

## RELIGIOUS EXCESSES ARE FORMS OF SEXUAL PERVERSION—NSS PRESIDENT

"While the orthodox Churches are in rapid decline, more irrational forms of religious fervour are proliferating," said Barbara Smoker in her presidential address to the annual general meeting of the National Secular Society in London on 27 June. She went on to describe the religious fervour and emotionalism that has been aroused by religious sects and groups within the Churches as a form of sexual perversion. Those cases which have come to public notice because they culminated in tragedy represent only a fraction of the suffering and mental anguish that has resulted from the current upsurge of religious fanaticism and irrationalism.

Miss Smoker declared that in the mid-nineteenth century, secularists saw their chief enemy as the Church of England, with all its wealth, political power and social respectability. Towards the end of the century, the Roman Catholic Church, gaining strength in the country under Cardinal Manning, began to replace the C of E as the chief enemy of the freethought movement. "But today," she added, "in spite of all the legal, fiscal and educational privileges that are retained by these two major Christian Churches, their allegiance is melting away like two lumps of sugar in a cup of hot tea; and the old Nonconformist sects with them like scattered grains of granulated. But there are new Nonconformist sects rising up to take their place, and even new aberrant movements within the orthodox Churches. Their appeal is mainly to unstable people for whom religious emotion is like dope to a drug-addict. Indeed it *is* dope; and they are hooked on it. When Marx, quoting Hegel, described religion as 'the opium of the people', he was pointing to its social and economic effects, but it is also true of its underlying psychological causes.

"Some of the way-out sects are not actually new, but they are suddenly enjoying a boom. A number of them—Mormons, Christian Scientists, Seventh Day Adventists—were imported into this country

from the USA, but even the backing they had from the almighty dollar did not enable them to make much real impact here until the post-war years, when the rapid decline of more orthodox religion seems to have left a vacuum for the fringe religions to fill.

"The gold-rush (sometimes with literal gold as the prime motive of the leaders) has also spawned new cults and sects such as the Children of God and the Divine Light Mission. At the same time, fervent cells within the traditional Churches have come into prominence—the 'Charismatic' movement and Pentecostalism for example—which have even swept into their orbits a number of Roman Catholic priests and nuns, in spite of hierarchical mutterings of unease.

### Psychological Compulsion

"This ferment of religious fanaticism, whatever its brand name—and, in fact, it is often ecumenical to a degree that bothers official tentative ecumenism—must surely be seen now as Enemy Number One to the cause of secularism. Sensational tragedies, such as the horrific Taylor murder and the death of the young bridegroom who had such faith in the motto 'Jesus Saves' that he trustingly stepped off a high balcony, are only a small fraction of the physical suffering and mental anguish caused by this upsurge of irrationalism, which constitutes a very real danger both to individuals swept up in it and to society at large.

"Why are some people such willing religion fodder? What drives them to wallow in religious emotionalism, however irrational the doctrines behind it? It is obviously a psychological compulsion that goes deeper than nineteenth-century rationalists supposed. They saw the social pressures behind religion, but had not yet sufficiently assimilated Freudian understanding to see the psychological pressures underneath.

"In the dependent years of infancy, we all have

faith in the omnipotence and omniscience of our all-providing parents or parent-substitutes who pay particular attention to our individual welfare in an incomprehensible world and for whom we feel love, tinged with fear and hatred. As we come to realise that their powers are limited, so we may experience a strong desire to transfer those infinite attributes to a supernatural being who likewise has a particular concern for us. The sex drive, which in infancy is directed mainly towards the adults on whom we are dependent, is often transferred to this supernatural parent-substitute; hence the high incidence of religious emotion in adolescence. And some people never get over this phase of sexual immaturity.

### Sexual Hangups

"The psychological/hormonal wellsprings of religious emotion are thus fed from the reservoir of the sex drive, and religious excesses are forms of sexual perversion. It does not require much knowledge of psychology to recognise the sexuality of the autobiographical outpourings of the great saints, from Augustine to Thomas à Kempis. In modern times, the writings of female saints are even more obviously—though unconsciously—sexual. The ever-popular *Autobiography of Thérèse of Lisieux* is a good example. Even more up-to-date an example is the masochism of Mother Teresa of Calcutta, for whom Malcolm Muggeridge (who seems to have his own peculiar sexual hangups) acts as PRO. However, since Freudian psychology penetrated the cloisters, such blatantly sado-masochistic practices as public confessions, followed by public penances, together with the practice of self-flagellation, that used to be regular features of the monastic life, for both men and women, are now actively discouraged.

"In the age of faith, the laity too were forced to do public penances, one of the Fathers of the Church directing that a repentant adulterer should be led into the church in haircloth and ashes, should lie prostrate, and embrace the knees and lick the feet of all present, to beg their compassion for his terrible sin. One can imagine a foot-fetishist deliberately getting himself caught again and again in *flagrante delicto* for the sake of the follow-up.

"More generally, soul music and incense are potent aphrodisiacs, and, as such, are almost indispensable for sexual orgies. The hymns of our childhood, whether Catholic or Protestant, were full of self-abnegation, together with such obscenities (sung by generations of children) as 'Blood of my Saviour, bathe me in thy tide, wash me ye waters, gushing from His side.' I recall the exquisite feelings engendered by this sort of thing—but, owing to my sexual ignorance at that time, I failed to recognise them for what they were.

"It is no accident that it is in the most erotic language that girls are seduced into taking religious vows of life-long virginity, which bestow on them

the title, 'Bride of Christ.' All the Christian emphasis on love of Jesus, love of the Virgin Mary, and love of one another, though said to be love translated from the Greek *agape*, is manifestly *eros*.

"We ought to be tolerant of any form of sexual deviance—provided only that its practitioners do no harm to others. When, however, they not only corrupt children and adolescents (even in school hours, brazenly), but also generate mass hysteria (which was historically responsible for witch-hunts, religious wars, and persecutions, and within the past few months has been directly responsible for the Taylor murder and other tragedies), we must surely condemn them. So we condemn the fringe religions and groups which have become such a menace in the 1970s, as the old enemies, the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches, have lost their popular appeal."

## DUBLIN TO HAVE A CREMATORIUM

It has been reported that the Irish Republic will soon have its own crematorium, the second to be built in Ireland. The idea was first put forward several years ago but it was not accepted because of opposition by the Roman Catholic Church. But there is now an acute shortage of burial space in the city, and it is expected that a crematorium will be erected at Deans Grange Cemetery. There are now only three acres of unused land in the cemetery and these are being occupied at the rate of about an acre every year.

The Roman Catholic Church was forced to abandon its opposition to cremation in 1963, and priests were forbidden to conduct a service in a crematorium until three years later. Over 11,000 Roman Catholics are now cremated in Britain every year.

Ireland's first crematorium was built near Belfast in 1961 despite strong Catholic and Protestant opposition. Approximately 1000 cremations now take place there every year.

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Portugal has formally renounced its right under an 89-year-old Concordat with the Vatican to present candidates for ecclesiastical posts in the Indian territories of Goa, Daman, Diu Dadra and Nagar Haveli. Under a treaty of 1974 Portugal and India agreed to end the breach in their relations which followed India's assumption of sovereignty over former Portuguese colonies in the Indian sub-continent.

# Churches and the Community Land Bill

CHRISTOPHER MOREY

Nothing seems to unite the Churches more readily than a threat to their property interests. It is regrettably necessary to report that the Government, in response to extensive lobbying by the Churches as reported in the June "Free-thinker", is wavering in its commitment to the universal application of the Community Land Bill. Indeed, if the past record of Governments of whatever political persuasion is anything to go by it is quite likely that the present administration will cave in on this issue too.

