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# FREE THINKER

The Secular  
Humanist Weekly

Registered at the Post Office as a Newspaper

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

VOLUME 91, No. 40

Saturday, 2 October, 1971

3p

## CHURCH LEADERS CRITICISE COUNCIL'S FREE CONTRACEPTIVES SCHEME

Plans by the London Borough of Islington to provide free contraceptive advice and supplies for married and unmarried residents over 16 have been warmly welcomed in family planning circles. The Family Planning Association Central London branch has its headquarters in the borough, and Edith Butler Madden, branch administrator said: "That this, in the long term, will result in savings for the ratepayers is of importance, but much more important is the saving in human misery and the enhancement of the quality of family life and human happiness. It is the right of every child to be a wanted child and the health committee is leading the way to making this a very real possibility in Islington". The Islington health committee is also trying to reverse a Government ruling which prevents local councils from paying for male sterilisation. Local authorities have no powers at present to provide, or make payment to voluntary organisations which carry out this service.

### Implementing the Family Planning Act

Dilys Cossey, general secretary of the Birth Control Campaign, told the *Freethinker* that the Islington Council had given a bold lead to other local councils on this matter. She said: "The council is proposing to fully implement the 1967 Family Planning Act. In acting so quickly to fulfil the pledge it made before the election the council has demonstrated that it is taking its responsibilities seriously. It recognised contraception to be a form of preventive medicine, and that the provision of free advice and supplies will reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies and abortions".

Dr Carl Burns, Islington's director of public health, told the health committee that a free service would remove any financial deterrent and the cost would be offset by the savings which would result in the reduction of unwanted pregnancies. Commenting on the Government's refusal to allow local authorities to pay for male sterilisations, Dr Burns declared: "From a purely financial point of view this appears to be an illogical situation, since vasectomy is without doubt the least costly method of family planning. It is the bargain buy".

### Contrary to the Bible

But support for the council's imaginative scheme is by no means unanimous. The Islington Deanery Synod passed a resolution expressing its belief that "sexual intercourse outside of marriage is contrary to the clear teaching of the Bible". It regretted those factors in our society "which have caused the borough council to consider providing free contraceptives to all over 16 in the borough who desire them".

Alderman Michael Morris, Conservative leader of the opposition, told a policy committee meeting that local churchmen had asked him to make their views known before the plan was given approval. He said the clergy are expressing "considerable concern" at free contraceptives being made available to those between 16 and 18.

Alderman Morris said he did not share the churches' views, but had been requested to convey them to the committee. A local newspaper, the *Islington Gazette* carried "Sex on the Rates" headlines, which drew a rebuke from a councillor who said this description of a socially beneficial and enlightened measure was unworthy. On the credit side, the same newspaper published a forthright editorial in which it described the proposed service as practical common sense. It concluded by saying that those who objected to the service on religious or other grounds have no need to take advantage of it.

### Pioneering in Islington

The policy committee has recommended acceptance of the plan, which will almost certainly go through. By passing a resolution the Islington Deanery Synod has made the right noises, but it is unlikely to attract much support even from the Roman Catholic Church, a hitherto implacable opponent of contraception. British Catholics are increasingly coming to accept birth control when they see that abortion is the likely alternative.

Fifty years ago Marie Stopes opened the first family planning clinic in the United Kingdom at Marlborough Road, Islington. Her pioneering work was fiercely criticised by the pious, conforming prudes of the time. The clinic windows were often broken and the religious Press surpassed itself in the scurrilous attacks they made on Marie Stopes. Shortly after the clinic was opened Marie Stopes said at a public meeting that by birth control she meant "bringing into the world healthy, happy, desired babies". That has been the aim of the family planning movement from its earliest days, and it is now even more important that unwanted pregnancies are avoided.

### No Deterrent

It will be argued by some that fear of pregnancy deters young people from having sexual intercourse, and that

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## BRADLAUGH AND HIS CRITICS

DAVID TRIBE

While I appreciate Margaret Cole's tribute to the "patient work" which went into *President Charles Bradlaugh, MP*, I am naturally concerned that she should give such "a long, full and loving account" of what she regards as serious blemishes, especially as I do not believe most of her complaints are justified.

