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LABOUR PARTY EXECUTIVE "PUSILLANIMOUS"

—SAYS NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

The National Secular Society has strongly criticised the Labour Party National Executive's decision, despite recommendations from the Party's Education Advisory Committee, that it should not accept as party policy that the new Education Act would replace "opting out" by parents of their children from school religion by "opting in." "It seems to us," said an N.S.S. statement, "that this pusillanimous, reactionary decision can only have been dictated by opportunism with an eye to the possible loss of Labour votes in constituencies with a high proportion of working-class Catholics.

Parliamentary "infallibility"

"In 1944 Parliament apparently considered itself qualified to guarantee the existence of a god to be worshipped, since the Education Act made daily collective worship mandatory. As a sop to those who might demur at parliamentary infallibility in matters of theological doctrine, a 'conscience clause' was written into the law allowing parents to withdraw their children from R.I. and acts of worship. No pupil, of whatever age, had the right of withdrawal at his own request.

"What an uproar there would be if factory and office workers, who are in the same age groups as Fifth and Sixth formers, were compelled to begin the working day with collective prayers unless a parent or guardian had requested exemption on their behalf!"

The R.I. "conscience clause" and personal liberty

The National Secular Society also points out that few parents, even committed humanists, feel happy about exercising their theoretical legal right to withdraw their children from school religion. There are, the statement points out, practical difficulties. "More importantly, there is danger of psychological damage that may be done to children by selecting them for minority treatment.

"This is not a religious question. It is an issue of personal liberty. There are many democratic Christians of all the major denominations who support humanists on this issue. But apparently it is an issue on which the political parties still feel vulnerable."

OBITUARY

Winifred Mary Roux

Winifred Roux (née Lunt) was born in Liverpool in 1898 and died in Johannesburg on 18 May last. A brief notice of her death appeared in *The Freethinker* of 17 June 1972. She became a teacher and went to South Africa, where

she taught mathematics at Johannesburg, Potchefstroom and Cape Town. She married Professor Edward Roux, a distinguished South African botanist, and nobly supported him in his work of promoting the Rationalist Association of South Africa, despite the efforts of the then Minister of Justice, Mr. John Vorster.

When Eddie Roux died, his widow took over the editorship of *Die Rasionalis* (*The Rationalist*), the Association's monthly journal, and completed an autobiography that he had been preparing. The book was published under the title of *Rebel Pity* and was reviewed in these columns (26 September 1970) by Professor Julius Lewin. A new edition will appear shortly.

Fearless and compassionate

A memorial service to Winifred Roux was held in Johannesburg on 22 May, conducted by Reinhardt Eybers, chairman of the Rationalist Association of South Africa. One of the speakers, a friend for many years, Molly Hahn, said: "Win Roux . . . was a gifted mathematician with a searching and analytical mind . . . [and] an encyclopaedic knowledge of English literature . . . She was fearless in speaking out when she considered that injustice was being done and she showed great compassion to anyone in distress . . . Teachers of her calibre are rare, and I consider that I have been immensely privileged to have worked with her, to have learnt from her and to have counted her a friend. I shall miss her greatly, as will all those who know her well."

A tribute in Afrikaans was delivered by Mr. G. J. Z. Rabe and poems by Eugene Marais, Santayana and Christina Rossetti were read by Zena Hugo. Mr. Reinhardt ended the ceremony with these lines:

"The dead have no tears and forget all sorrow;
"What's done is what remains. . ."

Winifred Roux's last words to her successor as editor of *The Rationalist*, Ann Weinberg, were: "You'll keep it going, Ann, won't you?"

We are sure she will.

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THE FREETHINKER

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The views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Board.

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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, WC1; Freethinker Bookshop, 103 Borough High Street, SE1. **Glasgow:** Clyde Books, 292 High Street. **Manchester:** Grass Roots Bookshop, 271 Upper Brook Street, 13. **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 Street, London, SE1 1NL. Telephone: 01-407 2717. Cheques, etc., should be made payable to the N.S.S.

Freethought books and pamphlets (new). Send for list to G. W. Foote & Co. Ltd., 103 Borough High Street, London, SE1 1NL.

Humanist Postal Book Service (secondhand books bought and sold). For information or catalogue send 5p stamp to Kit Mouat, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

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

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.

Humanist Holidays, East Mersea, Essex. 6-13 August: Youth Camp. Whitby, Yorkshire, 19 August-2 September: Summer Centre. Details from Marjorie Mephram (see "Announcements" above).

South Place Ethical Society: lectures will begin again on 1 October.

NEWS

FIFTY YEARS AGO

The Rev. F. H. Waring is disgusted at the scanty bathing costumes at the seaside. It is astonishing the number of pious persons who employ their spare time in looking for girls with short skirts and flimsy bathing dresses. It would serve these people right if ladies resolved to bathe draped from neck to heel in waterproof cloaks. It might spoil the holidays of these servants of the Lord, but it would be a just retribution.

—From *The Freethinker*, 23 July 1922.

