

CARDINAL HEENAN WARNS IRISH IMMIGRANTS

'ENGLAND IS A POST-CHRISTIAN NATION'

The Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster crossed the Irish Sea last weekend for what was a mainly private visit. His only public engagement was preaching a sermon in the Pro-Cathedral, Dublin, on Sunday, in which he praised the contribution of Irish Catholics to the Catholic Church in Britain, and the millions of Irish Catholics "... who for a century and more have been carrying the living water of the faith throughout the world. The Catholic faith in England is largely the legacy of Irish immigrants". Often they had to face prejudice, hostility and even hatred, and though this is not so today, Cardinal Heenan saw a new disadvantage for the immigrant who arrives in Britain. "The problem for the modern immigrant is that there are no enemies left—nobody to remind him that the faith matters even enough to hate it. Few people are members of any Church. England is a post-Christian nation; a land of former believers", he declared.

Indifferent to Religion

Cardinal Heenan claimed that the English have not rejected Christianity—it is only that religion is no longer regarded as important. The "no-Irish-need-apply" attitude which existed at the turn of the century was a thing of the past, and newcomers to England would be welcomed with courtesy and friendliness. This was excellent, but Cardinal Heenan said there was also a drawback about the outlook of the English: "These decent friendly people practise no religion. If they were unattractive and licentious they would be no danger. The Irish would say, 'see what these people have become through deserting religion'". The English are not immoral; what once we called immoral we now call permissive. The chief hazard for the immigrant is that words are used to disguise rather than disclose reality.

He spoke of the need for Irish Centres in Britain where emigrants can "keep in touch with each other and preserve the truths of faith. There is no national group which has been half so faithful to the old religion as the Irish. Far more English Catholics lapse after leaving our Catholic schools than Irish coming to Ireland".

A Different Picture

David Tribe, president of the National Secular Society, said in a Press release that there are some interesting observations and admissions in the sermon which are in conflict with the impression given by Cardinal Heenan and his co-religionists in England. "Here we are told that Britain is a Christian country strongly in favour of supporting denominational schools, religion in county schools and religious broadcasting. Well known Catholic converts (novelists, for instance) are cited as indicating a renaissance of papalism among formerly misguided Protestants and benighted atheists, and attention is drawn to the spontaneous outburst of decent English people against the horrors of the permissive society—sin, sex, drugs, divorce, abortion and other minority excesses too awful to name—

foisted on an innocent nation by commercial interests and humanist pressure groups. Cardinal Heenan admits that "... the decadent English actually like the permissive society, and the organised backlash against it is in effect a priest-supervised campaign by people of 'Irish stock'".

Cardinal Heenan admitted that the English are not immoral, but suggested that their morality derives from humbugging euphemism. Mr Tribe says there is much truth in the cardinal's allegation about the misuse of words.

"But 'morality' is a word whose reality is itself relative, and if the English are indeed friendly and decent it doesn't matter a rap if their private behaviour flouts every article in the Catholic catechism. What these genial, tolerant people must do is to see that repressive and intolerant views, whether or not they are sweetened with Irish blarney, do not gain ascendancy by default", Mr Tribe concluded.

Nominal Catholics

A few years ago Irish priests thundered against those who left their homeland for the work and decent living standards obtainable elsewhere. Better the frugal comfort of the mud-walled cabin and the security of the faith, than the pleasures and bright lights of foreign cities, they argued. The greatest danger facing those who left home was the temptation to forget their religious duties. And if you *must* emigrate, then go to the United States, Canada, New Zealand or Australia—anywhere, in fact, but pagan England. But they have been coming to England in their thousands, and although Cardinal Heenan's praise for their work on behalf of the Church is well deserved, it is known that large numbers of Irish immigrants are, after a few years, more likely to be practising contraception than Catholicism, and sending their children to State schools in preference to those controlled by the Church. Thousands of nominal Catholics never set foot inside a church except when they return to Ireland for a holiday.

MARIE STOPES AND THE MOTHERS' CLINIC

MARGARET McILROY

Fifty years ago, on 17 March, 1921, there was opened, in Marlborough Road, Islington, the first birth control clinic in the British Empire. (The world's first was in Holland.)

Dr Marie Stopes (1880-1958)—a doctor of philosophy, not of medicine—was not the least remarkable of the pioneer birth controllers. She was almost unique among them in being deeply religious, suffering from a painful sense of sin, and presenting her family planning doctrine as "a message from God".