In the first place, she strongly suggests that I am so prejudiced in Bradlaugh's favour that I overlook all his defects and magnify the faults of everyone with whom he came in contact. On the contrary, I have gone to considerable pains to set out both sides of the argument in the many controversies with which he was associated and do not try to conceal "his authoritarianism and power of vituperation". Throughout the book I quote extensively without comment, but for some reason Dame Margaret chooses to believe that while I do not intend the many criticisms and libels of Bradlaugh to be taken seriously I endorse every quotation unfavourable to everyone else. It is true that I believe Bradlaugh comes pretty well out of the investigation (though I think he was too harsh in his criticism of Marx's *Address on the Civil War in France* and his dismissal of Watts over the *Fruits of Philosophy* incident) and that, whatever his faults, I find him an "attractive personality"—even if I am alone among "this generation" in my assessment. I assert, however, that if Bradlaugh appears as a "hero" in my pages it is because his actions and not my sycophancy prove him heroic. Were we to look for evidence of prejudice, I suggest we might find some in Dame Margaret's review, which seems to display strong, uncritical feelings against Bradlaugh, Victorian radicals, constitutional law and the use of notes, and for Annie Besant, the Paris Commune and linguistic conservatism. Some of these must be matters of opinion, though a reader might think from this review that they were matters of fact. As a lecturer in English language and literature and journalism, let me assure Dame Margaret that at least I understand the meaning of words and also that they can be used in an ironic "*femme fatale*" and "*Scarlet Woman*" for Annie Besant) or metaphorical ("meandering factionalism" for sinuous intrigues) sense. A purist might, by the way, find her own "now no longer" and "back history" an "extraordinary" use of English. Though my account of the *Fruits of Philosophy* (Knowlton) case is the longest of any of the many trials with which Bradlaugh was involved and the fullest account yet published, it is said to be too short, especially compared with the "dreary legal details" of the oaths question, which involved several cases. Naturally I could have extended the Knowlton trial by extensive quotation from abusive pamphlets (which are elsewhere found "least pleasurable") or from the 355-page transcript of evidence (which is, I fear, anything but "exciting"). In retrospect Bradlaugh's championing of contraception seems probably the most important social contribution he made—as I have brought out in the book and elsewhere—but freethinkers should not lightly dismiss the oaths issue as dreary. Bradlaugh himself didn't care twopence what form of words he used in courts, parliament or anywhere else, but the oath was imposed not only in a theoretical sense to make religious belief, real or assumed, the chief norm of national orthodoxy, but also to put honest freethinkers (and therefore both honesty and freethought) beyond civil rights whenever any bigot chose to apply the ancient statutes. Many Victorian agnostics who knew nothing about the law found the whole subject dreary or impolitic and ignored it; but

Bradlaugh, with his mastery of intricate detail and his fearlessness, explored and resolved it. The issues were complex and engaged Bradlaugh for five years whereas the Knowlton case was essentially straight-forward and engaged as many months. It is thus hardly fair to accuse me of imbalance. The oaths question logically tied up with atheism and republicanism as Bradlaugh presented them. If they are "no longer live issues" so much the worse for this generation! But if our obsession is to be prejudice, dreariness or contemporary irrelevance, what can we say of the early Fabians' eulogy of Stalin's Russia, their endless memoranda and their concern with such ephemera as guild socialism?

### Passion Blighted by Duty

And so to Annie Besant. Whether or not I recreate her personality is not for me to say but for the reader to decide. What I can express is my great surprise and shock at Dame Margaret's criticism of my attitude to the "passionate pilgrim". Indeed I was a little reminded of a Barbara Cartland novel, lavish in description of every "eager beautiful young woman" but regarding any account of where her beauty, and above all her eagerness, might lead as nasty and "scurrilous". In the book I give a frank and fully sympathetic (to both parties) account of what I almost called—but decided the description might sound novelettish—a Victorian love story of passion blighted by duty. I introduce Annie Besant with a long and eulogistic account of her background, make no more of her incredible vacillations than any of her own biographers has done, emphasize that she was always too busy to worry about gossip and that Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonner was likely to be prejudiced against her. But Hypatia (and Kate Watts) is, in my view, a reliable witness to fact, and when Annie reportedly proposes that the Bradlaughs and she share the one roof and, failing that, finds other men who are less reluctant, I have little doubt the reports are true. Indeed I have simply found documentation of what has long been hinted at. What the sentence of mine is which is unparallel since the seventeenth century I am fascinated to know. The photograph of Annie was, by the way, chosen by my publishers without consultation. I confess I was at first surprised that it was not from the period when she knew Bradlaugh, but I had asked that it should not be her Hulton Picture Library portrait which is usually published with Bradlaugh and I can see the argument that Annie is best remembered, and spent most of her life, as a theosophist. If I—or my publishers—had really wanted to highlight the "nastier remarks", surely we would have depicted her as a vamp. In giving full attention to the strong emotional tie between herself and Bradlaugh till his death, I nevertheless came to the conclusion, however ungallant it may be, that it meant more to her than to him.

