

# FREE THINKER

The Secular  
Humanist Weekly

Registered at the Post Office as a Newspaper

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

VOLUME 90, No. 39

Saturday, 26 September, 1970

Sixpence

## DEATH OF A NATION: AMERICAN SCIENTISTS CONDEMN GERM ATTACKS

During the spring of this year students and faculty members of the university at Stanford, California, decided to relate their scientific training to political issues that concerned them deeply. They set out to investigate the ecological effects of the war in Vietnam and formed the Stanford Biology Study Group which included a graduate student in molecular biophysics; graduate students in population biology and ecology; and a post-doctoral fellow in molecular genetics. Their report has just been published, and it is a devastating indictment of American policy in Vietnam and other parts of Asia. Professor Donald Kennedy, chairman of the university's Department of Biological Sciences, has written the foreword, and declares: "No one can conclude, after looking carefully at the impact of our military strategy in southeast Asia, that we are fighting a war against an army. Instead, we are waging a war against a people and the land they live on. The enormity of our attack upon the Vietnamese environment has, for me, changed entirely the logic with which one evaluates the morality and even the efficacy of our operation there".

The war in south and east Asia has gone on for 30 years and has caused incalculable deprivation and suffering. A whole generation has grown up in war conditions, and the United States, in its advisory and fighting role, has added greatly to the suffering and destruction. America has added a new dimension to warfare, and her strategy of destroying forests and crops will produce devastating and long-term ecological damage. Long after the American forces have left Vietnam there will be a deadly legacy of their invasion.

The Americans are engaged in two main programmes of environmental destruction in Vietnam. One is the defoliation programme in which chemicals are sprayed on to plants from the air. Trees are often killed by this process, and non-target areas are often affected. Although the US Defence Department claims it has not deliberately defoliated rubber plantations, herbicides have seriously affected the rubber industry. Cambodian plantations and farms have also been defoliated by deliberate overflights of spraying aircraft (initially denied, but later admitted by the Americans).

### Women and Children Last

The other programme is aerially sprayed herbicides to destroy crops and land, and in this way deprive food to soldiers and civilians in areas occupied by the National Liberation Front. According to the Stanford Biological Study Group the rationale behind this "resource denial" programme is that the resulting starvation will sufficiently demoralise the NLF troops so that they will surrender. But previous wars have shown that when food supplies are low, the fighting troops are first to be fed, and what is left is rationed among the civilians. This policy of deliberate starvation contravenes the Nuremburg Principles which the United States formally accepted.

The "resource denial" programme is also an attack on unborn Vietnamese. The South Vietnamese public health ministry refuses to provide statistics on normal and abnormal births, so evidence indicating birth defects in Vietnamese children is not available. But in late 1967, after two years of greatly accelerated herbicide application,

Saigon newspapers began carrying front-page stories of an increasingly common birth defect described as "egg-bundle-like" fetus. Newspapers which reported a rise in the incidence of deformed babies in areas that had been sprayed were closed by the authorities.



US Air Force C-123s spray herbicides over Vietnamese fields as part of the programme of environmental destruction. The motto of the Aerial Spray Flight of the 309th Aerial Command Squadron is: "Only We Can Prevent Forests".

(Continued overleaf)



# HENRY SIDGWICK: MAN OF PRINCIPLE

ERIC GLASGOW

D. J. James who had prepared a series of lectures on Henry Sidgwick, the eminent scholar and rationalist, died before delivering them at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Later this year they will be published by Oxford University Press in a volume, "Science and Faith in Victorian England". Sidgwick resigned his professorship at Cambridge as a protest against the religious tests, but nevertheless enjoyed great prestige and influence in university life. He secured the admission of women to the university examinations, and was one of the founders of Newnham Hall. After Sidgwick's death his wife wrote that "half a dozen bishops tried hard to get him to die as a Christian". They were unsuccessful, but she buried him as one just the same.

Outwardly, the facts of Henry Sidgwick's life are quite simple and straightforward. He was born at Skipton, Yorkshire, and educated at Rugby and Trinity College, Cambridge, of which he was a Fellow from 1859 to 1869. Even then, however, his intellectual adventures were uncommonly diverse: in 1862, he spent some weeks at Dresden beginning with the study of Arabic, which he hoped would help in his comparative investigation of Semitic religions. As the years passed, his interest moved from classical scholarship to the moral sciences, which had been first admitted as a "tripos" at Cambridge in 1851, but not accepted as a qualification for a degree until 1860. Sidgwick was very prominent in the ensuing movement at Cambridge to secure the abolition of the religious tests in the universities. But that aim was not attained until 1871. Even Gladstone took time to be convinced, and the opposition, led by Lord Salisbury in the House of Lords, was both strenuous and vocal.