Her first marriage was dissolved on the grounds of non-consummation. Her unhappy experience set her thinking about the need for harmony in marital relations, and in 1918 she published a book, *Married Love*, which "aimed to teach a man and a woman how to understand each other's sexual problems". In this side of her work she seems to have been most truly a pioneer. Sexologists and psychologists had in the previous decades occasionally suggested in learned works that sexual problems could interfere with mental health but Marie Stopes was the first person to suggest not only that married women might actually enjoy sex without indecency, but actually to give a few hints on how enjoyment could be sought. She soon realised that sexual adjustment was likely to be impaired by the fear of unwanted pregnancies, and quickly wrote a short book on birth control methods, *Wise Parenthood*, to satisfy the many readers of *Married Love* who had written to her for birth control advice.

Thus she differed from her predecessors in the movement, who approached the question from the angle of an attack on the poverty caused by large families and the physical strain on mothers, or from stress on the economic dangers of over-population.

The Hazards of Childbirth

Her other major achievement, full of significance for the future, was, of course, the opening of an actual clinic. In the England of 1921 an alert and well educated woman could probably gain access to written birth control information without too much difficulty, but many women must have found these written instructions far from easy to follow, and a cap needs to be the right size. Upper and middle class women could consult a doctor, but the women who most desperately needed help were the very poor and the least likely to be able to pay a doctor, or even to find a sympathetic one. They would have found it very difficult and the least likely to cope with complicated written instructions. Dr Marie Stopes' Mothers' Clinic gave free advice to just such women, and was soon crowded out.

Where Marie Stopes had led others soon followed. Only eight months later the Malthusian League opened the second clinic in London, and shortly afterwards the Society for the Provision of Birth Control Clinics—later merged into the Family Planning Association—was opening clinics up and down the country.

The Work Continues

The Marie Stopes Memorial Foundation still operates as an independent body, and has been in the forefront of modern developments in family planning. In 1963 it provided a grant for setting up the Brook Advisory Centre, to

give advice on contraception and other sexual matters to young unmarried people. This was at a time when the FPA was still refusing to accept unmarried clients.

The Foundation also financed one of the first research domiciliary family planning projects which have shown the way in which contraception can be brought to the hard core of women whose social or mental handicaps make it impossible to reach them by ordinary means.



Marie Stopes; two years after the Marlborough Road clinic was opened.

The 50 years since Marie Stopes opened her first clinic have been years of immense progress. Then a woman could be calmly told by a doctor that to have another baby would kill her, and be sent away with no contraceptive device or given special care for the birth which did kill her precisely as prophesied. Such callousness is inconceivable today. Proper gynaecological care has developed alongside contraception, partly because birth control clinics pioneered in this field too, partly because coming forward in smaller numbers mothers and babies are regarded as precious—not superfluous. How far we have come from the days when a policeman had to be in attendance at the clinic to prevent religious fanatics from breaking the clinic windows. Even that, however, was a great advance on the days of Bradlaugh and Besant, when one could not have dreamed of a policeman being made available for such a purpose. Perhaps 50 years from now people will find it inconceivable that an unwanted child should be born, not merely in Britain, but anywhere in the world.

THE BREAKDOWN OF GREAT BRITAIN

PHILIP HINCHLIFF

Professor Leopold Kohr delivered the 52nd Conway Memorial Lecture at Conway Hall, London, last October. It was entitled *The Breakdown of Great Britain*, and South Place Ethical Society have published the text.

Despite his apocalyptic title, Professor Kohr does not deal with the collapse of Britain—in his own words, he is “against bigness, not England”. It just so happens that his lecture was delivered in this country. Britain offends, not by being Britain, but by being a *big* country; and it is Professor Kohr’s contention that a whole variety of ills—war, poverty, unemployment, student revolt, pollution, crime, over-population and the rest—can be attributed to a single factor: excessive size. The large, highly organised, collectivist nations of the world, such as the United States, Britain and the European Common Market countries, are simply too large to cope. They should be dismembered into a host of small, autonomous, competitive units and thus achieve the sort of stability and well-being that apparently characterises small states such as Liechtenstein,

What this lecture is all about, we are told, is “a new interpretation of history”. Modestly comparing his own work with that of Marx, Professor Kohr puts forward as the principal motive force in historical change the “increase in the size of society”, by which he means not just a growth in numbers but a steady increase in the degree of complexity and organisation of society. Where Marx went wrong was to attribute this role of historical “first cause” to *the change in the mode of production*—from the pastoral to the agricultural, from the agricultural to the manufacturing, from this to the advanced automated technology that now looms in front of us. This change in the mode of production cannot, however, be the primary determinant of social development, for what in turn explains the tendency of the mode of production itself to change, and apparently unaccountably, in each epoch? For Professor Kohr, it is *the changing size of society* that now becomes the fundamental explanation of historical development; and it is precisely the size and scale of society that we have to curtail to save the human race from nuclear catastrophe which Professor Kohr sees as inevitable if the “big” societies stay big.