### Complex and Complicated

In writing the life of a man who was faced simultaneously with enormously complex business, propagandist, legal and political problems—some of which have never been properly documented before, though the periodical literature I drew on was generally available—and who had the complex personal relations revealed in the Bradlaugh Collection, I was faced with enormous difficulties of con-

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# THE RISE OF THE MEDIOCRACY

BEVERLY HALSTEAD

The author argues that attitudes becoming prevalent in the universities appear to promote not a future meritocracy but rather a mediocrity. Professor Halstead, now of the University of Ife, Nigeria, was previously a reader in two departments of the natural sciences in an English provincial university. He has published some 70 scientific articles and has just completed his second book. He lectured in South Africa (1969) and was subsequently banned by the South African Government.

Some years ago there was much discussion on the prospect of the rise of the meritocracy. Following the first flush of enthusiasm, interest has waned in this matter, basically because it has not happened but more importantly because there seems now to be little likelihood of it happening. Theoretically, with the expansion of higher education, we ought to be moving towards a situation where merit rises to the top. Either something has gone wrong or there was a flaw in the original argument.

No one seems to have considered what was involved in the rapid expansion of higher education. Everyone is so concerned with the students and Amis's "more is worse" as applied to them, that the teaching staff are not considered. More's the pity, for it is among them particularly that mediocrity reigns. It is here that Amis's aphorism is applicable. There always have been, and still are, highly talented people in the universities. There are probably still the same number as there always has been, only now their proportion is much less. They can be likened to raisins in a porridge. The number is fairly static but the amount of grey porridge has expanded to such an extent that the raisins appear comparatively rare. Indeed, as time passes, it becomes progressively more difficult for the raisins to establish and maintain contact with one another!

There have been, over the last decade, a number of significant straws in the wind. Chairs and other high academic positions have been going to "Crown Princes", right-hand men and other such stooges, something unheard of in the past. A Crown Prince was, almost by definition, precluded from the succession, but not now. And let us look at some of the new incumbents. They are distinguished by their dull pedestrian contributions. They are sound men; they conform; they won't be awkward. It won't be exciting but the machinery will continue to run smoothly.

## A Dirty Word

The consequence of having such people in authority, people that stand for a quiet life, is simply that the non-conformist is seen as a menace. Indeed, such persons represents a serious threat to the system. Being individuals they tend to be loners, they are easily isolated and frequently attempts are made to crush them—happily all too often with scant success. Nonetheless, they arouse the most intense antagonisms. Their mere existence poses a threat by virtue of the comparisons that may be made between their contributions and the rest. This hardly bears thinking about. There is a very deep-seated animal instinct against the high fliers. They are bitterly resented.

So now we come to the students. Among them there are always a handful with a spark—only to be snuffed out, not fanned. Such students have something to offer a community of scholarship. But they are considered a general

nuisance, a pain in the neck. These students become disillusioned, before the end of their first term, with their sheep-like fellow students and with the status-conscious staff. They find no challenge and at the end of the first year fail the exams and depart. Some fortunately don't give up so easily.

Perhaps the most brilliant student ever to pass through our department has left with no degree. He failed—basically he was disillusioned with the attitude of the staff. He opted out deliberately.

Then we have the problem of originality. As one student said to me "originality is a dirty word in our department, we only whisper it in dark corners". The heinous crime of a recent undergraduate was to produce a thesis of such importance and originality that the results are being published in a scientific journal. It was not intended that an undergraduate thesis should comprise original research and henceforth the final year students have been explicitly instructed not to indulge in this sort of activity. Research is only for the elite, the entire academic structure would be undermined, if it leaked out that mere lowly undergraduates could do it.

Again there is a corrosive type of intimidation to which students succumb. They know they will be penalised for disagreeing with their teachers. Occasionally there is a student that is so entranced with a subject for its own sake that he falls straight into this trap. One student had the misfortune to be about 20 years ahead of the teacher and in consequence achieved poor grades in the subject, to the student's incredulity! Luckily for this particular student an outline of proposed research which he drew up resulted in the top research institute in the field (in the United States) snapping up the student concerned and providing a handsome grant on the spot. One more down the brain drain. Yet this student ended up with a poor degree and virtually no opportunity to prosecute research in this country.

## Disillusionment

For real success in the university, it is vital for a student to attend all classes religiously, to be seen to be a good student, to show a proper awe and respect for the great intellects that condescend to impart their wisdom. Work hard and have a parrot-like memory and you can obtain a First. Indeed, a prodigious swot can achieve just this, and one has just done so. With this label he can conduct research. Another good degree acquired by teacher's pet. How comforting. The rise of the mediocracy seems assured.

