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LET ITALY REMEMBER!

POPE CALLS FOR ABROGATION OF ITALIAN DIVORCE LAW

There must be very few readers of this paper so naïve as to suppose that the Catholic Church would relent in its uncompromising hostility to Italy's recently enacted divorce law. When Signor Leone, the Italian President, paid a state visit to the Vatican on 22 September last, Pope Paul took full advantage of the occasion to call—albeit obliquely—for the repeal of the new legislation by urging “a family law and usage” in accordance with Italy's “genuine traditions.” Now Italy's “genuine traditions” are largely a matter of taste, but, by and large, there are three main interpretations. First, there is a tradition which is today mercifully buried in the dust of history—almost: it is the tradition of the Papal States and Bourbon Naples; mediæval tyrannies that long outlived their day by the judicious use of dungeons, secret police, and political and religious absolutism.

Contravenes the Concordat

Secondly, there is the modern, neo-barbarian tradition of Mussolini and his blackshirts who overthrew Italian democracy and in 1929 signed the infamous Concordat which still dishonours the constitution of the Italian Republic, and which handed over the country's education system and social legislation to clerical control. The neo-fascists and Christian Democrat opponents of the divorce law complain that it contravenes the Concordat—they are probably quite right.

Then there is another tradition, the tradition of 1849—that of Mazzini and Bixio; of Saffi and Armellini; of the aristocratic radicals, middle class intellectuals and liberals and the brave working men and women of the Trastevere slums who fought for months, like tigers, in a desperate effort to prevent Pope Pius IX's French hacks from reinstating him in Rome; the tradition of Young Italy, of a nation which dared to be free in spite of its sufferings, in spite of French occupation, and the atrocities wrought by Austrian Emperors. The tradition, above all, of Garibaldi, whose statue stands to this day, massive and resolute on the summit of the Janiculum, high above the Vatican's courts. Garibaldi, of course, was in favour of divorce—and birth control.

Let Italy remember her “genuine traditions” by all means, lest she forget. Let her remember her liberties, so preciously and so precariously won—and from whom!

CASH FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN BRITAIN

Here in infidel, permissive Britain, which he once called “a land of former believers,” Cardinal Heenan is worried about the state of Catholic schools. “Although we have only to find one fifth of the cost of building new schools, rising prices have brought us to a financial crisis,” he laments in a recent pastoral letter. “. . . Unless more money

is found, we shall have to stop building schools and replacing sub-standard buildings.”

The cardinal calls upon local parishes to form ‘Friends of Catholic Schools’ so that “the Catholics of tomorrow will then bless us as we bless the Catholics of yesterday. We say with grateful pride that our churches and schools were built with the pennies of the poor. The Catholic people of England are much better off today.”

We are inclined to agree with his Eminence on the last two points, though for different reasons. Ones which he surely did not intend to convey! This much is quite clear, that if the local parish begging bowl fails, as it may well do, Cardinal Heenan will hold it under the nose of the Government. Only a few years ago the public handout to sectarian education was increased from 75 to 80 per cent of building costs, and unless there is a concerted effort from those, both humanist and otherwise, who prefer secular education to sectarian inculcation, the Cardinal may well get away with it again.

SPARE THE ROD

The latest drive by the National Council for Civil Liberties and the Society of Teachers Opposed to Physical Punishment to abolish corporal punishment in British schools is surely one to be welcomed. Added impetus to this move will be given by the publication of Peter Newell's new paperback, *A Last Resort*.

There is, of course, the old story about “I was thrashed regularly at school but it never did me any harm”; the only trouble is that those who trot it out are usually splendid walking—or limping—advertisements for the abolition of this barbarous anachronism (Poland abolished it in 1783). Judging from the comments of a Cumberland head to *The Guardian*, its ‘educative’ value is a myth: “On the whole the middle class wants canes so that other people's children can be beaten, while less refined parents want them for indiscriminate use.”

THE FREETHINKER

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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.

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.

EXHIBITION: "Thomas Paine and the Rights of Man." Marx Memorial Library, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1. Until 10 October. (Monday-Friday, 4-9 p.m.; Saturdays, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.) Admission free.

National Secular Society/Progressive League joint Weekend Conference, High Leigh, Hoddesdon, Herts. 3-5 November: "Religion in the Seventies." Speakers: Lord Raglan, John Capon, Lt.-Col. Gunter-Jones. Details from N.S.S., 103 Borough High Street, London SE1 1NL (telephone: 01-407 2717).

EVENTS

Havering Humanist Society, Harold Wood Social Centre, Gubbins Lane. Tuesday, 10 October, 7.45 p.m.: discussion on realistic approaches to present-day living.

Leicester Secular Society, Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate. Sunday, 8 October, 6.30 p.m.: "Pornography and Censorship" (discussion).

Nottingham and Notts Humanist Group, University Adult Centre, 14 Shakespeare Street. Friday, 13 October, 7.30 p.m.: G. O. Douglas, "The Conflict Between Religion and Science."

