

IT'S THE GRAND ANTI-ABORTION SHOW!

OR, DOGMA VERSUS COMMON HUMANITY

The Lane Committee is at present deliberating on the evidence that has been submitted to it on the workings of the 1967 Abortion Act. Meanwhile, the opponents of legalised abortion have been far from idle. The religious press has been carrying sickly headlines such as "The happy alternative to abortion" and "Abortion: bishop's anxiety"; there have been anti-abortion "drives" in Jersey and Guernsey (where the 1967 Act does not even apply), and on 25 March there is to be held in Manchester what the *Catholic Herald* calls a "White flower rally against abortion", for which the promoters are prophesying a turnout of more than 84,000. "No doubt a large number of people will turn out on 25 March", Diane Munday, the general secretary of the Abortion Law Reform Association, told *The Freethinker*, "but this does not mean that there are any more people against abortion than there ever were. It just means that the Catholic Church and other organs of reaction are marshalling their troops and making a great deal of noise. The organised opposition is recognising that the vast weight of solid evidence sent in to the Lane Commission does not support their case."

A woman's right to choose

No sensitive human being likes abortion; it is tragic that any woman should find herself with an unwanted pregnancy, but in an imperfect world—particularly one in which there is plenty of opposition to a rational and responsible approach to birth control—such things happen. When they do, the woman concerned should surely have the right to decide whether to continue with the pregnancy or no, and not be forced to carry an unwanted child to full term merely to satisfy the dogmas of theologians. As the National Secular Society said, in its submissions to Lane: "The right of a pregnant woman to choose either to bear and cherish her child, or to have the pregnancy swiftly and safely terminated, should receive first priority."

Most of the successful social reforms that humanists championed during the 1960s have been accepted by the public. There have been moves from time to time to rescind the abolition of the death penalty, but this reaction bears little comparison with the vociferous organised attack on the Abortion Act which Diane Munday believes owes more to the internal politics of the Catholic Church than to any real public opposition. "I think that the political reasoning of the Catholic hierarchy on this is twofold," she explained. "Firstly, they have been attacked by the laity and the hierarchy in other countries for not organising their opposition sooner; and secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the issue is deliberately being used as a way of healing the divisions within the Church that arose over the contraception controversy. The Church needed a rallying point over which its members could forget their differences and work together for a common end. In abortion they found this cause."

Mrs. Munday is aware that there are also non-Catholics in the anti-abortion campaigns, and agrees that their reasons may be good enough for such people not having abortions themselves. "But," she added, "they are not good enough reasons for their wishing to impose their view on the majority of the community that does not have the same emotional hang-ups."

"If opponents of abortion are not to put the clock

back," says a recent ALRA leaflet, "vigilant watch must be kept on the working of the Act and all attempts to repeal or restrict it must be vigorously resisted." To this end the Association has issued an urgent appeal for subscriptions and donations.* We hope that supporters of the 1967 Act who live within easy reach of Manchester will see to it that the white flower brigade do not get all the publicity on 25 March.

* ALRA's address is 22 Brewhouse Hill, Wheathampstead, Herts. (The minimum subscription is £2.)

CALL FOR INTEGRATION OF SECTARIAN SCHOOLS IN LONDON

At their Annual General Meeting on 17 February the Greater London Regional Council of the Labour Party passed a resolution which—among other things—called for the 1944 Education Act to be amended so as to provide for the integration of Voluntary Aided and Church Schools into the State system.

PATRICIA KNIGHT writes:

The argument against Church Schools was that they were incompatible with a comprehensive system of education. What was surprising was the volume of support from most of the delegates for this proposal. This is a useful corrective to those, even in the humanist movement, who urge 'moderation' and claim that Church Schools can never be made a relevant political issue. One delegate who favoured Church Schools was booed and asked when he was going to get his Papal Knighthood!

The Labour leader on the Inner London Education Authority, winding up the debate, was also very compromising, saying that the I.L.E.A. could do nothing as they were bound by the 1944 Act. Nevertheless, the resolution was passed, with only a few delegates voting against. It is worth noting that in this respect the London Labour Parties are more radical than last year's A.G.M. of the British Humanist Association, which voted that a motion calling for the conversion of Church Schools into County Schools "be not put".

THE FREETHINKER

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NEW ZEALAND: EXPULSION APPEAL FAILS

Readers will be sorry to learn that Wendy Rich and Helen Leonard have lost their case in the New Zealand Supreme Court. They had sought to have quashed their expulsion from Christchurch Girls' High School last year after they had organised a boycott of the school assembly as a protest against compulsory religious services.

During cross-examination the school's headmistress admitted that the first time she had ever told pupils they could get exemption from religious observances was *after* the last walkout by thirty girls on 13 October. She also admitted there was no legal requirement for a pupil to produce proof of parental consent before excusing herself from these services. "The practice had been established by custom."

"Mutiny"

Refusing the girls' application for a writ of *certiorari* quashing their expulsions, Mr. Justice Wilson said: "A school board which glosses over the instigation of this mutiny in its school, and fails to act firmly and to remove the instigators from further participation in the school's authority, is in my opinion failing to exercise its duty to manage and control the school." Though he also spoke of the girls' "initiative, a degree of determination and independence".

Back here in 'permissive' Britain we would of course never expel school pupils for the 'mutiny' of demanding freedom of conscience; we only expel them for really *serious* offences—such as a boy kissing his girlfriend in the playground (as happened recently!)

(Sources: *Auckland Star*, 3 and 8 February 1973; *Freethinker* 4, 11 and 18 November 1972).

FILTHY RUMOURS

We name the guilty ones!

Scurrilous and defamatory rumours have recently been circulated by Dr. Ilych Haczetmann and certain other members of the Gathering of Gloom's 'Chastity Commission' to the effect that the editor of this journal has accepted a "substantial fee" to take what has been described as an "an active rôle" in *Naked Tonsil*, the new, educational film epic currently being shot in Sweden by Professor Borman Mohl (the "Robespierre of the Sexual Revolution") and his talented photographer brother, Marcel.

NEWS

Whilst it may be true that the Editor is on occasion not averse to a little oral sex, we warn all concerned that these depraved, vile and disgusting allegations are wholly unfounded, and, if they continue, we shall have no hesitation in placing the matter in the hands of our solicitors. (Needless to add, we should not, however, refuse a modest consideration for puffing the said film and similar profound artistic productions in these columns from time to time.)

T.P.S. ANNIVERSARY

October next will mark the tenth anniversary of the Thomas Paine Society, and to celebrate the event the Society hopes to arrange a dinner, in London, towards the end of the year. The Hon. Secretary* of the Thomas Paine Society would like to hear from any *Freethinker* readers who would like to attend this dinner, and if the proposed function receives sufficient support, further details of venue, date and cost will be given.

* Mr. R. W. Morrell, 23 Pinders House Road, Nottingham NG2 3EG.

HOMOSEXUALITY

The United States Women's Army Corps is initiating discharge proceedings against two teenage members because they have gone through a form of marriage to each other. Army regulations apparently decree that homosexuals are "undesirable"; though we should like to know just why.

Meanwhile, the Campaign for Homosexual Equality is concerned—by the sound of things, with good reason—at the existence in Spain of prison camps, at Huelva and Badajoz, for the "readjustment" of homosexuals.† No doubt the Franco régime has "ways of making" its subjects heterosexual!

† *CHE* February issue (28 Kennedy Street, Manchester M2 4BG).

PRIZES ! PRIZES ! PRIZES !

Our loyal gaze has fallen upon an advertisement inserted in a recent number of *New Society* on behalf of the B.B.C. It announces a prize or prizes of £1,000 "for outstanding instrumental musical work to celebrate 1,000 years of Monarchy at Bath" [*sic*]. We had no idea that Bath had had its own kings and queens for so long.

This particular celebration may have something to do with the supposed thousandth anniversary of the English Monarchy, based in several well-appointed residences scattered across Britain (but not Bath). If so, we are impelled by the respectful and humble example of the founder‡ of this journal also to announce the G. W. Foote Memorial Royal Music Competition. The theme for this year's Competition will be: Raspberry in A sharp minor for strings, voices, klaxon, milk-bottle, bean tin, pickle jar, air-raid siren, hyena and two tomcats. The first prize, consisting of a free copy of *The Freethinker*, will be awarded to the best piece of original work on this theme received at this office by 30 January 1974. The editor's decision will be final, and the winning entry will be reverently forwarded to the B.B.C. with our compliments.

‡ G. W. Foote was secretary of the London Republican Club.

AND NOTES

ITALIAN BLASPHEMY LAW UPHELD

The Italian Constitutional Court has ruled that Italy's anti-blaspemy law, which provides for imprisonment and fines of up to £80 for those who offend "symbols and persons" venerated by the Catholic Church, is not unconstitutional; and the court has also recommended that this law be extended to cover other religions as well.

The learned judges who gave this verdict are, we hope, having recurrent nightmares of being spat upon by the gallant redshirts of 1849, 1860 and 1867, whose 'blasphemy'—and that of the great atheist and anti-clerical, Garibaldi—was to risk life and limb for the redemption of Italy by taking up arms against the temporal power of the Papacy and its hacks. Their descendants have shown their gratitude by signing a Concordat—and now this treachery!

CATHOLICISM IN AMERICA

According to a report by Dermot Purgavie in the *Daily Mail* (31 January), the Catholic Church is now generally believed to be the largest single corporation in the United States, with assets amounting to about £33,000 million.

The Church is the largest private property owner in America, with possessions ranging from vineyards to radio stations. The American Jesuits are believed to have an annual income of £100 million, and even the so-called Poor Sisters of St. Francis Seraph have assets of £48 million. Despite this, Catholic political lobbies are hard at work pressing for state aid for their church schools and, curiously enough, many of the dioceses "are on the brink of bankruptcy".

BEST VATICAN HUMBUG

A fine piece of Vatican humbug is the recent announcement in the official *Osservatore Romano* to the effect that St. Antony the Abbot may now be invoked by environmentalists and others concerned by the modern problem of pollution. St. Antony has been made a sort of unofficial patron saint of ecology.

We would be rather more impressed by this move had the Catholic Church not waited so long before jumping upon this now fashionable band-waggon. The Catholic Church has consistently opposed contraception (and still does), one of the most important factors in influencing man's ability to form a balanced relationship with his environment, and further, as has been pointed out by Andrew Hale of the *Sunday Times*, "Many religious institutions and orders [in Italy] are large landowners and some have acquired reputations for favouring the building speculation that has scarred so many Italian cities."