That was a good deal too slow for Sidgwick, who—as a real blow for academic freedom and integrity—resigned his Fellowship at Trinity College in 1869 rather than pretend to subscribe to the 39 Articles of the Church of England. It was a very courageous and memorable sacrifice, made not without considerable spiritual turmoil and perplexity, and influenced greatly, too, by the example of the poet A. H. Clough (1819-61), who had resigned from his Fellowship at Oriel College, Oxford, as early as 1848, assailed by even more pervasive and devastating doubts. Sidgwick was never likely to go as far in his anti-establishment views and ideas as Clough did: for one thing, his dedication to philosophy and the moral sciences was always austere, detached, scrupulous, and distinctly saint-like, in its self-effacement and its intensity. Sidgwick would have nothing of Clough's later excursions into social revolution, republicanism, and anti-capitalism; he was a pillar of academic honesty, luminous and consistently impressive, surviving as an intellectual of titanic proportions, lacking always anything of Clough's "Angry Young Man" mentality.

## Intellectual Evolution

Sidgwick, indeed, had nothing like Clough's later intellectual alienation and virtual irresponsibility. On the contrary, he plunged more deeply and thoroughly into his developing interests in philosophy and the moral sciences: his resignation of the Fellowship, bold and challenging as then it had seemed, ultimately involved no such hiatus in the smooth sequence of his evident intellectual evolution; nor does it seem to have driven Sidgwick into any sort of arid or sterile intellectual isolation. At any rate, his books

continued to come out, increasingly solid and self-sustaining, and increasingly demonstrative of the use and the power of reason as the basic standard of human thought. *The Methods of Ethics*, corrective of J. S. Mill, was first published in 1874, *The Principles of Political Economy* in 1883, *Outlines of the History of Ethics* in 1886, *The Elements of Politics* in 1891; and, after his death, on 29 August, 1900, his posthumous publications included *The Development of European Polity* (1903), and *Miscellaneous Essays and Addresses* of 1904.

## Devotion to Truth

It was a very impressive and enlightening total, a fitting memorial to one of the greatest Victorian minds. It affords a remarkable tribute, also to the transparent intellectual honesty, and the devotion to truth, of the best type of the Cambridge academic a century ago. That is surely an example which should not be lost to, nor forgotten by, our present, more packed and anxious generations. Although the specific issues are now very different from those of the Victorians, and today we are accustomed to accept, as axiomatic, much that liberalism had to fight hard for in those distant years, the essential and vital principles of freedom, honesty, and truth have not changed at all, in relation to those for whom the whole life and thought of Henry Sidgwick afford such clear and eloquent testimony and demonstration.

It is worth recording, that, unlike Clough, Sidgwick rejoined Trinity College as a teacher of ascending importance from 1875 until his death: so could the University countenance even the utmost in intellectual inquiry. Moreover, the excellent article on Henry Sidgwick in the *Dictionary of National Biography Supplement*, Vol. 3 (1901), came from the lucid and careful pen of Leslie Stephen who had left his Fellowship at Trinity Hall, Cambridge, in 1864, in similar circumstances to those of Sidgwick in 1869, and whose memorable book, *An Agnostic's Apology* (1893), practically gave currency to the new term for the human outcome of the final application of reason to the tenets of traditional religion.

## DEATH OF A NATION

(Continued from front page)

### US Violation of Geneva Protocol

The 1925 Geneva Protocol banned the use in war of all "asphyxiating poisonous or other gases, and all analogous liquids, materials or devices" and of "bacteriological methods of warfare". To date, 84 states, including almost all of the major industrial powers, have ratified or acceded to the Protocol. The United States, however, has not ratified it.

There was general agreement at the time the Protocol was drawn that the document prohibited any and all forms of chemical or biological warfare. This interpretation was reaffirmed by the Political Committee of the General Assembly of the United Nations on 10 December, 1969; the vote, in specific opposition to United States use of herbicides and tear gases in Vietnam, was 58 yes, 3 no (United States, Australia and Portugal). The World Health Organisation has also condemned the use of herbicides and tear gases in warfare.