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Sunday, 8 October. 11 a.m.: Peter Cadogan, "Science, Art and Ethics"; 3 p.m.: Chen Chimutengwende and Francis Prideaux, "The Rich and the Poor Countries—What Price World Development?" Tuesday, 10 October, 7 p.m.: David Warren Piper, "Post-School Educational Psychology."

Welwyn Garden City Humanist Group, Saturday, 7 October, 8 p.m.: discussion on "Pornography: Why and Why Not?" c/o Albert and Lena Whitear, Farce, Churchfields, Tewin.

"The churches have entirely ceased to treat sex like a dirty word. Clerics intone its virtues with almost sickening sycophancy. The only people who today treat it like a dirty word are, need I say, the pornographers . . . The pornographers are the new blasphemers, and it should be the rationalists and humanists driving them out of the Temple, far more than the Christian moralists, since it is now their religion which is being put at risk."

—Peregrine Worsthorne in *Pornography: the Longford Report*.

"Three full cheers are due from all Christian people for Lord Longford and his star-studded galaxy of colleagues . . ."

—Church Times leader.

"Well, it wasn't as bad as it might have been. I loved Peregrine Worsthorne's contribution, brilliantly upturning the tables in the secularist temple . . . ruined only by being based on the completely untenable premise that in an age of faith human relationships are unimportant. But I'm bound to say that most of the rest seemed either depressing or pretty silly . . . All pornographers, after all, are paper tigers."

—Nicholas Kenyon in the *Catholic Herald*.

"To be indulgent about 'Lord Porn' and therefore by implication to accept the muddled and unsupported conclusions of his committee would be a great mistake."

—New Law Journal editorial.

"As fresh as an egg, but a little cracked in parts."

—David Napley in the *Law Society's Gazette*, commenting on the Longford Report.

ANOTHER PORNOGRAPHY BATTLE

A remarkably ecumenical contribution to the present wave of pornography reports is surely the Fifth Earl of Ffrenchletter's *File on Filth* (published by the Gathering of Gloom), which describes itself as "A terrifying exposé of the flood-tide of sin which is swirling round the foundations of Western civilisation." Although this remarkable document was devised and edited by the vegetarian, pacifist, Catholic and youth-revolutionary Irish peer, some seventy-five per cent of the text was written by Dr. Ilych Haczemann, dedicated pornoclast, Ayran whippet-breeder, "positive" humanist, and founder member of the National Union of Warmongers. Indeed, although the text of the report has only been made public within the last week, the Amateur Venereological Society has already awarded the 1972 Treponema Trophy to the good doctor for "his outstanding services to public decency." The ecumenical nature of this report is further enhanced by the fact that shorter contributions have been made to it by such disparate personalities as Feargus O Flaithbheartaigh (the Fenian Firebrand of Finsbury Park) and the Rev. Dr. William Mountjoy McGrundy (Worshipful Master of the Finsbury Park No. 69 Loyal Orange Lodge).

Ecumenism, even with the best of intentions, has its limits, reached, inevitably, on the threshold of the Glorious People's Liberation Iconoclast Press Ltd., publishers of the well-known revolutionary atheist daily, *The Episcopophagist*. Its editor, the Hon. Peregrine Burke, took but one long, hard look at the young Earl of Ffrenchletter's (fairly liberal) Catholicism, and proceeded with a scaring editorial which echoed round the news-stands of West Bloomsbury like the guns of the *Aurora* in 1917. "Once again," he thundered, "we see the foul maw of Popery reaching out against the people's innocent pleasures (albeit in the hands

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of revanchist monopolies) . . . The black whore of Rome, its hands red with blood and fat with tribute from the toiling industrial masses and lower-middle peasants, is taking the offensive. Comrades! To the barricades!"

This stirring exhortation might have done no more than frighten the decadent, ambosexual pigeons that flaunt themselves in Prince of Darkness Square, had not Dr. Hacetmann chosen last Tuesday morning to sell copies of the Ffrenchletter *File* at the doors of Humanist House, home of the Assembly of Bloomsbury Heretics. Alas, this coincided with the publication date of Professor Borman Mohl's latest literary venture, *New Pornology*, lavishly illustrated with "rare, unusual and interesting" photographs by his talented capitalist brother, Marcel. Within half an hour of Dr. Hacetmann's arrival, Professor Mohl was setting up a rival stall. First there was a pregnant silence, followed by an exchange of abuse couched in Germanic psychological jargonese, then all hell broke loose. The riot squad from the Lytton Strachey Memorial Police Station arrived and found itself unequal to quell a promiscuous free-for-all between the Gathering of Gloom, West Bloomsbury Gay Liberation Guerillas, the Finsbury Park *Cumann* of (Pending) Sinn Féin, the No. 69 Loyal Orange Lodge, and stragglers from the Amazon Battalion of Miss Fiona MacDrumnadrochit's Scottish Libertarian Volunteers.

