



## THE FREETHINKER

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Family Squatting Advisory Service, no longer see much point in feeding the hungry or sheltering the homeless, without, at the same time, interesting themselves in the root causes of hunger or homelessness and seeking long-term solutions. The only type of organization able to be smugly satisfied with their position under the existing charity law is the religious charity, which enjoys all the financial privileges of charity status without having to register with the Charity Commissioners and without any curb on its utterances and activities, however political they may be.

### Spade-work

That meeting took place in January last year, and, after more spade-work, was reconvened in March, when a formal representative working committee was set up to make a thorough study of the draft proposals, to revise them as necessary, and to launch a public campaign under the title of The Charity Law Reform Committee. Their expanded and refined version of the draft proposals appeared as a six-page pamphlet in November (but embargoed until the launching date of 11 February) and copies were sent out to all the organizations interested, as well as to the Home Office, to all M.P.s, and to selected individuals whose patronage would add weight to the campaign. During those three months, evidence was collected to show the measure of informed support for the campaign, so as to ensure good press coverage of the launching. Meanwhile, a draft parliamentary Bill to put the proposals into effect was professionally prepared, together with contingent statutory amendments.

Organizations that sent messages of support included the Association of Liberal Lawyers, British Humanist Association, Conservation Society, Haldane Society, London and Quadrant Housing Trust, NACRO, N.C.C.L., N.S.S., PEST, Progressive League, Release, Social Morality Council, United Nations Association, and Young Volunteer Force, as well as two well-known charitable organizations which asked to remain anonymous for fear of jeopardizing their charity status. A number of lawyers (both practising and academic), professors (of law, politics, philosophy, and other disciplines), educationists, editors of learned journals, M.P.s, and members of the House of Lords, also expressed their support for the campaign, while prominent individuals who did likewise included

Sir Alfred Ayer, Dr. Cyril Bibby, Lord Brockway, Brigid Brophy, John Calder, Bernard Crick, Francis Crick, Rt. Hon. Anthony Crosland, Lionel Elvin, Antony Flew, Lord Foot, Rt. Hon. the Lord Gardiner (a former Lord Chancellor), Peter Hall, Dr. James Hemming, George Melly, Dr. Joseph Needham, Benedict Nightingale (author of *Charities*, published last year), Ben Whitaker, Lord Willis, and Baroness Wootton.

### Unlucky start

The build-up to the launching of the campaign with a press conference in the House of Commons on 11 February was thus fulfilling all the hopes for it. Nothing but some unforeseen disaster could shatter those hopes now. But the unforeseen disaster happened: a General Election.

As it is virtually impossible to extend the embargo on press releases, the launching had to go ahead on the agreed date—but not in the House of Commons as planned. And, understandably, no M.P.s attended—neither those who had promised to speak at the press conference, nor those who, had it been held on their own premises, while Parliament was in session, would have dropped in to hear the arguments. So the campaign could hardly have got off to an unluckier start.

However, it got a reasonably good press coverage, considering the diminished space available at the time for political comment on anything other than direct election issues. The next day's *Times* carried a long and sympathetic report of the Committee's proposals; *The Guardian* carried a briefer factual report (in which the N.S.S. was cited as an organization unfairly treated under the anomalous charity law that denies it the fiscal privileges enjoyed by the Lord's Day Observance Society, though the two bodies campaign as opponents on the same issues); and *The Daily Telegraph* devoted its third leader to a completely hostile comment on the proposals, inspired by paranoia about Reds under the bed, Fascists under the mattress, and agitprop under the blanket (top).

The new category of tax-exempt organizations proposed by the Charity Law Reform Committee would replace the value judgment of "public benefit" (now made by the Charity Commissioners on the basis of archaic criteria interpreted by a self-contradictory conglomeration of case-law) by the plain fact of *absence of private benefit*. The comment of the Charity Commissioners is that they see no need for any change in the present law or procedure.

### Protracted conclusion

In spite of the unlucky timing of the launching of the campaign, it is hoped that an opportunity will be found in the new Parliament to introduce the Voluntary Organizations Bill, or, at least, a "ten-minuter" outlining its proposals. However, achieving an actual change in the law along the lines proposed is not likely to be quick or easy, since the effect of adding to the existing number of tax-exempt organizations is sure to be opposed strongly by the Inland Revenue. So there is bound to be a protracted campaign ahead. It will need the patience of the proverbial saint, the adaptability of an apostate, the cunning of a Jesuit. But let us wish it a successful conclusion—before the patience of all the living saints is exhausted.

*(Details of the proposals are obtainable from the Charity Law Reform Committee, 105a Clarendon Road, London, W11 4JG.)*

# NEWS AND NOTES

## QUALIFIED SUPPORT

The Archbishop of Canterbury recently drew the attention of the General Synod of the Church of England to the historic significance of its deliberations. The occasion was the passing by it with an overwhelming majority of the Church of England (Worship and Doctrine) Measure. If this Measure is passed by Parliament—and this is regarded as a mere formality—that Church will have gained complete autonomy for itself in matters of worship and doctrine. This is the culmination of nine years' discussion in the Church and will purge the Church of the rebuff it has felt since 1928 when Parliament rejected the Church's proposal for a new prayer book. The limited power to experiment in these matters that was granted to the Church in the 1960s will become an absolute right.

Now one is in the rare position of agreeing with the Church of England on the subject of religious autonomy. It is patently absurd that Parliament should have any say in the matter of religious worship. On the other hand it would be quite wrong for Parliament to change the law in this respect without considering it in the whole context of Church of England Establishment, and, indeed, of statutory religious privilege in general. Accountability and privilege are two sides of the same equation, and less weight on one side should in equity be balanced by less weight on the other.

The General Synod is quite rightly demanding an end to the irrelevant interference of the State in Church affairs, but without any suggestion of abandoning Church interference in State affairs let alone of abandoning its unique privileges. These include its bishops sitting in the House of Lords, chaplaincy privileges, unfair allocation of time on radio and television, disproportionate influence on education, and the inheritance of all the Church lands and Church buildings that rightly belong to the whole population. Whilst one welcomes the resolution of the General Synod, it must be considered only as a step towards disestablishment and disendowment of the Church of England.

In a leader the *Daily Telegraph* (21 February) wondered whether this was in fact the direction in which things were moving. "It would be sad," it bemoaned, "if it were so."

There is no historical law which dictates that faith must always decline. The 19th-century religious revivals followed an era of relative godlessness. So deep is the religious impulse that, in time of great trouble and upheaval, people will always return to belief in God. It is proper, then, that the State—however theoretically—should derive its authority to legislate from the final, supernatural Maker of laws.

This pious outburst is perhaps understandable (in retrospect) coming as it did on the eve of a fateful general election. One hopes the electorate will come to realize that the price of Establishment is too much to pay as an insurance policy to provide spurious succour in time of trouble. The *Daily Telegraph's* attitude to religion is rather like that of many to the decline of the British Empire. Having been laboriously built up over a number of centuries, many felt it must last for ever. But in a couple of decades it was gone. The Church, however, has established itself in society more deeply and insidiously. Its tentacles stretch into the very organs of State, so that, although its

roots wither, the tree continues to bear its bitter fruit; its congregations dwindle, but still it seeks—and too often is accorded—the right to pose as speaking with the authentic, "moral" voice of the nation. It would seem that the forces of decline of "straight" religions go forward as inexorably as those that swept away the British Empire. Similarly its subjects are expected to suffer exploitation gladly: gladly must the electorate subsidize the superstitious pantomime, for which it has no need, but which, it is assured, is necessary to grant *true* efficacy to the workings of State. The social conditions that have pertained in western Europe and North America in the last half century are unparalleled in the history of mankind, and have been accompanied by a massive flight from organized religion. Even the Roman Catholic Church, which confidently expected to retain its hold over its adherents and to breed itself to supremacy, is having to face up to declining numbers of baptisms, confirmations and conversions. Now that this process has come so far, it is time for the State radically to reconsider its position with regard to the Churches, when it gives them so much, but has no use for what they offer in return—taradiddly afflatulence.

## BARNUM'S LAW VINDICATED

R. J. CONDON writes:

The well-publicized visit to Britain of the Israeli cutlery-bender, Uri Geller, has turned out to be almost literally a nine-day wonder, for his claim to possess supernatural power has provoked such an indignant reaction from his fellow-conjurors that the only trick he appears to be performing at the time of writing is the vanishing one.

On the time-honoured principle of never saying anything which might dry up a good source of copy, the media for the most part have been happily playing along with Mr. Geller's pretensions. However the *Daily Express* (24 and 26 January 1974) sent reporter Don Coolican the task of bringing the superman down to earth. Just how Mr. Geller manages to soften metal at a touch Mr. Coolican cannot say—Uri has yet to be caught out—but he knows it can be done without invoking divine aid. A solution of a chemical vaguely identified as a "metal halide" has the property of quickly penetrating the microscopic cracks called "grain boundaries" which all metals have. Mr. Coolican found by experiment that it took only a few seconds for the potion to bend brass keys and snap aluminium spoons and forks. Its use would present no problem to a competent conjuror.

The secret was revealed by another Israeli magician, Eytan Ayalon, who has been having a profitable time going around the theatres performing Uri's celebrated feat—and explaining it. Mr. Ayalon, who went on to explain why vast numbers of ordinary men and women have allowed themselves to be taken in by Uri:

People always want to believe that someone is special, particularly when we are going through such trying times as now throughout the world. They like to think there is always a chance that there are some powers that cannot be explained in nature. I could say I was a superman myself and millions would believe me. I don't have to prove that I am a superman, all I need do is say it . . .

