 6d |
| A History of Sex | G. L. Simons | 9/0 | 1/0 |
| 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 |
| The Secular Responsibility | Marghanita Laski | 2/0 | 4d |
| The Nun Who Lived Again | Phyllis Graham | 6d | 4d |
| An Analysis of Christian Origins | George Ory | 2/6 | 4d |
| New Thinking on War and Peace | A. C. Thompson | 1/0 | 4d |
| A Humanist Glossary | Robin Odell and Tom Barfield | 3/6 | 6d |
| The Vatican Versus Mankind | Adrian Pigott | 4/0 | 1/4 |
| Evolution of the Papacy | F. A. Ridley | 1/0 | 4d |
| Lift up Your Heads | William Kent | 5/0 | 1/0 |
| Men Without Gods | Hector Hawton | 2/6 | 10d |
| The Bible Handbook | G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball | 7/6 | 1/2 |
| What Humanism is About | Kit Mout | 10/6 | 1/6 |
| The Humanist Revolution | Hector Hawton | 10/6 | 1/6 |
| Pioneers of Social Change | E. Royston Pike | 10/6 | 1/6 |
| The Golden Bough | J. G. Frazer | 20/0 | 2/6 |
| Religion in Secular Society | Bryan Wilson | 15/0 | 1/3 |
| The Humanist Outlook | Various | 35/0 | 2/2 |
| 100 years of Freethought | David Tribe | 42/0 | 2/2 |
| Catholic Terror Today | Avro Manhattan | 12/6 | 1/6 |
| Materialism Restarted | Chapman Cohen | 5/0 | 1/4 |
| The Rights of Man | Thomas Paine | 14/0 | 1/6 |
| The Martyrdom of Man | Winwood Reade | 10/6 | 1/9 |
| Morality Without God | Chapman Cohen | 6d | 4d |
| Catholic Imperialism and World Freedom (secondhand) | Avro Manhattan | 15/0 | 2/2 |
| From Jewish Messianism to the Christian Church | Prosper Alfaric | 6d | 4d |
| Man His Own Master | Archibald Robertson | 2/6 | 8d |
| The Outlines of Mythology | Lewis Spence | 2/6 | 8d |
| The Dead Sea Scrolls | John Allegro | 5/0 | 1/0 |
| Age of Reason | Thomas Paine | 3/6 | 4d |
| Rights of Man (paper) | Thomas Paine | 7/0 | 1/4 |
| Rights of Man (hard cover) | Thomas Paine | 14/0 | 1/6 |
| Police and the Citizen | NCCL | 4/0 | 5d |
| The Hanging Question | Edited by Louis Blom-Cooper | 15/0 | 1/0 |
| Rome or Reason | R. G. Ingersoll | 1/0 | 5d |
| Thomas Paine | Chapman Cohen | 1/0 | 5d |
| Morals Without Religion | Margaret Knight | 12/6 | 1/2 |
| The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism | Bertrand Russell | 6/0 | 1/0 |
| Why I am Not a Christian | Bertrand Russell | 3/0 | 6d |
| Impact of Science on Society | Bertrand Russell | 6/0 | 1/0 |
| Mysticism and Logic | Bertrand Russell | 6/0 | 1/0 |
| Authority and the Individual | Bertrand Russell | 7/0 | 1/0 |
| Political Ideas | Bertrand Russell | 6/0 | 1/0 |
| The Conquest of Happiness | Bertrand Russell | 9/0 | 1/2 |
| Marriage and Morals | Bertrand Russell | 8/0 | 1/2 |
| Bertrand Russell's Best | Edited by Robert E. Egner | 15/0 | 1/6 |
| Religion in Secular Society | Bryan Wilson | 6/0 | 1/0 |
| Humanism | H. J. Blackham | 5/0 | 1/0 |
| Comparative Religion | A. C. Bouquet | 8/0 | 1/4 |
| William James and Religion | Gabriel Richard Mason | 1/0 | 5d |
| What is the Sabbath Day? | H. Cutner | 1/3 | 6d |
| Human Rights | Peter Archer | 3/0 | 5d |
| Marriage and Divorce | Various | 9/6 | 1/4 |
| The Freethinker 1969 Bound Volume | | 32/0 | 4/6 |

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NEWS

OH! CALCUTTA!