Mercifully, before anyone drowned in a sea of blood, 6-year-old Rosemary Lyttle, the doe-eyed, peaches-and-cream complexioned judo prodigy, arrived on the scene with her 25-stone papa. As P.C. Lyttle blasted orders in Morse on his whistle, his agile child, sheepdog-fashion, tore into the mêlée and within five minutes had arrested and "braceleted" the lot. As the disturbers of the Queen's peace were led away, one of Constable Lyttle's colleagues foraged among the broken paving stones, hanks of hair and empty stout bottles for copies of *New Pornology* which he removed "for examination purposes." Another guardian of the law was alleged to murmur, as they marched off singing the "Z-Cars" theme, "These'll come in 'andy. The station rest room 'asn't been the same since the 'Super.' impounded our complete bound volumes of *Men Only*."

Only Mr. Roger Montmorency, the visionary High Moderator of the Assembly of Bloomsbury Heretics, was left behind among the débris. "Alas!" he sighed, as he swept the broken glass from the entrance of Humanist House, "this could set ecumenical sex education back by decade!"

THE USTASHI LEGACY

In case any reader should regard our recent item on "The Ustashi Menace" as melodramatic, we have subsequently read a Reuter report from Australia, where a 33-year-old Yugoslav recently hanged himself in Sydney. Milovar Sretenovic left a suicide note saying that he had been visited by two Ustashi members who threatened him with torture and death if he returned to his parents in Yugoslavia. The report concludes: "His note said that it was better to kill himself than let the Ustashi do it."

OBITUARY

Narsingh Narain

We deeply regret to announce the death on 31 August, from a cerebral haemorrhage, of Mr. Narsingh Narain

(b. 4 October 1898), the Chairman of the Indian Humanist Union.

Abe Solomon writes:

In the sudden death of Mr. Narsingh Narain, the humanist movement in India has suffered an irreparable loss. He was 74. In India this is supposed to be a ripe old age, but for all who knew him, and to his close friends, he was not at all old. Until the last he was active and at the peak of his intellectual faculties. At the time of his death he was in the midst of arranging the seminar on "Moral Education" to be held in Delhi in January 1973.*

Mr. Narsingh Narain was a highly respected officer in the Indian Civil Service. In spite of prospects of reaching a very high position in his career because of his exceptional abilities, he sought early retirement in order to devote himself entirely to promoting humanist ideas and the humanist movement. In 1960 he founded the Indian Humanist Union and since then worked unceasingly to build it up. He attended the world congresses of the International Humanist and Ethical Union in London, Oslo and Boston, and greatly impressed many with the excellent manner in which he presented his ideas and with his clarity of thought.

He was a humanist in thought, word and action; and was held in the greatest respect and affection by all who had the opportunity of knowing him. He led a modest and simple life at Naini Tal, in northern India, and has left his entire life's savings to the Humanist Endowment Fund (also founded by him) and to the humanist movement in India.

. . . *Oh, for the touch of a vanished hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still.*

*This seminar is the first event to be organised jointly by the three humanist organisations in India affiliated to the I.H.E.U., namely, the Indian Humanist Union (Naini Tal), the Radical Humanist Association (Delhi) and the Indian Secular Society (Bombay).

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

The Postmaster-General has given us notice that this journal, which was prosecuted by both Whig and Tory Attorneys-General as a newspaper, and which has for nine years been continuously registered for foreign transmission as a newspaper, is to be deprived of this privilege. We thank the Government for this piece of paltry and petty spite, which we shall do our best to defeat.

—Charles Bradlaugh in the *National Reformer*, 6 October 1872.

NINETY YEARS AGO

In defending ourselves we are defending the freedom of every heretic in England. If bigotry succeeds in punishing us it will continue its evil work. Its appetite will be whetted instead of appeased; for all history shows us that it grows by what it feeds on . . . Eternal vigilance is the price of freedom.

A blasphemy prosecution strikes at the very life of the Freethought movement. If we cannot publish what we like in our own papers, we may as well cease fighting and evacuate the field . . . We mean to fight with every possible weapon, going first to the armoury of law, and afterwards, if need be, to the armoury of reason . . . If the jury acquits us, or fails to bring in a verdict, the Blasphemy Laws will be doomed to a speedy death. It will be something to succeed in breaking off the last letter on the freedom of the press, and that is what we hope to achieve before the end of this struggle.

—G. W. Foote in *The Freethinker* ("Prosecuted for Blasphemy"), 8 October 1882.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

"... This implacable insistence on religious segregation of children from the earliest age has been, and still is, after more than 50 years, one of the most contentious of policies in Ulster; and has been responsible for much if not most of the mistrust, lack of cohesion and now slaughter and mutilation there of men, women and children... It seems also that the rest of us have to pay for it, and not only financially."

—The Duchess of Westminster, in a letter to the *Daily Telegraph* (28 September).

NEW B.H.A. CHAIRMAN

Derek Marcus, a 40-year-old "second generation" atheist, has been elected Chairman of the British Humanist Association. Mr. Marcus, an ophthalmic optician from London, is particularly concerned at the indoctrination of children in one particular religious belief, both in the county schools, and especially in the church schools; this, he says, "promotes an intolerance of other viewpoints—at its worst we see it in Northern Ireland." He would also like to see a more rational approach to the problems of the environment and conservation of world resources.

