

NARROW DEFEAT FOR SUNDAY ENTERTAINMENTS BILL

'PRESENT LAW A COMPLETE MESS'—JOHN PARKER

An attempt in the House of Commons by John Parker, MP (Lab., Dagenham), to bring in a Bill to amend the law relating to public entertainment on Sunday, was defeated last week by three votes. Mr Parker reminded the House that similar Bills had passed through Committee on three occasions—in 1967 through the House of Lords, and in 1968 and 1969 through the House of Commons. In 1969, 60 hours and 19 sittings were spent on the Bill. It failed to become law because of filibustering activities by Sabbatarian opponents. He was now seeking the views of the House in which there is over 150 new Members, largely of the younger generation. The Bill was a limited one; it did not deal with Sunday trading, nor would it apply to Scotland and Northern Ireland. Ron Lewis, MP (Lab., Carlisle), opposed the Bill, saying that if more children went to Sunday school there might be fewer people appearing in courts. Significantly, a substantial number of those who voted against the Bill represented constituencies in Scotland and Northern Ireland, where churchgoing, drunkenness and crimes of violence are higher than in other parts of the United Kingdom.

Behind Public Opinion

Mr Parker said that the House of Commons is behind public opinion on this matter. The latest Gallup Poll of adults showed that 64 per cent of people in England, and 62 per cent in Wales, are in favour of reform. Of those between the age of 16 and 24, no less than 82 per cent were in favour.

Mr Parker continued: "The case for the Bill is that the present law is a complete mess. It is based very largely on the 1780 Act, with various exceptions for concerts and, in many areas of the country, for cinemas. The 1780 Act is enforced sporadically and sometimes abused, being got round through subterfuges of one kind or another".

It is illegal to pay for entry to an entertainment on Sunday, but the law is got round in many ways, and by reputable organisations. County cricket has been saved by Sunday play; this has been made possible by charging for programmes and parking instead of charging for admission.

Supported by Sporting Organisations

The proposed change in the law is backed by all the major sports organisations, including the Football Association, the Football League, the British Amateur Athletics Board, the MCC, the Rugby League Authorities, the RAC and many other bodies. Rugby Union games are now being played on Sundays.

Mr Parker said that public performances in theatres on Sunday were illegal. "Many people think it rather ridiculous that we can see a live play on television on a Sunday but cannot see it in a theatre. But theatre clubs can be created, and members can there see a live performance on Sundays."

No one was proposing that theatres should be open seven days a week. Those theatres which were open on Sunday would be closed on Monday or another day of the week. Young actors and actresses embarking on their careers are in favour of the change; so are stalwarts like Dame

Sybil Thorndike who believe that in the interests of the theatre it should be possible to give performances on Sunday, when an audience is more likely to be available.

Mr Parker recognised that fear of excessive noise, particularly in the vicinity of football grounds, had been an obstacle to reform. But he drew attention to the Clause drawn up by the Home Office which would enable people to lodge objections if there was a great deal of noise, and local authorities would regulate Sunday activities.

It is most unlikely that first-class football would be played by the same club on both Saturday and Sunday. Local circumstances would determine whether it would be played on Saturday or Sunday in any area.

Sabbatarian Pressure Group

Mr Parker denied that the Bill was in any sense anti-religious. "It is backed by leaders of most of the responsible religious organisations, which dislike the present hypocritical position. They feel that the present law brings law enforcement into disrepute and that it is much better to alter it and bring it into line with popular feeling than to have subterfuges to get round it.

"The only serious opposition comes from a fanatical Sabbatarian organisation, which is very well-organised and is one of the best pressure groups in the House, the Lord's Day Observance Society and its friends. Its members have every right to whatever views they like on how to spend their Sunday, but no right to force their views on the rest of us who do not agree with them."

"Defend Sunday Against Further Secularisation"

Opposition to the Bill came from Ron Lewis whose speech consisted largely of ill-informed guff of the standard expected from an evangelical lay preacher, rather than an MP. He was anxious to assure the House that he was not a spokesman for the Lord's Day Observance Society or

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THE FLAME THAT NEVER DIES: CENTENARY OF THE PARIS COMMUNE

ELIZABETH COLLINS

On the evening of 18 March, 1871, Jean-Francois Brunel, a young French officer of the National Guard, hoisted a red flag on the belfry of the Hotel de Ville and thus launched the Paris Commune upon the pages of history. The grim events of that fateful day and of the last week in May take on the aspect of a Greek tragedy. Scenes of confusion and intense ferocity had taken place and it had been obvious that few of the National Guard could be considered loyal to the Government. Excited crowds filled the streets shouting for the Commune and exulting in what they imagined was a new freedom.