The Churches have not lacked support in the House of Commons. Last month Roman Catholic MP Kevin McNamara tabled an amendment to the Bill. The amendment would ensure that redundant churches could be sold, not at current use value, but with reference to the value of surrounding land. It is reported that John Silkin, Minister for Planning and Local Government, has, on behalf of the Government, accepted the spirit of the amendment, but that the exact scope has yet to be decided. No firm undertaking has been given to the Churches, but it is possible that an exception from the rigours of the Bill will be extended to charities, ecclesiastical and secular, and to other church property (for example, church schools and the estates and speculative developments of the Church Commissioners).

## Grants, Taxes and Subsidies

The application of the Bill to the Churches has been described as "confiscation by stealth". It has also, incredibly, been argued that the Churches should be made a special case since all the money they raise from their speculative activities goes to the good of society. Might not the secular community reply that far from the Churches being a special case for exception from the Bill, rather they should be the case where the Bill is most justly and rigorously applied? Much Church land and much of the funds to build on it were acquired in an age when the Church eagerly exercised spiritual blackmail on the population to further its own power and fortune. Later, the Church benefited from compulsory taxation levied on the whole community. Here we are not merely thinking of tithes, but, for example, the special taxes levied to build London's Wren and Hawksmoor churches. If this were not enough, it was followed by special grants during the nineteenth century, and when such extortion became unacceptable to the community at large, nothing was done to restore this alienation of com-

munity resources. Indeed, it continues to this day—and this is to a large extent by stealth—in the form of outright cash handouts in the form of grants to church schools, and of massive tax and rate subsidies for all church lands, buildings and financial dealings.

## Minority Superstition

It may have been appropriate in the Middle Ages for the church to be at the centre of village or town and to be supported by the whole community, since it was a totalitarian Christian society. This is no longer the case. A minority superstition cannot claim these privileges. If the Churches wish to occupy prime sites they must pay the cost. Conversely, local authorities should be encouraged to buy up redundant churches at current use value under the provisions of the Bill so that the community should not have to pay again (in the form of speculative profits for the Churches) for the chronic past underuse of these sites. If, in addition, the Churches are forced to give up High Street sites they would prefer to retain, this is no greater a problem than that considerably more socially relevant organisations have had to face. The Churches claim that the speculative sale of a redundant church site to the highest bidder is for the good of the community, for whatever becomes of the site the money raised is applied to allegedly good causes. What they and the Government must consider is the extent to which this claim can be justified in view of the uses a local authority could make of the site.

It is to be hoped that the Government will at last put its foot down and see the Churches for what they are—an overindulged pantomime, no more deserving of exemption from the provisions of the Community Land Bill than Harry Hyams or the National Front. It is unlikely that the Churches will take much heed of these remarks, but they might care to answer the following points raised by one of their own number (letter to *Methodist Recorder* 12 June): Is it not undeniable that the Churches have profited from land speculation? Is it not the case that almost any desirable social objective has been made more difficult to achieve by land speculation? Would it not be a good thing to get rid of the system altogether? Can the Churches justify continuing to make money in this unjust way?

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**NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY**  
MEMBERSHIP ENQUIRIES to the General Secretary,  
698 Holloway Road, London N19 3NL

During the last decade the Roman Catholic Church has been shaken by dissension and weakened by the defection of some of its ablest theologians. The latest dispute involves Professor Hans Kung, the Vatican and the German hierarchy. Neither side is willing to submit and the dispute may be a factor in hastening the departure of Pope Paul VI from the Chair of St Peter.

The *Catholic Herald* recently gave extensive coverage to a major theological controversy that seems, just at present, to be causing much concern at Rome. The parties currently engaged in this dispute are Pope Paul VI (or, rather the Vatican Congregation of the Faith, formerly known as the Holy Office, which is presided over by a Cardinal of the Roman Curia, and is acting as the Pope's Authorised Agent in this matter), and the well-known liberal Catholic theologian, Professor Hans Kung of Gottingen University in Germany. (Incidentally, this university was founded by an English king, George II, then also Elector of Hanover.)

In connection with this controversy, the *Catholic Herald* published simultaneously, in a single issue, the full statement made officially by the Congregation of the Faith (with the express authorisation of the Pope) a further statement by the German Catholic hierarchy, and a brief reply by the Swiss theologian himself to the detailed charges made against him. The *Catholic Herald* editorial was decidedly favourable to the defendant.

As the tone of Professor Kung's reply to the charge is quite unrepentant, it would seem probable that we—and presumably Professor Kung—have not heard the last of the matter, even though the Vatican does not appear to be contemplating any drastic action—at least immediately. Pope Paul himself is in indifferent health and there are rumours that the end of his reign is approaching. Under these circumstances, he may prefer to leave this particularly tricky problem to his unfortunate successor.

The actual points at issue between the Vatican and Professor Kung appear to be technical and they have a distinctly medieval tone. It is no doubt fortunate for the dissenting theologian that we are not still living in the era before the secularisation of society deprived the Vatican of the means to invoke a physical "final solution" for theological error.

From the rather verbose statements currently emanating both from the Roman Curia and from the German hierarchy, it appears to be rather

difficult precisely to pinpoint the actual errors of which this Swiss theologian in Germany is supposedly guilty. In general, however, it would appear that Professor Kung is still continuing the process of liberalising the once monolithic corpus of Catholic dogma—a process which has been proceeding since the "Modernism" of the early years of the present century.

Modernism again appear to have raised its head under the comparatively liberal pontificate of Pope John XXIII (1958-63). The original Modernist movement was ruthlessly suppressed and driven underground by Pope Pius X (1903-14); its then intellectual leader, the French biblical scholar Alfred Loisy, was excommunicated with the traditional Bell, Book and Candle—though, according to Loisy himself, the only actual harm that he suffered from his official condemnation was that his charwoman gave notice!

## Transforming the Church

However, the Middle Ages are evidently over at last, and much water has flowed under the bridges of the Tiber since the year of Our Lord 1908, when the Vatican hurled its thunderbolts against Modernism—"That compendium of all heresies" as Pope Pius described it. A more apt description of "Modernism" would surely be that it attempts the perhaps impossible task of transforming the medieval Church into an institution consonant with modern scientific culture, and this has forced even Rome to an apparent acceptance of Martin Luther's arch-heresy embodied in his Wittenberg thesis: "The Holy Spirit does not desire the death of heretics"—presumably including under that heading Professor Hans Kung of Gottingen University.

Professor Kung's most heinous offence, and certainly the one to which the Vatican has taken the strongest exception, concerns the sacerdotal monopoly of the priesthood; in particular, Professor Kung has apparently called into question the decree of Papal Infallibility, pronounced at the First Vatican Council in 1870, and has also asserted the competence of the laity to administer the sacraments if no validly ordained priest is available. If carried to their logical conclusion, such assertions would appear to be entirely incompatible with Catholic theology, particularly as it evolved after the Reformation.

There is little doubt that, whatever may be the present case of the dissenting theologian, what particularly disturbs the Vatican is not so much the actual questions raised by Professor Kung, as the time and place at which these questions are being raised. For the place is Germany, and the time is

the 1970s, following close upon the "Papal Revolution" initiated by Pope John XXIII, and left unfinished when he died. At present, Pope Paul appears to be seeking to restrain this ecclesiastical revolution within traditional bounds, but without any marked success.