Barbara Smoker has been re-elected as Vice-Chairman of the B.H.A.

THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY
and
THE PROGRESSIVE LEAGUE

Weekend Conference: RELIGION IN THE SEVENTIES

Speakers:

LORD RAGLAN (National Secular Society)

JOHN CAPON (Editor, *Crusade*; former editor, *Church of England Newspaper*)

Lt. Col. GUNTER-JONES (Vice President, Buddhist Society)

HIGH LEIGH, HODDESDON, HERTFORDSHIRE
FRIDAY - SUNDAY, 3 - 5 NOVEMBER

Members of the N.S.S. or Progressive League: £6;
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Main booking list closes on 27 October: after that date bookings will be accepted only at the organisers' discretion and there will be a surcharge of 50p.

Full details and booking forms available from

N.S.S., 103 BOROUGH HIGH STREET, LONDON, SE1 1NL

Telephone: 01-407 2717

CHAPMAN COHEN: A CRITICAL REVIEW

F. A. RIDLEY

Chapman Cohen (1868-1954) took over the leadership of the secular movement on the death of G. W. Foote. He remained Editor of The Freethinker from 1915 to 1951, and President of the National Secular Society from 1915 to 1949. F. A. Ridley, the writer of this article, was himself N.S.S. President from 1951 to 1962, and his name is familiar to at least two generations of Freethinker readers. (Ed.)

I must start by stating frankly that I never belonged to Chapman Cohen's personal circle. Like so many of my generation, I knew him mainly through his articles in *The Freethinker* and through his numerous publications. I also heard him in debate upon several occasions, though unfortunately I missed the particular debates that are said to have been his most scintillating excursions into the arena of public controversy: his two verbal encounters with that modern successor of Mr. Facing-Both-Ways, the late Dr. C. E. M. Joad.

I took over the front-page article of *The Freethinker* in Chapman Cohen's lifetime, and so became the (no doubt unworthy) successor of G. W. Foote and Cohen himself in that capacity.—I never tried to copy the inimitable style of either of them! I also spoke once under Mr. Cohen's chairmanship, but in general I approach the subject from a purely impersonal angle. Accordingly, this critical appreciation must be regarded as mainly objective in character.

Chapman Cohen and modern Freethought

In the development of the British Freethought movement, Chapman Cohen occupied a distinctive, indeed a unique place. First, he was a freethinker pure and simple; unlike Thomas Paine and Charles Bradlaugh he played no part in the contemporary evolution of radical politics. He wrote



Chapman Cohen

nothing remotely resembling Paine's *Rights of Man*, or Bradlaugh's *Impeachment of the House of Brunswick*. All Cohen's work was confined to the critical assessment of religious concepts and dogmas, and of the moral and social effects of such doctrines. In this restricted, but highly concentrated field he was undoubtedly a past master; his range of operations was strictly limited, but no one could dispute his outstanding authority in that field.

I would imagine that he was not an encyclopaedic scholar of the calibre, say, of his great freethinking contemporaries, J. M. Robertson and Joseph McCabe. Cohen probably could not have written a masterpiece of scholarship like Robertson's *Pagan Christs*, or a literary masterwork like McCabe's *Peter Abelard*. What is perhaps Cohen's most important book, *Materialism Restated*, represents a permanent, and certainly original contribution to freethought.

rather than to professional literature or to technical scholarship. However, Chapman Cohen's main contribution to the literature of religious dissent is to be found in the innumerable articles that he contributed to *The Freethinker* for a generation, and in the unique stream of pamphlets and booklets that poured from his pen. These were outstanding and were all distinguished by two pre-eminent characteristics, to which Cohen has left no comparable successor: a quite unmatched subtlety of thought, expressed with an unequalled lucidity of style.

Chapman Cohen possessed, as did none of his contemporaries, nor anyone apparently since, an incredible skill in building up an acorn of argument into a majestic tree of logic. It represented an art, rather mediaeval than modern, and I remember once writing (whilst Cohen was alive) that had he lived during the "Ages of Faith" he would either have been burnt alive as an arch-heretic or would have been canonised as a doctor of the "Universal Church." Mr. Cohen would surely have made a superb theologian—a master of scholastic subtlety, had he only been endowed with the "Gift of Faith"! Incidentally, in this connexion, he never fell into the mistake of regarding his Christian opponents as invariably morons. He told me personally that he greatly admired the intellectual gifts of some of the old pre-Darwinian theologians; his admiration for one such, Bishop Berkeley, is repeatedly shown in his extant writings.

Cohen and the Secular movement

Chapman Cohen, however, was not only a brilliant writer and debater, but he was also a public figure: President of the National Secular Society, in which he occupied a dominant position for a generation. Personally, I regard his long ascendancy as a mixed blessing, unequal in its effects.

