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STANDING UP TO THE PRUDES

'TO DEFEND SOCIETY FROM SEX IS NO ONE'S BUSINESS' — BRIGID BROPHY

The furore over *Oh! Calcutta!*—believed by many to be part of a concerted puritanical campaign to restrict artistic freedom—looks like backfiring on its instigators. The shrill warnings about depravity and corruption seemed rather silly after the reviews were published. Many reviewers panned the show, although *The Times* critic Irving Wardle thought some of the material very funny. But they—and members of the audience who replied to a questionnaire or were interviewed—were almost unanimously of the opinion that *Oh! Calcutta!* would not deprave or corrupt. The *Daily Mirror's* Arthur Thirkell said it was "as depraved as a Welsh Sunday".

A number of leading writers, publishers, producers and directors have made it clear in public statements that they are going to make a firm stand against moralising busybodies. In a statement to the *Freethinker*, Brigid Brophy



Brigid Brophy

Mrs Fox says: "It is useful to glance over newspaper files of times gone by; one then observes that progress has indeed been made, but it is a diffuse and complicated process, similar to that of a tide creeping in over a beach. Although certain bastions of rock-like prejudice ("pornography is dangerous", "no normal swearing in TV plays or radio") stand out in apparent impregnability, certain little creeks and shallows are rapidly filled. Nudity and simulated sex acts on the stage or television, for example, not so long ago regarded by some as the ultimate indication of national decay, have been discovered not to result in the country's ruin, and people are beginning to realise that in itself such portrayal isn't really important or significant; it's simply a gesture in the direction of freedom.

The partial implementation of the Wolfenden recommendations in 1967, too, which was greeted at the time by certain venerable lords as issuing in the era of Sodom, has revealed itself as harmless. We now find that in popular television programmes such as *The Expert* the place of the homosexual in society can be intelligently referred to without hordes of elderly ladies shrilling down telephones to the BBC."

Avril Fox believes that education is the very essence of the struggle for enlightenment. "Only encourage the public to think, to ask themselves questions; only *challenge* the clichés and warnings; only pose the query, 'Shouldn't we encourage people to grow up, to look all the facts in the face, to make their own choice?'"

Essentially Political

Marion Boyars is a Joint Secretary of the Defence of Literature and the Arts Society, and a partner in the publishing firm Calder and Boyars. She believes that all censorship is essentially political in that it tries to prevent the free circulation of ideas. And as new ideas are often a threat to the Establishment, those who benefit from and control the Establishment see the threat directed against their own comfortable status quo.

Mrs Boyars told the *Freethinker*: "We do not advocate an anarchist society either on a political or a social level. Society obviously has to be regulated, and not least in order to protect the individual who might otherwise be a prey to ruthless exploitation by those who are in power as a result of their economic superiority. The Arts in particular examine and criticise the moral foundations of

made a plea for freedom and tolerance for all. Miss Brophy declared: "So long as the censorious are free to walk out / switch stations / stop reading, they have no right to interfere with the artists and audiences who are expressing or enjoying themselves without forcing anyone else to join in. To defend society from sex is no one's business. To defend it from officiousness is the duty of everyone who values freedom—or sex".

Progress Has Been Made

Avril Fox who was largely responsible for launching COSMO is optimistic about the British public ("a sensible lot on the whole") on the question of censorship. She feels that the only way in which it is possible to gauge progress is to stand back and compare the situation with that of a few years ago.

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PRESS-GANG, 1970 STYLE

ERIC WILLOUGHBY

The National Council for Civil Liberties has been campaigning on behalf of those who, because of colourful—many say misleading—recruiting propaganda, family pressure or an impulsive act, find themselves unwilling and desperately unhappy members of the Armed Forces. The refusal by the authorities to release such men was publicly admitted to be immoral by a former Defence Minister. But the scandal continues.

To many young people a career, or a short spell, in the British Armed Forces appears an attractive proposition. The possibility of saving a good deal of money over the period of enlistment is usually high on the list of advantages extolled by the man at the information office. Food, lodging and clothing are provided it is explained; "You only pay for your enjoyment" is a frequent cliché. The chance of overseas travel, the ability to learn a skill or trade, and constant companionship are other topics mentioned to help a potential recruit make up his mind about joining.