Incidentally, in this Year of Grace, 1972, the *Guardian* (5 July) reports that a Sicilian judge has fined a 34-year-old German woman the equivalent of £6.67 for "sitting in a public place in an attitude contrary to public decency by having the legs crossed so as to show the left thigh entirely nude." *Semper idem!*

INSULTING CHRISTIANITY

The Times of 27 June carried a long letter from Salvation Army Commissioner Catherine Bramwell Booth, protesting against the content of a T.V. interview with actor Peter O'Toole, including several clips from O'Toole's films. "The last of these, said Miss Bramwell Booth, "portrayed him impersonating my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; giving a burlesque of the Cross, blasphemously misquoting His words and engaging in revolting antics with a group of old women."

Is there, Sir, no power in all the land able to prevent the intrusion into any programme of such a beastly travesty of Him Whom I hold most Holy, most worthy to be worshipped, most truly 'my Lord and my God'?

... Has the British Broadcasting Corporation the right to thrust such an abomination into our homes, spreading it in Britain's name into the whole world?

The Salvationists' *War Cry* (15 July) also gleefully published the entire text of this letter "by permission". *The Times*, however, did not see fit to print a comment on Commissioner Bramwell-Booth's epistle by the President of the National Secular Society. The text of the N.S.S. President's letter was as follows:

Miss Catherine Bramwell-Booth's impassioned demand for what would amount to a total broadcasting ban on anything contrary to the most conservative Christian belief is both arrogant and dangerous.

Although committed and practising Christians now form a minority in the population of this country, their services and propaganda still take up an inordinate amount of radio and television time each week, while alternative viewpoints are allowed a hearing only when immediately countered by an orthodox Christian voice.

Jesus Christ—whether or not the legend is based on an historical person—has some symbolic interest to-day as a revolutionary figure; the meek-and-mild Jesus of Victorian sentimentality holds no contemporary interest. Those who still hanker after the sentimental approach had better seek it in church or chapel, not in the general media; though, unfortunately, they will find plenty of it there too.

On the one hand, older Christians hail with delight the current Jesus cult among the young (reflected commercially by Jesus pop-songs, "Jesus Christ, Superstar," and "Godspell"); on the other, they squirm at the unconventionality of the fashionable Jesus. Secular humanists also squirm; but we would certainly not want any ban imposed on the cult, or, indeed, on anything else. The Jesus craze will die a natural death, anyway, in a year or two. Christianity itself, with all its advantages of entrenched power, privilege, and property, will probably outlast it by a few more years.

BARBARA SMOKER,
President, National Secular Society

S AND NOTES

Commenting upon Miss Bramwell-Booth's letter, the *War Cry's* editorial stated: "Not all Salvationists could express themselves in such eloquent terms or with such forthright challenge, but few would not agree with her, or wish to identify themselves with the convincing sentiments . . . Wholesale cleaning-up action is needed."

In other words, as Barbara Smoker implied in her rejoinder, the Salvationists would like to muzzle any significant opposition. The charges made ninety years ago by G. W. Foote and T. H. Huxley that the Salvation Army had totalitarian tendencies seem as valid to-day as they were then.

YEAR OF RETRENCHMENT FOR B.H.A.

"For humanists in the United Kingdom 1971 was not a good year," says the British Humanist Association in its Ninth Annual Report, published recently. "Virulent attacks were mounted against the 'permissive society.' An increasing number of voices were heard calling for the repeal of the Abortion Act and for the tightening of censorship. . . . The organised churches lost support whilst many small fringe religious sects flourished. . . . Apathy or antagonism towards the established democratic parties and processes increased, as did the number of those 'opting out'. 'There is no meaning in life' was a cry increasingly heard, a cry translated into the hard statistics of more attempted suicides, alcoholism and drug abuse."

The Report speaks of the past year as one of "reassessment and retrenchment" but adds that, nevertheless, much useful work was achieved. The B.H.A.'s financial deficit has been greatly reduced, its organisation overhauled, and the recent manifesto, *People First*, met with "a most encouraging response;" being sold out within three weeks of publication and since reprinted. "As humanists," says the B.H.A. Report, "we cannot stand aside. We believe that people matter, that the quality of life matters. These beliefs, which underlie the whole of *People First*, have already brought us much new support. As a basis for our activities in 1972 they present both a challenge and a hope."

THE COMFORTS OF RELIGION

If anyone is still labouring under the belief that the mayhem in Northern Ireland can be solved merely by the injection of a little more Christian faith and "charity", a comparison with recent events in east Asia may prove instructive.

In the southern Philippines, according to recent reports (UPI/*Evening Standard*, 6 July) armed Moslems have massacred some 58 Christian women and children in an attack on three coastal villages. This was, apparently, a reprisal raid.

FAMILY PLANNING IN EARLY MARRIAGE

The notion of the "pathological childbearer" has been criticised in the recent findings of the Hull Family Survey,* which provide "little evidence for assuming that such individuals exist."

"Virtually no-one," says the Survey, "is indifferent to the existence of contraception and the general change of outlook on family planning is also reflected in the relatively liberal attitudes which are expressed in reply to questions on abortion and sterilization."

The latest findings suggest that most young people now have complete control over their behaviour in contraception. "Couples are now having the families they want rather than making the best of what they get and indulging in subsequent rationalizations about the result. . . . Indeed, the one departure from rationality revealed in this study concerns that significant group of couples who knowingly take risks. This is a group which clearly merits further and more intensive study. Whether such risk-taking represents modification of previous contraceptive neglect or whether it is based upon a particular new philosophy of sexual behaviour is difficult to determine."

