

DEMAND GROWS FOR FREE FAMILY PLANNING SERVICE

The demand for a comprehensive family planning service as part of the National Health Service is gathering momentum. Not very long ago few would have countenanced such an idea, but it is now widely realised that serious problems will arise if our population continues to increase every year. Many who are concerned with the environment, the strain on the social services and the sheer misery caused by unwanted pregnancies, now accept that only a fundamental change in our attitude to contraception—and a determined effort by the Government and local authorities to make it freely available to all—will make a solution to the question possible.

Mrs Renée Short, MP (Lab., Wolverhampton NE), has campaigned for such a service since she entered Parliament. She recalls that the former Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr R. H. S. Crossman) wrote to Regional Hospital Boards last December urging them to provide more accommodation and advice, and she believes that progress in this sphere should be constantly reviewed. Mrs Short says: "Many hospitals are doing good work, but some are less enterprising. They say there is a shortage of accommodation, but in many cases rooms which are not available during the day are empty in the evening and could be used then as advice centres".



Renée Short, MP

Mrs Short claims that unless drastic action is taken, the nation's natural resources and social services will suffer, and adds: "The moral case for making contraceptive advice and materials free to men and women, married and unmarried, is cast-iron". Her views will be widely, but not unanimously supported, and Renée Short makes no bones as to where she thinks the opposition will come from.

"Basically, it is only bigoted religious opposition that prevents total acceptance of the idea of free family planning services for all", she told the *Freethinker*.

Family Planning on NHS

Mr Caspar Brook, the Director of the Family Planning Association, is equally forthright in his views on this important question. He says: "Family planning should be readily available and free of charge. The cost should be borne by the National Health Service. This cost, which would not exceed £30 million every year would save tax as £300 million a year. This vast saving would come be-and ratepayers at least £120 million and possibly as much cause the need for medical, social and educational services would be greatly reduced if family planning was much more widely practiced. But these huge economic savings would be nothing compared with the reduction of human misery."

A Civil Liberty Issue

The National Council for Civil Liberties has also announced that it regards "the availability of contraceptive advice, materials and facilities, is an important national problem and a definite civil liberty issue for the individual". Their Sub-Committee which considered an annual general meeting resolution (arising from a motion submitted by the National Secular Society) has issued its report. In it they say that a full service "signifies that the local health authority is providing a family planning service for all who want it, irrespective of marital status".

In theory, contraception like the Ritz, is available to all. But practically speaking, hundreds of thousands of couples have more children than they want or can manage because they lack effective birth control services.

Abortion and Family Planning

A *New Statesman* article (7 August) on the proposed independent inquiry into the working of the Abortion Act concludes: "One result of an independent inquiry should be a recognition that the best way to limit recourse to abortion is to hurry on the provision of free family planning under the Health Service". The article is initialled RHSC, so it may be assumed that it was written by the former Secretary of State for the Social Services who is now editor of the *New Statesman*.

ON WHAT I AM

PETER CROMMELIN

According to Descartes (1596-1650) "I think therefore I am". Without accepting *cogito ergo sum* as a self-evident truism, it is none the less difficult to think of thoughts existing without a thinker. If I think at all, I must at least think that I am. I may deceive myself about everything else, but I cannot deceive myself in thinking that I exist and will continue to exist, at least until I die. That, in all probability, is the moment when I shall cease to think and cease to be.

For so long as I am a thinking being, what I am is determined by what I think. And what I think is very largely determined by what I have ceased to think. I could not think of myself as a secular humanist if I had not entirely ceased to think of myself as a Roman Catholic priest. When I was a priest, I thought as a priest. But when I ceased to be a priest, I gradually came to think along the lines of a purely secular humanism.

I could not think of myself as a freethinker if I had never experienced a sense of liberation from ways of thinking induced by habit, custom or tradition rather than by any objective reality or truth. I could not think of myself as a freethinker if I had never at an earlier stage of my life thought of myself as intellectually and morally bound to some form of religious orthodoxy. Freedom of thought is achieved by emancipation from religion. This is equally true whether the religion may have been Roman Catholicism, Anglicanism, Judaism, Mohammedanism, Buddhism, or any other of the multitude of dogmas and disciplines that constitute the religions of mankind. Secular humanism is not a religion. It is, on the contrary, a meeting point for all those who either by personal experience or by scientific study or both have come independently to the same conclusion: that the survival of religious orthodoxies is the main obstacle to the evolution of man as a rational animal.