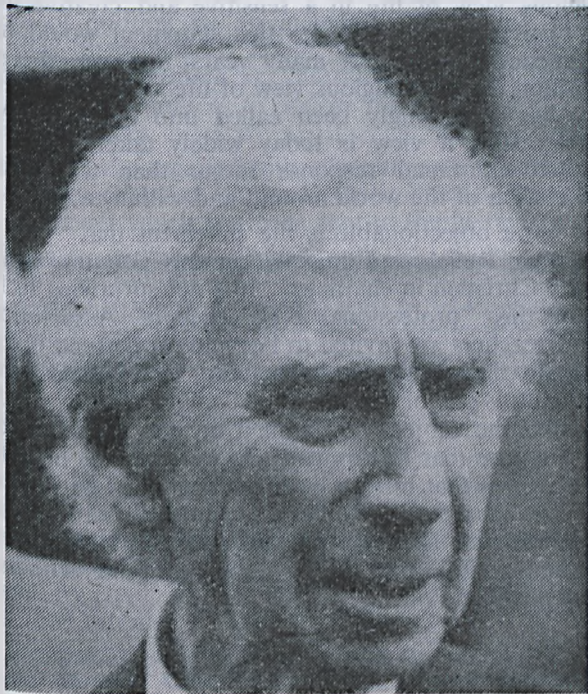


## NSS AT RUSSELL AND DARWIN HOMES

MARTIN PAGE

The National Secular Society annual excursion took place on Sunday, 13 September, when members and friends visited Pembroke Lodge, Richmond, and Down House, Kent. Pembroke Lodge was the home of Bertrand Russell between 1876 and 1870, during this time the young Russell outgrew the religious "education" inflicted on him against his parents' wishes, and recorded in his diary his doubts as to the existence of God. In his great *Autobiography* he vividly recalled this period at Pembroke Lodge.

David Tribe (president) and Martin Page (general secretary) gave short addresses on the humanism of Bertrand Russell. The visitors afterwards saw the house at nearby 41 Queen's Road, where Russell lived for some time during the late 1940s. (Unlike Pembroke Lodge and its spacious grounds, this house is still in private ownership.) It was announced that the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works intends to erect a commemorative plaque to Russell at Pembroke Lodge, but it was felt that more could be



*Bertrand Russell*

done at a national level to honour Russell. A petition was circulated calling for the establishment of a Bertrand Russell museum and library at Pembroke Lodge. This petition has been sent to the Ministry, and the NSS invites the co-operation of other organisations which may be interested in this idea of a national memorial. The Society was fortunate in having David Western as an expert guide at Richmond.

The party spent the afternoon at the Charles Darwin home and museum at Down, where Darwin entertained T. H. Huxley, W. E. Gladstone, John Morley and Sir John Lubbock (a local resident and an ancestor of Eric Lubbock, who was until recently, Orpington's lively and radical MP). The Down museum is not so widely known and publicised as it deserves to be. Among its fascinating

Darwiniana is a letter dated 13 October, 1880, in which the author of *Origin of Species* replied to Karl Marx's offer to dedicate *Das Kapital* to him: "I would prefer that the book should not be dedicated to me (although I thank you for the honour you wished to accord me) for that would have meant—to a certain extent—that I agree with the entire work, about which I know nothing. Being a resolute advocate of free thinking in all problems, I still think that definite proofs against Christianity and theism will hardly produce any impression on the public and that the greatest benefit for freedom of thought is the gradual enlightenment of minds that results from scientific progress . . . Perhaps in this case I was influenced more than need be by the thought of the suffering that I could cause to some members of my family if I supported in one way or another the direct attacks against religion".

Rain prevented exploration of the church and village which seem virtually unchanged since Darwin's day. Darwin's distinguished disciple Sir Arthur Keith also lived in the village, and no man paid a more fitting tribute to the enduring significance of the house where Darwin lived and worked for 40 years and where he died in 1882: "Truly from Down Charles Darwin shook the world and gave human thought an impress which will endure for all time. Down is a priceless heirloom not only for England but for the civilised world. One of the greatest men of all time lived there".

On the return journey to London the party passed the site in Bromley where H. G. Wells was born in 1866, the year the NSS was founded. The excursion was a great social success, and everyone welcomed the opportunity to honour two great men whose work will influence generations to come.

### SECULAR EDUCATION APPEAL

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*All donations will be acknowledged*

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The views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Board.

The *Freethinker* can be ordered through any newsagent, or obtained by postal subscription from G. W. Foote & Co. Ltd. at the following rates: 12 months, £2.1.6; 6 months, £1.1.0; 3 months, 10s 6d; USA and Canada: 12 months, \$5.25; 6 months, \$2.75; 3 months, \$1.40.

## 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.

## ANNIVERSARY

Plans are being made to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the birth of Robert Owen who was born on 14 May, 1771, at Newtown, Montgomeryshire. He was virtually the founder of the co-operative movement, a pioneer of trade unionism, promoter of mass education, and a self-proclaimed atheist. At the same time, Owen was a successful industrialist—at 29, owner of the largest cotton-spinning mill in Britain—and, although respected, his efforts to advance the welfare of his workers did not make him popular with other employers.