Yet there is a mood of disillusionment among the students. They were led to believe that in a university there would be the excitement of seeking knowledge in the company of scholars. This they do not find. They need to be reminded that at their age they are at the height of their intellectual powers. The academic staff have long passed theirs. The antagonism towards students is based on an underlying fear of being found out. What the staff do have, however, is experience—this coupled with the invigorating intellectual striving of young active probing minds can be an exciting combination. One of the most rewarding moments of my teaching career was when I gave one of my best lectures on a particular topic. It was clear, logical

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## 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, \$6.25; 6 months, \$3.13.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

The *Freethinker* is obtainable at the following addresses. London: Collets, 66 Charing Cross Road, WC2; Housmans, 5 Caledonian Road, King's Cross, N1; Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street (Angel Alley), E1; Rationalist Press Association, 88 Islington High Street, N1; Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC2; Freethinker office, 103 Borough High Street, SE1. Glasgow: Clyde Books, 292 High Street. Brighton: Unicorn Bookshop, 50 Gloucester Road (near Brighton Station).

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 5p stamp to Kit Mouat, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

## EVENTS

Ashurstwood Abbey Secular Humanism Centre (founded by Jean Straker), between East Grinstead and Forest Row, Sussex. Telephone Forest Row 2589. Meeting every Sunday, 3 p.m.

Brighton and Hove Humanist Group, Imperial Centre Hotel, First Avenue (seafront end), Hove, Sunday, 3 October, 5.30 p.m. Derek Marcus: "Humanism".

Humanist Holidays. Details of future activities from Marjorie Mephram, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey, Telephone: 01-642 8796.

Humanist Holidays. Long weekend in Holland; either four days from 21 October or three days from 22 October. Cost of flight from Southend to Amsterdam and bed and breakfast: £21 or £18. Can be arranged if 12 people apply immediately to Marjorie Mephram, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey. Telephone 01-642 8796.

Leicester Secular Society, Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate, Leicester, Sunday, 3 October, 6.30 p.m. F. J. Corina: "Have we Gone Sex Mad?"

Nottingham and Notts Humanist Group, University Adult Centre, 14 Shakespeare Street, Nottingham, Friday, 8 October, 7.30 p.m. Margaret Laws-Smith: "Personally Speaking".

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1, Sunday, 3 October, 11 a.m. Richard Clements: "The Art of Growing Old". Tuesday, 5 October, 7 p.m. Discussion: "Will Marriage Survive?"

## THE LIGHT THAT FAILED

There were varying reports on the number of people who attended the Festival of Light in London last Saturday, but whatever the figure, it will not be remembered as one of Trafalgar Square's more spectacular demonstrations. The organisers had everything in their favour. The speakers included Malcolm Muggeridge, Lord Longford and Mary Whitehouse. For weeks the religious Press and other newspapers had churned out free advance publicity. Even the weather was on the side of the righteous. Despite these advantages the Festival of Light was small beer compared to the massive demonstrations at the Aldermaston marches and against the Suez war.

The Jesus Freaks were there; so were the Salvation Army and an odd assortment of gentlemen carrying posters which warned: "The Wages of Sin is Death". One report said that the police were benign; members of the Gay Liberation Front, who were set upon by policemen and dragged to waiting vans, did not share this view.

## MUSIC AT CIVIL WEDDINGS

Every year an increasing number of brides forego the fashion parade at church and get married in a register office. Many of these offices date from the time when nothing but a church wedding was considered right and proper, and consequently many of them are cheerless rooms in inconveniently situated buildings. But as society becomes more secularised the demand grows for register offices which are not just functional but dignified and aesthetically pleasing. Many registrars really try to make the surroundings more attractive and comfortable, often without any support from the authorities.

Frank Harris, Brighton's superintendent registrar, has shown commendable initiative in aiming to make civil weddings memorable occasions for all concerned. He is now trying to arrange for music to be played during the ceremony. Only music of the highest standard would be played, but religious is excluded by law.

The idea has been acclaimed by many, including the Legal and Parliamentary Committee. Only the Registrar General is opposed; he does not want to set a precedent.

We should have thought this was a precedent worth setting. Music at civil weddings would give much pleasure and would not be an economic imposition. The Registrar General should produce a better reason for opposing the scheme or withdraw his opposition.

## MEETING

The first of a series of public meetings which the National Secular Society and the *Freethinker* are organising in London takes place next Friday evening (see display advertisement). David Tribe, former president of the NSS and now chairman of the *Freethinker*, will be the speaker, and a presentation will be made in appreciation of his services.