*PEEL, John 1972. "The Hull Family Survey, II. Family Planning in the First 5 years of Marriage." *Journal of Biosocial Science* 4 (3): pp. 333—346.

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

" . . . We shall never get the natural world put to rights as long as we continue to refer to a supernatural one; and are taught to fear one supernatural being, while another, we must believe, goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. . . . We must sweep all the cobwebs from the skies, and superstition must be crushed, even under the respectable name of religion, in its last hold, which creates the evil and those very fears it pretends to alleviate."

—C.B.A. in *The National Reformer*, 21 July 1872.

EXPLOSIVE REPERCUSSION

Readers of this paper were doubtless not amazed by the bombing on 21 June of a Tel Aviv "sex boutique" by Jewish orthodox extremists. However, we were surprised to find that this action had struck a chord in the most unlikely of hearts, that of "Aryan humanist" Dr. Ilych Haczetmann, the well-known pornoclast.

In an exclusive *Freethinker* interview, 25-stone Police Constable Hengist Lyttle told your correspondent that in the early morning of 23 June he was "proceeding" down Coit Street, West Bloomsbury, when he observed Dr. Haczetmann in an obvious state of elation, singing the "Exodus" theme tune, and brandishing a Schutzstaffel-issue grenade-launcher. Asked if the weapon was loaded, Dr. Haczetmann replied that it was, but that it was jammed, and he was in search of a plumber to render safe a "sentimental souvenir". Not satisfied with this information, the police officer asked Dr. Haczetmann to accompany him to the station "for further questioning," particularly as Coit Street is hardly a stone's throw from the studio at Prince of Darkness Square, of Mr. Marcel Mohl, art-photographer brother of Professor Borman Mohl ("Robespierre of the Sexual Revolution"), who did much of the close-up work on the Professor's film, *Detumescence*.

Dr. Haczetmann's "souvenir" was examined by the Army at the Lytton Strachey Memorial Police Station and found to be jammed and rusted up, as stated. Accordingly Dr. Haczetmann, after apologising profusely for "unwittingly" singing "oriental" music, was released with a caution. According to army explosives expert Sergeant Timothy ("Fingers") Crump, the grenade-launcher contained a missile made in 1943 or '4, whose charge had deteriorated and was in a most unstable condition. Commenting upon the Doctor's state of mind and parentage in colourful military terminology—none of its printable, he concluded that "even the I.R.A.'d bloody shoot a bloke for carryin' a thing in that state. Could 'ave gone orff if yer'd blown on it!"

FEMINISTS AND THE REASONER IN THE 1850'S

TOMOKO SATO

G. J. Holyoake founded The Reasoner as an Owenite weekly in 1846, and the paper flourished until 1861. Thereafter, Holyoake appears to have made two attempts to revive it (under that name) in 1863 and 1871. The Reasoner finally folded a hundred years ago, in July 1872. (Ed.)

Feminists in the early days of their movement in the mid-1850s had close links with *The Reasoner* which paid great attention to George Drysdale's anonymous work, *The Physical, Sexual, and Natural Religion* (1855). George Jacob Holyoake wrote his first review of the book (a favourable one) in *The Reasoner* for 25 March 1855, to be followed by Francis W. Newman's seven letters to the paper in which he dealt with such questions as chastity, marriage laws, and Malthusianism raised in Drysdale's work. Holyoake wrote twice more on this work in his paper. He also wrote on women's rights, and supported early feminists' work by reporting their activities in his paper and by other means. Because of this relationship between *The Reasoner* and feminism, one wonders if feminists came to know about Drysdale's book through the paper and if they expressed any opinion on the book. Whether they read it or not, however, it seems that they were completely silent on it. But this does not mean that they were not aware of the two main points of his advocacy—sexual freedom and Neo-Malthusianism—which to our mind are women's questions as well as men's, and more directly affect women. Here we shall examine the relationship between *The Reasoner* and feminists, whose private views on sexual questions may be indicative of the course their movement later took.

The Englishwoman's Journal

Bessie Rayner Parkes (1829-1925), one of the earliest feminist leaders, first wrote to G. J. Holyoake on 15 June 1856, for she thought "in some direction, tho' not in all, we work together." Feminists had been collecting signatures for petitions to Parliament for married women's right to their property and earnings, and Holyoake, who as early as 1847 urged women to start a journal for their rights, was only too willing to back them up. He reprinted in *The Reasoner* the whole of Barbara Leigh Smith's pamphlet on *The Most Important Laws Concerning Women*, and also published its second edition separately. He gave lectures on "Civil Freedom of Women," and they were printed in his paper. Feminists' work was conjoined with the Law Amendment Society's agitation, and culminated in the Married Women's Property Bill, 1857. The Bill failed, but the significance of the campaign lay, as Parkes rightly judged, in the fact that all the forces interested in women's rights and welfare, which had been scattered over the country, were brought together through it. Now the obvious need was to launch their own magazine. After using *The Waverley Journal* for a time, they founded *The Englishwoman's Journal* in London in 1858, and Bessie Rayner Parkes became its co-editor with Matilda M. Hays, translator of George Sand's works. G. J. Holyoake and his brother Austin who had wide experience of printing, helped these young middle-class women. Their anonymity was probably at Parkes's request, although she herself was something of a secularist then, and her friend, Barbara Leigh Smith, a diehard one.