## CIVIL MARRIAGE FIRST

In a circular letter to registrars their representative body, the Institution of Population Registration, states that hundreds of register offices where civil marriages take place are unsuitable. This, they say, is a matter that needs urgent attention, especially as many offices will be resited as a result of the reorganization of local government that takes effect on 1 April. The number of civil marriages has been increasing for a number of years; now well over a third of brides forgo the trappings of a church wedding for the spartan surroundings of the registry. The Institution drew attention to the Law Commission's report of 1973, *Solemnisation of Marriage*, which stated that the "surroundings should be in keeping with the solemnity and importance of the occasion."

WILLIAM MCILROY writes:

There will be a wide measure of support for the Institution of Population Registration's call for improved civil marriage facilities. Whilst many superintendent registrars conscientiously endeavour to introduce a feeling of warmth and dignity to such ceremonies, their efforts to do so are often hampered by dismal and unaesthetic surroundings. One suspects that in the past it was a deliberate, if unofficial, practice to allocate the most functional and inconveniently sited room in the district for civil marriages.

The National Secular Society has advocated that all marriages should take place in a register office, followed by a church ceremony if the couple wishes. This may be opposed by the clergy of some denominations. But the opposition may not be so strenuous as might be supposed, for such a reform would discourage the humbug which is unquestionably a feature of many church weddings today. Even if this policy is not adopted, the increase in civil marriages, to which the I.P.R. referred, necessitates a new attitude by the authorities to the question of register office facilities. Experts should advise on decor, furnishings, floral arrangement and music; register offices should be available for ceremonies all day on Saturday.

Marriages is a serious undertaking, but the wedding ceremony need not be a sombre affair performed in surroundings which are often reminiscent of a railway waiting room.

## OBITUARY

### Marie S. Grimsditch

The death of Mrs. Marie S. Grimsditch on 14 February greatly saddened her many friends in London and the West Country. She was aged seventy-two, and her health had deteriorated following an operation last year.

Mrs. Grimsditch constantly endeavoured to serve the community, particularly those who were socially deprived. She was a dedicated teacher and continued to take a keen interest in educational affairs after her retirement. She was an active member of the Labour Party and was prevented only by her last illness from participating in the General Election campaign. She was a staunch secularist and freethinker, a *Freethinker* reader and a member of the National Secular Society. She often planned her London visits to coincide with N.S.S. functions. Her chief interests included reading, travelling and archaeology.

Marie Grimsditch will be affectionately remembered for her kindness, selfless concern for others and for the great courage with which she faced the last months of her life. She was a widow and our deep sympathy is extended to her son Stephen.

There was a secular funeral at Haycoombe Crematorium, Bath, on 20 February, when Mr. Ken Taylor paid the final tribute.

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### Election comment, pages 39-41

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(Continued from page 37)

inorganic state. For, let us make no bones about it, if society is based on hedonic lines (happiness as existential target and incentive), it follows from this, happiness being transitory and far from unlimited in nature, that the supreme society is that which aims at the highest state of happiness, which is, however (as the nineteenth century German philosopher, Von Hartmann, taught) utter painlessness. Since, however, existence, as such, is suffering, the final stage of civilization will be the transition from a hedonic, utilitarian morality to a pessimistic, "redemptive" morality, which will perhaps achieve what can be the only logical goal of civilization and a self-conscious, reflective species—voluntary and planetary discontinuance.

If civilization, by dehumanizing man, increases his dissatisfaction with life, this is a necessary evil—it will lead to global euthanasia, which can be fittingly regarded as the human *summum bonum*. For, even making the most generous allowance for a fundamental change for the better in man (for example, an increase in practical intelligence), it is unlikely that man will be able to prevent the deterioration of conditions on this planet that will result from over-population and pollution. Therefore, instead of the species becoming extinct through what the writer calls "compulsory dysthanasia" (a miserable and undignified death of the species through global conflict, famine or pestilence), would it not seem more desirable and consoling to think that the future generations will lead, eventually, to an intentionally "terminal" age, which, acknowledging the intrinsic misery and pointlessness of life, will not only refrain from perpetuating the race, but will, through global determination, achieve the discontinuance of the species?

### Planetary euthanasia

As against the facile optimism so often peddled nowadays by those who find the recognition of the suffering of life distasteful, let us end by remembering what Von Hartmann claimed would be the fitting conclusion of the terrestrial evolutionary process, and, therefore, of global civilization itself. He maintained that, with the increased communication of ideas due to print and telegraph (he was writing in the last century), a day would come when mankind, seeing the maintenance of life as ultimately unprofitable and unnecessary (mankind has no heir), would resolve upon planetary euthanasia. Incredible as this sombre view may sound, it is an existential possibility and option for man—and what can be more fascinating than to reflect upon the future of planetary man?

# THE ETIOLOGY AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF CIVILIZATION

GEOFFREY WEBSTER

Anyone with sufficient inclination can soon familiarize themselves with a line of thought about man and evolution which seems, for various reasons, to be becoming increasingly popular and influential in contemporary society—the “evolutionary optimism” (for want of a more expressive phrase) of individuals such as De Chardin, Colin Wilson, Sir Julian Huxley. According to the unanimous opinion of these distinguished minds, civilization, culture—in short, social organization of the more “advanced” kind—cannot be understood by seeing it merely as a kind of artificial product of over-sophisticated minds—or, as I believe De Chardin refers to it, “a mere biological epiphenomenon.” No—man is in possession (they emphatically maintain) of a superior, versatile, indefatigable and purposive consciousness, and the utilization and enjoyment of this produces what we know as civilization. The fact that human intelligence may be an over-compensatory mechanism, developed by man precisely because he is so limited, vulnerable and fundamentally afraid of the inhospitable global environment—this suggestion is brushed aside summarily as a product of existential pusillanimity—defeatist or “reductionist” thought.

It is also worth mentioning that a work of galvanizing originality published recently, which attributes human hairlessness, enhanced intelligence, insatiable genital appetite and powerful aggressiveness to ancestral cannibalism has been conveniently overlooked by those critics ready to fall at the feet of some philosopher only too ready to confirm the old prejudices about man being the pinnacle of creation—or, more accurately speaking, the pinnacle of organic and evolutionary achievement. After reading a book by one of these numerous evolutionary optimists, however, the present writer's principal and immediate reaction is one of singular depression—not because he has concluded the book, but simply because this whole new world view, which is unconcealedly anthropolatrous and retains God by interiorizing him as “purposive evolutionary drive”, and seems to him to be so much indulgent and irresponsible daydreaming.

## Optimistic outlook

Let us admit that man can be more than what he is now—more compassionate, more relaxed, more integrated, more responsible, more intelligent, more contemplative. Even admitting this (it should be remembered that many so-called “philosophical pessimists” frankly acknowledge man's capacity for some advancement), these optimistic outlooks, which see the world inhabited by rapturous supermen within a few decades, overlook one nasty but inescapable fact—that life is basically a hard, unrewarding, sad and senseless business, given both man's almost total subordination to ineradicable subjective limitations (pertaining to his own psycho-physical actuality) and ineradicable objective limitations (the fact that he inhabits an unconscious universe, governed by mechanical causality or, as man tries to huamize it, “natural laws” which is ignorant, not only of human life, but of any life). So, although men can often cause themselves physical or psychological suffering by lack of self-control and aware-

ness, we see the “anthropolators” extending ever outward the limits of man's supposed exemption from suffering, until we end up with an outlook on man which (at the risk of sounding malicious) sounds suspiciously like a humanistic equivalent of “God's in his heaven . . .” Man may experience supreme “affirmation” through copulation, art, philosophy, science, and so on, but what does this really mean, how does it benefit the human race, one man rhapsodizing over an orgasm while the universe is subject to the anguish of birth and the pain of life?

If it is objected that a philosophically melancholy person projects his own lack of existential enthusiasm and vitality out onto the world, and “blames” the world for what is his own fault (his own gloominess and despair), could it not equally legitimately be maintained (howls of protests from the optimists notwithstanding) that the great “yea-sayers” (to use Nietzsche's phrase) are not experiencing the “sacred objective worth of life”, but simply externalizing and rationalizing their affirmation of themselves, themselves as in those rare and tantalizing moments when a man, through intensification of consciousness, is in a state of refreshing forgetfulness and transcendence of the misery of life? Colin Wilson, in his book *New Pathways in Psychology—Maslow and the Post-Freudian Revolution*, seems unwittingly to “blow the gaff” on the real motives of evolutionary (or, existential) optimism when he states: “. . . the basic evolutionary drive in human beings is towards the impersonal.” Fine—but is this not precisely an argument against optimism, since, whatever else may be said, the impersonal, *per se*, can only be satisfactorily conceived and explained as a profound release from the (unsatisfying, experientially claustrophobic) personal?

## Symptom of fear

As I see it, society is an environmental and environning substitute for what man lacks, which is regulation by instincts; this lack, generally represented by optimists as a sign that man is less limited and behaviourally automatic than the animals, could just as plausibly be shown to be a sign of man's inferiority to our animal brethren. Secondly, we may say that society is a symptom of man's primal and ineradicable fear of a harsh, remorseless and impersonal world, where he is required (he chooses to persuade himself, invoking some kind of existential equivalent of a categorical imperative) to exist, a consciousness surrounded by unconsciousness, a personality surrounded by impersonality. It is not that the universe *is* malicious; it is simply that man's interaction with it is bound to occasion suffering, since it is beneath awareness and he is awareness. In a sense, therefore, we might even suggest that social organization, by attempting to standardize human mentality, is a way of insulating man against the universe, a kind of psychological protective clothing—attempting, simultaneously, to regularize human conduct so as to make itself (social organization) a viable substitute for government by the (missing) instincts, as well as trying to “impersonalize” human consciousness, so that man participates, to a slight extent, in the “feelinglessness” of the

(Continued on page 36)

# CHILDREN WHO STILL WAIT

SYBIL SILVER

Dr. David Owen's Children's Bill was due to have its second reading on Friday 8 February, the day Parliament was dissolved. This Bill, one of the most comprehensive and detailed private members' Bills ever drafted, based on the Government appointed Houghton Committee's report, was to reform adoption and guardianship, fostering and custody law.

