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GOVERNMENT SELL-OUT TO CHURCHES

—CAPITAL GRANT TO CHURCH SCHOOLS RAISED TO 85 PER CENT

On 30 July the Secretary of State for Education and Science, Mr. Reginald Prentice, announced that he would introduce at the earliest opportunity legislation to raise the capital grant for aided and special-grant church schools by five per cent to 85 per cent. Mr. Prentice said that his action followed representations from the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church and the Free Churches that "the financial difficulties facing them at the present time were preventing them from playing the part in the public system of education that both they and the Government would wish them to do". He continued: "I think it right to add that the important rights which the Churches have in running the aided schools depend on the principle of a voluntary contribution towards the cost; I hope that this further measure of financial assistance, at a time of economic stringency, will provide a durable basis for the continuation of the dual system." The Church of England Board of Education and the Catholic Education Council have welcomed the announcement, while pointing out that it will only go some way to meeting their financial difficulties.

No surprise

The announcement, although regrettable, will come as no surprise to freethinkers: firstly it is in line with the progressive increases in the proportion of State aid to church schools since 1944, and secondly a number of Labour ministers were promising such a move before the February election. It may however be considered rather remarkable that the Government should undertake this extra commitment at a time when other public services are having to accept savage cuts in expenditure. The statement by Mr. Prentice that it was his wish to continue the dual system on the basis of shared financial responsibility is almost laughable, as an examination of the basis of State aid to church schools will show. In 1944 such schools were made eligible to receive half the cost of repairs, alterations, transfers and substitutions of existing buildings. In 1946 the cost of all internal repairs became a public responsibility. In 1959 the grant was raised to 75 per cent and certain new schools became eligible. In 1964 all new schools were included, while in 1967 the grant was raised to 80 per cent. Such was the diminishing contribution of the Churches for the enormous privilege of horning in on the State education system.

But this is only part of the story. These contributions are only to the capital side of Church schools. In addition the Churches obtain loans and provision of land on special terms, and most important of all they receive *all* of the running costs of aided schools. When questioned about this the authorities cannot say how much this amounts to, but Mr. David Tribe in his pamphlet *The Cost of Church Schools* (National Secular Society, 1970) estimated from the data available that the State must be paying something in the region of 98½ per cent of the total cost of sectarian schools within the State system. Now that this further increase has been made in the capital grant, the position must be even worse. It is clear that what is put forward as a dual system of joint participation and joint financial responsibility is little less than a blank cheque from the State to the Churches to provide sectarian education at

the whole Community's expense. If this were not enough, there are other questionable aspects of the State's financial commitment to sectarian education. Firstly, church schools built largely with public money become entirely the property of the Churches to dispose of to the highest bidder when they become redundant. In addition, where teachers in church schools are members of religious orders, they still receive full salaries, which go, not to them, but to the Church.

Yet even so the Churches are not satisfied, and will press until they receive the full 100 per cent of the cost. (Doubtless some formula will be devised to save face and to continue to suggest that it is a dual system of shared financial responsibility.) A spokesman of the Catholic Education Council took the opportunity to complain of spiralling building costs and interest rates. A correspondent to the *Church Times* wrote of the difficulty of raising money from parishes, and of the fact that they still had not paid for their post-war secondary schools. He asked:

Would we have done better to have expressed our willingness to co-operate in comprehensive schemes and the raising of the school-leaving age, but to have pointed out that the changes of the arrangements were not of our making and ought therefore to attract 100 per cent grants for any school building that was necessary?

It would seem that church schools are not only a drain of short resources, but a drag on educational developments.

Social cost

This change in the basis of grants for church schools went almost unnoticed in the press. It is surely time that the true position of the Churches' participation in State education were put before the public and its true economic and social cost made clear. It must be pointed out that these schools are socially divisive and a denial of the basic right of every child to belong to the undivided community. The whole idea behind church schools is reinforcement

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of the creed of the child's parents and isolation of the child from any alternative viewpoint.

Not only will the increased subsidy mean a large increase in the number of Christian denominational schools, but it will mean a proliferation of the number of religions able to set up their own sectarian schools and force segregated schooling upon their children. Muslim religious leaders in some Northern and Midland towns are already agitating for their own schools—which will inevitably militate against the integration of Muslim immigrant families with the local community. They could well create a permanent gulf of hostility comparable with that which creed-segregated education in Northern Ireland has helped to perpetuate, and might well result in racial violence in our cities in the future.

Since the right of adherents to the Islamic and other faiths can hardly be denied so long as there are State-subsidised Christian schools and Christianity holds a special place even in non-denominational schools, there is a new urgency in the campaign for the complete secularization and integration of the British education system.

ATROCIOUS ABSURDITY

One of the major problems facing religionists has always been how to overcome the serious objections that immediately arise as soon as they posit some infinite being sustaining the universe. The apparent comforts of such a view have to be reconciled with the manifold insults to common sense that such a view gives rise to; the price to be paid is a helter-skelter flight from reality, in which reason is routed and anything goes. God moves in a mysterious way, because if his way is not obscured by mystery it will clearly be seen to be malicious. One of the most nauseating examples of such a situation is the religionists' reaction to suffering, where the apparent malevolence of the deity is so vigorously glossed over, that it emerges a benevolence: suffering becomes an ennobling experience, both for sufferer and onlooker. Now, whatever the effects on individuals in particular cases, one must surely accept that it would be desirable in general if the vast majority of human suffering could be greatly ameliorated, if not totally eradicated. However, this position is not open to the religionist, for common sense tells him that if such suffering were inflicted by one human being on another it would rightly be regarded as despicably sadistic, but

obviously the deity must be protected from any such unflattering conclusion.

Such an attitude must be behind a recent statement made by Mrs. Denise Haran, joint secretary of the Birmingham branch of the Catholic Handicapped Children's Fellowship and the Birmingham Anti-Abortion Campaign in a letter to *The Universe*. Answering the criticism that those who are serious about reverence for life should concern themselves with what happens after birth to unaborteds foetuses, while saying that the C.H.C.F. did just that, she added:

If we all carry on and ignore the Abortion Act, there won't be any handicapped children to show us how to love our neighbours, and how to unite families by their very existence.

Yes, indeed, and we can look at handicapped children and count our blessings in being unhandicapped, or we can join organizations like C.H.C.F. and amass treasures in heaven by our good works, and doubtless the existence of the handicapped enables the frontiers of medical science to be pushed forward. Presumably by this line of argument the thalidomide tragedy was a socially beneficial accident, and if not enough handicapped children were occurring naturally gynaecologists and midwives could be charged to take such action as was necessary to rectify this situation by ensuring a specified proportion and variety of handicap in the population. But I forgot: it is only the deity that is permitted to work out and apply such a social policy; for the rest of us to dabble in the process would, of course, be a barbaric disregard for the "sanctity of life".

Freethinkers have always to draw the line between tolerance and over-indulgence of such anti-social views, and that line must surely be drawn when it comes to putting up large amounts of public money to subsidize the propagation of such views in general, and particularly in our schools. We need always to be reminded of Voltaire's dictum that those who believe absurdities can commit atrocities.

FORWARD MR. FORD

One always imagined that it was one of the principles of the American constitution that the President was *mercy primus inter pares*, that the office would not be shrouded in the mystique that clings to monarchy, and that without offence the incumbent could be subjected to straight criticism. It was surprising then to see the awed silence with which Mr. Nixon's last speech from the White House was greeted by those present and the world's press. With ineffable gall the man, who had been demonstrated to have betrayed the trust of the people in so many ways, not least with an elaborate web of blatant lies, was allowed to preach to his audience, appealing to the American mission for mankind and invoking the grace of God.

Nixon's heir, Gerald Ford, is being hailed as "Mr. Clean," but for freethinkers his record is blemished. It was he, who in January 1973 introduced a measure into Congress to give tax credits to parochial schools. This only failed to become law, when it was struck down by the Supreme Court. It will be interesting to see what his position will be as President. It was Nixon's policy to give financial aid to parochial schools in order to win the Catholic vote. Ford may then have been merely falling in line with Nixon's policy, which is entirely out of tune with Ford's Protestant mid-western background.

NEWS

AND NOTES

NO CAUSE FOR COMPLACENCY

The annual reports of societies provide useful records of the previous year's events in their areas of activity. The annual report of the National Secular Society, which was published at the end of July, is particularly useful in this respect in that it contains not only a detailed review of the Society's activities but also a review of the previous year of world affairs from a secularist point of view.

Events in the country and in the world these past twelve months have given us little cause for complacency. Not only have gains been minimal in the Society's areas of concern, but the gains of earlier decades have been under attack, and new forms of irrationalism and repression have crept in.

This pessimistic conclusion reflects the changed atmosphere for the worse that has occurred in this country since the heady reforming 1960s. The only bright spots recorded in the report have yet to produce the reforms that they presage, and as things are optimism would be misplaced. In June 1973 the legal organization Justice recommended that the oath should be replaced by universal affirmation.

Earlier this year the favourable recommendations of the Committee on the Working of the Abortion Act (Lane report) were welcomed by freethinkers. The three-day week gave rise to Sunday football, which proved very popular, and seemed to suggest that public opinion was more than ready for the repealing of the Sunday observance laws.

Two of these events, however, showed the amount of opposition the National Secular Society and freethinkers have to counter in forwarding their libertarian policies. The publication of the Lane report was greeted with a highly organized and extremely hysterical campaign calling for the Abortion Act's repeal or restrictive amendment. This campaign is still in full swing, and its proponents are determined to keep it going, and will doubtless be pressurizing candidates in any future election. Sunday football brought the Lord's Day Observance Society considerable coverage of their views in the media.

Other areas of secular concern included in the report include the imminent founding of Muslim schools, the campaign mounted by the Order of Christian Unity to ensure the retention of Christian religious instruction in schools, the dubious financial activities of fringe religious organizations such as the Divine Light Mission and the Children of God, and "the crafty appropriation of public property" by the established religious sects.

(Copies of the report are available free from the Secretary, N.S.S., 698 Holloway Road, London N19 3NL.)

TENANTS INVESTMENT SCHEME

P. A. R. WARD writes:

Conversion of the old house at Sunhill Place, Pembury, near Tunbridge Wells, by the Humanist Housing Association into ten elderly persons flats is now well advanced, and it is hoped they will be ready for occupation early in 1975. Each flat will be let on a life tenancy in return for an interest-free investment in loan stock to the value of the flat. No rent will be payable, only a service charge and rates. These one-bedroomed flats are designed for one or two people and are completely self-contained enabling the tenants to live independently, whilst having the benefit of the warden service and the use of communal lounges,

laundry, etc. Anyone who is interested in occupying one of these flats should write to the Secretary of the association at Rose Bush Court, 35/41 Parkhill Road, N.W.3, for further information.