When it comes to the disadvantages, however, the enquirer is told that of course he will have certain obligations to meet, and certain duties to fulfil. Very often, it is mentioned that "we usually find the discipline does a man good".

But it cannot be denied that youths of 15 or 16 are, although well on the way to maturity, still very impressionable, and an interview with an important man in a smart uniform is more likely to impress than revolt the majority of those who have already sufficient interest to go along. Moreover, the sound of even such words as "you may find it hard at first" seem to have little substance while the mind is churning over the prospect of complete independence, and the excitement of a completely new way of life.

Many Have Regrets

However, once you have signed a paper agreeing to serve your country for nine years, it is not so easy to un-sign. The result is that there are many young men in the armed services today who very much regret ever having joined. Their misery and anguish can only be imagined. The plight of those who find themselves in such circumstances is a cause few people seem anxious to fight for, but once again the National Council for Civil Liberties has justified its reputation as a guardian of rights and freedom, by its efforts to bring this scandal to the attention of the public.

In fairness it must be said that various Government bodies since 1952 have conducted enquiries and made observations on the problem of the reluctant serviceman.

As long ago as 1952 a Select Committee on the Army and Air Force Acts indicated that it favoured a four year term, with optional discharge at 18. But the proposal did not appear as a recommendation in the final report of the Committee.

Two years later the Committee on Boys' Units in the Army accused the army of neglecting the personal develop-

ment of recruits. Boys were being treated like men, it asserted.

The Lately Committee in 1967 recommended what had been favoured 15 years earlier, namely that an option for discharge at 18 should be offered to recruits. It said that consideration should be given to "much shorter" terms of service for boys.

Earlier this year the Prices and Incomes Board criticised the deterrent effect of long-term engagement. The Ministry of Defence further came under fire from the PIB for what it called reluctance to release dissatisfied young servicemen. It was suggested that the Canadian system, in which resignation is possible, could be adapted and substituted for the present system.

Further, the Universities-Studies Group at Edinburgh University, in consultation with senior officers from all three services, has suggested that more effort should be directed toward the recruitment of older, trained men. It advanced the view that the recruitment of youngsters was positively harmful, and that, there should be more interchange between civilian and services employment.

Action Soon?

And now the National Council for Civil Liberties, which has been campaigning for some time for the remedying of the situation of the "reluctant serviceman", has published an impressive document* based on its evidence to the Donaldson Commission, due to report in September.

The NCCL concludes that it should be possible to eventually cease the recruitment of boys into the armed services, given that entry schemes for trained men could be made sufficiently attractive. A four-year engagement should be the norm in any case, it adds, and this could carry the option of renewal at the end of the term.

On the question of discharge, the Council believes that each individual should be granted the right to choose to leave at the age of 18, and at specified intervals after that. It also renews its plea for the appointment of a Military Ombudsman.

The evidence included in the NCCL document is not based solely on theory. On most of the 22 pages of text there are quotes from dissident young servicemen, their mothers, and in some cases, replies from commanding officers. Some of the quotes are lengthy, but I reproduce an edited selection:

"... I had an unhappy home life, joined the army at 15½. ... I went to the information office, I had only been there a few minutes and signed a whole load of forms before I knew where I was ... thought I had only signed for nine years ... a year or so later I found it was 12 ... I found out I had made a mistake ... I went a.w.o.l. in January and have been ever since ... frightened to go back. ... long prison sentence ... 7½ more years can't face it."

"I have unsuccessfully been trying for three years to purchase my discharge from the army ... so depressed I attempted suicide ... as I had not served three years from age 18, discharge was out of the question ... don't think I can take much more."

(Continued foot of next page)

NATIONAL IDENTITY AND A WORLD PARLIAMENT

TONY MILLS

The relationship between an individual nation and the species *homo sapiens* is a delicate matter and a cause of deep emotional reactions. It is very important that it should be discussed soberly and with a proper recognition of the sincerity of both those who wish to preserve their national identity and those who believe that, if we are to survive, we must move on from the concept of the independent nation state. There is too much at stake for us to approach it in any other way.

Much of the emotion in this debate is generated by the term "world government". We are all accustomed to using the word "government" to denote the cabinet, presidium or executive committee at the head of a sovereign state. And we tend to be suspicious of any attempt to impose such a concept on the whole human race. There are, unfortunately, good grounds for this suspicion in the behaviour of governments in many countries today and in the past. We fear dictatorship and the word arouses much the same reactions as did "popery" in the seventeenth century—for much the same reasons.