Until recently it has been assumed that parents are the most appropriate people to have the rights and care of their children. Parental rights have been paramount, children regarded, not as humans with feelings and needs, but rather as the property of their parents. Social workers, doctors, courts, all of these have paid undue respect to parents' rights even when parents have long ago abandoned their responsibilities. Recently there has not only been much written about the needs of children, but there has been a great deal of publicity given to many unfortunate and sad cases, where children have been the victims of their parents mis-treatment.

## Sentence for life

At present in this country there are 90,000 children in care. Many are in care temporarily, while mother is in hospital or unable to cope, many will be reunited happily with their families, but it is clear from the recent publication from the Association of British Adoption Agencies, *Children Who Wait*, that of these, those who are in care for six months are likely to remain there for the rest of their lives without any or little contact with their original parents and family. A devastating report. To grow up in care, means you grow up without anyone of your own—no one who just cares about you. Admittedly, you would have good housing, clothes and food, holidays and toys and the company of other children, but no one of your own, no sense of identity and a growing feeling of rejection. In addition, there will probably be many changes of house mothers and helpers and even the social workers change many times—and she is the one responsible directly for your long term welfare. And when you reach the age of eighteen, your care-order terminates, the local authority ceases to be responsible for you, you are on your own—and out you go into the world. Most are equipped in some way to earn their living—many are not and all have no family and have to leave their children's home and live in lodgings or hostels. Some who have been successfully fostered are lucky and they of course continue to live with their foster families until they choose to leave and set up on their own—but they at least do have their families there to go back to.

## Substitute family

Fostering can be and is a successful way of finding a substitute family when a child is taken into care. In many cases, however, foster parents have to contend with natural parents, who are unwilling and unable to have their children, visiting so occasionally that all it does is to disturb the child. They also have to live with the knowledge that the natural parent has the right to take away that child when ever they wish—that is if the local authority does not have parental rights—which means that they cannot do this without the permission of that authority. Some natural parents only visit their child when encouraged by the social worker—and it is indeed argued that these are the

very parents—the very inadequate ones who need the help to stay in contact with their children. But I would query the worthwhileness and effect on the child of these occasional visits. They are too often disruptive—leaving the child confused and anxious about the next visit which may never come. I would like to see a time when parents who do not visit their children regularly over a period of a year and demonstrate their ability to care for them have their rights to be parents removed and the long term welfare of the child planned—and by that I mean that a new permanent substitute family found for them.

At present parents with children in long-term care play cat and mouse with them, they have the right to do this. Social workers are empowered to use resources to rehabilitate the family at all costs—taking the child into care at the request of the parents—giving it back when they think they can manage again. Then there are the children without any parental contact, or even, in one case where the mother is dead, and yet these children are growing up in a children's home—placed there with no long-term plans made for them to be found a new family. How can this happen when we know there are many people anxious to adopt children?

Until recently it has been assumed that would-be adopters have only wanted small white Anglo-Saxon babies. The Parent to Parent Information on Adoption Service (P.P.I.A.S.) has dispelled this myth. This is a group composed of people who have approached their local authority asking for children, only to be told they have none available.

Had Dr. David Owen's Bill received its second reading, we might by now have had some hope for these unfortunate children. For example, one of the clauses would cover children fostered for a year—natural parents would not be able to remove them impulsively—they would have to give twenty-eight days' notice.

## Onus of proof

Foster parents who have had children in their care for five years would be able to apply for an adoption order without the fear that the natural parents would be prompted to reclaim their child even though they have not seen them for years. At present an application to adopt has to be accompanied by parental consent. It is suggested that after five years in the continuous care of foster parents it would be in the welfare of the child for the natural parents to have to prove their rights in court that they were able and suitable to have the care of their child.

Mothers giving their babies or children for adoption will have to place them with an adoption agency (unless placing with relatives). At present any mother can hand over her child to anyone of her choosing and anyone can take this child—these are known as third-party adoptions. Mothers who decide they want their baby adopted will be required to give their legal consent to this when they place the child with the agency so that when the child is placed in its adoptive home the new parents will not be in the position of doubt and fear that this child can suddenly be reclaimed by a mother who has changed her mind and wants her child back.

Parents who give up their children for adoption will no longer be able to specify the religion under which the child

must be brought up. It will still be open for parents to go to voluntary societies which serve people of particular faiths.

These and many other proposals were all incorporated in Dr. David Owen's Bill, which is now no longer in existence. It did however receive an enormous amount of publicity and sympathy which has not been lost. The Conservative Party say that the Department of Health and Social Security will accept the Bill with some modifications and that it is Sir Keith Joseph's intention to bring forward a Bill on similar terms. But what priority will be given to

this is in doubt. If they are re-elected there will be a lot of work to be done to keep their intention before them.

There is no doubt that until recently parents rights have been paramount—rights to what?—to neglect and abuse? It would seem that now we must recognise that the child has paramount rights—rights to a secure, loving permanent home and if this cannot be achieved with unwilling, incapable natural parents then a permanent substitute home should be found and found quickly before the child is exposed to rejection and change too often, and damaged irreparably. New legislation is needed to further these aims.

## FREE THOUGHTS ON THE ELECTION

The electorate has just been given one of its sporadic chances to choose between a limited number of policy packages, but with no guarantee that the package it selects will in fact be put into practice. As it turned out the result of the electors' choice was not entirely clear. Some commentators tried to make out that this was their intention. This is, of course, absurd, as the vast majority of the electorate voted for one of the two major parties, who presented distinctive programmes. Only a comparatively small minority voted for the party of "moderation". The majority voted for one form of decisive programme or the other. One can sympathize with a minority party that will win disproportionately few seats in relation to the number of votes cast for it. The arguments in favour of some form of proportional representation are fairly strong. Besides being obviously more equitable, it is the system that works reasonably well in most European countries and it would be a means of, to some extent, adjusting the balance between parliament and the executive at a time when the latter is gaining an increasingly free hand, with parliament becoming more and more a rubber stamp to its wishes. However as the system is at present the outcome was fairly obvious. Indeed, having gone to the country for a renewed mandate and lost, Mr. Heath's dalliance in Downing Street is rather surprising. His point that the Conservative Party had polled more votes than Labour is irrelevant, as this has been the position of the Labour Party in opposition in the past.

### Religious platform

Nearer home, the members of the Humanist Parliamentary Group have all been safely returned, most with increased majorities. There were two candidates who stood on an exclusively Christian platform at Dundee East and Harrogate; both lost their deposits. At Southall the Turban Action candidate (opposing the compulsory wearing of crash helmets on motorcycles) won only 310 votes. Clearly the Sikh inhabitants of Southall see this problem in perspective. One wonders what would have happened if there were no secret ballot, and they had to cast their votes openly before their religious leaders. In this case the motivation is clear, but it is surprising the number of candidates who stand with no hope of saving their deposits: one candidate stood in three constituencies as an "Air, Road, Public Safety, White Resident" candidate and polled 35, 45 and 240 for a net gain to the Exchequer of £450.

When Parliament is dissolved, is always a time of mixed feelings. A large amount of parliamentary effort on legislation in progress goes by the board. Most will regret the

lapsing of the Children's Bill (see article on adoption in this issue) and the Health and Safety at Work Bill, both of which are areas where action is urgently needed. Few tears will be shed in freethinking circles, however, for the demise of the Cinematograph and Indecent Displays Bill. Police activity in field of alleged pornography is already reaching alarming proportions without their legal armoury being strengthened further. Recently all 324,000 copies of the Christmas 1972 edition of the comparatively harmless magazine *Men Only* were adjudged indecent under the Customs and Excise Act 1952 and were ordered to be destroyed. During a raid on a wholesale newsagent in Bath police took away copies of (among others) *The Lady, Exchange and Mart, Nova, Tit-Bits, Woman* and *Amateur Photographer*. Clearly the police were not going to be put off their quest for smut by these seemingly, innocuous, but clearly ambiguous, magazine titles. The newsagent now faces a charge in which no less than sixty titles are alleged to be obscene. So serious has the situation become that the trade magazine *National Newsagent*, has asked the Association of Chief Police Constables for a complete list of all "pornographic" publications seized in the last two years.

During the election campaign Mrs. Mary Whitehouse of the National Viewers' and Listeners' Association canvassed party leaders on their views towards reviving the Bill in the new parliament. Naturally enough Mr. Heath declared his intention of so doing, but no such assurance was forthcoming from the leaders of the Liberal and Labour parties. However, Mrs. Whitehouse's questionnaire to the party leaders also included questions on sex education and religious education in schools. Previously she had taken on herself to accuse the B.B.C. and I.T.V. of giving two sympathetic coverage to the miners' case in their pay dispute. Readers of this journal will see here the true political nature of her campaign coming to the surface. It prompted the general secretary of the National Council for Civil Liberties to question in a letter to the *Guardian* (23 February) the constitution of the N.V.L.A. Have the members authorized Mrs. Whitehouse to express political views? Have they authorized her to issue statements on religious instruction? Is policy determined by an annual general meeting that elects an executive committee? He concluded:

If the answers to the above questions are unsatisfactory, is it fair to assume that the National Viewers' and Listeners' Association is one of those organizations which Mrs. Whitehouse has requested the party leaders to establish a broadcasting commission to look into to ensure the "effectiveness of existing

(Continued overleaf)

## THREATS TO FREEDOM

A series of PUBLIC MEETINGS at  
**CAXTON HALL, LONDON SW1**  
 Meetings commence at 7.45 p.m.

