

WARM PRAISE FOR NSS PRIVACY RECOMMENDATIONS

"COULD FORM THE BASIS OF OUR CIVIL LIBERTIES"—LIBERAL MP

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights have endorsed the right of privacy. Many countries are zealous in defending privacy; the United States has been able to invoke the fourth, fifth and fourteenth amendments to the Constitution; the French Civil Code recognises *dommage moral*, and the Federal German Republic the "right of personality"; Norway and Denmark have penal codes protecting "private facts". But British law does not protect the right to privacy, and attempts in Parliament to introduce legislation have been unsuccessful through lack of Government support. This is hardly surprising as the Government is itself the major invader of privacy. With the development of even more sophisticated snooping devices and increased computerisation it is certain that the defence of privacy will be a major concern of many organisations and individuals in the near future. They will find the National Secular Society's submissions to the Government Committee on Privacy (the Younger Committee), which were published on Wednesday, of immense value.

A Political Issue

Submissions to the Government Committee on Privacy is an impressive document; the result of much hard work and research. It has been deservedly praised by those who have seen advance copies.

In a statement to the *Freethinker*, John Pardoe, MP (Lib. Cornwall North), said: "Privacy as a political issue will inevitably be of growing importance in the next few

years. As the power of automation (and particularly computer technology) to spy into our lives and record its findings grows, the individual's right to privacy will come under greater attack. Governments will inevitably use these advanced techniques to enlarge their roles as 'big brother'. Individual liberty is therefore more dangerously threatened by central government than ever before in the history of the world.

"Nor is it only government that will use these devices. Private investigators, credit rating agencies and landlords will increasingly use them and even an honest man whose life is virtually blameless would look pretty crooked on a computer print-out on every action in his life.

"The National Secular Society is to be congratulated on its submissions to the Government Committee on Privacy. It has set out the problem in a challenging manner, and its wide range of recommendations could form the basis of our civil liberties in the future."

Kenneth Baker, MP (Con., St Marylebone), said he regretted that the Younger Committee was not dealing with the invasion of privacy by the public sector. He was glad that organisations like the National Secular Society are submitting their views.

Comprehensive and Reasonable

Gerald Howarth, general secretary of the Society for Individual Freedom, said it was a "comprehensive and reasonable document, fully annotating the major threats to privacy today. At the same time it is not alarmist, nor does it make unreasonable or impossible demands which are so often the undoing of such reports".

Mr Howarth welcomed the Society's recognition of the merits of credit agencies which protect the legitimate rights of traders, and that Government poses a greater threat to privacy than the public sector. He pointed out that the



John Pardoe, MP

(Continued overleaf)

SIF, in its submissions to the Younger Committee, recommended that there should be recognised in law a general right of privacy, rather than elaborate controls governing bugging devices, computers, etc. In this way the individual could be given an adequate means of redress, and the law would be easier to administer.

He continued: "The suggestion of a Broadcasting Council is welcomed, particularly should commercial radio be introduced. Most of the other recommendations we would also endorse, though we are doubtful of the practicability of giving individuals access of computerised information".

Important Contribution

Tony Smythe, general secretary of the National Council for Civil Liberties, told the *Freethinker* that the NSS submissions dealt with most of the main issues, and were a very important contribution to the defence of privacy. He was pleased that the Younger Committee's terms of reference did not prevent the Society emphasising the fact that the Government is the chief invader of privacy.

It was encouraging that, after a poor initial response to the invitation to submit evidence, a wide range of organisations were now beginning to see the importance of this question, and sending their views to the Younger Committee. The NCCL had done so, and had also drafted the Control of Postal Information Bill which Leslie Huckfield, MP (Lab., Nuneaton), introduced in the House of Commons on Wednesday.

Telephone Tapping

While recognising the Government's responsibilities regarding national security, the NSS refers to the reserve powers of the 1868 Telegraph Act, the 1920 Official Secrets Act, and the 1953 Post Office Act. "But it is clear that today letters are being opened and telephones tapped in matters that have nothing whatever to do with what a reasonable person would call security lapses or 'serious crime'".