Sooner or later the Church is also going to have to do an about-face on the question of what it at present terms "artificial" methods of birth control (that is to say, the ones which are really practicable). When it does, we shall doubtless read of a new patron saint of contraception. Perhaps *The Freethinker* should open a "book" for readers with gambling instincts—what odds on St. Origen, or St. Onan. At any rate, when the unchanging Church does

"reinterpret" its doctrine on this matter, we shall doubtless hear from the clerical press that family planning was all invented and pioneered by the early Christian Fathers and has no connexion whatever with vulgar atheists like Mill, Bradlaugh and Drysdale.

MISSIONARIES AND WILDLIFE

In the 'good old days', Christian missionaries used to attract the attention of 'primitive' peoples by gifts of glass beads and quinine tablets wrapped up in pictures of the Virgin Mary. The technique now being used in South America is to give the local Indians gifts of steel traps and firearms; these are then used to catch and kill ocelots and jaguars, two species of big cat which are already threatened with extinction because of over-hunting. The pelts end up as fur coats for rich 'civilised' ladies. According to *The Guardian's* Miscellany column (22 February), a protest against the distribution of these traps has already been issued by Carl Koford of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

CLERICAL POVERTY

At his enthronement on 10 March the new Bishop of Salisbury, the Right Rev. George Reindorp, said that it was a scandal that a parson should have to pay most of his expenses out of a "sacrificial" salary. "Our patronage system is a jungle," he added. "Too often our freehold is a stranglehold." He later pointed out that the Church of England was the only part of the Anglican Communion where the laity did not pay for their clergy. Has the good bishop forgotten that the Church of England is an established church, and is therefore financed, not merely by its own investments, but both directly and indirectly from the public purse? Even with charity status and royal patronage, the Lord does not provide quite as well as his flock might wish. Perhaps they should remember to sell all they have and give it to the poor.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY ANNUAL DINNER

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TO A LION FROM A MOUSE

Who loves shall suffer; no philosophy

Transmutes this law of jealous destiny;

Yet could a lover ever grudge the cost

Of love achieved—and peace and quiet lost?

SYLVIA WINCKWORTH

THE CHANGING FACE OF BRITISH POLITICS

F. A. RIDLEY

Towards the end of the Victorian era (1837-1901), Frederick Engels, socialist historian and Marxist sociologist, went on record with the notable comment that, in the contemporary Britain where he had resided for a generation, the traditional class-conflicts, normal in capitalist society, were apparently coming to an end. Only one class now functioned effectively in Britain, the bourgeois "middle class", so called because it was intermediate between the hereditary aristocracy and the also hereditary working-class. According to Engels, Britain had only one fundamental class, since it had a bourgeois aristocracy, a bourgeois middle-class and a bourgeois proletariat! All these formerly antagonistic classes now subscribed in an increasing measure to the fundamentally bourgeois political and economic ideology.

Since Engels made this notable comment, British political evolution and its resulting Parliamentary structure have proceeded steadily along the lines indicated by their perceptive German critic. One can summarise the fundamental character of this evolutionary process by noting that the two main parties, that have dominated the British political scene since the end of World War I, have steadily moved in opposite directions: the Tory Party to the left, and the Labour Party to the right. (The Liberal Party, that obvious relic of the nineteenth century, after a final blaze of glory prior to 1914, has been steadily eliminated.)

Changed class positions

As regards the two major parties, their transformation has been obvious, since at the beginning of the twentieth century the Tory Party represented the party pre-eminently of the aristocracy; whereas the Labour Party (founded in 1900 as the Labour Representation Committee) was equally obviously the party of the "working-class" (Marxist proletariat). Now, however, as we enter the last quarter of the twentieth century, the class position of both parties has completely changed. One might express the net result of this process by observing that the Tories have abandoned the aristocracy, whilst the Labour Party has equally discarded the working class.

When put in terms of personality, the present Tory leader, Heath, and his Labour opposite number, Wilson, are both essentially middle-class. Sir Alec Douglas-Home, originally the Fourteenth Earl of Home, was probably the last Prime Minister to emerge from the hereditary aristocracy. While on the Labour side, the late Aneurin Bevan, by social origin a working Welsh miner, was probably the last *bona fide* proletarian to aspire to the British Premiership. To paraphrase a Liberal contemporary of Engels (Sir William Harcourt), we are all bourgeois nowadays! Engels turned out to be a true prophet!

An interesting adjunct of this process is represented nowadays by the very problematic future of the British monarchy. Bourgeois democracy naturally tends towards republicanism (as in both the contemporary United States and Europe), and the current tendency in present-day Britain is certainly in the direction of a bourgeois republic. No longer buttressed by Divine Right, and no longer the glittering symbol of a far-flung empire, the British monarchy becomes increasingly functionless and an increasingly useless appendage of bourgeois society.*

Ideology follows class movement

Both political and economic ideologies follow the movement of classes. Whereas the nineteenth century was effectively dominated by "the Great Liberal Party" of Cobden and Gladstone, and by its economic ideology of unrestricted individual competition (*laissez-faire, laissez-aller*), the twentieth century has seen ideological evolution in a contrary direction. During the three-quarters of a century that separate us from the end of the Victorian era, the main parties in the State have (as I suggested above) moved in precisely opposite directions; the Tory Party has moved to the left, abandoning *laissez-faire* in the process (as even the Liberals had begun to do before 1914), whereas the Labour Party has jettisoned socialism at least in its nineteenth-century connotation as "the socialisation of the means of production, distribution, and exchange"; and has substituted its mildly reformist programme for any actual or potential socialist one. Only a few political fossils upon either side are left high and dry on their deserted beaches. On the Tory side, Enoch Powell and the Monday Club still revere the neglected ghost of Cobdenite Free Trade, along with a number of surviving groups of the extreme Left who still haunt the Marxist shrines; but as far as the main line of current political evolution is concerned, the end of political *laissez-faire* has been sounded. "We are all Socialists now", at least in the Fabian collectivisit sense of the term. Collectivism in some form or other has now come to stay, whether administered by Heath, Wilson, or by their future successors. This process has just reached its conclusion in the official adoption of collectivism by the Tory Party of Enoch Powell! The present Government's "freeze" perhaps represents a long, hard winter.

We are undoubtedly at the beginning of a new era; a topsy-turvy era to those who (like myself) arrived at political maturity in such a different political climate. But that age has now gone, probably for good. Things change even when, as at present, names still remain identical. The Tory leaders of my youth (such as Balfour and Curzon) would undoubtedly have regarded the present-day Tory Party as a socialist party. (What, no workhouses for the workers?) Whereas equally certainly the militant pioneers of the British Labour movement would have regarded the present-day Labour Party as a mere pale (or pink) reflection of "the Great Rosy Dawn" of socialism. "Times change", and political parties change with them. It is not only externally, along with the Common Market, that Great Britain enters a new era. Internally we also appear to be entering a perhaps prolonged era of state capitalism, in relation to whose economic realities the old party names become increasingly meaningless and their traditional differences become increasingly trivial.

* The evolution of the British monarchy really requires separate treatment; and I hope subsequently to devote another article to this subject.

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QUESTIONS OF CULTURAL FREEDOM AND SEX

DAVID HOLBROOK*

* David Holbrook is well-known as an educationalist, novelist and poet, and is at present writer-in-residence at Dartington Hall. He edited *The Case Against Pornography* and is author of *The Pseudo-Revolution* ("a critical study of extremist 'liberation' in sex"), both recently published by Tom Stacey.

Is it true that people coming out of *Oh! Calcutta!* are no more corrupted and depraved than when they went in? Suppose they had just been to a cockfight, or a fox hunt? Must they have the absolute 'right' to indulge voyeurism? And to see a girl "arch and present" her posterior and genitals to the audience for them to gloat on, with a lot of cant talk about 'freedom' in the script?

If 'freedom' is at stake, why do the cast shout at the audience, "I suppose you're wondering what she does when she has her period?" and "What do the men do when they get erections?" Why does one of the sketches have to show a man killing a woman by sexual intercourse (in the New York version)? Why is the piece so "nasty, infantile, and vicious", as Colin Wilson has said?

Let me take some questions about freedom and sex and suggest what my answers, as a rationalist and humanist, would be; and let us see if *Freethinker* readers can answer me.

1. *Is the 'release' of sexual phantasies beneficial and a contribution to the real sexual revolution of our time?*—Only if you follow Freudian psychology, which believes that men have a 'head of steam' or *id*-impulses, of an uneducable kind, which must be sublimated or released. This fundamentally pessimistic philosophy—that men can only be civilised by strict control—is, in fact, one shared with Pareto, Hobbes, Schopenhauer, Hitler and Mussolini. It belongs to natural scientism of the nineteenth century, and denies all capacities for care and concern, such as are emphasised in man by Melanie Klein and Harry Guntrip, by the existentialist psychotherapists like Rollo May, and by philosophers who are attending to man's subjective realities, such as Roger Poole and Viktor Frankl.

Positive value of shame

Erwin Straus, a thorough opponent of behaviourism and all its deterministic reductionism, says that the Freudian view that sexual looking has been badly inhibited in our culture rests on the pessimistic steam-engine concept, which holds that shame is simply a restriction that is best got rid of. In fact, Straus argues, shame is a positive protective device, which safeguards the lovers' capacity to go with time and creative love into unique sexual meeting. We dislike the voyeur intensely, if he tries to look at our private life, and the reason is that he is trying to objectify us, and make us into not-people, and people in control of his distaste for sexuality.

This is borne out by the views of Robert Stoller, who says that pornography must have a victim, and the looking of the voyeur is a hostile act of objectification. The people in pornography are always *under control* and subjected to a humiliation, by which we triumph over them. The public today watching sadistic sexual acts, and demanding the right to, is therefore indulging in and demanding the right to humiliate and exploit others.

Some, like Marcus, believe that people should be allowed to indulge their infantile phantasies. David Boadella, a

Reichian, says that in his experience as a therapist, such indulgence is likely only to fix people in infantile distortions of sex. Only if they see how infantile their hang-ups are can they begin to find real warm-hearted sexuality. Reich warned that the new permissiveness could be exploited by people who needed to live out their sick and sadistic fantasies. Marcuse warned of "repressive desublimation"—that is, a form of going to extremes of sexuality which could be worse than the old kind of repression, because it imprisons people in distorted attitudes to sex, and prevents their enjoyment of one another in "the natural embrace".