The Robert Owen Bi-Centenary Association has been organised to make arrangements for commemorative events next summer. These will include local and national meetings, a Summer School and an exhibition at the London headquarters of the Trades Union Congress. Mrs Caroline Dale Owen Baldwin, a great great grand-daughter of Owen, will be speaking at meetings in various parts of the country.

The Democratic History Society has accepted responsibility for staging the exhibition (which will be opened by Victor Feather, general secretary of the TUC), the theme of which will be "Robert Owen and His Times". The Association would like to hear of the whereabouts of material relating to Owen and his contemporaries. Offers of material, information and assistance with the exhibition should be sent to the secretary of the Democratic History Society: Henry Fry, 31 Chartfield Road, Reigate, Surrey.

Information about the Robert Owen Bi-Centenary Association is obtainable from the secretary: Paul Derrick, 11 Upper Grosvenor Street, London, W1.

# NEWS

## MINI-MANIFESTO

Last week the Association for Religious Education issued what it rather grandly described as a manifesto for the 1970s. In fact it was little more than a tarted up recruiting form which will impress only those who are already sympathetic to the aims of the organisation.

*David Tribe writes:* What the Association for Religious Education describes as its "Manifesto for the 1970s" clearly shows the anomalous position of religion in modern education.

The ARE is itself a strange amalgam of a professional association and a political lobby. The 14 points of its members' "pledge" reflect these joint aims. If a bureaucratic infrastructure of sufficient complexity can be built up educational reform in the future will be much more difficult. But even more characteristic are the statements at the beginning of the manifesto.

Religious education is defined as "introducing pupils to a religious view of life in a sensitive and creative manner". Five hundred years ago this statement would have been uncontroversial. For many years, however, the presupposition that a "religious view of life" has an objective reality has increasingly been called into question. Academically such a view is today widely taken to be an individual emotional response rather than a plausible interpretation of the world around and within us.

Yet more objectionable is the statement that "it is accepted that Religious Education in this country will be basically Christian in character". It is not surprising to find that, of this "professional RE Teachers' Association", non-RE teachers are invited to become supporters. If there were a shred of academic impartiality in this field, where Christianity is one of thousands of "religious views of life", how could the subject be founded on one particular outlook? Suppose that history teachers were to announce that "it is accepted that history in this country will be basically Marxist in character". Would there not be a national outcry? Parliament should take early steps to remove the propagandist subject of RI (or RE) from State schools as soon as possible.

## BEJASUS!

It seems that the champions of "our Lord and His Day" are beginning to lose their grip even in traditional strongholds like Northern Ireland. After years of successful and triumphant opposition to such depravities as the unlocking of children's swings on Sundays, Ulster's sabbatarians have suffered a defeat. It has been decided by the Belfast City Council that in future the maxim "cleanliness is next to godliness" will apply also on Sunday, and that the Public Baths will be open on that hallowed day.

Last June a councillor suggested that Victoria Park should be open for boating and swimming on Sunday, and Belfast Humanist Group sent letters to local organisations urging them to support the suggestion. Subsequently, a number of them wrote to the Town Clerk. The *News-Letter* and the *Belfast Telegraph* carried editorials criticising the delay in opening the baths, and after much discussion and buck-passing, the Council reached its decision. Those who voted to keep the baths closed on Sunday included Councillor Mrs E. Paisley, wife of the Rev. Ian Paisley.



# S AND NOTES

## FREE FAMILY PLANNING

Only 45 local authorities are fully implementing the 1967 National Health Service (Family Planning) Act, Mr Caspar Brook, director of the Family Planning Association, told a meeting in London last week. The Act allows councils to provide free family planning services. Mr Brook called for a massive, nationwide programme of birth-control education, and announced that the FPA was offering local authorities a scheme which could lead to family planning clinics in almost every town.

Mr Brook claimed that between 500,000 and 600,000 unplanned pregnancies occurred every year, and that about half of these were also unwanted. He called for an increase in research to develop better contraceptives, and said that all doctors and nurses should be trained in family planning.

Local Humanist groups and *Freethinker* readers would be doing a worthwhile job by checking on their local councils' attitude to the 1967 Act. Despite the welcome change of outlook by an increasing number of Roman Catholics, there are no doubt plenty of them who still regard family planning as "murder", and will use their positions on committees to oppose the extension of family planning services.

Catholics who regard family planning as a private matter are strongly criticised by the Catholic Priests' Association in a statement which has been sent to the hierarchy. They refer to the "audacious decision" by the Catholic Renewal Movement to publish a leaflet "propounding a doctrine on birth control so much at variance with papal teaching". The priests view with great anxiety the encouragement given to Catholics to come to their own decision on contraception, and call on the hierarchy to "repudiate in the most emphatic manner this incredible interference by a group of laymen in the realm of the teaching Church".