For too long France had suffered under rulers intent on extending their own power in pursuit of "la Gloire" supported by corrupt and extravagant Courts. Previous revolutions had taught them nothing, and Louis-Napoleon had been one of the most inept. He had entered upon military adventures that had alienated the rest of Europe and in his latest unnecessary war with Prussia he had brought final tragedy to France. An ill-equipped army, badly led, outnumbered, out-gunned, and out-maneuvred resulted in ignominious defeat and the harshest peace settlement ever inflicted on a proud nation. A further humiliation was the triumphal march of victorious Prussian troops through the main streets of Paris, the shame of which caused citizens to scrub the streets with Condry's Fluid after their departure as a symbol of effacement.

The Assembly, with Thiers at its head, newly elected to carry out the armistice and treaty obligations, had blundered at the start. It had passed two measures not calculated to stem revolutionary feeling building up in the city and the Red Clubs. The Moratorium on debts and rents was to cease forthwith—debts had to be paid within 48 hours, and rents to be paid on landlords' demand—and the 1.50 francs a day paid to the National Guard was to cease. To a city which had endured a painful siege with business at a standstill these were punitive decrees. To the workers of Paris it was enough. Their plight could hardly be worse. Baron Haussmann, Prefect of the Seine, declared that half the people of Paris lived in poverty bordering on destitution, and the Goncourts vividly described the horrors of what life was like for many Parisians behind the glittering facade of the Second Empire.

Paris Alerted

Thiers, no lover of the proletariat, failed to assess the mood of the people when, in the early hours of 18 March, troops of the regular army were sent to seize the guns on Montmartre which were in the custody of the National Guard, shot and seriously wounded the sentry on duty, and refused the request of Dr Georges Clemenceau (mayor) to allow the man's removal to hospital. In face of a hostile crowd gathering, the commanding officer ordered his men to fire on the mob and to use their bayonets. Quickly men of the Montmartre Vigilance Commune went into action. The tocsin sounded and soon all Paris was alerted. Clemenceau related that the people appeared to be seized with a kind of savage fury and under the stress of some primeval emotion.

Next day it became apparent that the revolutionaries were in charge of Paris, and seeing that they could no longer rely upon the loyalty of the National Guard, Thiers

and his Government speedily withdrew to Versailles determined to organise the regular army in order to recapture the rebel city. Events had taken the Commune Central Comité by surprise with no plans prepared for the contingency, but they immediately established themselves in the Hotel de Ville as the official Government of Paris.

All over the city huge posters proclaimed their aims—to consolidate the Republic and establish the authority of the Commune—to control expenditure, expropriate Crown property, education to be free and *secular*, and ending thus, "the proclamation of 18 March, inaugurates a new political era; experimental, positive, scientific, the end of a governmental-clerical world of militarism, monopolism, and privileges to which the proletariat owes its servitude and the nation its miseries and disasters". Noble words.

Solidarity

In London solidarity with the Commune was expressed at meetings organised by the London Patriotic Society at Clerkenwell Green and sympathetic mass meetings were held in Hyde Park. It was to be a short-lived experiment however; the leaders of the Commune were not a united body and they tended to look back to 1793 for guidance. Karl Marx warned them not to begin the past over again but to build the future. He had written to the two Internationalist members, Varlin and Frankel, "the Commune seems to lose too much time in trifling affairs and personal quarrels". And time was not on their side.

Thiers had assembled an army by early May and was preparing to march on the city, and the Comité Central had made little preparation for such an emergency. Clemenceau and his fellow mayors tried to negotiate with Thiers when the situation was becoming desperate but he refused to listen to anyone speaking on behalf of the Communards. It was suggested that Charles Bradlaugh, amongst others, should act as a mediator, but Thiers was determined on the destruction of the "rebels", so when on 21 May his troops entered the city through an unguarded sector at Point du Jour the week of blood began—the slaughter of Frenchmen by Frenchmen. The barricades were up and men and women Communards, fighting with desperate courage, defended their city street by street. Soon many quarters were burning, some set alight by enemy shells, others by citizens as a defence measure. For a week the bloodshed continued. Many Communard prisoners captured were shot outright, other marched off wounded and in rags to Versailles for "trial" and transportation—often arbitrarily shot on the way as it pleased General Gallifet.

Massacre at Pere Lachaise

Mass shootings took place in all the parks, gardens and railway stations; the climax was reached on Whitsunday, 28 May, when 147 Communards were lined up against a wall in Pere Lachaise cemetery and shot. Each year that wall, the Mur de Federes, is still a place of pilgrimage on 28 May. The repression of the Commune with its indiscriminate shooting of prisoners caused a revulsion of horror throughout Europe. John Stuart Mill addressed a protest meeting in London, and on 29 May *The Times* condemned "the inhuman law of revenge under which the Versailles troops have been bayonetting, ripping up prisoners, women

and children, during the last six days . . . so far as we can recollect there has been nothing like it in history. The blood shed in these few days exceeded the executions of the Reign of Terror”.