2. *Should not those who need to explore forbidden themes be allowed to do so, for their own good?*—There is no reason why ethical principles should not apply here as anywhere else. As Reich argued, the police are repressive if they interfere with the private enjoyment of individuals. But they are the servants of freedom, in so far as they protect individuals against child seduction or rape. When Brady wanted a tape of a dying child for his own sexual satisfaction, it is hardly to be argued that he should be allowed to make such a thing. De Sade said he had destroyed everything in his heart that interfered with his pleasures—and this is the sexual philosophy of the inhabitants of Broadmoor. Stirner, the egoistic nihilist, denied that one needs to feel concern for anyone, or for the "community"; but who would go so far, if any human future is to be envisaged? Yet is not *The Little Red Schoolbook* Stirnerism for children?

3. *Violence and delinquency are surely caused by bad housing, and other social conditions, not by the exploitation of sadism in films and television?*—It is true that many criminals come from poor homes, and that poor home conditions can be found behind some delinquents. But the proportion of mentally ill people is roughly the same in middle-class people, in African tribes, and in people from poor areas. There is always a proportion of people in any society who are so incapable of finding positive solutions to their problems—and so are likely to be encouraged in one way or another to resort to aggressive solutions. We know in school that it is the disturbed children from bad homes who get into trouble. But why put more stumbling blocks in the way of the weak?

In fact, in all affluent societies crime has increased—and crime seems to many a protest from a disturbed minority against the meaninglessness and immorality of the acquisitive society which promotes envy and hatred.

Turning from the social origins of crime to the question of violence in culture, there are several serious studies which suggest a connection. As Raymond Williams points out, there are about 7,000 acts of violence on American television every week; and this is the country where last year the murder rate rose by 30 per cent. The American psychologist Berkowitz has found that screen violence is copied, while others find screen sex is imitated in a masturbatory way, and causes aggressive feelings. The recent Report to the Surgeon-General of the United States on television violence found a "modest" connection between screen violence and violence in society.

Several psychologists and philosophers also believe that sexual scenes are likely to make people more liable to commit 'non-consensual acts' such as rape. Dr. Robert

Stoller, a leading American psycho-analyst, says that the main energy in pornography is hostility. When we look at a nude girlie or watch sexual acts we are taking from people something we feel they would not give voluntarily. In invading their privacy (as by watching them like a voyeur) we are raping them. We also reduce them to mere instruments of sensation, and so make them less human. Ernest Van Den Haag believes that the processes of feeling in pornography are the same as those in racism: only woman is the victim, rather than the Jew or negro. The basic feeling is contempt—and this he believes could lead to crime and other uncaring acts.

4. *Is it not simply 'natural' to look at nudes and sex?*—We all have a natural curiosity, and it is natural to enjoy the naked body in, say, swimming, or in private love-making. But it is not natural to dwell compulsively on nudity, as our culture does, for commodity purposes. The exploitation of sexuality for commerce reduces the most precious of life's gifts—as celebrated in the nude painting—to commonplace triviality.

As for sexual acts—it is the voyeur who wants to excite himself mentally by watching others make love. He is obsessed with the sexual organs, the functions and the words, and he hates love. He does not want to love another person, for their own sake, in privacy, and he wants to stay in a perpetual state of masturbatory sexual tension. This is a sick state, which goes with a sexual-emotional impotence; and yet it is the state which is the staple fare of our culture today. Its underlying energy is the energy of hate and the public exhibition, rather than privacy and love.

In devaluing people it reduces them to exhibited commodities, and so contributes to the same kind of dehumanisation as a materialistic society does. Today the 'Peeping Tom' act of a few sick old men is the basis of money-grabbing on a mass scale.

5. *Should we not be free to have sexual depiction of all kinds?*—The reason why we have sex and violence in our culture is an economic one, as E. J. Mishan says in *The Costs of Economic Growth*. We do not have enough freedom to be protected from those who wish to exploit our deepest anxieties for money. Those who control the 'media' are beyond our control, and we cannot prevent them from putting out the most perverted and cruel spectacles—with apparently calm indifference to the psychic effects. Yet children go to 'X' films and see magazines which are obscene—and the community, having been persuaded to accept this as 'freedom', is as indifferent.

A threat to democracy and freedom

In truth, because sadistic violence and sex express contempt for woman, for sexual love, and for humanity, this commercial exploitation of pseudosexuality threatens democracy, because this depends upon equality. It also threatens freedom, because the new forms of sensationalism inhibit people's capacity to find joy in relationships one with another.

There could be no greater betrayal of the original 'sexual revolution', which sought warm-heartedness and joy, than the present use of sex as if to give a sensational kick to a body that seems deadened—rather than the living body of a person in love. Its nihilism threatens imagination and creative vision, and thus the future of man, with cultural pollution.

As Ian Robinson says, pornography does not *cause* depravity or corruption; it *is* depravity and corruption. The audience coming out of *Oh! Calcutta!* have been indulging in depravity by depriving, with their own eyes, the actors and actresses of their human value and freedom.

OBITUARIES

Mr. R. G. Morton

Readers will be sorry to hear that Mr. Robert Morton died at his home at Howstrake Grange, Isle of Man, on 9 December last. He was 92.

Mr. Morton devoted a great deal of both time and money to good causes, such as the welfare of old people—two pensioners' club halls, which he helped finance, are named after him. In 1969 he gave a very valuable collection of manuscript books to the University of Liverpool. He was for many years a reader of *The Freethinker* and a member of the National Secular Society, and contributed most generously to both.

Mrs. OLIVE J. MORTON writes:

He had the death he would have wished—just sitting in his chair, and only poorly for three hours—no pain, and no trouble to anyone. After the cremation his ashes were sent to Landican Crematorium, in Wirral, not far from where we used to live.

Miss E. Twynam

We regret to announce the death recently of Miss Ella Twynam. She was 94.

R. W. MORRELL writes:

Ella Twynam came from a country family of marked radical outlook, and from an early age she came into contact with many of the radicals of the period. This influence she absorbed and after moving to London she became active in freethought and socialist circles. Her socialism was to evolve into anarchism; but, unlike so many secularists of the period, her growing interest in politics did not curb her active interests in freethought.

As a book collector she came into contact with the late Ambrose Barker, who also had a passion for books and built up what was probably the finest freethought collection in Britain. She collaborated closely with Barker both in his active freethought work in London and when he took upon himself the editorship of the anarchist paper *Freedom* for a time during the inter-war period.

Although active in secularist circles Miss Twynam never became a national figure, although her name would have become familiar to members of the National Secular Society through her pamphlet, *Peter Annet, 1693-1769*, published by the Pioneer Press many years ago. Recently she published privately an excellent monograph on John Toland (she owned a very fine collection of his very scarce works) that deserves wider recognition.*

As the close companion of Ambrose Barker she inherited his fine library and presented its Bradlaugh section to Northampton Public Library and its superb Thomas Paine section to Thetford Public Library, where it is now housed in a special room. Miss Twynam was also a founder member of the Thomas Paine Society.

Ella Twynam was a grand old lady who until the last retained an agile mind, and who liked to meet and converse with those who shared her outlook. She will be greatly missed by those who knew her.

* Copies of John Toland, *Freethinker* by Ella Twynam may be obtained (price 25p plus 3p postage) from G. W. Foote & Co. Ltd., 103 Borough High Street, London SE1 1NL. (Ed.)

THE LITTLE RED SCHOOLBOOK AND THE POLICE

RICHARD HANDYSIDE*

* Richard Handyside is to be the guest of honour at the National Secular Society's Annual Dinner later this month. This article first appeared in the February 1973 Newsletter of the Defence of Literature and the Arts Society; it is republished here by kind permission of Mr. Handyside and the D.L.A.S.

Much has been said and written about the outrageous obscenity of the prosecution of *The Little Red Schoolbook*, and I do not propose to discuss here the basic issue of censorship. Instead I propose to give a brief account of the events leading up to the prosecution, and in particular details of police behaviour, in the hope that readers may find this interesting and even perhaps useful, should they have the misfortune to find themselves in a similar position in the future.

Just to set the scene, I run a one-man publishing house, Stage One, which I started at the end of 1968 in a 10-foot by 10-foot office where I still work. My first three publications were directly political books, on Cuba and Africa. The *Schoolbook* was to be the fourth. It had already been published in eight other European countries, without running into any legal problems, except in France.

The English edition was due to be published on 1 April 1971. By mid-March copies were ready, printed by an eminently respectable and indeed conservative firm, Hazell, Watson & Viney. Advertisements were placed in *The Bookseller* and booked for such well-known scabrous publications as the *Times Educational Supplement*, *Times Literary Supplement* and *Teacher's World*. Press releases and review copies were sent out to national newspapers, educational and medical journals, with an embargo until publication day, 1 April.

Sensational headlines

The *Daily Mirror* was the first to break the embargo, running a "love and revolt guide for schoolchildren" story on 22 March. On 28 March the *Sunday Telegraph* inevitably followed suit, with the sensationally inaccurate headline "Drugs are fun, children told": this story also reported that Mrs. Whitehouse was asking the Director of Public Prosecutions to take action, and that Sir Gerald Nabarro wanted to "dam this tide of filth". The *Sunday Times* carried a far more accurate and objective account of the book, but this was clearly not the preferred reading-matter of the relevant authorities.

By this time, copies were already in the bookshops, and some had started to sell the book. Nabarro was calling on the Home Secretary, the Minister of Education and the Chief Commissioner of Police to ban the book outright, but it was Mrs. Whitehouse who had taken the crucial step of complaining to the D.P.P. (She was later to sit in the body of the court during the entire three-day "trial", constantly comparing notes with the police and clearly relishing "her" prosecution.)

Around midday on 31 March, no less than eight members of Scotland Yard's Obscene Publications Department invaded my tiny office. I was out at the time, and a friend was manning the telephone. She went to 'phone my solicitor, but one of the police told her not to. Unfortunately she did not know that she had every right to 'phone whomsoever she wanted, and thus did not insist. If she had insisted, it would have been interesting to see whether the police would have physically prevented her, since this would have constituted an assault.

