

LORDS REJECT DISESTABLISHMENT MOTION

Lord Grantchester moved a Motion in the House of Lords last week urging the peers to consider whether the Church of England should continue to be established and proposing that a bill be introduced so that Parliamentary and public opinion may be tested. The National Secular Society, in a statement welcoming the proposal, described the present situation as an historical curiosity, "... a byproduct of Tudor (and in part later) history and bears all the marks of political expediency which, however necessary in the past, has no national role to play today. To non-Anglican and devout Anglicans alike, the meddling of Church and State in each other's affairs is not simply anachronistic but is intolerable". The NSS regretted that no provision was made for disendowment, "and the position of the Church Commissioners, among whom are Officers of State will be even more anomalous. All Church property is to be vested in them at the same time as they come under the control of the General Synod. But these are matters which can be thrashed out in later debates".

Lord Grantchester suggested that a reasonable way for terminating establishment included the Crown's relinquishment of its power to appoint bishops and dignitaries, that Church law no longer be the law of the land, for seats in the House of Lords to be preserved for only the present Church holders, and for compensation to be paid (subject to arbitration) to anyone damaged by the end of establishment if he wished to claim it. He went on to say that the Archbishop of Canterbury had described some of the provisions indicated in the Motion as generous.

Lord Grantchester continued: "The purpose of my proposals would be to transfer the government of the Church of England to representatives of that Church as a whole, meeting as the General Synod set up by the Measure of 1969. If there is a field where Her Majesty's Government should put into practice its desire for 'less government' and 'for withdrawal' surely this is one of the most appropriate. If there is one group of people who should be encouraged to accept responsibility for the conduct of their own affairs it is the Anglican Church".

Lord Beswick said he believed the term "establishment" to be a liability, but thought it would be wrong to speak of disestablishment as if it meant the State disowning the Church. He declared: "I do not think that it would be good for the nation to give the impression that, as a deliberate act, the majority of people in the country wish to dissociate themselves from a Church, if not from a religion. At this point of time it would be a mistake for the State to cut adrift from organised Christianity. It would be misinterpreted, and it would give comfort to all those who apparently seek a complete free-for-all in matters of morality".

Lord Beaumont said that as a Liberal legislator while he thought that the disestablishment of the Church of England would be a good thing, but it was far down his list of priorities. "But as a member of the inferior clergy of the Church of England it is fairly high on my list of priorities. That is why I wish that this proposal had come from the Church of England. I still hope it can come from that quarter before very long".

Although the Motion was withdrawn—and only the very optimistic thought it had any chance—it provided a valuable opportunity to discuss the question of disestablishment.

THE RIGHT TO DIE

David Tribe writes: On the publication of a report against mercy-killing, the chairman of the British Medical Association Council is quoted as saying that 99 per cent of his colleagues would refuse to operate a Euthanasia Act. What, one wonders, is his evidence? Has he conducted a plebiscite? Or is it a mere impression?

My impression is that more than one per cent of doctors are already prepared to terminate the lives of distressed and incurable patients if begged to do so, though they run the risk of a manslaughter, or even a murder, charge. Statements that proceed from spokesmen of medical bodies like the BMA (or the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists) must be treated with considerable caution since their central committees tend to be dominated by supporters of MRA and Catholic Action, whose views on moral issues are not typical of the profession.

No Relief

Another opponent of euthanasia is reported as saying that "today no one need be screaming in agony". True. It is possible to sedate people so well that they become drug addicts or semi-conscious wrecks unable to scream. But there are many agonising physical and mental states other than pain: constant breathlessness, incontinence, tinnitus, pruritis, ulceration, terrifying hallucinations, nausea, vomiting, eructation, hiccoughing, Barbiturates, warm sponges and Jesus are not enough to dispel these.

It is true that people can become very depressed and seek death when these conditions are only temporary, or in the total absence of physical illness, and two medical opinions and other safeguards must be required by any Euthanasia Act. When people announce they intend to commit suicide every effort is made to talk them out of it as the announcement may be simply a cry for help. But, after centuries of hatred and repression of those who scorn life, we have come to accept the right to suicide. Much more should we pity and help terminal patients who, because of physical dependence or lack of access to reliable means of suicide, are denied the right to die.

THE ORIGIN, SURVIVAL AND DECLINE OF RELIGION

PAT SLOAN

Religion today is in a bad way. Ecclesiastics lament the declining interest, and even the late Pope John XXIII had to recognise the need for Christians to co-operate "with human beings who are not enlightened by faith in Jesus Christ but who are endowed with the light of reason and with a natural and operative honesty".

The educational need for direct anti-religion is no longer as necessary as it was and the decline of religion is finding its own pace.