Bessie Rayner Parkes, of a Unitarian family, was atheistic in the early 1850s. In May 1856, *The Reasoner* praised her poem, *Gabriel*, which was about P. B. Shelley. In 1857

she sent G. J. Holyoake her English translation of the Proudhon-D'Héricourt controversy on women's rights for publication in *The Reasoner*. She also believed that the work of Mme Jenny P. D'Héricourt, a French secularist, would be stimulating to her British colleagues, although she did not want her own name to be associated with secularism. Probably she felt that open association between feminists and freethought would compromise their movement which was just being organised. In private she helped Holyoake's campaign for the release of the Cornish well-sinker, Thomas Pooley. Pooley had been imprisoned for an heretical inscription on the gate of a clergyman's field. She might not have liked the open acknowledgement which Holyoake made to her in *The Reasoner*.

Barbara Leigh Smith (1827-1891), painter, also from a Unitarian background, was bolder in putting her views into practice. She omitted all religious instructions in the co-educational Portman Hall School she founded in London in 1854. The success of this strikingly modern venture was noted with approval and envy by Octavia Hill who dared to teach drawing at the secular school although her mentor, the Christian Socialist, F. D. Maurice, would not have liked it. In 1861, Barbara, now Mme Bodichon, in her written reply to the Circular of the Commissioners on Popular Education, declared that "religious instruction in schools is generally utterly useless," and that Government, if it were to support any school at all, should "extend its aid to all schools, including secular schools." Her boldness extended to her views on sex.

Barbara Smith, and Bessie Parkes to a lesser degree, seem to have had liberal views on sexual relationships. They remained George Eliot's staunch friends even when what Frederic Harrison, called her "left-handed marriage" to G. H. Lewes had alienated her from society. Moreover, Barbara almost followed her example in her own relationship with John Chapman, a married man and editor of *The Westminster Review*. Barbara's intimacy with Chapman started in the summer of 1854 and in the following summer, according to Professor G. S. Haight, she told her father that she intended to live with Chapman, but he quickly put an end to the affair. Before she was sent to Algiers by her father, she wrote to Bessie about the Leweses with whom she was staying for a time. She explained that the Leweses practised some form of birth control, and intended to have no children.

Conversion or interpolation?

In Algiers Barbara met Eugène Bodichon, republican, humanist, and medical doctor whose book *De L'Humanité* (1853) was, according to his own statement, banned in Europe. They married on 2 July 1857. Dr. Bodichon's abridged—drastically abridged—English translation of *De L'Humanité* was published by Holyoake and Co., and was advertised in *The Reasoner* from 24 October to 12 December 1858. Barbara probably helped in the translation for Dr. Bodichon's English was not very good. An interesting fact is that there is an insertion in the translation of a sentence which advocates women's absolute equality with men and that it contradicts Dr. Bodichon's remarks in the original; for he had warned against women's influence on public opinion. Had she converted him to an advocate of women's rights, or did she smuggle the feminist sentence into the translation? Whichever the case might

have been, the advocacy of women's absolute equality with men did not run against Dr. Bodichon's view of sex. He writes: "Polygamy, polyandry, monogamy, every form of relations between men and women are legitimate, provided they are assented by the contracting parties." His liberal sexual views were not however, accompanied by Neo-Malthusianism, for although he was a republican he shared the imperialist belief in superior races and repudiated Malthus's tenet that population tends to increase faster than the means of subsistence. He did not mention Neo-Malthusianism which replaced "moral restraint" or postponement of marriage with another preventive check or the use of artificial means on the ground that the former was impracticable and a great evil, and produced other evils like prostitution. Neo-Malthusians mentioned such birth control methods as the use of sheaths and sponge, douching, withdrawal, and the safe period.

Mme Bodichon on her part must have been acquainted with the Malthusian theory for a long time since she had been impressed with George Combe's *Moral Philosophy* (1840) in which the author expressed his full agreement with Malthus on population. The Bodichons had no children themselves, for whatever the reason it was.

Bessie Parkes in London did not as yet go much farther, but fared worse. She was exposed to what her friends took as "a personal attack" on her. In her *Remarks on the Education of Girls* (2nd edition, 1856), she argued that "it is preposterous to keep educated women from reading Chaucer and Dryden, Ben Jonson and Fielding." *The National Review* for October 1858 said: "The idea of teaching young girls to study the sexual relations with these works for textbooks is excusable only under the assumption that the young lady is a theorist who has not realised the working of her vague ideas." The review represented her as if she had wished people to send their daughters "to attend the lectures of a professor of the Passional Influences who proposes to read George Sand with his pupils." Among her friends were, in fact, two translators of George Sand's novels. To her mind it was wrong and absurd to imagine that reading the French woman's works would lead to immediate swallowing of her ideas and acting them out. Ignorance was not bliss in her eyes. George Eliot, who had herself defied conventional morality countered *The National's* misrepresentation of her friend among her private circles. Bessie feared that she would "only be more blackened by any allusion" to the review, but she allowed *The Reasoner* to stand up in her defence. Holyoake devoted a leader in the paper for 31 October to defend the work and character of Bessie and other feminists associated with *The Englishwoman's Journal*.