*Wednesday 2 April*

### THREATS TO SEXUAL FREEDOM

RENEE SHORT, M.P.  
 (Labour Member for Wolverhampton North-East)  
 DILYS COSSEY (*Secretary*, The Birth Control Campaign)  
 ANTONY GREY (*Secretary*, The Albany Trust)

*Wednesday 24 April*

### THREATS TO LITERARY AND ARTISTIC FREEDOM

HUGH JENKINS, M.P. (Labour Member for Putney)  
 MARTIN LONEY (*Secretary*, National Council for Civil Liberties)  
 GEOFFREY ROBERTSON (Barrister, Committee member, Defence of Literature and the Arts Society)  
 MARION BOYARS (Publisher, *Director*, Calder & Boyars)

*Tuesday 14 May*

### THREATS TO IMMIGRANTS AND EXILES

FRITZ EFAW (*Secretary*, Vietnam Veterans Against the War)  
 R. A. HASHINI (*Counsellor*, U.K. Immigrant Advisory Service)  
 DAVE CLARK (Assistant Editor, *Race Today*)

*Wednesday 29 May*

### THREATS TO CIVIL LIBERTY

BENEDICT BIRNBERG (Solicitor, *Ex-Chairman*, National Council for Civil Liberties)

The meetings will be chaired by BARBARA SMOKER

Organised by the NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY  
 698 Holloway Road, London N19 3NL  
 (Telephone: 01-272 1266)

## FREETHINKER FUND

The February total would have been rather unimpressive but for several generous donations. We are very grateful to those readers who have contributed, and appeal to individuals and groups to help us to reduce the deficit incurred in publishing *The Freethinker*. The following contributions were received. Anonymous, £1; C. Byass, £1; A. Dennis, £3.90; E. J. Hughes, £1; J. D. Hockin, £2; E. Jackson, 75p; C. Jeffery, 45p; F. W. Jones, 90p; J. Little, £5; R. Matthewson, £1; J. McCorriskin, 50p; R. Murray, £10; P. Neilson, £2; P. Seager, £1; B. M. Siegan, £3.75; J. Vallance, £1.90; E. G. Vaughan, 40p. Total for February: £37.45.

(Continued from previous page)

safeguards against corruption and the exploitation of broadcasting by small and unrepresentative groups whose activities enshrine anti-social and political aims”?

During the election campaign the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children put out advertisements proclaiming “Vote for the Unborn Child”, presumably urging the point of view of one correspondent to the *Catholic Herald* that consideration of this “issue of conscience” should override normal party affiliations. However, the press officer of SPUC had to warn her supporters not to be taken in by what she described as “Tory politicking”. She was referring to the passage in the Conservative Party manifesto that promised to “introduce a reform of the abortion law in the light of the Lane Committee report”. People might be misled, she said, into thinking that they intended to restrict abortion.

Besides opposing abortion, the Catholic Church also took a swipe at Communists. Pastoral letters were read in areas of Scotland where Communist candidates were standing, while a pastoral letter from Cardinal Heenan drew a quick response not only from Communists but also from many Catholics. The letter was seen as a clear warning against the influence of Communists in the trade unions and Labour Party. In so doing he was rightly accused of indulging in one of the more dubious aspects of Tory electioneering. A number of Catholics from Oxford University wrote to several of the national daily newspapers pointing this out. They stressed that Communists holding office in trade unions had been elected by their colleagues—which is more than can be said for Cardinal Heenan.

Having himself spoken of the importance of knowing the facts before coming to a political decision he has yet taken upon himself the grave responsibility of suggesting that our present disorders are due not, as many responsible analysts think, to a fundamental weakness in our economic structure but to a conspiracy of disruptive men.

### Out of print

The Cardinal based his criticism of Communism on a papal encyclical directed against Stalin in 1937. In the course of his pastoral he quoted from a Communist Party of Great Britain training manual—“Our work in the unions is to permeate them with communist ideas and convert them into revolutionary organizations”—but it turns out that this manual was published in 1927 and has been out of print for forty years.

Now that a Labour administration has been formed, it may be worth considering what important measures (apart from repealing the Industrial Relations and Housing Finance Acts) they may be likely to introduce. There will initially be tremendous pressure on parliamentary time, but it is to be hoped that they put through a Children's Bill as a government measure, and that we shall see a more satisfactory Anti-Discrimination Bill than has been presented so far. It seems likely too that museum charges will go. Several London museums have reported dramatic drops in attendances since charges were introduced. It may be thought that a good proportion of those using them are foreign tourists who should be obliged to pay, but a recent survey showed that a clear majority of tourists in London came from Britain. The continuation of these charges therefore must impair the nation's enjoyment of its heritage.



### Church school bonanza

The most disturbing prospect for readers of this journal will be their policy on church schools. In a statement before the election Mr. Edward Short, deputy leader of the Labour Party, pledged that on taking office a Labour Government "would invite the voluntary bodies—principally the Churches—to discuss their financial problems with us, and together we will find a solution which will provide some relief for them and, at the same time, will preserve the 1944 religious settlement intact." He revealed that twice last year he pressed the previous Secretary of State for Education, Mrs. Thatcher, for additional financial assistance for them. The *Catholic Herald* claimed this as an example of Catholic influence on the election campaign. The general secretary of the Catholic Teachers' Federation of England and Wales greeted the statement as "wonderful".

In a similar vein, Mr. Robert Mellish, now Government Chief Whip, who was created a Knight of St. Gregory by Pope John for his contribution to Catholic education, maintained that the religious settlement of 1944 had been accepted once and for all.

The Humanist influence is negligible—they've got about as influence as the Communists. . . . Of course there are a few cranks in every party, but I speak for the party as a whole. Personally I'd like to see 100 per cent grants for our schools, but I think we get a pretty good deal at the moment.

That the Labour Party should be taking this line is not surprising—especially in view of the way the platform evaded the issue at the last party conference. Mr. Mellish may dismiss humanists as cranks, but there is surely something unbalanced about a party that holds simultaneously policies for comprehensive and sectarian education. To attempt to integrate the two not only involves almost insuperable organizational problems, but the adoption of sectarianism is a fundamental betrayal of the principles of comprehensive education. *The Freethinker* is often accused of overdoing its opposition to church schools, but this cannot be so. The problem of church schools will not just disappear as some humanists and liberal Christians seem to imagine. Once the Churches obtain a 100 per cent grant, church schools will be set to go on for ever. No longer will the financial embarrassment of the churches be a continuous indictment of the blatant injustice of their involvement in education.

## SECTARIANISM REAFFIRMED IN ULSTER WILLIAM McILROY

One myth was shattered on 28 February. The General Election provided moderate opinion in Northern Ireland with an opportunity to demonstrate a desire to turn from the futile and mistaken sectarianism of the last 50 years and for the establishment of a more equitable system in the Six Counties. However the Faulknerite Unionists, on whom Westminster depends for the implementation of the Sunningdale agreement, were annihilated at the ballot-box in favour of the anti-Sunningdale "loyalists".

The British people have been deceived by Mr. Faulkner's and Mr. Whitelaw's smooth assurances that the "moderate majority" in Northern Ireland was on the brink of finding its voice and declaring for policies formulated to establish peace and social justice. The moderate majority never existed and the desire for change was mythical; now we must face the reality. The people of Northern Ireland have chosen to be represented at Westminster by religious fanatics, demagogues and would-be liquidators of opponents. The fact that the pro-Assembly Unionists, who are far to the Right of the Monday Club, were rejected for being too liberal, effectively illustrates the political degeneracy of the Protestant majority in Northern Ireland.

### Dangerous Allies

The outcome of the General Election caused much speculation about deals between the main parties and other groups, including the United Ulster Unionists, now represented at Westminster. Any pact between Mr. Wilson and the Paisley-West-Craig coterie seems to be out of the question. Mr. Heath probably realises that to form even the most tenuous alliance with the Ulster members would be as incautious as accepting an invitation to accompany them on a midnight tour of a stiletto factory.

Mr. Heath or his successor will also be aware that a pact with the Ulster Unionists at Westminster would cause strong dissension within the Conservative Party. The traditional links have already caused much unease and

embarrassment, for the image of any British party which claims to be fair, moderate and forward-looking is bound to be seriously tarnished by an association with the discredited thickheads of Ulster Unionism. Mr. Heath was undoubtedly aware of such feelings when he set up a commission, under the influential Lord Chelmer, to study the relationship between British and Ulster Tories. The report has been ready for some time but its publication was delayed because of the General Election. Publication may be further delayed by the new situation at Westminster, but it has been reported that Lord Chelmer and his colleagues have recommended a break with the Ulster Unionists. Their deliberations took place prior to Mr. Faulkner's deposition from the party leadership and before his opponents' triumph at the General Election, events which will reinforce the commission's recommendations.