But if we conceive of a world cabinet as being, like the British cabinet, dependent on the support of a majority in an elected parliament, much of our anxiety will disappear. A cabinet of one or two dozen men might indeed degenerate into a dictatorship; but a parliament of five or six hundred, elected by all the peoples of the world would be most unlikely to do so. It is better, therefore, that in discussing this question, we should stick to the term "world parliament". (Unless, of course, we really wish to denote the kind of entity that is denoted by, say, "the Conservative Government" or "the Soviet Government".)

It can be indicated, though not proved, that, under a world parliament, the rights and traditions of racial minorities are likely to be better respected than they are today. At present we have a large number of independent states nearly all of which consist of one majority group (e.g., the English) and one or more minority groups (e.g., the Welsh and the Scots). As things are, the English can, and sometimes do, trample with impunity on the sensibilities of the minorities. Nobody can stop them, just as nobody can stop Vorster enslaving the subject races in South Africa. But in a world parliament of, say, five hundred members, there

would be only four English MPs, and the Welsh and the Scots would each have one of their own. Even the dreaded Chinese would be outnumbered by four to one. We should not then find Englishmen jeering at the feelings of the Welsh.

Perhaps the greatest danger to human survival lies in a misunderstanding of the circumstances likely to produce a world dictatorship. It is the *present* situation, with two or three super-powers competing against one another for the top of the international pecking-order, that is most likely to lead to dictatorship. Sooner or later one of the super-powers will believe that it has got either a secret weapon or a clear lead in known armaments, to which the others have no reply. It will then take risks of the kind that Khrushchev took in Cuba. If, in 1962, Khrushchev had had a secret weapon—and had taken care to leak the fact to Kennedy—the USA would have had to choose between annihilation and accepting a Russian base on their doorstep. The Russians would have become the *herrenvolk* of the world. Khrushchev was playing for high stakes. So when one of the super-powers finds itself in a position to do a successful "Cuba", world dictatorship will be here. Such a situation seems almost inevitable before the end of the century and possibly much earlier. The only thing we can do to prevent it is to put an end to the pecking-order system of running human affairs. A world parliament appears to be the only thing that might do this.

THE COST OF CHURCH SCHOOLS

By DAVID TRIBE

Foreword by MARGARET KNIGHT

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"You don't realise when you're 15 that you'll be out at 27 without a hope of building a future."

These are by no means the most moving servicemen's letters reproduced in the publication, but the more harrowing are rather too long to be included here.

Despair must end

It cannot be denied, however, that the despair revealed in these letters should not be perpetuated. A wrong choice should not sentence a person to mental—and indeed physical—imprisonment of the type revealed in the NCCL

document. It is to be sincerely hoped that the Donaldson Committee will have the good judgment to take heed of its forbears, and recommend a system of recruitment which allows for rashness and over-enthusiasm in those sought by the services themselves. Reluctant recruits are, I am sure, little use to the services and as time goes on the feelings of such people towards those who rule them can only become more vehement. A sorry situation all round. But it is not without remedy, and it is the duty of thinking people to see that this, and other oppressed minorities within the community, have the opportunity to find the way of escape, and easily.

* *Civil Liberties and Service Recruitment—National Council for Civil Liberties, 152 Camden High Street, London, N.W.1, 7s 6d.*

FREETHINKER

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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 Mapham, 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.

London Young Humanists. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1. Sunday, 16th August, 7 p.m. Robin Osner, Robert Goodsman: "The Open Society and Democracy".

STANDING UP TO THE PRUDES

(Continued from front page)

our society, and freedom of expression in all fields is a necessary condition for a democratic society in which minority opinion of whatever colour is as important as majority rule. An erotic revue like *Oh! Calcutta!* which is primarily designed to entertain and, on a more serious level, intends to send up and alleviate sexual frustration could not possibly deprave or corrupt anyone, i.e. make them worse morally. A serious playwright like Edward Bond is far from depraving or corrupting us by relentlessly exposing the less savoury aspects of human nature, and in high-lighting them he acts as a moral teacher. Censorship itself is infinitely more dangerous than the works which censorship attempts to suppress. It cuts us off from the possibility of learning and attaining truth, however unpalatable and however embarrassing at times."