By the time I arrived, the police had already been through all my office files and had extracted all invoices relating to the book, correspondence, copies of the manuscript, proofs, leaflets, posters and several hundred empty, opened envelopes addressed to Stage One. They also had all the copies of the book they could find (just over 1,000), including some already sealed in envelopes addressed to individuals who had written in and paid for them. The police did not try to stop me 'phoning my solicitor, but refused to wait ten minutes for him to arrive, pleading lack of time.

Fortunately—perhaps because there were too many of them to see clearly in such a small space—the worthy officers of the law missed the bulk stock of the book elsewhere on the premises. Anyone outside the office late that night could have seen a curious procession of cars, taxis and vans being loaded with some 14,000 books and dispersing to different corners of the Home Counties. Without this timely rescue operation by many friends the police would have definitely succeeded in driving me out of business (as one of them was later heard saying).

Simultaneously with the raid on my office, the police had also been pounding up the stairs of Hazell, Watson & Viney in Aylesbury, much to the consternation of that respectable firm. They questioned them about the book, and removed all the type moulds and rubber plates. I was due to talk about the book on television that evening, and, having developed distinctly cold feet after the raid, Hazells tried to persuade me not to appear on the programme and to cancel publication of the book. As it turned out, they need not have worried: the police much preferred to concentrate on a small individual publisher (who had even advertised his slender finances in the back of his book) rather than tackling a massive, well-heeled printing company.

Too late

The following day, publication day, I was honoured by a further police visit, armed with yet another search warrant. Clearly they had done their arithmetic and discovered a substantial discrepancy between the number of copies they had seized, the number invoiced to bookshops, and the number printed. By this time they were too late: only some hundred-odd copies remained in the office, and they had to be content with these.

One important detail about both raids: the police flatly refused to give any form of receipt for what they were taking. I later learned that this is quite a standard practice. A newsagent who was raided later found several publications which he had never stocked included in a list of what the police had "taken from his premises". To say the very least, this procedure is wide open to abuse by the police.

In the following days sales of the book naturally boomed, and in fact by a week later virtually all remaining copies had been sold (including those fortunately rescued between the two police raids). However, despite the fact that no charges had been made, the police continued to apply their own inimitable forms of pressure. A television programme about the book was cancelled when Thames TV's legal department was informed by the D.P.P.'s office that

they considered the matter to be "*sub judice*". On 6 April I happened to be in a bookshop on the Charing Cross Road when two (by now familiar) obscenity squad men came in and curtly told the manager to stop selling the book, "otherwise we'll get a warrant and search the whole place". Similar visits were paid to other bookshops (some of which courageously declined to accept the police "suggestion"). The police also had an unrewarding rummage through the warehouse of Moore Harness Distributors: as it happened, they were not distributing the book.

Telephone tapping

With all this police activity visibly assuming that the book was indeed obscene, a prosecution seemed pretty inevitable. From various curious tinkles and other signs I gathered that my telephone was being tapped, both at home and in the office. I had been out of the office all day on 7 April, but had 'phoned in to a friend manning the fort to say that I would be in at 2.30 the following day, 8 April, just for half-an-hour, to see a journalist. Promptly at 2.30 the next day the police arrived with summonses. Barring a few other interesting details, the rest is known history.

After I had been convicted in the magistrate's court, and my appeal dismissed, the police duly destroyed the 1,200-odd copies of the book that they had seized. This was legal, however obscene the law and the particular judgment. What was not legal, however, was their destruction at the same time of all the leaflets and cards about the book that they had also seized: these had not even been produced in court as evidence, let alone condemned as obscene.

The only other places actually raided and charged for selling the book were, significantly, a well-known progressive bookshop in Brighton and a radical information centre in Glasgow, now sadly defunct. In Brighton the book was duly found obscene and destroyed according to the hal- lowed ritual. In Glasgow, however, the court found that the book was neither indecent nor obscene.

Glasgow is thus the only place in Britain where the original edition could still legally be sold, if there were any copies left. In Edinburgh, the revised, expurgated, D.D.P.-sanitised edition has been acquitted, and the prosecution is not to appeal. We must be thankful for small mercies, however farcical.

JOTTINGS

BANS AND BANNERS

During the last two months there has been a marked increase in the activities of the purity lobby. Encouraged by their success in pressurising the Greater London Council to ban the film version of *Oh! Calcutta!* the Nationwide Festival of Light has mounted a letter-writing campaign against *Last Tango in Paris* and other films. Mary Whitehouse's strident demands and commands have gone forth with monotonous regularity from her virtuous abode in Far Forest, Worcestershire; and it is very likely that the Home Office will prove to be as spineless as the broadcasting authorities when confronted by this good lady and her side-kicks.

The announcement that Mr. Robert Carr had agreed to meet a deputation from the National Viewers' and Listeners' Association and the Nationwide Festival of Light surprised many people who thought that the Home Secretary had more important matters with which to concern himself than the complaints of these latter-day Grundys. Representative deputations at local and national level are a useful democratic procedure, but it is highly unlikely that a similar deputation from the Defence of Literature and the Arts Society would have an application to meet the Home Secretary given the priority treatment which has been accorded to the disciples of St. Mugg and Our Lady of Far Forest.

Now that they have lost the battle against the public acceptance of contraception, Roman Catholics and some fundamentalist Protestants are aiming to sabotage sex education programmes. Like Lady Bracknell, they do not approve of anything that tampers with natural ignorance.

Lord Belstead, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department of Education and Science, has agreed to meet a deputation following a campaign in Bedford against the Family Planning Association's courses for teachers

WILLIAM McILROY

giving sex education. This campaign was initiated by Pastor George Bowler, of Bedford Tabernacle Church, whose attack on the F.P.A. included phrases like "pernicious evil" and "filthy indoctrination". Mr. Trevor Skeet, the town's Conservative M.P., who has agreed to lead the deputation, described the information for teachers as "quite unpalatable".

Mrs. Vanessa Fenton, curricular development officer of the F.P.A., says the Association would like to see these courses at teacher-training colleges. In fact they would like sex education to become a standard part of the curriculum at such centres.

Perhaps Lord Belstead will receive a deputation consisting of F.P.A. representatives and teachers who have attended the courses. Ideally, such a deputation would include young people who have been subjected to the "filthy indoctrination" of sex education. One suspects they would be more balanced and sensible in their approach to sex than many young Festival of Light supporters who are sexually repressed and sex-obsessed.

However, there are signs that the self-appointed censors are not getting it all their own way. An increasing amount of criticism of these busybodies has appeared in the religious press, and one clergyman wrote to the *Church Times* that he found the views of Mrs. Whitehouse "utterly abhorrent". In Birmingham, Mecca of moral re-armers, Catholic activists and born-again Protestant groups, an audience described as "a substantial and thoroughly representative cross-section of people between the ages of 17 and 30" passed a motion that "This house believes that Jesus would not have marched with the Festival of Light." The fact that speakers against the motion included Mary Whitehouse and Peter Hill, national secretary of the Festival of Light, is very significant.

In London the Defence of Literature and the Arts Society held a successful public meeting at which excerpts

from Andy Warhol's films *Flesh* and *Trash* were shown. It is difficult to judge a film on the basis of a few clips, but I was not encouraged to spend 50p and an evening at the cinema to see the complete versions. Lady Birdwood and the Rev. Eddy Stride, two of the brightest beams in the Festival of Light, sat together gazing demurely at the full frontal nudity; neither accepted the chairman's invitation to pro-censorship members of the audience to state their case.

Finally, news of a new group which has been formed to campaign specifically against censorship in the cinema. It is the Campaign for the Abolition of Film Censorship for Adults (CAFCA). *Freethinker* readers who would like to know more about this group should write to the secretary: David Godin, 139 Church Road, Bexleyheath, Kent.

COLLECTORS' CORNER

A recent report by a research team at University College, Swansea, drew attention to the plunder and destruction of many of the great Welsh working-class libraries. This irreparable loss was due mainly to the ignorance and indifference of those who were in charge of the collections, and to the sharpness of book dealers; large numbers of volumes were destroyed or were bought at a fraction of their value and sold to American collectors for thousands of pounds.

The libraries were originally financed by the pennies of miners and grants from the more enlightened mine-owners. They were eagerly used by generations of miners and their families, and played a significant rôle in fostering political and social consciousness. Their dispersal is a matter of concern to all who are interested in preserving records and obtaining an insight into the lives of those who created them. Although it came too late to save most of the collections, the report is not entirely an exercise in closing the stable door after the horse has bolted. Some complete libraries—and the remnants of others—have been saved, and a South Wales Miners' Library is being established at Swansea University.

Hopefully, the scandal of the Welsh libraries will alert the freethought movement to the danger of its literary history being lost to future generations of students and researchers. There has been a resurgence of interest in the movement's history and development; much useful work has been done by historians like Walter Arnstein, Edward Royle and David Tribe, but this revival has also produced a slick coterie which operates on the periphery of the movement, and whose interest is financial rather than intellectual. They imply that book collecting is to them just a hobby, and that their collections will eventually be presented to an organisation or institute. In fact, they have been building up lucrative businesses on rich pickings from the libraries of elderly freethinkers. Some book dealers deliberately give the impression that they are collecting on behalf of an organisation; one Birmingham nonagenarian handed over several volumes of the *National Reformer* (1860-1893) to a person who said they were "for the N.S.S."

If you are in possession of old books, journals or records which may be of historical and financial value, then be very wary of prospective buyers, many of whom have obviously acquired a good knowledge of the movement and its personnel.

A new method which has been adopted is to persuade owners of books and journals to have them microfilmed. There are microfilm companies whose honesty and integrity is beyond question; it is some of the one-man firms whose standards are far less than creditable. One such

operator is a gentleman with Scottish accent who has been successfully conning organisations and individuals. A few years ago such characters would have been selling nylons from attaché cases in Oxford Street; today they carry briefcases and a supply of impressive-looking contract forms.

The best way to dispose of historical books and pamphlets is by contacting a reliable freethought organisation, or a library or a university whose history department has a specialist interest in the subject. This will ensure that such material will be properly used for education and the dissemination of knowledge, instead of lining the pockets of bibliographic vultures.