Since the 1957 Birkett Report the number of warrants issued for telephone tapping has not been revealed, "but few believed the innocently low figures that used to be cited. It has often been asserted that up to a million telephones in Britain are on the list for tapping. While the logistics of such an operation seems incredibly vast, evidence given during prosecutions for trivial offences suggests that the practice is more widespread than is officially acknowledged".

Personal Questions

Other government departments collect information about people from the census, inland revenue, social security and employment. Such information gathering and processing is often necessary for the purposes of economic planning, and forecasting health, educational and other requirements.

"Yet there are implications to bring concern to the most scientific breast. Some of the questions asked involve personal matters that can have little genuine interest for governments. One of these is religion. Divulging this can bring risk, or at least the fear, of anti-Semitism and other forms of discrimination that might not otherwise have happened. Those in institutions who are brave enough to write 'atheist' on entry forms may find, to their annoyance, that this is translated to 'C. of E.' But whatever is written down, hospital patients are often pestered by chaplains

and open ward services. Very often people put down a religion which is nothing more than an ancestral memory. In this way bogus statistics of religiosity are contrived which are later used to justify a privileged position for religion in general and Christianity in particular in such matters as public ceremonial, education, broadcasting, adoption, hospitals, prisons, the armed forces and other important areas and institutions. In some of these, religious provisions come automatically, but this entails an invasion of privacy, if not victimisation, for those who wish to opt out."

Forcible Entry

At the present time a large number of officials have the authority to enter people's home. The Society does not wish to interfere with the right of the police, firemen, or even private citizens, to break in in an emergency. It recognises that in many offences involving health hazards or the welfare of children, the element of surprise may be an important factor in detecting abuses. "But", says the report, "it is doubtful whether all the officials who have the privilege of scaling the walls of an Englishman's castle uninvited really need or deserve it.

"The powers of the police, tax collectors, customs and excise officers, health and school inspectors are well known, but *Stone's Justices Manual* shows that there are some 32 other categories of persons with rights of entry under 38 principal statutes. In only ten of these is a JP's warrant specified. Recent legislation, especially that involving those drugs which have provoked national hysteria, has made it easier than before for police to get search warrants, some so vague as to be little better than the general warrants of the days of John Wilkes, to invade premises, or to stop 'on suspicion' and search people in the street, where, even if an offence is found to have been committed, it is often of the most trivial nature."

Media Snoopers

The tactics involved in news-gathering and reporting are often highly dubious. Both the BBC and ITA authorise hidden recordings in special circumstances. Invasions of privacy by the Press—constant telephoning by day or night, photographers skulking behind privet hedges, reporters calling on neighbours pretending to be social workers—frequently take place.

Ethics in the industry is pronounced on by the Press Council, which has an independent chairman (a retired Lord of Appeal). But, apart from him and a vice-chairman, the council consists of 20 representatives of the industry and only five laymen. Even if it makes an adverse report it has no sanctions to enforce it.

Private Investigators

In a section on private investigators the report says that many of them are of the highest repute, and doing a necessary job. About 400 have formed the Association of British Detectives, but it is estimated that nearly ten times that number are involved in private investigation work. No qualifications are required; a man can be in Dartmoor today and in the business tomorrow.

Private investigators consult, by various techniques, all the files of the bureaucrats—including, as some of them boast, the criminal records at New Scotland Yard—and pretend to be officials with rights of entry, sometimes using

(Continued on back page)

HOUDINI AND SPIRITUALISM

R. J. CONDON

When, in 1848, the two little Fox sisters of New York decided to play a prank on their mother by making tapping noises when they were supposed to be asleep, they unconsciously launched the modern cult of spiritualism. The readiness with which their mother and neighbours accepted that the children were possessed by a spirit revealed to the sharp practitioners of the United States that here was a new and rich field for exploitation. The simple rappings of the Fox children were improved upon, and before the end of the century spectacular demonstrations of spirit activity were, with the discreet aid of conjuring apparatus, being given throughout the civilised world. Luminous tambourines and trumpets floated in the dark, and the spirits of the dead were materialised for the comfort of the bereaved and the profit of the "medium", as these charlatans styled themselves.