But we must not be complacent. How many non-churchgoers in the West eagerly read their horoscopes? How many, when discussing religion, still exclaim: "But there must be something"! Or ask: "Why have men always believed, if there is nothing there"? And such people probably get their children baptised, "just in case".

The time has come for a new approach. We should now be explaining *why* religion has been an *inevitable* phase in human development, and *why* it dies hard; and that there *is* a positive way of looking at everything, from the Cosmos to our Ego, which makes religion and superstition superfluous.

Origin of the Supernatural

Modern man is the end-product of millenia of evolution. For most of this period he has been able to work and to communicate in language. But for only a very small part of this time have a relatively few men been able to think logically and scientifically. This has been directly bound up with technological progress, which has gone hand-in-hand with the development of scientific knowledge

If we try to transport ourselves back a few millenia in time, to the stage at which no men were clear on the difference between sleep and death, the animals and the inanimate, the human and the non-human, we find ourselves at a stage when dreams in sleep were experienced "evidence" of eternal life. Long sleep involved the likelihood of a long dream. Hence, out of actual experience of sleeping and dreaming the myth of eternal life arose naturally, to last until such time as all men should understand that death was not sleep but annihilation.

The lack of clear distinction between life and death was accompanied by lack of distinction between animate and inanimate, and between different forms of the animate. The earliest "communities" included everything that moved and had being. Even today we often personalise the Sun shining on us, the Wind maliciously blowing us about, the Rain "pouring down" on us and so on. But the time was—and it was a very long time—when such phrases were always taken seriously.

Anthropologists argue as to whether, originally, inanimate gods (sun, moon, trees, mountains, etc.) were deified *in themselves* or as dwelling places of ancestor-spirits. In my view it was probably both. Even today there is no agreement among believers as to whether the bread and wine in the communion service actually *become*, or are merely *symbols* of, the body and blood of Christ. And the *Cross* is wielded against Devils in exorcism as if it possessed some divine life in itself.

Out of these ideas there developed in men's minds two worlds: material and "spiritual". In many surviving "primitive" societies, belief in supernatural powers tends

to end as soon as human control masters a phenomenon. Even in modern Britain prayers are still said for rain, but people do not pray for comfortable room temperatures or hot baths.

Since the "other world", the "eternal world", emerged from the imagination, it naturally reflected man's real world. As and when castes and classes arose in human society, so castes and classes emerged in "heaven". The Old Testament provides interesting indications of the rise of the priesthood and of kings; while at a later period we have the heavenly reflection in cherubim and seraphim, angels and archangels. Even today, we can see rough parallels between worldly and heavenly organisation: this is of course by no means conscious, and it is unlikely that the Catholic peasant and the Protestant company director ever meditate on the extent to which the Catholic "Holy Family" reflects the peasant *household* with mother playing a leading role.

The Hell myth—in Britain at least—has largely faded, and although class society still exists, at least our young are no longer taught to sing "The rich man in his castle, The poor man at his gate, God made them high and lowly, And ordered their estate".

At least one dignitary of the Church of England, Dr John Robinson, a former Bishop of Woolwich, admitted "The moral teaching of Jesus . . . says nothing whatever, for instance, about . . . how one is to be a good citizen and a positive and useful member of society".

Religion Dies Hard

Today neither social organisation, nor the development of the scientific outlook, help to perpetuate beliefs in the so-called "other world". Yet such beliefs continue, ranging from the orthodox forms of religion to horoscopes and spiritualism.

Karl Marx believed that religion, once rooted in humanity, cannot be disposed of by propaganda campaigns or just "pure reason". What he said was: "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the *opium* of the people". (Marx's own emphasis.) He went on: "The abolition of religion as the *illusory* happiness of the people is required for their *real* happiness. The demand to give up illusions about its conditions is the *demand to give up a condition which needs illusion*". (Marx, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*.)

If, therefore, after intense anti-religious campaigns, there are still religious people in the USSR; and if, here in Britain, despite the progress of science and technology there are still people who cling to the "illusory happiness", the comfort, of belief, the reason is—as Marx pointed out long ago—that the human condition still "needs illusion". Despite material progress in Marxist Socialist countries, and despite the Establishments' discouragement of religion, there are still plenty of reasons why some people may want comfort, and still find it in the "illusory happiness" of religion.

In this country, the belief in the other world can be utilised in a most sinister way by pundits of religion, as was exemplified by Archbishop Fisher in 1954 when, according to the *Evening Standard* of 17 May of that year

he said: "The H-bomb can only sweep a vast number of people at one time from this world into the other and more vital world into which, anyhow, they must all pass sometime". Or, eight years later when speaking to a Tomorrows' Citizens' Conference: "We have all got to die sometime. Is it any worse if we all die in one minute?" (*Daily Worker*, 6 January, 1962.)