It took many years to bring me to the conclusion that what are called the theological virtues should really be called the theological vices since they result in behaviour or conduct that can only be described as sub-rational. The late Bertrand Russell was certainly not the only philosopher to come to the conclusion that the practice of Christianity is no more rational than the practice of any other religion.

Man's Capacity for Self-Deception

One of the classic sayings of our language is that the proper study of mankind is man. Certainly the study of man must not exclude man's curious capacity for self-deception. It was the study of self-deception in myself and in others that led slowly, gradually and rather painfully, to the wisdom of secular humanism. Of course, self-deception is not confined to priests and doctors of divinity. It can be found in doctors of science and in professors of philosophy. I have no doubt that it might be found in some of those who call themselves secular humanists. Even atheists may on occasion have deceived themselves by the fanciful discovery of some final proof that there is no god. None the less it may be said quite truthfully that secular humanism as a meeting place for rational minds, is a place where people take far more than the usual precautions to guard against self-deception. For all secular humanists self-deception is the ultimate enemy to be destroyed in the search for a rational humanity. We feel quite sure that man began to define himself as a rational animal long before he began to deviate into religion or politics.

I Thought as a Priest

But as I have said, when I was a priest I thought as a priest. There is in fact nothing in a priesthood except what a man thinks there is or ought to be. When I was a priest I felt bound to condemn many human actions that as a secular humanist I accept as completely ethical. The reverse is also true. As a priest I accepted certain human acts as right and proper which I now condemn as unethical.

When I was a priest it seemed perfectly right that the State should provide schools for citizen parents wanting their children to be educated as Roman Catholics or in some other religion. I now think that the State has no right to encourage parents to believe that parenthood confers a natural right to dictate the religion of their children. I now think that it should be against the public policy of any civilised community to sanction religious indoctrination as a necessary part of compulsory education.

When I was a priest I felt bound to condemn deliberate contraception as a mortal sin. I now regard a far more widespread practice of contraception as absolutely essential for the survival of the species. It is far more important to prevent the world from becoming over-populated than it is to satisfy the natural appetite for procreation.

When I was a priest, there was no such thing as "legal abortion". If there had been I would have felt bound to condemn it. My present position is that the abortion law may well require some change or modification but is essentially right in principle. Abortion, like contraception is a reasonable contribution to the prevention of a great calamity, the over-population of the earth. It is quite impossible for a rational mind to regard the destruction of a foetus as morally equivalent to the murder of a person.

The Real Conflict

But my real conflict with the Church was not concerned with the ethics of sexual intercourse. What alienated me more and more from the Church as time went on, was the daily recitation of a creed which seemed to contain less and less information about the nature of things. Long before I actually abandoned my priesthood, I knew that there is not one single article of the ecclesiastical creeds to which I could honestly prefix the words "I believe". I would be dishonest to pretend that I even wanted to believe in such doctrines as the Trinity or the Incarnation or the "redemption" of the world through the crucifixion of a man.

I fully acknowledge that I ought to have excommunicated myself from the Church long before I actually did so. If there ever was a heretic, I was one. If there ever was one who would have qualified for burning in the ages of faith, I was one. But it always requires some courage to break the habit of a lifetime. I would never have acquired that necessary courage, if I had not loved my wife, and she had not encouraged me to be myself. It might be argued that I never was a Catholic by virtue of my own free and rational will. There can be no shadow of doubt that when I ceased to be a Catholic, it was entirely by my own free will and by own deliberate and premeditated choice. I am what I have chosen to be. I only continue to be, because I choose to be rather than to stop being, which I could very easily do at the very first really convenient moment.

THE KEEPER OF THE KEYS

R. J. CONDON

St Peter founded the Catholic Church in Rome, as that repository of all truth never tires of telling us. He became its first bishop, and was martyred there 25 years later. Not long ago his bones were found in a tomb under the Vatican. The devout lady scientist who examined them refused to apply modern dating tests because, she said, the bones would be destroyed, and then nobody would venerate them! But she persuaded Pope Paul of their authenticity, so perhaps we ought to be satisfied too.