Professional stage magicians realised, of course, what was going on. Some, like J. N. Maskelyn and Harry Houdini, sought to expose the spook fakers by imitating their tricks and issuing challenges. While Maskelyne confined his work almost entirely to London, Houdini pursued the mediums throughout the length and breadth of his native USA. His feats of escapology, for which he is chiefly remembered today, tend to obscure the valuable public service he performed.

The Credulous Scientists

In the years following the first world war spiritualism received a tremendous boost from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who toured America affirming his belief in spirit communication. The endorsement of their activities by the creator of Sherlock Holmes greatly enriched the rogues against whom Houdini battled. Although on opposite sides of the fence, Doyle and Houdini had a cordial regard for each other. Lady Doyle, at Sir Arthur's suggestion, favoured Houdini with a seance. In a "trance state" she produced by "automatic writing" a letter purporting to have been dictated by his mother. Houdini wrote later, "I have given this episode very careful, thoughtful consideration, for I would have given my right hand for any evidence that may have proved to be true and put me in touch with my sainted mother. I regret exceedingly that I must put myself on record as not having been convinced . . ."

Psychical research societies came low in Houdini's estimation. They were, he said, duped by stage hypnotists, mediums and clairvoyants, who foisted one hoax after another on these credulous seekers after the supernatural. They were even fooled by some of their own members, who needed positive results to attract donations for their so-called research, and to provide material for the books and magazine articles they were paid to write. Scientists were particularly easy to hoodwink. However brilliant they might be in their own fields, they knew nothing about conjuring methods, and thought if they could not detect trickery, there was none going on.

There was some justification for Houdini's scorn. One research body, of which he was a member, conducted in his absence a series of tests on a medium known as Margery, and was about to pronounce her genuine. Margery had a spirit "control" called "Arthur", who could speak and acted as master of ceremonies. Other spirits, less gifted, communicated by means of a bell code. The bell was placed just out of the medium's reach, and her limbs were held by the investigators. Houdini joined the seances,

which were held in pitch darkness, and detected movements by the medium which had escaped his colleagues on no fewer than eighty previous occasions. He decided on a more stringent test. Margery was searched and placed in a cabinet with holes for the arms and head. In the dark the spirits burst open the cabinet and rang the bell. The cabinet was repaired and strengthened, and this time the medium's hands were held, something she had not foreseen. She was trapped and knew it, and the language of "Arthur" was distressing to hear. On the floor of the cabinet, folded to a six-inch length, was the two-foot rule with which she had hoped to reach the bell. In his notes on this, his most outstanding case, Houdini hints pretty strongly that it had been concealed on, or rather in, a part of her person which, for reasons of delicacy, she knew would not be searched.

Dupes in High Places

In 1926 mediums from all over America gathered in Washington to protest against a proposed bill which would have made their activities unlawful. One of them indignantly declared that she was frequently consulted by both Senators and Representatives, who considered her advice sound and followed it. This was only too likely. No less a person than the Vice-President of the United States, Senator Alben Barkley, was in the habit of seeking advice from a clairvoyant on important personal and government matters. Barkley, a lawyer, ignored his own advice to clients and left no will when he died at 78. There was no hurry; his clairvoyant had told him he would live to be 103.

Houdini gave evidence in support of the bill before a committee of the Senate. He said: "In 35 years I have never seen one genuine medium. Millions of dollars are stolen every year in America, and the government has never paid any attention to it, because they look upon it as a religion . . . when a medium is arrested and brought before a magistrate she will say: 'I am the Reverend Josie Sharman; I am an ordained Minister', and the magistrate does not know that you can be an illiterate and yet be an ordained minister . . . one of my investigators has been ordained six times . . . I have examined 300 mediums and this town (Washington) is the worst I ever struck . . . Every medium, with few exceptions, would sell my investigators lucky charms; they spent at least 2,000 dollars . . ." Asked why the law should be passed, he replied: "You will stop people being robbed . . . If you were to die and your wife went to a medium, they would rob her of every penny by claiming to bring your spirit back". As Houdini had predicted, the bill failed to become law. The mediums were right; they had many friends in Washington.