Here is a very real case of "opium" bringing "comfort" of a kind to those who are ready to accept risk of nuclear annihilation and not do anything to prevent it. There are still many people who still cling to a "a condition which needs illusion" rather than get down to the more adult task of trying to change the world. Hence the survival of religion, both orthodox and unorthodox, shading off into all forms of surviving superstition.

In many cases even scientists, e.g. Sir Olive Lodge, retreat to illusions in their search for personal comfort.

The Decline

Religion may still die hard, but it is on the decline. Statistics show it, and so does the gradual acceptance of new rules—so that people may actually not state their religion when entering hospital, for example, and that children may be exempted from "RI" at school. The rate of decline varies, and in the USA it is much slower than in Britain, apparently because the church "community" has meant much more in family life there than here—a possible after-effect of the religious nature of so many immigrant groups in the past.

But a rational and materialistic outlook is spreading. In the Socialist countries this is with the full (and sometimes excessive) encouragement of the authorities. In the West it is still mainly against the tone set by the Establishment.

But until the "condition which needs illusion" is done away with, religion will survive to some extent.

In the West the link between orthodox religion and private property is still strong. The days are past when the Ecclesiastical Commissioners reaped fat rents from houses of prostitution in Paddington; but the Church is still strong enough to secure stipends for hospital chaplains, paid out of public funds, well in excess of the earnings of many of the medical staff with superior qualifications. "Religious Instruction" in schools today ranges from balanced consideration of "Comparative Religion" to the dogmatics of fundamentalists who tell young people that every word in Genesis is true. "Religious" charities are still backed officially, religious qualifications for adoption are still demanded in most cases, and so on. "And yet it moves", as Galileo muttered.

The refrain "God is dead" is now echoed from within the walls of churches. The idea of "God" arose from the prior idea of "gods" which in turn was a reflection in "eternal dream" language of earthly chiefs and rulers. The idea of "God" arose naturally and inevitably at a certain level of human development as a result of its accompanying inadequacies. This idea is no longer necessary for a rational understanding of the evolution of the universe, of the world, or of human kind and human society.

But human society is still far from a stage where nobody "needs illusions". For some, it may never reach such a state, and humanity may always have in its midst constitutional flat-earthers who, even in an Age of Plenty and of Reason, will need to draw a spurious comfort from religious or superstitious illusions. But at least they will then no more influence society than do the flat-earthers of today.

MRS WHITEHOUSE—ILLUSION OR REALITY?

AVRIL FOX

Opening my newspaper this morning I saw yet again the familiar phrase "Mrs Whitehouse, Secretary of the National Viewers and Listeners Association, has protested . . .", and one more I experienced a small spasm of irritation at the Fourth Estate. It is true that we have some of the finest newspapers in the world, but this is to some extent merely indicative of the rottenness of the rest. We have a very very long way to go before we achieve even one single national paper which genuinely struggles to present a clear, unbiased and *enlightened* picture of the world to its readers.

The truth of this has been increasingly borne upon me through more than three years of steady campaigning against those wishing to "clean up" the BBC. As in the case of the Press, it has become obvious that the last thing television desires is the final rout of this tiny, shrill group of would-be censors. They are good copy, especially Mrs W.

Interesting peripheral facts have emerged over these years. The complaints are nearly always aimed at the BBC, as against the ITA; always, in fact, until Cosmo, the organisation I founded, pointed to this odd discrimination. My opinion of the MRA, of which Mrs. W. is a highly representative member, impelled me to write to a well-known sympathetic journalist to suggest he investigate this odd acceptance of the pure morals of commercial TV, as I thought he could come up with interesting disclosures. I

have his significant answer on file; the gist of it is: "I dare not. My paper, in common with most others, has too many shares in commercial TV". To return to my theme. The BBC seems particularly reluctant to ignore the lady. *Talk-back* might have been designed to provide her with a useful shot-in-the-arm of publicity when we were beginning to forget about her. And after a while, when merciful oblivion began once more to descend, *The Listener* helped out by splashing her on its front page with no less a male piece of cheese-cake to catch the eye than Mick Jagger, delectably attired.

Tinkering with Reality

I have come to the conclusion that we have been so regularly exposed to sensationalism and vulgar tinkering with reality that we have become dangerously lulled into acceptance of values we would instantly criticise if they were presented to us nakedly for the first time. Any indiscreet remark that can be elicited by a provocative journalist in the heat of the moment during an interview is apparently much more valuable than obtaining genuine information. BBC radio interviewers are particularly prone to this cheapening of news. No doubt commercial radio will cap their efforts.