There is obvious rapport between the Scottish National Party and Plaid Cymru, and theoretically it would appear that they and the Ulster Unionists would be natural allies against the big battalions. In fact there are only slight similarities in their aspirations. The Scottish and Welsh Nationalists are cast in a completely different mould to the Ulster group. Neither the Scottish National Party nor Plaid Cymru seek to set up a régime based on repression, discrimination and the regulation of a substantial minority of its citizens to an inferior position in society. They have a fair measure of idealism, tolerance and pride in their nations' history and culture. These qualities, whatever the cynics may say, have not just surfaced with the oil.

### The Master Race

The Ulster Unionists, in contrast to the Scottish and Welsh Nationalists, have scarcely a redeeming feature in their attitudes and tradition. They are the choice of the Orange elements which, for over 150 years, have been the toadies of religious and political despots, and the most enthusiastic supporters of reactionary causes. They have

fostered a racist mystique, upholding the Scottish-Ulster breed as being superior to all other mortals. Social reforms in Northern Ireland had to be imposed by Britain, and the "Protestant parliament for a Protestant people" at Stormont was an affront to democracy. The Unionists have no tradition, only a squalid record. They have no future either, and no group at Westminster will want to be associated with political lepers.

Unfortunately the bellicose, reactionary rantings of the Reverend Ian Paisley and other contemporary Unionists obscure the fact that Ulster Protestants were once ardent supporters of reform and social justice. During the last decades of the eighteenth century they organised around

a programme which anticipated that of the English Chartists by 50 years. They hailed the French and American Revolutions; they were familiar with the works of Thomas Paine and other radicals; Belfast had an anti-slavery society as early as 1781; a co-educational school was established in the city. Liberal Protestants and avowed freethinkers worked together for the equality of all citizens, irrespective of their religion. All that changed during the nineteenth century with the rise of evangelical Protestantism and of the Orange Order.

There is a lesson here for those innocents who think that progress is inevitable, or that gains that have been made are secure for all time.

# REVIEWS

## BOOKS

**THE FUTURE OF BROADCASTING:** A Report presented to the Social Morality Council. Eyre Methuen, 75p.

The Social Morality Council was founded in 1969 as a joint Christian and Humanist body to study important social issues from an ethical point of view. It is perhaps this structure which explains the surprising omission from the report of any mention of religious programmes—the topic which springs immediately to the mind of a non-believer when broadcasting is discussed.

The report was instigated in 1972, when it was thought that the Charter of the B.B.C. and the Act establishing the I.B.A. were due for renewal in 1975. The Government has subsequently postponed the date to 1981, but this does not devalue the findings of this report, nor is the need for public debate about the place of broadcasting in society diminished. As the report points out, there is a surprising lack of research into the long-term accumulative impact that television, in particular, has upon the ideas of each individual, and hence upon society as a whole.

Ninety-five per cent of all British households possess a television and the average time spent viewing is nineteen hours a week. Only sleeping and working occupy more time. Estimates of television's effect on society vary between negligible and catastrophic. Perhaps it is time that we found out for sure.

The traditional goals of broadcasting are the trinity of information, education and entertainment. These are as difficult to bring together in one entity as their Christian

equivalent. Reducing entertainment to the lowest common multiple will negate the first two, but emphasis on the first two will not meet the needs of the majority who pay licence fees. A difficult balance has to be struck.

In the future, much of the informative and educative rôles of broadcasting can be taken over by cablevision, with sixty channels per cable, and videotape. The educative rôle of broadcasting cannot be underestimated, especially the success of the Open University. Many of these programmes are reinforced by teacher's notes and pamphlets. However, this is done against the background of shortage of available airtime, particularly at peak-viewing times.

One possible cure for this is the Fourth Channel. Most of the Commission feel that this could be used extensively for educational broadcasts. This would still leave ample time for programmes of minority interest. The numerous other alternatives are set out in the report together with their respective advantages and draw-backs.

The structure of the broadcasting institutions are necessarily complex. The broadcasters require independence from Government interference in the day-to-day running of programmes, but must be accountable to society for their general standard and tone. Conversely, broadcasts must be protected from vociferous minorities who want to enforce their own "morality" on the rest of society. (No names mentioned.)

Two important suggestions are a Complaints Review Board, to examine charges of inaccuracy and misrepresentation by the B.B.C. and I.B.A., and a Centre for Broadcasting. This latter organization would keep under constant review the content and practice of broadcasting, and to act as a mediator between Government, broadcasters and the public.

This report provides some useful background information about broadcasting of interest to the layman. Its recommendations are hardly radical but are soundly based and argued. I found this report stimulating and it will be of interest to any person who cares about the society in which he lives.

JOHN FROGLEY

DAVID TRIBE

### BROADCASTING, BRAINWASHING, CONDITIONING

25p plus 4p postage

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

698 Holloway Road, London, N19 3NL

**EPIDEMIC: TORTURE** by Amnesty International. British Amnesty, 55 Theobald's Road, London, WC1. 25p.

Our age, like Macbeth, has supped full with horrors; the time has long passed when our senses would have cooled to hear a night-shriek.

And that, precisely, is part of the trouble. As this pamphlet points out, it is not the proof of torture that is

lacking; it is the courage to believe the reports that daily come in. There is a natural limit to our belief, a natural reluctance to credit that what we have got so used to in films, novels and television programmes has a basis in political reality that is even more disturbing.

George Orwell used to complain that we in England did not realize which century we were living in. But there is more to it than that. It is not merely that the more optimistic of Victorian prophecies have failed to come to universal fruition, but that in some ways in some countries we appear to have actually gone back, to have returned to political habits that the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries thought they had got rid of for ever. Secular politics in our time have taken a leaf, or a thumb-screw, out of the religious politics of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Paine and Burke, as well as Gladstone and Disraeli, would have been outraged by the documentary evidence assembled here. No less than thirty-two countries, from the extreme Right of Portugal, Greece and South Africa to the extreme Left of Cuba and the U.S.S.R., are indicted here for practices which would have won the warm approval of Gestapo and the Spanish Inquisition. From police brutality to the more subtle method of certifying political opponents "insane", the record seems more suitable to a fictional 1984 than an actual 1974. Everywhere the motive is fundamentally the same: to torture and humiliate a political opponent, to get him to betray his cause—and himself. "The victim must disgrace himself", wrote Sartre, "by his screams and his submission, like a human animal. In the eyes of everybody and in his own eyes."

Naught for our comfort? There is one gleam of hope. "We could always tell when international protests were taking place", reports a former political prisoner quoted here; "the food rations increased and the beatings inside the prisons got less . . ." The victims, in other words, are completely helpless *only* when the outside world shrugs its shoulders and says it can do nothing. The buying of a pamphlet like this, a peaceful protest outside a foreign embassy, a question in the House . . . such things are very small in themselves but together they can at least start the necessary, long overdue counter-offensive. The alternative is to condone.

R. C. CHURCHILL

### IN MY OWN WAY: An Autobiography 1915-1965

by Alan Watts. Jonathan Cape, £3.50.

In one of many passages of self-disparagement in his autobiography Alan Watts describes his interests and abilities as "of no economic value or intellectual interest to the community at large". This might be regarded as an indictment of the community at large did he not say later, "I have some difficulty in taking myself and my work *seriously*." But even this observation is not meant seriously, for the author clearly imagines himself as a great prophet not without honour save in his own country, England. It seems to be Britain has judged correctly.

Throughout his narration Mr. Watts displays that contempt for money usually found among those who have never lacked it and who have turned against the English public school system while extracting maximal advantages from its contacts. Impregnated there with chapel, respectability and "subtle, but not really overt, homosexuality", he turned in later life to the legalized drag of the Anglo-Catholic priesthood. Not surprising, one may think. What was surprising was that he should admit his vocation was merely "some way of fitting in with the traditions of

Western culture" and that it was an interlude in a life generally devoted to Buddhism and to complete heterosexuality.

The blurb describes him as "one of the foremost interpreters of Eastern religions for the Western layman" and his announced beliefs are eminently eclectic: "If I am asked to define my personal tastes in religion I must say that they lie between Mahayana Buddhism and Taoism, with a certain leaning towards Vedanta and Catholicism, or rather the Orthodox Church of Eastern Europe." He admits that he was to some extent responsible for the "Zen boom" of the late 1950s and the "beat Zen" of Kerouac's *Dharma Bums*, and he seems on intimate terms with every trendy *guru*, *yogi*, *roshi* and *sadhu* on both sides of the Indian Ocean.

Among his acquaintances have been "Oom the Omnipotent", "whose disciples included members of the highest New York society", a creator of the New Britain movement who turned to Woodbines and *carpe diem* parties, a publisher who brought out his "potboiler" *Easter—Its Story and Meaning*, illustrated by one of his icons labelled "Modern Indian—artist unknown", John Cage "getting away with murder in the hopelessly deranged world of avant-garde music" and being handsomely paid for Zen "melodies of silence", an artist fascinated by automatism and the "fundamental rhythms of the universe", a psychiatrist who used therapeutic astrology, a surgeon who healed people by doing nothing, a wedding couple given away by their respective analysts, the "disciplined yogi" Allen Ginsberg and a creator of collages of cloth on plywood who "started out to be a charlatan and became an artist in spite of himself". With friends like that, who need ever be short of money and devoted admirers in California and American college campuses? And who can wonder why the world of academic philosophy is unappreciative?