The Ladies' Sanitary Association

Bessie Parkes was one of the early leaders of the Ladies' Sanitary Association which was aimed at diffusion of knowledge of elementary anatomy, physiology, and hygiene among women who were notoriously ignorant of those subjects. Barbara, who called herself a "sanitarian," helped Bessie's work. *The Englishwoman's Journal* for August 1859 reported the Christian Socialist, Charles Kingsley's speech which was delivered at the first annual meeting of the Association. The speech was later published as a pamphlet under the title, *The Massacre of the Innocents*. Octavia Hill, who heard his speech at first hand, wrote to her sister Miranda that Kingsley said, "If you believe the teaching of many great political economists, who think that England is in great danger of being over-populated, and

who advocate preventive checks on the increase of population, you had better pause and think whether it wouldn't be better on the whole, just to let the children die; whether we mayn't have difficulty in finding work and food for them . . ." When we compare her report with the one published in *The Englishwoman's Journal* later than the time of her writing, we realise that she had taken almost verbal, full notes of his speech. The only marked difference is that the clause in her report on the political economists "who advocate preventive checks on the increase of population" was replaced in *The Englishwoman's Journal's* report and in the pamphlet with the description of "a country which has the greatest colonial empire that the world has ever seen." The difference is clearly due to the replacement, and not the mistake made on the part of Octavia, granddaughter of Dr. Southwood Smith, who was soon to lead working-class housing reform. Did Parkes and other leaders of the Ladies' Sanitary Association suggest the elimination of the original clause, or did Kingsley replace it with the praise for the empire without being asked? Kingsley's view of "preventive checks" seems to decide which was the case.

Kingsley wrote an article for *Fraser's Magazine* of January 1858, calling for sanitary reform. In this article he wrote that a preventive check, "if a nation did ever apply it—as it never will—could issue, as every doctor knows, in nothing less than the questionable habits of abortion, child-murder, and unnatural crime." In common with many of his contemporaries, he could not distinguish prevention of pregnancy from abortion and infanticide. His speech at the Ladies' Sanitary Association strikes the same note. He associated suppression of population with death, or the loss of lives, and population increase with life, or preservation of lives. The inclusion of the clause makes his true ideas and concern unequivocal. So we can perhaps safely rely on the report in Octavia's private letter. There is also an instance of deliberate omission of "prudential restraint" in Parke's own writings.

Mill's attitude to feminism

When Bessie Parkes wrote two articles on "The Opinion of John Stuart Mill" for the September and the November 1860 issues of *The Englishwoman's Journal*, she amply quoted from Mill's *Principles of Political Economy* (2nd edition, 1849). Painfully aware of women's low wages, she drew heavily on his chapter, "Of the Differences of Wages in Different Employments," but made a point of omitting his important reference to "the prudential restraint on marriage." Again, while quoting from the section on the "Tendency of society towards the disuse of the relation of hiring and service," she ignored the last two sentences in the preceding section which are vital for understanding of Mill's idea of feminism. There he writes:

It is sufficient for the immediate purpose, to point out, among the probable consequences of the industrial and social independence of women, a great diminution of the evil of over-population. It is by devoting one-half of the human species to that exclusive function by making it fill the entire life of one sex, and interweave itself with almost all the objects of the other, that the animal instinct in question is nursed into the disproportionate preponderance which it has hitherto exercised in human life.

Although it is not mentioned in his *Political Economy*, Mill favoured artificial checks against "moral restraint."

At the time of Bessie Parkes's writing, feminists had been trying hard to open the medical profession and other professions and trades which had been closed to women.

(Continued overleaf)

There were a great number of "superfluous women" who had no fathers or husbands to support them and this gave an impetus to their movement. Bessie's readers would have come across Mill's advocacy of family limitation only if they had taken trouble to look in his book itself.

Deliberate silence

From what we know of Bessie Rayner Parkes and Mme Bodichon, we may assume that the latter admitted sexual freedom for educated women, whom feminists tended to distinguish from other women, although we are aware that personal experience of sexual freedom does not necessarily mean advocacy of the same freedom for other people. As for Malthusianism, the omission of the terms, "preventive checks" and "prudential restraint on marriage" takes us nowhere in judging their stand. For the omission was made in one case in the writings of a Malthusian (Mill), and in another, in the speech of an anti-Malthusian (Kingsley). The Bodichons might have practised some form of birth control like the Leweses, but here again we must remember that personal practice of birth control cannot be equated with advocacy of family planning for everyone. We do not know whether feminists held that family limitation would contribute to improvement of women's position (as Drysdale did) or if they did not see the link between the two questions. One thing is certain: their silence on the population question and birth control was a deliberate act. This is not surprising when we remember the attitude of early reviewers of Drysdale's work.

Only a few men—Ernest Jones, G. J. Holyoake and "Anthony Collins" (W. H. Johnson)—had the courage to

welcome Drysdale's work openly in their papers when the title itself was condemned as too repulsive to mention in respectable press. Those few were secularists who had a strong claim to freedom from bigotry and to a scientific attitude to life; even they could not but resort to abstract and general language in their description of his book. They never mentioned "preventive intercourse" or the use of artificial means for prevention of pregnancy without which his population policy was indistinguishable from Malthus's, and his new sexual morality impossible. Holyoake, whose praise of the book was qualified, feared the involvement of secularism with Drysdale's sexual morality because it was used against secularism by its opponents. His attitude towards Malthusianism was somewhat ambivalent and this was probably because its opponents associated it with the new sexual morality. Under such a climate of opinion, feminists could not have publicly discussed the disreputable subject as they wanted to enlist in their newly organised movement wide sections of a society which imposed respectability far more rigidly on women than on men. Years later, however, they were to face occasional criticism for their neglect of sexual matters.