As in all revolutions, the rebels committed crimes, but compared with those of their opponents they were minimal. During their short time in power their achievements were small. They had abolished night work in bakeries and were planning the secularisation of schools when the blow fell, but historically they made a profound impact upon the world and left an unfading image. Many of its famous leaders, Delescluze, Varlin and others died at the barricades or were executed by Thiers “legal expiatory” forces.

In 1964 when a three-man team of Soviet astronauts went into space they took with them a ribbon off a Communist flag. But perhaps in this centenary year it is fitting to recall the tribute paid by Auguste Renoir, the great French Impressionist painter. Of the Commune he said, “they were madmen, but they had in them the little flame that never dies”.

(Continued from front page)

any body of Church opinion. Spokesman or no, Mr Lewis spoke in terms that would have pleased the members of that pious body. He said a campaign had been going on, particularly in the Press, and no doubt those who opposed the Bill would be branded as killjoys. “But we should be prepared to defend Sunday against further secularisation and commercialisation from a patriotic sense of duty as the trustees of posterity.”

Mr Lewis then issued this dread warning: “If by our actions we pass on to the next generation a de-Christianised Sunday, they will pass on a de-Christianised Britain. It will be easier for us and them to defend Sunday with religion behind it than it will be for our children to defend religion without Sunday on which to practise it.

“The Church, which seeks to retain Sunday, is composed of people and not merely institutions run by parsons, important though they are. I am not, in my opposition to the Bill, simply advocating that people should go to church on Sunday, though if more did and if more children went to Sunday school we might have fewer people in the courts.”

Moral Issues

Mr Lewis went on to say that John Parker’s Bill raised certain moral issues. “For example, a nation which seeks to neglect its Sabbath responsibilities of rest and worship for commercial ventures is travelling along the road to seeming disaster.

“In the last few years we have seen an extension of what is now known as the permissive society. A great many people in these islands, irrespective of politics, religion and creed, are becoming restive about moral values and standards. Like me, they believe that an extension of Sunday entertainments would not help us in any way.”

Time for Reform

The battle for the reform and rationalisation of Britain’s Sunday Observance laws will eventually be won. As Mr Parker pointed out in the Commons, many reputable sporting and cultural organisations already get round the law. The British Tourist Authority favours a full range of

entertainments and activities on Sunday. And even with our daft Sunday laws, we live in what informed and realistic Christians describe as the post-Christian era.

Mr Lewis’ concern about “passing on a de-Christianised Britain” has come late in the day. There is little reason to believe that future generations will wish to revive or defend Christianity, but if they do, it will be necessary to raise stronger defences than obsolete Sunday Observance laws. No one will prevent them practising their religion on Sunday or any day of the week. It is narrow, intolerant Sabbatarians who seek to prevent other Christians, other religionists and unbelievers, spending Sunday in any way they choose.

Ron Lewis, MP, may not be from the Lord’s Day Observance Society stable, but his arguments have a curiously similar odour to that which emanates from the headquarters of those who defend “our Lord and His Day”.

FPA DIRECTOR

Caspar Brook, whose review of *Parents and Family Planning* is on page 86, has been director of the Family Planning Association since January, 1968.

He was publications editor of the *Economist Intelligence Unit* for five years, and director of the Consumers’ Association during its early crucial years. He founded the International Organisation of Consumers’ Groups. Mr Brook was also a part-time consultant to the Advisory Centre for Education and the National Extension College.

He is married to Dinah Brook, formerly education correspondent of the *Observer*, and they have two children.

DEFENDING ACADEMIC FREEDOM

A group of Oxford dons will meet at Balliol College on Monday evening to set up a branch of the Council for Academic Freedom and Democracy. They claim that during the last two years academic freedom has been threatened. Security firms have been employed in universities, and attempts have been made to recruit political informers.

Christopher Hill, the Master of Balliol, is one of the sponsors of the new organisation.

CHURCH AND STATE IN EIRE

Jack Lynch, Prime Minister of Eire, recently made a statement during a television interview that would have cost him his seat in the Dial only a few years ago. He was being questioned about possible changes in Eire’s Constitution to reassure “the black North” that the Roman Catholic would not rule the roost in the South.

He was prepared to abandon the Article which gives the RC Church a privileged position, and his attitude to some social questions was unusually liberal. While making it clear that he did not approve of divorce, Lynch went on to say that it was not the business of the State to legislate for private morality.