FREETHINKER FUND

We are most grateful to those readers who kindly contributed to the Freethinker Fund during February. Our thanks to:

Anonymous, £1; Alan M. Ashton, 50p; Sidney Axenfield, £1.56; S. Birkin, £1; Bruce Breeze, 64p; A. G. Brooker, £1; Charles Byass, £1; S. Clowes, 25p; Alan Dennis, £1.11; E. Henry, £1; E. J. Hughes, £1; T. W. Lines, £1; J. Manus, £3.90; Earle McGue, £1.56; S. A. Salter, 75p; Bruce M. Siegan, £3.50; E. Wakefield, 41p. Total for February: £23.18.

SYMPOSIUM:

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Speakers:

ROWAN AYRES (B.B.C. television producer)
ALAN SAPPER (General Secretary A.C.T.T.)
JULIAN CRITCHLEY, M.P.
PHILIP WHITEHEAD, M.P.
JOHNNY SPEIGHT (author of *Till Death Us Do Part*)
BARBARA SMOKER (President, N.S.S.)

CAXTON HALL, LONDON (near St. James's Park Underground)

THURSDAY, 5 APRIL 1973

7.30 p.m.

Admission Free

Organised by THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

NINETY YEARS AGO

The City Corporation is lavishly spending other people's money in its attempt to put down the *Freethinker*. Sir Thomas Nelson is keeping the pot boiling. He employs Sir Harding Giffard and a tail of juniors in court, and half the detectives in London outside. These surreptitious gentlemen, who ought to be engaged in detecting crime, are busily occupied in purchasing the *Freethinker*, waylaying newsvendors' messengers, intimidating shopkeepers, and serving notices on the defendants. What money, unscrupulously obtained and unscrupulously expended, can do is being done. But there is one thing it cannot do. It cannot damp our courage or alienate the sympathy of our friends . . . We are prepared to stand by our principles at all hazard. Our motto is "No Surrender". What we might concede to criticism we will never yield to menace. The *Freethinker*, we repeat again, will go on whatever be the result of the present trial. The flag will not fall because one standard-bearer is stricken down; it will be kept flying proudly and bravely as of old—shot-torn and blood-stained perhaps, but flying, flying, flying!

—G. W. Foote in *The Freethinker*, 4 March 1883.

"I thank you, my lord, your sentence is worthy of your creed."

—George William Foote to Mr. Justice North, on Foote's being sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment for "blasphemous libel", 5 March 1883.

BOOKS

BEFORE THE BAWDY COURT: Selections from Church Court and Other Records Relating to the Correction of Moral Offences . . . edited by Paul Hair. Elek, £4.

In our picture of the past we tend to look at things from the upper levels of society, in the focus of politics or of economics in the abstract. So it is a good thing to get a book which deals in detail with some particular aspect of daily life. One of the aspects we tend to forget is the vast amount of petty oppressions and inquisitions from which people suffered. These are brought out forcefully in the present book, whose contents consist of some 600 selections from church records in England, Scotland, and New England in the years between 1300 and 1800.

They remind us of how wide was the area of life over which the church claimed control; and how in a world of small townships and villages it was hard indeed for anyone to escape the deadly eye of authority. Paul Hair excludes cases dealing with theological issues, church property and finance, and the like, and shows how the controls acted on ordinary folk who for the least deviation from conventional morality or for any outburst of high animal-spirits were liable to be brought up for condemnation, disgrace, and fines. We may add that many of the offences, such as bastardy, blasphemy, and boozing, could lead to charges in the secular as well as the church courts. What with the archdeacons and the churchwardens prying into one's affairs, the king's and the manorial courts, we get the feeling that a man had to live a very careful and straight-laced life if he was not to run into trouble.

There are many amusing instances in Hair's book of the way in which the church intruded into family intimacies. At London in 1526 a man was ordered to pay his wife 5s. a week for a year and to "cohabit with her on feast days and when his business permits." In 1476 a man was cited for lying abed on Sunday mornings. The smallest act of disorder was likely to bring its nemesis. At Stogumber in Somerset in 1623 a man was cited for playing bowls on Sundays and for "tripping Gilbert Knight's heels in an angry manner in the church yard for that he stopped his bowl."

At North Ockendon, Essex, in 1583, Robert Billiging was charged "that he useth to lie with his mother, he being above the age of xvii yeares." At Banbury, in 1619, a man was "reported publicly" to have misbehaved with two women: "the manner was by putting his hand under their clothes & lifting them up to feel their privities."

Some cases bring out how darkly suspicious men's minds could be. At South Leigh in Oxfordshire in 1519, "John Piper and Alice his wife are suspected of idolatry. They have a cradle near their bed at nights, and they behave as if there was an infant in it." At Barwick, Bucks., in 1632 a case of christening a cat comes up. At times the entries amount to intriguing short stories.

Hair might have added more historical details about the courts. Thus in the seventeenth century church dignitaries were generally J.P.s and the crown often asked their advice when commissioning new Justices; so the influence of the bishops among the magistrates was considerable. The church could rely on the civil arm, when necessary, to enforce its decrees. The procedure of the church courts was informal: there was no jury and the old method of compurgation was still used. The accused was acquitted if he could produce four or five persons to say on oath that they believed him; but men seldom knew

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when they had been charged; and even if the accused was proved innocent, he had to pay the court fees. The system bred large numbers of spies; no one was free from libellous and malicious charges. The spies or informers seem to have gone scatheless even when their indictments fell down.

The procedure, with its delays and vexations, can be illustrated from a case cited by Eleanor Trotter in her *Seventeenth Century Life in the Country Parish*. John Johnson of Shincliffe was presented by the churchwardens on suspicion of unchastity with someone else's wife. He was cited and threatened with excommunication if he did not appear. At length he presented himself and denied the charge. The apparitor promoted the office of the judge against him. His accusers were asked to produce proof, so they brought forward nine persons of Shincliffe who swore to the general belief in his guilt. Called on to reply, he again denied the charge on his oath *ex officio*. He was then required to produce four honest neighbours as his oath helpers. He did so and was acquitted. The suit came up nine times before the court and lasted from June 1600 to May 1601. Finally, though acquitted, Johnson was compelled under pain of excommunication to pay the whole cost of the suit, £1. 3s. 4d.

JACK LINDSAY

THE AGE OF CONSENT: Victorian Prostitution and its Enemies by Michael Pearson. David & Charles, £3.25.

"The Great Social Evil," as the Victorians euphemistically termed prostitution, was viewed in two different ways. The tolerant, realistic attitude was to see prostitution as an inevitable part of society, a safety valve to preserve the sanctity of the bourgeois family in an age when middle class men married late and respectable women were expected to get no enjoyment out of sex. The alternative opinion was that prostitution was the result of masculine lust, and prostitutes depraved creatures who should be harrid out of existence, or innocent victims of seduction who should be rescued. It was to this latter view that the religious philanthropists described by Michael Pearson subscribed. He chronicles their earnest and often ridiculous attempts to stamp out child prostitution and the trade in children to overseas brothels, in the 1870s and 1880s.

They included W. T. Stead the Nonconformist (later turned spiritualist) editor of the prominent London daily paper the *Pall Mall Gazette*; Alfred Dyer, an ascetic Quaker; Bramwell Booth, son of the founder of the Salvation Army; and Josephine Butler, feminist wife of an Oxford don. Michael Pearson stresses the significant point that they were all motivated by a feeling that sex was sinful, and used histrionics and exhibitionism to achieve their ends. Stead was in the habit of "dropping to his knees and praying before he entered 'the dens of iniquity' in search of copy." Dyer had written a book on masturbation giving the opinion (widely held in the Victorian period and even today) that it resulted in lassitude, illness and insanity—he quoted "terrifying examples of boys who had so exhausted their strength by masturbation that they no longer had the will to survive the night." Bramwell Booth "often opened his meetings by rising from a coffin, borne by six men and demanding 'Death where is thy sting?'" Josephine Butler was so modest that she preferred to go through her confinements without the aid of a qualified physician rather than be examined by a male doctor.

REVIEWS

Mr. Pearson follows these characters in their lively adventures in the underworld of London and Brussels. There was a considerable white slave trade in young girls inveigled away from their homes and sold to the licensed brothels in Brussels—virgins were particularly in demand. The authorities and the police often connived at this traffic. In their attempts to expose it Stead and Dyer awkwardly posed as clients and infiltrated the brothels (said to have padded rooms and doors which could only be opened from the outside to prevent the girls escaping). Stead was always embarking on these escapades, "I must now hasten to the café in — Street to eat supper, infernal sacrament of the Devil, with one of the worst procurers in London, Good Lord, Help me!" Underneath his façade of revulsion, he rather enjoyed himself.

The fight against licensed prostitution in England had already been won. In the early 1870s Josephine Butler led the campaign against the Contagious Diseases Acts. These Acts, passed in 1866 and 1869, were intended to reduce venereal disease in the armed forces; any woman in a garrison or naval town suspected of being a prostitute could be arrested by special police and forced to undergo a medical examination. The attention of the C.D. police was extended to many women not prostitutes, who then lost their claim to respectability for ever. The Acts were attacked on the grounds that they amounted to an official approval of prostitution and that they embodied the double standard of morality: the prostitutes were deprived of their freedom; their clients got away scot-free. As a Royal Commission on the C.D. Acts said, "With the one sex the offences are committed as a matter of gain, with the other it is an irregular indulgence of a natural impulse." Prostitutes themselves were induced to sign petitions against the Acts, and the high point of the campaign was a by-election in Colchester in 1870, where the Liberal candidate Sir Henry Storks was a great supporter of the Acts and even wanted to extend them to soldiers' wives. Josephine Butler and her friends were physically attacked by Liberal supporters and hounded from hotel to hotel in Colchester, but they put up an anti-C.D. Acts candidate and Storks was defeated. The Contagious Diseases Acts were suspended, and finally repealed in 1886.

The anti-prostitution battle culminated in Stead's dramatic exposé of the trade in virgins in London, published in the *Pall Mall Gazette* under the heading "Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon" in 1885. To prove that this trade existed, Stead actually bought a thirteen-year-old girl, Eliza Armstrong, from her mother for £5, using a converted prostitute as his intermediary. He took her to a brothel in London in order to make the events as realistic as possible, and then sent her to Paris in the care of the Salvation Army. These revelations produced a furore, the *Pall Mall Gazette* sold out, questions were asked in the House of Commons; indignant readers wrote to Stead cancelling their subscriptions. But at this point Stead got into difficulties. His account had caused repercussions in the working class community in Marylebone where the girl came from, and Stead's account did not agree with that of her mother, who denied selling her. Stead was charged with abduction and sentenced to three months' imprisonment. Typically, every year on the anniversary of his conviction he travelled to work wearing a convict dress, though since he had been a privileged prisoner he had never actually worn such clothes in prison.