Changes in Social Organisation

Now clearly this argument cannot be dismissed out of hand. A good case can indeed be made for the notion that it was the change in the size of society, suddenly brought about by an unprecedented increase in the population, that triggered off the industrial revolution in England in the middle of the 18th century. There is no innate reason to suppose that people suddenly became more inventive at that time than they had been before; but as the traditional methods of agricultural production, particularly, could no longer satisfy the needs of the rapidly growing population, there was an immediate incentive to meet these needs by the wave of technological innovation that first launched and then sustained the industrial revolution. And clearly the consequent urbanisation of the working population, and the vast changes in social organisation that resulted, led inevitably to an enormous increase in centralised government. We see exactly these same pressures operating today, overwhelmingly so in the case of cities such as New York and Tokyo.

But the trouble with all “first cause” arguments is that they tend to ignore, or deny, the complexity of the real world. As with Aquinas’ famous “first cause” argument for the existence of God, to say that “excessive size” (or God) “causes” everything is to fail to account for all those features of the world that cannot be attributed to the first cause. Thus it is quite absurd to maintain, as Professor Kohr does, that student revolt is merely a function of excessive university size; if this is so, then why do large establishments like University College, London, go their peaceful academic ways when equally large colleges like the London School of Economics periodically breaks out into rebellion? And why, even in the LSE, is revolt spasmodic and not permanent—the place, after all, gets bigger and more congested each year. And what about the composition of the student body—social science students are much more likely to be politically radical than the physicists and mathematicians of a science-based college. And what about precipitating causes of student unrest, such as Vietnam? The world is too complex to be squeezed into one single theory, however plausible.

To progress to more important matters. Is it really the case that small states tend to live peacefully with each other whereas big states do not? Professor Kohr is too intelligent a man seriously to maintain this proposition, so he rightly points out that the bigger states tend to wage “big” wars, in the sense that their armaments are much vaster and more destructive. Modern war is potentially *totally* destructive; medieval wars were not. But of course the crucial difference is not the size of the respective states, but the misapplication of modern science. Since Professor Kohr does not maintain that his utopia of small states will be characterised by any decline in general living standards or the rate of scientific progress—indeed, quite the reverse—it is not obvious that “balkanising” the nuclear giants will contribute anything to solving this problem. Texas could have hydrogen bombs just as easily as the US now does. And Professor Kohr’s entire perspective on world affairs is bent. What matters today is not so much the cautious nuclear stalemate between the big powers, but the danger of widespread nuclear dissemination. When both Israel and Egypt have the H-bomb, this will indeed put the whole theory to the acid test—though many of us would prefer the present situation, even with all its perils, to that.

The Need to Limit Population

It would be unfair to caricature this pamphlet, so let me conclude this somewhat critical article by agreeing with Professor Kohr’s main point that excessive size is indeed a major problem of our present society. But it is important to be clear about the exact nature of the problem. In so far as the enormous, and growing, social problems of environmental pollution, crime, congestion, and so forth, can be attributed to over-large and over-complex social organisation, their *root* cause must be clearly labelled as over-population. Professor Kohr frowns on this and draws a distinction between *numerical* over-population, which he will have none of, and what he calls *velocity* over-population, which he erratically identifies as the speed of movement in complex societies—tell that to the frustrated

(Continued on page 95)

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. Mepham, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey. Telephone: 642-8796.

Leicester Secular Society, Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, Leicester, Sunday, 21 March, 6.30 p.m. Avro Manhattan: "Geniuses I Have Known".

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1, Sunday, 21 March, 11 a.m. Naomi Lewis: "Is Queen Victoria Dead". Tuesday, 23 March, 7 p.m. David Stephens: "Race Relations, British Culture and Enoch Powell".