(Mr. Ward is Housing Manager and Secretary of the Humanist Housing Association. An article on the history and work of the Association by Lindsay Burnet, a founder member and first housing manager, appears elsewhere in this issue.—Ed.)

HOLYOAKE GRAVE "LISTED"

N. H. SINNOTT writes:

The grave, in Highgate Cemetery, of George Jacob Holyoake (1817-1906), founder of secularism and pioneer of the co-operative movement, has been included in the new revised list of "buildings of special historical or architectural interest" prepared by the Department of the Environment for the London Borough of Camden.

A number of other graves and family tombs have been included in the new list. Of particular interest to readers of *The Freethinker* will be those of Karl Marx (perhaps Highgate Cemetery's best known resident), George Eliot and John Galsworthy.

OBITUARY

Mrs. Gladys Dimmick

Civic leaders, including the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor of the London Borough of Hammersmith, were amongst the mourners who attended the funeral of Councillor Mrs. Gladys Dimmick at Mortlake Crematorium on 1 August. Mrs. Dimmick, who was aged 67, had an outstanding record of public work in West London.

There was a secular funeral ceremony and an address was given by Mr. Michael Stewart, M.P., in which he said that Mrs. Dimmick was true to her family and true to truth.

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invisible authority. Therefore, the authority invoked by religions from an anthropomorphic God is a direct challenge to our freedom and also detrimental to our collective welfare. If man ignores his fundamental obligations to his fellow beings and evades the responsibility of his irresponsible actions by taking shelter in the mercy of an all loving God, then a conflict between man and man becomes inevitable. Since God is an addict of human love and demands only blind faith and slavish obedience his forgiveness is always a transgression of natural justice, that is, he forgives without considering the implications and consequences of man's actions which might endanger others and might threaten the very structure of mutual co-existence. God loves everyone irrespective of his actions.

The belief in God is not only an illusion but also detrimental to man's relations with his fellow beings. Therefore religions are unnecessary and their continuing existence is unjustifiable and absurd. If men have to live in perfect harmony with each other, if they have to avoid conflict with each other, the only way open is to fight the very forces that feed on their fears, those forces that aggravate mutual tension and bring division and disunity. Man has to give up the irrational, the age old absurdity of his beliefs in the other world, and establish a new religion, a religion of humanity, in which the supreme God is man and its moral law is the understanding of human nature.

HUMANIST POLICY ON R.E.: ALTERNATIVE VIEWS

PATRICIA KNIGHT writes:

While agreeing with Harry Stopes-Roe's critique of the new style religious education (July *Freethinker*), I feel he misinterprets the motives of the religious "progressives". The new trends in R.I. have appeared not because its supporters have suddenly become Humanists, nor even out of a desire to keep up with modern educational developments, but because traditional methods of indoctrination have obviously failed in their aim of producing committed Christians. Hence the necessity for a more palatable and persuasive, open-ended R.E., including comparative religion and even other philosophies such as Humanism and Communism (as in the Birmingham Syllabus).

Harry's article expresses a verbal commitment to getting rid of religion in schools, but lacks adequate suggestions for achieving this. One of his solutions is a Humanist dialogue with the churches on the National Council for Religious Education, though one would have thought that the disastrous Humanist participation in the Social Morality Council document on religion in schools, three years ago, would have been sufficient warning against this sort of "collaboration". It is surely naïve to suggest that Humanists can work on such bodies "with no strings attached"; as they are inevitably in a minority in any such organization, they are obliged to participate in discussions on the premises of the religious majority, and often end by approving quite anti-humanist policies. Of course the supporters of R.I. are anxious to obtain humanist cooperation in order to provide credence and respectability for their pro-religious conclusions.

Harry would like to substitute for R.I. "Education in religious and non-religious stances for living, or systems of belief", but this solution is less satisfactory than simply removing the religious clauses of the 1944 Act. The specific inclusion of religious ideologies permits the re-entry of religious indoctrination into education through the back door (especially as the R.E. "progressives" have always insisted that religious education under what ever name it goes, should be taught, if not by Christians, by people sympathetic to religion). The existence of "religious education" anywhere in a school curriculum results in proposals to retain the Act of Worship also—it being said that this is an essential element of the teaching of R.E. And many educationalists will object to the teaching of anything clumsily and pretentiously entitled "stances for living".

We should be asking why a specific slot is needed in schools for religious education at all, and why religion cannot be perfectly well taught as part of history, sociology, current affairs and general studies.

I see from the agenda of the Labour Party Conference this year, that at least one Labour Party has a resolution down asking for the deletion of the religious clauses of the 1944 Education Act. Instead of corridors-of-power compromises which play into the hands of the churches, we need a campaign to mobilize support for genuinely secularist objectives.

MICHAEL LLOYD-JONES writes:

In his article on *Humanist Policy on "Religious Education"* (July *Freethinker*) Harry Stopes-Roe has usefully drawn attention to the danger of R.E. teachers winning uncritical acceptance of their work, which is still an attempt to indoctrinate children with religious ideas.

Harry Stopes-Roe, however, believes that humanists now have an opportunity to do "something effective in the reform of religious education". (He might in fairness have pointed out that the National Secular Society has been doing something about it for years.) This opportunity he sees in humanist representation on the National Council for Religious Education. Before sharing his enthusiasm *Freethinker* readers may care to know a little more about this "genuinely progressive" body, and, in particular, it is instructive to examine the views of the Council's Chairman, Mr. Edwin Cox. Mr. Cox has made his opinions clear in a small work, *Changing Aims in Religious Education* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), and they are not so evidently progressive as we might have guessed from Mr. Stopes-Roe's article.

It is true that Cox declares himself opposed to Christian indoctrination in schools, but he adds, in an important rider which sets the tone for the whole book, "there is a distinction between aiming to induce a religious attitude to life, and converting to any especial creed or denomination." Is this part of what Mr. Stopes-Roe calls "genuinely progressive activity within religious education"? Some Christians have decided to stop converting pupils to Christianity and to "induce religious attitude to life" instead. Christians must forgive humanists if our cheers are muted.

In the later part of his book Cox makes some suggestions about the ways in which an R.E. teacher should go about his or her job. At the infant stage he believes that the "important thing is to present a favourable attitude to the idea of God". At the junior school level he recommends the "inculcation of favourable attitudes". By the early years at the secondary school Cox thinks the pupils are ready for a little Bible-study, and he specifically recommends that a "thorough-going critical, and even radical, approach making use of all available biblical scholarship should be employed". He gives an example of what he means: the story of Moses and the burning bush should be taught in such a way that it shows the pupils that "God speaks, not in voices from supernatural phenomena but in the soul, through the pattern of experience, and that the realization of his guidance is what we call prayer." Well, is that really an example of a "thorough-going critical, and even radical, approach" to the Bible? Secular humanists may be tempted to call it something different.

By the later secondary school years Mr. Cox is prepared to see R.E. in terms of a "search in which teacher and student 'feel after truth and find it'", but—and here is the usual escape clause—"it is a search based on the belief . . . that life has been given us with point and purpose by a personal power greater than man".

There is nothing unusual about Mr. Cox's views; they might be expressed by almost any of the leading R.E. apologists. Are their views now so enlightened and progressive that secularists should join them in a 'National Council for Religious Education'? I think not.

It is important that the double-talk of the R.E. side should be recognized by humanists for what it is. It is not a wholehearted recognition of the injustice of religious indoctrination; so the secularist fight is still on. This is not the time for humanists to be considering unilateral disarmament.

THE MAHARISHI: CHARLATAN, MYSTIC OR HUMANIST?

ANTONY A. MILNE

After an absence of several years, the publicity conscious Maharishi Marhesh Yogi is back in the U.K. to promote his intangible yet apparently beneficent product with the help of an efficient nationwide marketing team. One cannot but admire the way in which this fascinating but somewhat ambiguous Himalayan gentleman manages to attract the attention of the media, but perhaps this is due to the hard-headed newsman's desire to expose a good consumer fraud at the earliest opportunity.

Flight from reality

The guru's earlier claim to fame of course arose from the Beatle's flight from reality to become his surrogate in India. This inevitably led to a resurgence of interest in transcendentalism and mysticism in the sixties, and to the pilgrimages by the fringe hippy fraternity to the magical lands of the East in search of the Inner Man. The Esoteric renewal itself led to a wider interest in the occult generally, and the boom in paranormal and occultist literature has by no means abated. Unfortunately for the Maharishi, however, any attempt on his part to emphasize the uniqueness of his "product" is not helped by the confusing plethora of subcultural beliefs and motives abounding among the Phychical Colleges, Psychometrists and Astrological Lodges that can be found all over the capital.

The Maharishi's Transcendental Meditation appeals to the newer Pentecostals and other Jesus freaks, although he denies that his system has any religious import. It is secular and transcultural, and if his followers feel it helps to induce appropriate states for religious experiences far be it for him to look a gift horse in the mouth. Rather like the College of Psychic Science which embraces everything from psychical research to the most inner personal experiences, Transcendental Meditation, on another level, offers self-fulfilment on many different dimensions.

What the Maharishi is selling is "The Science of Creative Intelligence", which is another name for a timeless technique that is supposed to relax and refresh the mind, body and subconscious in order to recharge the inner resources of the psyche, and this in turn to facilitate improved performances in whatever field of activity one indulges in. It is a kind of yoga, except that physical posturing is unnecessary. Hence the universalism of this easy device which a harrassed and perhaps morally confused world can quickly turn to if "sold" in the right way. It is the psychological equivalent of National Socialism—all things to all men. And yet S.C.I. seems to operate on the same fraudulent level that inspired those redoubtable firms to sell canned London fog or bottles of Continental spa water. The price of learning how to use S.C.I. is not disclosed to the uninitiated. We are told it takes only thirty minutes to learn, and need be practised for only two twenty-minute periods daily, but one is recommended to attend the training centres for several months to ensure that one has learned all the intricacies of meditation properly.

The Maharishi's worldly philosophy is remarkably simple; and it, too, can be learned in only a few seconds: "All the world's political and economic problems are due to a fundamental weakness in the human mind. When the Science of Creative Intelligence is practised the mind becomes stronger, and brings forth its hidden faculties and potential that enables it better to solve the world's problems . . ." As a self-improvement scheme, therefore, S.C.I.

seems to score heavily over other packages that have been offered as remedies for human deficiencies in the past by Americans like Dale Carnegie and Harry Lorraine. Instead of "trying harder" to be popular and to improve one's memory or other motivational and social skills, one simply relaxes for twenty minutes to recharge invisible batteries; and by doing so all manner of sociopolitical problems become solved.