### Distinguished Predecessors

Historically, relationships between the German Reich and the Vatican have probably been more stormy and chequered than those between Rome and any other Christian country. One recalls successively, the Holy Roman Empire, Canossa (1077), and the Bismark *Kulturkampf* (War of Ideologies), in secular annals; and Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation in the religious sphere. (At Canossa, the German Kaiser Henry IV was made to do public penance by Pope Gregory VII, while in nineteenth-century Germany, Bismark attempted to destroy the political power of the Catholic Church in the celebrated *Kulturkampf*.) Even in recent times, the Vatican has found perhaps more opposition to its claims in German Catholic circles than anywhere else. In 1870, the opposition to Papal Infallibility at the Vatican Council was led by the Munich theologian, Dollinger; and earlier in the century it was Dollinger's master, Adam Mohler, who in his famous *magnum opus*, *Symbolism*, launched a formidable polemic against the then novel dogma of Papal Infallibility. (Mohler aptly described this dogma as "Protestantism run mad", for the individual judgment of the pope becomes, *ipso facto*, superior to the collective judgment of the Church!) Professor Kung has thus had many distinguished predecessors in his rift with Rome.

If the *place* of Professor Kung's heresy is significant, and significantly dangerous, the precise *time* at which it appears is not less so. Ever since Pope John's death in the middle of an uncompleted revolution, the formerly monolithic Catholic Church has been in a state of permanent chaos. It is proverbially difficult to "change horses in mid-stream", and this is what Pope Paul has been trying to do. As his troubled pontificate draws towards its end, a new and menacing cloud appears on the northern horizon: in Germany, the native land of Luther, and from a Swiss theologian, a fellow-citizen of Calvin; ominous names that echo down the corridors of time—and of the Vatican!

It would appear to be this combination of time and place, rather than any special talents of the new heretic, that makes the present confrontation between Rome and the Gottingen theologian peculiarly significant. After all, the Reformation (the Protestant Revolution) that has permanently divided and all but destroyed the Church of Rome, was actually started in a similarly troubled period, four and a half centuries ago, by some obscure and

highly technical theses hung upon the gate of another German university, Wittenberg, and by another professor, one Doctor Martin Luther. That event likewise drew an angry condemnation from Rome. But the matter did not stop there. All Europe ultimately took sides in the controversy.

Is a new "Luther", a new German "Reformation", in the offing?

## ATTRACTIVE PROGRAMME AT RPA CONFERENCE

The theme of the Rationalist Press Association's annual conference in September will be Science and the Paranormal, and an excellent programme of lectures and discussions has been arranged. The conference will be held at Churchill College, Cambridge, from Friday evening, 12 September until Sunday 14 September.

The first lecture, "A Philosophical View of Normality", will be given by Antony Flew, Professor of Philosophy at Reading University, and author of *A New Approach to Psychical Research*, *God and Philosophy*, *An Introduction to Western Philosophy* and *The Presumption of Atheism*. John Taylor, Professor of Mathematics at King's College, London, and author of *Superminds: An Enquiry into the Paranormal* will speak on "Current Research in Paranormal Phenomena" (part one); Christopher Evans, Experimental Psychologist and author of *Cults of Unreason* will speak on the same subject. Trevor H. Hall, author of *The Haunting of Borley Rectory* and several other books ("An Historical View of Psychical Research") and David Berglas ("A Practical View of Paranormal Phenomena") complete the programme.

A programme-booking form giving full details (including information regarding travelling arrangements from London) is obtainable from the Rationalist Press Association, 88 Islington High Street, London, N1; telephone 01-226 7251.

BARBARA SMOKER

### HUMANISM

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Much evidence has been submitted to the Commons Select Committee that is considering James White's Abortion (Amendment) Bill, and many points of view have been expressed in the press and elsewhere, regarding the practicalities and likely effects of enacting the Bill as it now stands. This article is based on personal evidence submitted by Diane Munday, a leading figure in the Abortion Law Reform Association from 1963 till 1974. She is now working on a part-time basis for the British Pregnancy Advisory Service.

I believe that amendment of the 1967 Abortion Act is unnecessary. However, I accept that not every aspect of its working is satisfactory, but believe that such changes as are needed would be better made under new or existing Statutes (other than the Abortion Act) and by the robust use of the non-statutory administrative controls for which there are already existing powers.

The threat to doctors and nurses, inherent in the combination of clauses one and eleven of the Abortion (Amendment) Bill, and the interference with clinical freedom to prescribe treatment in the best interests of the patient, have been well described in the medical press. An article in *The Nursing Times* (6 February): "New Abortion Bill Shifts Burden of Proof"; an editorial in *World Medicine* (12 February): "Misconceived Legislation" and a further detailed analysis of the Bill (26 March): "They have produced a Bill which is undesirable in principle and stupid in detail"; an editorial in *General Practitioner* (11 April): "This ludicrous Bill could land you in jail"; an editorial in *The Lancet* (15 February): "The present Bill is a very long way from the consensus solution which Mr Abse claims it to be"; and a leading article in the *British Medical Journal* (17 May): "These provisions represent a serious threat to the professional freedom of doctors. In assessing an individual case the question would no longer be what was best for the patient . . ." These have made clear the wide extent of medical criticism and opposition regarding these clauses.

The sponsors of the Bill claim that clause 1(a)ii would make it more difficult for doctors to operate an "abortion on demand" policy. They express a greater concern on this point regarding the private, as opposed to the NHS, sector. This implies that it is "abortion on demand for money" which they believe occurs and which they are attacking.

There is little evidence to suggest that abortion on demand is available on a large scale. There is no evidence to suggest that, for example, the private sector in London is any more liberal in its policies than the public sector in Newcastle.

The case-history files of many of the helping agencies make it clear that some women with excellent grounds for termination of pregnancy under the 1967 Act are refused the help they so desperately need and want. It cannot be believed that all 58,100 illegitimate births in England and Wales in 1973, were desired.

The regional variation shows how little opportunity there is for "abortion on demand" for women resident in Birmingham, Sheffield or Liverpool. For these women, changes are needed to push back the barriers the current law allows NHS doctors to erect; not the creation of even more legislative hurdles for women to negotiate.

This clause, if enacted, would make NHS abortion more difficult to obtain. Then, at least initially as demand outstripped supply, it would open the door to more non-NHS abortion at inflated prices. Those women who could not afford high prices would not return to a situation of compulsory maternity but would use whatever means were available to end unwanted pregnancies. Thus the overall effect would be to increase racketeering and restrict availability of safe, legal abortion. It would not control abuse of the law by "get-rich-quick" doctors, but only give them greater opportunities to exploit.

The justification put forward for clause eleven appears to be that it is too difficult to bring prosecutions likely to succeed under the terms of the 1967 Act.

## Encouraging the Abortion Sharks

This case could be argued in many areas of criminal law. There is little doubt (and I write as a magistrate who sits not only at Petty Sessions but also at trials of more weighty matters in the Crown Court) that many more prosecutions would be brought and many more convictions would be obtained if the onus of burden of proof was shifted to the defendant in criminal matters. Whether this is desirable or not is a totally different question. However, this is not the way British law functions now and there seems no good reason why the system should be stood on its head regarding termination of pregnancy prosecutions only.

According to Mr White (*Sunday Times*, 18 May) he did not intend the burden of proof to be on the accused in relation to clause one. However, as drafted, clause eleven applies to the whole of the principal Act and will apply to the whole of this Bill, should it become an Act. It is hoped that this admission of a drafting error by the proposer of the Bill, which has changed the intent of the clause, has been duly noted by the Select Committee.

Nevertheless, the combined likely effect of these

two clauses (whether the drafting error is corrected or not) would be to encourage the abortion sharks and exploiters to specialise in an area where the profits would be huge for those happy to charge prices commensurate with the risks taken. In the NHS a few committed doctors would continue to operate as now, widening still further the regional gulf that exists. For women outside their areas it would mean a return to the backstreet and self-induced operations of pre-1968, making nonsense of James White's insistence that "abortions must be made available for women with problems."