The result of all these hectic efforts was the raising of the age of consent in 1885 from 13 to 16.

Mr. Pearson ends by suggesting that these campaigns were the "first move towards womens' liberation." This, however, is a contentious point; and it is precisely here, where more analysis is needed, that the book (highly entertaining on the descriptive side) rather falls down. Josephine Butler's view of sex was the view of most of the feminists: it was summed up later by Christabel Pankhurst as "Votes for women and chastity for men." The feminists, instead of advocating more sexual freedom for women, advocated less for men. Because of this absence of any positive view on sex, the feminists had nothing to say on birth control in the nineteenth century; contraception was propagated by male neo-Malthusians, not by women's liberationists. This meant, of course, that the feminist movement lacked an important dimension.

It is the nineteenth-century supporters of the C.D. Acts and of licensed prostitution, who often seem to us to be putting a realistic, tolerant, broadminded view of sex; they regarded sex as a necessity—for men at any rate. In contrast Josephine Butler's statements read like a Lord Longford Report: she said the C.D. Acts "would undermine the national virtue," and "offered protection and immunity to the sinner in the practice of his sins." To the anti-vice campaign a religious distaste for sex was a greater motivation than concern over the exploitation of women. It is significant here that the 1885 Act which raised the age of consent also made illegal homosexual acts between consenting adults in private.

As Michael Pearson indicates, the campaigners' image of prostitutes was not even correct. To see all prostitutes as unwilling victims of seduction was wishful thinking. Wealthy high class prostitutes existed, the "pretty horse breakers" who cantered in Rotten Row to the admiration of aristocrats. And Mr. Pearson describes Mary Jefferies who ran a string of brothels from respectable Church Street, Chelsea; her activities were winked at by the local constabulary till one straightlaced policeman made it his business to compile a dossier on her business. She was prosecuted but let off lightly owing, it was said, to protection from friends in high places. The anti-vice campaigners were as much disgusted by the "vicious rich men" as by the prostitutes themselves. One wonders what Stead would have made of the prostitute who wrote a long, literate, well-argued letter to the *Times* in 1858 justifying her profession.

However, the campaigners, ludicrous as they often appeared, did have a point when they stressed the exploitive side of prostitution. Most prostitutes suffered from sexual, class and economic exploitation. Prostitutes invariably came from the working class, their clients from the upper and middle class. What it boiled down to was the fact that a girl could earn five times as much for a few minutes of sexual activity than she could in a whole day's drudgery in one of the sweated trades—women's wages in the period being frequently as low as three or five shillings a week. The author of *My Secret Life*, a huge compendium of the Victorian sexual underworld, describes a young girl who sold herself to get money to buy pies and sausage rolls, and to pay for interminable rides around London in omnibuses! Most well-to-do men looked on this pathetic situation with complacency.

To resist the lure of prostitution, considerable self restraint and self-discipline were needed. For a girl not to succumb was to assert her existence as an independent human being,

not a commodity to be bought; but it seems possible that such sexual self-discipline might also lead to an anti-sex attitude, repression of sexuality itself.

The problem of sexual freedom for women, and whether this is possible without corresponding social and economic freedom, is one which still perplexes the women's liberation movement today. Mr. Pearson's book, with its insights into one set of Victorian attitudes towards sex and prostitution, is a valuable starting point for a discussion of this problem.

PATRICIA KNIGHT

CAP AND BELL: *Punch's Chronicle of English History in the Making, 1841-61.* Collected and edited by Susan and Asa Briggs. Macdonald, £3.75.

A court jester was a privileged person, but in print the rôle of jester has been filled, if not by desperate men from the garrets of Grub Street, at best by freelance wits mounted on the crutch of letters ranging afield for targets and fortune. *Punch* was not born in the literary underworld, although it started off "squeaking in the streets" before its honourable and successful career made it 'respectable' like any other hero of Victorian self-help.

After experiments of a similar kind, it was started at the right time by the right men. The time was in the first decade of formal democracy after the Reform Act, a season of industrial depression and bitter class conflict. The men were Douglas Jerrold (ex-compositor and writer for the theatre), Henry Mayhew his son-in-law, and Mark Lemon, the editor throughout the twenty years of this retrospect. Their earlier ventures had given them the medium and the message. The message can be expressed in the words of Jerrold himself—although taken from the prospectus of another of his literary enterprises: "It is intended that this work shall be mainly devoted to a consideration of the social wants and rightful claims of the PEOPLE—that it shall appeal to the hearts of the masses of England." *Punch*, then, began without a trace of deference or cynicism as a robust popular champion of the new democratic order.

The early success is attributable to the variety of talent, literary and artistic, which the founders brought in, and to their teamwork in regular discussion and argument behind the scenes in preparation for each issue—a brotherhood reinforced by attacks from conservative quarters in the country. (This recipe for success was repeated with the *New Statesman* under Kingsley Martin and the *New Yorker* under Ross.)

Professor Briggs and his wife have made this selection to illustrate development in the media of communication, rather than as a sub-chronicle of English history during the period; for Professor Briggs is an historian of broadcasting as well as an authority on the Victorian period. *Punch* in its methods had links with the theatre, and can be seen as progenitor of the strip cartoonists and columnists (for example, Bernard Levin) who have become a feature of daily journalism, a serio-comic ingredient in the solid pudding of the 'quality' press. The selections are grouped under eight heads, each selection running chronologically for the period under review. Thus the different aspects or rôles of *Punch* are exhibited: The Watcher; Curator, Protector, Chastiser; The Scalpel of Reform; Lancet of Satire; Lightness of Heart; *Punch's* Images; Retrospect and Prospect; Plus Ça Change. The mixture of entertainment and instruction (compare Reith's formula for the B.B.C.) re-

mains, but entertainment is dominant with the eclipse of the early radical cause.

Some of the regular targets we should regard as marks of prejudice, for instance, foreigners and Jews; and the attitude to women is consistently, if playfully, reactionary. In fact, *Punch* is John Bullish, the popular jester of an insular people. Readers of *The Freethinker*, however, will still relish sarcasms directed against two of the other regular targets, the Pope and canting clergy.

Apart from social comment, footnotes to history, and evidence for the development of communication, this large and well-produced volume offers an abundance of pleasure in the visual and literary wit of famous talent, here rescued from the lost pages of old files. There is value for money, at today's inflated book prices.

H. J. BLACKHAM

THE DISECONOMICS OF GROWTH by H. V. Hodson. Pan/Ballantine, 50p.

All economic growth is not identical to increased general welfare. Leaders must decide how potential growth is to be spent: whether on more consumption, more education or better homes. However, the French Commissariat du Plan is too short-term in outlook, with projections of actual economic growth. Likewise the United States Goals Research Staff mention as all-important the "overall development and welfare of man and his social and other requirements," but the author admits that, when it comes to action, "industrial expansion" and "resources exploitation and expanding technological advances" will take precedence over these and everything else. Palliatives are listed; making less litter, less noise, using less water and insecticides and making fewer car journeys, together with the creation of departments to enforce and extend them. The author ignores the existence of similar "machinery" to restrict the growth of nuclear armaments—a machinery which, as everyone knows, is completely ineffective. He refuses to admit that human numbers came before economic growth and are its mainspring, writing instead that "population questions are close to the heart of the whole problem of growth."

"Enforced infanticide or abortion must be eliminated." But 30 million adults were eliminated during World War II; their fate was such that their death by infanticide would instead have been a mercy-killing. Is there not something fundamentally wrong with our breeding that such a choice is presented to us?

The author asks "Who is to control the breeding of mankind?"—Asserting that it cannot be done. "All such decisions must be left to the family." But coercion is being exerted by every government in the world to boost its birthrate through press, radio, television, novel and pulpit. And perhaps Mr. Hodson is not aware that the conception of a child is, in the great majority of cases, an accident? Reasoning and choice do not enter into it.

R. READER

PAMPHLET

THE ORIGINS OF CHRISTIANITY From the Pagan and Jewish Backgrounds by G. A. Wells. South Place Ethical Society, 20p.

This 24-page pamphlet is in the nature of an appendix to Professor Wells's book *The Jesus of the Early*

Christians, and contains further evidence and argument in support of his view that there was no historical Jesus.

Two kinds of beliefs are noted: those concerning practical affairs, which are always liable to correction through experience, and those relating to a remote past or life after death, which do not so readily lend themselves to correction. Professor Wells claims, as others have done, that Paul and other early Christian writers have misinterpreted Old Testament passages as references to Jesus, and have constructed biographies of him from these models. It is, he says, essential to his thesis that these misinterpretations failed to be corrected. And that was because they referred to events long past and beyond anyone's experience.

Some of the author's statements are open to doubt, as for example when he says that no pagan deity was crucified. What about Prometheus, nailed to a rock in the form of a living cross? Nor is it correct that all early denial of the historicity of Jesus was ignored or suppressed. Among other evidence to the contrary we have the emphatic declaration of Irenaeus that "According to the Gnostics, neither the Word nor the Christ nor the Saviour was made flesh. They insist upon it that the Word and Christ never came into this world. Not one of the heretics would admit that the Word of God ever was or ever could be made flesh..." (Heresies, 1 : 11).

The pamphlet is useful as far as it goes, but there is more evidence in support of Professor Wells's thesis than he appears to realise.

R. J. CONDON

THEATRE

IS YOUR DOCTOR REALLY NECESSARY ?
by Ken Hill. Theatre Royal.

From *Le Malade imaginaire* to *The Doctor's Dilemma* the medical profession has always been a good target for farce and satire; the mystery, mumbo-jumbo and exclusiveness of doctors is easily ridiculed. *Is Your Doctor Really Necessary?* takes a good few swipes at doctors and other professions as well: lawyers, clergymen and television pundits are observed with a scathing eye. But this play, directed by the author, is not high satire, for it is far too much a piece of jolly good fun with everyone enjoying each other's jokes and no opportunity for a song and dance routine missed.