NEWS

LADIES IN THE PULPIT

Shortly following the reiteration by the Methodist Conference of its theological approval of the admission of women to the ordained ministry, we hear that women studying for the Ministry of the Church of England are to be admitted to the men's theological college at Lincoln. They will attend the same theological and doctrinal lectures as the men, but whether they will ever enjoy the same status in the Church is a matter for speculation.

It is likely that the ladies will find there is still much opposition to their ordination to the priesthood, based on the most unimpeachable teachings of the Bible. Already there are rumblings of dissent: the *English Churchman*, which describes itself as "a Protestant Family Newspaper", says that on this question the Church must be guided by scripture and adds: "We cannot find any indications in the New Testament that women are to be admitted to the ordained ministry". The *English Churchman* could have truthfully continued: "We do find that in the Bible woman occupies a position of inferiority; they are commanded to be silent, submissive and obedient".

Throughout history, in both Catholic and Protestant countries, woman has been treated in much the same way as in the tenth commandment where she is lumped together with their husband's cattle and other property. Many Christian leaders have professed a belief in equality of the sexes, and some have claimed that the improved position of women is due to Christianity. I doubt, however, if campaigners for women's rights have ever been able to quote the Bible to support their case.

NEXT TARGET

The decision by the Attorney-General, Sir Peter Rawlinson, not to take proceedings against *Oh! Calcutta!* under the provisions of the 1968 Theatres Act, was greeted by almost hysterical fulminations by Mr Frank Smith, Tory Councillor and lay preacher, who, with his lady wife Ida and the Dowager Lady Birdwood went to see the revue and then complained to the police. He called for the intervention of the Prime Minister, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Roman Catholic Archbishop Heannan, although it seems unlikely they will accept his invitation to see the show or support his campaign.

I predict it won't be long until the crusaders for purity are on the warpath again, and next time they will carry the banner of righteousness into Piccadilly Circus itself—the Criterion Theatre to be precise. For that is where the curtain is soon to rise on what is called a theological farce, *Council of Love*. It will have a cast of 36 playing a wide range of characters, including God, Jesus, the Virgin Mary and Satan. Rehearsals are taking place in, of all places, a synagogue, and the play opens on 20 August.

Warren Mitchell, who plays Satan, says *Council of Love* will be controversial: "Some may think it sacrilegious and blasphemous". Certainly it was thought to be just that at the turn of the century when the author was sent to prison on a blasphemy charge. It will be interesting to see the reaction in 1970.

AND NOTES

PUBLICATIONS

HUMANIST HOUSING EXPANSION

Building work is commencing on a 30-flat extension to Rose Bush Court in Hampstead and an agreement reached to purchase a site in St John's Wood for 60 flats, possession to be obtained at the end of 1971. The Committee of Humanist Housing Association is now turning its attention to assist those humanists partial to country life. A scheme is being considered for the purchase of a large house on the outskirts of Pembury for conversion into flats and the building of two new blocks to be connected. Pembury is a village of 3,000 persons with shopping facilities situated three miles from Tunbridge Wells, and Tonbridge. The bus stop for these and other routes is immediately outside the drive of Sun Hill Place, the house in question. The accommodation will consist of flats providing one bedroom, sittingroom, kitchen, bathroom for one or two persons and there would be communal facilities, lounge, television room, laundry, visitors bedrooms, the estimate rents for single person flats being about £6 10s to £7 per week inclusive of rates and heating.

Before a final decision is taken upon the scheme, the Association would like to hear from members of the Humanist movement who think they might be interested in taking accommodation on its completion in about two years. Letters should be sent to the secretary, Humanist Housing Association, 28 Rose Bush Court, Parkhill Road, London, NW3.

The Humanist Housing Association—of which Lord Willis is president—has done splendid work in providing homes for the elderly at economic rents and in congenial surroundings. Everyone will wish them well with this new project.

A WELCOME VISITOR

India's leading atheist, Gora, was in London last week, and leading members of British freethought organisations met him at the headquarters of the Rationalist Press Association. The Indian visitor was staying for a short time in Britain en route for the International Humanist and Ethical Union congress in Boston, USA. Those who met him included Peter Cadogan (South Place Ethical Society), Michael Lines (British Humanist Association), Christopher Macey (Rationalist Press Association) and David Tribe (National Secular Society).