The guardians of decency, morality and Christian values never learn by their mistakes. A year or two ago they were gunning for *Ulysses*, and thanks largely to their antics, the film had a highly successful run in London's West End. Their latest target is *Oh! Calcutta!* which had its official opening at the Round House, Chalk Farm, last Monday. Representatives of the purity brigade went to see preview performances and then lodged complaints with the police. All this was manna for Fleet Street, and tickets for *Oh! Calcutta!* are being sold at inflated prices.

Oh! Calcutta! has not been foisted on an unsuspecting public. Indeed, it has not been foisted on anyone; no one is being forced to see the show. The old women of both sexes who traipsed off to darkest NW1 knew they were not going to see *Wild Violets*. Of course they did not sit through an erotic revue for pleasure; they sacrificed and soiled themselves in order to protect unsophisticated theatregoers, the innocent youth of Britain, London's good name. (No doubt those who tried to ban Shaw's and Ibsen's plays, and clean up Marie Lloyd's songs were prompted by the same lofty motives.)

There is a great deal of real immorality to protest about; racialism, persecution of minority groups, glorification of war, to mention only some examples. But those who so feverishly agitate for censorship and suppression nearly always confine their efforts to the sexual sphere. "We have declared war on pornography, the real enemy of family life and true sexual happiness", one of them declared recently. It is worth noting that a poll of psychiatrists and psychologists throughout the United States has been conducted by Chicago University on the subject of pornography. One of the questions revealed that 86.1 per cent of the respondents believed that people who try rigorously to suppress pornography often are motivated by unresolved sexual problems in their own character.

THE POPE'S MEN

The *Surrey Comet* recently published an article on the Roman Catholic Knights of St Columba. Despite denials that the Order is a secret society the *Comet* reporter was not allowed to attend a meeting, but met several of the Knights at a member's home.

It transpired that the wearing of robes and other regalia has been discontinued, but someone recalled an occasion in 1938 when the Knights, in full drag, walked through the streets of London to protest against a "Communist Atheistic Congress". This was, of course the congress of the

World Union of Freethinkers, and some *Freethinker* readers will remember the campaign—conducted mainly by Roman Catholics—to prevent it taking place. There were articles in the religious press, petitions to the Home Secretary and questions in the House of Commons.

AND NOTES

Although that favourite son of the Vatican, Senator Joe McCarthy, had not appeared on the scene, the Roman Catholic practice of describing as Communist people and organisations they did not like, was already widespread. (It had been enormously successful in Germany and Spain.) But that smear did not daunt the World Union of Freethinkers, the congress was a resounding success despite the efforts of the Knights of St Columba and the Catholic hierarchy.

HOUSEWARMING

The Independent Adoption Society held a reception last week to celebrate moving to its new headquarters at 160 Peckham Rye, London. The Society has never had a proper home since it came into existence (as the Agnostics' Adoption Society), but the new premises, which are spacious and pleasantly decorated and furnished, are admirably suited to their needs. They share the building with the British Red Cross and the Family Planning Association.

The IAS has only five full-time workers, but their dedication, plus the generosity of many friends, has made the future much brighter for the organisation and those it serves. It has a splendid reputation in adoption circles.

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All donations will be acknowledged

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

103 BOROUGH HIGH STREET, LONDON, SE1

THE THREAT TO PRIVACY

(Continued from page 243)

The NCCL has suggested measures to control data collection in its Personal Information Bill. We have also called for much more stringent control of surveillance techniques, interception of personal communications and the powers

of officials to enter private premises. The last Government replied by establishing the Committee of Enquiry into invasions of privacy by private agencies while refusing to put its own house in order. This reluctance to scrutinise its own powers is in the nature of government, but if we are not prepared at this stage to force the issue, how on earth are we to put Big Brother in his place before 1984?

Big Brother in Britain published by Michael Joseph, 35s.

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 St., 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.