Meetings will be held on alternate Fridays, and a further series will be arranged early in 1972 if there is enough support and interest.

# NEWS

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# ISSUES AND NOTES

## BE PREPARED

The Boy Scouts have always been exhorted to Be Prepared. Now we understand the Mormons are being advised by their leaders in Salt Lake City to have at least one large dry room, preferably a basement, in which to store a year's supply of food and clothing. They believe the Second Coming of Christ will be preceded by pestilence, plague and earthquakes, and the chosen few will have to take precautions like the rest of us while they wait to be gathered to his bosom.

There is nothing new about forecasts of the day of doom; some Christians have even rashly announced the date. They assembled on hills and mountains to await the great event, but when the appointed hour past and the last trumpet had not sounded they returned to face the ridicule of their neighbours. But such is the gullibility of mankind that any prophecy, however daft, will be taken seriously by some people.

## SUNDAY TRADING

The absurdity of Britain's Sunday trading laws was demonstrated at Matlock Magistrates' Court last week when the magistrates dismissed a case, brought by the Derbyshire County Council, against the directors of a furnishing firm. Herbert Hardy and his sons Ivan, Stewart and Keith were accused of contravening the 1950 Shops Act by opening their furnishing establishment on Sunday—for the sale of carrots.

Customers who bought a carrot for, say, £100 were presented with a suite of furniture as a free gift. The prosecutor said this was a "palpable sham". But the defence argued that what the firm did was quite within the law: "If the law has left a gap then the public is entitled to take advantage of that gap until Parliament plugs it up"

The present laws relating to Sunday trading and entertainment are, of course, riddled with anomalies. They were passed in an age and for a society completely different to that in which we live. Many attempts have been made in Parliament by Lord Willis, William Hamling, John Parker and others to achieve the reform of Sunday laws. It was ironic that, of all the reforms promoted when the last Government was in power, efforts to bring the Sunday observance laws into line with twentieth century thought and practice were frustrated.

Gone are the happy days when Sabbatarians were able to prevent the opening of parks, museums, and cinemas on Sunday. The fulminations against Sunday travel and newspapers have been in vain. So far as trading and work are concerned Sabbatarians have posed as the protectors of the working man, even if they were little concerned about his hours and working conditions during the rest of the week. The objections to Sunday law reform are entirely religious, and reform has been prevented to a large extent by the filibustering activities of Sabbatarians at Westminster. The record of Labour and Conservative governments have been less than creditable; both left individual Members to introduce the subject via Private Members' bills and to fend for themselves.

Dodging Sunday restrictions has been a national pastime for generations. Perhaps a few more cases being brought before the courts will shame politicians out of their spinelessness on the question of reforming the laws governing Sunday trading and entertainment.

It would be interesting to know if the Derbyshire County Council decided to prosecute solely because of the defilement of the Sabbath resulting from the activities of the enterprising Hardies. Or were they forced to prosecute because of a complaint by an informer? It is certainly difficult to believe that a county council cannot find a better way to use its resources than by bringing a footling prosecution like that at Matlock.

**Dr D. J. Stewart, chairman of the Rationalist Press Association, was the Association's delegate at the meeting to form the Freethought History and Bibliography Society which took place in London on 18 September.**

THE CLARENCE, WHITEHALL, LONDON, SW1  
 (One minute from Trafalgar Square)  
 Friday, 8 October, 8 p.m.  
 A public lecture by the former President of the National Secular Society  
**DAVID TRIBE**  
**PRESIDENT**  
**CHARLES BRADLAUGH, MP**  
 A presentation will be made to Mr Tribe  
*Everyone welcome*  
 Organised by the NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

## FREE CONTRACEPTIVE SCHEME

*(Continued from front page)*

providing free contraception encourages them to go to bed together. People who believe this are overlooking the fact that the absence or ignorance of contraception never prevented indulgence in what is a perfectly natural activity. The illegitimate birth rate, the prevalence of shotgun weddings and the appalling cruelty towards the unmarried mother and her child throughout history, is strong evidence that lack of precautions is no deterrent. In these "permissive" times the unmarried girl who becomes pregnant is less likely to be turned out of her home or become socially ostracised. She is still likely, however, to be pressurised into having an abortion or making her baby available for adoption. Unless she is supported by her parents, if she keeps the child she has difficulty in finding work or accommodation, and her social life is seriously restricted.

Yet, despite the unenviable situation of the unmarried mother, a large number of illegitimate children are born every year. Any action to prevent unwanted pregnancies inside or outside of marriage, should be supported. The London Borough of Islington is to be congratulated on setting an example worthy of emulation by every council in Britain.