In introducing his Bill, James White said: "The Bill seeks to deal with parasitic pregnancy advisory and referral bureaux which have acted as agents for existing private clinics. Many are run by touting taxi-drivers, former taxi-drivers or spurious charities . . . The police have said that criminal gangs are suspected of having an interest." Presumably, clause four is intended to deal with these matters.

There is no evidence to show that this description of the abortion scene is applicable to 1975. In earlier years it was partially true (although, even then, the "scandals" were fewer and less serious than popular newspapers and the anti-abortion lobby would have had us believe). This clause, if enacted, would interfere with normal private medical procedures, about which there is no evidence of abuse. Outside the NHS, it would make it more difficult for women to be sent through reputable channels and would lead to the development and growth of "underground" systems. In these, prices would be high to compensate for the risks taken.

### Prohibition on Information

Instead of ensuring that only reputable agencies could exist (and however reputable these are, they would still need money to function efficiently), this clause could close them down. So the result would be an increase in "touts" and others prepared to exploit women and flout the law for the large rewards that would be available. I believe that referral agencies can best be controlled by a licensing system, as proposed by the Lane Committee, but legislated for under a separate Statute which covers all fee-charging medical referrals.

Overall, clause five, if enacted, would create an intolerable and unjustifiable prohibition on the dissemination of information. Its effect would be to push discussion of the subject underground. Rumour, fantasy and lies would replace knowledge. Reputable channels of information about reputable services would be closed. There would be a concomitant growth of alternative information networks concerned with illegal, rather than legal, abortion. It is difficult to envisage abuses that could occur with licensed referral agencies but that would be prevented by this provision. On the other hand, an

intolerable "abuse" of the right to free speech would be created if all or even part of this clause five of the Bill was enacted.

I receive fees for some of the writing, broadcasting and lecturing I do on the subject of abortion. In order to continue, I would have to provide my services competely free or be "A person approved for the purposes of this section by the Secretary of State". If such approval was refused, I would have to stop these activities, although at no time during the past fourteen years have I said or written anything that could be construed as harmful to women or detrimental to the spirit of the law: neither have I made large profits.

I often give talks in schools and youth clubs. Some audiences are under the age of 16. I believe these audiences have a right to the factual information which I am invited to impart. I preferred my children to obtain such information from experienced, knowledgeable adults rather than from other adolescents behind the school and youth club lavatories. If this clause is enacted I would be prevented from giving such talks unless the parents or guardians of all the young people were present. When lecturing, broadcasting or writing on the subject of birth control, I invariably refer to the law on abortion. To continue to do so, if this clause is enacted, would constitute a criminal offence.

Little valid evidence has been put forward to support the varied claims concerning abuse of the Abortion Act 1967. The glaring failure of the existing legislation—namely, the regional variation in availability of NHS treatment—has been ignored. The Abortion (Amendment) Bill, as drafted, would do nothing to rectify the alleged abuses nor would it make good this very real failure to provide equitable treatment for all.

There are measures that could and should be taken: these are either ignored or taken too far in this Bill. If it had been unashamedly presented as a Bill to reduce the number of legal abortions, it would have commanded my respect for its honesty. As it is, its main sponsor declared: "I take no hard line on abortion," and said he wanted to "make the 1967 Act work as it was intended to work". In practice, he put forward a measure that his supporters claimed would reduce legal abortions on British women to 20,000 a year. That was most emphatically not the intention of those who sponsored the 1967 Act. Their declared aim was to rid Britain of the 100,000 illegal abortions they believed occurred each year.

During the Second Reading Debate, Leo Abse, MP, declaimed that the bells were already tolling for the "avaricious who have sought to create a repugnant industry based on women in difficulty". If this Bill is enacted—in whole or in part—those bells will stop tolling as the "repugnant industry" is given the biggest boost it could possibly have.

## ABORTIVE REPORT

A committee set up jointly by the Church of England and the Methodist Church to consider the question of abortion has produced its report, but the C of E has withdrawn its sponsorship for publication. The Board for Social Responsibility "reluctantly concluded that the report was inadequate in its treatment of the ethical issues and they therefore did not approve its publication". The Methodists are naturally reluctant to admit ecumenical failure in this enterprise by going it alone, and it is unlikely that the Church Information Office will give the true reason for the decision not to publish. But it has been reported that the committee, which included a majority of specially selected Anglicans, was confidently expected to come out strongly against abortion, and instead arrived at embarrassingly liberal conclusions.

It appears that the more the committee members studied the sociology of abortion, the more they realised the dangers and impracticalities of the absolutist religious stand on the sanctity of foetal life—and they were honest enough to say so. The report is therefore likely to remain unpublished, but the leakage of its suppression is even more telling perhaps than its publication would have been.

The great march and rally on 21 June against James White's Abortion (Amendment) Bill was the most impressive political demonstration London has seen since the heyday of CND. Encouraged by the fine weather, thousands of demonstrators converged on the Victoria Embankment. They included contingents from Manchester, Birmingham, Leicester, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Coventry, Bristol, Nottingham and Oxford. Estimates of the number ranged from 15,000 to 25,000, and although it is impossible to give an exact figure, the strength of the demonstration can be gauged by the fact that it took the marchers, walking five and six abreast, almost two hours to pass Trafalgar Square.

Most mass demonstrations for liberal causes indict the state as Enemy Number One, but on 21 June—perhaps for the first time during this century—the Churches shared this dubious honour. It was heartening to see how widely it was realised that the would-be wreckers of the 1967 Abortion Act were motivated by religious dogmatism and how this perception was expressed in the slogans and posters. Glum-faced members of the Nationwide Festival of Light and the Order of Christian Unity had gathered at Nelson's Column (one of London's best known phallic symbols) where they held a large banner inscribed "The Churches Against Abortion". The demonstrators chanted "Not the Church, Not the State, Women Must Decide Their Fate". One marcher carried a poster declaring "If the Pope Could Conceive, Abortion Would be a Sacrament". Another was dressed up as a gloriously pregnant bishop across whose swollen abdomen

## NEWS

was written "This Will Ruin my Career!".

Renee Short, MP, addressing the rally which took place in Hyde Park, called on those who wanted to see abortion remain legal and safe to bury MPs in a mountain of protest letters against James White's Bill. *Freethinker* readers are urged most strongly to respond to Mrs Short's call, for we must take care not to be lulled into complacency by the upsurge of opposition to the Bill that is now sweeping the country. Write to your Member of Parliament at the House of Commons, Westminster, London SW1, and obtain petition forms from the National Abortion Campaign, 80 Raiton Road, London SE24, telephone 01-274 8498.

## CHURCH INVESTMENTS

Roman Catholic priests in the Westminster diocese have questioned the morality of Catholic institutions' ownership of shares in South African gold mines. The diocesan Senate of Priests is to ask a working party of the Justice and Peace Commission to give advice on shareholdings in Consolidated Gold Fields Limited, a company which was described two years ago as "an instigator and prop of the apartheid system." It was then alleged that black mine-workers were at that time being paid an average of less than £3 for a 60-hour week.

In 1973 there were five Catholic bodies which held shares of over £27,000 in the company. The largest single shareholding was the Trustees for Roman Catholic Purposes—a Jesuit enterprise—with investments of £20,000. A London Carmelite monastery and the dioceses of Portsmouth and Westminster also owned shares, although some of the others sold out after a report by Counter-Information Services on wages and conditions in the mines.

The Financial Secretary of the Westminster diocese has admitted that the Church still holds shares in Consolidated Gold Fields. Despite the adverse report in 1973 it was decided to retain the holdings so that pressure could be brought to bear on the company. But the secretary of the Senate of Priests is reported to have said recently: "We feel . . . that the good name of the diocese would be damaged if it were known that we invested in this sort of company."

## AND NOTES

"... tearing in pieces of a silly innocent hare . . . the lowest, vilest and most abject part of butchery".