EVENTS

Humanist Holidays. Family Centre, Aberystwyth, Monday, 17 August until Tuesday, 1 September. Full board just over £2 per day with reductions for children. Details from Mrs Mepham, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surry. Telephone: 01-642 8796.

The Progressive League. Summer Conference at Haldon House, near Exeter from 29 August until 5 September. Charges are very reasonable, and children under 13 are accepted free. Details are obtainable from Ernest Seeley, 38 Primrose Gardens, London, NW3.

FREETHINKER FUND

The *Freethinker* just cannot exist on income from sales. Many other journals—some of which have a substantial advertising revenue—also depend on the generosity of their readers to make ends meet. Although production costs have increased we have, so far, been able to keep the price of the *Freethinker* at sixpence. But we depend greatly on the goodwill of readers and contributors to keep the paper in existence.

We appeal to readers and organisations to donate generously and regularly to the *Freethinker*, and extend our warmest thanks to the following:

- E. Willoughby £1-1-0; N. Leveritt £1-1-0; D. Harker £1-1-0; F. Hamman £4; Mrs J. Fannell 11/-; A. S. Pulham 8/6; L. Spain 3/-; D. Sandwell 9/-; J. Sutherland 8/6; T. Myles Hill 5/-; E. Henderson 18/6; D. Wardle £10; J. Benjamin 10/-; W. Craigie 5/-; J. R. Hutton 7/6; S. C. Merryfield 5/-; A. Bradley 10/-; A. E. Smith 18/6; C. T. Knapp 8/-; R. L. Chismer £2; E. McGue 16/4; P. A. L. Young 10/-; B. A. Coxson 3/6; Mrs W. Mawson £1; B. W. Mackay 1/8; N. Sinnott 14/-; F. W. Jones £1-1-0; T. F. Stringer 8/6; C. Byass £1; J. Barr £1; J. Vallance 18/6; R. Brownlee 18/6; R. G. Mason £2; H. W. Day 8/6; C. Jones 8/6; Mrs G. M. Jones 3/6; R. Parker 18/6; K. Graham 8/6; Mrs D. Behr 10/6; Mrs D. Burdett 4/6; J. G. Hillhouse (in memory of John Ingram) £2; P. R. Smith 8/6; R. C. Essex £2; A. W. Harris 5/-; C. Thompson 5/-; M. Watson 18/6; A. K. Philpott 8/6; S. L. Ford 8/6; N. Griffin £1-4-6; W. C. Parry 5/-; Sale of books £2. Already acknowledged: £53-14-8; 1970 total to date: £103-3-8.

BOOKS

ONE MORNING IN THE WAR

by Richard Hammer. Hart-Davis, 30s

Do you remember it? Do you remember Son My/My Lai (Pinkville)? On 16 March, 1968, an American task force in Vietnam indiscriminately slaughtered over five hundred unarmed villagers — men, women, children, babes-in-arms. The circumstances, for what they are worth, are that the massacre took place soon after the Tet offensive and that the American troops, working to a wrong map reference, expected to meet NLF opposition.

Some details: "The bullets riddled the woman's body. . . . They just kept shooting at her. You could see the bones flying in the air, chip by chip. . . . I shot them, the lady and the little boy. He was about two years old. . . . There were soldiers standing outside the hootches, watching them burn, and as Vietnamese suddenly emerged from the pyres, would shoot them. . . . one soldier shooting at everything he saw, blazing away indiscriminately and laughing hysterically as he kept pulling the trigger. . . . awful hysterical laughter of one soldier or another. . . . he launched grenades at groups of people. . . . you'd see pieces of body flying around. . . . most of them women and little kids. . . . he lets fly with a grenade. . . . the whole area just suddenly turned red. . . ." And so it went on, hour after hour - a young girl is raped, a toddler is shot dead as it clasps the hand of its dead mother, babies and old men are burned to death.

To take Pinkville out of context, to say it is exceptional, is to misunderstand the whole nature of the Vietnamese war. It is to the credit of Richard Hammer, a journalist for the *New York Times*, that he tries in this book to set Pinkville accurately within the total situation, a situation in which rape and murder, for example, are commonplace:

Several of the soldiers walked casually across the field to the woman and child. They grab her, throw her to the ground, pull up her skirts and then, one by one, rape her while the child stands screaming. . . . When they are finished, one of the men takes a rifle and casually shoots the woman through the head. He turns and just as casually kills the child.