Cohen's personal influence on the content of current N.S.S. propaganda was excellent: he raised it from a doubtless necessary, but mainly negative brand of biblical criticism (which sometimes actually appeared to accept the unscientific premises of current evangelical orthodoxy—Jonah's "whale" is a notable case in point!) to a positive historical and philosophical critique, of religious doctrine in general, and of theism in particular. However, on the sociological side his leadership had more dubious effects. He appeared to regard contemporary political issues primarily as an observer, and allowed the radical and republican aspects of secularism, so prominently emphasised by his predecessors Bradlaugh and Foote, to fade into virtual desuetude. This appears to have been on the whole a mistaken policy, with generally unfortunate results in the context of time. Particularly, one can add, for an organisation which continued to describe itself as "Secularist," and not merely as "anti-religious."

The relevance of Cohen today

Whether Chapman Cohen was one of the immortals is open to doubt. It could perhaps, be held that his sphere in the annals of militant freethought, unlike those of Paine and Bradlaugh, was too limited (one must leave such final judgements to posterity, which alone can decide them). Be that as it may, Cohen was a unique figure in his day and way: an original thinker of outstanding ability, and a writer of incomparable lucidity.

A final point: in our present epoch of universal muddle, endless confusion and meaningless dialogues, the sharp wit and penetrating logic that were Cohen's outstanding gifts were never more necessary. We could do with another Cohen today, but such men, unfortunately, do not appear twice.

terms in books, its simulation on the stage and its presentation in a work of art. Why, Dr. Cole wanted to know, is an acceptable thing rendered unacceptable when it becomes, by the artistic process, second-hand? (pp. 71-72).

No doubt the opposers did make "a conscious distinction between the sex act in performance and in depiction." But the relevant distinction, which they may not actually have made, though they certainly should have done, is between doing and displaying. For there is nothing in the least inconsistent in being all for lots of it, and even for all sorts, in the privacy of the bedroom; while still objecting to the same things being either done or simulated on the public stage. Barber follows Cole's question immediately with his own comment: "Merely by raising this one point we can see how difficult it is to regard the suppression of pornography as anything more than an expression of sexual fear, of a belief that sex is a source of shame and guilt and is fundamentally regrettable" (p. 72). But it is not difficult at all—once we are seized of the correct and crucial distinction—to regard a disapproval of public displays of—say—defaecation as something more than an expression of defaecatory fear.

Later, in the final chapter, Barber supposes "we happened to stumble on a copulating couple." He surmises: "We would be embarrassed because we had accidentally invaded their privacy, and possibly excited by our own sexual response to what they were doing, but we would be unlikely to condemn them or our witnessing of the act as pornographic." True. But Barber then suggests that there cannot, therefore, be anything obnoxious about the same

REVIEWS

BOOKS

PORNOGRAPHY AND SOCIETY by D. F. Barber.
Skilton, £1.95.

This is a polemic against laws for the suppression of pornography; and, as such, it will no doubt appeal to most readers of *The Freethinker*. Nevertheless, it is a slight and rather shoddy book, which has almost nothing to offer to those who already have a general inclination towards some fairly liberal position. It is, for instance, altogether typical that, though the author is fond of quoting what he takes to be wise words from chosen authorities, he rarely indicates what are the claims of these authorities to our respect; and only once gives a proper reference for any such quotation (pp. 130-131).

What I regretted most throughout was a failure to make, and to come to terms with, the fundamental distinction between what may or should be done in private and what may or should be done in public. Thus Barber reports "a recent Cambridge Union Debate on the motion 'Pornography should never be forbidden'," in which, he tells us:

Dr. Martin Cole made the very valid point that the opposers of the motion made a conscious distinction between the sex act in performance and in depiction. No doubt . . . all those who oppose this motion would approve of sex. What they disapprove of is its photographic record, its description in non-euphemistic

(Continued on next page)

performance staged in a 'live sex show.' He says, ironically: "To pay money to watch two people copulate introduces the pornographic element, apparently" (p. 172). Yet, whatever the merits or demerits of the essentially contested concept of pornography, it is absurd to suggest that there are no important non-financial differences: between, on the one side, a couple enjoying each other in private, and having their privacy invaded unintentionally; and, on the other side, a couple putting on a public sex show, in order to attract an audience of eager voyeurs.

Two minor points. First, the Italian title of Machiavelli's masterpiece was *Il Principe*; and not *Il Principio*, as it is given in the quotation from Anthony Burgess (p. 157). It is much better not to show off the knowledge which you have not got. Second, Barber has the bad habit—too common in our sociologically mindless age—of introducing the word 'society' on every possible or impossible occasion: occasions when it is either altogether redundant or would be better replaced by the concrete 'we' or 'people.' For example: "society must examine the whole question of pornography"; and "the tendency in society at the moment is to cut off the tip of the iceberg" (both, with two or three others, on p. 170).

ANTHONY FLEW

TO SEEK A HUMANE WORLD.

Edited by Howard Radest. Pemberton Books, 75p.

The Proceedings of the Fifth Congress of The International Humanist and Ethical Union make curious reading. On the one hand, a staunch old-fashioned liberal like Jo Grimond can call for a new broad-based populism and an end to bureaucracy; and on the other, the American linguistic philosopher Noam Chomsky acidly dismisses electoral politics as irrelevant, demanding instead a decentralised libertarian socialism.