There is, however, something odd about Peter's stay in Rome. Paul, who also went to Rome, says nothing in his epistles about Peter being there. Acts is also silent, and so were contemporary historians. No author until Bishop Dionysius of Corinth (170 AD) mentions Peter's sojourn in Rome. Eusebius (4th century) is the first to place it at 25 years. Professor P. W. Schmiedel, in the *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, gives a detailed analysis of all existing data and concludes: "Our decision . . . must decidedly be that Peter was never in Rome at all".

Peter was never in Rome because he never existed. His symbol of two keys places him in a fairly large class of key-carrying gods. The earliest is the Egyptian Petra. Chapter 68 in the *Book of the Dead* begins: "The doors of heaven are opened for me, the doors of earth are opened for me . . . by the god Petra". Just as the Christian hopes to be welcomed at the pearly gates by St Peter, so the ancient Egyptian looked forward to meeting his own "St Peter", who had the keys of heaven and earth like his later namesake.

The nameless time-god of Mithraism is depicted carrying two keys, his body covered with the signs of the Zodiac. Peter, too, connects with the Zodiac. In Matthew 19:27-28 he is told he will judge the twelve tribes of Israel, traditionally descended from the sons of Jacob, who are identified with the Zodiac in Genesis 49.

In Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound* (circa 500 BC) the god is nailed to a rock in the form of a cross for his benefactions to humanity. His disciple Oceanus begs his master to make his peace with authority, then forsakes him and flees, as Peter does in the gospel. An alternative name for Oceanus, carefully concealed in our versions of the play, is Petracus. Like Peter, Petracus is a fisherman.

Peter is Petrus in Greek, but according to the *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, another form of the name is Protus. This brings to mind Proteus, another key-carrying god, who had the equivocating, mercurial character so noticeable in Peter. Proteus walked on the sea, as Peter did.

The Roman equivalent of Proteus was Janus or Jonas. Janus, who gave his name to January, was the leader of twelve gods representing the months. He also carried keys because, as Ovid said, he had the power to bind or loose, to open or close all things in heaven and earth (cf. Matthew 16:19). Janus had two faces, and Peter is very much a "two-faced" character. Moreover, he is actually called "son of Jonas" (bar-Jona) in Matthew 16:17.

Peter, like Janus, was a leader of twelve. The Twelve turn up in nearly every solar religion. As already indicated, they represent the sun-god's companions on his yearly

journey, the months, and also the signs of the Zodiac, always closely associated with the months. Thus we have the twelve companions of Osiris, Horus, Mithra and Odin. In our own Arthurian myth we have the twelve Knights of the Round Table—round to represent the sun. We get the death-and-resurrection theme in this legend also.

The ancient year was divided for convenience into twelve months of thirty days each, the remaining five being outside any month and tacked on to the end of the year. To correspond with the 360-day year, the circle of the heavens was divided into 360 degrees—which we still use—and the sun's path into twelve sections of thirty degrees each, termed the Zodiac from the animal names of many of the constellations found in it.

The "other seventy" disciples of Jesus (Luke 10:1) is another indication of solar myth. In some manuscripts of the New Testament the number is 72, a factor of 360. The number 72 occurs in other myths; for example, the 72 conspirators to the murder of Osiris, and the 70 or 72 translators of the Septuagint.

Pope Paul, in a rare moment of honesty, recently relegated a number of "much loved" saints to the limbo of mythology. He is not, unfortunately, likely to apply the same process to the central characters of the myth from which he derives his power.

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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 Mephram, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey. 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".

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By DAVID TRIBE

Foreword by MARGARET KNIGHT

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REDUNDANT CHURCHES

"If the Blood of the Lamb is no longer saleable perhaps people will buy the butcher-shops," said David Tribe, president of the National Secular Society, following the announcement by the Church of England that 700 redundant churches may be offered for sale in the next ten years.

In a press statement, Mr Tribe declared that within the last 100 years churches have been built whose loss, whether to the demolition workers or transatlantic souvenir-hunters would grieve no one. Some could be usefully converted into social and cultural centres; "But, one fears, those most likely to be exported—and some of which will be demolished—will be ancient buildings of architectural and historical interest, created by national resources of men and materials".