St Thomas More

"Last year, at least 599 hares were killed by greyhounds in coursing events".

A spokesman for the League Against Cruel Sports

## BLEAK HOUSE

Edward Shackleton, a 72-year-old bachelor who is much agitated by the excesses of the permissive society, and Geoffrey Percival, a former gospel pianist who was with Eric Hutchings' evangelistic circus for 22 years, have joined forces to open a clinic for "victims of moral pollution". They have acquired a house in Surrey for this noble venture, which is being backed by the Nationwide Festival of Light. Mr Shackleton is an active member of the FoL, and last year he attempted unsuccessfully to bring a prosecution against the film *Last Tango in Paris*.

Mr Percival is reported to have said that they expect their first "patients" to include actors who have taken part in pornographic films and plays. He added that they would be cared for in a "morally pure atmosphere. But first they must come to terms with the Lord, and society. We will make sure that no bad magazines or books get in."

In order to help their victims—sorry, patients—Messrs Shackleton and Percival will introduce intellectually uplifting activities like Bible studies and Christian films. But television will be out! Mr Percival says: "There will be no television in the residents' part of the hostel, though I will have one". He added with true Christian graciousness: "I may let them come and see mine one day a week if the programmes are suitable".

## Freethinker Fund

Thanks are expressed to those readers who sent donations to the Fund during June. Anonymous, £1.72; J. Ancliffe, 60p; J. H. Budd, £1.80; C. Byass, £1; I. Campbell, £4.67; F. Caldwell, £2.72; J. Collins, £1.40; G. J. Davies, £1.60; A. W. J. Dennis, £1.60; H. Lyons-Davies, 60p; T. H. Ellison, £2.10; J. L. Ford, 60p; A. Garrison, 60p; G. S. Grimdsitch, £3.60; W. H. Goodall, 55p; G. Heathcote, 60p; E. J. Hughes, £2; R. J. Hale, £1.28; C. Jones, 60p; Mrs M. Knight, £3; E. A. Mackay, £2.60; M. P. Morf, £1.25; Mrs L. Middleton, £2; P. J. McGormick, 30p; Miss E. Mannin, £1; A. R. J. Pitcher, 60p; R. H. Scott, £2.40; F. M. Skinner, 60p; M. Scott, 30p; S. Velinsky, 60p; E. Wakefield, 48p. Total: £44.77.

The passing, by a large majority, of the Hare Coursing Bill delighted opponents of blood "sports" and aroused the ire of those boneheads who derive pleasure from watching hares being torn to pieces by greyhounds. Time and again, private members had put up an anti-coursing Bill in the House of Commons only to have it defeated by the cry "Object!" On this occasion, however, the Bill was sponsored by the Government, and Dr Shirley Summerskill, Under-Secretary of State at the Home Office, disdainfully silenced the Bill's opponents.

Several days before the vote in the House of Commons, supporters of hare coursing, who had come to lobby MPs, held a meeting at Westminster Central Hall at which William Whitelaw, once tipped as Edward Heath's successor, gave a performance which almost persuaded one to accept with equanimity the possibility that Margaret Thatcher will be the next Conservative Prime Minister. He resurrected even the old chestnut about "the prejudice of people in towns who know nothing about the countryside and country pursuits." Clement Freud, speaking at the same meeting, pleased the bloody lobbyists by attacking the Hare Coursing Bill as "an extraordinary demonstration of kindness to animals and to hell with people."

Mr Freud, best known for his television appearances with a canine friend in a dog-food commercial, is a man of wide interests; for instance, in 1968 he was guest speaker at the annual meeting of the Birmingham branch of the League Against Cruel Sports. He declared on that occasion that it was lunacy to cause suffering to animals or people, and on the subject of hare coursing said: "Coursing, which I have seen, is a shameful and indefensible sport." What has happened to this "sport" or to the Liberal Member for the Isle of Ely to make coursing now defensible and no longer shameful?

Clement Freud is free to change his mind. But his sneers against anti-coursers come rather strangely from a man who, only seven years ago, was happy to speak at a meeting of the League Against Cruel Sports. No doubt he was even happier when he collected a substantial fee for doing so. And it may not be without significance that he is now Liberal MP (with a majority of only 2,685) for a constituency that is situated in one of the country's main hare coursing areas.

**PERMISSIVE BRITAIN: SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE SIXTIES AND SEVENTIES** by Christie Davies. Pitman, £3.25.

The sheer diversity of Mr Davies' subject would be enough to strain the coherence of any book; so, although disappointing, it is hardly surprising to find that *Permissive Britain* is not so much the portrait of an age as a series of often disconnected observations on various examples of permissiveness, with little attempt made to give either unity to the whole or adequate treatment to the individual parts. Nor indeed is there much consistency of approach among the individual parts themselves. The only chapters which directly deal with "social change in the sixties and seventies" are those on the growth of "hard" drug taking and the changing sexual attitudes of young people. The chapter on homosexuality is a historical digression; while divorce, abortion, capital punishment and censorship are all treated primarily as illustrations of law reform, the social changes which gave rise to these reforms being largely ignored.

In fact the sections on "hard" drugs and the sexual attitudes of young people turn out to be the most rewarding, though largely because they bring conveniently together material already available from other sources. When Mr Davies is more original, for example in the chapters on law reform, the result is less happy. What interests him here is a shift on the part of our legislators from what he describes as older "moralist" (i.e. moral absolutist) attitudes to newer, "causalist" (i.e. utilitarian) ones. Yet while this shift is interesting, it would have been even more interesting had he attempted to explain why it should have occurred. As it is, we are invited to see as a change in moral attitudes something which is perhaps more usefully to be seen as a change in the means whereby moral attitudes are legally enforced. Surely the present, reformed laws on divorce, abortion and homosexuality reflect the same morality as the laws that they replaced. The most significant difference is that they work better. That blanket legal condemnations of such practices could be only very partially applied was not seen as incongruous when the original laws were enacted: the same after all was true of the laws on theft. But in the present century government has come to exert, and to expect, a far greater control over our social existences.

As Mr Davies himself admits in the case of divorce, and the same was even more true of abortion, the laws were being openly flouted and were, in fact, unworkable as they stood. The situation with regard to homosexuality was even more patently unsatisfactory: the illegality of private homo-

# FREETHINKER

sexual acts between adult males resulted in few prosecutions (since in practice prosecution could only be instigated after the "voluntary" confession of one of the offenders) but at the same time it gave *carte blanche* to blackmailers, for who would be likely to report cases of blackmail for homosexual acts in the knowledge that he himself was likely to be prosecuted in consequence? Indeed, the most obvious consequence of the Sexual Law Reform Act has been a considerable increase in the number of prosecutions against such blackmailers. Adulterers, homosexuals and pregnant women who want an abortion are still legally penalised, and the moral code which underlies these laws is still the Christian ethic of a hundred years ago.

Mr Davies' own ideas on why the law on homosexuality should have been changed are to be found in his chapter on "Buggery and the Decline of the British Empire". As it is the most substantial in the book, and as it puts forward a thesis about society's persecution of male homosexuals which has at least the merit of being original, it is perhaps worth examining in some detail. The thesis is that homosexuality, though it may have been alright for the ancient Spartans, is bad discipline in the modern army and, it therefore follows, the more militaristic a society, the stronger its taboos against male homosexuality. That, he concludes, is why, given our sad decay as a military power, we no longer need to legislate against it, except, of course, among members of the armed forces. Although such a theory may sound neat, the mass of historical evidence which Mr Davies quotes in support of it does nothing to make it sound more plausible, and many of his more dogmatic assertions are simply untrue. It is not, for example, the case that "the laws and social pressures against male homosexuality were considerably strengthened in the last quarter of the nineteenth century". While it is true that the Labouchère Amendment of 1885 "made the so-called lesser homosexual acts offences for the first time", it would only have been honest to quote the law as it already stood. The laws on buggery had already been given a significant extension of application to cover many "lesser homosexual acts" in 1828, when all such acts incurred the death penalty (removed in 1861).