The winds of change have reached even holy Ireland!

FREETHINKER

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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 and Co. Ltd. at the following rates: 12 months, £2.55; 6 months, £1.30; 3 months, 65p; 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.

EVENTS

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

Leicester Secular Society, Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, Leicester, Sunday, 14 March, 6.30 p.m. Alex Hancock: "Student Unrest—Cause and Cure".

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1, Sunday, 14 March, 11 a.m. John Lewis: "Levi-Strauss and Structuralism". Tuesday, 16 March, 7 p.m. Tony Evora: "Man Between East and West—a Personal Experience".

CRISIS

The postal strike has ended, and whatever the rights and wrongs of the dispute may be, it has caused much harm to voluntary organisations and publications like the *Freethinker*. Our postal subscribers will be receiving six issues at the same time, and overseas readers will be subjected to even greater delays.

Few postal subscriptions or donations to the *Freethinker* fund have been received since mid-January, and we urgently appeal to readers to help at this difficult time. Please send your postal subscription when it becomes due (a reminder will be enclosed). The *Freethinker* fund helps to meet the annual deficit.

Since it was founded nearly 90 years ago, the *Freethinker* has encouraged readers to participate and make their views known through the "Letters" column. During the last six weeks it has been almost impossible to receive letters from readers outside the London area, but now that postal services have been restored we look forward to getting your views on current affairs and *Freethinker* contents.

There have been many problems and difficulties to overcome, and we warmly thank those readers, contributors and the printers for their unstinting support during the crisis.

NEWS

GOD AND DR BROWNE

Policemen who harass people of unconventional appearance, racist immigration officers and head teachers obsessed with their pupils' hair styles have been joined by some Midland doctors in their arrogant, high-handed behaviour. Three weeks ago one of them told a 21-year-old patient to make other arrangements because he had long hair. A week later, a factory worker who was being treated for ear trouble was subjected to a tirade for being on strike. (He very sensibly complained to the appropriate authorities.) But perhaps the worst example of such behaviour was that of Dr Robert Browne, who informed the parents of a 16-year-old patient that she had been put on the Pill by the Brook Advisory Centre. Dr Browne is reported to have said: "Enough time should be taken to convince these people that it was not God's will for them to have intercourse before marriage".

Dr Browne did not reveal how he came to know God's will in the matter. But "these people", to whom he referred, are young unmarrieds who seek reliable contraceptive advice. And in doing so they are acting far more responsibly than the God whom Dr Browne presumably believes is the creator of all—including the unwanted babies of unmarried girls.

If there is such a thing as sin, the real sinners of this world are those who refuse to face facts of life—particularly if these are going to result in the unplanned creation of life. One of the basic facts is that people in their teens and early twenties are at the peak of sexual energy. Often, for social, economic and educational reasons they are unable to marry, but this does not, and should not, prevent them finding an outlook for their sexual drive. If they are heterosexual, it is vital that reliable precautions are taken to prevent the birth of unwanted children. Organisations like the Family Planning Association and the Brook Advisory Centre are qualified to give advice and supply contraceptive requirements. Doctors, priests and others who hamper their work are being anti-social and irresponsible.

Ideally, a 16-year-old girl who wishes to go on the Pill or be fitted with a contraceptive, should be able to discuss the question with her mother, or both her parents. But this is not an ideal world. A mother may be a wonderful person and truly her daughter's best friend. This does not mean she is able to discuss her daughter's sexual life with a modicum of sense or rationality. Moreover, there are bad mothers. And when a girl is unfortunate enough to have a bad mother she is doubly handicapped if society insists that her mother is her best friend, when she knows from bitter experience that this is not so for her.

In either case, if the girl is determined to have sexual relations she will not be deterred, and it is better that she obtains outside, expert advice, and goes on the Pill or is fitted with a suitable contraceptive.

The Brook Centre has been operating in Birmingham for five years and has treated over 8,000 people. Its staff includes 23 doctors, 10 State registered nurses and 19 social workers. A large proportion of those who seek advice have a sexual relationship with a regular partner.

Mrs Helen Brook, founder of the 13 centres throughout the country, said she hoped this case would not stop girls coming for advice. "Only a fraction of the country's doctors would act in the way Dr Browne did", she said last

AND NOTES

PUBLICATIONS

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weekend. Mrs Helene Grahame, information officer of the Family Planning Association, said that girls who attended clinics "were demonstrating their responsibility in seeking professional advice, and it was important that their confidence should be maintained".

Dr Browne was found not guilty of serious professional misconduct by the General Medical Council's disciplinary committee. We can only echo Mrs Brook's hope that the case will not prevent girls seeking contraceptive advice at Brook Centres and similar institutions. Boys and girls of 16 are allowed by law to indulge in sexual intercourse, and they should be allowed to make reliable, confidential contraceptive arrangements.