The NSS president says that "the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works and the Board of Trade should at once make it clear to these church authorities, and especially to the established Churches of England and Scotland, that premises long ago erected on public land with public finance (royal, parliamentary or municipal), maintained down the years by compulsory tithes or commuted tithes, and kept by the whole community tax-free and rate-free, are not now to be regarded as private assets to be sold to the highest bidder or given export licences to be taken out of the country".

Lord Grantchester has put down a motion on the Order Paper of the House of Lords proposing that they consider disestablishment of the Church of England. "It is to be hoped," says Mr Tribe, "that the Government will give full support for any forthcoming Bill to disestablish and disendow the Church of England and the Church of Scotland."

WANDERING FLOCK

There has been a marked increase in unrest among Dutch Catholics, and the Primate, Cardinal Alfrink, believes that the issue of priestly celibacy could lead to a schism within the Church in Holland. His recent visit to the Vatican seems to have been unavailing, for the Pope is still insisting that the celibacy rule be enforced.

Cardinal Alfrink's misgivings about the future of the Roman Catholic Church in Holland are understandable. The number of priests leaving the ministry increases yearly; 205 asked to be released from their vows in 1969, and 186 during the first six months of this year.

In Britain, too, the faithful are becoming restless, and there is growing support for such groups as the Latin Mass Society and the Association for Mass in the Liturgy. These two groups will probably become quaint and harmless bodies which the Church authorities can safely ignore. But they are obviously concerned by the challenge of groups like the Catholic Renewal Movement. The Birmingham CRM is a co-sponsor, with the Family Planning Association, of a leaflet advising Catholics to contact the FPA if they find that methods of birth control sanctioned by the Church are inadequate. Thousands of Catholics had already been in touch with the FPA and using methods of contraception of which the Church would not approve without the advice of the CRM. But when a group of

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Catholics publicly associate with the Family Planning Association (which, not so very long ago was lumped together with Freemasons, Communists and Freethinkers as an agent of the devil), then the bishops have something to worry about.

BROOKWOOD

The London Young Humanists have issued a statement expressing dismay at the state of Charles Bradlaugh's grave. A party of them recently visited Brookwood Cemetery, Woking, where the famous 19th century radical and founder of the National Secular Society is buried. Although one of the group had been to the grave only three years ago it was with great difficulty that they located it because of the condition into which it has fallen.

Whilst searching for Bradlaugh's grave they found that of W. S. Ross who was well-known in freethought circles as "Saladin". But he was no friend of Bradlaugh, and almost certainly was largely responsible for the scurrilous biography which was suppressed after Bradlaugh brought a successful suit against it.

POLLUTION

The smogs which recently disrupted New York and Tokyo are grim illustrations of how we tolerate a standard of cleanliness of our air which would be totally unacceptable for food and water. In Britain alone, millions of tons of smoke and sulphur dioxide gas are discharged into the atmosphere every year. Although the smoke content of the atmosphere is decreasing, there is an increase in other pollutants.

There is an excellent article in the current *Newsletter* of the Conservation Society (21 Hanyards Lane, Cuffley, Potters Bar, Hertfordshire) on the problem of atmospheric pollution, in which the author (M. Unsworth) gives a depressing outline of the damage being done to human and plant life. He concludes: "Our understanding of the environment, of the possible dangers of using the atmosphere as an open sewer for the effluents of an expanding population, is still far from complete, and much further research is needed before we can plan for the future".

If the warnings of organisations like the Conservation Society go unheeded, the future isn't going to be very healthy.

CIVIL LIBERTIES MOVE NORTH

Good news for Scotland. The National Council for Civil Liberties announced last week that, thanks to the generosity of the Glasgow and District Trades Council, the Scottish Council for Civil Liberties will have the use of an office in the new Trade Union Centre, 1236 Manghill Road, Glasgow, NW. This will enable the Council to expand and work more effectively. The office will be manned in the evening and at the weekend. But it will be Scotland's loss if there is not enough support forthcoming to maintain a full-time staff and keep the office open during the day.

Meanwhile, offers of assistance and gifts of office equipment should be sent to the secretary, Robert Thomson.

PUBLICATIONS

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BOOKS

BERTRAND RUSSELL AND TRINITY

by G. H. Hardy. Cambridge University Press, 16s.

Professor Hardy's short and lucidly written book was first privately published in 1942. Copies were available to any Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, from the pile on the table in the entrance hall to Hardy's rooms. He wrote the book in order that all misunderstandings regarding Bertrand Russell's dismissal in 1916 from his Cambridge lectureship and his subsequent (but seldom ever mentioned reinstatement) might be finally dispensed with.