There are a thousand Pinkvilles and it is a squalid irrelevance to try a handful of unhappy soldiers for a single event in many. The guilt lies with the policy makers in Washington and the Chiefs of Staff in the Pentagon. The American soldiers in the field are subject to intolerable stresses: they live in a hostile land with every hand against them; they see their friends shot and wounded; all they wish is to return "to the world." If they sometimes behave like barbarians in stressful situations we should look to the men, the politicians, who put the guns in their hands.

The book serves well to remind us of a daily and massive atrocity. In a final section, "The Ultimate Responsibility", our attention is drawn again and again, as Russell and thousands of others have tried to do, to the sustained crime of the American action. Well may Tacitus be quoted - ". . . where they make a desert they call it peace." And the desert is Son My and thousands of such villages: "Everything was destroyed by the American troops; not a house stands, not a field still flourishes, not an animal grazes. It is uninhabited wasteland." With a clear-cut and well-documented racialism, with a brutal cruelty, the American military are destroying a nation, its institutions, its economy, and its people. It is a tragedy, not only that such a process should be running on year after year, but

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that decent misguided folk, kept ignorant by a wretched right-wing press, should be prepared to support it, even in the *Freethinker* columns.

There are factual errors (and two or three misprints) in this volume. The most serious blunder is the statement (p34) that the 1954 Geneva Agreements constituted an "official establishment" of two countries. In fact the Accords explicitly state that the military demarcation line is in no way to be interpreted as a "political or territorial boundary." In history and law Vietnam is one.

If you want detailed information on the background to the Vietnam war there are better and cheaper books than this, but the present volume does convey well what the war means in human terms for ordinary Vietnamese and for the GIs themselves. It is recommended reading for those irresponsible cheerleaders who, by approving the US involvement, would egg on the American to further carnage, whether in Vietnam or elsewhere.

G. L. SIMONS

THE ASSAULTS ON OUR SENSES

by John Barr. Methuen, 50s.

John Barr's previous book *Derelict Britain* was a masterpiece of its kind which came out just when it was needed, and has already had a considerable effect on attitudes to derelict land. His new book lacks the precision of target of *Derelict Britain* but is a valuable contribution all the same. It is sub-titled *Pollution—Factory-farming—Manhandled foods—Squalor—Noise*, that is to say just about the whole field of the living environment in Britain which is under attack today. He is therefore aiming at a much more diffused target, but in spite of this and the fact that he inevitably repeats much that has been said before by others, the bringing together of so much material on the general subject forms a notable contribution to European Conservation Year.

He starts off by asking precisely the right question about conservation and conservationists: "is all this becoming laughably obsolete, the sentimental longings of the middle-aged and elderly, all unendurably trite? . . . to those of conservative temperament, to the Merrie Englanders, the answers may seem obvious. But . . . to the younger, reared from birth to this new world of noise and impermanence and machine-worship, the answers are by no means simple. . . . Country solitude to father may be a creepy bore to son." But he soon comes to the conclusion that there is little in these doubts and goes on to recount example after example of the spoiling of our environment, with suitable quotations from famous people in that particular field about the situation.

The chief value of the book is, or should be, dual. It is intended to supply ammunition for the struggle against pollution and it is meant to be thought-provoking on the subject. It amply fulfills the first and if it falls down on the second, my final paragraph will make it clear that this is no fault of the author's.

John Barr tends to blame much on the state into which our minds and visual sensibilities have got. He says "what would Ulysses—who when home from Troy said that having seen the cities of men he knew their minds—make of

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Slough or Hendon, of the minds that have created such dreariness?" He perhaps fails to follow this up sufficiently in terms of what should be done to improve our minds and awareness in this field, whether by publicity or education. Perhaps that will be another book for him.

Part five of this book gives an account of what is being done about the situation, by official and voluntary bodies and by individuals. His conclusion sums up his criticisms and the action which he thinks is possible, as well as giving a valuable list of organisations concerned with the environment.