In his gracefully written book, which does not often lapse into name-dropping chattiness or *bon viveur* pretentiousness, Mr. Watts directs many accurate barbs at orthodox institutions of the Western world: psychiatry, *Hymns Haunting and Horrible*, academic mediocrity, the monumental apathy of students in England, religious prudes and the "whining obsequiousness of deliberate self-humiliation". Well does he write of the "amiable platitudes" of Bahai and the "kind of nostalgia" and "obsessive verbosity" which characterize Christianity. But why, oh why, turn from these to Indo-Chino-Japanese mysticism, which blends its platitudes only with ludicrous paradoxes (rubbish like meditation on the sound of one hand clapping) and a verbosity which is less incredible than Christianity's merely through being, for the most part, totally incomprehensible? While European interest in things Oriental is perhaps a healthy reflection of declining Western imperialism, one of the most ironic aspects of our time is the sight of "liberated" people abandoning the Rosary for interminable Mantras, sermons for exhortations, prayers for "meditation", church organs for jingling bells and proper meals for "macrobiotic" food (where a tasteless, vitamin-deficient, repetitious, subsistence Eastern diet is offered at high prices with talk of Yin and Yang).

Yet Alan Watts does with "a certain charm and a big gift of the gab" explore the no-man's-land where East meets West and offer to busy Westerners a potted version of Oriental religion and sociology of the self-indulgent school. Easy living—and my carping comments—need cause no concern; after all, they're all Brahman.

DAVID TRIBE

**ANOTHER LITTLE DRINK:** The Story of an Alcoholic's Decline, Fall and Return to Life by Abraham Adams. Scotia (33a Huddart Street, Wick, Caithness), £1.50 (75p paperback).

The urge to write is a widely distributed affliction. All over the country little old ladies are scrawling their memoirs, lyrical couplets and romantic novels. Little old men have their share of memoirs too, but their penchant is the philosophy of life, usually taking the form of a tendentious history of mankind larded with refutations of Darwin and Marx, speculations on psychosexuality and platitudes that make the Sermon on the Mount sound profound. Most of these, through illegibility, incomprehensibility or whatever, never reach print, but all too many creep through by means of private publication or a minor publisher relying on indiscriminate buying by librarians.

Thus one's instinctive reaction when faced with an autobiography produced by an unknown provincial publisher is unfavourable. In the case of *Another Little Drink*, this reaction would be very unfortunate and unfair. As the title suggests, this is the account of one man's slide into alcoholism and his attempts, eventually successful, to be cured. However, it is much more than this. His alcoholism forms the centrepiece of an engaging autobiography.

The author is by profession a librarian, and has already suffered discrimination on account of his alcoholic past. He therefore writes under a pseudonym. This is but one indication of the widespread mistaken attitude towards alcoholism. The sufferer from any other disease might expect sympathetic consideration from a prospective employer, but the former alcoholic, it seems, must be tainted for life as much and as regrettably as the former convict. Too often the reaction is one of moral indignation, not of informed compassion. This, the author suggests, is the main objection to the temperance movement, that it regards alcoholism, not as a disease, but as a sin.

The author's passage through the more rigorous Scottish education system left a negative impression on him. Dominies willing to use corporal punishment on pupils for failing to answer questions correctly must have been semi-sadists, and some were certainly mentally unbalanced. The author wonders how much things have changed when he reads of pupils sent home for refusing to conform to outmoded styles of haircut and dress.

Education, as understood by the majority of pedagogues, still seems to be a mere cramming process designed to badger and bully children into digesting slabs of largely useless information to be regurgitated at successive examinations. . . . The inevitable result is that when, eventually, they escape from their child prisons, the average boy and girl are so thankful that they speedily forget everything they have learned and become part of the great mindless, soccer-mad, telly-watching, general public.

Some are moved to think this is the intention. At university things were little better: Chaucer was dissected word for word; twentieth century literature might as well not have existed.

His university studies were almost interrupted by the Second World War. As a pacifist he was determined to become a conscientious objector. He opposed the arguments put forward by, among others, his minister, of the righteousness of the cause, of war being the lesser evil,

with the view that being loyal to his ideal would not involve Britain being overrun by the Nazis as not all Britons shared his views, but that his stand was necessary as a beginning of the process by which those on *both* sides would come to see the folly of taking up arms against one another.

His university education complete, his ideas moved towards entering the Church. His beliefs were already unorthodox—for instance, he rejected the divinity of Christ—and perhaps his earliest religious encounter when he drew blood from the hand of the baptizing minister should have warned him that such a career would be ill-starred. But he had always been fascinated by religion: as a boy he preached interminable sermons to an unfortunate playmate, and celebrated Communion with lemonade and biscuits, until his parents put a stop to it. The author's sojourn at theological college began with a warning from the principal not to invite choirboys to his room. The lecturer on the Old Testament held very sceptical views on its authenticity; he probably held similar views on the New Testament, and had no interest at all in such questions as the Existence of God or the Divinity of Christ. After being almost expelled for a practice sermon advocating free love and trial marriage he was duly ordained a Unitarian minister, only to be appalled at the prospect of a lifetime of pastoral work.

It was then that, like so many, rejecting teaching on account of his own experiences on the receiving end, he became a librarian. At first his drinking was a social asset, but already there were signs of incipient alcoholism, had he cared to notice them; for instance, his ability and willingness to outdrink his colleagues. His tolerance to alcohol increased and at first this led to a happy release of tension. But this situation soon deteriorated: amnesia, drifting away of friends, unkempt appearance, waning finances, unsuccessful attempted cures, semi-mystical experiences, resignation of job, conviction for being drunk-in-charge, sale of family business; culminating in an attack of *delerium tremens* that lasted ten days.

The author hopes that his account of his own experience of alcoholism will give renewed hope not only to alcoholics themselves, but also to their friends and relations who may well despair that their loved ones will ever recover from this dreadful illness. As well as his own experiences he also discusses the theories of the causation of the disease and the methods of treatment other than the one that was eventually successful in his case.

His scepticism arose from his reading of Shaw, Paine, Jode, Bradlaugh, McCabe, Cohen, and "The Thinker's Library" series. From 1948 he contributed over fifty articles to *The Freethinker*. "I greatly admire the courageous no-hold-barred nature of its approach, and the burning sincerity of its contributors." It is perhaps disappointing then that the author regards his return to Christianity as a key to his recovery, but he retains his freethinking attitude to add:

I am quite certain that belief in God is not, *pace* Alcoholics Anonymous, a prerequisite of recovery from alcoholism or any other mental illness. Nevertheless, devotion to some sort of ideal, whether it be Humanism, Christianity or Communism obviously gives an alcoholic a sense of purpose, and hence reduces his desire to escape from reality through drink.

CHRISTOPHER MOREY

# CINEMA

## ONE DAY IN THE LIFE OF IVAN DENISOVITCH

Studio 2, Oxford Street.

Last month, Alexander Solzhenitsyn's long battle with the Soviet authorities culminated in his being exiled from his beloved homeland. Once in the West, he was treated as a tourist attraction, a reaction as reprehensible as it is inevitable. With Solzhenitsyn the man so much in the news, it is not surprising that a film based on his writing should be shown again. Probably audiences in other parts of the country will be given another chance to see this film. I very much hope they will.

Ronald Harwood's screenplay is very faithful to the original, with an unseen narrator reading excerpts from the novel, including the end, so stirring in its resigned simplicity. The Aitkin translation avoids the clumsy renderings of Russian colloquialisms which encumber the Penguin version. Solzhenitsyn's greatness stems from his unequalled gift for combining epic power with human gentleness. The picture of life in a Stalinist labour camp is autobiographical but never bitter, and, while covering a broad canvas, is rich in the observed minutiae of everyday life. The film reflects this with its unobtrusive but telling details, such as the moments of huddled privacy; the hasty prayers; the changing rhythms of work, with those sudden spurts of energy that can galvanize the most exhausted workers. There is the startling beauty of sunlight on a snowbound landscape; Ivan's reaching down to stroke the well-fed cat in the surgery; the look of troubled sympathy on the face of some of the prison officers who are, after all "only obeying orders". These touches are true to Solzhenitsyn's balanced, compassionate vision.

The film, like the book, is informed by a sensitivity that is never precious: the camera plays on the faces of the men trudging through the snow to their work-site, showing here a mouth, here an eye, here a tear-stained cheek. The director, Caspar Wrede, could not have found a better actor to play the ingenuous Ivan than Tom Courtenay, gap-toothed, with a shaven head and slow, ruminative speech. Courtenay's hurt face shows by turns fear of being caught committing some—by sane standards—trifling offence, physical wretchedness, longing, hope, patience, and, in an unforgettable sequence, the giddy euphoria of a man who has managed to pull himself unscathed through another day. Perhaps "unscathed" is too airy a word. The vast, snowy wastes of Siberia (Norway, where this film was made, can look very forbidding) make the officers' precautions against prisoners' escaping seem like a cruel joke. Ivan's team leader, subtly played by James Maxwell as a cultivated man hopelessly at odds with his environment, is punished for lodging a mild complaint by ten days in the cells. He is shown briefly, confined within slimy, frozen walls, demented with cold. As the prisoners in the overcrowded canteen devote themselves to their evening ration of porridge, the camera lingers for a few seconds on the solitary face of an older man, fighting down the rising anguish of his desolation.

If man's capacity for inflicting pain on his fellows seems boundless, so is his resourcefulness, his stoicism, his faith, and his dignity.

VERA LUSTIG

# THEATRE

## LE GRAND MAGIC CIRCUS ET SES TRISTES ANIMAUX. From Moses to Mao: 5,000 Years of Love and Adventure. The Roundhouse.

Anarchic is how I should describe this production put together by Jeremy Savary and his company: anarchic in its total disrespect and wild disregard for convention and at times in the sense of being quite chaotic. A group of Austro-Prussian music-hall artists are putting together a history of mankind from his origins to the present day. This involves an irreverent look at a wide number of heroes and the myths which surround them—not for the purpose of historical accuracy, but in a spirit of debunking and containing some wildly improbable guesses of how it really was.