Hardy, who died in 1947, found most of his colleagues ignorant on four major points concerning the matter: it was generally believed that Russell had been deprived of a Fellowship (he was in fact not elected a Fellow until 1944); it was thought that it had been dismissed by the whole College, whereas, in fact, he had been dismissed by the Council; it was widely supposed that he had been dismissed because he had been sent to prison; and, finally, no one knew that he had ever been reinstated.

Hardy's pamphlet soon became a collector's item. It is difficult to see the reasons today why it should have been republished. Russell himself recounted the basic facts in his autobiography, and ten years before that Alan Wood in his biography, *Bertrand Russell: The Passionate Sceptic*, had said about all there was to be said. Certainly, Hardy's publication contains many facts about College life, and the internal politics leading to the dismissal and the reinstatement—it is particularly interesting to read about the philosopher McTaggart's disreputable part in all this—but so many facts, which, after all, only add up to a footnote in a long and remarkable life, are hardly needed by the general reader.

I suppose that if the story is to be told completely it was better that it was told by some one as dispassionate and disinterested as Hardy, who, despite the fact that he all along sided with Russell, and was prominent in wishing something constructive to arise from the wasteful holocaust of the First War, was able to present both sides of the argument.

The case did become something of a *cause celebre* amongst the more thoughtful members of the College, but it is difficult now to see why the decision to dismiss Russell was ever taken.

Russell had written a short pamphlet attacking savage sentences which had been passed on conscientious objectors. When, in Liverpool and elsewhere, a number of men were arrested and imprisoned for circulating the leaflet, Russell felt it beholden upon himself to admit authorship (although, as Professor Hardy pointed out, he was not in fact responsible for the paragraph which the authorities took particular exception to). The Government, who might otherwise have been perfectly willing to leave things as they were were forced into a prosecution. Russell was found guilty of making "statements likely to prejudice the recruiting and discipline of His Majesty's Forces" (although he himself said that his statements were hardly prejudicial to such for he had outlined the painful fate awaiting those who would not take up arms) and was fined £100. (It was a pamphlet written much later that earned him his spell in prison)

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It was the foolishness of some local authorities that had forced first Russell's and then the Government's hands, but despite this Russell was deprived of his Lectureship by a Council of which only eleven members were present.

In 1920, following petitioning by 27 Fellows, Russell was reinstated, although only months later he was granted a year's absence to go to China. Fearing that his personal life—he had gone in the company of his future wife, the redoubtable Dora Black, and his divorce from Alys Russell was pending—might cause the College embarrassment, he resigned his lectureship.

TERRY PHILPOT

THE DOCTORS' CASE AGAINST THE PILL

by Barbara Seaman. Michael Joseph, 70s.

Many people appear to find birth control a threatening and confusing topic; no doubt because it impinges upon human sexual behaviour. All systems of belief in the supernatural tend to make the problem more acute and, as a result, couples in 1970 who try to plan their families suffer in several ways. They are condemned to use a range of rather second-rate methods of birth control which could and should have been improved upon at least a generation ago, if the necessary investment of time, money and research had been made. In the case of oral contraceptives there was a considerable understanding of the potential of ovarian hormones to control fertility in the 1920s and 1930s. It is poignant to recall that Ludwig Haberlandt, who published numerous papers on the subject in Austria in the late 1920s, wrote his final papers on what he called "hormonal sterilisation" within a few months of the first encyclical from Rome against the use of contraceptives. The world did not seriously return to the problem of oral contraception until the middle and later 1950s. The one thing which can be said about the present Pill is that it is very much a prototype form of contraception. It has taken family planning into a new realm of predictability and acceptability, and in the face of a great deal of opposition twenty million people are now using oral contraceptives. At the same time, it is undoubtedly a method which has disadvantages which is associated with fatal consequences in exceptionally rare cases, and which is open to improvement.

Prejudice against contraception still exists. As a consequence the side effects which have occurred due to oral contraceptives have not always been reviewed in a rational context. Barbara Seaman's book is one of the most extreme examples of unbalanced reporting in this field. The book is in the tradition of those gynaecologists who, only a generation ago, were damning mechanical contraceptives as dangerous for no other reason than that they felt on shaky ground if they called them immoral.