Altogether then, this is a book to buy if you have any interest in the subject. My own disagreement with the author were very minor, but I have one real complaint against those who produced the book. I have mentioned that the book should be thought-provoking, and clearly it should provoke thought not only among those who are already interested in the subject. But its presentation and design are old-fashioned and would never attract a reader who was not already interested. For this price, both the jacket, the design of the pages and the presentation of the illustrations might surely have been done in an imaginative way that would catch *anyone's* attention and at least make him think of buying the book. I would not like to end on this carping note, so will urge anyone reading this review to ignore the presentation and read what John Barr has to say.

ALASTAIR SERVICE

PAMPHLET

POLLUTION AND OUR ENVIRONMENT

The Labour Party, 3s.

This is a report prepared by the research department of the Labour Party for presentation to the recent annual conference of Labour Women, and is obtainable from the party headquarters, Transport House, Smith Square, London, SW1.

It starts by stating the root cause of pollution:

It is population growth, combined with the growth of affluence, that provides the major dynamic behind the whole problem of pollution. For more people must mean not only more garbage, sewerage, and the like, but also more pesticides, more housing, more motor cars, more open-cast mining, more demands on the countryside for leisure facilities and so on.

But having stated that population growth is the dynamic cause of pollution little is offered in the way of a solution. Family planning should be made available to all in a far more positive form. Doctors are paid for every birth but have no incentive to help where more children are not planned. Part of the maternity service should be advice on family planning—especially sterilisation. When the family is complete, sterilisation offers the best known solution as it makes no difference to your sex life and gives 100 per cent protection against further pregnancies without requiring any further action.

The report contains chapters on various aspects of pollution which indicate the complexity of the problem. While our population increases by about 1,000 every day we are losing about ten acres every day to the demands of mineral-working and the disposal of refuse of all sorts. The increas-

ing population increases the need for land so the problem intensifies.

The report underlines how difficult pollution problems are to solve. In many cases the solution of one leads to yet another pollution problem. For example detergents used to stop oil pollution can cause greater pollution than the oil itself. The pollution caused by refuse may be partly solved by burning it, but this leads to increased air pollution.

Stress is given to the acts the former Labour government initiated, but whether acts of Parliament will result in positive action to curb pollution remains to be seen. On the whole this is a good report which contains a number of useful ideas. However it is to be regretted that although it considers population growth to be a major cause of pollution, more proposals for effective population control have not been advanced.

J. E. L. AINSLEY

THEATRE

THE HERETIC. Duke of York's Theatre, London.

Hitherto known as a highly successful purveyor of offbeat Catholic *Schmalz*, Morris West now surprises us (or surprises me) with a most perceptive and moving account of the betrayal, trial and sentence of Giordano Bruno. There are one or two novelettish moments: the opening monologue where Bruno's betrayer, the Venetian nobleman Giovanni Mocenigo, explains his ambitions and his impotence; the dragging away to torture of the heretic, shouting "You horrible men" at his judges; Mocenigo's wife rushing up to his bedside in the dungeon with an "Oh my love". But these are bubbles which soon burst on waves of deep and genuine feeling.

The dramatist captures well a world of Renaissance splendour and Reformation/Counter Reformation intrigues, of courtly manners and naked cruelty, of ageing dogmas and newborn hypotheses. We see Bruno as a poet-philosopher throwing off the blinkers of geocentric, anthropocentric mediaeval thought and catching a vision of an infinite world with myriad suns and planets. For this was his real heresy, his questioning of the uniqueness of man and Christ's sacrifice for sin—far more fundamental than what heavenly body revolved around which. And at the same time we get, from someone who has lived in Italy and thoroughly understands Catholic theology and history, a convincing picture of inquisitors who are not wicked men but are intellectually and emotionally engrossed in a world-view which they deem not only the gate to eternal salvation but the arch which props up the body politic and the moral law.