Gora was born in 1902 and took part in campaigns for Indian independence. He was closely associated with Gandhi, and although he believes Gandhi was more sympathetic to freethought and secularism than is generally realised, Gora was much more outspoken in his opposition to superstition. He founded the Atheistic Centre in Andhra Pradesh in 1947, and has continually campaigned on behalf of the "untouchables".

Gora has never concealed his belief that religious superstition is one of the curses of India and the world. He blames it for many of India's ills, including the fatalism which makes people tolerate all sorts of iniquities and the caste system. As an exponent of such views, it is not surprising that Gora has been dismissed from jobs and imprisoned many times.

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BOOKS

THE BRITISH CHURCHES TODAY

by Kenneth Slack. SCM Press. 16s.

The original edition of this book appeared nine years ago. Since then, there have been dramatic changes—theological, ecclesiastical, moral, and social—in the British religious scene, justifying this completely revised edition, and reflected in the re-written and additional portions of the book. The author was general secretary of the British Council of Churches from 1955 till 1965, and is now Minister of London's City Temple. He points out that many of the world's most important Protestant sects have emanated from Britain; not only the Anglican communion, but also the Methodist and Congregational churches, the Society of Friends, the Salvation Army, and the Churches of Christ.

The book is concerned only peripherally with doctrine and forms of worship; its main theme is organisation. Or, one is almost tempted to say, disorganisation—for the diversity of Christianity in these islands entails obvious inefficiency as well as doctrinal strife. However, humanists have little room for smugness on this point, with their four national humanist organisations and as much internal dissension as bedevils the Christians! We may be heartened, though, by the fact that the spread of humanist ideas has helped to force the churches into a spurious togetherness. As Mr Slack says in his first chapter, "... there are agitations possible only in a time of general religious prosperity. Before the flood of secularism a more brotherly feeling obtains."

However, he sees the aim of achieving church unity in Britain (that is, of the main Protestant sects) by the scheduled date of Easter 1980 as "something of a forlorn dream", though he is far more hopeful about co-operation than about amalgamation. There certainly has been a spectacular increase in inter-church co-operation during the past few years, even between Catholics and Protestants, formerly so intractable in the separateness. In a prefatory note to the present edition, the author states: "Few things have afforded me more ecumenical pleasure than the opportunity to re-write the chapter on the Roman Catholic Church in the post-Pope John era".

That chapter might almost have been written by a Catholic, so generous is it, for instance, in its praise for the work of the priests with the Irish potato famine immigrants. But Mr Slack is, in fact, scrupulously fair to all the sects covered in his survey—which ranges from the comprehensiveness of the C of E to the aloofness of the Exclusive Brethren.

Although the Roman Church, alone of all the major sects in this country, can claim a continuing increase in membership and church attendance year by year, the actual rate of increase, particularly of adult conversions, has dropped sharply in the past decade. One reason for this, as Mr Slack point out, is doubtless the degree to which the RC Church, transformed by the *aggiornamento* of Pope John XXIII, is suddenly sharing in the general religious questioning and openness of outlook, after centuries of blind certitude and "a total refusal to be accommodated to the spirit of the age". Much of its attraction to converts in the past has been this certitude and immutability.

On the subject of the RC Church's notorious dual standard with regard to issues of liberty—demanding full rights of conscience and civil liberties for Catholics in non-Catholic countries, but refusing similar rights to non-

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Catholics in countries where the Catholic Church is dominant—Mr Slack writes: "No doubt there is a long road to travel before all is satisfactory in Spain and one or two other countries, but the Roman Church has come to grips with the real nature of religious freedom and has recognised what is involved in a plural society". One small measure of the rate of change today in the RC Church is the fact that the edition under review, published only within the last few weeks, is already out of date in stating that the non-Roman partner in a mixed marriage is required to give an undertaking that all children born of the marriage be brought up within the RC fold and that this "remains a disturbing and much discussed element of friction in the new relationship of this Church to other Churches". This requirement has, in fact, now been modified.