Underlying many of the contributions is a sense of bewilderment at the backfiring of many traditional humanist goals. Thus, "self-realisation" of the individual sounds very well, and I remember myself, not long ago, arguing against right-wing friends up and down half the pubs in London that it was the duty of the government—any government—to create a society in which every individual would have the fullest possible chance to develop himself. But what if the self-realised individual, with his car and high standard of living, then pollutes the environment? And what if his material comforts are purchased at the expense of the rest of the world, by keeping them poor? And who is to blame—the individual, or society, or the government? Is it hypocritical for me to drive to work each morning, as I do, and profess concern about pollution? How do we square the idea of individual fulfilment with the problem of enforcing social responsibility?

Part of the trouble is that modern humanism attempts to wear two different hats at once. There is the old hat, donned by those who still uphold as an ideal the free-thinking, scientifically-minded, liberated *individual*. And there is the new hat, worn by the collectivists who believe in sweeping social change and the fully planned economy. Barry Commoner, in particular, is one humanist trying to have it both ways. For him, pollution and environmental collapse is caused by technology and the associated misuse of science. Elsewhere in his writings, he calls for radical social, political and economic change, since the present economic set-up cannot furnish the kind of socially responsible technology that he thinks is necessary to restore faith in science and deal with the assault on the environment.

Yet, at the same time, he pins his trust on men of "great moral force," such as Linus Pauling and Bertrand Russell, to show the way. The clear-thinking, emancipated individual, having been expelled from his citadel by the forces of collectivism, now enters by the back door.

The changes needed to solve the environmental crisis will have to be the responsibility not of men of great moral force, but of governments. And it is here, it seems to me, that older notions of what humanism is all about may still have an important role to play. For if the power of government is to be extended yet further, we need the vigorous energy of a Jo Grimond or a Ritchie-Calder to combat the insidious growth of bureaucracy. Calder's contribution, "Science and Human Needs," is certainly the most incisive of the whole collection. Citing as his main example the chaos caused by a power failure along the eastern seaboard of the United States in 1965, Calder comments that we have become dangerously over-dependent on "impersonalised systems" controlled by computers.

The computer seems to be Calder's main target. Its phenomenal capacity to store and retrieve information makes it a potentially grave threat to liberty, as it enormously enhances the power of bureaucrats whose passion for cataloguing and filing us has made form-filling just about the only growth industry we have. Worse, the computer has removed, in too many cases, our power to make independent judgments. People have already lost their bank credit facilities, and even their jobs, through computer errors. And since software technology has developed to the point where computers can readily converse with each other, the error of one machine is spread rapidly—and irrevocably—throughout the system.

Having myself worked as a computer programmer, I can endorse Calder's scepticism about the stock defence offered by some computer people to his charges. The cliché is that if you put garbage into the machine, garbage is what you will get out of it. In other words, the computer can do only what it is programmed to do, and "systems errors" of the kind discussed by Calder are the responsibility of human beings, and therefore remediable. This is true, but irrelevant. There is the practical problem of ascertaining responsibility for a particular error in the program. And computer experts, like others, are highly reluctant to surrender any of the technical ground they have won in developing their information storage and retrieval systems. A further difficulty in finding a solution to this potential "big brother" aspect of computers is the all-prevalent mystique that surrounds these machines, as Calder points out: "The computer says so, so it must be right!"

However, an anti-scientific, anti-technological Luddism would be a highly inappropriate response. Computers offer enormous benefits to mankind, if used properly, as does the revolution in biology which may greatly increase people's control over their own heredity, through the choice of sex of their children and the drastic reduction in genetic defects. The problem is, as Calder and other contributors point out, that we do not have a working ethic in this sphere; to what extent is the application of science through technology harmful? Individual scientists, working in their various specialised disciplines, may see their own discoveries as contributions to human knowledge. But what about the collective moral responsibility of scientists? Who decides whether a particular technological breakthrough may have the most undesirable consequences?

An approach to the problem must first identify its components. As well as the traditional *bêtes-noires* of humanist

thought, ignorance, irrationalism and bad social institutions, there is the drive to "self-fulfilment," expressed through the acquisition of wealth. It is now widely recognised that economic growth in the affluent West cannot continue indefinitely without stringent measures to control pollution and curb wasteful consumption of scarce natural resources. This may well be the most serious long-term challenge facing the humanist movement. Howard Radest observes, in his introduction, that the humanist values of reason and what he calls "sympathy" must now seek to enlarge their referents. Along with the traditional humanist objectives of sharing wealth and power more equally, and bringing about a more integrated world order, must come a growing awareness of the potential evils of science and technology. And, moreover, an acceptance of the restraints that society will have to impose—most obviously, and most immediately on the motor car.