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NEWS

ULSTER

The murder of three young British soldiers in Northern Ireland last week was an appalling outrage. It is bad enough when Irish people kill each other, but when British soldiers, sent to keep religious fanatics from each other's throats, are killed because of their involvement in the situation, it is a tragedy of more than usual magnitude.

Questions have already been asked about the policy of sending boys scarcely out of school to what the mother of one of the victims described as "that hell in Belfast". (Indeed, the wisdom of sending a Scottish regiment to Ulster is to be questioned. In Catholic quarters there has always been strong resentment against the Scottish because of the behaviour of hordes of Orangemen from Glasgow and elsewhere who travel to Ulster for Orange demonstrations.) There have been demands from Unionist politicians for the rearming of the police. These demands have been wisely ignored by Whitehall. Ulster Unionist MPs are not greatly endowed with good sense. One of their main qualifications for adoption as a candidate is that they are persona grata in Orange lodges. Consequently a large majority of those who were sent to Stormont during the last 50 years have been mediocrities who, in Britain, would have found it difficult to get themselves elected to the post of village dog-catcher. And the Royal Ulster Constabulary is widely regarded as a partisan, discredited body. The B Specials, now generally admitted to have been the Orange Order in uniform, has been disbanded, but their outlook is still widespread. It is not just the IRA that has been responsible for violence and thuggery in Northern Ireland.

Eventually representatives of Whitehall and the two parts of Ireland will have to meet and work out a formula for the unification of the country. If the Ulster Unionists are unwilling to participate they will have to be left out.

Time and again we have failed to settle the Irish question through giving way to the Protestant minority in the North. The last opportunity to do so was in 1921, but instead partition was imposed against the will of the majority of Irish people. In 1971 it is being maintained against the will of both the Irish and British people.

Ulster Protestants have always been willing to accept the benefits of union with Britain—but on their terms. Reforms which had been implemented in this country a generation ago had to be imposed on them. There is no doubt that discrimination against Catholics took place with the knowledge and approval of Stormont. When the trouble eventually came, Britain sent troops to Ulster, and Ulster replied by sending the Rev Ian Paisley to Westminster. Ulster people living in Britain were laughed at when they said Paisley enjoyed wide support. No one laughed when he was elected to both the Ulster and British parliaments. And, whatever Paisley himself might say, he was not elected with God's help but with the votes of electors who will, if he so wishes, make him the prime minister of Northern Ireland within five years if the farce of partition is not ended.

Like most organisations of its kind, the IRA depends on the support of ordinary people, and its various wings undoubtedly have the support of Catholics who regard the Republican gunmen as their only defence against the police and Protestant mobs. When such a mob invaded a Catholic district and burned scores of houses, the only streets which were safe were those which were defended

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by the IRA. The unification of the country, with an all-Ireland army and police force imposing law and order impartially, would remove the fears of those who now look to the IRA for protection.

It is often argued that if Britain withdraws from the Irish scene there will be civil war. This is possible, but by no means inevitable. In the past, Orangemen (who, together with their supporters constitute the majority of Ulster Protestants) have been ready to throw their weight around because they could rely on the support of the B Specials, the RUC and, in the last resort, Britain. In a united Ireland they would be cut down to size, and that may induce them to act realistically and keep the peace. It is time the Ulster Protestants were told in unmistakable terms that the Britain with which they desire union died with Queen Victoria.

FACTS OF LIFE

Following the furore over the Birmingham doctor who informed the parents of a 16-year-old patient that she had been put on the Pill by the Brook Advisory Centre comes a report of a similar case in Stafford. On this occasion the doctor (a Roman Catholic) drove to a 17-year-old girl's home and told her parents she was on the Pill. The girl left home because of "family distress" after her secret had been revealed. The Birmingham Brook Advisory Centre announced last week that because of the publicity resulting from the first case, they had a record number of patients and bookings.

On 31 March, Mrs Sally Oppenheim, MP (Con., Gloucester), will ask that leave be given to introduce a Bill in the House of Commons to amend the Family Law Reform Act, 1969, to give discretion to doctors to consult the parents of minors under the age of 18 before giving medical treatment. At present the Family Law Reform Act fixes the age at 16 at which young people can make a decision regarding their own treatment.

The Birth Control Campaign, a newly-formed pressure group set up to campaign nationally and locally for comprehensive birth control provision under the National Health Service, claims that the main intention of this amendment is to make it impossible for a girl under 18 to be given a medical prescription for a contraceptive without the knowledge of her parents.