An even more serious outcome of this exaggeration by

(Continued on back page)

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.

EVENTS

Humanist Holidays. Easter Holiday at the Belgravia Hotel, Bournemouth. Details from Mrs M. Mephem, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey. Telephone: 642-8796.

Leicester Secular Society, Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, Leicester, Sunday, 31 January, 6.30 p.m. J. J. O'Higgins: "Marx and Marcuse".

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1, Sunday, 31 January, 11 a.m. Richard Clements: "Georg Lukacs, Sociologist and Critic".

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

SOCIAL EVENING

at the OPERA TAVERN

23 Catherine Street, London, WC2

(opposite Drury Lane Theatre; nearest Underground stations: Covent Garden and Holborn)

SATURDAY, 30 JANUARY, 1971, 8 p.m.

Cabaret:

ANDREW MASSEY and Company

DAVID TRIBE

DEREK WILKES

ERIC WILLOUGHBY

Comperre: MARTIN PAGE

NSS members, *Freethinker* readers and friends invited

ADMISSION FREE

NEWS

AFFIRMATION

When nine-year-old David Pinder arrived home his mother was being attacked by a man with a knife. He dialled 999 and told the police. His mother was taken to hospital where she died two hours later. But David was not allowed to tell the jury at the Leeds Assizes what happened—not because of his age, or the possible distress it would cause him. He told Mr Justice Forbes that he had not received religious instruction, nor had he been to church or Sunday school. He was sent from the court, and Mr Justice Forbes told the jury that the Court of Appeal made it quite clear that a boy ought not to be called as a witness unless he can be sworn. He continued: "As he has no religious belief he could not be sworn. As our law now stands, unless a boy understands something about it, it is useless and he cannot give sworn evidence. We just cannot call him".

David Tribe, president of the National Secular Society, commented: "As a child the potential witness was subject to the court's discretion in the matter of his acceptability, and it may be that the judge correctly interpreted an earlier Court of Appeal ruling on children's oaths. If, more than 80 years after the Oaths Act 1888, which was intended to make affirmations a universal substitute for oaths, children cannot in any circumstances affirm if they have no religious beliefs, a serious defect persists in English law.

"With children, as with adults, belief in God is no guarantee of truthfulness. Some of the most notorious liars I have ever known were my fellow Sunday school pupils. Moreover, in the modern world, growing millions regard the Biblical stories and the fundamentals of theism and eschatology as themselves a gigantic imposture passed on from generation to generation as a continual confidence trick. Such nonsense can be no guarantee of veracity in people of any age."

Conrad Ascher, secretary of the Society of Labour Lawyers, told the *Freethinker* that he was strongly in favour of affirmation. Mr. Ascher said: "I am sure most members of the Society would prefer to see the oath replaced by some form of affirmation".

This is yet another illustration of the need for the oath to be abolished.

CAMPAIGN FOR FREE ART

The Campaign Against Museum Admission Charges has been formed to organise non-partisan opposition to the Government's intention to introduce charges for admission to national museums and galleries.

These museums of art and science, which we all pay to maintain, are an essential part of our culture. Their value to the millions who use and enjoy them should not, and cannot, be measured by the visitor's income. A charge for admission (which informed sources say will be 4s) would violate this principle and would destroy cherished traditions. The British Museum, to take one example, has been a free institution for more than 200 years.

The Government has repeatedly stated that the money taken will not go to the museums, but to the Exchequer. This will be an additional tax like the duty on whisky or tobacco.

AND NOTES

No system of exemptions could justify this tax, for no system of exemptions could possibly be fair and equitable. It would create a privileged group. The enjoyment of art and the pursuit of knowledge has nothing to do with privilege. Short, impromptu, frequent visits are those which most people especially value, and admission charges would discourage this practice.

The Government has so far refused to consider any alternative means by which the museums might obtain revenue for their own benefit. The decision was made without consulting the Trustees, Directors, or the Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries. Such a total disregard for the principle of public trusteeship and for the knowledge and experience of the museum profession is unprecedented. The Trustees of the Tate, and of the National Portrait Gallery have already expressed their opposition, as have the Standing Commission, but, being Civil Servants, the Directors and their staffs have to remain silent. In almost every case their silence hides dissent.

The CAMC has organised a petition to provide an opportunity for the general public to express its opposition. Support has been expressed by a large number of organisations and individuals including Lord Annan, Alan Bullock, Sir Hugh Casson, Sir William Coldstream, Thurston Dart, George Melly, Paul Rose, MP, and Stephen Spender.