Brilliantly interpreting the heresiarch, as coarse as Osborne's *Luther* but not unmindful of his studies, blustering, then seemingly broken—a cripple with a death's head—and finally winning through to his triumphant refusal to recant, is Leonard Rossiter, recently named "Stage Actor of the Year" for his performance in Brecht's *Arturo Ui*. Other outstanding portrayals come from Joseph O'Connor (who also directs the play in collaboration with the author) as the Inquisitor General of Venice, Robert Eddison as the Papal Nuncio and Brian Spink as the Assessor of the Venetian Republic. The sets and costumes are effective—unless one has actually been to Venice.

DAVID TRIBE

LETTERS

Hector MacDonald's recent letter (*Freethinker*, 18 July) is a prime example of Schopenhauer's flowery rhetoric being mistaken for serious philosophy. Mr MacDonald's confusions are pardonable only because they stem from Schopenhauer himself.

Let us consider an example: Mr MacDonald writes "insects, animals and man . . . are nothing but a manifestation of the 'will to live'". Surely, Mr MacDonald doesn't believe this; they are at least atoms and molecules as well! Moreover, whose will are they manifestations of? It can't be their own will, for to talk of someone's will presupposes his existence. Schopenhauer saw this problem and introduced the notion of the Cosmic Will. Apart from the fact that the universe is not the sort of thing that could have a will, this doesn't solve Schopenhauer's problem because, for him, the universe itself is a manifestation of the will. One is tempted then to say that it must be God's will, but, the will being evil, it must be the Devil's.

In view of this Schopenhaurian mythology Mr MacDonald's question is entirely misplaced. He asks "How is it possible for the millions of deluded human beings to manifest their 'will to live' without causing great distress and suffering in this world?" But for Schopenhauer it is not the human beings manifesting their will to live but the will to live manifesting the human beings. Had Mr MacDonald put his question this way round it would have appeared what it is—absurd. If we rephrase it, then Schopenhauer's answer is that it is not possible. The solution he proposes for the difficulty is that we should seek—by chastity, fasting and masochism—to break the will to live. (For obscure reasons, suicide is held not to be an appropriate method.) But if the will manifests us (instead of vice-versa) how can we do anything about it? And, if all will is evil, even willing to break the will, is evil.

It is unfortunate that Mr MacDonald should choose Bertrand Russell as an example of the silliness of a "so-called great philosopher". As Schopenhauer believed that the Holy Ghost dictated parts of *The World as Will and Idea* to him, and named his poodle after the World Soul, it can scarcely be said that he was wholly free of silliness himself. Needless to say, Russell never advocated dropping the bomb on Russia, as he took pains, several times, to point out.

NICHOLAS GRIFFIN.

I hope Hector MacDonald can find some consolation by considering the possibility that through the painful process of natural selection there may evolve the will "to live and let live".

Surely, "human society" is a product of human nature and vice versa; the process is "in nature". So let us, indeed, consider: what produced Bertrand Russell's so-called "advocacy"?

CHARLES BYASS.

Russian Satellite?

Kenneth Ead (11 July) calls me a liar. All right I challenge him to produce a single one of the lies I am supposed to have told. Unless he does so it is quite impossible to refute him.

Hurling abuse at one's opponent and calling him a liar can hardly be called a profitable type of debate. It is reminiscent of the late unlamented Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's minister of propaganda, who was an expert at this sort of thing. His theory was that if you called your enemy a liar often enough and loud enough then people came to believe it.

Kenneth Ead wants *Freethinker* only to print the Communist view. To him, no doubt, Marx was God and *The Morning Star* Holy Writ. But could a periodical which only gave one point of view really be called "Free"? Hardly. It would be a mockery of the very word.

I too feel desperately sorry for the Vietnamese, and all the other victims of communist aggression. I also feel sorry for the Czechs whose national hero Alexander Dubcek is being slowly destroyed before their very eyes; the Hungarians, Poles, East Germans, and all the other Russian satellites who have lost their freedom.

Mass murder? No—I certainly do not condone it; and I heard all about the grisly details of the massacres at Hue by the communists after their Tet offensive. Now the wretched Cambodians are having a taste of the same medicine.

The Morning Star does not agree? Of course it doesn't—as it is only a communist propaganda rag one would be surprised if it did. That is why no communist ever gets into Parliament; the British public detest any form of dictatorship and have no desire to become another Russian satellite. Has Mr Kenneth Ead?