## BOOKS

### THE BLACK PRESENCE: A DOCUMENTARY HISTORY OF THE NEGRO IN ENGLAND, 1555-1860

by James Walvin. Orbach and Chambers, £2.95

In this book James Walvin assembles and introduces some 27 extracts from contemporary sources on the impact of negroes in this country from the arrival of the first group of African slaves in 1555 until they disappeared from view in the middle of the nineteenth century. Between eight and ten and a half million Africans were taken to the New World, and it has been estimated that Britain's involvement in this trade contributed about one-third of her economic development, and this crucially just prior to the Industrial Revolution.

Inevitably, some of the negroes came to this country. They had been popular as servants to aristocratic families under the Stuarts. But their number increased enormously during the eighteenth century when returning planters invariably brought with them a retinue of negro slaves. Gradually, as slaves ran away from, or were abandoned by their masters, a free negro community developed in London.

The existence of slaves in this country posed a problem for judges as exponents of English law. There was a conflict between the courts' growing recognition of individual liberty. This new attitude was inimical to the existence of slavery here, and the courts' natural inclination was to protect the property rights involved in the ownership of slaves. (Compare today the legal battles over the ownership of children.)

A striking example of slaves treated by the law as sub-human property was a case in 1781 (quoted by K. L. Little: "Little Negroes in Britain"). The case concerned the captain of a ship who dumped 130 slaves overboard ostensibly because he had run short of water. The case was not, as the reader might expect, a criminal one against the captain, but a civil one between the ship owners and an insurance company. The owners argued it was a justified act of jettison and that, therefore, they had a claim against the insurers. The insurers maintained the claim was fraudulent. Finding for the owners the court held that there was not even "a surmise of impropriety in the transaction".

Humanitarians, the most notable of whom was Granville Sharp, brought cases before the courts not only to help individual negroes but to try and get a general ruling that slavery could not exist in England. They came closest to this in the case (1771-72) of James Somersett, a recaptured runaway slave. A writ of *habeas corpus* to prevent Somersett being shipped back to Jamaica was contested by the owner's representatives. Lord Mansfield, the Chief Justice, realised that to find against slavery and thereby liberate 14,000 slaves was to alienate some £700,000 worth of property. This he hesitated to do, and after failing to get a settlement out of court he finally avoided the issue by merely applying the medieval law of villeinage, which prevented a lord removing a villein out of the country without the latter's consent.

By this time, however, the case had been built up in the popular imagination as "the great negro case" and, because Somersett was released, it was assumed that all slaves had been. The report of the case, printed four years later,

# FREETHINKER

incorporated this error so that it was cited especially in America for the view that slavery could not exist in law unless specifically provided for by statute.

The writings of Olaudah Equino and other free negroes gave the British an authoritative account of the condition of negroes in Africa, on the plantations and in this country. Their case was also put by humanitarians like Sharp and John Wesley who, commenting on the alleged inferiority of negroes, wrote (*pace* Professor Eysenck): "Without question (the stupidity you attribute to them) lies altogether at the door of their inhuman masters, who give them no means, no opportunity of improving their understanding . . . The inhabitants of Africa, where they have equal motives and equal means of improvement, are not inferior to the inhabitants of Europe; to some of them they are greatly superior".

In view of this it is surprising, as Dr Walvin notes, that the negroes who adopted Christianity tended to be members of the established Church rather than of nonconformist churches which might have given them more opportunity of radical awareness and of organised unrest. It is the more surprising, when an apologist for the slave trade could point out that "The Society for Propagating Christianity, composed of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of London, and many pious doctors of the established Church (derive), as masters, a yearly income from the labour of their negro slaves in the West Indies".

The humanitarian case against the slave trade was so strong that the pro-slavery lobby was forced to retaliate with tracts like the one by Richard Norris (quoted above), or with more substantial works like Edward Long's *History of Jamaica* (1774). What is significant about such writings is that, although they failed to prevent the abolition of slavery, the caricature of the negro that they presented became accepted, and in the next century was reinforced by accounts of "savages" brought back by missionaries and colonial officials. Most Englishmen had little or no contact with negroes and so the caricature offered them was accepted even by such men as David Hume and Thomas Carlyle.

Dr Walvin has done a useful service in bringing together this selection of contemporary writings and—something not always the case with documentary histories—one is made to want to read more of the documents quoted. This volume is the first of a series of documentary histories of minority groups in England under the general editorship of Professor Laurence Orbach (City University, New York). Readers of *The Black Presence* will look forward to the volumes promised on the Jews, the Irish and the poor.