Here the wheel turns full circle. We all know the problems, but what can the individual do? In the final essay in this book, J. P. van Praag urges humanists to sharpen their conceptions and convictions. The central humanist quest is to give meaning to life—a function it has taken over from organised religion. In this context, humanists must clearly articulate their criticisms of a society dominated by bureaucracy and organisation, and oppose to these evils the values of personal participation, social commitment and the will to mutual understanding. These first of all have to be realised in personal relations, and then universalised. Unfortunately, what is not clear in all this is how these commendable aspirations and values are to be expressed in political terms, or embodied in political programmes designed radically to transform society. It may be significant that Radest describes the "radical pre-supposition" of humanist politics as the root of a humanistic *faith* that "the people both ought to, and can, rule even in a complex world." Still, as this book makes clear, the locus of the humanist struggle has shifted away from the battle of "isms," which are superbly irrelevant, towards the new ground of fighting for a humane world against those many forces, "including the ones inside ourselves, that work towards its impossibility."

PHILIP HINCHLIFF

THEATRE

ZIGGER ZIGGER by Peter Terson. Shaw Theatre.

THE APPRENTICES by Peter Terson. Jeannetta Cochrane Theatre.

GOOD LADS AT HEART by Peter Terson. Jeannetta Cochrane Theatre.

This year, instead of presenting a new Terson play the National Youth Theatre has decided to put on three of what it considers his best creations in the last five years, and which have proved his most popular. Though—as far as I know—Terson has published no "Damn you, England" manifestoes from the South of France, promoted no well-publicised fiascoes in "workers' theatre," and is largely unknown to smart society or television chat shows, he is one of the most interesting playwrights of his generation. It is said that since the Berlin festival of 1967 he has become better known to German than to British audiences (which will surprise no one who knows his work). In an age which has launched many mediocrities on the strength of their youth, a Northern accent or a "working-class

vision" it is the more surprising that Terson, who has a special knowledge of all three and an ability to transmute this knowledge into art, should not have received more popular acclaim. Certainly all his N.Y.T. shows, and especially *Zigger Zigger*, have been widely acclaimed, but somehow the gilt rubs off the gingerbread when the summer season is over.

Of his youth canon Michael Croft, the imaginative and energetic director of the N.Y.T., especially likes *The Apprentices*, while the author himself prefers *Good Lads at Heart*. I can sympathise with both of these judgements and also with the popular preference for *Zigger Zigger*. The first has the best story line, the second the best dramatic unity, while the last, with its huge cast of singing, swirling, blaspheming tribalism, is the best "theatre." All of them have a strong central character, marvellous vignettes among the supporting rôles, and a great sense of atmosphere, respectively of Northern factories, Borstal institutions and football crowds. Though written as recently as 1968, *The Apprentices*, which Terson admits owes much to his own youthful romancing, seems to me to have dated most. Part of the ferment of our industrial life has come about because the proletarian "revolution" has advanced further and faster than most people thought possible a few years ago, so that today (at least in factories in the Midlands and the South) "hands" have more privileges than "staff" and supervisors are paid considerably less and have correspondingly lower social status than many of the men they are supposed to be supervising. That said, this play is probably truest to the disappointments, failures, yet coming to terms with life that are abiding human experiences. *Good Lads at Heart* is a wonderful picture of an enclosed community (I wish Terson would set a play in a monastery) but such a life is still very much a minority one. *Zigger Zigger* is more of a farce. It has the sharpest satirical comment and the most sentimental and unlikely ending. Even if Harry Philton were to tire of his life as a school drop-out and football tearaway and, under the influence of his industrious sister and brother-in-law, decide to learn a trade, he would, I am afraid, find he was already too old and poorly qualified. But I enjoyed the wicked caricatures that beset his path, especially the youth careers officer, the recruiting sergeant and the trendy vicar who proclaims that God has forsaken the altar to take up residence in the goal-mouth. A very courageous sketch is of the racial backchat between Zigger, Harry and their girlfriends, and two West Indian girls and a West Indian bus conductor, who finally exit to a song-and-dance routine based on what in my youth used to be known as "Bongo, bongo, bongo, I don' wanna leave the Congo." This contrasts markedly with the "Sidney Poitier" negro graduate in *The Apprentices*.

Most of the parts in the Terson plays are for boys, and he is well served by such young actors as Dave Moran, Karl Howman and Antony Conaboy in long and demanding rôles. But the acting I particularly remember is that of Carolyn Pickles and Susan English, two machine minders who skilfully capture the very difficult transition from teenybop to woman. Whether dealing with the social realism of *The Apprentices* or the surrealism of *Zigger*, Christopher Lawrence designs and Michael Croft directs with deftness and sureness.

The season is so short that it is likely to be over when this notice appears. If so I simply urge readers to look out for the National Youth Theatre next year.

DAVID TRIBE

THE BALLYGOMBEEN BEQUEST by John Arden and Margaretta D'Arcy. 7.84 Company, The Bush Theatre Club. (Now on tour.)