Although intended primarily as a contribution to the cause of ecumenicalism, the book is also of considerable interest to militant secularists, giving, as it does, inside information on the enemy's present position and future campaign plans. For we must still be concerned to diminish the power of the churches, which has failed to decline at the same rate as church membership and attendance. Christianity may be all but dead, but it won't lie down. At the same time, the book provides facts and figures which are heartening—from the secularist viewpoint—as well as useful. For example, "The decline in the number of children in Sunday school and children's church is far swifter even than that of communicant membership". And, "In almost all the churches, theological colleges have been falling like the leaves in autumn". In his introduction to this edition, the author confesses that: "The revision of the statistics alone has all too fully confirmed the personal impression gained of the accelerating decline of the Church as an institution throughout the period. Only in regard to Ireland have membership figures remained static, and this leads to reflections of an even more disturbing character".

The book is recommended also for its readability. Allowing for the rather irritating phraseology (e.g. "our Lord") that creeps in here and there, arising from the author's simple faith in a personal God, the book is very easy to read, both stylistically and typographically. In spite of its somewhat prosaic subject, it is not devoid of humour. For instance: "Until the early eighteenth century English Baptist congregations were only with difficulty persuaded even to sing in unison, since this implied a denial of spontaneity!"

BARBARA SMOKER

THE STRUGGLE FOR EDUCATION 1870-1970

by Ricard Bourne and Brian MacArthur. Schoolmaster Publishing Company, 15s.

This pictorial history of popular education and of the National Union of Teachers, published to mark the centenary of the Union, is an excellent production. The text is by two well-known education correspondents and the illustrations are superb, bringing out with telling force the very real progress we have made from the wretched state of education a century ago.

The development of the NUT has been closely bound up with that of education generally. Young people and militants of any age become impatient from time to time with the progress of any union, but in large measure over the

REVIEWS

years the NUT has played an admirable role, winning not only improvements in the salaries and conditions of teachers, but keenly involving itself in nearly all the major improvements and reconstructions of the school system as a whole.

It fought against the iniquitous system of payment by results, which turned the schools into forcing houses and imposed harsh disciplinary measures from which we have hardly even now recovered. It struggled against the imposition of religious tests on teachers, and the attempts that have been made to keep teachers divided by the imposition of different standards of education for teachers in training, different schemes of remuneration, and consequently different levels of social standing. The NUT is aware that this attempt to divide teachers has been part of the attempt to divide children along class lines, from the deliberate destruction of the higher grade schools, the revival of moribund grammar schools, the introduction of the scholarship system and the beginnings of the evil 11-plus era. The Union has demanded equal opportunities for all children throughout this century, and it worth remembering that in 1905 the Trades Union Congress voiced this demand with the NUT support. (The co-operation of these bodies in future should be increasingly fruitful.)

The passion that has gone into this struggle is explained by the fact that teachers know at first hand the heartaches that are caused by the selection system. To administrators, statistics are just statistics, but teachers who have lived and worked with children can never forget the child who is refused by the hard-faced system. This explains why the NUT has reacted so sharply to Margaret Thatcher's withdrawal of the circular which made comprehensive education compulsory.

Battle which have been fought and won include that for equal pay, although one would have welcomed here some mention of the National Union of Women Teachers, which pioneered this campaign and sensibly disbanded when its objective was obtained. Adequate medical care and school feeding had to be introduced, especially when large scale evacuation during the war revealed the condition of many children from the poorer areas. And the complete revolution in teaching methods which has affected all subjects except one during the last half century, have been encouraged, if not inspired, by the Union.

One aspect of NUT policy which seems least satisfactory at the present time is that concerning religious education. But some progress has been made and should be mentioned. At the beginning of the period most schools were in the hands of the churches. The churches opposed measures to make the schools free, despite the poverty in the country, because they needed the kids' pence to keep going. Nevertheless payment was abolished, although a Tory Establishment came to the aid of the church schools with millions of pounds of taxpayers' money. The Union, glad to get an increasing number of schools out of the clutches of the clergy, settled for an undenominational, unsectarian religious teaching. It must be remembered that the majority of teachers were trained at this time in church training colleges. In 1944 when the issue was fought in Parliament and outside, Union officials were so anxious to secure the improvements in secondary education that the Act seemed to offer, that they accepted the religious settlement. Teachers were to have a share in deciding what was

to be taught; there was an abolition of the right of direct entry by the churches; there were to be safeguards on religious tests and no inspection by HMIs. But as we all know these safeguards did nothing to outweigh the disaster of compulsory religion, which is now so widely condemned. The present line of the NUT Executive however hardly helps the situation. In their submission on the proposed new Education Act, they simply suggest that school assembly need not take place always at the beginning of the day, and that worship should be voluntary for the over-sixteens. But recently a number of NUT branches have passed resolutions condemning compulsory religion, the matter obviously cannot be allowed to rest there. More pressure is called for.