CHRISTOPHER MOREY

## THE COST OF CHURCH SCHOOLS

By DAVID TRIBE

Foreword: MARGARET KNIGHT

20p (plus 3p postage)

G. W. FOOTE & Co.

103 Borough High Street, London, SE1

# REVIEWS

## ALIENATION

by Richard Schacht with an introductory essay  
by Walter Kaufmann. George Allen and Unwin, £1.75

Alienation is one of those terms that have gained a large measure of general currency, especially among people who concern themselves with the human situation and its problems, without having any clear objective matter of reference. Like "democracy" and "pornography" it means different things to different people and, as with these terms, discussions about its meaning resolve themselves largely into clashes of attitudes and feelings conducted by each participant believing that he—but not his opponents—is attempting to describe some genuine characteristics of the real world.

In this book Richard Schacht attempts the formidable task of clearing up the confusion associated with the concept "alienation". It is a task which demands a careful, critical scrutiny of the different ways influential writers have used the term. Mr Schacht brings to this task wide-ranging scholarship, a talent for analysis and a great capacity for clear exposition. Walter Kaufmann's introductory essay gives a first-rate overall survey of the field.

After an examination of the linguistic and intellectual background of the usage of the term, its etymological origin in the Latin *alienare* (to make something another's) and *alienus* (other or another), Mr Schacht looks at its usage by Hegel.

Hegel was probably the first important thinker to use the term systematically. His use stems from his notion that man has an "essential nature". He spoke about self-alienation when he wished to refer to the discordance between man's actual condition and his essential nature and alienation when the discordance he was discussing was between the individual and society.

Schacht is correct, I think, in arguing that we should not too quickly dismiss Hegel's idea of man's essential nature as a metaphysical abstraction. There are certain characteristics which are, in an important sense, part of what we mean by man, his intellectual life, his capacity to participate in social, cultural, political activities, the deprivation of which would reduce him to a non-human stature.

This idea was taken over by Marx who saw man as essentially a social being whose typical, species-activity is production. In production man achieves self-realisation. Alienation for Marx related to the separation of man from his product, its acquisition by the capitalists who, owning the means of production, can tell the workers what and when to produce. "Alienation" he wrote, "is apparent not only in the fact that my means of life belong to *someone else* . . . but also that . . . an *inhuman power* rules over everything". This "inhuman power" refers to the laws of capitalist production, the pressures of the market economy which deprive the workers of control of their product. This general alienation of men from their product leads to an alienation of men from one another. He saw capitalist society as severing "all the species-bonds of man", and establishing in their place "egoism and selfish need", dissolving the human world into "a world of atomistic, antagonistic individuals". The overthrow of capitalism he saw as the basis for a truly human society. "The positive supersession of *private property*", he wrote "is the positive supersession of all alienation".

This is the young Marx speaking mainly through his *Economic and Political Manuscripts* of 1844, revealing a passionate, humanistic aspect of his character, so different from the picture of Marx depicted in the *Open Society* by Sir Karl Popper, a Marx who was a socialist only because he thought socialism was the scientifically ascertainable next stage in social development.

Schacht then turns to an examination of modern usages of "alienation" considering first those of the psycho-analytically orientated writers, Erich Fromm and Karen Horney, following this with the more general sociological literature and concluding with a discussion of the usages in existential philosophy and theology. The general effect may be summed up in Schacht's comments both on Erich Fromm's usage and the usage in general sociological literature. Of Fromm he writes that he has "a tendency to resort to the term 'alienation' whenever he comes across something which is not as he feels it should be", and of general sociological writings: "More commonly, different writers use the same general designation to refer to different specific phenomena, thereby appearing to speak of the same thing, but in reality not doing so".

One cannot help asking the question: is this word really necessary? Is it a useful conceptual tool in dealing with aspects of reality or is it so beset with confusion as to be better left alone? My own view is that it is probably more useful to describe directly the kind of conflict situations to which the term "alienation" is sometimes applied so that there is little doubt as to what one means, and abandon the term altogether.

REUBEN OSBORN

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## BRADLAUGH AND HIS CRITICS

(Continued from page 314)

tinuity. Other reviewers have considered these difficulties successfully overcome. If Dame Margaret had been less conscientious in turning backwards and forwards between text and notes, which were carefully devised to be inessential to the understanding of the story but useful to the specialist or committed reader at second reading, she might have seen that the story does flow on and that every new character is briefly described the first time he is introduced and important ones are faded out with same care as if the biography had been a novel. Of course it is more complicated, just as truth is. I could have dished up Bradlaugh as a sort of cross between a television documentary and Lytton Strachey, full of breezy, inaccurate generalisations "relevant" to our time. I chose not to and I don't apologise.