The BCC points out that the continuing rise in the number of pregnancies in young teenage girls emphasises the need for preventive measures. The number of illegitimate births among girls of 16 and 17 was 7,800 in 1969. The number of abortions notified the same year for the age group of 16-19 was 8,924. In 1968, about 40 per cent of 16 and 17-year-old brides had babies within eight months of marriage.

The BCC is appealing to all those who agree that the amendment to the Family Law Reform Act would be harmful to the confidentiality of the doctor-patient relationship to write to their MPs (at the House of Commons, London, SW1), asking them to be present on 31 March, and to vote against Mrs Oppenheim's attempt to introduce her Bill. It would be damaging, they say, if the fear of disclosure deterred young people from seeking medical advice on contraception and run the risk of pregnancy.

We hope that *Freethinker* readers will immediately respond to this appeal. It would be quite disastrous if,

because of the fear of a breach of confidentiality, young girls found themselves pregnant. Other young people may hesitate about going to a VD clinic if they felt, rightly or wrongly, their parents may be informed if they have to receive treatment for venereal disease. And it could be a matter of life and death for the children of Jehovah's Witnesses who have not attained the age of 18.

Readers who wish to know more about the Birth Control Campaign should write to 233 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 9AE.

NSS DINNER

Lord Brockway and John Parker, MP, have been forced to cancel their acceptance of an invitation to speak at the National Secular Society's annual dinner in London on 27 March. They will be out of the country.

Tom Ponsonby, general secretary of the Fabian Society, will now propose the toast to the guest of honour, Dame Margaret Cole. Avril Fox, founder of Cosmo, and indefatigable opponent of censorship will propose a toast to the NSS.

The postal strike delayed many applications for tickets, but the demand has speeded up during the last week. But there are still plenty of tickets available, and *Freethinker* readers should endeavour to attend what is one of the movement's best social events. Full details are in the display advertisement on page 92.

DESMOND ALBROW

During the time I was secretary of the National Secular Society, and even more since becoming editor of the *Freethinker*, it has been my practice to read a wide range of religious journals. It's always useful to know what the enemy is up to! But I regretted the news in last week's *Catholic Herald* that Desmond Albrow is giving up the editorship after what he describes as "four-and-a-half fairly tough years".

Whatever one may feel about the religious Press it must be admitted that under Albrow's editorship the *Catholic Herald* has become one of the most interesting of the weeklies. Its contents are often infuriating (to Catholics most of all judging by the correspondence columns) but always of a high standard, the layout is streets ahead of the other religious weeklies, and the paper a veritable mine of information.

Mr Albrow has been appointed to an executive post on a national Sunday newspaper.

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BOOKS

THE END OF A ROAD

by John M. Allegro. Macgibbon and Kee.

Although *The End of A Road* is described by its author as "a companion volume to *The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross*", its outlook and much of its argument may be accepted by those who (like myself) regard as trendy and perverse the mushroom-and-drugs theory of the preceding book. Regrettably, Mr Allegro regurgitates that theory without any apparent sign that he has even noted, let alone accepted, the very substantial criticisms levelled at *The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross*: like the Bourbons, he seems to have forgotten nothing and learnt nothing.

For the rest, *The End of A Road* contains much common sense and many telling points, although it lacks the originality that marked the earlier book. He rightly points to the absurdity of the Gospel Jesus as a moral guide in the modern world and to the divisiveness wrought in his name (pp 46, 75-6, 101-2). All too often leaders invoke religion to sanctify their crimes or justify their policies, however disastrous or inhuman. It is scarcely surprising that the blatantly inconsistent Christ of the Gospels becomes all things to all men: "an extraordinary feature of Christianity has been the ability of people of so many different outlooks to interpret the man Jesus in terms of their own heroic mythology". Moreover, religious sanctions and doctrines are increasingly irrelevant—when they are not harmful—in the modern world; the rigid, short-sighted application of general principles and religious "certainties" by sincere and idealistic men has often wrought so much human misery (p 82). Because religions are hubristic enough to lay exclusive claim to the truth, it is scarcely surprising that supernaturalism in particular has been such a prominent enemy of human progress, however limited or imperfect that may be.