Houdini died later in the same year, following an appendectomy. Spiritualism survives, but it is not what it was. Yesterday's operators used mechanical tricks and were caught red-handed. Today they rarely venture beyond clairvoyance and "healing", and the mediums themselves may be firm believers in their own occult powers. In the golden age of spiritualism its truth was guaranteed by some of the world's foremost scientists. Harry Houdini did more than anyone to ensure its permanent removal from the field of serious study.

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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

Brighton and Hove Humanist Group, Salisbury Hotel, King's Road, Brighton, Sunday, 7 February, 5.30 p.m. Public meeting. A speaker from the Notting Hill Inter-Racial Council on Race Relations.

Guildford Humanist Group, Guildford House, Guildford, Thursday, 11 February, 7.45 p.m. Public meeting. A speaker from the Buddhist Society.

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

Leicester Secular Society, Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, Leicester, Sunday, 7 February, 6.30 p.m. Public meeting.

London Young Humanists, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London, W8, Sunday, 7 February, 7.30 p.m. Peter Cadogan: "Why I Left the Left".

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1, Sunday, 7 February, 11 a.m. Nicolas Walter: "The Humanism of Kropotkin". Tuesday, 9 February, 7 p.m. Brian Behan and John Gravelle: "What Moved Lenin and Hitler?"

Nottingham and Notts Humanist Group, Adult Education Centre, 14 Shakespeare Street, Nottingham, Friday, 12 February, 7.30 p.m. Richard Silburn: "Poverty, Economic Growth and the Welfare State".

Merseyside Humanist Group, Ethel Wormald College, Mount Pleasant, Liverpool, Wednesday, 10 February, 7.30 p.m. Annual General Meeting.

THE COST OF CHURCH SCHOOLS

By DAVID TRIBE

Foreword: MARGARET KNIGHT

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NEWS

RELIGION'S VICTIMS

Dr Morris Fraser, who is conducting a survey at the child guidance clinic in the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children, is uncovering startling evidence about the effects of riots, community division and religious fanaticism on children. He says: "I have been horrified by the ideas and beliefs that have emerged".

It is quite clear from the children's tape-recorded statements that some of them are suffering from delusions of persecutions. One boy, a Protestant, said: "The Catholics take the soldiers' guns. They kill policemen and Protestants. It's all Bernadette's fault. She should be burned to bits". A Catholic boy told how he and his companions asked the priest if they could play football and Rugby, and added: "He was very angry and said they were British games. He went to see my mother about me".

Dr Fraser will not arrive at any definite conclusions until the survey is completed. But he has already said: "It looks as if these paranoid ideas come from the segregated school system. They create divisions and pressures. Fears are built up. It starts early—you might say it begins with the mother's milk".

Ulster children, Protestant and Catholic, are truly victims of Christian superstition; they have little chance of avoiding it. When a Catholic child opens his eyes the first thing he is likely to see is a religious trinket or a bleeding heart picture which has been attached to the end of his cot. He is taken to church as soon as he can walk and, from an early age, joins in the prayers and praises of Mary. The Protestant child is also indoctrinated from his cradle days and, at an early age, acquires an impressive repertoire of Bible stories and tales of Orange folk heroes most of whom were—and are—fit subjects for a psychiatrist's couch. In both cases a hatred for those of different religious views is instilled in the home, and this, together with a strictly segregated educational system, ensures that there is little mixing in organisations, youth clubs and sport.

Christianity, both Protestant and Catholic varieties, pervades every sphere of life in Ulster. Small wonder Dr Fraser is horrified by the outcome.

FREE SPEECH IN MANCHESTER

The National Council for Civil Liberties, Christian and secularist speakers have joined forces in a battle to get Manchester a "Speakers' Corner". Letters of protest against the Corporation's failure to provide a site have been sent to local councillors and a dozen MPs in the area. The Manchester case will be used as a model for NCCL attempts to get official speaking sites in other cities.