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REVIEWS

BOOK

WHO IS MY LIEGE ? A Study of Loyalty and Betrayal in Our Time. By George K. Young. Gentry Books, £3.

The subtitle for this somewhat puzzling book is "Loyalty and Betrayal in Our Time." The reason I found it puzzling is that I had to wade through many pages of rambling commentary on a number of issues before the problem of loyalty is defined. This is a badly organised book but the author, formerly in the diplomatic service, now in merchant banking, is unusually well informed over a wide range of subjects. He is a right wing intellectual, diametrically opposed to liberal humanism.

Mr. Young thinks that humanism is built on logical errors arising from too much concern with universals such as Man, Morality, Freedom, etc., at the expense of particulars. If he merely meant that woolly thinking too often arises from the excessive use of large abstractions, the point could be well taken. He means a great deal more as his attack on the liberal ideals of tolerance and equality and multiracialism shows. He has little use for the United Nations just because it thinks in terms of "universal man."

Once you drop such concepts as the unity of mankind or the brotherhood of man you are left with irreconcilable divisions. Asians and Africans and Europeans, for example, are all seen as hopelessly diverse. And if you also discard

the idea of equality ("brothers under the skin") you are liable to judge Africans and Asians as lesser breeds than Europeans. "The pioneer minds will remain Western," says Mr. Young.

What he is trying to maintain is that the mentality of Indians differs essentially from that of Chinese and of negroes, and of Europeans. Indians are introvert, Chinese extrovert; never the twain shall meet. Arabs, whose identity is bound up with Islam, are said to show signs of withdrawing from the western model. As for the Jews, they have a special problem of loyalty since, if Mr. Young is right, Israel is based on a myth and is likely to conform more and more to the Middle East, leaving those Jews in a Gentile society with no rational option except assimilation.

I cannot see any great difference between this view of the human race as being composed of disparate and unequal elements, and the Nazi theory of Nordic superiority; or, to be fair, to the Kiplingesque doctrine of *The White Man's Burden*, except that it is more sophisticated. Obviously if you build a Chinese wall round certain communities any attempt of individuals to escape over the wall must seem an instance of disloyalty. But these walls only exist in Mr. Young's imagination. He objects to the class-name "Man," but he does not see that to talk of African or Asiatic or Western man is still to obliterate individual differences. He merely substitutes one set of abstractions for another.

The concept of a specifically European culture which is the touchstone of all that is best in civilisation recalls the fantasies of Hilaire Belloc. Those in the West who rebel against its traditions are said to commit "the treason of the intellectuals."

What all this philosophising and dubious social psychology leads to is clearly and frankly expressed. It leads to Enoch Powell's blood-curdling prophecies about Black Power; to support for Ian Smith in Rhodesia and a scornful dismissal of Afro-Asian aspirations. For example:

The formal version of treason is reduced to farce when a patriotic Briton and fighter ace in the shape of Mr. Ian Smith is categorised as fit for incarceration in the Tower of London (p. 40).

Referring to "the sponsorship of African terrorism by a number of our churchmen," Mr. Young does not name the culprits but denounces them as "clerical ranters." It is not hard to guess who they are. Again:

Our oldest ally, Portugal, which for two hundred years has consistently pursued the same overseas policies, finds itself put in the rôle of one of the principal villains: and so do the white Rhodesians who continue in practice to administer African affairs as we did ourselves in Crown colonies with much self-congratulatory talk about our duties and our responsibilities (p. 63).

High on the list of Mr. Young's "villains" are Dag Hammarskjöld ("who launched deceit, violence, pillage, murder and rape in Katanga") and surprisingly, Haile Selassie. "It would be easier to make out a case for Governor Eyre of Jamaica, whose brutal suppression of the negro uprising of 1865 at least saved the island from the continuing miseries of Haiti and gave it a hundred years of relative peace and welfare." Actually, Mr. Young is doing just that!

Pius XII comes under the lash for his "Vatican Machiavellianism" and so does Pope Paul for refusing to give vital information about Gestapo and S.S. personnel. But although Mr. Young's rather contemptuous attitude to the Church and churchmen may be congenial to readers of *The Freethinker* his views on race and liberal humanism will not.

Reviewing the book in *The Spectator*, Mr. Enoch Powell commends the author for his courage and perception for writing:

... when the wretched British monarch is obliged by her ministers to stand up in Westminster and repeat her lesson that we should all become citizens of the world [U.N. 25th Anniversary Celebration in Westminster Hall], she is committing an act of betrayal as heinous as that of King Charles against those who trusted him: for her Coronation Oath requires her to maintain the laws and customs of the land.

If this book had been less discursive it could have seemed an apologia for the ideology of some form of fascism, whatever the author may protest to the contrary. Fortunately those to whom it might have been dangerous will not understand it.

HECTOR HAWTON

THEATRE

NITROGEN by René de Obaldia and **THE INHABITANTS** by Olwen Wymark. Shaw Theatre.