Whereas religions tend to concentrate on the salvation of the individual "soul" in a supposed hereafter, secularism resurrects our responsibility to our fellow men in the here and now and to future generations in this world. "The hope the secularist offers is not the self-surrender of puny man to the divine caprice, but the possibility that by his foresight of events and appreciation of the nature of the forces at work in the universe, man can forestall the catastrophe that threatens him" (p 95). The state of balance commended by the ancient nature philosophers and by Mr Allegro might be said to correspond to the state of grace in the Christian mythology. Certainly a sense of balance, of rationality, of moderation pervades Mr Allegro's book, and this makes it a more satisfying, if less challenging and sensationalist work than *The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross*.

Mr Allegro regards Communism as another religion which—like the others—enslaves those it claims to liberate, providing its own mythology, its own dogma, its own priesthood and its own inquisition no less pernicious than those it has supplanted. It may well be—though Mr Allegro does not devote enough attention to this important question—that man requires some form of illusion, myth or superstition in order to justify his existence to himself, in order to live. The search for perfection and salvation, whether it finds expression in art, in religious or political ideology and action, certainly seems to indicate the abiding significance of myth for humanity. But if we need myths in order to live, they need not be religious or specifically

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Christian: we can accept them as myths, not as dogmas, literal truths or the word of God; they do not have to be forced upon others at the point of a sword or with the threat of eternal damnation, or perpetuated by indoctrination made possible by enormous privilege, social and economic. If we need myths in order to live, by the same token we should always feel free to discard myths that have outlived their usefulness: this a religionist is unable or unwilling to do. Moreover, human progress is made possible by our ability to doubt and to free ourselves (however transiently) from superstition.

Mr Allegro asks: "Can a society whose efficient administration depends largely upon conformity afford to be composed of people thinking for themselves?" Inasmuch as a society presupposes at least *some degree* of conformity, the role of freethinker has always been a hazardous and sometimes a lonely one: but he at least has made the evolution of society possible. Today, this perennial problem is heightened by ever more sophisticated and deadly threats to our freedom, security and existence as individuals and as a species in an increasingly complex, technological world. Insofar as freethought cherishes human diversity and tolerance allied to a love of truth (which is many-sided and universalist), it is more likely to prevent armed conflict than any church or any religion, whose divisiveness, as Allegro says (p 183), "the world of the twentieth century cannot afford".

MARTIN PAGE

PUBLIC LENDING RIGHT

Edited by Richard Findlater. Andre Deutsch, £1.50.

If you want to make some money, don't try authorship. A writer of a book is very seldom paid a sum you could call rewarding in proportion to the time and labour spent. This is true whether the book is fiction or fact, that is, political controversy. It is true, too, in spite of the changes brought by paper-backs to the book trade. For if a Penguin does sell 30,000 copies at 25p each, you will receive only £375 from a 5 per cent royalty. Out of this amount, you will have paid a typist, not to mention other expenses. And you will have to wait for years before those 30,000 copies are sold at home and abroad.

It is these figures—and others even less cheerful—that have led to the demand for legal recognition of a public lending right (PLR). The proposal is this: public libraries would pay the author (or his publisher) an amount calculated from the number of times his book was borrowed every year. The case relies on the argument that no reader should enjoy the writer's product without paying him a nominal sum such as one penny.

On the face of it the case for PLR looks sound enough; and it is made persuasively by the eleven short articles in this book. The Government is now known to be giving serious consideration to the proposal. But it would be unwise for any author to celebrate in anticipation of benefit to come. PLR has in fact been under discussion for years by all involved in producing and selling or buying books.

REVIEWS

By far the largest buyers of books are librarians and they are by no means all in favour of PLR. Their objection turns on the vital question who will pay the cost. Not readers, we hope, because public libraries are free and must remain so. If writers are to be paid by the public libraries, it is all too probable that the amounts paid will come out of the present budgets, which are already scrutinised by borough treasurers, and then fewer books will be bought. In addition, there is the administrative expense of keeping records. An alternative plan is to put a special charge on all books sold (usually through suppliers) to the libraries. These books might be bound in a special recognisable cloth.

Some of our best librarians dislike the whole idea of PLR, and not because they are immovably conservative. W. R. Maidment, for example, is director of libraries in Camden, which is London's most progressive borough, with many writers living in Hampstead. He argues (not in this book) that the creation of a new legal right is not justified by the admitted fact that many authors are poorly paid. Their struggle is a matter for the Society of Authors, already in effect a trade union with some influence. Mr Maidment also points out that it is the popular, well-known writers, already well rewarded, who will benefit most from PLR, not the struggling unknown ones.