Nevertheless, regardless of the blatant naïvety and commercialism, this kind of meditation has many favourable attributes that in themselves have subtle affective and cognitive correlations. It is altruistic, in the sense that it aims to help others to get more out of life through the expansion of the conscious *mind*, rather than through developing other parts of their physical bodies or through manipulating unreal facets of their personalities. At the same time it is individualistic without being egoistic—the self improvement is of an intrinsic nature and does not rely upon improving one's self-image in order to benefit from a better feedback from others. It has no suffocating social ethic like that of the Sufi Society, which "aims to practice the Sufi way of life, love and kind actions towards all members of Creation". It does not claim to indulge in esoteric mysticism like the Swami Atman Astoram Meditation Society, with the arousing of dormant powers for seeing into the "past, present and future".

Potentialities of the mind

S.C.I. is similar to Science of Mind which teaches that man can control the course of his life by using mental processes which function according to a specific mental law. How "creative intelligence" can accrue from meditation is not clear, however. The potentialities of the mind can only be improved like any other part of the body: that is by training and regular exercise. Nevertheless, by definition S.C.I. places mental prowess in a dominant position in its ethos, and in effect is a humanistic religion. It deifies human potential rather than the supra-natural. If hidden, magical powers exist they reside in the human subconsciousness. As Emile Durkheim wrote, all world religions have one common denominator—man himself. Sacred artifacts such as Golden Pagodas and wooden crosses have an intrinsic religiosity, but are symbolic of the awesomeness of society itself; it is society that is being worshipped. In a sense therefore man is worshipping a part of himself, but he does so under the exegesis of a dialectical fraud that mystics and prophets have handed down to contemporary theology.

Jesus Christ was the first humanist and the first guru, since he conceived of God and Man as being two dimensions of the same reality. Through the philosophical notion of *emergence*, which says that a wall is more than the sum of its brick and mortar, or society more than collectivities of individuals, we are left with a miraculous and omnipotent ingredient, the collective psyche, that can be used creatively. "Believe on me and you shall receive eternal life", expresses the same sentiment in a less direct form of: "Bring Out the Magic in Your Mind". The Maharishi, along with the Scientologists and the many other self-improvement schools, are bringing religion down from the cosmos and putting its magic back into the people from whence it came.

HUMANIST HOUSING ASSOCIATION

LINDSAY BURNET

Humanist Housing Association started on its way as Ethical Union Housing Association, its corporate existence dating from January, 1955. There was a feeling amongst some members of the Ethical Union that it was desirable that as a movement there should be involvement in some form of social service and a small committee was formed to look into the matter, membership including Ena Elkan, Beatrice Pollard, and Mora and Lindsay Burnet. A survey was made into a number of fields of need and a decision reached that the housing of elderly persons would be very helpful. At the time, local authorities had not entered into the field of specialized housing of the elderly and the few active voluntary bodies frequently had religious affiliations. It was felt that a body providing primarily, although not exclusively, for the non-religious would be doing a useful service.

The Ethical Union donated funds for the registering of the Association and subsequently when a property, 8 Burgess Hill, now known as Burnet House, was found, made a loan to cover most of the purchase costs. A meeting was held at Conway Hall with speakers Robert Pollard, Evelyn Dennington of the London County Council, and architect member of the committee, Clifford Culpin, and £400 was raised. An issue of Loan Stock at the very low interest rate of 2½ per cent raised upwards of £2,000. Burnet House was a large Hampstead house and was converted into fourteen flatlets and a flat for the wardens. It was opened with a flourish by Lord Chorley.

Second project

Several years elapsed before a second project was undertaken. Situated in Worples Road, close to the centre of Wimbledon, the site provided accommodation for twenty flatlets and a warden's flat. Clifford Culpin was the architect and associated with him was Clive Alexander who was to set up an architectural practice of his own and to become architect of Rose Bush Court and Robert Morton House in Hampstead. Rose Bush Court provided twenty-seven flats, and soon after completion further property was acquired for an extension, consisting of another thirty flats. Included in the purchase was a small block of recently completed flats.

The running on purely voluntary lines of a housing association throws a lot of work on a few. The burden is particularly heavy when a project is undertaken. Possible sites have to be visited, meetings with architects arranged, and when a site which appears to be suitable is found there are a lot of negotiations with officers of the local authority or the Housing Corporation and the Department of the Environment. Then follows the visiting and selecting tenants. These activities have to be carried out during working hours and with the Association's officers already heavily engaged in their own occupations there is a struggle to find the required time. Then each scheme upon completion requires its quota of attention. Tenants have to be visited, decisions taken upon maintenance and other matters. For these reasons progress is slow. When a scheme is completed, the officers principally involved welcome a respite for a considerable time before tackling something new.

With work commencing upon the second part of Rose Bush Court which would bring tenancies up to one hundred, the Association was facing a position in which it would not be practicable to undertake further expansion

with the existing help of spare time workers. It was thought that the experience gained in setting up and running schemes should be made available in a wider sphere, and a decision was taken to embark upon a programme of expansion. Lindsay Burnet, who had experience of working as a Housing Manager of two other housing associations, was appointed the first Housing Manager. At present schemes providing over 100 flats are being built, one of which in Pembury, near Tunbridge Wells, is about to open, the architect being Henry Osborne. A further 400 flats are in various stages of planning.

An interesting feature of the experience of the Association has been the rising standards of accommodation. The Association in the few years of its history has been always a pace maker. The first scheme, Burnet House, was a conversion with cooking units in bedsitting room flats with shared bathrooms and toilets. The second, Blackham House, had purpose-built kitchens and own toilets. The first part of Rose Bush Court consisted of fully self-contained bedsitting room flats; in the second part a separate bedroom was provided. So, in the space of fifteen years standards were raised three times. Features of the schemes are communal facilities, a common lounge with pantry, a laundrette, guest rooms, and an intercom system between flats and wardens. Attention is paid in siting schemes as near shops and public transport as possible.

An essential feature of management is the close link between tenants and committee members. Pre-eminent in this work has been Rose Bush, the present chairman, and for a time, secretary of the Association. She is a constant visitor to all the houses and is ever ready to visit prospective sites. The first chairman was Edwin Fairhall, a prominent member of the South Place Ethical Society. Apart from Rose Bush, the other chairmen have been Lindsay Burnet and Diana Rookledge. Prominent committee workers are Alex Dawn, L. J. Fischer, Erica Haslam, Mora Burnet, Marjorie Kew, Dame Florence Cayford and Edward Henry. Former members who served the Association with distinction included Ena Elkan (now Mrs. Stanfield), Ashton and Ilse Burall, Olga Blackham, Beatrice Pollard and Dorothy Lester. Most important of all are the daily contacts maintained by the wardens and the Association has had a devoted line from Mary Reed to present day wardens, Mrs. Hillen, Mrs. Bradley, Mrs. Owens and Mrs. Baker.

Arduous task

An arduous task has been the post of Treasurer, which until recently has involved bookkeeping duties unpaid, those involved being Cicely Body, Clifford Reed and Katherine McKeen. The present holder is Alex Cox. Over many years Philip Soper has given devoted service undertaking far more than is usually associated with this office. The Association has had three presidents, each distinguished in his field or fields, Lord Chorley, Lord (Ted) Willis and Harold Blackham.

It was in 1966 that the name of the Association was changed from Ethical Union to Humanist, which reflected changes which had occurred over the years. Although at the time there were members who regretted the change, over the years there been general acceptance.

In January 1974, Lindsay Burnet retired from the position of Secretary and Housing Manager, his position being

taken by Peter Ward, who had been accountant for a time and who formerly worked for the London Housing Trust.

The Association was formed with the housing of elderly persons in mind, though its Objects are for housing in general. In principle, the Committee have agreed that the scope can be widened. One new line could be accommodation for young workers. Included in a scheme projected for Stevanage are two-bedroom units to house women at work with elderly dependants who require some attention during working hours. But in most, if not all, schemes there will be a part devoted to the elderly. The Association would like to do a scheme which would cater for the minority of elderly persons, perhaps five or ten per cent of the whole, who reach the stage when they are not physically able to live in an independent dwelling even with

supporting social services such as Home Helps and Meals on Wheels.

The housing association movement has been growing rapidly in recent years owing to the unprofitability of the private provision of housing to let. These conditions are likely to be intensified and therefore lead to a very much larger housing association movement. In the field of specialized housing for the elderly, housing associations and local authorities are the only bodies engaged, a factor which has led the Humanist Housing Association to include in its programme adjacent to the one at Pembury which follows the ordinary pattern, a scheme, in which tenants can buy the leasehold of their flat and secure the warden and other services and amenities which are not available in a private enterprise scheme.

TRANSPORTS OF DELIGHT: A TALE OF OUR TIMES

PHILIP HINCHLIFF

In October 1974, Harold Wilson was returned to power with a majority of one over all other parties in the House of Commons. Fortified by the country's thumping mandate for socialism, the Labour government set about removing the last vestiges of power and privilege in the land. Private medicine was abolished, the schools comprehensivized under pupils' control, Buckingham Palace converted into a hostel for the homeless. One problem, however, remained intractable: the vexed question of private service bays in National Transport Service garages. For transport was, after all, a gut issue; the British public would put up with a lot, but deprive them of their cars or their petrol and there would be such a rush of resentment as might sweep the socialist government from power.

Mobility of millions

Now that the *right to transport* had been recognized by all parties, as essential a right as the right to work had appeared to bygone governments, it was vital that the British public be kept on the road. Buses and tubes had steadily deteriorated since the middle 1950s, and by 1984 the benefits of North Sea oil and its attendant prosperity were seen in a car ownership of 80 per cent. Owing to the failure of Michael Wedgwood Foot's national plan of 1978, though, garage capacity had hardly increased at all in 1984 compared to the late 1970s. There were far too few garages and not nearly enough mechanics to keep Britain's thirty-three million cars on the road. Breakdowns were all too common and spare parts for some makes almost unobtainable. In this parlous situation, the government acted to restore mobility to millions. Garages were nationalized and absorbed into a National Garage Corporation with enormous powers of supervision and control over the motor industry. Garage services were made free at the point of use to the motorist and, to pay for the huge cost of the Corporation, a special National Transport contribution was added to the basic insurance stamp. Small garages were steadily closed down and replaced by multi-million pound gleaming garage centres where the motorist armed with a letter from his local Transport Practitioner might seek the advice and help of a consultant trained in his particular make of car.

There were some, it is true, who deplored this further extension of state control; yet what did outmoded right-

wing doctrines ever do to keep people on the road? Transport, clearly, was a basic right, and it was offensive—and, in Mrs. Beatrice Castle's expressive term, "obscene"—to allow the rich to purchase garage services for their Jaguar XJ6s whilst the Mini of the humble miner or docker went unserviced. Mrs. Castle, the new Secretary of State for Transport Services, was determined to do away with this discretionary spending power of the rich on transport. True, the ultimate answer was the total equalization of all incomes, but for some obscure reason some of the trade unions had objected to that and so for the moment progress towards equality had stopped. However, it was obviously within the government's competence to act on private spending on transport, and act they would.