The Goons and the Theatre of the Absurd (Adamov, Ionesco, Beckett, Pinter *et al.*) have a lot to answer for. Their so-called masterpieces have, in my view, been greatly overrated, but what shall we say when we come to inspirationless imitators? In Lewis Carroll and Sir W. S. Gilbert we had an absurdity that, by turning ordinary logic precisely on its head, produced a new form of logic, and by preserving recognisable characters and situations allowed us, however fantastically, to identify with the action. Con-

temporary absurdity is not just "out of tune" but is unrelated to tune altogether and is part of the irrationality of our age.

Nitrogen is, I think, about the emasculation of men brought about by chauvinism and militarism ("nitrogen"), but its symbolism manages to be both elusive and laboured. Above all, the characterisation—with the "heroine" veering between a Cockney good-time-girl, a Hampstead intellectual and an *au pair* missy—is too erratic to make us, or at any rate me, care very much what happens to those involved, while the lines and stage business are wearying to both actors and audience.

The Inhabitants also appears as "absurd drama", but has the advantage of another, and more fruitful influence: Pirandello. After a tedious introduction of creatures trying to placate, and at the same time assert their identities before, God, the playlet enters the more interesting area of ambivalent human relationship, where the playing of Patricia Perry as the Woman is outstanding.

The Shaw Theatre has put on these two productions as "an experiment in late night theatre," and invites reactions. While one expresses gratitude to artists and theatre staff who have given their time free, the response on this showing cannot be particularly encouraging.

DAVID TRIBE

LETTERS

Single Mothers

I have read the 1971 Casework Report of the Independent Adoption Society (mentioned in "News and Notes" on 17 June) with interest, and I have some sympathy for the frustrations expressed. These are, however, part of the nature of the task, and should not be overstressed by the professional worker.

I formed the impression that a more impartial attitude should be shown to the unsupported mother's struggle to keep her child in the face of difficulties. The growing tendency for such mothers to keep their babies is surely a sign of more tolerant social attitudes in society; not one to be deplored. Is not the best way to help them to find cheap rented flats in which they can make their homes?

WILLIAM BYNNER

Joseph McCabe's Autobiography

In my article, "Some Irish Freethinkers" (8 July) I was so rash as to suggest that there was no book-length biography of Joseph McCabe in print. This, of course, did not escape the eagle eye of Len Ebury, and the evidence of my ignorance now lies before me.

There is, of course, an autobiography by McCabe, entitled *Eighty Years a Rebel* (Girard, Kansas, 1947). It is one of a large series of "Little Blue Books" written by McCabe for the American firm of Haldeman-Julius, most of which are very scarce this side of the Atlantic.

NIGEL SINNOTT

Reality and the Marxist Dialectic

What a rare old muddle Mr. Trevor Morgan (letters, 8 July) finds himself wallowing in. I do not mind in the least if he calls my article on Marxism and Christianity "rubbish", but I do think he ought to say why. As it is, the venom of his invective is surpassed only by the facility with which he goes on missing the point. And all this from somebody who has the colossal nerve to tell me to study philosophy before venturing to criticise Marx!

So Marx and Engels claim that objective reality is material in nature. True, but irrelevant. The guts of Marxism is not its theory of reality, but its application of Hegel's dialectic to social change and the location of the alleged driving force of history in the class struggle. Marxism is not based on Mr. Morgan's scientific materialism at all. It is founded on an intellectually pernicious brand of Prussian metaphysics.

Marx and Lenin are both content dogmatically to *assert* the materialist theory of reality. What they do not do is try to substantiate their assertions. Nor do they succeed in reconciling their materialist notions with the metaphysical concept of the dialectic. Present-day "Marxists", oblivious to the philosophical ground of their doctrine, are inclined to drop the dialectic altogether. They do this without noticing that it fundamentally undermines the internal coherence of their ideology. For without the historical optimism generated by the dialectic, and without its guarantee of utopia, those who advocate violent revolution can offer nothing except a pious hope that it will not all go wrong. And, in passing, a theory that depends on an extremely partial view of history, coupled with a whole series of falsified predictions about the outcome of the class struggles of Marx's day, can hardly be called "scientific".

The "main body of science" has, in truth, *never* confirmed the Marxist theory of reality, still less the validity of the dialectic. Science may accept a materialist approach as a working assumption, but that is all. To ask about the nature of ultimate reality is of course to do philosophy, and not science. Finally, you cannot talk about the "correctness" of objective reality (can reality get its sums wrong?), just as you certainly cannot say that Marxism is founded on this "scientific" fact. For it is not a fact at all, but simply a philosophical position. I am afraid Mr. Morgan will just have to try a whole lot harder. PHILIP HINCHLIFF

Fact, Theory and Reality

Apropos of Trevor Morgan's letter of 8 July, there is surely a world of difference between holding that an objective reality is a scientific fact and holding that Marxian theory gives us scientific facts of that objective reality. CHARLES BYASS

Kind-Hearted K.G.B

Mr. Morten's admiration for the kind Russian police system (letters, 8 July) is touching—if a trifle naive.

Suppose he committed the crime of being a Jew who wanted to go to Palestine, does he think they would fall over each other trying to help him? And what of all the wretched Russian intellectuals who criticise the régime and are carted off to prisons and lunatic asylums by these kind men?