The result is a series of grotesque images, whose only consistency is a certain zaniness. You see Joan of Arc as masochist, Louis XIV entertaining his courtiers with musical farts, Napoleon as a midget and so on. It is all done with boisterous good humour and there are plenty of lively songs. The acting is incredibly energetic, at times acrobatic. With a mixture of French and English it is usually fairly easy to follow, relying more on visual effects, the speed and confusion of which I occasionally found bewildering. There was plenty of tit and bum, but all too exuberant to be offensive. Not a subtle or thought-provoking occasion, but an entertaining romp.

JIM HERRICK

## I'VE GROWN ACCUSTOMED TO MY FACE

Henry IV by Pirandello. Her Majesty's Theatre, London.

'Tis Pity She's a Whore by John Ford. The Actors' Company, Wimbledon Theatre, London, S.W.

*Henry IV*, written in 1922, is considered by many to be the greatest work by the author of *Six Characters in Search of an Author* and *Tonight We Improvise*. It too, deals with man's search for identity, for a bearable image of himself. The play moves into the eerie territory of madness, where illusion and reality merge and part with dream-like capriciousness. The protagonist, an eccentric with a penchant for cavalcades, is thrown from his horse during one these processions, and, as a result of his head injury, stays rooted in the eleventh century. He "becomes" Henry IV of Germany, living out the Emperor's strife with his nobles and the Pope. The masquerade is sustained by a well-briefed "court", which no anachronisms of dress or manners is allowed to infiltrate. As the action of the play gets under way, fissures begin to appear in the mirror . . .

I have admired and enjoyed many of Clifford Williams's previous productions, notably his *Comedy of Errors* at Stratford a few years ago. His *Henry IV*, admittedly a difficult play, is disappointing. It lacks clearly defined changes of pace and mood and variations in tensions, and fails to convey Pirandello's profound and disturbing insight into human psychology, an insight that foreshadows Dr. Laing. Apparently afraid of being pedestrian, Williams

has erred on the side of flippancy, often playing for easy laughs. The overall impression is of a bunch of foolish socialites nursing their hangovers and their bitchiness after an unsuccessful fancy-dress party. The acting is fair; unexceptionable performances are turned in by the Rosen-crantz-and-Guildenstern figures, led by a pained, discreet Peter Cellier (a nice performance, this last). James Villiers makes the ineffectual visitor Tito Belcredi a shade too foppish. His formidable mistress is excellently played by Yvonne Mitchell as a grasping, snake-tongued lady, lending a sly coquetry to every word and movement but with depths of misery in her eyes.

Rex Harrison's Henry IV is a mangy but impressive lion. His first entrance has great impact, but his performance lacks inner fire. His voice peters out into a monotonous whine; his outbursts have neither the mechanical flatness of a madman's ravings nor the pent-up fury of a man in real pain. Mr. Harrison is not helped by the general tone of the production. Farrah's open set is distracting and tawdry. The actors are frequently masked by swathes of multicoloured ropes festooned about the set. I was irresistibly reminded of those quivering sprays of wire bathed in iridescent light, that are proudly displayed in chic stores at Christmas.

With such a strong performance by Yvonne Mitchell as Donna Matilda, the emphasis shifts from a man's inability to face the fact that he, Henry IV, cannot be twenty-six forever, to that of a woman. Miss Mitchell is well supported by Carolyn Courage as the daughter she dominates and envies. This is a performance of contained passion which with Miss Mitchell's, gives us a glimpse of the self-doubt, fear and disenchantment that underlie Pirandello's characterization. But a glimpse is not enough.

David Giles's production of *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* is totally gripping right up to and through the inevitable carnage with which it ends. It is also an adventurous production, updated to an Italy of Mafiosi and *gelati* which captures, with horrible accuracy, the unsavoury, vertiginous atmosphere of Jacobean drama. The performances are of the high calibre we have come to expect from this team of fine actors; though Margery Mason, as the bawdy confidante Putna, does at times sound rather hollow, and the cold viciousness of the wronged husband Soranzo sits a trifle oddly on Edward Petherbridge's startled-child features.

Ian McKellen of the princely stature and keen intelligence is remarkable in the lead rôle. Bandbox-dapper, yet somehow decayed, his Giovanni is very much the Italian whelp. McKellen has an unsurpassed gift for creating visual images that burn into the memory. When Giovanni has killed his sister/mistress, he tears out her heart, and, raising it aloft on his dagger's point, moves through the shocked crowd with the imperious gait of a Spanish dancer. Only a great actor can suggest grim, dangerous sexuality with such power.

When I saw this production during the Company's first season (Autumn 1972), the part of Giovanni's sister Annabella was played by Felicity Kendal, who has since left. Her place has been taken by Paola Dionisotti, a very interesting actress; fiercely animal yet disciplined. To see Miss Dionisotti playing opposite Ian McKellan should prove an exciting theatrical experience.

VERA LUSTIG

## LETTERS

### Abortion statistics

Mrs. Madeleine Simms (*The Freethinker*, February 1974, p. 22) thinks that I seem "a little hazy about the distinction between 'hard' and 'soft' data. The first is based on evidence; the second, on estimates", so may I try to dispel the haze a bit for a start? Data, of course, are evidence: but neither data nor any other sort of evidence can be based upon estimates—it's the other way round. Guesses are different, since a guess has only the authority of the guesser, and so is seldom susceptible of rational argument. But an estimate, being derived from objective data, is falsifiable and therefore proper for scientific study and criticism. Estimates may be good or bad ('hard' or 'soft', if you like), though they can't be better than the evidence from which they derive: they may be worse, however, if the derivation is faulty.

For my own abortion estimates (and I'm glad Mrs. Simms now agrees that this is an important and socially relevant question), the evidence and methods are set out at some length elsewhere, and it is open to anyone to show that they are wrong. If Mrs. Simms likes to produce some data to support her own very different figures, I will be happy to treat them as scientific estimates deserving serious study, rather than as the guesses they at present appear to be.

Mrs. Simms also asks for comments on some French figures quoted from *The Guardian* recently: but I claim no special knowledge of abortion in France, and anyway I would want more than a newspaper report to go on, for serious comment. This report, however, gives only an *average* figure for the whole period since 1920. In England and Wales there were 111 abortion deaths recorded for 1920, compared with 34 for 1967 (the last year before the law was changed), and some comparable decline would be expected for France. Even if the terrible figure of 350 deaths is correct as an average for the 54 years since 1920 in France (and I would like to see the evidence upon which this estimate is based), it is far from clear what relevance it would have to the present position, or even to correcting the official figure of 40 for 1968.

Finally, isn't it a little surprising that Mrs. Simms should think of the "sanctity of life" as an exclusively *religious* principle? Are all Humanists really happy to yield precedence to adherents of other religions, in their concern for human life? Precisely *when* human life may be supposed to begin is a difficult question, in connection with the ethics of abortion, and a proper matter for discussion among people who don't like having their minds made up for them by others. Freethinkers might be expected, perhaps more than most, to want to think things out for themselves, and if they are to do so they are hardly all likely to come up with the same answer. Is it to be taken for granted, without debate, that no question of the sanctity of human life could possibly arise for a baby before it is born? The right to life raises serious questions, however they are to be answered, and it really isn't good enough simply to assume that if religious believers often arrive at one answer, it must for that reason alone be the wrong one. Or *vice versa*, if it comes to that! C. B. GOODHART.

### MADELEINE SIMMS replies:

Dr. Goodhart says that estimates are "falsifiable" and "therefore proper for scientific study and criticism". There is, however, no way of either validating or falsifying how many legal and illegal abortions took place in Britain forty years ago. Consequently Dr. Goodhart is playing statistical games.

I do not agree that playing statistical games is either "relevant" or "important"—though they may be amusing. I am not clear why Dr. Goodhart is under the impression that I "now" agree that this is so. It would be relevant if we *really* knew how many abortions took place annually in Britain in the past. It would not necessarily be important. We might, as a society, prefer to have more abortions and less child cruelty and neglect.

Dr. Goodhart thinks it is useful to ask "precisely when does human life begin?" I can't think why since we have no accepted criteria for determining this (since no answer is "falsifiable"—see above). Instead of playing statistical games and asking himself unanswerable questions, perhaps Dr. Goodhart should devote the next rainy afternoon in Cambridge to contemplating the following conundrum: "Why should I be perverse enough to assume that the biological existence of the foetus is more important than the human life of the adult mother?" and "Why should I be arrogant enough to seek to impose the consequences of my unverifiable beliefs on others by force of law?"

### A plea for pugnacity

"Don't let us be so fixed in our traditionally hostile responses [to religion] that our replies are predictable," bids Mr. W. Owen Cole (February letters). I quite agree with him, which is why in turn I think he is wrong to advise William McLroy to "ring his bells with joy", rather than express suspicion, "when Christians are changing their views".

One of the primary functions of the National Secular Society, of which Mr. McLroy is Secretary, is to provide a specialist, informed vehicle of opposition to supernaturalist and totalitarian ideologies, including the Christian religion. Now it is generally agreed that the function and purpose of an opposition is to oppose, and to oppose intelligently and well.

To us an analogy: one of the cardinal rules of good soldiering is to preserve for one's own side the maximum opportunity for manoeuvre, whilst at the same time depriving the enemy of his means of movement as far as possible. Military analogies are, of course, imperfect; and one would have thought that an ideology like Christianity, which purports to possess "The Truth" for all time, would and could remain unchanging—but it cannot, and it is worth drawing public attention to this paradox.