Christian doctrines have caused millions to suffer from feelings of guilt, and sexual neuroses. Christian people and organisations fought tooth and nail against family planning clinics for the married. Those who endeavoured to show that planned families would improve the quality of family life, health and sexual experience, were harassed, smeared and persecuted. Even today in Spain, Italy, Eire and other Catholic countries, the advertising of birth control facilities is forbidden or frowned on.

Perhaps God does not approve of the Brook Advice Centres. On the other hand perhaps he does; but it is hardly likely that he would favour Dr Browne with a personal statement.

N.B. Jesus is recorded as not telling his mother what he was up to when he was 12!

SUPREME COURT CONSIDERS BIRTH CONTROL LAW

After hearing arguments in favour of quashing a law which make it a criminal offence to advertise birth control information, Italy's Supreme Court has announced that its decision will be made known in a month. Luigi de Marchi, secretary of the Italian Association for Demographic Education, has been charged with opening a birth control clinic in Rome two years ago. Virgilio Bertinelli, a former Minister of Administrative Reform, has been charged with distributing a University of Chicago book, *Conscious Procreation*. The law under which they have been charged was passed during the Mussolini era when bride and groom gave the Fascist salute and promised "12 children for the Fatherland".

The law does not forbid the sale of contraceptives; it is their advertisement and dissemination that is illegal. It was argued before the Court that this was unfair to the poor and ignorant, and was largely responsible for Italy's soaring abortion rate. It is officially estimated that a million abortions are carried out annually, and some health officials claim that 30,000 women die every year having abortions.

Signor de Marchi was convicted in 1965 for making a speech in which he explained the consequences of the population explosion. His wife is well known to Rome's slum dwellers. She has made more than 10,000 home visits to hand out contraceptives. After the publication of Pope Paul's encyclical, *Humane Vitae*, she replied with a book entitled *Inhuman Lives*, exposing the conditions under which Italy's poor live.

BOOKS

PARENTS AND FAMILY PLANNING SERVICES

by Anne Cartwright. Routledge and Kegan Paul, £3

The usefulness of this elegant, monumental and unusually practical major work of down-to-earth social research is that it confirms the birth controllers' views of some of the shortcomings of Britain's birth control provision. Basically these six are very clearly identified. One: there are not enough General Practitioners willing and specifically trained to give satisfactory help with family planning. Two: specialist family planning clinic facilities are inadequate (too few places, insufficient and inconvenient opening hours, too much waiting). Three: there are almost no birth control services in hospitals. Four: there is at present a heavy emphasis on "medical" contraceptive methods requiring the intervention of doctors. Five: there is virtually complete failure, especially by specialist family planning clinics to follow up the so-called patients. Six: there is lack of effective factual information especially about unwanted effects of the Pill.

A more apparent than real shortcoming of the survey, to use Dr Cartwright's own words, is that ". . . the study does not of course give a complete picture of current contraceptive practice . . ." In the main, the work is based on a sample of nearly 2,000 mothers of several children. Statisticians will probably find the sample a sophisticated one because, to quote Dr Cartwright again, it enables the survey to be "somewhat biased towards parents who will have, although they do not already have, large families, and therefore toward those who have not used effective contraception". As Dr Cartwright points out, this bias helps to show the "limitations of existing services", but unfortunately I have to point out that notwithstanding her claim that she shows possible ways of overcoming them, she merely states the obvious tactical remedies and then only by implication.

My impression after working in the FPA over three years is that what she says of the shortcomings of family planning services for her sample of mothers can be assumed to hold true also of other sexually active people. Very likely, however, the views of young people who have not set out to produce a family, would have made Dr Cartwright state the limitations of present family planning services much more sharply still.

Almost every one of the book's nearly 300 pages contains evidence to support the specific arguments for more and better family planning services which those committed to family planning have been advocating for years. The book thus is a gold mine for publicists in favour of family planning. Here are only a few examples of the nuggets: A third of pregnancies (in the sample were unplanned; a third of the sample of mothers, most of them under 30, already had more children than they had planned when they got married; a third of the General Practitioners in the survey were "too busy" to discuss family planning; nearly half (44 per cent) of the General Practitioners thought they ought to be better informed about contraception; although the majority of health visitors thought that giving advice about family planning was part of their work, they tackled fewer than one in seven of the sample of mothers about it; only about a fifth of the mothers in the sample were on the Pill, but many more had tried it and abandoned it.