If I sounded smug because I admire Britain and our democratic freedom (such a precious possession in a world of violence!) I was certainly not trying to be so. I was trying to be strictly factual. This is not the same thing as boasting—which is partisan exaggeration. Why being proud of one's country should annoy anybody I cannot imagine.

The Spanish and Portuguese governments are fascist in nature and so the citizens there have lost much of their freedom under a totalitarian system—just as they have in Russia and in the rest of the Communist Empire (now the largest and most dangerous the world has ever seen). But I can assure Mr. Morten the Russian police are far more brutal in every way than anything that goes on in either Spain or Portugal. And we hope that democracy will return to these near neighbours of ours. Does anyone seriously imagine the Russians will ever get their freedom back? It is most unlikely in *our* lifetime anyway! CLAUD WATSON

Celtic Nationalism and Social Freedom

I would like to thank Paul Rose for his sympathetic and kind review of my book *A History of the Irish Working Class*. There are, however, a couple of points which need clarification.

Mr. Rose seems to make the claim that my work is based on the works of a few writers on Irish history, including "a couple of pages from my own little book *The Manchester Martyrs*," and therefore my work lacks "original research and objectivity". While one cannot blame Paul Rose for getting a plug in for his book, *The Manchester Martyrs* was one of 136 volumes listed in the selected bibliography dealing with major source material. This does not include pamphlets and newspapers quoted in nine pages of reference notes. I can assure Mr. Rose that the months spent in studying this material was hardly taking "the easy option to replace original research. . ." How much research does Mr. Rose consider necessary to qualify for doing original research?

Mr. Rose refers to "Mr. Ellis's curious blend of almost Chauvinistic Celtic nationalism with orthodox and rather mechanical

Marxism . . ."; Chauvinism means "an absurdly extravagant pride in one's own country with a corresponding contempt for foreign nations . . ." I challenge Mr. Rose to produce any Chauvinistic statement from any of my works where I have shown contempt for any nation. It is true I have contempt for the English ruling class and their creed of imperialism as I have contempt for other imperialistic classes. But surely Mr. Rose will not construe contempt for the English ruling class as contempt for the English people, or will he? Nor have I entertained any extravagant pride in any one particular nationality.

I fear Mr. Rose is throwing in labels because, like so many others, he unfortunately suffers from the "Celtic hang up"! It is all very well to advocate the economic, political and cultural independence of any nationality in the world from Vietnamese to Biafrans to the Guarani but let one speak of the Celtic nationalities in this context and the label "Chauvinist" is quickly applied. It seems an emotional reaction entirely without logic. If it is an Englishman who advocates it he is merely "round the twist", if it is someone from outside our Disunited Kingdom, he is merely an "ignorant foreigner not informed of the circumstances."

My views on the necessity for the independence of *all* small nationalities in Europe and throughout the world have been aired before (see, for example, *The Freethinker* of 20 June 1970). My belief in the economic, cultural and political independence of small nations, not just the Celts, applies to all nationalities who are being destroyed and assimilated all over the world—a world of growing uniformity whose ecological sickness is not confined to the destruction of our physical environment but to our cultural environment with the wanton destruction of small cultures that will inevitably lead to a conflict between the big dominant cultures. This conflict will probably be reflected in a physical struggle whereby we will, for a short time anyway, probably achieve that nightmare, world unity and uniformity, one dominant culture which must, inevitably, diversify again. This belief in the importance of the part small nationalities have to play in saving us from *Brave New World* and our headlong rush to uniformity and extinction is in no way incompatible with a Marxist analysis of history or the concepts of a Socialistic world. It was Lenin who wrote that one of the principal conditions for Socialism was that *every nationality* in Europe and the colonies must be given independence.

Our only way forward in this world is internationalism—dialogue and co-operation between nations; a world where no nation enslaves another (in whatever form, whether by economic, political or cultural dominance); a world, also, where no one man enslaves another. Nationalism, by which I mean the advocacy of the freedom of a nation from the cultural, political and economic exploitation by another nation, is inseparable from the achievement of a true socialist society. National and social freedom are not two separate and unrelated issues. They are two sides of one great democratic principle, each being incomplete without the other.

As a point of clarification, as it has become a common practice since the French Revolution to confuse the term Nation with State, I use the term nation to mean a body of people marked off by common descent, language and culture. To forestall critics, there is no racial connotation in nations; there is no German race, no Latin race and no Celtic race. Each of these groups is a mixture of various races and in the case of populations recognised as Celtic it is particularly true that no distinction of race is found among them. The term Celtic is indicative of language, not race; language and culture enshrines nationhood. The criteria for the recognition of Celtic peoples is by the fact they speak or were known to have spoken, a Celtic language.

I make this point of clarification solely to prevent critics wrongly equating nationalism with racialism.

P. BERRSFORD ELLIS

Church Privilege

While applauding Barbara Smoker (*Freethinker* letters, 8 July) for bringing attention to the fact that the churches enjoy certain exemption from taxes and rates, it is worth pointing out that it is not only the Established church which can procure exemption from rates but other denominations as well. For example, Quaker meeting houses have rates exemption as long as they do not let the premises at a profit. The same goes, I think, for other churches or bodies who can prove their religiosity. BILL HUGHES