Sixteen people have been arrested in connection with open-air meetings in Manchester. They include Vincent Wood, of the National Secular Society, who was arrested ten minutes after he had started speaking on the steps of the Queen Victoria statue in Piccadilly Gardens. Reginald Wise, an evangelist, then attempted to speak, but the police were unimpressed by the glad tidings and he, too, was escorted to the Black Maria. Both were charged with obstruction under the 1959 Highways Act.

Alderman R. A. Fielding, leader of the ruling Conservative group on Manchester City Council, said there was no deliberate attempt to stifle free speech, and that the Cor-

AND NOTES PUBLICATIONS

poration is on the lookout for another site. This may well be true, but it is not surprising that the outdoor orators have misgivings. In recent years the number of speaking sites all over Britain has been seriously reduced. Sometimes they have disappeared in a development scheme, and have not been replaced. It is strongly suspected that police pressure has been responsible on some occasions.

The Manchester rumpus will make it more difficult for the authorities to deprive people of the right to hold forth to anyone who wishes to listen. Certainly it is an event when an NSS member and an evangelist find themselves together in the dock on the same charges.

HARMONY '71

Community relations councils all over Britain are organising functions to mark the International Year for Racial Harmony (short title, Harmony '71). This follows a request to the Community Relations Commission from the Government to take a lead in promoting and co-ordinating national and local activities in accordance with a resolution of the United Nations General Assembly.

Plans are well advanced in towns like Coventry, Manchester and Newcastle-upon-Tyne. The London boroughs of Lambeth, Southwark, Wandsworth, Greenwich and Newham are considering joining in a major effort to provide an impressive programme of events.

Further information may be obtained from the headquarters of the Community Relations Commission, Russell Square House, Russell Square, London, WC1.

STILL TRYING

John Parker, MP, is to make another attempt in Parliament to liberalise Sunday entertainment laws. He tried, without success, to get a Sunday Entertainments Bill through the House of Commons on a previous occasion and, unfortunately, the prospects for his latest effort are not too hopeful. He failed to draw a place in the ballot for private Members' Bills, and intends to raise the subject under the ten-minute rule. He will be allowed ten minutes to persuade the House to allow him to bring in a Sunday Entertainments Bill, and the same will be granted to anyone who wishes to object.

The only possibility of the Bill making real progress is if the Government takes it under its wing and provides time for debate. The Labour Government shillyshalled on the matter, and it is unlikely that the present lot will be sympathetic.

But Mr Parker is undeterred, and deserves the support of everyone, in side and outside Parliament, who wish to see an end to the archaic Sunday laws.

SOCIAL

Social gatherings, formal or otherwise, are not my cup of tea, and attendance is usually a matter of grim duty. But the social arranged by the National Secular Society in London last Saturday was a happy exception to the rule.

There was an excellent programme of songs and poetry in which Carol and Andrew Massey, David Tribe, Derek Wilkes and Eric Willoughby provided for, I should think, all possible tastes.

TITLE	AUTHOR	Price	Post
Humanist Anthology	Margaret Knight	10/6	1/6
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BOOKS

POPULATION, RESOURCES, ENVIRONMENT

by Paul R. Ehrlich and Anne H. Ehrlich.

W. H. Freeman, 84s.

Paul Ehrlich is one of the world's brightest luminaries in the field of conservation and this book is a major event. Professor Ehrlich and his wife Anne are both biologists, but the scope of their knowledge and of the book is all-embracing: indeed *Population, Resources, Environment* is almost a bible for conservationists and everyone concerned with population problems.

The Ehrlichs define their work themselves: "It has been our aim to produce a reasonably comprehensive and reliable sourcebook for the study of questions related to population, resources and environment—a book that can serve the needs of teachers and students as well as the needs of general readers who may not be enrolled in any formal courses". Anyone who shares the authors' concern about the future will agree that they have achieved a formidable success.

The structure of the book is generally as follows. There is an introductory chapter entitled *The Crisis*, seven chapters setting out the present world situation and problems under such headings as *Population Structure* and *Food Production*, and then five chapters giving an idea of the various possible solutions to the problems.