Urging "a clean and unequivocal rejection" of the CRN ideas the Catholic Priests' Association declares that silence by the hierarchy will "only be interpreted to confirm the weak in their weakness, and that the pernicious doctrine on contraception can be followed in the conjugal life of the Catholic."

If any one is being audacious, it is the members of the Catholic Priests' Association who have no experience of parenthood. They are either indifferent to, or unaware of, the strain on the health of the parents and other children, that result from unplanned and unwanted pregnancies.

## NCCL EXPANSION

The National Council for Civil Liberties plan to launch two new groups in Cambridge and Luton. Tony Smythe, the NCCL's general secretary, will be speaking at Cambridge (St Michael's Hall, Trinity Street) on Thursday evening, 1 October. Although the group has not yet been officially established it has already been active observing and reporting on the trial of the Cambridge students. Details are obtainable from Mavis Middleton, 32 Mingle Lane, Stapleford; telephone: 84 3141.

Readers who are interested in the formation of Luton NCCL group should contact Clive Godfrey, 6 Manley Highway Cottages, Pirton Road, Hitchin; telephone: Hitchin 51325

## A BAD DECISION

It is regrettable that Reginald Maudling has behaved in a manner that conjures up memories of the awful Henry Brooke. The Home Secretary has decided that after the end of this month the presence of Rudi Dutschke would be against the public interest. It would be interesting to know what proportion of the public was even aware of Dutschke's presence in Britain during the last two years. Mr Maudling's brand of Tory freedom is hardly that of the battleaxes who are so much in evidence at party conferences and dominate constituency associations, so it must be assumed that the Special Branch had a hand in the affair.

Dutschke is slowly recovering from the effects of two bullets in the head, and his expulsion—with his wife and two children—at a time when he was well enough to resume his studies, is a stupid and inhuman act. Mr Maudling should pay attention to those who know, and have predicted, that rather than being against the public interest, Dutschke's continued residence would add much to university life.

The National Secular Society has asked the Home Secretary to meet a deputation, and those who have agreed to join the deputation include Lord Annan, Mrs Fanny Cockerell, Lionel Elvin, William Hamling MP, the Rev David Head, Maurice Hill, Tony King, Professor Hyman Levy, Professor Julius Lewin, Lord Sorensen, David Tribe, Martin Page and the Rev Basil de Winton.

It is to be hoped that the Home Secretary will listen to voices of reason and humanity.

## UN IN A NEW LIGHT

The United Nations hits the headlines when it is called upon to settle political differences in almost any part of the world. This is its more spectacular work and, unfortunately, it is on these activities that the organisation is judged.

Hamish Richards has written a new pamphlet, *The United Nations: an Economic Institution*, in which he shows how the headline-making operations of the UN have almost obscured the organisation's unspectacular, but worthwhile, work. In 1969, for example, the UN development programme was engaged in more than 3,000 large and small scale projects, involving small villages and whole regions. The record in the sphere of economic development is impressive, despite the lack of financial resources. Because people tend to judge the organisation on its more sensational activities it is often regarded as a failure, but bearing in mind that under its aegis are the International Labour Organisation, UNESCO and the World Health Organisation, some idea of the true scope of the United Nations becomes apparent.

Mr Richards describes these various activities in the pamphlet which costs 4/- and is obtainable from the publishers: The Fabian Society, 14 Dartmouth Street, London, S.W.1.

## BANNED BOOK

Professor Julius Lewin (whose review of *Rebel Pity: The Life of Eddie Roux* is on page 310) retired to Britain from South Africa where he lectured on race relations for many years. He protested strongly against the ban imposed on Roux whose friend he had been for 35 years. Needless to say, *Rebel Pity* is banned in South Africa. But it is obtainable from the Freethinker Bookshop, price 45/-, plus 2/- postage.



## BOOKS

**REBEL PITY: The Life of Eddie Roux**

by Eddie and Win Roux. Rex Collings, 45s.

It is hard to describe the role of religion in South African life. The dominant Dutch Reformed Church is not established by law but in effect it plays the part of an established church. There was no mention of religion in the Act of Union which was passed at Westminster in 1909, and which formed South Africa into a unified state. This omission was rectified 15 years later when the constitution was amended by the Union parliament itself, which inserted a new first clause, simply stating that "the people of the Union acknowledge the sovereignty and guidance of Almighty God". A cynic would say that from 1925—which was also the first year of office of the Nationalist party—racial policy deteriorated markedly.

This book sheds light on the activities of a South African rationalist, Edward Roux, in the ensuing period. It is part autobiography, and part biography written by his widow, Winifred Roux. It discloses the experiences of a radical who stood for racial equality in a country where first tradition and then law decreed that "there shall be no equality between white and black in church or state". It shows that in the 1920's and 1930's the persecution of radicals was mild by the standards of the present day.