As far as there is a plot it concerns a Doctor Gamble who refuses to give drugs to his patients and cheers them up instead; his cure rate is, of course, very high. Fortuitously he inherits a large drug company and the profit-seeking minions of that company have to find a way to change the good doctor's attitude to drugs. The Minister of Health, a caricature Tory, lady golf-player, played with zest by Avis Bunnage, holds the not very logical premises that people must be allowed to be ill and the drug companies must be allowed to make money. After various attempts to compromise Doctor Gamble via seduction, trial by television and trial by nincompoo lawyers, Doctor Gamble is cured of his distaste for drugs by a psychiatrist who only just fails to kill him in the process. So the drugs go on, the doctors' pockets continue to be lined and we are jocularly brought the predictable reprise of "Is your doctor really necessary?"

The whole play is rather predictable and the level of humour often that of a medical students' review, with bizarre operations and grotesque examinations. I doubt whether audiences will be brought to think very deeply about the National Health system from such good-humoured fare, and though it provides a pleasant evening, the Theatre Royal has surely seen more incisive days.

JIM HERRICK

THE FREEDOM OF THE CITY by Brian Friel.
Royal Court Theatre (until 1 April).

It was not originally my brief to review this play. I was prompted to do so by the bad notices it received in London. To write a play "set in Londonderry . . . 1970" is to invite close critical scrutiny, unless one is a young 'fringe' writer. I myself would not dismiss the play as propaganda, but I would cheerfully cut out the funeral scene and some of the creaking bits of dramatic irony. I would recommend that you see it, though, in Albert Finney's restrained, intelligent, yet theatrically strong production. The timing is faultless, smartly juxtaposing things as they are with things as we imagine them to be. The actors fit into their social rôles, as the Law, the Army, the Church, without becoming Aunt Sallies.

A chatty housewife, mother of eleven, a spirited layabout, and a rather joyless idealist, are on a banned Civil Rights march, for various motives. Overcome by the effects of C.S. gas, they seek refuge in what turns out to be the Mayor's Parlour in the Guildhall. Their reactions to this novel situation, and to each other, provide in themselves material for a short play. The layabout is of particular interest; his type of behaviour discredits the Civil Rights Movement, his attitude is infectious. The troops who shoot the three, on their leaving the Guildhall, are at one point accused of having acted in a 'punitive' manner.

The parlour scenes are ironical flashbacks. They show us three human beings, inept, disruptive, priggish, confused and alive. Almost simultaneously, we are shown what other people make of them. To the Army, they are a dangerous contingent of armed terrorists; to the Church, 'the meek'; to balladers, they are noble Irish patriots; to the sociologist, they are part of the self-perpetuating problem of poverty. They present a problem to the law, too, lying silent, their bodies perforated by high-velocity bullets.

Over to you.

VERA LUSTIG

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LETTERS

Northern Ireland: the imprisonment of Peter Cosgrove

I should like to bring to your readers' attention the fact that Mr. Peter Cosgrove, a second-year student at the New University of Ulster, was recently imprisoned for three years under the Northern Ireland Special Powers Act. The savagery of the sentence and the very nature of the charge highlight the totally undemocratic and inhuman nature of this law; and I feel very strongly that this case should not be allowed to pass without some positive action by all people who value justice.

In December 1971 Peter Cosgrove, whose home is in Cookstown, was found to have in his wallet a list of car registration numbers together with descriptions of private cars of policemen stationed in Coleraine. At no point did Peter deny compiling the list. In his defence he alleged that over a period of time he had been subjected to a measure of police harassment. On one occasion in Cookstown he had been searched while walking home in the dark by the police, and on another his house had been raided. On returning to Coleraine he had also been worried by the fact that as he walked to the University in the mornings he felt that he was being followed by cars. It was at this stage he decided to note the numbers and descriptions of the vehicles. In the late summer of 1971, *some months before being charged*, Cosgrove consulted a local solicitor, Mr. E. M. Doris, for advice on what he should do about this surveillance. *Mr. Doris gave sworn evidence to this effect in court.*

When charged under the Special Powers Act with collecting and recording information of such a nature as was calculated to be useful to persons hostile to the maintenance of order, there could be no other verdict than guilty as there is no onus whatsoever on the prosecution to prove any malicious intent or connection with an illegal organisation. Merely collecting or recording material which *might* be used in such a manner is an offence. Once convicted under this unjust law the minimum prison sentence which the Judge could impose was three years.

In December 1971, when Peter was charged, he was 19 years old. However, he was held on bail, without undue restrictions on his movements, until the trial in January 1973; this is perhaps some measure of the dangerous nature of his character. However, this delay by the prosecution had several far-reaching and iniquitous results to his welfare. By holding the case longer than six months it meant that the charge could not be amended and that a summary trial was no longer possible. In other words, he had to face a judge and jury with a minimum sentence of three years, rather than a magistrate's court with the sentence largely at the discretion of the magistrate or judge. Both these are plainly against the defendant's interests. In addition he suffered an extra year of tension. In choosing the jury it is normal practice for both sides to challenge the jurors; however, it is *interesting to note that the Crown successfully opposed all the Catholic members of the jury with the result that it was a totally Protestant body.*

It is the view of everyone at Coleraine who has known Peter as a friend and in academic circles that this sentence is totally unjustified. It serves only to highlight and condemn the unjust legislation which exists in Northern Ireland today. It is difficult to see how any solution to the violence in Ulster can be achieved while such powers exist. I would ask you and your readers to do everything in your power to lobby support not only for this specific case but against such legislation.

ROGER CURRY, *Student President,*
Coleraine, Co. Londonderry. New University of Ulster.

Mozart—a Rejoinder

Brigid Brophy (letters, January) says, "Anyone who thinks *Così, Figaro* or *Entführung* broken-backed is tone-deaf to form". I might answer: anyone who does not see it is artistically blind.

In a letter to his wife dated 11 June 1791 Mozart says that he composed an aria for *Die Zauberflöte* because he was bored. Even a genius does not produce the best work if he acts like that.

In my article I did not say no one in England appreciated Mozart in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. I said: "English writers like to claim that the English appreciated Mozart before anyone else; I wonder." The first country to appreciate Mozart as a whole was Bohemia (as it then was). G. B. Shaw came after Oulibicheff—he wrote at the end of the nineteenth century and Oulibicheff flourished in the 1850s. And Shaw's writings make it clear he was trying to make an unappreciative England see Mozart's good points (had Mozart been a popular favourite in England Shaw would have attacked him as he did Mendelssohn).

Miss Brophy says, "Were Mr. Low to read beyond the first sentence [of her book] he might discover that *Mozart the Dramatist* argues that Mozart was the dramatist in the sense of being the chief shaper of the structure of his librettos." I do not know if Miss Brophy finds people give up reading her books after the first sentence as a rule and she therefore assumed I did; but I have read through her book, and I do not agree that her book justifies such a claim. Indeed, she hardly says anything about Mozart at all (though lots about Orpheus, Narcissus, etc.). However she does say that the libretto of *Zauberflöte* was originally anti-feminist but that Mozart "made it feminist after all" by making Pamina the heroine sing some feeling passages. If Mozart was the shaper of the libretto why did he ever make it anti-feminist at all?

As regards Raaff—it seems Miss Brophy is not interested in the truth of the matter, only whether Dent gave rise to what I consider a legend. So I will spell it out: the version given by Dent and other Mozartians is so far from the truth as to be an invention.

The word "philistine" often appears in Miss Brophy's letter. So let me say that her statement in her book that Wagner's operas were "against the nature of opera" because they dealt with themes different from those of Mozart, and that Beethoven was "untidy" and "like a weightlifter", are twenty times more philistine than anything I have said.

If people can only get through one library book a month that proves they have not enough time for proper reading—they should be able to get through a book a week.
I. S. Low.

Lenin's Own Words

John Lewis tells us one thing about Engels's and Lenin's theory of knowledge, Pat Sloan another. Sloan suppresses Lewis's assertion that Lenin "subsequently", and "after reading Hegel", repudiated the view he had previously propounded, and attempts to confuse the issue by referring to Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* but not his *Philosophical Notebooks*.

In *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* (1908) Lenin declared that "the senses give us faithful images of things" and "man's perceptive faculty [is] a simple reflection of nature". But in the *Philosophical Notebooks* (1914-1915), written after immersing himself in the study of Hegel, Lenin said that "Man's consciousness not only reflects the objective world, but creates it" and that "The approach of the human mind to a particular thing, the taking of a copy (= a concept) of it is not a simple, immediate act, a dead mirroring, but one which is complex, split into two, zig-zag like, which includes in it the possibility of the flight of fantasy from life; . . . in the most elementary general idea ("table" in general) there is a certain bit of *fantasy*."

There is, in fact, good internal evidence that Lenin subsequently abandoned or significantly modified some of his earlier positions. He himself admits that "Marxists criticised . . . the Kantians and Humists more in the manner of Feuerbach (and Büchner) than of Hegel"; "Dialectics is the theory of knowledge of (Hegel and) Marxism".

Freethought is not to be confused with the parroting of sacred texts.
JUDEX.

Capitalism and World Government

I am sorry that to poor Philip Hinchliff (letters, February) I "do not actually say anything", but at least my 'nothings' on average have used up very much less space in your paper than his have done. Therefore I crave a few more lines for further 'nothings' re Hinchliff and Low.

In ancient days it was much 'simpler' to see the earth as flat with a star-studded roof as its sky, but it was wrong. Equally, Hinchliff's 'simple' view of the oil question, ignoring the exploitation of the workers and of whole nations by the few international oil companies is simply twentieth-century economic flat-earthism.

This leads to the crux of Mr. Low's problem. A world government to "control" the "international capitalist corporations" is quite impossible so long as these capitalist corporations themselves control the governments that have to form the "world government".

Hence the *first* job is to achieve enough national governments which have the guts to stand up to, and subjugate, the powerful capitalist interests that have hitherto dominated their countries. This means the socialist states that have abolished capitalism, the transitional régimes that are putting up an heroic struggle for independence from world capitalist domination (for instance, Chile), and even independent states dominated at this stage by sheikhs

and other historical relics which are, with popular support, nevertheless standing up to foreign capitalist domination.

As a result of such a world-wide struggle I can visualise, at some future date, a federation of world socialist states. But first, the peoples must get the socialist states. PAT SLOAN.

Tolstoy's Age

In her review of Leo Tolstoy's pamphlet, *The Slavery of Our Times*, Merle Tolfree states that "Tolstoy wrote his essay in 1900, a year before his death at the age of 73."