If you already know something about the subject you may be a bit put off by the introductory chapter, which is full of dramatic generalisations and the jargon (e.g. *Space-ship Earth*) which plagues conservation just as much as other subjects. But there are only three pages of this, clearly intended to catch the attention of the lay public, and after that you are launched into the fully documented survey of the world in the 1970s.

The chapters tend to start off with a pretty readable text, well illustrated by graphs and diagrams, which gradually become thicker with statistics (invaluable, but not easy going), until it is clear that this part is meant for reference later rather than straightforward reading. Each chapter ends with an extensive bibliography.

The width of topics covered by the authors is staggering. In the chapters on the limits of earth, the defensive argument that human beings could adapt themselves to living in multi-storey layers over the entire surface of the world, and could then colonise the other planets, is dealt with by a cold calculation of how long this would take if the present rate of population increase is sustained. The speed at which the earth would be smothered in such dwellings is alarming—reminiscent of the story of the man who asked to be paid by one grain of rice on the first square of a chess board, two on the second, four on the third, then eight, sixteen and we are into millions, before reaching the end of the third row. Then, if we *could* colonise the planets, they too would be filled in only 250 more years. And if any reader can get through the sections of chapters four and five on our depleted reserves of fresh water and the future possibilities of food supplies—even allowing for further great agricultural advances—without feeling his or her face going grey at times, that reader should get some sort of Muslim award for fatalism.

FREETHINKER

Yes, ladies and gentlemen, it's all here in terrifying detail—the treats in store for your descendants and mine if we in this generation don't succeed in doing something about it on a large scale within the next few years (though of course it might be taken out of our hands by world-wide disease, famine or war). And with the promised exhaustion of resources—minerals, vegetables, air and water—marches the steady pollution of so much of what we have left. It becomes stunning after a time—unbelievable. But when you reach the point of disbelief, there is always that bibliography of studies of each subject at the end of each chapter: anything you do not believe you can check.

So it is a relief to turn to the last part of the book, which is devoted to what we *can* do and, more important, what the governments we elect can do. This is the Answers section. The Ehrlichs examine the possibilities for reducing pollution and of course the worst pollutionist of all, population growth.

The chapters are headed *Optimum Population and Human Biology*, *Birth Control*, *Family Planning and Population Control*, *Social, Political and Economic Change*, and *The International Scene*. In these sections the authors have marshalled almost all the important answers to the problems that people in different parts of the world have come up with so far. The various forms of birth control (including abortion) and further probable developments are examined, as are their marginal likely effects on the population increase. Marginal, that is, unless we can instil a sense of the immorality of having large families (i.e. more than two children) throughout the world. The Ehrlichs find it hard to believe that such efforts at voluntary control will

succeed, and they go on to list the various unpleasant methods of control which the next generation may have to introduce if our attempts fail. This reviewer, speaking for himself, believes that by a combination of birth control availability and intensive education the population could be stabilised in developed countries. That is the reason why such activist organisations as the new *Birth Control Campaign are coming into existence.

The Ehrlichs have some interesting historical examples to demonstrate their theory that the only proved way of cutting down the birthrate is by making people *want* to have few children. For instance in the USA, the depression of 1933-1939 was the only form of contraceptive which has ever reduced the American birthrate to less than 80 births per 1,000 women of reproductive age. That was not done by any contraception handed out at clinics, but we have to achieve the same effects by persuading people to want birth control and by making sure they can get it. Of course it is something of a tightrope, for persuasion must be given a number of years to become effective, and massive financial backing. And in the meantime the population pressure will be increasing rapidly, tempting governments to coercion. But we must try the all-out voluntary way, and quickly.

That is not the only tightrope involved. Other complexities are revealed in this passage from the book. "Despite the tendency of black militants to regard the provision of birth control to the poor as a policy of genocide against Negroes, it should be emphasised that the government's present programme is basically a welfare programme, intended to benefit the poor, and poor children

REVIEWS

in particular . . . Although many middle-class Americans favour population control for others, especially the poor, they must realise that it is really their own excessive reproduction that accounts for most of the United States population growth rate."