FREETHINKER

Unfortunately, Dr Cartwright has not answered the question she poses in the blurb on the dust jacket of this work: "How can family planning services be organised to reduce unwanted pregnancies?" We know what needs to be done—what services there should be. And Dr Cartwright dots the i's and crosses the t's for us here. But what we really want to know is what organisational arrangements would provide the obviously needed services.

Anyone worried by our great capacity and recklessness as a society for producing vast numbers of unwanted pregnancies should read this important and impressive report to have his or her worst fears confirmed and, hopefully, will be inspired to find practical ways out.

CASPAR BROOK

NEW FABIAN ESSAYS

Edited by Richard Crossman. Dent, £1.75.

The British Labour Party never shows any particular interest in socialist theory, except when it is out of office, and some would argue not even then. This collection of essays, originally published in 1952 and now re-issued with a new introduction by Richard Crossman, is therefore not to be taken as a major influence on Labour's policy-making in the 1950s, still less on the party's performance in power; but is nonetheless well worth reading as a guide to the preoccupations of this distinguished group of Labour intellectuals, half of whom achieved cabinet rank under Harold Wilson.

If you are an unrepentant hard-line socialist, then your particular bogeyman may well be Anthony Crosland. His contribution anticipates his later *The Future of Socialism* in providing, under neatly-numbered headings, an extensive critique of traditional Left-wing beliefs such as nationalisation, and demonstrating just why these will no longer do. In contrast to the Marxist obsession with class conflict, Crosland rightly maintains that the object of socialism is to eradicate class divisions and create a sense of common interest and equality; and, again quite rightly, he sees that this age-old goal is not be secured by the mere extension of traditional policies of nationalisation, heavy taxation of income, or even providing more and more "free" public services. I doubt myself whether Crosland's emphasis on the redistribution of wealth (as opposed to income) is likely to work miracles, since there is abundant evidence that, by and large, people do not compare their lot and that of the very wealthy and thereby feel hard done by; and the result of Sweden's comparatively light wealth tax has been to induce a flight of capital from the country without doing anything to improve the distribution of wealth. Still, the Labour party in power is sufficiently stolid to reject instinctively such radical notions which, however attractive they may seem in theory, are too remote from the lives of ordinary people to improve their sense of well-being.

It is distressing that none of the essayists really come to grips with the implications of the very considerable shift in power to organised labour that has occurred since the

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war, and thus fail to deal with the threat of inflation and the damage to social stability that this causes. One must beware of reading today's outstanding problems back into the politics of the early 1950s, yet it was not for nothing that the Attlee Government of 1945-50 imposed the first of many "wage squeezes" that have dominated British economic policy since the war; nor have the essayists appreciated the long-term importance of the Keynesian white paper on full employment policy of 1944 which expressly drew attention to the dangers of inflation. Thus Ian Mikardo, in his contribution, *Trade Unions in a Full Employment Economy*, barely mentions the problem of wages policy and confines himself to a worthy, but dull, advocacy of greater internal democracy and ways and means of improving branch attendances. That great, unanswered question once asked of the unions by George Woodcock—"What are we here for?"—gets nary a mention.

It would be quite wrong, however, to continue this review with a catalogue of grumbles and not to applaud the admirable essay by Richard Crossman, *Towards a Philosophy of Socialism*. Nonetheless, it is refreshing to read what is true, that the Labour party—precisely as a result of making social democracy work and thus improving the lot of the common man—"is in danger of becoming not the party of change, but the defender of the post-war status quo". Now to say this sort of thing in the Labour party is likely to bring obloquy from both Left and Right of the party; from the Left, as such a realistic and critical view of the party's role and function throws a lot of depressingly cold water on all their cherished myths that what is needed is simply a revival of traditional socialist zeal and an evangelising leadership (thus burking all the hard problems of policy in the 1970s); and from the Right, since talk of the fundamental purpose of the party just interferes with the job of running Britain a little bit better than the Tories can. It therefore requires courage to make Crossman's criticisms of the Labour party, particularly when one is at the centre of Labour politics—as Crossman was then and remained until the last election.

To go on, as he does, to question a whole series of unspoken socialist assumptions indicates, in a paradoxical kind of way, the health of British socialism. For against the anti-rational emotionalism of the present-day Marxists, the Fabian tradition has always stood for a reasoned approach to politics which acknowledges that circumstances, and the policies required to meet them, change. Continually to invoke the State to deal with social ills leads, as Crossman frankly recognises, to "exploitation, injustice and inequality", thus jeopardising freedom; yet how rarely do prominent Left-wing socialists heed this brutal fact. It is, then, the task of a modern socialist movement to civilise the inherently corrupt, and corrupting, social institutions which the Labour party has itself created. Crossman calls for a "critical humanism" which is to "sceptical, but not cynical; detached, but not neutral; rational, but not dogmatically rationalist", and the role of the Labour movement is to express this humane radicalism and preserve freedom.