# MORALITY AT ITS LOWEST

JAMES O'HANLON

Not infrequently it is urged by complacent Christians that, as believers in an everlasting life after death, they have nothing to lose. If they are correct in their belief, then they go to a heavenly home and partake of all its glories. If there is no heaven, then all are in the same position and sleep in eternity. In any event they will not lose. On the other hand unbelievers, if the Bible is true, will have to stand trial on the day of judgement and find that they have much to lose.

We can appreciate the smug self-satisfaction of the Christians. They cannot lose. If they are wrong in their beliefs, there are no regrets in the universal oblivion. If they are right in their belief in a state of eternal bliss, they will enjoy their rich inheritance. They are "sitting pretty", and their advice to the unbelievers is to put themselves in the same happy position of having nothing to lose by abjuring their unbelief and subscribing themselves Christians.

It seems a pity to destroy so idyllic a picture, but, even on the assumption that there is a state of eternal bliss for believers, can these complacent Christians really be confident that they have nothing to lose? The existence of the "two-and-seventy jarring sects" is evidence that belief in Christianity is not enough to qualify as a certain winner. The candidate for the joys of heaven, to be successful, must be fortunate enough to belong to the sect which has the power to pronounce the "Open Sesame" before the pearly or golden gates or whatever may be their ornamentation. In an endeavour to prove it has the exclusive power, each sect has participated in bickering and strife, in many cases to the extent of submitting to torture or consigning to the flames those who would not subscribe to the view that truth resided in the tenets of this sect or that. In view of the bitter history of sectarian strife, Christians have no cause for complacency or believing they have nothing to lose. They might lose everything by failing to align themselves with the right people!

This complacent attitude of mind we have been discussing is morality at its lowest. To suggest to rationalists that they reject their philosophy and accept Christianity on the grounds that they have nothing to lose is to reveal complete lack of appreciation of the rationalist point of view. A rationalist refuses to acknowledge the god in whom the Christian believes not through some obduracy of heart. He is a rationalist by process of reasoning. Reflecting upon Christianity and all the religions of the world, he comes to the conclusion that these are man-made. The rationalist denies the existence of gods, of heavens and of hell, not through any perversity of heart, but because he has developed mentally and sees these things as arising from the conceptions of ignorant man.

The rationalist "spurns bribe of heaven and threat of hell". He adheres to a concept of life based on reason. He cannot accept the outlook of the Christian who relies on matters of faith propounded by priests as liable to error as any man. If, after dissipating his energies in preparation for a life after this, the Christian is wrong in his belief, he stands condemned as having failed to do all that he might have done in this world which he knows and in which he lives and moves and has his being. One world at a time is the essence of a rationalist's philosophy. If he strives to live without reproach amid the temptations that beset him and to leave this world the better, if possible, for his presence, he has done all that may in justice be expected of him.

# LETTERS

## Support for Hanging

Regarding the article on the Derek Bentley case (*Freethinker* 11 September) I agree that he should not have been hanged, but I also agree with Lord Goddard that some murderers should be destroyed. Men like Christie and Heath deserved to die, but not Evans, Bentley or Hanratty. In your article you made no mention of the policeman's family and how they feel. Craig got away with murder—what is he doing now? What was Bentley doing on the warehouse roof?

The gross miscarriage of justice in the Bentley case and others does not mean that no murderer should hang. How would you feel if your mother or child was brutally killed by a violent thug? Hanging is too good for such people. We shoot mad dogs and bulls. We should destroy human killers too. B. HOBSON.

## Protest

I strongly protest against parts of the article on the Derek Bentley case. The description of Mrs Bentley's last visit followed by the statement that she was unconscious when he "dropped through the trap-door at Wandsworth Prison next morning", was crude and brutal, and will only add to the Bentley family's distress when they read it. G. J. HILL.

## THE RISE OF THE MEDIOCRACY

(Continued from page 315)

and it was, with calm deliberation, demolished by an undergraduate. With the attempt to salvage something from the wreck, the student and I made a discovery which had been overlooked by others in the subject. This is what university life should be all about.

Sad to say too many academics fear the students and protect themselves with rules and regulations. Flexibility is going out of the system. In one department's proposed higher degree regulations the following appears: "His (the student's) general scientific education will be watched over". Each research student is to be interviewed by a Progress Group one of the duties of which is to "assess his attitude". Do not step out of line, conform to the accepted norms or suffer the consequences. Long live the mediocracy.

The mediocracy will not succeed without a struggle. In fact this article is in itself a minor gesture of defiance against the rise of the mediocracy.

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