Who was this affectionate and honourable man whom successive governments regarded as a very dangerous person? Edward Roux traced his descent from the Huguenots who fled from persecution to South Africa in the 17th century. Graduating from the Witwatersrand University in 1925, he won a scholarship to Cambridge where he completed his training as a botanist. Returning to Johannesburg with his Ph.D. in his pocket, Roux then did something extraordinary—he "became a full-time communist" in the service of the South African branch of the party. For years he preached his gospel, literally from a soap-box at street corners. Living on a very meagre income, he had the lean and hungry look of a man with dangerous thoughts. Most of his time he spent editing a weekly paper printed in African languages. Together with an Englishman, Sidney Bunting, whom he deeply admired, Roux went to Moscow for a famous conference in 1928. He was shaken by what he heard there and by the Russians' attempt to impose a party line—premature demand for a black republic in South Africa. Roux left the Communist Party in 1936; ironically, only a year before it came under the reformed control of new men who would have appreciated him at his true worth.

For his early dedication to Communism, Roux was punished nearly 30 years later by the then Minister of Justice, John Vorster, now South Africa's Prime Minister. He was first prohibited by law from attending any meeting whatever or even a social gathering. He was also ordered by law never to set foot in his old university, in which he then held the Chair of Botany, or in any other educational institution.

Undaunted by this severe punishment, Roux nursed, more devotedly than ever before, the small Rationalist Association he had founded in the 1950s. Almost single-handed he produced its little monthly paper. He angered the authorities by these activities, and most of all by outwitting the censors who had banned Bertrand Russell's *Why I am Not a Christian*. Realising that only the importation, not the sale, of the work was forbidden under the

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existing law (subsequently made more stringent), Roux had the famous essay reprinted as a pamphlet and sold 3,000 copies.

In my opinion, it was Roux's atheism more than his early Communism which really brought on him the penalties he suffered near the end of his life. The powerful predikants of the "Much Deformed Church" (as Lancelot Hogben once dubbed it) regard a liberal Afrikaner as a particularly dangerous man. The Government can almost overlook the liberalism of a small minority among English-speaking people. It almost expects Jews to rank as radicals. But a true Afrikaner should avoid such types, for if he does not, he might catch the infections of modern thought and then infect other Afrikaners.

It was always assumed from his name that Roux was an Afrikaner. In fact, however, his father who was an anglicised atheist and socialist, married an Englishwoman, as Roux himself did. But other members of his father's family were really Afrikaners.

This modest book is hardly a final assessment but only an honest and readable record of an heroic life. As such, it will help the historians to recall a brave pioneer who will be remembered long after those who persecuted him have faded into oblivion.

JULIUS LEWIN

**WILDERNESS AND PLENTY**

by Frank Fraser Darling. BBC Publications, 21s.

The theme of this book (which consists of the excellent 1969 Reith Lectures) is the over-riding problem of the population explosion, and the resulting congestion and drain on resources. Evolution tends to produce a state of balance within the environment. Each animal, plant and insect gives and takes from its habitat. If one species expands, its food supply tends to decrease; overcrowding increases stress symptoms; numbers decrease and balance is restored. Man is defying the balance of nature. In a finite world our population is increasing rapidly. There are 40 people to every square mile now, and unless births are planned this will be doubled by the year 2000.

Fraser Darling is not optimistic regarding man's ability to master his own fertility. Sex needs to be divorced from reproduction: many find birth control methods difficult to use: others are turning to sterilisation, which in no way changes sex enjoyment but removes the fear of further reproduction. Nature exists on a delicate balance—far more delicate than many may realise. The wilderness, besides having many vital functions, acts as a safety valve for man's errors of judgement. The population explosion is fast reducing the wilderness on the one hand, and increasing the magnitude of any errors on the other hand.

There is a growing awareness in the world that the population growth must be rigidly controlled, but there is a tendency to indicate that other people, and not ourselves, must take action.

Fraser Darling has set out very lucidly the errors of the past and the problems which face us in the future. It is to be hoped that *Wilderness and Plenty* will be widely read, and result in effective action to deal with the problems of population growth and pollution.

J. E. L. AINSLEY



# REVIEWS

**THE MANCHESTER MARTYRS: The Story of a Fenian Tragedy.** By Paul Rose. Lawrence and Wishart, 25s.

In the wake of several books on modern Irish affairs, we now have one written by a British Labour MP about the sensational trial and execution of three Irishmen in Manchester 103 years ago, the sequel of which was (yet another) worsening of Anglo-Irish relations, and earning for the men concerned a niche in history as the Manchester Martyrs.