Other questions which the NUT will find itself called on to look into include that of corporal punishment, and that of the Head teacher system. Since most of the members of the Executive are Head teachers themselves this will demand a great measure of detachment. Nevertheless the times call for it.

The Struggle for Education 1870-1970 is a fascinating and inspiring document.

MERLE TOLFREE

THE ELECTED MEMBER

by Bernice Rubens. Eyre and Spottiswoode, 25s.

The security offered by life in some small community of rigid structure, whether village or family, cut off from the surrounding world, has come to represent to many people today almost an ideal of human happiness. One wonders how much its attractiveness is enhanced by the fact that for most of us it is a thing only of the past, irretrievably beyond our own experience. Certainly, when we blame our spiritual ills on the instability of modern life, we tend to forget completely that equally great, if different, stresses arise in a more stable pattern of existence. We accept the cosy picture of English rural life, already tinted with nostalgia, of such writers as Miss Mitford rather than the claustrophobia, the vindictiveness, the sheer mental unhealthiness of Crabbe's presentation of the same communities. But there still are a few people in this country for whom accidents of geography or religion have preserved such an existence to some extent. There is for example the family life of orthodox Jews, which provides the setting and the subject for Bernice Rubens' novel, *The Elected Member*, which has been awarded the Booker Prize.

Here, the emancipated and rootless reader sighing for a lost way of life can see some of the drawbacks attaching to his ideal. Norman Zweck, once a brilliant young barrister, has suffered a nervous breakdown and seen the promise of his own early achievement forgotten by all but his immediate family. It is in their house that he idly exists, as he has always done, and his sole refuge as he approaches middle age is a hallucinatory drug the effect of whose withdrawal is to infest his world hideously and unbearably with hordes of silver fish. He is a victim of that uninhibited, because unrealised, selfishness with which, sanctioned by custom and religion, we treat those close enough to us to be in our power—our "nearest and dearest". He is the "elected member" of the title, a human equivalent to the biblical scapegoat, whose victimisation, like that of the poor outcasts of Crabbe's poetry, is for the good, even the survival, of the family.

Norman has by now accepted his role successfully enough to have earned the immunity of madness, so that the suffering we at first see is that of the others, the sane

survivors. These are his father, an orthodox Rabbi, and his two sisters, a spinster growing ungracefully old in white ankle socks, and the embittered wife of a gentile who has been banished from her father's house as a result of her marriage. But as the novel proceeds we gradually learn the history of Norman's fall in a series of flashbacks taking the form of recollections or confessions by each member of the family in turn. Such a form of narrative has its dangers: it can appear contrived or merely confusing, but it is used here with such smooth skill that it creates the shape of the novel instead of threatening it. What makes the success of these passages possible is the strength of the characterisation. Perhaps the most vivid impression one gets in the novel is of the sheer range of Miss Rubens' powers of imaginative sympathy: the thoughts of each character carry complete conviction. Related to this sharpening compassion is the surprising funniness of much of the observation. This is often most irresistible at the most painful moments of Norman's past, such as in the hilarious account of his last, disastrous appearance in court.

TONY HALLIDAY

EXHIBITION

DRAWN AND QUARTERED

National Portrait Gallery, London.

Sir David Low, who was quite possibly the greatest cartoonist of the century, once said that Gillray was the father of the British political cartoon. Gillray and his descendants find themselves in a place of august honour in one of the most fascinating exhibitions to have reached London for a long time, and to be seen at the National Portrait Gallery, until 23 August.

The famous and the infamous, the great and the mediocre, the right and the wrong have all found themselves at one time or another mercilessly lampooned or satirised. And what one notices in looking at these cartoons, which stretch back centuries, is that invective in the political cartoon has been considerably dampened. Gillray and his contemporaries, and some of his earlier successors dealt bitter and cruel blows at the prominent of their time. Where is their successor today? For a while Gerald Scarfe seemed that he might have awoken the satirists' sleep of centuries, but even he now has sugared much of his acidity. The recent cartoon, which appeared in *The Times* (and which is not in the exhibition) and which showed Paisley and Powell as two flies settling on a dung heap with Powell saying: "Go find yourself your own pile, Paisley" has seen few equals in recent times, while the general tone was more in keeping with what one would expect from Georgian or Victorian cartoonists. If our politicians are being attacked with somewhat blunted swords, the cartoonist of today is a pacifist as far as the monarchy is concerned. The jibes and criticism aimed at George IV, for instance, would be unthinkable today.