CLAUD WATSON.

Free thought in the Freethinker

If I was given to despair the two replies to my letters would certainly occasion it.

I was hoping that in the *Freethinker* I might find some free

thought—some serious treatment of ideas and a change from the usual pathetic way of conducting an argument by label-sticking, mud-slinging and personal innuendo.

Is there no one around who can conduct an intelligent argument intelligently?

For Mr Watson's information I spent five years of the last war in the RAF. If he had wanted to know this he could have found it out without making himself look ridiculous.

His remark about Indo-China is beneath contempt.

As to the relevance of Cromwell's days to the present day has he not heard that there is a spot of bother in Belfast? And has he never asked himself the question: "How was the 'sovereignty' of Westminster established in the first place—and what, therefore, is its substance?"

As to the meaning of 'spirituality'—if I may attempt the impossible in one sentence—it is a name (or can be used as a name) for a peculiarly human characteristic that is compounded of *homo sapiens* dual capacity for love and imagination.

PETER CADOGAN.

Ulster

Your recent editorial on the Ulster problem (11 July) requires, I think, one or two qualifications.

I am not altogether sure that it is true that "the Paisley-inspired Protestants . . . now . . . make up majority opinion in Ulster" if by this you mean that the Paisleyite faction has become the majority group in the Six Counties of Northern Ireland in place of the other factions in the Unionist party, such as the O'Neillites as they were once called. I do not under-estimate the strength and potential danger of the Paisleyites and extremists such as the Ulster Protestant Volunteers, but it should be borne in mind that the men who are eager to resort to the gun are usually those from strife-ridden areas, typically urban and poor, where there is a ratio of Protestants to Catholics of about 50/50 so that each side feels that it is politically insecure.

I do not know that we should "welcome" the fact that the press and broadcasting media have come to term the two sides simply Protestants and Catholics. Although religious obscurantism is the principal aggravating factor in the Ulster tragedy, there are wider issues which have to be borne in mind. There are Catholics in the Unionist Party: few in number and largely showpieces, I admit (who in the "old days" would have been called "Castle Catholics"); also Protestants and (ever since the days of Wolfe Tone) Free-thinkers in the Nationalist ranks. I think it is very probable that the vast majority of Protestants in the Irish Republic are in favour of a United Ireland.

For fifty years the "Six Counties" have been a pocket colony run by fundamentalist Protestants and the old Ascendancy squirearchy in the face of public opinion in the rest of Ireland and the British Isles. They were prepared to oppose Home Rule by violence, and ultimately, therefore, the responsibility for the present situation lies with the Unionists and with the Westminster Parliament which has repeatedly appeased them.

What can be done? Firstly, the Stormont circus should be closed and the area be ruled direct from Westminster pending a plebiscite. Before 1921 the Nationalists had been clamouring for an all-Ireland parliament in Dublin, the Unionists for continuation of representation in Westminster. Stormont therefore satisfied nobody.

I would seriously suggest that another move towards easing the Ulster situation would be the abolition of the British monarchy. The fetish of the Crown is a major component of the Ulster Unionist mentality, and if Britain became a Republic I think that public opinion in Northern Ireland might well, given time, come to favour an all-Ireland Republic, so long as this was a secular state (both in theory and in practice), and that the present convention was maintained whereby Irish and British citizens have voting rights when resident in either country. Republicanism and Secularism are not the "in thing" these days, but I think Bradlaugh and his Victorian radicals were shrewder than we know.

NIALL AODH SIONOID.

I read with interest the front page article of your issue of 11 July.

The Catholics have been taught about religion by their priests and the Protestants also by their priests. The trouble between the Catholics and Protestants is what they have been taught to believe, which is the cause of all the trouble in Northern Ireland.

It is therefore most surprising that the Heads of the Catholic and Protestant religions in this country have not been called upon to settle the disgraceful state of affairs.

They should be told that it is up to them to control their followers and forced to get them to come to order, failing which, they are the ones to be condemned.

Why are they in hiding when they are the ones who are directly responsible for all this fracas?

A FREETHINKER.