Petition forms are obtainable from Andrew Wright, 221 Camden High Street, London, NW1.

INVESTMENT

Last Sunday, Helene Graham, assistant director of the Family Planning Association, called on the Government to spend £1 million annually on the promotion of birth control. She estimated that the country would save £4 for every £1 spent. Mrs. Graham added: "This sort of money needs to be spent because most teenage school leavers are completely ignorant of birth control methods, and a growing proportion have pre-marital sex relations. Unwanted children should not be brought into the world before or after marriage".

The FPA spends a total of £12,500 on publicity in its 50 branches. They have decided to distribute 150,000 birth control leaflets in Urdu, Punjabi and Bengali to immigrants in Britain.

SHORTAGE OF PRIESTS

A report published in Dublin by the Catholic Communication Centre reveals a serious decline in the number of students for the priesthood in the last ten years. And unless the trend is reversed the Roman Catholic Church will face a critical shortage of priests.

In 1961 there were 417 priests ordained. There were 3,409 students in the seminaries, and there was a drop-out figure of 20 per cent. During the period 1965 to 1970, 1,267 entered the seminaries, and there are only 757 left. This represents a drop-out figure of 45 per cent.

The effects of this decline have not yet been felt in English dioceses but, as some of them have strong links with Irish seminaries, they will almost certainly be faced with problems arising from this shortage of suitable candidates.

A vocations director referred to the growing industrialisation of Ireland, and many people are blaming the upheaval following the Vatican Council for the crisis.

OBITUARY

Frederick Edwin Monks, who has died at the age of 81, was the sole survivor of a group of Manchester residents who met in 1917 to form a local branch of the National Secular Society. He was a freethought stalwart all his life.

Mr Monks had been in indifferent health for some years, and his condition steadily deteriorated following a fall three months ago, when he suffered greatly from injuries and shock.

Mr Monks had been a widower for ten years, and our sympathy is extended to his daughter and other relatives. Members of the family were joined by local freethinkers and members of the legal profession for the funeral at Manchester Crematorium. The committal ceremony was conducted by Harold Bayford.

* * * *

Herbert Ashplant, a forthright and eloquent advocate of secularism, died on 22 January after a long illness. He was 85. Mr Ashplant was a member of the National Secular Society and the Brighton and Hove Humanist Group. The funeral took place at the Downs Crematorium, Brighton, on Wednesday. Our sympathy is extended to Mrs Ashplant.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

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BOOKS

THE FIFTH SOCIAL SERVICE: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE SEEBOHM PROPOSALS

The Fabian Society, 30s.

This collection of essays is written by a distinguished group of writers drawn from the academic, medical and social work professions. Taken together they constitute a fairly comprehensive, but not well balanced survey of the major social work fields of the Social Services Departments which will be set up by all local authorities from 1 April. Too much space (nearly 40 pages) is devoted to the aged, while the chapters on child care and mental health together comprise less than 20 pages.

The authors tend to be over-critical of social workers in general and particularly of the Seebohm Report which will be probably regarded by posterity as a landmark in our social history. Admittedly, its approach to the subject was far from ideal: it failed completely to sound out consumer reaction to the existing services, or to define precisely the term "an effective family service" though it was used repeatedly by the Committee. Townsend, who rates the new Social Services Department as being only the fifth major social service, coming after health, education, housing and social security, rightly censures the Seebohm Committee for concerning themselves more with the structure of the new Department than with the scale and scope of future social services.

The most interesting and stimulating essay of this collection is Adrian Sinfield's *Which Way for Social Work?* where he discusses such vital issues as the role of social workers in society; professionally qualified versus untrained staff; the rift between hospitals; and the client-social worker relationship.

His proposals are often controversial as when he advocates that untrained social work auxiliaries should be increased at a faster rate than qualified social workers. Mr Sinfield is no less than fair to social workers (who are still badly paid for their very considerable responsibilities, and their long and erratic hours) when he talks of professions, holding the country to ransom. His idea of employing nurse-social workers is excellent in itself, but contrary to the spirit of the Seebohm Report. He advocates very sensibly the training of receptionists and telephonists who are often the first to have contact with the social workers' potential clients. There is certainly a crying need for a much more even distribution of the Social Services throughout the country, but without increasing the control by central government.

Barbara Kahan in her chapter on the Child Care Service correctly describes residential social work as the Cinderella of the social services. She makes the interesting point that more enlightened attitudes towards juvenile offenders (as contained in recent legislation) could in time liberalise the treatment of adult offenders. Hiliary Rose, writing on housing, stresses the fact that sheltered housing will continue to be the responsibility of the housing department, and not, as Seebohm hoped, included in the new Social Services department. The Act, in her cynical view, will not lead to the mobilisation of new resources, but merely constitutes a bureaucratic, tidying-up operation. In his essay on Mental Health, Peter Mittler, advocates much closer links between hospitals and the community, but at

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the same time with some justification he condemns "the sloppy and sentimental belief that people are always better off in the community rather than receiving hospital care".