None of this is to say that cartoonists are less effective or less able today than they ever were. Few cartoons equalled Dyson's immortal one of the Allied leaders leaving the Versailles Peace Conference, and a small child is depicted in one corner labelled "Class of 1940". "Curious", one statesman is saying, "I seem to hear a child weeping."

Perhaps, our cartoonists' relationship is better the way it is. It is never toadying (one only has to see the cartoons

produced during the years of MacMillan to realise that) but it is not based on a soured hate that seems to have characterised the early relationship. Vicky, the most effective cartoonist of the last 20 years, had an enormous respect for MacMillan, although he constantly prodded the latter in his work, MacMillan being the astute politician that he was turned the tables on Vicky once. It was Vicky who coined the nickname "Supermac". The name is always remembered (and for a while seemed to sum up the population's estimate of the Prime Minister), but Vicky's captioned warning ("Note Mac's torso is, of course, padded") has long been lost and forgotten.

Interestingly, some of the best cartoonists of the century like Papas, Low and Abu were born abroad. Like Vicky, who was Hungarian born, they all had an enormous affection for their adopted land. One could not, however, imagine them creating many of the typically British cartoon characters like Maudie Littlehampton, Andy Capp, or the Flutters. British as these might be they are not without their adherents across the world: Bristow is a Negro in the West Indies, and Andy Capp is avidly read in 40 countries, apart from Britain, although one wonders exactly how Reg Smythe's humour comes over abroad.

This is not only an exhibition of cartoons for it is also about cartoons: there are preparatory sketches, and the finished work, plates and engravings, and pictures of cartoonists hard at work at their trade.

If there is a disadvantage it is that history rushes on while cartooning stands still: only the most knowledgeable of visitors will understand all the cartoons; even Gillray and Tenniel will, at times, be obscure.

TERRY PHILPOT

LETTER

I am grateful to S. E. Parker for his courteous letter in reply to my article on Buddhism.

With the possible exception of George Ory, I cannot think of any contemporary New Testament scholar who holds the myth theory of the origins of Christianity as propounded by Robertson, Drews, Rylands, Smith *et al.* However, I am subject to correction on this point. Modern scholars who reject the theory include K. Bultmann, R. C. Fuller, J. Jeremias, P. Van Buren, G. Bornkamm, G. Lampe, J. M. Robinson, E. Fuchs, G. Ebeling, E. L. Mascall, C. E. Raven and H. Zarndt.

Of course J. M. Robertson and L. G. Rylands were serious scholars of immense erudition. But I was referring to the exegesis situation in 1970, not that prevailing 40 or 50 years ago. Although Herbert Cutner was a great "character", with whom I conducted a long and entertaining private correspondence, I am afraid I cannot regard him as a serious scholar. Mr Parker may not be aware of it, but Cutner actually believed that the Earl of Oxford wrote Shakespeare's plays! As for John Allegro, I am convinced that *The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross* is the most brilliant literary hoax since Lobsang Rampa's *The Third Eye*.

I cannot see how any piece of evidence, contemporary or otherwise, could ever conclusively prove the historical validity of Christ. But, then, no piece of evidence could ever conclusively prove his historical "invalidity" either! It must always be a matter of probabilities. In a future article (subject of course of the consent of the editor), I hope to deal with the whole question of Christian origins. But, generally speaking, I agree with Paul van Buren that "There is no reasonable doubt among contemporary Western-trained historians that there was a man named Jesus, a Jew, who lived and taught and died in Palestine during the first third of the first century AD and who has, ever since, been the centre of concern for the Christian religion" (*The Secular Meaning of the Gospel*, p. 122).

Finally, I sincerely hope Mr Parker will not judge Buddhism by my very inadequate account of it, but will study some of the many excellent introductions which are available. I will be happy to provide him with a reading list if he so desires.

JOHN L. BROOM.