Mrs. Castle plans, however, ran into opposition from the top servicing consultants of the British Mechanics' Association. The B.M.A. would no co-operate in the new National Transport Service unless they could treat fee-paying private motorists in N.T.S. garages. This would be done by providing private servicing bays, or pay bays, in each garage centre to which the private motorist would alone have access; the N.T.S. cars would have to wait their turn for admission to the garage in the normal way. Mrs. Castle was reluctantly compelled to accept this anomaly in an otherwise perfect socialist system as the price of the consultants' participation. And, thus, for a few years, the system more or less worked—although complaints were soon heard about servicing delays and the bureaucratic snarl-ups involved in such minor jobs as the fitting of a fanbelt and the lengthening queues at the out-car clinics for spare-part surgery.

Matters came to a head in 1988 with the militant action of the National Union of Garage Employees. Carrying out a conference resolution, they withdrew all co-operation at the brand-new showpiece Charing Garage Centre and refused any longer to drive the cars of private fee-paying motorists up the servicing ramps. They demanded the immediate expulsion of all private cars from the centre and the conversion of all pay bays to public motorists' use. Why, at a time of shortages and delays, should private motorists jump the servicing queue and command a disproportionate share of motoring resources by being able to pay over the odds? Why should B.M.A. consultants attend private motorists's cars in N.T.S. garages? It was

time end this unfair, inegalitarian and totally unsocialist anomaly and assert the principle of a free and comprehensive national transport service.

The NUGE direct action caused a furore. Mrs. Castle said, timidly, that whilst she disapproved of their withdrawal of co-operation, which infringed the principle of the *right to transport*, she did rather approve of their aim—which was, indeed, the government's. The B.M.A. threatened an immediate work-to-rule of their own if their right to determine which spanners to wield and when was not upheld by the government. One or two diehard Tories actually had the gall to say that people who had paid their taxes, rates, insurance and transport contributions really ought to be allowed to spend the rest of their money in their own way and not be interfered with by Mrs. Castle or NUGE or anybody else: but this was a very unpopular view quite out of joint with the times. Other people pointed out that pay bays in N.T.S. garages actually took up about 1 per cent of the total servicing facilities anyway, and that the whole issue was rather a storm in a dipstick;

was it not more important to attract money into the ailing N.T.S. by letting people spend money on transport if they wished? But the government by now had arrived at the conclusion that the real answer to the whole problem was the abolition of private ownership of cars. Owing to the restrictions imposed by stage twenty-nine of the incomes policy then in force pending the total equalization of all incomes, the government was unable to pay the B.M.A. consultants the very much higher fee they would have demanded as their price for remaining within a N.T.S. stripped of private practice: how much better, then, to stop people owning their own cars altogether, nationalize all vehicles in the country, and issue them to motorists on application through the normal administrative channels. The government would then get all its cars serviced itself at regular intervals and fee-paying private motorists would instantly and painlessly fade away. Some muted voices were heard saying that this was yet another erosion of individual freedom, but what did that matter compared to the great principle of free access to transport which would now be available to all . . .

ARE RELIGIONS NECESSARY FOR MODERN MAN?

ANTON STANISLAUS

It is a paradox in history that religions which uphold the noble ideals of peace, brotherhood and happiness have been the cause of many wars, savage violence and mass murders; religions which preach the supreme qualities of compassion, kindness and universality have fomented division, disunity and mutual hatred. Our history books contain blood-stained chapters of ugly wars perpetrated in the name of a loving God; wars between Christians and Moslems, between Catholics and Protestants, between Hindus and Moslems. From the human sacrifices of pagan religions to the Inquisition and its horrifying tortures, from the Indian Mutiny to the Belfast slaughter, religions have been the cause of unspeakable human tragedies.

Fragmentation

Christianity has innumerable sects, more than any of the other religions of the world. A single God-figure has been split up into hundreds of fragments, remodelled into different images with different meanings, with organised disciples sworn to believe only in the truth of their own denomination. This fragmentation of God has also fragmented society into splinter groups, into hostile religious camps, each opposed to the other. The divine love has become the very weapon of hate; instead of unity and love religions have brought division and enmity.

Religions have been feeding on man's fears for ages. They flourished on his despair and cherished his frustrations. They had a powerful impact on the human race, for they apparently solved many of the unanswered questions of the unknown. They had a charming effect, for they infused the hope of survival thus mitigating the horror of death. They had a wonderful appeal, for they gave divine essence to man and made him heir to the kingdom of God. Theology offered ready-made answers to the meaning and purpose of existence. The immense, impenetrable universe was reduced to a simple purposive design, a harmonious structure of matter, devised for the spirit to move towards its transcendence. The mortal nature of man assumed immortality, his short life was extended to

the timeless realm of infinity. The body was despised as a source of evil passions and rejected as a useless bundle of lifeless atoms. The soul became the spark of divinity, the inner light, the *atman*, the missing link of the cosmic consciousness. In short, religions thrived on man's mythical consciousness.

The mythological nature of religious beliefs, with their primordial symbols and archetypes, appealed to man's primary mental structure, the mythical consciousness or the primitive unconscious. Religions entered into the world through this back-door, through this psychic underworld. They still retain their base in this underground psyche, whose deranged manifestations, in the form of psychotic hallucinations and visions, are even now glorified as a form of mystical experience and revelations of the divine. But religions have always had the difficulty of reaching out to the frontal region, the 'overground', where man's consciousness is constantly confronted with the world of physical reality, where angels and gods are dead remnants of a past myth.

Failing to impress man's reason with miracles and promised lands, religions changed their strategy. They preached humanism, moral virtues and norms of conduct. Christian theology interpreted God as a principle of supreme goodness, the highest perfection, and asked men to pursue the goal of perfection. Christian morality had its appeal but always proved ineffective. These moral laws disregard the realities of human nature and the problems that confront man. If man's fundamental drives and basic impulses are condemned as mortal sins, then his very essence, the core of his inner personal being, is fundamentally opposed to the supposed godliness. Therefore, instead of absolving sins, religions implanted guilt and shame. The supreme qualities of the highest good, as conceived by religions, could be the attributes of an unknown entity in heaven, but man's nature is anchored in the depths of his own instincts and emotions which form the very stuff of his soul. Hence religious morality failed to influence human conduct.

Matured by knowledge, by the experience of historical realities, with the horizons of his rational consciousness widened, man has found himself totally divorced from religions, the concern of which is the other world. Man's complex problems and his fundamental needs belong to the earth. Religions seek a peace between God and man, between heaven and earth, but man wants peace on earth, peace between man and man; religions promise a promised land in an unknown universe, but man wants the right of property here on earth; religions preach fraternity but man wants to prevent fraternal genocide. This gap, this contraposition, has become unbridgable. Therefore religions fail mankind, fail to contain the realities of his earthly problems.

Inescapable destiny

Man is no more terrified of this phenomenal world and its instruments of natural terror. He has learned to recognise the natural law of inevitable annihilation as his irreversible and inescapable destiny. He is no more tormented by the Kierkegaardian dread before God. Long ago disillusioned philosophers proclaimed the death of God. Man's basic needs and his fundamental problems lie with his fellow beings. Our relationship with others are more important to us than our relations with a non-existent God. Our happiness and unhappiness, our security and dangers, arise from our involvement with other people. When the fires of reason consumed our fears of the unknown, when Gods were made powerless and impotent, we found only ourselves left alone in this planet faced with each other in mutual conflict. In this contemporary world man has emerged as man's biggest problem.

Our involvement with others is real and inescapable. We are enclosed and encompassed by others as being engulfed by an ocean and are constantly challenged, contested and forced to compete for our existence. The stresses and strains of life arise out of this mutual conflict. This tension is not only an intra-psyche condition in which the individual is constantly caught up, but is also projected outside between individuals, between groups, between states, extending to universal dimensions, engulfing the whole of mankind into a continuous flux of tension. One may call this tension 'the primordial animosity', since it has its evolutionary origin in the struggle of the species for survival. There is no possibility of avoiding involvement or participation with others. We are tied to each other in an eternal bond, have rooted our being in interdependence and are forced to accept our destiny of participating in this massive human struggle. It is absurd to ask for supernatural intervention. Religions cannot insure safe-guards from the other world for a frightened being threatened by his own species. Our freedom is freedom guaranteed by others. We signed contracts with others to prevent pillage and anarchy. We surrendered our rights to others to uphold our rights. We punish others to protect ourselves. Our existence is mutual existence. Our fundamental problems are problems of inter-relationship. What we need is human love and understanding, not divine compassion.

Religions, with their authoritarian character, interfere with man's freedom and his responsibility to himself and to others. Man cannot be free if he is tied by blind obedience to a religious faith which receives its authority from heaven. Man will never recognise his responsibility to himself and to others if he is dependent upon a God and believed that his destiny on earth is designed by an

(Continued on page 115)

REVIEWS

BOOKS

URI: The original and authorised biography of Uri Geller—the man who baffles the scientists

by Andrija Puharich. W. H. Allen, £2.95.

No one within reach of television and newspapers can, surely, plead ignorance of the name Uri Geller. He is the young Israeli illusionist—sorry, "Israeli psychic", according to this book's dust-jacket blurb—who, having taken the U.S.A. by storm last year, has appeared on at least four British TV programmes in recent months, and who has, most amazingly of all, been taken seriously not only by semi-literates but also by many respected scientists and communicators.

Although described in its sub-title as "biography", the book might more accurately be entitled "The gospel of Uri according to Saint Andrija". Even the phraseology here and there closely echoes that of the gospels—for instance, "There were many other phenomena that occurred in London, but these were things Uri had done before and that I have already described elsewhere." I am sure no parody is intended: it is quite unconscious, and all the more revealing for that. For, like so many biographies, this book reveals far more about its author than about its subject.

The author is a doctor of medicine (though no longer practising), and the fact that he specialized in neurophysiology is significant. The psychosomatic aspects of medicine were no doubt the link between his choice of profession in the first place and his ultimate obsession (of which this book is clear evidence) with establishing causal connections between human minds and inorganic objects on the one hand and human minds and extra-terrestrial intelligences on the other. He admits that his conclusions undermine the whole foundation of science as hitherto understood, but he nevertheless accepts this, rather than doubt his methods of investigation. And once you accept it, all the coherence of your total experience disintegrates, and then you lose all ability to distinguish between reality and fantasy. Thus, Dr. Puharich reports Uri's illusions and his own delusions as hard fact.