In fact the Labouchère Amendment represented much less severe punishment for homosexual acts than had ever existed before, reflecting a considerable amelioration of social attitudes towards homosexuality in this country; an impression which

# R REVIEWS

is borne out by the much greater freedom with which the subject was openly and favourably written about. In fin-de-siècle Germany, his prime example of a modern militaristic state, Mr Davies fares even worse. As he hangs his case on the Eulenberg scandals in 1907-10, his failure to explain that their origin was primarily political, not moral, is unfortunate. That Germany was at that time the home of the largest, most prestigious and most publicised movement of homosexuals in modern times; that the Social Democrats, who were chiefly responsible for creating the Eulenberg scandals in the first place, in fact officially supported the legalisation of homosexuality and tried to get such legislation through the Reichstag—these facts are not even mentioned. (One might add that the last remaining of the German homosexual movements was eventually destroyed by the Nazi SA, which the uninformed reader might well imagine, from Mr Davies' account of the matter, actively to have encouraged homosexuality.)

Unfortunately the omissions, inaccuracies and groundless assertions which mar the chapter on homosexuality are not without parallel elsewhere in the book. Nor is the impression which they give of a book hastily and even carelessly thrown together dispelled by such faults as unintentional repetition and sheer carelessness of argument. The latter, in particular, vitiates much of the closing section, where Mr Davies, having illustrated the failure of permissiveness in relation to the spread of "hard" drugs, holds up the American Synanon community as a possible answer to that and other problems in our society. Synanon's achievement, if achievement it is, is to brainwash heroin addicts into obedient, unquestioning followers of contemporary American culture. That this process is far from pleasant emerges even from Mr Davies' admiring description. And it would seem that the extremely severe persecution to which American addicts are legally subjected helps to account for the fact that so many of them end up submitting to the Synanon treatment: they are left with no alternative. The obvious question that this raises for Mr Davies in advocating Synanon type treatment for addicts and other (unspecified) deviants here, is whether he would be prepared to see the same rigorous persecution practised on his chosen scapegoats. But this is something which he carefully evades, preferring for example silly comparisons between Synanon and the English public school system.

It is sadly typical of Mr Davies that he should explore this last line of argument at length without touching on the one most obvious reason for the success of the public school: inherited wealth. I am sure that if the accumulated hereditary wealth of this country were diverted to the pockets of the reformed junkies, thieves, homosexuals or whatever emerging from Mr Davies' projected English Synanons, they would be a resounding success. But as that carrot is not offered us, I fear that what he has in mind is probably the whip.

TONY HALLIDAY

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**MEMOIRS by Cardinal Mindszenty. Weidenfeld & Nicholson, £6.**

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What would have been the choice made by an intelligent non-Christian citizen of the Roman world in the late fourth century of the present era? To fight the growing tides of Christian belief, already showing its ugly face in the persecution of Jews and pagans, by upholding the fading glories of pagan Rome? Or to acquiesce in the inevitable collapse of the ancient world and seek to preserve the voice of humanity and toleration in the new order? A similar choice, in the different circumstances of the twentieth century, faced Cardinal Mindszenty. His unyielding belief in the authority and inviolability of his Church could not reconcile him to the Communist takeover of Hungary in 1945. Backed by Soviet power, the Hungarian communists were irresistible. What could any man do except make the best of a bad job? But Mindszenty refused to compromise with the new rulers of his beloved country. The Russian soldiers raped his female parishioners; they brought with them an alien materialistic ideology; they represented a savage threat to the Church. They must be fought. And so, Mindszenty was arrested, tortured and imprisoned after a show trial. And in prison he stayed until the Hungarian Revolution of October 1956, when the cardinal—as he puts it—caught a glimpse of the world. He did not find it pretty. After the suppression of the abortive revolt by Soviet tanks, Mindszenty fled to the American embassy in Budapest, where he carried on his bitter campaign against the Communist rulers of Hungary until 1971. By this time, he had become an acute embarrassment both to the papacy and to the Kadar regime. He left Hungary for Rome, and dedicated his remaining years to ministering to Hungarian exiles all over the world. These memoirs are his cry from the heart, a last resolute refusal to give an inch to political expediency.

I found this book a powerful and moving statement of courage and principle. It is also the work of a man who cannot begin to understand the appeal that Communism has, a man for whom the simple word of the Church that Communist ideology and

practice are wrong is the last word. Stubborn to the end, Mindszenty found amazing the fear of the Vatican officials that his pastoral work among Hungarians in the west could be detrimental to the relationship of Church and state in Hungary. For how could there be a relationship between persecuting state and suffering Church?

And yet there is another side to the problem. One does not have to be any kind of apologist for Communist regimes to realise that they do bring certain benefits to the people, as has happened in Hungary, very slowly, after 1956. One does not have to be a dedicated anti-Catholic to say that countries where the church holds sway are not noted for human rights. Reading this book from the standpoint of an outsider, I found it difficult to say how right or wrong Mindszenty's conduct was; but that is to adopt the stance of a detached observer, which Mindszenty's entire personality ruled out of court. And how history will judge is impossible to say; we are too close to look back on Mindszenty's life with the degree of objectivity made possible by our remoteness from fourth-century Rome, a historical task much easier than the examination of this great clash of men and principles brilliantly sketched in this book.

PHILIP HINCHLIFF

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**CHARTISM AND THE CHARTISTS** by David Jones.  
Allen Lane, £3.

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More, possibly, has been written about Chartism than about any other historical subject—David Jones's bibliography lists over a hundred recent books and articles—and certainly no other subject has received a greater variety of interpretation. Were the Chartists the forerunners of Socialism or Self-help? To what extent did they oppose capitalism? Did they foreshadow the Labour Party, or look backwards to an idealised rural society of smallholders? Were they reformists or revolutionaries? Was Chartism a working-class movement? Was there any such thing as a working class in the 1830s and 1840s? Was there even such a thing as a Chartist movement? Or does it dissolve on closer inspection into a bewildering variety of local organisations and activities? Chartism was a movement that defies precise categorisation; it was as diverse as the individuals comprising it.

The value of this book lies in its success in clarifying some of these issues, while illustrating the narrative are lively quotations from Chartist speeches, writings and poetry. It leaves an impression of the enormous richness and vitality of Chartism, which embraced not only the six-point Charter itself, but also factory reform, free-press agitation, opposition to the new Poor Law, self-education (the Chartist Thomas Cooper set out in his spare time to master

Latin, Greek, French and Hebrew, by the age of 24), temperance (with a furious debate between those who held that "those who gave up drinking turn to thinking", and those who maintained that "a glass of beer or brandy produced a fine, genial, generous spirit from which the best Chartism had always come"), and religion. Most Chartists were religious, in a non-demoninational, non-theological way, but they were also anti-clerical: when a vicar in Norwich in a sermon urged the working class to be content with their station in life, the Chartist congregation shouted, "You get £200 a year; come and weave bombasses!" and brought the service to an abrupt end by putting out the gas-lights. Chartists also had an interesting practice of "invading churches"—occupying all the front seats, and obliging the minister to pray for the success of Chartism and preach a sermon from a text of their choice, to the discomfort of the middle-class members of the congregation.