Paul Rose outlines the background and sequel to the famous "smashing of the van", when a group of Irish Fenians, some of them veterans of the American Civil War, made a daring daylight raid upon a prison van transporting two captives, Colonel Thomas Kelly (leader of the Fenian movement in Manchester) and his *aide-de-camp*, Captain Timothy Deasy, back to Bellevue Prison. In the *melée* the two prisoners were released, and eventually managed to find their way to the United States, but in attempting to blow off the lock of the back door of the prison van one of the rescuers fired a shot which killed the warder inside, Sergeant Charles Brett. After a massive round-up of Irish suspects, five of these were tried and convicted of murder. All five were duly sentenced, an event which caused the press reporters at the trial to take the unprecedented step of sending a petition to the then Home Secretary declaring their conviction of the innocence of one of the accused, Thomas Maguire, a recently discharged Royal Marine. In due course Maguire was given a free pardon and was re-admitted to the forces, but no investigation was made into the trial of the remaining four, even though they had been convicted on the evidence of substantially the same shaky witnesses. Another man, Edward O'Meagher Condon, had his sentence commuted, probably because of the pressures brought to bear by the United States Government. For the remaining three prisoners, William P. Allen, Michael Larkin, and Captain Michael O'Brien (*alias* William Gould), there was to be no mercy: on a murky November morning, 1867, they were publicly hanged on the walls of Salford Jail. Moreover, it seems likely, in the light of contemporary and subsequent evidence, that the authorities did not in fact apprehend the man who fired the shot which killed Sergeant Brett.

*The Manchester Martyrs* is a well written, and quite well illustrated account of the trials of the various accused, and the substantial efforts made by the radicals, both Irish and English, to secure the reprieve of the condemned men. Paul Rose feels that the part played by English sympathisers in the Irish cause has hitherto been overlooked, and he prefaces the book with a suitable quotation from Victor Hugo: "To come to the help of Ireland is equally to come to the help of England". Despite the baying for blood by the establishment Press, many leading radicals like Frederick Harrison, John Stuart Mill, Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, John Bright and Charles Bradlaugh expressed their displeasure with the sentences. Bradlaugh, who had seen the state of Ireland for himself declared: "If the Government is strong, let it pardon, if it is weak and cowardly let it hang the men who are condemned". (Swinburne, we are told, wrote a stirring ballad during the trials, but the title is not given.) Although Mr Rose does not refer to it in his book Annie Besant was also present at the Manchester trials, though she was then the respectable

wife of a country parson, and it was ten years before she met Bradlaugh. She subsequently recalled how appalled she was by the injustice of the proceedings, and by the "loaded" jury.

The author's narrative is most moving in dealing with the letters written by the condemned men, and with the mechanics of their execution, which are presented in a blow-by-blow account of the revolting details. If the author's source, Father O'Dea, is to be believed, Michael O'Brien took *three quarters of an hour to die on the gallows*. There could not have been a better example of the death penalty being no deterrent at all, for it provided the Fenian movement with three martyrs whose memory was to keep their cause alive for many years afterwards.

Besides dealing with the factual account of the trials and executions, Paul Rose deals with these events in relation to their place in the perspective of Irish history since 1800 and dealing with some of the weaknesses of the Fenian movement. In discussing the role of the Catholic Church in the Nationalist movement he may annoy those readers who think that Freethought/Humanism should be the Atheist Lodge of the Orange Order. Generally speaking, I am in agreement with his contention that the invariably reactionary attitude of the 19th century Catholic hierarchy has at least to some extent to be set against a courageous minority of liberal and radical ordinary priests in Ireland and in Europe generally.

This is a book that fills yet another gap in the colourful fabric of 19th century social and political history. It is well laid out, there is a useful index, and it is free of typographical errors, except for "1898" for 1798 (p. 83). It also contains as an appendix a collection of the many songs and ballads that soon sprang up about "the men who smashed the van", and who paid such an awful price to free their leaders. Read this book if you want to understand how it felt to be Irish a century ago—not so different from being a Pakistani or a Jamaican today, in some respects—and do not forget the words of Bradlaugh on the death of the Manchester Martyrs: "How could they take those lives with the consciousness that if we had governed Ireland better these things would not have happened?"

NIGEL SINNOTT

## LETTER

At least James McMahon and I can agree on something, namely that the forbears of some of the IRA men would have been Cromwellian Roundheads. This rather goes to show that the Irish are not so "foreign" after all.

I agree that the status of the six Ulster counties as part of the UK was not *necessarily* altered by the grant of semi-autonomy. However, it is pertinent to question the original incorporation of Ireland by the 1801 Act of Union: as everyone knows, this was a most dubious procedure, completed only by wholesale bribery of Ascendancy officials with hard cash and titles. Welfare may be better in Northern Ireland and England than in the Republic of Ireland, but the standards of democracy in respect of, for instance, local government in Northern Ireland fall well below that in the other two areas.