Watching Uri Geller on television, I greatly admired his skills as a showman—not only the deftness of his fingers and the talent with which he exploits the prevailing situation, but also the way he keeps up his act as the complete innocent. However, I felt that his persistent protests, even between shows, that he had no idea how he achieved his effects had really gone beyond a joke, especially as so many people were placing more credence upon his word than upon their own common sense and life experience. But it had obviously proved too lucrative a deception to be willingly abandoned by Uri and his promoters.

When I first heard about this book as a forthcoming publication, I assumed that the author must be an accomplice in Uri's confidence trickery, as a member of his public-relations team. But a quick glance through the book changed my mind about that. Far from being Uri's accomplice, Andrija Puharich seems to be the most conned of all his victims. When this doctor of medicine, seeking a new Messiah, came to meet Uri in his native Israel, it

was probably too strong a temptation for Uri to resist. But after months of close companionship, does he, one wonders, go on cold-bloodedly exploiting this man's trust, even at the surely obvious risk of reinforcing his delusions? There are conversations reported in the book that suggest that Uri may occasionally have tried, if rather half-heartedly, to disillusion his friend—who, however, had by then acquired so unshakeable a faith that such half-hearted debunking, even by the Messiah himself, was no match for it.

Uri points out to Andrija (somewhat ambiguously) that his trusting interpretations of the mysterious tape-recordings (which are continually materializing and dematerializing when Uri is around) are not the only possible interpretations, but this may not necessarily indicate qualms on Uri's part about aggravating the doctor's delusions. It could be no more than a prudent attempt to safeguard the reputation of his alleged "paranormal powers" against the risk of a single interpretation of their source. This may seem a rather uncharitable theory, but it happens to be very much in line not only with the classical magic principle, undoubtedly employed by Uri, of finding alternative methods to achieve the same effect (so that one method can be used while another is under surveillance), but also with Uri's careful avoidance in television interviews of any definite explanation of his "powers" or any definite claim that he will be able to exhibit a particular effect at a particular time.

He is less careful, however, about self-contradiction. For instance, in a television interview I saw, after saying that large numbers of people have similar powers latent in them, he declared a few minutes later that none of those claiming to have such powers would ever be able to pass such stringent tests as he had done. Moreover, in the book under review, of which the subject tacitly approves, it is stated that the authoritative extra-terrestrial voices on the vanished tapes promised that no other human being for the next fifty years would be given the same powers. (This ensures Uri a good long run free of competition!)

One incident related in the book is of Uri and a woman friend denying any knowledge of events experienced by the author and another friend in their presence. Instead of plumping for the likely explanation that Uri and the woman are lying, or even for the other all-too-likely explanation that he himself may have imagined the whole thing, he jumps to the conclusion that "Sarah and Uri experienced one sequence, and Ila and I experienced another, in the same time frame."

There is similar evidence of unbalanced credulity when an electric light "that had been inoperative for four days suddenly switched on and off". Instead of thinking to himself, "Now, when did Uri replace that bulb; and where is he now, tampering with the circuit?", he immediately recognizes it as a signal made by "some invisible hand".

The book heaps confusion upon confusion, often couched in pseudo-scientific terms—for example, ". . . if we get seven times the electrical equivalent of the human body . . . corresponding approximation to light velocity will be ninety-nine per cent." The numerologically favoured numbers seven and nine recur time and again throughout the book. There are, for instance, "Seven Pillars of Fire" and "the Nine Principles of God".

Computer "intelligences" from outer space jostle with a mysterious dematerializing dog, as well as trance-state clairvoyance, psychokinesis, and all the rest of the claptrap of twentieth-century superstition. And much of the

author's phraseology (for example, "That is the way that we order you to take" and "Of my own free will I serve") may indicate a pathological yearning for authoritarian subjection.

The book might be worth reading by student psychiatrists as an interesting case-study—and possibly as a warning to them of an occupational hazard. Apart from this, I cannot pretend that it merits reading at all. And only because the book is confidently expected to attract a very large readership—of which a considerable proportion will swallow it whole—does it rate all this *Freethinker* space.

People today are no less credulous than those of biblical and medieval times. The main difference today is the greater speed of distant communication—enabling Uri Geller to become a global wonder within a few months.

However, this "authorized biography" of him might at least bring back to their senses some of the more intelligent, educated people who succumbed so mindlessly to the artful charm of his televisual image.

BARBARA SMOKER

STRATEGY FOR A LIVING REVOLUTION

by George Lakey. W. H. Freeman, San Francisco, \$2.95 (from Housmans, London).

From time to time someone tries to write a handbook of the revolution. The result is always failure but at least an *interesting* failure. Sir Thomas More and George Orwell knew better—the utopia and the dystopia succeed because they are non-programmatic imaginative exercises, they do not preach at us, their fantasies speak to a deeper level of human awareness and help us to transcend limitations of time and circumstance.

The simple fact is that no significant revolution was ever planned. Coups d'état are planned but they are only palace revolutions and not socially significant. Revolution proper only happens when constitutional forms that have worked for centuries decline to the point of their collapse, when arbitrariness destroys confidence and government can no longer continue in its old way. Since life has to go on something has to be done and the great creative stumble begins. The most unrevolutionary people do quite revolutionary things lest otherwise they perish or suffer disastrously in the train of chaos.

To get some idea of the nature of the process the obvious thing to do is to consider the well documented models of past experiences. Nobody wanted the English Revolution of the 1640s, nobody planned it. All people wanted was for the King to see reason and listen to the voice of Parliament, but this he flatly refused to do and in the name of the Divine Right made one disastrous mistake after another the accumulative effect of which was civil war. The same kind of thing happened in America in 1776 and in Russia in February 1917.

A good revolutionary is an inspired and principled opportunist, he can recognize the climatic moment when he sees it and do the right thing; but that moment is not of his making.

In this country and the Western World generally there are two very different kinds of revolutionaries—the puritans and the bohemians. (The marxists, with the odd exception like the late Christopher Caudwell, are not revolutionaries at all, since they cling on to the most reactionary ideas of all—those of class and centralized power. All

they have been able to do is to create new authoritarian régimes.) The puritans are the movement builders, the people who say what is right and wrong and organize campaigns to achieve limited ends. They constitute the foundation of the whole voluntary movement. If they have vision they keep it to themselves. The bohemians are the life-stylers to whom the revolution is always *now* and to be made manifest in clothes, music, décor, the arts, human relations, communes and the rest.

Some puritans and some bohemians get involved in party politics but not for long—"the machine" is alien to them and they soon revert to their own do-it-yourself ways of life. The distinction between them is never clear since each always has a little of the qualities of the other; the difference is all tied up with complex theory-and-practice problems, class structure, the generation gap, religion, traditions and the human potential. It may be that one day a new kind of revolutionary will emerge who synthesizes all the antecedent qualities—we shall see.

Be this as it may a young American Quaker, George Laker, has been so bold as to write his version of the handbook. In the late 1960s George Lakey spent some time in this country trying to inject some life into our moribund peace movement and then returned to the U.S. to write this book.

He believes that in a John Wayne culture "revolution is now necessary as a life-affirming strategy" against a situation where power is equated with violence. He then proposes a strategy in five stages: (a) cultural propaganda; (b) building organisational strength; (c) propaganda of the deed; (d) political and economic non-co-operation; (e) intervention and parallel institutions.

This is far too schematic to stand any chance against the facts of life. "Only a strong and united people's organisation with a revolutionary programme can provide the new life which becomes the new society." George Lakey wrote this just before matters came to a head in Vietnam. He should now know, as all the world knows, that the war did not end for any of the reasons instanced above but much more simply because the front-line troops had had enough—they mutinied, deserted and killed their own officers rather than have themselves die for no good reason. They were not revolutionaries but they took revolutionary action. The foundations of revolution lie in this absolute earthiness, in contingent action and in the collapse of existing authority. It is true that at the same time the process of change can be much helped by some inspired character who can put words to the whole thing and give it an extra dimension, but his vision is as nothing unless and until the time is right. And what is true in war is also likely to be true of inflation, the paying of taxes and obedience to existing laws and customs.

Lakey makes much use of the latest addition to American jargon "transnationalism". "I look forward to the day when activists go beyond the loose association of national groups (*internationals*) to associations which transcend boundaries and reflect the new world society of the future." It may seem a hard thing to say but in practice this works out as upside-down American imperialism—"transnational" associations run by the Americans with all the world's radicals on American leading strings! In practice there is no substitute for local control, nor should there be since proper accountability can only be face-to-face. We can, of course, respond to universal ideas but even there we may be in trouble since cultural identities are so varied and diverse that an idea like "peace" may need many

interpretations and some of them will contradict others. "Justice" is probably the most important potentially universal idea and for a statement of this, of historic importance, see John Rawl's recent book *A Theory of Justice* (O.U.P., £5).

I must say that it always irritates me that our American friends pointedly ignore the vast British experience of non-violent direct action from 1958 on. This may be because we failed to produce much significant literature but we certainly did produce the ideas, the forms of action and the results (in terms of movement building) that constitute the best foundations for the 1970s. George Lakey makes reference only to the failure of the Vietnam campaign in the U.K. and fails to understand even that.

He makes the case for smallness, well worth making, but adds (on p. 192) that "world referenda and a legislature are needed". He does not seem able to make up his mind whether devolution shall come from below or be dispensed from on high. This is a fundamental point. He writes, concerning the intervention, "the national council works with other councils to dismantle the national government by distributing its legitimate functions to local, regional and transnational levels." Can anyone seriously envisage any national council dissolving itself? I think not. If and when we reach the point of decentralization it will come by the assertion of the regions *without* national support just because the national state has disintegrated of itself like a political "black hole".

George Lakey's book is a probe in a useful direction if only because it provokes a response. So far as England is concerned "the revolution" is much more connected with the loyalty of troops serving in Northern Ireland, the revolt now beginning to be seen in the Civil Service and the final exposure of party politics than in any programme of the schematic or charismatic order.

PETER CADOGAN

A HISTORY OF THE DEVIL by William Woods.
W. H. Allen, £3.50.

Sometimes, wrote Shelley, the devil is a gentleman. But not very often, fortunately for the writers of popular demonologies. Rogues are fascinating characters, and none more so than the archetype of them all, so that it would be virtually impossible to produce a dull biography of Satan even when, as here, much of the material is already familiar from earlier works of the kind.

The author traces the origin of the devil to the tribal migrations of early man. When men began to practice agriculture and form settlements, their security was constantly under threat from the nomadic people still remaining. The gods of the latter, as unknown quantities and therefore to be feared, were regarded as devils by the more advanced culture. This attitude persisted as society evolved along class lines, for there has always been a tendency in the oppressed lower orders to revert to the gods of their primitive ancestors, the while paying lip-service to those of their masters. The cruelties of the medieval Church made many turn in disgust to witchcraft. At the present time we see a revival of many forms of the ancient occultism, against which establishment religion fulminates in vain.