This quotation reveals some of the associated problems, and also indicates one of the book's few faults from the point of view of the British reader—its frequent focus on the subject from the American internal viewpoint. A small matter, though, for most of the time the Ehrlichs are talking about the whole world. More serious criticisms (though they are shortcomings in the ideas that mankind has produced, rather than the fault of the Ehrlichs) are the skimpiness of the sections on optimum population and on new economic theory for societies without growing populations. Much research is needed to establish criteria for the former, while the time is ripe for a new, great economist to provide the necessary ideas for the latter. Without these vital pieces of knowledge, all our actions will be to some extent gropings in the dark.

But this is a book review, so let it end by thanking the Ehrlichs for gathering so much valuable information and presenting it in a way which will be constantly useful to everyone involved or interested in what is going to become of us all.

ALASTAIR SERVICE

* An article on this organisation will appear in a future issue.

EXPLOITATION

by Robin Jenkins. MacGibbon and Kee, 30s.

The sub-title of this book, *The World Power Structure and the Inequality of Nations*, indicates the wide range of allied subjects that it tries to cover. The author is a brilliant young man suffering from intellectual indigestion. He leaps from one aspect of a topic to the next in a breathless way aggravated by a prose style which shows at its worst in a sentence like this: "The point here is to relate the three models into a coherent perspective which produces criteria for their application to concrete situations—otherwise we are left with a plurality of possible explanations of the behaviour of states".

Robin Jenkins is right in rejecting the view of international conflict which "treats nations as if they were billiard balls bumping together and it assumes that their size is all-important in explaining the way they bump together". As he says, this view fails to take into account the economic penetration of one nation by the capital of another. Mr Jenkins therefore harps on the fact, by now well enough known to all but the politically blind, that the rich nations continue to pursue policies which have the effect of keeping the poor nations poor. To establish this argument, the author draws on some familiar sources but mainly on other books usually ignored because they are by Left-wing writers. A reader to whom the whole argument is new will learn something of value from this

analysis if he is patient enough with it in spite of the tone and style employed. But I doubt whether a sceptical reader will be convinced; and this is a pity because at bottom Mr Jenkins is right and the orthodox arguments against him are fraudulent.

I wish so sharp a mind as his had given more thought to the strategy and tactics required in one country or another to bring about the conquest and reconstruction of the existing social order. Like so many in his age group, Mr Jenkins is strong on denunciation but weak on constructive methods of getting us nearer a just society. His last word is: "The system cannot reform itself to it has to be overthrown; the Vietnamese people are presently showing the world what this means in practice". Does the second half of the sentence follow from the first? Is it really helpful to bid British readers look for guidance to Vietnam in its long agony?

Robin Jenkins is not yet 30. I predict (and I hope) that long before he is 40 he will write a far better book.

JOHN GILD

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LETTERS

School Freedom

The disagreement between Grace Berger and myself are largely points of emphasis, and in some cases merely confusion over words. For instance, what does the NCCL paper mean by "religious instruction by qualified specialists"? This phrase implied to me priests coming into schools and saying to children whose parents accept their religion, "You are a . . . , and therefore you must believe the following . . ." This is quite different from, as Grace Berger puts it, "studying religion in any of its various forms", which I quite agree may properly take place in schools. In this case, however, it would be as well to avoid the term religious instruction, which progressive teachers of the subject have themselves dropped, and substitute religious education.

My experience is that school uniform is not resented when it is well designed, does not include unnecessary items such as hats, and allows reasonable freedom of choice in detail, e.g. regulation material for summer frocks, available in several colours, which girls can make up into any pattern. Without any regulation some girls would quite certainly wear a different dress, all in the latest fashion, every day of the week, and I personally couldn't afford to dress my two secondary-school daughters like that. They already cost a fortune to keep in what their circle consider necessities. Incidentally, I am myself a teacher, but I defended school uniform as a parent. Grace Berger's surmise as to my lack of contact with children was not inspired.