Chartist mass meetings, demonstrations, and celebrations (which were held at every opportunity) were full of inventiveness and zest. Chartists were nothing if not historically conscious. At a dinner in Ashton-under-Lyne in 1840, there were toasts not only to Paine, Cobbett and Hunt, but also to Voltaire, Mirabeau, Hampden, Wat Tyler, George Washington and William Tell! The highlight of an Aberdeen procession in 1840 was a live fox in a cage, inscribed with satirical comments on Russell's opposition to further reform of Parliament—on one side "Little finality jackall" and on the other "A hen-house conservative". Social cohesion probably contributed as much as anything else to the Chartist success in involving large numbers of people; like the later secular societies, they organised day trips, cricket matches, dancing schools, and games of chess and draughts. Chartism could be a completely absorbing way of life.

One of the most interesting aspects covered in David Jones's book is the relationship of Chartism to trade unions. Although many individual Chartists were also trade unionists, officially the Chartists were suspicious of the moderate apolitical attitudes of the skilled unions, which they saw as creating a labour aristocracy at the expense of the poorer groups, and, less understandably, were also opposed to strikes, as doomed to certain failure. They favoured either purely political action, with the Charter as the panacea for all social problems, or else hoped to avoid a confrontation with capitalism by self-employment, by co-operative production, or by Feargus O'Connor's land plan to create peasant smallholdings.

It is in this key area of economic theory that Chartism appears at its most confused and limited. Chartists were convinced of the dehumanising results of uncontrolled mechanisation; O'Connor commented that "steam, the Poor Law Act and a rural police,

constitute a trinity of villainy, complete and indivisible." But they saw the main social conflict lying between the corrupt aristocracy (the idle rich) on the one hand and the people (or industrious classes) on the other. The middle class were therefore allies rather than enemies. This view reflected a situation of incomplete industrialisation, when the majority of the labour force worked not in factories but in their own homes, in small workshops, or on the land, and when the gulf between artisan and employer was very small. Most committed Chartists, in any case, were not factory workers, but impoverished domestic workers (such as hand-loom weavers) or well-to-do, often self-employed, craftsmen.

Ironically, it was only when Chartism itself was in decline, after 1848, that it began to be influenced by the ideas of Marx, and demands began to be made for "Charter Socialism" and "the Charter and something more". Many books on Chartism end at 1848, but David Jones points out that the last Chartist convention did not take place till 1858, when it was finally agreed to collaborate with the middle-class reformers, at the price of dropping all the points of the Charter except for manhood suffrage. However, Chartism in the 1850s, though still calling for nationalisation of the land and currency reform, had become very much a minority movement. It could appeal neither to the poorer workers, who were apolitical and deferential—part of the "perishing and dangerous classes"—nor to the increasingly prosperous labour aristocracy, who, "quietly settling down to the business of small shopkeepers, and bemoaning their 'awful sacrifices' for the cause", were becoming permeated with middle-class values.

The Chartist movement was full of contradictions. Chartists were practical though visionary, self-reliant while divided, hoping to succeed by "moral force" but inevitably having to resort to threats of violence as the only way to oblige the Government to accept the Charter. Chartists "challenged everything", but they could not in the end overcome the limitations of the economic structure in which they lived.

PATRICIA KNIGHT

Another leading Catholic theologian has left the priesthood. Father Hubert Richards, a former principal of Corpus Christi College, London, announced his intention to apply for laicisation after a meeting with Cardinal Heenan. He declared: "It has become progressively clearer to me over the past three years that as a priest I am not free to teach theology in any Roman Catholic establishment in this country." In 1972, Father Richards and the entire teaching staff of Corpus Christi College resigned after a confrontation with Cardinal Heenan.

## BIRTH CONTROL IN MODERN CHINA

Dr Graham Leonard, Adviser on Education to the International Planned Parenthood Federation, told a meeting in London recently that it would not be too strong to say that one of the main motivations for birth planning in China is for women to achieve complete equality with men.

Dr Leonard, who has just returned from China, went on to say: "There is an assumption in the present Chinese culture that every individual wishes to marry and have at least one child. Questions as to whether any individuals had pledged to be childless for the sake of the future of the people, however, were answered with incredulous stares. But in three areas we were told of couples who have decided to have one child only. An additional personal motivation behind this is a rule in cities that only one child per family may live and work in the urban area of his or her parents.

"The marriage age in old China was not fixed. Infant marriages were not rare and adolescent marriages were the rule rather than the exception for girls. China's lawful age for marriage is now 18, but urban women are urged to wait to 26 and rural women to 24. The combined age of bride and groom should be well over 50." On the surface, Dr Leonard said that this may appear as a way to shorten the fertile span in married life; but clearly a woman marrying at 24 or even 26 can still have five or six children even if spacing them at the recommended four years.

On the question of divorce, Dr Leonard said that this was allowed on the women's initiative for the first time after 1950 but it is very rare for those married since 1950. Technically, it takes only the approval of the commune or neighbourhood organisations where the couple lives but great efforts are made at reconciliation and the motives of social harmony and the security of children are considered far more important than the individual's likes or dislikes.

Dr Leonard's overall conclusion was that equality for women is both an objective of birth planning in China and also one of the means by which birth planning is achieved. "No one claims that equality has yet been achieved but all that I met insisted that this is the ultimate goal of both sexes in China", he said.

Christopher Evans

### CULTS OF UNREASON

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The report of a working party on the education of Muslim children in the United Kingdom was submitted recently to the Department of Education and Science by the Union of Muslim Organisations of the UK and Eire. Membership of the working party was drawn from the UMO, the Islamic Cultural Centre, the UK Islamic Mission, the Muslim Educational Trust, the Woking Mosque and individual Muslim educationists. The report was prepared by Dr Muhammad Iqbal, a lecturer at Huddersfield Polytechnic and Chairman of Huddersfield Community Relations Council. Educationists and community relations workers will be concerned by this latest demand for the segregation of children. And if met, it will encourage the religious leaders to press for the recognition of Muslim Personal Law.

The report indicates that the question of co-education is of immediate concern to the Muslim community in Britain. After listing the arguments in favour of co-education, it claims that "these arguments . . . would seem to be opposed to basic Islamic principles. Islamic teaching has rejected the idea of free intercourse between the sexes. A woman is expected at all times to behave modestly before men and not seek to rival them in masculine pursuits. The report quotes a passage from the Qur'an (24, 30-31): ". . . they [the believing women] should Draw their veils over Their bosoms and not display Their beauty except To their husbands, their fathers . . . Or their women, or the slaves, Whom their right hands Possess, or male servants Free of physical needs . . ."

It is claimed by the working party that "the learned men in Islam in the UK would be in no doubt as to the religious viewpoint on the mixing of girls when attaining the age of maturity. The girls are certainly not allowed to free society of men other than close relations. This means that no Muslim girl ought to go to a mixed secondary school."

Now there is a case for, and a case against co-education. But the idea that Muslims living in a modern Western society must conform to the exact word of the Qur'an, or to its interpretation by "learned men of Islam" (Mullahs) is very much open to question. The report acknowledges that "when some Muslim parents refused to send their daughters to a co-educational school, other Muslim parents were even critical of the stand they took". It also concedes that "in Islamic countries, there are co-educational schools, a symbol of modernism at work". Clearly those who served on the working party are opposed to modern trends and expect life to be organised strictly in accord with the

Qur'an—or with their fundamentalist interpretation of it.

If Muslims who hold strong religious beliefs cannot convince the governments of Muslim countries that co-education is contrary to the teaching of the Qur'an, how can they hope to persuade a Western government that it is? The answer must be that they know that leaders of opinion and government in this country would not wish to offend the religious and ethnic minorities. Additionally, they aim to build a substantial following for their anti-modernist viewpoint among people who are cut off from the progress in religious and social thought even in the countries of their birth.