For almost a thousand years the devil, in popular imagination, walked the villages and country lanes as a man, and there can be little doubt that he was often impersonated at witch gatherings by lusty young men. His

worshippers saw him as their ally against authority, in fact the exemplar of freedom itself. "For a large part of human history the devil has been on the side man", says Mr. Woods, who in his turn is decidedly on the side of the devil. Of Christianity he writes:

... in one's anger and indignation at its irrational its anti-human doctrines enforced with so much pain and blood on the defenceless, one has to say straightforwardly that it was the greatest cultural disaster that has ever befallen us.

As thorough a denunciation as one could wish for, which makes it all the more regrettable that, on a number of important issues, superficial research has led the author to make assertions contrary both to reason and ascertainable fact. It is worth dealing with these at some length, because one knows from experience (and recent experience at that) just how ready the public are to accept irrational explanations for reported wonders.

No book on the occult would be complete without a mention of Dr. J. B. Rhine. Says Mr. Woods: "If Rhine can demonstrate, as he has without question, that certain individuals are consistently precognitive . . ." But Rhine's work has been questioned, notably by John Scarne and Milbourne Christopher in America and D. H. Rawcliffe in Britain. According to Christopher (*Seers, Psychics and E.S.P.*) a British professor of psychology, C. E. M. Hansel, examined the buildings at Duke University where Rhine's experiments were carried out and found that they might have been specially designed for cheating. Windows, trapdoors and other unsuspected peepholes enabled Professor Hansel, without being detected in trickery, to reproduce the high scores of Rhine's card-guessing "psychics".

Another of the author's certainties is the case of the two young Welsh boys, not named by him but evidently Glyn and Ieuan Jones. He tells us that the boys were tested under laboratory conditions which ruled out any possibility of fraud, and that one of them scored a run of twenty-five correct guesses at cards looked at by the other, beating odds of millions to one against. "We are forced to accept such evidence", says Mr. Woods. Are we indeed? Christopher says the boys were seldom tested under fool-proof conditions, and when they were their scores dropped to chance level. Once they were detected using a code of coughs and chair creaks, and were obliged to promise not to cheat in future. They afterwards became sufficiently expert to baffle even professional conjurers. Professor Hansel, however, demonstrated that one possible explanation had been overlooked. The signalling instrument could have been a "silent" dog whistle, which for physiological reasons would have been audible to the boys but not to the somewhat elderly gentleman who tested them.

Poltergeist phenomena, we learn, may often be the result of fraud, but not all. One case here cited as "inexplicable by any rational means" occurred at Worksoop in 1883. As usually happens the manifestations, mainly crockery smashing, took place only when a certain young girl was present. Mr. Woods bases his opinion on a report by Frank Podmore, who investigated the matter for the Society for Psychical Research. Further study would have shown that Podmore had second thoughts about the Worksoop case. He wrote:

If my verdict in 1897 differs from that which I gave, according to the best of my ability, in 1883, it is because many things have happened since, which have taught us to discount testimony in matters of this kind. In the course of the fourteen years which have elapsed we have received some striking object-lessons demonstrating the incapacity of the ordinary unskilled observer to detect trickery or sleight of hand; and we have learnt to distrust the accuracy of the unaided memory in

recording feats of this kind, especially when witnessed under circumstances of considerable excitement (*Studies in Psychical Research*, p. 144).

He went on to list the many discrepancies and contradictions in the evidence of the Worksoop witnesses.

A former spiritualist, Podmore became almost completely sceptical as a result of his occult investigations. His final verdict on poltergeist hauntings was "That the alleged phenomena are due in the first instance to trickery, magnified by malobservation and errors of memory", the motive being a desire to cause a sensation. He noted a number of cases in which the tricksters were caught in the act, thus falsifying Mr. Wood's assertion that "the young girl at the heart of the trouble . . . is invariably found to be physically innocent."

In accuracies such as these, together with over-hasty judgements, detract from what is otherwise a well-written and entertaining book.

R. J. CONDON

THEATRE

OIDIPUS TYRANNUS by Sophocles.
Chichester Festival Theatre.

BLOOMSBURY by Peter Luke. Phoenix Theatre.

There is no need for purism in producing the classics. It is impossible to re-create the atmosphere of a Greek amphitheatre and anyway theatre should be a living, developing form, constantly re-thinking and re-interpreting great plays, not offering museum pieces. Hovhanness Pilikian's production of *Oidipus Tyrannus* is in no way conventional and I applaud his attempts at re-thinking the play, even if I have reservations about the final effect.

The choice of the Greek title *Oidipus Tyrannus* rather than the more familiar Latin *Oedipus Rex* is explained in the director's programme notes. Pilikian sees Oidipus as a tyrant in the modern sense of the word, complete with sinister, leather-clad bully-boys. It is also emphasized that he is a foreigner, a usurper. Keith Michell's fascinating performance shows Oidipus as cruel, primitive and ferocious: his struggle with the uncovering of the awful truth that he has married his mother and murdered his father is seen as a savage battle against the emerging facts. This performance was the most successful aspect of the production: the angry transition from bully denying the words of Tiresias, the blind prophet, to writhing defeated creature being sneered at by the same Tiresias was most effective.

Other features of the production were less happy. The chorus is always something of a problem for modern versions of Greek drama. Pilikian believes that comedy and tragedy are intermingled (a view perhaps more applicable to Euripides than Sophocles, as was seen in his recent production of *Electra*) and that the play is full of word-play. It is surely a mistake to equate subtle puns with knock-about comedy and to present the Theban elders as a crew of bald, old men, a gaggle of parish pump cronies, chortling and chuckling in various patterns around the stage. Such bizarritiy and grotesqueness was even more misplaced in Willoughby Goddard's "Michelin-tyre-man" shepherd, rolling comically about the stage. The set was a livid orange representation of the inside of the womb, symbolically appropriate and brilliantly lit, but I did at

times have the feeling that Startrek mission had wandered on to some strange new planet. I would recommend the play for Keith Michell's performance and it is interesting to have preconceptions about Greek drama challenged, even if the final effect is unconvincing.

Bloomsbury, a new play at the Phoenix Theatre by Peter Luke, is a study of Lytton Strachey's relationship with Dora Carrington and the artistic circle known as the Bloomsbury group. The play demonstrated that in this circle "all the couples are triangles and everyone lives in squares". Daniel Massey is excellent as Lytton Strachey, a gangling sympathetic character. The play is really a series of sketches spanning the years 1914 to 1932, passing through Lady Ottoline Morrell's salon (a brittle performance by Moyra Fraser), Strachey's appearance before a tribunal dealing with pacifists, literary success with the publication of *Eminent Victorians* and a comfortable unhappy ménage à trois between Strachey, Carrington and the young man they both love, Partridge (a refreshing, straightforward performance from Clive Francis). I found the play thoroughly entertaining and very professionally presented, but felt that Peter Luke was just a little uncertain what he was trying to do with this gallery of eccentrics. The narrative was linked by Virginia Woolf (a thoughtful and intense performance by Yvonne Mitchell) but her intensity and incipient insanity put her quite outside the circle and at times she gave the impression of wandering in from another play.

JIM HERRICK

SPRING AWAKENING by Frank Wedekind, translated by Edward Bond. The National Theatre at the Old Vic and on tour to Oxford, Nottingham and Birmingham.

Written eighty years ago, banned in this country till the 1960s on grounds of obscenity, *Frühlings Erwachen* is a jagged Expressionist play about adolescents in a provincial German town. The young people's teachers are bumbling obscurantists, who misconstrue their pupils' natural curiosity about sex. While the children need the knowledge that will help equip them for living, their teachers give them conjugations from a dead language to memorize. The parents are on the whole likable, but superficial and cowardly. Fourteen-year-old Wendla Bergmann, whose older sister has already been visited three times by the stork (and what a useful invention harassed mothers through the ages have found that bird!) wants desperately to know where babies really come from. Her mother, played by Beryl Reid in a strangely flat, incantatory voice, but with astonishing depths of feeling, puts off Wendla's questions with procrastination and untruths. She feels, like so many mothers, that it would be criminal to let her daughter know the realities of sex while still so young. At one point, Mrs. Bergmann tries to summon the courage to tell her daughter the truth, while Wendla burrows under her mother's skirts. This is one of the most potent images in the whole of the theatre, matched, in this production, by the still, slow opening of the play, which is shot through with limpid poetry. This poetry emanated from the very presence of the actress playing Wendla, an eighteen-year-old Irish actress called Veronica Quilligan. How Miss Quilligan will mature I do not know, but now she is coltish and knowing, with a timeless Celtic romanticism about her. Her Wendla is joyously and yearningly alive, but there is a sorrowful edge to her voice. From the first moment we see her, we sense that the girl is doomed. Shortly after her mother has squirmingly misinformed her

on the facts of life, Wendla dies as the result of a botched abortion.

Melchoir Gabor, whose child Wendla was carrying, is played with the authority of a precocious and attractive boy by Peter Firth. This forceful young actor, with his blond curls and fiendish-choirboy good looks, has already made a great impact at the Old Vic with his performance in *Equus*. Firth brings controlled power to his performance as Melchoir. He meets Wendla in a wood. She has been fantasizing about the beatings her classmate Martha claims to be given by her parents. Wendla gives Melchoir a switch and begs him to thrash her. He refuses at first, cool, disdainful and rather amused, and then complies, beating Wendla savagely, foaming at the mouth. The scene is all the more powerful because Geoffrey Scott's sets for the production are so cool and airy, quite devoid of the claustrophobic quality I had expected in a play about sexual repression. The stage is raked and bare, backed alternatively by an expanse of dully reflecting steel, and by a white backcloth against which the characters are suddenly silhouetted. Furniture is kept to a minimum: a brass bed, an old-fashioned wardrobe and a wooden table, whereas in Visconti's film *Death in Venice* the proliferation of tables, chairs, vases of lilies, stuffy curtains and bits and pieces in nasty, expensive shades of amber and lapis lazuli effectively created a sort of animated-morgue atmosphere. Scott and Bryden have used space, the clear sound of an unseen schoolboy choir and an easy delivery of the lines in most parts to gain an effect. I may be wrong, but I believe that the style in which the play has been directed cuts deliberately across the action. If you take the act of sex and free it from shame and guilt, from disgust and fear and from the manifestations of the anti-sex brigade, those people who in the name of permissiveness have tried to rob sex of its glorious naturalness, if you raise sex out of the realm of the tired smutty joke, the furtive snigger, and enjoy it for what it is, the laughing yet awed exploration and fusion of two bodies, and the soaring pleasure of it, then you have, and this is of necessity a subjective view, something of that purity which Bill Bryden and Geoffrey Scott have evoked.