Avro Manhattan may well be "eminent" in Paisleyite circles, but his regular work for the *Protestant Telegraph* precludes any claim for him to be termed a freethinker. Instead, I would recommend Mr McMahon to peruse Joseph McCabe's *Biographical Dictionary of Modern Rationalists*, particularly the entries under EMMET, Robert; TONE, Theobald Wolfe; O'CONNOR, General Arthur CONDORCET, etc.

NIGEL SINNOTT.



## SEX AND THE YOUNG

The National Secular Society asked two of its members (Maurice Hill and Michael Lloyd-Jones) to conduct a survey of books on sex education for young people. Their findings will be published later this year in a pamphlet entitled, *Sex Education: the Erroneous Zone*.

*Maurice Hill writes:* Sex is a powerful source of anxiety for young people, particularly when secrecy and ignorance have been deliberately used to create feelings of guilt and "sin". Boys whose whole lives were being ruined by such fears would come to me sometimes in a state of almost suicidal despair. Some were tormented by their irresistible urge to masturbate; others were in love with other boys. There was a class of 15-year olds in which all but 2 of 33 boys had had sexual relations with other boys in the class. There were other groups in which most of the boys, though without any such experience, were haunted by the fear that they were homosexual. Some boys, noticing that their sexual organs were smaller than those of their companions, believed they were in every way inferior. Others were in distress about their relationships with their girl friends, and wanted advice about such things as petting, impotence, premature ejaculation, contraception and abortion. The "cure" for these people was always honest information, and the possibility of talking freely about their feelings and desires without fear of condemnation.

For more than ten years I tried to persuade the school authorities to provide some sort of sex education. The Headmaster eventually went so far as to arrange a private showing (for himself and me) of a sex education film. I thought the film better than nothing; he was extremely embarrassed. It was never heard of again.

Some years later a very pious junior teacher complained to the (new) Headmaster that I was displaying obscene documents in my class room. He refused to repeat to me what he had said, but declared: "If those does not work out to my moral satisfaction, I shall simply tear the notices down". The Headmaster, without seeing the offending document, supported him. In fact, the "obscenity" in question was a list of titles of books compiled by the very respectable National Marriage Guidance Council.

When the dust had settled, the Headmaster was persuaded to invite some NMGC speakers to the school to explain to the staff what sex education is about. This was an enlightening experience. It became apparent that many of those teachers who believed in gods were passionately opposed to the idea of allowing boys of 11-18 to hear about sex in school. At question time, one of them asked with rhetorical fervour: "Is it not a well-known fact that masturbation is a *disease*?" Even the staid and conservative NMGC speakers are taken aback by the ignorance and hysteria of some teachers.

Many of the boys who later had the privilege of listening to these speakers pronounced their talks useless and boring. A common complaint was that instead of telling them what they wanted to know, the speakers were giving them moral lectures; instead of telling them "how to do it", they were telling them "don't!"

There are the two most common faults of sex education, where it exists at all: first, it is still full of embarrassment, and therefore glosses over some facts and falsifies others;

secondly, it does not answer the questions young people really want to ask, but instead attempts to impose moralistic prejudices.

Michael Lloyd-Jones found that student teachers in Colleges of Education shared the same ignorance and the same tendency to moralise. We decided to investigate the quality of sex education books which are commonly seen by young people, either in school or at home, or furtively passed round amongst friends—furtively, because adults still give many young people the impression that sex is nasty and "sinful" and there are still many teachers who, finding a boy in possession of such a book, will confiscate it!

We examined 42 books of this kind, covering the period 1940-70. In general, they were found to be inaccurate and misleading (in some cases deliberately deceitful) and nearly all of them contained insidious moralising of the worst kind. Many were badly written and carelessly produced. The vast majority avoided a frank and explicit presentation of the physical, psychological and social facts, and a frequent aim appeared to be the promotion of those same guilt feelings which authors claimed to be trying to allay.

For example, Pauline Perry, in *Your Guide to the Opposite Sex*, having assured the young that masturbation is normal and "almost universal", warns them of "the danger that, in adult life and in marriage, the boy who masturbates may find himself unable to receive satisfaction in the sexual act". While such nonsense is disturbing, some other statements are positively dangerous; Julia Dawkins (*Teach Your Child About Sex*) writes: Your eggs won't get fertilised until you are quite grown up and have a husband". R. W. Kind and John Leedham (*You Grow Up*) declare that "the sperm cell comes from a man not from a boy". We hope that no unsuspecting girls will take what these people say seriously.

These are minor examples of the extraordinary nonsense which is being presented to our children.

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