This brings me to Mr. D. A. Crompton's letter. Whilst it is gratifying to see oneself quoted twice in one letter, I do not think that readers will easily be persuaded by this Christian gentleman's plea to cease "fighting" and be "constructive" instead: we all (or most of us) know what that means.

It is a feature of our cant-ridden age that people deal in clichés rather than argument. Thus "What I don't like" automatically becomes "negative", "irresponsible", and so on; and what is approved of is, of course, "relevant, meaningful, positive, significant," and, of course, "constructive". The Nazis were masters of this process, and it is ironic that they purged the German church of "negative" elements, thus creating the German National Church, one of whose pet theologians, Dr. D. Cajus Fabricus, even brought out a book called *Positive Christianity in the Third Reich*.

Since Mr. Crompton has quoted my "scurrilous and blasphemous" self, I would like to reply by quoting words written in the first half of the last century by W. J. Fox, M.P., the radical Unitarian minister of South Place Chapel:

"Do not destroy! And why not destroy, when destruction will liberate the good? What is the aim of what is called destruction? The destruction of tyranny is political freedom. The destruction of bigotry is spiritual and mental emancipation. Positive and negative are mere forms. Creation and destruction, as we call them, are just one and the same work, the work which man has to do—the extraction of good from evil."

Those words regularly appeared below the mast-head of the *National Reformer* in the 1860s. They are just as (forgive the phrase) relevant for *The Freethinker* in the 1970s.

NIGEL SINNOTT.

### Printer's pie

Mr. D. A. Crompton (February letters) did not mention that his first quotation comes from a piece headed "Censorship at the Counter", and his second from a leader headed "Power, Population and Progress—Technopolis or Tragedy?"

For those, like Michael Edmondson, who "believe in [Jesus Christ] as Lord and Saviour", Mr. Crompton's work as compositor of *The Freethinker* may perhaps appear somewhat less "constructive" than it does for free thinkers—like Arthur Francis.

CHARLES BYASS.

### Bestialities of Communism and Capitalism

An awful lot of trouble would be saved if Judex always gave his sources. As I said in my last letter, Joan Robinson's tribute (and it was a tribute) to Marxism was coupled with certain "adjustments". This to Judex, is "deliberately suppressing" a reference to "readjustment". I am sorry, I said "adjustment" and did not choose to duplicate the same idea by then saying "readjustment".

But as I said, Robinson misses the main necessary "adjustment/readjustment": that is bringing Marx's theory of Value and Prices up-to-date in the conditions of monopoly capitalism. I am sure most of the sources Judex quotes suffer the same failing.

If my attempts to get some sanity into our application of Marxism today are merely "propaganda" as alleged by Judex, what are we to call his endless string of anti-Marxist quotations?

The political abuses of Stalinism were not, I repeat not, the subject of my book. But if Denis Cobell really insists on seeing

"small difference" between the two social systems—our own with private ownership, rocketing profits from property, rocketing prices, unemployment of resources, and the Soviet system of public ownership, planned production, stable prices, full employment and a steady rise in living standards—there is nothing I can do but hope that he may still live and learn.

Judex dismisses my chapter on "What Marx did not do" as "evasion". I mentioned it in answer to his nonsense that I had just parroted the Marxist classics: I criticize Marx because he "still regarded monopoly as an 'accidental' influence on the market", never explored the modern development of credit, when, as a Soviet economist has said, "gold itself has become a commodity with a monopoly price", and also never foresaw the existence of the first Socialist state for years in conditions of capitalist encirclement—one of the main reasons for the deplorable abuses under Stalin. If we can see how this was a "defensive" system to protect the U.S.S.R. from the fate of modern Chile we can at least understand even though we do not at all approve. But to dwell today on Solzhenitsyn's past researches while the real bestial terror is now raging in Chile under the banner of capitalism is simply, as Judex says, "switching emphasis from the actual life conditions of human beings". I would have thought that to any objective person the degree of terror inflicted on Vietnam by the U.S.A. or in Chile by the present usurpers weighs very heavily indeed in the balance against the Czechoslovak episode or the exiling of Solzhenitsyn, But Judex will never recognize the fact that capitalism means exploitation and oppression.

PAT SLOAN.

### Essential election issue lacking

When this letter appears in print the election will be over. But what a maddening situation it has been! We were asked to vote on an issue that should never have arisen. We had a rotten choice of parties: the Conservatives who allow industry to fall into decay and the environment to be wrecked on the one hand and the Labour Party—narrow-minded, out of date, unimaginative, and blinkered with nationalistic prejudices—on the other. As for the Liberals, their pact with the Scottish Nationalists stopped me from supporting them. And at the moment (23 February) one can't help feeling the whole business of the coal strike was a fiddle.

Of course, current political thinking is dated. All the ideas that have been put before us and for which our support has been asked—Nationalism, Imperialism, Socialism, Marxism, the various forms of support for private enterprise—arose in the nineteenth century. Yet we live in days of space travel, atomic energy and other scientific discoveries that change the world every day. Expressions like Right and Left have lost their meaning. The only real twentieth century idea just now is World Government.

Their leaders are too old: their ideas were formed long ago when conditions were different: they are too engrossed in political tactics and administration to think up new ideas. The people seem to look on political parties as geographic features like mountain ranges (I wish they were like mountain ranges which are beautiful). Again and again we hear people say, "We need a new party", yet no one does anything about it. And if we don't wake up soon we shall stagger from one frustration and futility to another till one day it's too late to wake up.

I. S. Low.

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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. **Humanist Counselling Service**, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London W8 5PG; telephone 01-937 2341 (for confidential advice on your personal problems—whatever they are).

**Humanist Holidays. Easter Centre** in Folkestone, 11-16 April, at small guest house near Harbour. Bed, breakfast and evening meal, £19 (juniors £15) includes V.A.T. and gratuity. Regret, no singles.

**Summer Centre**, 17-24 August at Hunstanton, Norfolk. Small quiet town, variety of beaches for all ages. Golf. Country Club Hotel on cliff. Full board (lunch packed if required) £26.50 (single £30), includes V.A.T. and gratuity. Reduction juniors.

Both hotels are licensed, and both will take dogs. Hon. Secretary: Mrs. M. Mephem, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey, SM1 4PD. Tel.: 01-642 8796.

**London Secular Group** (outdoor meetings). *Thursdays*, 12.30—2 p.m. at Tower Hill; *Sundays*, 3—7 p.m. at Marble Arch. (*The Freethinker* and other literature on sale.)

# EVENTS

**Central London Humanist Group**, 4 West Cromwell Road, London W5. Tuesday 19 March, 8 p.m.: "Voluntary Euthanasia". **Brighton and Hove Humanist Group**, Imperial Centre Hotel, First Avenue, Hove. Sunday 7 April, 5.30 p.m.: RICHARD CLEMENTS, "Humanism and the Art of Living".

**Harrow Humanist Society**. Gayton Road Library, Wednesday 10 April, 8 p.m. EDWARD BLISHEN: "Education for all".

**Havering Humanist Society**, Harold Wood Social Centre, Squirrels Heath Road/Gubbins Lane, Romford. Tuesday 19 March, 8 p.m.: Annual General Meeting and MICHAEL GILL, "Butterflies"; Tuesday 2 April, 8 p.m.: DIANE MUNDAY, "Abortion—the Present Situation".

**Leicester Secular Society**, Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, Leicester. Sunday 24 March, 6.30 p.m. H. J. BLACKHAM, "The Humanist/Roman Catholic Dialogue"; Sunday 31 March, 6.30 p.m.: Dr. I. M. EVANS, "A Bird's Eye View of Leicestershire".

**London Young Humanists**, 12 Prince of Wales Terrace, London W8. Sunday 17 March, 7.30 p.m.: HECTOR HAWTON, "Wilhelm Reich". Sunday 7 April, 7.30 p.m.: IKEM ARINZE, "Is Marxism the Answer to Our Problems".

**National Council for Civil Liberties**, George Cadbury Hall, Bristol Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham 29. Weekend 6-7 April: Annual General Meeting (registration fee 50p: N.C.C.L., 186 King's Cross Road, London WC1X 9DE).

**Nottingham and Notts Humanist Group**, University Adult Centre, 14 Shakespeare Street, Nottingham. Meetings, second Friday of month, 7.30 p.m.

**South Place Ethical Society**, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. *Sunday Lectures*, 11 a.m.: 17 March: H. J. BLACKHAM, "Ritual in Society"; 24 March: RAY HELMICK, "The Ethical Impossibility of War Today"; 31 March: HECTOR HAWTON: "Sex and Mysticism". *Humanist Forum*: Sunday 24 March, 3 p.m.: STAN and MARGARET CHISMAN, "What is Right and Wrong with the Family". *Tuesday Discussions*, 7 p.m. (admission 10p): 19 March: Dr. GLYN SEABORN JONES, "The Primal Scream"; 26 March: DAVID BOADELLA, "The Language of the Body".

**Welwyn Garden Humanist Group**, Community Centre Woodhall, Welwyn Garden City: Saturday 30 March, 3 p.m.: Jumble Sale in aid of the Independent Adoption Society. 55 Bridge Road, Welwyn Garden City: Saturday 6 April, 8 p.m.: "Lucky Dip" Discussion Evening. Backhouse Room, Handside Lane, Welwyn Garden City: Thursday 11 April, 8 p.m.: subject to be arranged.

**Worthing Humanist Group**, Burlington Hotel, Marine Parade, Worthing. Sunday 31 March, 5.30 p.m.: MARTIN PAGE, "Humanism, Communism and the Common Market".

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