Barbara Seaman is a woman journalist and not a doctor. She has collected together and plucked out of context a number of human stories concerning adverse Pill effects. There is no reasonable doubt that some of these are based upon fact. Others are made to look sinister when really normal, as in the case of the woman who is said to have

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been on the Pill and visited her doctor every six months; he always found everything normal but, to quote Barbara Seaman, the woman knew she was living on "borrowed time". The book contains no single case of the advantage of using contraceptives or of the Pill in particular. It omits the crucial fact that oral contraceptives are used by women who are, by definition, at risk to become pregnant.

The risks of use must be placed against the risks of non-use. Everyone agrees that the Pill is much more effective than any other reversible method of contraception. With western patterns of maternal mortality the risk of death from the Pill is of the same order of magnitude as risk of death from unplanned pregnancy when using mechanical methods of contraception.

Barbara Seaman also damns most other methods of contraception, makes some emotive, groundless (and ungrammatical) remarks about vasectomy, "There is usually an emotional aftermath, particularly in men." Only the cap escapes unscathed, perhaps because this is the method which Barbara Seaman used herself.

It is possible that in the hands of a well motivated, intelligent woman the risk of death each year using the cap is less than that of the Pill, but the great majority of women find this method of birth control unacceptable and in Britain, even at the height of its popularity, it was not used by more than one in ten of married couples, many of whom probably used it rather inadequately. In some places such as Canada and Australia use of the Pill has reached one third of all married couples within a relatively brief time of introduction.

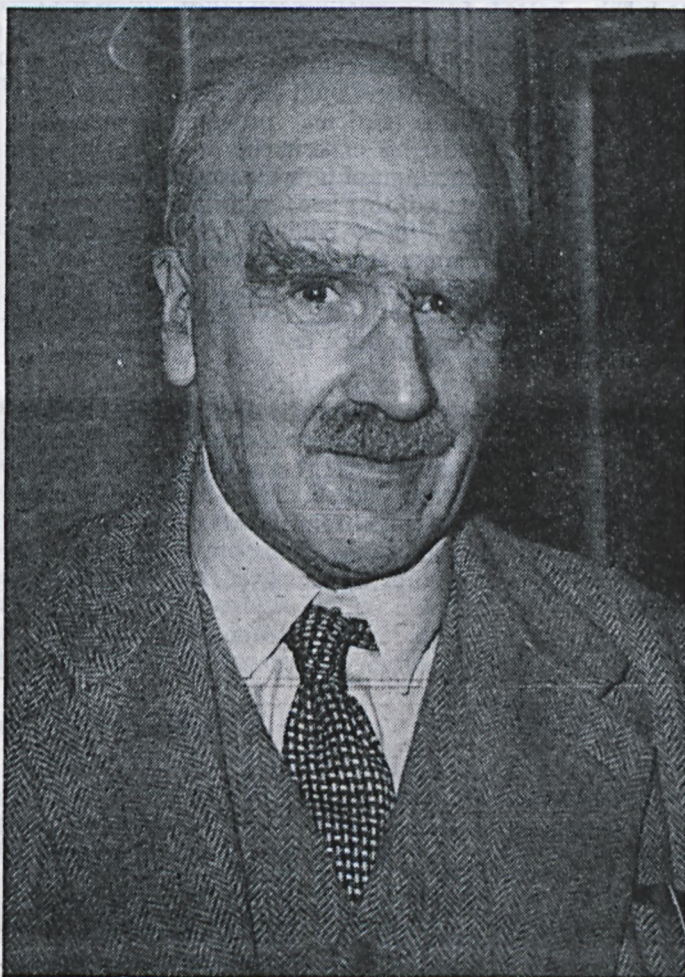
Secularists have a proud record in introducing the possibility of contraception to men and women in England and, more recently, they have played a part in the campaign to legalise abortion and make sterilisation available. The rational approach to family planning is to look at the whole topic. In the overall pattern of family planning the methods which present least risk of life to a couple is sterilisation (in particular male sterilisation) after achieving the desired family size. Alternatively, the couple can use one of several relatively ineffective methods of contraception but which have no lethal side effects and have a legal abortion if pregnancy occurs. This requires an ease in obtaining an abortion which is not available in Britain but if it was it would also be significantly safer than taking oral contraceptives, although many people would find it less aesthetic. Incidentally, our prejudices against abortion have also helped to retard improvement of the Pill. The normal pharmacological procedure is to raise the dose of a therapeutic agent until the required response is obtained. In the case of the Pill fear of unwanted pregnancies and the non-availability of abortion, led doctors to begin with the use of excessively high doses which were subsequently reduced. As was shown very recently, the current low doses used in oral contraceptives carry less risk of death from thrombosis than the higher dose previously used. It is sad to reflect that this very obvious conclusion could have been achieved in 1960 rather than 1970 if clear thinking had been allowed to reign. It is to be hoped that, with the passage of time, the present risk of oral contraceptives will be further reduced, although the sort of hostility raised in Barbara Seaman's book could make it genuinely unlikely that the