I am afraid discipline must be looked at when one considers the rights of the school child. "Huge 11-year-olds who terrify teachers" are certainly rare; huge 14-year-olds who terrify younger or weaker children, or who create a classroom atmosphere of disorder and friction in which little work can be done, are not. The minority of children who, perhaps because of difficulties, must not be allowed, in the name of freedom, to impose these things on their school-fellows.

MARGARET MCILROY.

Religion in Russia

In his excellent article, *The Origin, Survival and Decline of Religion* (*Freethinker*, 30 January), Pat Sloan says: "In many surviving 'primitive' societies, belief in supernatural powers tends to end as soon as human control masters a phenomenon". Hence people in Britain still pray for rain in time of drought, and I might add that they have also been known to pray for the rain to cease. Whereas if the water supply fails in the factory the workers do not go down on their hands and knees to pray for water but contact the Water Board.

Mr Sloan continues: "If, therefore, after intense anti-religious campaigns, there are still religious people in the USSR and in Britain . . . 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 my opinion there are two main reasons why religious superstition is still a powerful force in Russia today. First, Russia is a predominantly peasant or agrarian country. The life of the peasant and collective farmer is largely determined by the weather which he cannot control. As an official Russian report says: "Religion is strongest among the peasants and collective farmers while religious beliefs are weakest among the toiling intelligentsia, especially in its highest income groups". Or as Bertrand Russell once aptly observed: "Fishermen with sail boats incline to be religious while those who boast of the possession of motor boats divest themselves of religion".

The second reason is that the Russian masses do not control the economic system of the country. The ruling group in Russia determine the political and economic policy and what they do is determined by the laws of economic development of the whole world of capitalism. The Russian ruling group also do whatever is required to keep themselves in power.

The Russian masses are ruled by the most efficiently organised and ruthless totalitarian dictatorship in the history of mankind. When the wage-labour and capital economy of state capitalist Russia reaches the development of wealth production in abundance for all, the people will be enabled to establish a free socialist democracy in co-operation with the whole world of socialist mankind.

When the Russian people become masters in control of the phenomenon of the economic and social history of Russia the need for the illusory happiness of religion will vanish. Mankind will have then reached the stage when, as Marx put it: "The prologue of human history is played out and history begins".

R. STUART MONTAGUE.

The Irish Question

I am most sympathetic with Avro Manhattan's problems with distribution and advertising of his book in the United Kingdom and abroad, but that does not alter the fact that his "reply to my critics" leaves much unsaid.

Nobody wishes to see the inhabitants of the present State of Northern Ireland "forcibly . . . absorbed and digested" by the existing Dublin régime. But Mr Manhattan has failed to answer the editor's contention that in a United Ireland the Ulster Protestants would be able to act as a radical bloc, and contain the secular power of the Catholic Church in the country as a whole. In any case, Northern nationalists were (and still are) forcibly incorporated into the Six County unit.

Having had access to Mr Manhattan's *Religious Terror in Ireland* I can only say that he compares himself, with consummate aptness in my opinion, to Don Quixote "tilting at windmills".

NIGEL SINNOTT.

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(Continued from page 42)

cameras and electronic equipment that press photographers and television men never dreamt of.

Recommendations

The NSS makes 15 recommendations to the Younger Committee. These include a Government scheme to licence and inspect all private investigators, and the outlawing of all unofficial bugging devices with the minimal official use of such devices. An independent tribunal should be set up to investigate complaints against the police for failure to obtain, or the improper use of, warrants, and other matters. The Official Secrets Act should be applicable only in cases of genuine national security.

It is proposed that the right of officials to enter premises without the permission of the lawful occupants be reduced to a minimum. The removal of the right of mail order houses to make any claims on the recipients of unsolicited material is also called for.

There should be a statutory embargo on the divulging, without the patient's consent, of medical information outside medical circles save criminal courts. There should be the maximum of privacy physically possible for those in all residential institutions.

Lay membership of the Press Council should be extended to include a majority of members, and a Broadcasting Council should be established on similar lines.