Michael Meacher in a brilliant essay entitled *The Old: The Future of Community Care*, presents the reader with a mine of information, and a plethora of statistics concerning the aged. He emphasises the massive incidence of unrecognised medical needs amongst old people and the prevalence of hypothermia in old age. Mr Meacher advocates the provision of fixed aids in the home to prevent accidents, and more personal services to include shopping, bathing and night nursing.

He also urges that central government grants to local authorities should be made conditional on their upgrading services to the requisite standard within a limited period, and many of their permissive powers should be made mandatory. Meacher regrets that the Seebohm Report failed to put forward the case for a comprehensive register of all senior citizens, but to most social workers this seems not only impracticable because of the numbers involved, but also unnecessary because so many of the aged are active and can manage by themselves. Even today, relatives often provide more help for the elderly than do the rapidly expanding social services.

Mr Meacher believes that the Government should place greater emphasis on community care as opposed to institutional care, and this theme is elaborated by John Agate in his essay *The Old: Hospital and Community Care*. He makes the bold claim that "modern geriatrics can now rehabilitate more older people than the social services can re-integrate into society". In his opinion, old people should enter homes on a temporary basis for the relief of domestic stress, and there should be more interchange between the staff of hospitals and those of local authorities.

Tony Lynes on Welfare Rights welcomes the growing tendency to see poverty in terms of the denial of human rights, and he argues that legal services should be more readily available to working-class people. He regrets the absence of an Ombudsman to deal with the complaints of clients concerning local government officials. In the concluding chapter, *Action for Welfare Rights*, David Bull regards means-tested benefits as no substitute for a guarantee of an adequate income as of right. From my own experience, I endorse wholeheartedly his remark that too many restrictions are imposed on local authority social workers who are not, as he implies, just "a mouthpiece" for local or national government. Mr Bull makes such radical proposals as the setting up of "education shops" and "mobile information offices"; he envisages the time when social workers will seek out those in need rather than wait for clients to come to them for help.

KEVIN L. PAGE

The second sentence of Martin Page's review of *The Theory and Practice of Regional Planning* (*Freethinker*, 23 January), should have read: "In defining the sequence of operations in regional planning, he readily admits the not insignificant part played by subjective and even arbitrary value-judgements, and the tremendous difficulties in quantifying aesthetic values".

REVIEWS

TODAY'S REVOLUTIONARIES

by Ian Greig. Foreign Affairs Publishing Company, 14s.

Mr Greig concludes his book: "It must never be forgotten that were the revolutionaries allowed to succeed in their aims, the result would not be the replacement of tyranny by freedom, but the replacement of freedom by a tyranny which they would control".

I approached this book with distaste, expecting a Right-wing Conservative attack on socialist groups. I found this—but the author has cunningly chosen to emphasise his criticisms by repeatedly inserting the violent statements of black power, student and Left revolutionaries, without mentioning the violent means employed to keep his Conservatism going. I found my sympathies therefore very mixed.

As a freethinker I cannot countenance the religious devotion of millions of Chinese to Mao Tse-tung, and the Bible-like reverence given to his little red book, which contains this comment quoted by Mr Greig: "power grows out of the barrel of a gun". This is both true and wrong, as Ronald Sampson stated so well in his pamphlet *The Anarchist Basis of Pacifism* which I reviewed in these columns recently.

Ian Greig quotes Stokley Carmichael and Roy Sawh in violent advocacy of black power in the USA and Britain. The latter is averred to have said, "the only way to destroy the present violent society was by violence". An assertion such as this, is extremely naïve and shortsighted; it is a travesty of man's history and psychology.

This book gives several other examples of violence in pursuit of conquest by today's revolutionaries. Students for Democratic Socialism supporters caused a police horse to be burned to death in Germany in one riot. The American Weathermen (who take their name from a line in Bob Dylan's folksong *Subterranean Homesick Blues*: "You don't need a weatherman to see which way the wind blows"), employ tactics involving the use of violence on a greater scale than hitherto. One of their slogans is "the only direction is insurrection". Until those who wish to change society realise that it is people's minds they must approach first, then they will only continue to alienate themselves from the majority of the community and give excuse to the government forces' violence, which can always overcome them.