What all this might mean in terms of actual policy is discussed by Roy Jenkins in another splendid contribution, simply titled *Equality*. For Jenkins, where there is no egalitarianism there is no socialism; but "equality" is not to be interpreted as restricting liberty. So there must be a

limit to the State's taxation of individuals, as to take too much of people's money from them is to take away their freedom to live their own lives—a point seldom appreciated by the fervent interventionists who overlook that equality means the equality of individuals in their regard for each other, not just the equality of their post-tax incomes. More positively, Jenkins argues for capital taxation and a more decentralised form of public ownership to spread the distribution of wealth and power more evenly. And yet, despite the undoubted vigour of this essay, one remains unconvinced; it is not just the familiar spectacle of the politicians' actions falling short of their words (no one reading Jenkins' contribution to this book could fail to contrast its lively radicalism with the wholly unimaginative performance of the Labour Government in all those spheres discussed by essayists). It is rather that politicians are perennially in danger of cutting themselves off from ordinary people. A Government which was seen to stand up at least occasionally for the public rather than (say) bail out Rolls-Royce on public money, or wring its hands at rampaging wage inflation which directly hits the least organised and thus most defenceless sections of the community, would do much to remove the "credibility gap" between government and governed. That this is now a major problem of our time shows, I suppose, how far the traditional concerns of the Labour movement, as reflected in this book, are now obsolescent.

PHILIP HINCHLIFF

CINEMA

10 RILLINGTON PLACE

Columbia Cinema, Shaftesbury Avenue, London, W1.

This is the horror film to beat all horror films. Even if one did not have the continual nagging awareness that the ghastly story of ghoulishness and tortured innocence that one is witnessing is a true story, this would still be one of the most successful horror films ever made. Hitchcock's *Psycho* has nothing on this, save perhaps an unrealistic excess of blood.

But, of course, *10 Rillington Place* is much more than a horror film. It is also a study of what the law can do to an innocent man, guiltless save for a lack of intelligence and savoir faire. Evans' childlike innocence and Christie's furtive conniving guilt are brought out in crystal contrast. The lies, the scheming and his many murders weigh lightly on Christie. Mere bewilderment and lack of comprehension cause Evans to suffer horribly. The criminal character and the unquestioning conforming character are laid open with amazing dexterity. It is because Richard Attenborough as Christie and John Hurt as Evans both give such unblemished character studies, that they complement each other in such a striking way. Their success is all the more remarkable when one considers that it can be no fun to play these two real-life characters. Attenborough in particular gains one's immense admiration. Somehow, he has managed to live the life of the sad, twisted monster Christie. This a supreme feat, surely worthy of an Oscar or some similar tribute.

Photography, set design and direction by Richard Fletcher combine magnificently to portray the dingy life of

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LETTERS

Book List

I regret it was not possible for me to produce a winter list of secondhand freethought books, but hope that list 16 will be available in June. Meanwhile, requests for specific books which I may have in stock will be welcome.

KIT MOUAT.

Incest

The National Secular Society's evidence to the Home Office Departmental Committee on adoption refers to "genetic relationships" that might "endanger the children" of incestuous marriages between brother and sister. Is there in fact any evidence of genetic danger to children of such marriages?

In 1969, two members of a British Humanist Association study group on marriage and the family (of which I was a convenor) took up the question of incest, and we looked for evidence on this point. We didn't find any; we had not made an exhaustive search, but it looked to me as if we were not going to find any. I urged the study group to drop the matter since we had enough controversial things to say, and the incest taboo was a relatively harmless one. If any of your readers know of any evidence for genetic harm to offspring of brother-sister matings (human or other), or of any theoretical reason for expecting such harm, I would be glad to hear of it. I am not talking about inbreeding in small populations; I am talking about incest. If there is any genetic harm here, maybe we should look into cousin matings, too.

If no one can find the evidence I ask for, my suspicion will be confirmed that the alleged genetic dangers of brother-sister matings are on old wives' tale. I trust the NSS would wish to modify its evidence to the Home Office Departmental Committee accordingly.

In any case it is hardly likely that the *origins* of the incest taboo had anything to do with genetics—unless we attribute to palaeolithic man an expertise in statistical research methods matched by few of our contemporaries. There must be some other reason for this taboo. I suspect the taboo may play an important part in the social development of young people in that it impells them to form social contacts outside the family circle. Perhaps marriages between adoptive brothers and sisters (which the NSS has urged the Home Office to permit) are not such a good idea after all. Whether they should be illegal is another question again, of course.

CONNAIRE KENSIT.