pharmaceutical industry will make the necessary investment to produce better contraceptives. Books like *The Doctors' Case Against the Pill* could condemn women to continue using second best methods, thereby producing a result which is diametrically opposed to that which is held to be the sincerest belief and wish of the author.

MALCOLM POTTS

TELEVISION

It is not often that Television screens three biographical performances on the same evening, but recently this happened when BBC 2 preceded, by a mere sixty minutes or so, a tribute to Lloyd George on the occasion



J. B. S. Haldane: "a nonconformist in the non-religious sense".

of the 25th anniversary of his death, with a *Horizon* programme *The Last of the Polymaths*, a portrait of the renowned Professor J. B. S. Haldane. On the commercial channel, a little earlier, we had seen the still very much alive and "with-it" Alan Whicker starting a new series called *Whicker's Walkabout*, interviewing a 76-year-old one-legged woman from Norfolk Island.

By far the most engrossing, because it was the most adult of the three, was the Haldane programme, showing

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the great classical scholar, brilliant mathematician, rationalist and scientist, who died a naturalised Indian and a Communist sympathiser, only a few years back. "JBS" was a remarkable outsider, a nonconformist in the non-religious sense. I heard him lecture on a number of occasions and he was one of the few public speakers, in my view, who actually scored his points and advanced his cause through the simple arguments he employed, and the curiously halting delivery which marked his platform efforts. There were a number of scholars and scientists contributing to the Haldane programme, but it was left to his sister, Naomi Mitchison, the novelist, to provide us with the most vivid close-up of the Professor. The dons with whom he worked, and the general under whom he served during the first World War when he was in the Black Watch, failed quite clearly to understand the nature of the genius with whom they had to cope. His first wife, Charlotte, a writer herself whom I knew after she and JBS had been parted for some time, did little to enlighten viewers about what made Haldane tick. Certainly, the man's versatility and moral courage were both out of the ordinary. What this viewer would have appreciated hearing more about in this particular programme were such subjects as the Thetis; his experiments with lice in more detail; some sort of account of how the rugged individualist who was JBS managed to "live" with his fellow Communists on the *Daily Worker* editorial board for so many years; and finally, some sort of emphasis placed on the freethought of the man who wrote *The Inequality of Man*, *The Causes of Evolution*, *Fact and Faith*, *Science and Everyday Life*, to mention but a few.

We were, however, treated to his last gorgeously defiant poem written when, a year before he died, Haldane entered University College Hospital for an operation for cancer which he did not long survive. It was an example to all those who fear pain and death, and should be reprinted in enormous quantities in order that faint hearts can take courage from the death-bed philosophy of the brave old man, then well over 80, who died as he had lived, a freethinker.

PETER COTES

LETTERS

No Compromise on Principles

At times I have been an outspoken critic of some right-wing Humanists who show a fastidious distaste for militancy and who (as I feel) are in danger of compromising our principles in their desire to find common ground with the woollier Christians. So I should be sorry if Edward Blishen's article (1 August) gave *Freethinker* readers the impression that I have now changed my attitude; and that when I was invited to contribute a foreword to David Tribe's new and characteristically militant pamphlet *The Cost of Church Schools* I responded by writing something more like a hostile review.