In fact, Tolstoy died in 1910, at the age of 82. JOHN L. BROOM.

Brick by Brick

It is evident religion has not only been the cause of brutal wars in the past but is today responsible for—or made a scapegoat for—the atrocities in Northern Ireland.

I would like to recount an episode which took place in a large psychiatric hospital where I was receiving treatment.

A group of patients were taken to the hospital chapel where the Roman Catholic chaplain was taking mass. When the service ended, a very senior member of the nursing administration stood up and said that the Protestant patients not only had no business to be present but that their presence was a "sin". The chaplain had seen fit to let all remain, but she told him that she could not understand why he had allowed this "desecration of the host"—whatever that meant. This protest was the instant cause of a violent outburst of fighting between the Catholic and Protestant patients. After it had been broken up, the normal knock-out sedation was administered to the offenders and they were branded "disturbed" in the duty report. The ward sister could not understand how it was she sent twelve calm patients to church and they all returned disturbed.

If even high-ranking hospital staff are not free from bigotry, while religion brings discord rather than the 'peace' it claims, Ireland and other world centres of religious disunion will continue to bring misery, death and suffering to those unfortunate enough to live there.

As a humanist, I can see that the Christian house is not only divided against itself but that it is only falling down brick by brick, instead—unfortunately—of tumbling down. That each brick causes untold suffering seems irrelevant to the army of Christian soldiers still marching onward. Is it too optimistic to hope that kindness, consideration and a genuine concern for humanity will halt that march in the future? HELENE G. WIGLEY (Mrs.).

Existentially Fortunate

As one who seems existentially lucky enough never to have had either a religious faith to lose or a "dreadful dread of nothingness" to feel, I am wondering what kind of corrupting influence can have cut me off from access to certain meanings of David Holbrook (letters, February). When faced with the possibility of damaging the fabric by which existential security (of whatever form) is achieved—or indeed, sought and found—by anyone whomsoever, one hesitates before suggesting that "with only our nothingness before us" there is nothing before us to dread. Moreover, since the void is not anything that would seem to exist—why the implication of hate in the thought, or feeling, of setting a meaning against the void? CHARLES BYASS.

Abortion and the Catholic Church

One of the principal opponents of abortion is the Catholic Church. It says that human life is present in the embryo or foetus from the moment of conception. This, however, is a vast oversimplification; of course life is present in the embryo or foetus, just as it is in the tonsils or appendix. Destroying the embryo or foetus is destroying life, but so is a tonsillectomy or appendectomy.

The Church also argues that the embryo or foetus has a soul; but science finds no evidence of a soul in any form of life. Furthermore, the Church contradicts itself by this claim: according to the best theologians the soul (and not, as scientists claim, the brain) is responsible for reasoning; there is no evidence that an embryo or foetus does any reasoning whatsoever, therefore it does not have a soul.

A foetus becomes a person or human being when it is separated from its mother's body and begins to breathe. The Bible speaks of man becoming "a living soul" (person or being) when "the breath of life" was breathed into his nostrils (Genesis 2:7). Let us forget this "soul at conception" nonsense, and recognise the humanity in the need for abortion. WILLARD E. EDWARDS.
Honolulu, Hawaii, U.S.A.

The Failures of Divine Providence

My thanks to Messrs. W. R. Price and Trevor Morgan for having read my article "One or None" and for their helpful comments on the same (letters, February). Perhaps I was carried away by a too fanciful imagination in suggesting that the work of Voltaire, Paine, Bradlaugh and Marx was inspired by a metaphysical monotheism operating at a deeper level of the mind than their professed atheism or agnosticism. However, it seems to me to be far more absurd to suggest that all theological words and terms are meaningless nonsense. If this were so militant atheism would be equally nonsensical.

If we are to derive any intellectual satisfaction from the conflict between humanism and religion we must be willing to accord, at least for the sake of argument, an equal degree of rationality to both sides. The question whether there is one God or no god certainly cannot be resolved by the toss of a coin; that would be most irrational.

It would be nearer to the truth to compare God to a criminal on trial. The case for the prosecution is very strong, as there are many evils here on earth for which God as the First Cause must be held responsible. The case for the defence of God is very weak, but does at least help to demonstrate that the criminal really exists and is not merely a figment of human imagination. In the defence of God we can point to at least two good things that are universally necessary to all finite and contingent beings, existence and non-existence. Non-existence before birth and after death, and existence between birth and death. Moreover during the period of existence some individuals are able to acquire an ability to think freely, so that they are able to emancipate themselves from all religious sects and political parties and yet at the same time are able to derive material and moral benefit from living within a human community.

God cannot be absolved from full responsibility for all the evils of this world. But God should not be allowed to plead non-existence for the many failures of Divine Providence.

PETER CROMMELIN.

Spinoza's Monotheism

Peter Crommelin's article, "One or None" (January *Freethinker*) makes refreshing reading. In the spirit of inquiry rather than one of criticism I should like some reference to support his assertion that "The monotheism of Spinoza was probably the most absolute monotheism ever formulated by the mind of man." Since thrice daily in the Jewish faith, and possibly more often in the Muslim religion, the Unity of God is proclaimed, one wonders how a 'more absolute' than absolute unity can be formulated.

Mr. Crommelin goes on to suggest that Spinoza's conception "made the God of Israel look like a tribal deity". For some of us—not prepared to accept without question this ancient Christian propaganda ploy—a little evidence would seem to be called for.

Incidentally, Einstein's answer to those who pestered him about his religious beliefs was that he believed in Spinoza's God.

GERALD SAMUEL.

Corrections

The second paragraph of Mr. W. R. Price's letter (February) should have read: "Do you believe in Abracadabra?" can receive neither yes nor no as an answer, because the question is meaningless."

In Professor G. A. Wells's "Was Jesus a Political Rebel"—Part 2, the words in italics were omitted from p. 23: "But before we accuse Luke of random assimilation of traditions concerning ancient ritual practices, or of indiscreet betrayal of inconvenient political facts, we will do well to look at the context in which he sets Jesus' injunction."

Our apologies to readers and to Mr. Price and Prof. Wells.

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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.

EVENTS

Brighton and Hove Humanist Group, Imperial Centre Hotel, First Avenue, Hove, Sunday, 1 April, 5.30 p.m.: Dr. JOHN LEWIS, "Beyond Chance and Necessity—a reply to Jacques Monod."

Glasgow Humanist Society, Horse Shoe Bar, 17 Drury Street, G2. *Thursdays* in March at 7.30 p.m.: informal discussions.

Independent Adoption Society, Post-Graduate Centre, Royal Northern Hospital, Holloway Road, London N7. Saturday, 14 April, 2.45 p.m.: Annual General Meeting—guest speaker, Miss JANE ROWE.

Leicester Humanist Society, 5 Guilford Road, Stoneygate, Monday, 26 March, 7.45 p.m.: Annual General Meeting.

Leicester Secular Society, Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate. *Sundays* at 6.30 p.m. 18 March: ARTHUR COLEMAN, "D. H. Lawrence: a man before his time"; 25 March: RICHARD CONDON, "The Problem of Christian Origins"; 1 April: GILLIAN HAWTIN, "Remember to Keep Holy the Sabbath"; 8 April: F. A. RIDLEY, "Thomas Paine and the English Revolutionary Tradition"; 15 April: Half-yearly General Meeting (members and associates only).

London Young Humanists, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London W8. Sunday, 18 March, 7.30 p.m.: Sister PATRICIA MORRIS, Sister NORAH LESTER, Swami YOGESHANANDA and the Ven. PHRA D. PANNAVARO, "Obedience and Celibacy in the Modern Age" (discussion).

National Secular Society symposium, Caxton Hall, London SW1. Thursday, 5 April, 7.30 p.m.: ROWAN AYRES, ALAN SAPPER, JULIAN CRITCHLEY, M.P., PHILIP WHITEHEAD, M.P., JOHNNY SPEIGHT, BARBARA SMOKER, "Broadcasting for Democracy."

Nottingham and Notts Humanist Group, University Adult Centre, 14 Shakespeare Street, Friday, 13 April, 7.30 p.m.: BRIAN THOMPSON, "Implications of the New Biology."

Perrin's Gallery, 16 Perrin's Court, Hampstead High Street, London NW3. 19 March—7 April (Mondays excepted), 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.: exhibition of new paintings by OSWELL BLAKESTON.

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. *Sunday Morning Meetings*, 11 a.m. 18 March: HAROLD BLACKHAM, "Purposive Thinking Without Ideology"; 25 March: HECTOR HAWTON, "The Emergence of Modern Rationalism"; 1 April, T. F. EVANS, "Education—the White Paper and the Black"; 8 April, PETER CADOGAN, "The Hutterians of North America"; 15 April: PETER CRONIN, "Freud and Philosophy". *Sunday Forums*, 3 p.m. 25 March: BARBARA SMOKER, "Descent of Woman"; 8 April: JAMES PATRICK, "A Glasgow Gang Observed". *Tuesday Discussions*, 7 p.m. (admission 10p) 20 March, ROGER BARNARD, "Violence in the Arts"; 27 March: DEREK WILKES, "Violence in Traditional Religious Values"; 3 April: ERIC WILLOUGHBY, "What is News?"; 10 April: title to be announced; 17 April: BARRY FANTANI, "Why Private Eye?"

Sutton Humanist Group, Sunday, 1 April, c/o Mrs. Eva Rothschild, 19 Birdhurst Court, Woodcote Avenue, Wallington, 7.30 p.m.: discussion, "Do Other Animals Think?" Thursday, 12 April, Friends Meeting House, Cedar Road, Sutton, 8 p.m.: TONY DURHAM, "China".

1973 Voltaire Lectures (sponsored by the British Humanist Association), Small Hall, Friends House, Euston Road, London NW1. Wednesday, 21 March, 7.30 p.m.: Professor BERNARD CRICK, "Between Self-Destruction and Oppression."

Welwyn Garden City Humanist Group, Community Centre, Woodhall. Saturday, 31 March, 2.30 p.m.: jumble sale. (Further meeting on 12 April—details from J. van Someren, telephone: Welwyn G.C. 25901).

Worthing Humanist Group, Burlington Hotel, Marine Parade. Sunday, 25 March, 5.30 p.m.: DEREK MARCUS, "Participation in the B.H.A."

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