A Destructive Book

I feel it necessary for someone to counter Bob Broeder's assessment of *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex*. Having only recently read Maurice Hill's and Michael Lloyd-Jones' gentle, sensitive onslaught on sex education books, I was perhaps turned off more forcibly than would otherwise be the case by David Reuben's little *chef d'oeuvre*.

The first surprise came when I read his reference to Kuru (a viral disease of the central nervous system quite similar to Multiple Sclerosis, occurring solely in New Guinea) as an affliction of Chinese gentlemen wherein the penis loses itself in layers of oriental fat; worthy of a guffaw but perhaps no more. But might this poetic licence encroach further on the central topics of the book? Well, folks, on page 77 it is revealed to us that "one of (marijuana's) most powerful effects is sexual arousal"—a statement that informed people will no doubt consider worthy of a casual lift of the left eyebrow; to be swiftly followed by the right one when we are told that, in effect, LSD turns people into sex maniacs.

These minor points caused me to reconsider what I had previously considered to be an excellent book. Looking at the chapter on homosexuality, there are two major aspects that I would criticise, and which make me agree with the members of the Gay Liberation Front who protested against the book. Firstly, a patronising attitude pervades the whole chapter, although under the slick chatty style of writing it is easy to miss the fact that homosexuals are throughout considered as inferior, to be pitied, and no reference is made to the undeniable fact that we all have the seeds of bisexuality within us. Second, several scare stories are included, of traumatic encounters with sado-masochists, of sordid public lavatory liaisons, and the statement that stable homosexual relationships are very rare; a whole chapter that might have been designed to screw up an adolescent feeling with homosexual feelings. Yet Mr Boeder wants to use it in sixth forms!

The whole book, in fact, relates to the concept of narrowly defined "healthy norms"; "... if a man or woman who is sexually intact chooses oral sex instead of genital sex, there may be an emotional problem . . ."; no statement—just the hint to make you feel insecure. The so-called aberrations, and in fact the whole sphere of human sexuality, is approached with a jovial manner

which on closer examination reveals something very like the schoolboy mentality we are all trying to negate. On the merits of the Indian vasectomy campaign, Dr Reuben has this to say: "Regrettably most of the advantage is an illusion, since one well-motivated Indian with his vas intact can fertilise up to 365 (or more) women each year . . ." The wily wog up to his tricks again, eh, Carruthers?

This book's underlying attitude is destructive; a retrogression in avant-garde clothing.

DAMIEN DOWNING.

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the inhabitants of the horribly dingy 10 Rillington Place. Here again we find excellence and one's verdict of a brilliant and remarkable film is given without qualification.

The film does however, give rise to one or two questions. Despite its success as what it is, one cannot but wonder whether its treatment of the topic, namely to tell the story straight, without comment and with emphasis on the characters and activities of Christie and Evans, will create as much public awareness of the truth, the fallibility of the British legal system, as another approach would have done.

The topic could have been approached as the murder of the Greek politician, Lambrakis was approached in the film "Z". There all who were to blame were shown up and identified ruthlessly, and one came away thoroughly shocked at the corruption of the Greek regime, rather than just feeling sorry for its victims. Admittedly the system is more to blame than individuals in the Evans case, but nevertheless one would like to have seen in more detail how Evans was treated by the police, what attitude his barrister had towards him, how the judges behaved towards him. That a large part of the audience actually laughed when the bodies of Christie's victims were revealed some years after Evans had been hanged, indicated to me that they had come for and got their Saturday night dose of horror and failed to appreciate that the horror was caused as much by the legal system to which they are all subject as by the ghoul Christie. And Christie was shown only in his ghoulish form. One would like to have seen why he became a psychopath.

A little of Christie's childhood and earlier years, plus a more rigorous examination of the failure of justice would have made this in itself brilliant film, into a film of considerable social significance without sacrificing its commercial viability. But perhaps it did after all work better than I have suggested. A middle-aged impeccably groomed gentleman turned to me in the foyer afterwards: "How dare they play *God Save the Queen* after that?"

DAVID REYNOLDS

DEMOLITION

Many London buildings with freethought associations have been demolished since the war to make way for roads and yet more office blocks. The latest to go is the Scala Theatre in Charlotte Street, off Tottenham Court Road. It was in this theatre that the public rally was held during the International Congress of the World Union of Freethinkers in 1938. Chapman Cohen was in the chair, and the speakers included Lancelot Hogben, G. D. H. Cole and John Langdon-Davies.

In his opening speech, Cohen referred to the campaign of vilification and slander which had been stirred up (mainly by Roman Catholics) against the Congress. Cardinal Hinsley was muckraker-in-chief. He tried to get the Congress banned but Sir Samuel Hoare had to inform him with (genuine) regret that he was unable to oblige.