The Trotskyites of Paris 1968 fame were, according to Ian Greig, like Trotsky their prophet, "fascinated by military strategy". But I find myself in disagreement when Mr Greig writes of "academic sickness"; I like to hear that the Radical Socialist Student Federation in this country want "new participatory, massed based organisations . . . to overthrow capitalism". This sounds more like democracy in action.

Obviously violence is part of our present political organisation, and if revolutionaries seek a totally different kind of society, they must first renounce the methods currently used by capitalism. It is foolish to imagine one can operate the tools of our repressive society in order to replace it with libertarian socialism. So I think Ian Greig has served some small good purpose in teaching opponents of the established order where they have gone wrong. He did not, of course, intend this, and as William Deedes makes clear in his foreword to the book, this work is a plea for keeping our present law and order intact.

DENIS COBELL

PAMPHLET

LABOUR AND INFLATION

by Thomas Balogh. The Fabian Society, 8s.

The strikes by power and postal workers have provoked storms on all sides. The Government is committed to a firm line on wage increases; trade union leaders are being pressed by their members to get as much as possible, and those sections of the public not directly involved in the dispute grumble about the inconvenience and rising costs.

Prices in this country are currently rising at the rate of 7-8 per cent a year and wages at a colossal 14 per cent. Whether you find this piece of information merely boring, mildly disturbing, or positively frightening depends, of course, on your political viewpoint and also, I suspect, on whether you take a pragmatic or ideological view of economic policy. Lord Balogh attempts to steer a middle course between the two and ends up marginally on the technocrat's side of the fence, as befits this distinguished economist. His pamphlet is a brave attempt to dispel some of the muddle and hypocrisy that bedevil the Labour Party's attitude to the trade unions and their responsibility for wage inflation.

One senior Labour MP sardonically remarked that Balogh was the only Labour man in the country who could seriously argue that an incomes policy was an essential tool of Labour government. If this is true, then so much the worse for the chances of the party in future elections, let alone for the chances of achieving social justice in this country. For Balogh demonstrates conclusively that the bidding up of wages by trade unions in a free-for-all labour market does not increase the share of wages in the national income, and still less does it bring about "any policy which could claim to be social, let alone socialist . . . An increase in costs, an undermining of the currency, the forcing an aggravation of unemployment, all this the unions can accomplish . . . What they did do was to achieve a cost and price increase which, by threatening the housewife, the old, and by creating an atmosphere of doubt about the undoubted basic achievements of the Labour government, led to a Tory victory at the polls".

Rarely can such an indictment of British trade unions have been drawn up so forcefully by an eminent Labour politician. It is a pity, therefore, that Balogh does not go on to draw the logical conclusion—that the trade union "movement" is nothing of the sort, and does not represent a force for progress in this country. This is why some sort of statutory control over the trade unions is now inevitable, under either party, and why British governments trying, as they do from time to time, to alleviate the plight of the poor, continually find their efforts frustrated by union-induced wage inflation. This, to my mind, is the kernel of the argument for a statutory wages policy, one which Balogh would himself endorse. On the other hand, he argues that a statutory policy is only possible in a climate of economic consensus in which the unions, as a kind of quid pro quo, would be allowed to participate in national economic planning, particularly as this effects the distribution of income.

It will be remembered that a similar genuflection to the unions was a feature of George Brown's attempt at incomes policy way back in the halcyon days of November 1964. Yet the only thing wrong with this concessionary approach is that there is not a shadow of evidence that trade unions are particularly interested in the overall distribution of income. Why posit, as Balogh does, a hypothetical grievance of low-paid workers (or even the high-paid) who

contrast their lot with that of the "capitalists" when industrial sociologists such as Runciman have shown that people tend to compare themselves with the social class immediately above them? This is why union wage claims are frequently based on the "restoring of differentials" rather than any abstract notion of cutting into capitalist profit. By all means let the Government seek to consult unions on economic policy; but what is a government for if not to govern? And this is what all post-war governments have failed to do.

Balogh is totally opposed to once-fashionable theories that economic management is a question of "fine tuning", as if the economy were rather like a high-powered Jaguar car. It resembles instead a clapped-out Mini which has to be energetically ushered to make it go. Both the "fiscal" and "monetarist" schools of economists have advocated policies (such as demand-management through taxation and control of the money supply) which presuppose that the economic system can more or less be regulated from Whitehall. This is palpably not so, since in practice powerful unions and managements can and do determine the pattern of wages and prices respectively. There is a strong case to be made out that inflation is more a sociological phenomenon than an economic; and Balogh is clear that a "macro-interventionist" policy is required which takes into account the ability of these large organisations to disregard, indeed flout, the wider interests of the community.