I did, it is true, make some minor criticisms—perhaps "qualifications" would be a better word—as did Lionel Elvin in his foreword to Mr Tribe's earlier pamphlet *Religion and Ethics in Schools*. But I made them only after I had expressed my wholehearted agreement with Mr Tribe's views on church schools, and my admiration for what I described as the "racy, hard-hitting, zesty polemic" with which he conveyed them. The phrase of mine which Mr Blishen quotes: "Mr Tribe's combative attitude makes him a dangerous ally" gives a misleading impression out of its context. What I wrote was: "Many will undoubtedly feel that Mr Tribe's combative attitude, etc". This does no more than state a fact, and one which I am sure Mr Tribe himself would be the last to deny.

I need scarcely say that I am not among those who regard Mr Tribe as a dangerous ally—if I were I should not have agreed to write the foreword. But I do sometimes feel that he would be an even more valuable ally if he were less provocative. Today, increasing numbers of Christians are aligning themselves with Humanists in the campaign against a dual system of education, and this being so, a case can be made for saying that it is unwise for us to adopt a tone that is bound to antagonise them. Mr Tribe, however, is more concerned with the opposite danger—that attempts at compromise between people of radically different ideologies may lead only to ineffective half-measures that satisfy nobody. I myself am enough of a trimmer to feel that there is much to be said on both sides; but if I were casting a vote I would cast it for Mr Tribe. I thought I had made this attitude clear in my foreword, but if I failed to do so, may I express my regret to all concerned.

MARGARET KNIGHT.

Schopenhauer

I read with great interest Hector Macdonald's letter in the *Freethinker* of 18 July, but it was with astonishment that I read Nicholas Griffin's reply to it (1 August).

It is clear from Mr Griffin's letter that he has failed to grasp the essential meaning of Schopenhauer's concept of will, and it is very doubtful whether he has grasped the immortal truths of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* on which Schopenhauer's philosophical structure is based.

To describe Schopenhauer's style as "flowery rhetoric" is absurd, and it is evident that Mr Griffin has not studied Schopenhauer's important essay on style in the second volume of the *Parerga and Paralipomena*, nor has he read the posthumous essay on the mutilation of the German language in which Schopenhauer thoroughly castigated the "flowery rhetoricians" of his day.

In all my close study of Schopenhauer's works in German and English for nearly forty years, I have never come across the statement that the Holy Ghost dictated to him parts of his chief work.

As for my qualifications to write this letter, I may state that my English translation of Schopenhauer's main work in two volumes was published in 1966 by Dover Publications of New York. For more than thirty years I have been a member of the Schopenhauer-Gesellschaft and am now its Vice-President. I am also secretary of the Schopenhauer Society in England.

E. F. J. PAYNE.

Nicholas Griffin's contention that Schopenhauer's philosophy is not a serious philosophy is utterly ludicrous. No serious student of philosophy would ever accept that; in fact, Schopenhauer's philosophy is one of the most profound. And his essay "Ueber den Willen in der Natur" is directly in line with the brutal facts of nature. There is no Schopenhauerian mythology there, Mr Griffin.

Schopenhauer's direct antipode among the philosophers is Anaxagoras. The reality for Anaxagoras is mind, while for Schopenhauer it is an irrational will. An Anaxagorean mind, that is, from a will accompanied by knowledge, necessarily demands optimism to excuse it, which accordingly is set up and maintained in spite of the loudly crying evidence of a whole world full of misery.

What actually perplexes Mr Griffin is Schopenhauer's view of will, and I really wonder if he believes man has a will, and if not, why not? According to Schopenhauer the will is metaphysical and pervades all nature. Therefore all products of nature—insects, animals and man—are manifestations of the will to live. That answers Mr Griffin's question. As we are all part of nature I can see nothing wrong in talking about our wills as we talk about our bodies. I see nothing wrong in talking about an individual manifesting his will to live. If it had been God's will that would be different and foreign to man, but for Schopenhauer it is nature's will which is not foreign to man. So it is Mr Griffin who is the confused person about will, not Schopenhauer. The serious question I put to freethinkers is: "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?" Mr Griffin very cunningly dismissed trying to answer that question from his humanist point of view, as he was far more taken up with the so-called confusions of Schopenhauer.

Incidentally, Bertrand Russell did advocate the dropping of the atomic bomb on the Soviet Union. *The Daily Worker* at that time called him atomic-bomb Russell.

By the way, one usually calls a dog by name. I can see nothing silly about Schopenhauer calling his poodle Atman.

HECTOR MACDONALD.