The fundamentalists also paint a very rosy picture of early Islamic society which they no doubt think was ideal. It will be noted from their own quotation of the Qur'an that slavery was an acceptable feature of that society, and although the Prophet Mohammad tried to humanise their treatment, even that did not prevent the mutilation of male servants (to free them of physical needs) in order to ensure that women of the harem or the household did not mix freely with males other than close relations. But neither the Muslim working party, nor the most reactionary Mullahs (as far as one knows), have proposed that Muslims should revert to such practices. Modern Muslims should be prepared to take from the Qur'an, and from traditional Muslim institutions, only that which corresponds to current needs and reject that which does not.

### Further Demands by Fanatics

There may be a very good case for keeping some single-sex schools in some areas if a substantial number of parents, whether native or immigrant, express a strong preference. This may well happen in areas of Muslim immigrant concentration in the transition period. But such a flexible solution must not be based on any rights vested in a religious minority's attitude to its holy book. Otherwise we may soon be faced with further demands based on Mullahism. For the report makes it clear that "the Union of Muslim organisations is already looking forward to the possibility that Muslim Personal Law could be given some recognition as applicable to Muslim citizens of the United Kingdom. This would have the effect that in matters of marriage and divorce, birth and death, health and hospital, dress and diet, freedom of worship and religious education, they would have the full benefits of the Islamic Religion in all such matters. This would, no doubt, call for certain Parliamentary provisions which would, ultimately, have this effect."

It would require a separate article to analyse

*(Continued on back page)*

# No More About the Language of Love for Britain

DAVID GODIN

The successful Old Bailey prosecution of the film "More About the Language of Love" (a result which the author predicted in the December "Freethinker") exposes the total chaos surrounding film censorship in this country. And it also shows how our New Puritans can exert an influence out of all proportion to their actual numbers, and manage to make us all conform to their morbid and unhealthy moral standards. Unlike any prosecution under the Obscene Publications Act, the Common Law case against this sex-education film allowed a sequence to be judged out of overall context, and the jury (influenced, no doubt, by the judge's far from impartial summing-up) decided that in 1975 it is "grossly indecent" to watch a man and a woman make physical love to one another.

Luckily, having seen this film before the police, Lord Longford and Raymond Blackburn, I am in a position to express my own moral outrage over this matter, but the media are not interested in quoting me in their news stories on this issue. Mrs Whitehouse's unashamed joy at the verdict is considered printable however, and she gaily admits that she has not even seen the film. The two participants filmed making love at the end of this film could hardly have performed with more taste and charm, nor could the film's makers have picked two human beings who more represented all that is good and wonderful in the physical charms of both sexes. So are we meekly to accept the attitude of a minority that this is "grossly indecent?" The Greater London Council Film Viewing Sub-Committee decided that the film could be shown to those over 18 years of age in the London area, and it was not a close vote. (In Sweden the film can be seen by anyone over 14.) How then can their decision be overthrown by our New Puritans? Simply through the stupidity of the British legal system, and because the GLC actually judged the film as a whole, and operated (as they have done for several years) the criteria required by the Obscene Publications Act.

## Time to Make a Fuss

During the debate early this year in which the GLC sought to abolish film censorship for adults, several people told outright lies to establish panic and confusion on the issue. We were told that if the GLC abolished its role as censor, then the final barrier to stem "the floodgates of pornography" would fall—and this by people who knew as well as I did (though of course they didn't mention the

fact) that *More About the Language of Love* was awaiting trial at the Old Bailey. Since this verdict has now totally invalidated British Board of Film Censors' certificates and local authority licences, we must press the Home Secretary to put films under the Obscene Publications Act, and at the same time remove from the BBFC their powers to withhold a certificate or demand cuts before granting one. Those pious Christians who publicly prayed outside County Hall prior to the GLC debate on film censorship are interested only in their pathetic adventures after death. But those of us more sanely rooted in the here and now must demand cinematic freedom and protection under the law.

We tend not to make a fuss. Well, we must do so in future. The Longford-Whitehouse-Blackburn threat to freedom in this country has been too benignly tolerated, and it must be realised that these people are motivated by intolerance and a desire to impose their standards and tastes on the rest of us. It is they, not us, who need to know more about the language of love.

The secretary of the Cornish branch of the National Federation of Funeral Directors has written to the Plymouth City Council, owners of the Efford Crematorium, complaining about the behaviour of clergymen at the crematorium. Cornish undertakers who cross the Tamar, the boundary line between the dioceses of Truro and Exeter, say they are embarrassed by clergymen who demand an immediate payment of a £2 surcharge. They have often done so before the service, and sometimes in front of relatives, according to the undertakers' spokesman.

G. A. Wells

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# EVENTS

**Brentwood Humanist Society.** Old House Arts Centre, Main Road, Brentwood. Thursday 24 July, 8 p.m. Christopher Macy: "Psychology Today".

**Capital Radio London (194m).** Sunday, 17 August, 9 p.m. to 10 p.m. Phone-In Programme on Secular Humanism. Barbara Smoker.

**Havering Humanist Society.** Harold Wood Social Centre, Havering. Tuesday, 15 July, 8 p.m. Kenneth Furness: "Humanism and the BHA".

**Humanist Holidays.** Hon. Secretary: Mrs M. Mephram, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey; telephone 01-642 8796. Details of holidays at Isle of Man (9-23 August) sent on request.

**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.)

**Rationalist Press Association.** Annual Conference, Churchill College, Cambridge, Friday 12 September until Sunday 14 September. Antony Flew, Christopher Evans, John Taylor, Trevor Hall, David Berglas: "Science and the Paranormal". Detailed programme from the RPA, 88 Islington High Street, London N1, telephone: 01-226 7251.

**South Place Ethical Society.** Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Sunday 13 July, 11 a.m. Roger Woodis: "Fools are my Theme! (Byron) Satire in a Sick Society".

**Waltham Forest Humanist Group.** Wood Street Library, Forest Road, Walthamstow, Tuesday, 22 July, 7.45 p.m. Bob Smith: "Reminiscences of a Humanist Octogenarian".

## *Islamic Sex Laws for Britain*

what such a blanket provision would imply; suffice to say that the application of the Muslim law on divorce would benefit the men only, and Muslim women would be placed at a very great disadvantage. Since these hopes have been expressed in the name of the Muslim community, perhaps it is time that the more enlightened members of that community spoke out against such demands.

# LETTERS

## GIFT TAX

Gifts of up to £100,000 to charities and to political parties are completely exempt from the new Capital Transfer Tax (the Gift Tax) if made at least a year before death. However, any gift made to organisations that do not fall into these categories will be liable to the Tax. This means that many organisations, including those of the humanist movement, are being subjected to discrimination. Please write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Treasury Chambers, Parliament Street, London SW1, and to your Member of Parliament, protesting against this unfair treatment.

DON BAKER

## NO VIOLENCE BY HERUT

Permit me to reply to your item on the "Zionist menace" (News and Notes, May) which has only just come to my attention. May I set the record straight and correct any misunderstanding by stating categorically that, much as we object to the views of Mr Uri Davis and to his film, the Herut Movement has never encouraged violence at any of the pro-Arab meetings to which you refer. We believe that this propaganda can be easily refuted with the written and spoken word.

I was personally present at the Conway Hall, when the violence to which you refer took place, and can assure you that the perpetrators of the violence were unknown to me and were not members of this movement. With the exception of the Central London Polytechnic, the violent interrupters at the other meetings were not identified. I therefore cannot say to what organisation, if any, they belong, though you evidently suffer from no such inhibitions. The two (not three) persons arrested at the Central London Polytechnic are not known to me. I learned their names only after the incident—they are not members of Herut.

You are also incorrect about the "total silence" of broadcasters. Within an hour of the Conway Hall incident, LBC was suggesting that Herut was responsible, until I went to their studio, corrected this misinformation and broadcast a factual account of what took place.

GEORGE EVNINE  
General Secretary, Herut Movement

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## THE FREETHINKER

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