How feasible such a policy would be is something one can be sceptical about. Certainly the Tories have not yet got round to thinking of a statutory wages policy, which would go right against their enthusiasm for opting out of the economy as much as possible. Nor has the Labour party shown any sign of overcoming its fears of telling the truth about wage inflation and the enormous damage it does—not only to fixed-income recipients like old-age pensioners but to ordinary people faced with ever-mounting prices which is hardly compatible with that elusive sense of national well-being and stability that Balogh rightly says is the most important objective of all. Yet sooner or later the madness of the wage/price spiral will have to be curbed; and Balogh deserves all credit for saying this now, and for campaigning on behalf of blunt and unpalatable truths when the whole mythology of his party is almost totally against him.

PHILIP HINCHLIFF

LETTER

The Rights of Children

Several questions were raised about the recommendations made by the National Council for Civil Liberties paper—*Children in Schools* (*Freethinker*, 9 January).

For many years the NCCL has called for the abolition of corporal punishment in all schools. However, faced as we are with the total opposition of the educational establishment, we suggested a few intermediary steps which we hoped might actually be implemented at once.

Our paper was, in fact, claiming the right for all children to opt out of religious education if they so desired and it is our fault if this point did not come over clearly enough. In fact, at the press conference, I was asked if I would like to see a five-year-old withdraw himself from religious education and answered that I would, provided that any five-year-old was articulate enough to make such a demand.

Margaret McLroy queried our statement that "religious instruction by qualified specialists should be provided for those who want it". Here we would most seriously disagree, as there seems no reason why children who wish to study religion in any of its various forms (i.e., the Bible as history or myth, comparative

religion, etc.) should be prevented from doing so at school any more than they should be prevented from learning history, cookery or taking part in physical education. It could be held that the present system gives parents a choice with RE which they do not have with other subjects. A parent who feels that Geography is a waste of time for a child of 13 who has learnt where to look up the necessary information will be told by the Head that it is not possible for his child to have a free period. We would like to see a far wider freedom of choice given to children with respect to their curriculum.

Your reviewer's comments on school uniforms seem to indicate a lack of contact with children. Practically every child with whom this paper was discussed and with whom the teachers who wrote it have come into contact resented school uniform. This applies not only to the articulate middle class child who rightly felt that his individualism was being repressed, but also in a more practical way to the children whose families could only afford one outfit and who were thus forced to have school uniform and nothing else. Most important, we did not suggest that school uniforms should all be banned but that in schools today a somewhat alarming situation has arisen where one often finds more time and effort being spent on determining whether a child is in a correct uniform than whether he is able to read properly.

Nobody knows how much authority schools councils will eventually have. Our point is that they are essential to any learning of the democratic way of life and from the above, one could suggest several issues on which they should have a very important say—school uniforms, curricula and punishment.

Finally, the report certainly did not deal with the problems of disciplining children as we do not feel that this is the right approach. Endless articles are written by Heads and others about "huge 11-year-olds who terrify teachers", and there seems to be a notion that a child who questions what he has been taught or how he is being disciplined is in fact a threat to the whole school system. In this atmosphere, it seemed to us important in a *discussion* paper to underline the fact that if you treat the majority of children as a minority group who have no rights, some of them will explode into violence in just the same way as their "elders and betters". The main aim of the paper is to try and extend to children in schools some of the more basic civil liberties which adults have claimed as a right for a very long time.

GRACE BERGER,
Chairman, NCCL Children's Committee.

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the media of the cries of the men and women of our cultural backwoods is the impression created that it is far more representative than is the case, as can easily be shown by the results of a number of surveys over the years. The British public is one of the least censorial and paternalistic in the world. Yet the collective voice of bishops of the Roman Catholic Church in a recent report reveals that they have been taken in hook, line and sinker by the figmental female Frankenstein created by the Press and television. The bishops, they say, are convinced that the great majority of people in Britain are "more and more revolted by the pornography of stage, screen and print . . . It should not be impossible to devise restraints". This notwithstanding that the "great majority of the people of Britain" have more than once indicated their distaste for restraints of any kind.

Mrs Whitehouse Lives

It is true that there are honourable exceptions among our journalists to the tendency to vulgarise and sensationalise, and it is heartening that the circulation of the quality papers in which they sometimes appear is tending to grow. But the figment is still there, blown up to vast dimensions, scaring ecclesiastics and the Establishment to death. I have no doubt of the fleshly existence of a Mrs Whitehouse, the plump respectable Midlands housewife with the dated hair-do, but the secretary of a great, militant National Viewers and Listeners Association, leader of the masses of mighty cohorts of puritanical Britons, is a big balloon that should never have been blown up—a balloon ripe for pricking.