The tragedy of *Spring Awakening* is that sex has been hedged in by fear and superstition and a sense of revulsion that breed shame and misunderstanding. Sex may hold mysteries, but the price to be paid for ignorance is far too high. So is the price for suppression of a child's free spirit, however affectionate and well-intentioned that suppression might be. Moritz Stiefel, a friend of Melchoir's is, like Wendla, ignorant about sex. He is obsessed by the groundless fear that his academic failure would cause his parents terrible distress, as they have made so many sacrifices for his sake. He drives himself on relentlessly, trying to master subjects that are of no interest to him; but his curiosity about sex remains unsatisfied. Melchoir, with condescending pedantry, offers to write and illustrate a treatise on sexual intercourse and slip it between the pages of one of Moritz's exercise books, so that he can happen upon it, as it were. The atrocious document is discovered, and Melchoir is sent to a reformatory. Overcome by the difficulty of maintaining the academic standards he thinks are demanded of him, but at the same time reluctant to leave life behind, Moritz shoots himself. The last person he meets is Ilse, a young girl who has just returned, deliciously corrupted, from days and nights of debauchery with the Orgasmians, a group of painters for whom she has been modelling. The scene of grotesque non-communication between the girl besotted by the abandon of her life, and the boy unable to surmount the hurdles of the classroom

and so live, is very powerful. Fine performances from Michael Kitchen as Mortiz and Patti Love as Ilse.

This is a flawed production, but I do hope the National Theatre will long carry on giving us productions as fascinating as this. Meanwhile, it is worth noting that several members of the *Spring Awakening* cast are taking part in a mobile production of *Romeo and Juliet*, directed again by Bill Bryden and with Peter Firth and Veronica Quilligan in the title rôles. The production will visit seventeen regional centres. The National Theatre is beginning truly to live up to its name.

VERA LUSTIG

LETTERS

R.I. and basic ideologies

In the July issue of *The Freethinker* I noticed the use of the expression "stances for living" in an important work on education. I hope this is a sign that the "Establishment" is at last beginning to realize the dangers of the existing compulsory R.I. in schools.

I have used the idea of "basic ideologies" since 1950 and in 1967 registered the Basic Ideology Research Unit "to study those systems of ideas which human beings use to govern their general attitude and behaviour to others and to society".

My present theory is that—briefly and very roughly—after the introduction of language, human minds evolved a strong tendency to accept, without question, the basic ideologies of the society around them. This tendency was probably supported by natural selection because it enabled a large society (e.g. a nation) to be united and organized and so able to survive in competition with less well organised societies.

Today many individuals acquire such strong convictions that they inevitably interpret all their experiences in terms of their beliefs. The exploitation of human suggestibility and belief, especially in the case of defenceless children, I think, a main cause of conflict in the more interdependent world of today.

It seems to me that the best means now available for obtaining a better understanding of the nature of existence is by the strict application of the methods of science, and I hope that science will soon be extended to cover the whole field of human thought and action. Better understanding should produce more co-operation.

G. F. WESTCOTT.

Marxism and religious commitment

Certainly Judex repeatedly exposes the shallowness and evasiveness of that doctrinaire Communist, Pat Sloan. But I wonder whether Judex understands why Sloan keeps defending the indefensible? Sloan is a deeply religious person, his religion Marxism and his prophet, Marx, as unassailable as Jesus or Mahomet to their faithful devotees. One can't reason with religiously committed people and Pat Sloan is religiously committed. Judex should understand this.

J. ROSS.

Althusser's "Marxist anti-humanism"

In reply to R. Mulholland (Letters, July), the facts relating to Louis Althusser are as follows:

On the first page of his book *For Marx* (Vintage Books edition p. 9), under the heading "To My English Readers", Althusser says that "To understand these essays and to pass judgement on them, it is essential to realize that they were conceived, written and published by a Communist philosopher in a particular ideological and theoretical conjuncture". And a footnote adds: "For explanation of terms used see Glossary, page 249". So that is exactly what I did. I referred to the Glossary which begins on page 249 and in my April letter I correctly quoted from the entry on "Humanism" and gave my source (i.e. page 251).

In "A Letter to the Translator" on page 257, following the Glossary, we are told that the translator submitted the text of the Glossary to Althusser who returned it "with a whole series of corrections and interpolations". And on page 258 Althusser states explicitly: "(1) I have myself gone over the text of the glossary line by line, and (2) I have made changes in matters of detail (which need not be indicated) and a few important interpolations.

As a result, everything should be perfectly clear." Furthermore, in the body of his book, Althusser also speaks repeatedly of "Marx's theoretical anti-humanism" (on pages 229, 230 and 231), of "theoretical Marxist anti-humanism" (on page 230), and of "Marx's philosophical anti-humanism" (on page 241). It would be fraudulent to lead *Freethinker* readers to believe otherwise.

As for Mr. Mulholland's reference to what he calls the "English orientated"—but what many would describe as the "Moscow orientated"—Communist Party, it is not necessary, as he should know, to be a card-carrying member, like Althusser, to subscribe to reactionary and suppressive doctrines, which are a disgrace to the cause of socialism. As a lifelong anti-Fascist, anti-Stalinist, and freethinker, I suggest to Mr. Mulholland and others of his tendency, that they would be well advised to refrain from their abortive attempts to restrict freedom of discussion, under the cloak of talk about "repetitiveness", "waste of space" and so on. "What we contemporaries have to do is the uncompromising critical evaluation of all that exists." (Marx).

My articles on Marx—the writing of which has several times been interrupted by the need to defend the freethought position against Stalinist attack—will, I trust, be subjected to searching criticism and if there are any specific and demonstrable errors, let them be stated. The quotations I have given are, I think, self-explanatory and my work is a conscientious attempt to provide a reliable and up-to-date critical survey, based on lengthy research and an extensive and diverse collection of writings containing some exciting and little known new materials. Dreariness, bias, and the endless and indiscriminate repetition of the same tired old quotations, are characteristic of much of the stream of political literature emanating from Moscow and from those bound by Marxist-Leninist dogma, but I think it is evident that my contributions have little in common with such hagiographical offerings.

Echoing Lenin (*Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* (1972) p. 422), Mr. Mulholland uses the term "Judas-kiss" in referring to me. Perhaps he should read the illuminating chapter by Professor Feuer on "Lenin's Fantasy" in *Lenin and Leninism* (edited by B. W. Eissenstate, 1971). Amongst other things, Feuer discusses the metaphors for the emotional determinants of Lenin's crude and obsolete materialism and his use of invective and of words such as "kisses", "concubinage" "fig-leaf" "Chinese braids". For an assessment of where the Leninist path led, we have Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago* and the splendid article on this new book by the Soviet historian Roy Medvedev (*New Left Review*, May-June 1974) which I warmly commend to *Freethinker* readers, contrary as it is in some respects to some of my own researches.

JUDEX.

Freethinking or blind belief

After suffering another two pages of Judexian diatribe I see the sensibilities of the readership are due for another ruthless flogging, indicated by the fearful: "to be continued". Therefore I would like to add another voice to those of R. Mulholland and Walter Connolly who have both raised some very important points.

In particular, I agree wholeheartedly with Walter Connolly that "Free-speech should not be equated with the right to lie and cheat." For every minute particle we possess has come to us from the torn and bleeding fingers of heroic self-sacrifice. From those courageous pioneers who suffered imprisonment, torture and death, tearing those particles from that monolithic totality once known as Divine Right—the Absolute Right to lie and cheat. Consequently, it must be causing concern to many freethinkers to find those high ideals, of such things as integrity and the quest for truth, that we associate with the early pioneers being so contemptuously abused by so many of their beneficiaries and "upholders" today. And it must grate objectionably against the finer sensitivities when distortions, half-truths and complete falsehoods, are committed in the name of freethought. It is surely quite unjustifiable to suggest, or imply, that falsehoods due to culpable ignorance, may be excused on the claims of "honesty" when second-source writings are voraciously and feverishly grabbed, merely because they provide convenient support for one's prejudices and superficial assumptions. Popper's concept of Falsifiability has indeed eroded the structure upon which personal dientity stands.

In the past, like many others, I preferred to ignore the puerile and contradictory comments and quotes that appeared by the pseudonymous-sounding Judex. These have now increased to a veritable Niagara of nonsense. He has produced dozens and dozens of ticker-tape tongues of disjointed stercotype, stuck together with the adhesive of incoherence, and then had the astounding temerity to accuse one of his opponents of "parrotting". One can't help but notice the similar religious thought-habit existing between "Professors, This, That, The Other—or whatever their names be—say . . ." and the Bible-babblers: "Paul, John,

Matthew, Luke say . . ." The mere necessity of the *need* to appeal to such a multitude reveals the uncertainty and inadequacy of the individual.

It is this same strange form of reasoning that causes him to imagine as reality his ludicrous claim to "a thorough and prolonged study of Marxism", the results of which may be seen in the following: after producing an alleged, but certainly mindless, quote of Stalin in referring to the subject of "objective reality" ("Marxism in Perspective, August 1972) he followed with: "The Marxist thesis that it is not the consciousness of men that determines their being was thus inverted." Surely, anyone who has the slightest knowledge of Marxian theory and understands that this "inverting" was performed by Marx himself—before Stalin was born. This was precisely Marx's point. The whole purpose of his "dialectical method". He explained, that philosophers had previously only "interpreted" the world, man's task now "was to change it". The external world of matter, existing independently of man—"objective reality"—on the other hand, is the fundamental basis of historical materialism which goes right back to the Ionian Greeks, and, epistemologically speaking, cannot possibly be changed. Hence, Judex's reference to "objective reality" and the "Marxist thesis" when translated into the common ideas of everyday affairs is the equivalent of saying that, because Marx put a modern window into an old house "the house now stands on its chimney—but Stalin did it". Such is the type of nonsense that readers are subjected to in the name of freethought and free-speech.

Again, in attempting to associate dialectics with Christianity he fails to understand that not only is he insulting the intelligence of freethinkers, whilst at the same time debasing the intellectual image of the ancient Greeks, but he elevates Christianity to ridiculous heights. For dialectics, science and materialism, are the products of a highly developed people, and certainly *not* the result of metaphysical soliloquy. He would have readers "believe" that profound thinkers like Hegel and Marx studied the philosophy and dialectics of the ancient Greeks merely to "hide" that their understanding of the subject resulted from the later period of intellectual degeneracy known as Christianity.

So it comes as no surprise to find Judex quoting the religious fanatic Solzhenitsyn—who shamelessly paraded before the whole world in the deceitful guise of poverty—as testimony: "Christian theology is indeed 'the grandmother of Bolshevism' which, as Solzhenitsyn's Nobel lecture testifies, is the mortal enemy of freethought and humanism" (September 1972). Surely, his gullibility knows no boundaries?