John Arden's new play is subtitled "An Anglo-Irish Melodrama," which is true up to a point. It concerns an English absentee landlord who exploits his property in Galway by renting to tourists and keeping the sitting tenants as cheap labour. Here is a confrontation between villain and hero, but it is a convention of melodrama that all will eventually be well in the best of all possible worlds; and in the second half of the play Arden sharply breaks with this convention. The tenants' son has become 'politically aware,' resists eviction and is betrayed to the British Army, whereupon you see as vicious a piece of torture as you could wish (or not wish).

The play deals with capitalist-worker and colonialist-exploited relationships rather than with the current maze of tragic socio-religious problems in Northern Ireland. Arden deals with the white, black and even blacker. His earlier plays were so ambiguous that his audiences were puzzled by the author's own views, but now he hurls his beliefs at them with the force of a machine-gun. I feel that the result is a loss of subtlety (but in fairness to Arden, his earlier audiences did not seem to appreciate this in his earlier plays). Where his earlier plays contained poetic prose and convincing ballads, we now have doggerel:

"I do believe it's half past eight,
I had not thought 'twas quite so late."

The 7:84 Company are about to tour this play round England and they should provide a provocative evening to their audiences. They are clearly a talented company all able to act, sing and produce music in a wide variety of ways; in true co-operative style they list no director. The Bush Theatre, whose future programme looks very interesting, is one of the many pub theatres sprouting outside the West End. It is informal and 'matey': "Please take your coats off, it gets very hot in here," we were requested before the play began. "Is that all?" one of the audience cheekily retorted. "Please yourself!" But, as with many West End theatres, the audience seemed more 'Hampstead' than local and I doubt whether they would be taking off to join their Trade Unions and expand their political consciousness, which is presumably the aim of both the authors and players of *The Ballygombeen Bequest*.

JIM HERRICK

AUTUMN SUNRISE IN CUMBERLAND

An autumn stillness in the air of morning shrouds
High mountain peaks caressed by dull grey clouds
Rising like ghostly ranges changing shape
Against a clear, cold, opal-tinted sky;
Apollo's sombre cloak tufted with angry red,
As if some wounded bird while flying overhead
And scarcely brushing Scafell's rugged cape
Let fall its blood-smear'd plumage passing by.

CHRIS HARRISON

LETTERS

Nihilism, Triviality and Freethought

I was surprised that Antony Flew recommended Professor Duncan Williams's *Trousered Apes*, in preference to my own *Masks of Hate*. I respect Professor Williams's book, but there is no doubt at all that it rests on the invocation of traditional, Christian, paternalistic values in its discrimination against the nihilism and moral inversion of contemporary culture. As I said in my review in *Books and Bookmen*, there is a quest for meaning, even in the blackest nihilism of our time. Our problem is to understand that meaning, not to seek to put the clock back.

I have tried to understand, by what Professor Flew calls "psychologising": I believe that in the 'schizoid diagnosis' we can get to the root of the impulse of modern man to turn against himself, and to deny his own nature. This analysis applied to culture is immensely complex. It makes, I am afraid, for long and somewhat tortuous books—as might, say the analysis of fascism (which is related to the problem).

Today, because of the trivialities of television debate and of the media in general, people cannot be bothered with long and complex books. In this situation it seems to me extraordinary for someone in *The Freethinker* to tell readers not to read a book—which has been found by some people, like Colin Wilson, to be important and relevant. However, I suppose I must be content to get reviewed at all—as I have not been in the *New Statesman*, *Times*, *Listener* and other magazines.

DAVID HOLBROOK.

Where Have I Gone Wrong?

Mr. Little's letter (23 September) criticising my "World Malaise in History" take us back to April 1969 when I criticised Mr. G. L. Simons's "China's Industrial Advance." None of the subsequent replies ventured to explain how certain predictions I made over the period 1953-1969—recapitulated in "Effective Birth Control: the New Atomic Bomb" (8 February 1969)—came to pass ten years afterwards.

Perhaps Mr. Little, drawing on his experience as a practical workman, close to nature, the elements and mankind's achievements, can explain this. For my part, although I am in contact with engineers, technicians, and practical workmen in four countries, I am an old man over 50 and perhaps in the same case as was H. G. Wells.

Also, can Mr. Little explain how H. G. Wells, when suffering from old age (he was 67 when he wrote *The Shape of Things to Come*), illness, or "elitism"—or perhaps all three, was able to write, in 1933, the paragraph quoted in my article "The World Malaise in History," and beginning "As the gravity of economic and political problems . . . was abundantly exploited"? As a sheer practical, brilliant, concise and workmanlike summing up of our present situation in 1972, it is unbeatable.

Lastly, if Mr. Little turns to my own very modest "World Malaise in Space" (25 March 1972) he will find some practical, workmanlike figures and reasoning to check. Could he give a practical, workmanlike statement showing where I have gone wrong?

R. READER.

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Corrections and Postscript

The fifth line of Cecily Bomberg's poem "Funfair Accident" (published last week) should be read as ". . . You were calling . . ." and not "are calling."

Apologies to Brian Khan for misspelling his name (letters last week).

Pat Sloan's letter should have read "One of the main failings" not "feelings".

Full references for Judex's quotations may be obtained by writing c/o the Editor. (Ed.)