Everyone agrees that books are different from food or clothes or any other commodity sold at a profit. This is recognised by exemption from selective employment tax and from the law against resale price maintenance. Yet the book trade is languishing, apart from the educational books produced for schools and colleges. The production of creative literature faces such mounting problems in our acquisitive society that it remains very doubtful if PLR can by itself do much to solve them.

JOHN GILD

ART

ART IN REVOLUTION: SOVIET ART AND DESIGN SINCE 1917. Hayward Gallery, London, until 18 April.

No exhibition of totalitarian art is complete without some demonstration of blatant censorship. In the Arts Council catalogue there is a sinister slip of paper stating that "it has been found necessary to omit some items from the exhibition". What this means is that due to the insistence of the Soviet Ministry of Culture a number of exhibits, including all the catalogued works of Malevich and everything abstract by Lissitzky, have been removed from the exhibition.

Aside from this irritating meddling it is an excellent exhibition. The gallery is divided into different sections, one devoted to architecture, another to posters, another to stage design and so on, with one room showing film documentaries of the revolution itself. What the exhibition really represents is the approved philosophy of design initially termed "productivism" and later "constructivism". The aims, like those of the Bauhaus, are fundamentally utilitarian and mechanistic—to build things that

One of the most impressive sections is that given to stage design. If the sets I've seen in recent London plays are anything to go by, modern stage designers might learn a lot from such highly imaginative settings as those by Varvara Stepanova for *Tarelkin's Death*. The posters and the Agit Prop exhibits convincingly evoke the magnitude of the enthusiasm which followed the revolution. In fact the wave of intense mass creativity which swept Russia immediately after 1917 is evident right through the exhibition. Much of the typography, the book-production, Tatlin's and Rodchenko's furniture and some of the architecture still seems strikingly fresh. But in the architectural section the whole truth is clearer and sadder. Some of the early designs are very exciting, for example the Vesnin brothers' project for the Leningrad Pravda building. Tatlin's 1920 design for a monument to the Third Internationale is a beautiful embodiment of "productivist" concepts and is represented by drawings and a bright red wooden replica which is very impressive against a background of cranes on the National Theatre site. But the later architecture, enormous, solid and drably heroic is reflective of little but stagnation and a new totalitarian establishment.

It is an exhibition of Soviet *art* and design but since the banishment of Malevich from the exhibition the paintings are almost non-existent—merely a handful of second rate academic portraits and a landscape.

Painting is generally a very personal business. Revolution is quite the opposite and the two are demonstrably difficult to reconcile. Productivist art is the art of machines not of the individual. Vertov in his 1922 manifesto on film, *We*, declares; "One has to be ashamed in front of machines at man's inability to behave . . . The gaiety of dancing saws is more comprehensible to us, and closer to us, than human caperings". This is the point at which you sympathise or you do not.

Whatever your political leanings, the exhibition is to be highly recommended as a well organised demonstration of how a big idea can be expressed visually and of how art, or design at least, can be linked with politics. The exhibition is further enriched by the current season of soviet films of the same period at the National Film Theatre.

LOUIS MACKAY

THE BREAKDOWN OF GREAT BRITAIN

(Continued from page 91)

motorist in the London traffic jam! But "velocity" overpopulation is plainly caused by the vain attempt to satisfy the aspirations of too many people all at once; not everyone can drive down to the West Country on a beautiful summer's day, because the A.30 just will not hold all those cars. The answer, in the short run, is to preserve what is left of our environment from the ravages of "progress", and in the long run to limit the population of this country, which left unchecked will be 80 million or more by the year 2,000. The world population is expected to reach 6,000 million by this date, and nothing short of massive world action by the "big" powers can prevent it. Organisation as such is ethically neutral; what matters is the use to which it is put. It is this simple point that Professor Kohr's highly readable and provocative pamphlet overlooks.

LIBERATION FOR WHOM AND FROM WHAT?

KIT MOUAT

In the *Sun* of 12 December, 1968, the television critic Nancy Banks Smith wrote: "... you are not going to like this—and I don't care whether you like it or not—but I find being a woman in our society absolutely unendurable". Nancy Banks Smith at least avoids the problems of being a declared atheist (and we can both be grateful that we aren't black), but it was because I knew exactly what she meant that I joined the Women's Liberation Workshop more than a year ago. I have had moments of disappointment with what seemed an unnecessary lack of organisation since then, and a couple of Liberationists I met were a bit alarming with their obviously negative reasons for joining the movement, but a fortnight ago all my hopes were confirmed.