But, suffice to sav freethinkers from *their* "thorough and prolonged studies" are well aware that carefully phrased words may obscure, but cannot obliterate, the philistinism inherent in blind belief.

TREVOR MORGAN.

Unpopular new concept

That the world is round and not flat is today accepted, unless some "freethinkers" still cling to a flat-earth theory in defiance of "dogmatism". Philip Hinchliff?

Marxism today is in a rather similar position to round-earthism in the days of Galileo. Persecution punishes an unpopular new "dogma", though this new "dogma" in fact spells liberation from pre-Marxist myths about capitalist society.

Marxism is much more complicated than round-earthism because it deals with a constantly changing society and consciousness and is intimately bound up with people's own economic interests. Yet in spite of his very many journalistic comments (Marx was a day-to-day journalist as well as a profound theoretician) which later proved mistaken, Marx's basic analysis of capitalism remains valid and the present crisis of the "Western" world bears this out.

Or does Philip Hinchliff's myth of capitalism rule out the conception of crisis?

PAT SLOAN.

Expression defended

Mr. R. Mulholland (Letters, July) says he will defend my "right to my viewpoint about world government". But he doesn't say he'll defend my right to express my viewpoint, indeed in effect he demands that my right of expression be suppressed, and then he says he doesn't want to attack freedom of speech.

"Undue repetition does pall after a while", says Mr. Mulholland plaintively. What about the "repetition" of Marxist ideas that's been going on in books and articles for over fifty years? What about the "repetition" of Conservative, Liberal, Socialist ideas on

television and in national newspapers? Mr. Mulholland, it seems, only objects to "repetition" when it concerns a new struggling idea.

As I pointed out in the May issue there have been more references to Marxism this last year in *The Freethinker* than to World Government. According to Mr. Mulholland's argument I would be justified in demanding that articles on Marxism be cut down (I don't intend to do so of course).

Mr. Mulholland hasn't replied to my question whether he had ever been prevented from getting a letter published by my writings—which suggests the answer is No

Referring to the argument between Judex and Pat Sloan, Mr. Mulholland says, "My objection to his side of the debate with Pat Sloan is that, apart from his acrimony and repetitiveness, his tactics are questionable . . ." Since "Pat Sloan" is the last proper noun before the two "hises" this means "Pat Sloan's acrimony and repetitiveness", Pat Sloan's tactics are questionable".

However, Mr. Mulholland's remarks about England and Scotland suggest he is motivated by narrow nationalism, so it's not surprising if he wants discussion on world government suppressed. And his remark about "the Judas kiss" suggests he sympathizes with one of the more obsolete ideas of Christianity that most intelligent clergymen are dropping.

I. S. Low.

Powerful interests

I, for one, welcome Mr. I. S. Low's further contribution (letter, July) to the advocacy of world government. It seems to me that one of the "tremendous difficulties" is that of persuading "powerful nations" that world government (of Mr. Low's kind) is in their interests. Perhaps from within U.N.O. "disunities" will come to be seen as threatening the interests of all?

CHARLES BYASS.

Religion, war and brainwashing

Your fourteen-year-old schoolgirl (*Freethinker*, June) is doing remarkably well and should be congratulated. But it is hoped that as she grows up she will learn more about organized religion. It is simply not true that "it is against most religions to fight anyway".

This was brought out sharply in a recent religious television programme in Scotland when I questioned members of a religious panel, including a Roman Catholic priest and a Church of Scotland minister, about war.

It was admitted by everyone that not once, in hundreds of years, had Christianity ever officially condemned wars, and there have been many of these, whether religious or for trade. Indeed the Catholic priest was honest enough to admit that when the Second Vatican Council was called that was one question that should have been dealt with, but was not; instead it was left to individual nations.

She is on surer ground when she writes that "all religions are used to brainwash people". It will probably surprise her to meet some of the people who fall for it; only recently I got a letter from a Professor of Biological Sciences, who told me that he could not live "without Christianity". My reply was, among other things, that Hindus and Bhudists seem to manage all right without it.

PETER KEARNEY.

Correspondent wanted

I am wondering if, among the readers of *The Freethinker*, there may be anyone who would care to correspond occasionally with me. I must say at the outset that the reason for my being largely isolated and cut off from the outside world is because I am deaf (hard-of-hearing as it is politely called, as I wear a hearing aid). I find this handicap a grievous drawback to conversation, debate and so on, of which I am very fond.

I am not now young, but am still passionately interested in literature, the arts, history and even politics. It would be a great boon to me to be able to correspond with someone with similar interests. Let no one be put off by the suspicion that I have any great erudition in any of these subjects, as I am largely self-educated.

Perchance there may be one of your readers in a similar situation to my own. In any event, I hope I shall not have appealed entirely in vain.

VIOLET GANDY.

Anyone writing to Mrs. Gandy should address their letter c/o The Editor, 698 Holloway Road, London N19 3NL.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

National Secular Society. Details of membership and inquiries regarding bequests and secular funeral services may be obtained from the General Secretary, 698 Holloway Road, London, N19 3NL (telephone: 01-272 1266). Cheques, etc., should be made payable to the N.S.S.

Freethought books and pamphlets (new). Send for list to G. W. Foote & Company, 698 Holloway Road, London, N19 3NL.

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. 18-20 October. Weekend at Brighton hotel with visit to Lewes where Thomas Paine lived. Cost £7, inclusive of breakfast and one main meal on each of the two days. Hon. Secretary: Mrs. M. Mcpham, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey (telephone: 01-642 8796).

1975. Comments are invited from any interested in proposal for a two-week event in the Isle of Man next year. Hon. Secretary: Mrs. M. Mcpham, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey SM1 4PD. Telephone: 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.)

Falmouth Humanist Group (affiliated to the National Secular Society) welcomes visitors to Cornwall. Particulars of meetings, etc., from the Secretary, 30 Melville Road, Falmouth, Cornwall. Telephone: Falmouth 313863.

EVENTS

Brentwood Humanist Society, Old House Arts Centre, Shenfield Road, Brentwood. Thursday 12 September, 8 p.m.: LINNEA TIMPSON, "Humanism in Literature".

Brighton and Hove Humanist Group. Imperial Centre Hotel, First Avenue, Hove. Sunday, 1 September, 5.30 p.m. WILLIAM MCILROY: "Humanism in the 'Seventies'".

Conway Hall Gallery, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Until 18 September: EXHIBITION OF PAINTINGS: Frances Broomfield, Judith Clute, David Cuthbert, Giles Harvey.

Harrow Humanist Society, Public Library, Gayton Road, Harrow (near Harrow-on-the-Hill station). Wednesday 11 September, 8 p.m.: J. VAHRMAN, "Is the National Health Service Breaking Down?".

London Young Humanists, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London W8. Sunday 1 September, 7.30 p.m.: ERIC MCGRAW (Population Countdown), "Is Population Costing Us the Earth?". Sunday 15 September, 7.30 p.m.: A speaker from the Campaign for Homosexual Equality will talk about the ideas and work of C.H.E.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY ANNUAL EXCURSION

London—Kent, Sunday 8 September

Return fare, Lunch, admission to Sissinghurst Castle and to the Ellen Terry Museum at Small Hythe: **£2.40** (National Trust members, **£2**)

Advance booking only

Details from the NSS

698 Holloway Road, London N19 3NL.

Telephone 01-272 1266

PUBLICATIONS

TITLE	AUTHOR	Price	Post
The Jesus Hoax (Hard cover) (Breakaway edition)	Phyllis Graham	£3.95	22½p
The Dead Sea Scrolls Comparative Religion	John Allegro	55p	9p
The Longford Threat to Freedom	A. C. Bouquet	55p	11p
Religious Education in State Schools	Brigid Brophy	10p	3½p
Did Jesus Christ Exist?	Brigid Brophy	12½p	3½p
Materialism Restated	Chapman Cohen	5p	3½p
Thomas Paine	Chapman Cohen	25p	13p
Morality Without God	Chapman Cohen	10p	3½p
Ten Non Commandments	Chapman Cohen	5p	3½p
The Bible Handbook	Ronald Fletcher	12½p	3½p
	G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball	65p	11p
Bertrand Russell: A Life	H. Gottchalk	25p	9p
The Nun Who Lived Again	Phyllis Graham	5p	3½p
The Humanist Revolution Controversy	Hector Hawton	60p	11p
The Little Red Schoolbook	Hector Hawton	60p	11p
Rome or Reason	Soren Hanson	30p	7p
The Misery of Christianity	R. G. Ingersoll	10p	5p
Humanist Anthology	Joachim Kahl	40p	9p
Christianity: The Debit Account	Margaret Knight	60p	9p
The Case Against Church Schools	Margaret Knight	3p	3½p
The Secular Responsibility	Patricia Knight	20p	3½p
An Introduction to Secular Humanism	Marghanita Laski	10p	3½p
What Humanism is About	Kit Mouat	45p	3½p
Ethics without God	Kit Mouat	52½p	15p
Against Censorship	Kai Nielson	60p	7p
Birth Control	N.C.C.L.	25p	5p
A Humanist Glossary	N.S.S.	20p	3½p
Rights of Man	Odell & Barfield	20p	5p
The Vatican Versus Mankind	Thomas Paine	35p	11p
Boys and Sex	Adrian Pigott	20p	11p
Girls and Sex	W. B. Pomeroy	25p	7p
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Impact of Science on Society	Winwood Reade	60p	17p
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Unpopular Essays	Bertrand Russell	60p	9p
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Legitimacy versus Industrialism	Bertrand Russell	65p	9p
Education and the Social Order	Bertrand Russell	37½p	9p
The Mask of Anarchy	P. B. Shelley	60p	3½p
Life, Death and Immortality	P. B. Shelley	20p	3½p
Abortion Counselling	P. B. Shelley	10p	3½p
The Freethinker 1972 Bound Volume	M. Simms	50p	5p
	Edited by Nigel Sinnott	£2.50	30p
Humanism (Ward Lock Educational)	Barbara Smoker	40p	5p
A Chronology of British Secularism	G. H. Taylor	10p	3½p
Broadcasting Brainwashing			
Conditioning	David Tribe	25p	3½p
Nucleoethics: Ethics in Modern Society (paperback)	David Tribe	90p	13p
Questions of Censorship	David Tribe	£4.75p	23p
Religion and Ethics in Schools	David Tribe	7½p	3½p
The Cost of Church Schools	David Tribe	20p	3½p
Freethought and Humanism in Shakespeare	David Tribe	10p	3½p
Religion and Human Rights	David Tribe	3p	3½p
100 Years of Freethought	David Tribe	£2.50	22½p
President Charles Bradlaugh M.P.	David Tribe	£4.00	30p
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