A snowstorm was blowing when I left Sussex in the morning, and I never got to Speakers' Corner where the Women's Liberation demonstration began. But outside the National Gallery I joined in the cheerful, straggling march, which made its way at a good pace down Northumberland Avenue. One banner read: "One in 17 Apprentices and One in 4 at Universities"; another proclaimed, "Abortion is Contraception Three Months too Late"; a third asked, "Who is St John-Stevas Anyway?" I decided to follow "Women in the Media", for this is a subject that would keep me warm in the Arctic. Or rather, *Why so Few Women in our Media?* I suppose I am nauseated twice as many times every week by the radio and television attitude to women as I am by their treatment of Secular Humanists, and that's quite a lot of nausea.

Four Basic Points

How many were there there? Well, it depends on which of the media you believe. The BBC said 3,000; the *Observer* 2,500; and the *Sunday Times* 1,000. "Have a mint", said a woman behind me. "Slow down, you bastards . . .", yelled a helpful male behind her. "We're losing the tail . . ." Somebody handed in a petition to Downing Street, and the march continued: "*What do we want? Liberation! When do we want it? Now!*" the demonstrators chanted.

I asked a policewoman walking beside me what she thought about it all. But she didn't hear me. I asked her again, but she was still, and probably very wisely, deaf. In Trafalgar Square the crowds sorted themselves out in an orderly, peaceful fashion; men and women of all types, colour and age. Prams, babies, thermos flasks; the usual routine, but there was nothing ordinary about the speeches. I doubt if the pigeons have ever heard anything like it.

"Sometimes we have fought with men", said the first speaker, "as we did when we won the right to strike. Sometimes we have had to fight against them; as when we won the vote . . ." The four basic points were then declared in a clear voice that must have been heard in St Martin's Church. (1) Equal pay now, (2) Equal education and job opportunities, (3) Free contraception and abortion on demand, (4) Free 24-hour nurseries.

Inevitably, the bespectacled man of God appeared to spread that old tall story of Jesus: "God has a plan for every individual life. We read "... When a woman accepts this total plan—by committing her entire being to Jesus

Christ—she finds both liberty and security, independence and dependence, blessing and sacrifice, certainty and mystery, protection and responsibility, etc., etc. . . . He tackled two (obviously atheist) women who argued (and handed the leaflet back). No women were daring to suggest that the liberation of our sex can be deduced from any Christian Testaments! But nor were there any *Free-thinkers* on sale. As usual I despaired of all those opportunities I have seen slipping away over the last 10 years for humanists to influence society through (and thereby help) women.

A young man greeted a young woman in front of me. "Hallo!" he said. "Long time no see?" said she. "Yep", he replied, and then raising his arm at somebody in the distance, grinned and shouted "Mum!", and disappeared. The statistics of women's *lack* of liberation are impressive. If you don't know them, then in the name of Hypatia get hold of them. I'm no fan of John Lennon (apart from his music) but when he was reported in today's *Observer* (7 March) as saying, "... I'm always interested to know how people who claim to be radical treat women", I'm with him all the way.

WLM Mean Business

A street mime and dance was going on in one corner, demonstrating the Ages of Women from "Thank Heaven for Little Girls" through "I'm so Pretty . . ." to the thankless and far from pretty kitchen sink. The music was drowned by some Maoist's shouting: "Class war not Sex war!" At the foot of Nelson's Column a woman was reading what sounded like some good poetry, but by now I was freezing. I went into Lyons for some coffee. "Do you know what all that demo, was about?" one of the elegant penguin-men in the hall was asking. "Do you want to know?" He did, so I told him. "Jolly good", was his reply. So long as that is a majority opinion among the privileged male minority of this country, well and good. But if not, we need not mind quite so much now. As the speakers said, "This is only the beginning . . ."

As for the spectator in Army uniform who is reported as saying, "They need shooting . . .", when he saw the women marching, I suppose there is bound to be lots of male nostalgia and bitching before men realise that (as the speakers made absolutely clear) WOMEN'S LIBERATION MEANS PEOPLE'S LIBERATION . . . and "people" means men and women, from now on—never mind their race, colour, class or anything else. If you would like to know more about the Women's Liberation Movement write to 27 Albany Mansions, Albert Bridge Road, London, SW11.

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