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SEX EDUCATION: GOVERNMENT MINISTERS YIELD TO THE BREEDERS' LOBBY

There are increasing signs that Government Ministers have been influenced by propaganda concerning contraception, abortion and sex education in schools being issued by religious pressure groups. Scurrilous attacks have been made on social agencies which provide information and educational material, with the Family Planning Association and Brook Advisory Centre as the chief targets. The nonsense being disseminated by the Responsible Society, Festival of Light and Order of Christian Unity is echoed in Parliament where one Conservative MP recently accused the FPA and BAC of distributing "pornography that encourages licentiousness among our schoolchildren".

The confusion in Government circles about teenage pregnancy and contraception has resulted in reduced grants to Brook Advisory Centre and the imposition of unreasonable conditions. For two years running, Leeds City Council has put forward a Centre in the list of projects for Inner City Funding, and twice Lord Bellwin at the Department of the Environment has turned it down. On 21 July a new Brook Centre opened in Brixton, paid for by Inner City Partnership Funds, but only two months previously the Islington Brook, also funded by Inner City, was told finance would cease next year. The Islington Brook is barely a year old, but is already successfully helping exactly those deprived and alienated inner city young people to whom an unwanted pregnancy would be a disaster. The local Health Authority has put the Centre forward for continued Inner City finance, and again Lord Bellwin has singled it out for the thumbs down.

At the same time, over at the DHSS, Sir George Young told the Brook Conference in April: "To attempt to restore family values by the wholesale curtailment of availability of contraceptive advice to

young people would—in my view—be an irresponsible and blind act of faith which would probably lead to young people using unreliable methods of contraception or none at all. We cannot experiment with young people's lives in this way."

Teenage pregnancy has reached epidemic proportions. The DHSS, committed to preventive medicine and health education, has announced a Health Education Council campaign of over £100,000 to urge teenagers at risk to seek professional advice on contraception, and has renewed the Government grant to Brook Advisory Centres, which Dr Gerard Vaughan, Minister for Health, says, "reflects our recognition of the value of the mainstream of BAC's work". However, at the same time, Lady Young, at the Department of Education and Science, has asked Dr Vaughan to attach strings to the Brook grant. When schoolteachers order any one of four specified teaching aids from Brook (aids designed to teach young people about contraception), Brook must refuse to supply the material—as a condition of the grant. This seems to cut across Secretary of State for Education Mark Carlisle's statement on 16 June: "My Department has published general advice on sex education. . . We have, however, no plans to issue detailed guidance on the selection of teaching material, since that must be a matter for the schools themselves."

The first publication is a booklet designed specifically for low reading skills and widely welcomed by professionals in the field as simple and clear. The second is a Word Search Puzzle which is part of a contraceptive teaching pack and which seems to have offended only because it is a game, a common educational device. The third is a set of slides showing methods of contraception. And the fourth is a tape of girls talking about what it was like when they

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first went to the doctor for advice on contraception.

These teaching aids are not designed to shock or titillate, but to give clear information and trigger off discussion on a sensitive subject (unlike the material used in schools by the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child which they admit themselves are "gory" pictures of aborted babies designed to shock). Brook material is for teachers to use as one part of a full course about human reproduction and relationships. The pack, for example, contains suggestions for role play about relationships within the family, discussion on teenage relationships and behaviour, on religious views relating to contraception and on planning a family.

While the adults argue, 50 per cent of young people nowadays are sexually active before they are 20, 92,000 teenagers a year become pregnant, and 10,000 of these conceptions are before the girl is 16 years old. Brook is singularly successful in encouraging young people at risk of pregnancy to use contraception. For this reason the local health services subsidise the Centres with £600,000 a year, supported by the central grant of £30,000 from the DHSS.

Irresponsible "Moralists"

What is behind the confusion? It seems that Ministers are under attack from various groups claiming to have a monopoly on morals and the views of parents. Angry that they have failed to stop young people becoming sexually active, these groups have turned their anger on the doctors and other professional workers who are at least helping them to behave responsibly by using contraception. Valerie Riches of the Responsible Society, for example, is driven to accusing Brook Advisory Centre of having an interest in encouraging young people to use contraception—a defamatory allegation that is absolute rubbish.

The false basis of the attack is the belief that teenage sexual activity is caused by access to contraception. This is obvious nonsense. As Sir George Young said: "Teenage sexual activity has grown and continues to grow because of influences outside the family planning sphere. If we need proof of this, statistics of unwanted pregnancy show that many teenagers indulge in sexual activity without the benefit of contraceptive advice."

The doctors, nurses and administrative workers of clinics such as Brook are parents and grandparents, too, and obviously care deeply for the present and future happiness of children and their families. Surely the work such clinics do to help teenagers not to become pregnant before they are old enough to create a stable and loving family shows more realistic care and concern than does the sanctimonious and uncharitable preaching so often handed out under the guise of "education".

The announcement in the August "Freethinker" of Jim Herrick's vacation of the editorial chair cast a shadow over the celebration of our centenary.

Few readers realise the amount of work involved and the problems that arise from the publication of "The Freethinker" every month. During part of his period as Editor, Jim Herrick was also General Secretary of the National Secular Society. After giving up full-time work, he continued to play an active role in the Society's affairs and his services as a speaker are in constant demand.

Since he became Editor nearly five years ago, Jim Herrick has made many excellent contributions and introduced a number of new writers to "The Freethinker". We look forward to a booklet on "The Freethinker" which Jim is writing, and he has also promised to contribute articles in future.

Mr G. N. Deodhekar, Chairman of G. W. Foote & Company, paid this tribute: "We wish to place on record our appreciation of the excellent work done by Jim Herrick as Editor of 'The Freethinker' from January 1977 until last month, and particularly for the high quality of the Centenary issue. He has given up the editorship in order to devote more time to writing, in which we wish him every success."

Barbara Smoker, President of the NSS, writes: "On behalf of the National Secular Society—always closely associated with 'The Freethinker'—I would like to add to the above my appreciation of Jim Herrick's editorship, my congratulations on the splendid Centenary issue, and my confident prediction of the future success of the journal."

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The Rev Dwight Wymer, a Baptist minister in Michigan, USA, has been giving electric shocks to children attending his Bible classes. He uses a six-volt electric battery on them so that "they can hear the word of God". He says: "Sometimes God talks to you, and we just don't listen. But sometimes he can shock you into hearing his word." In response to criticism by a director of health, the Rev Wymer retorted: "I've done nothing wrong. I'm teaching God's word."

In Bed with the Creationists

BEVERLY HALSTEAD

It is not only in the United States that the Genesis lobby is attacking Darwin's theory of evolution. The exhibition, "Origin of Species", at the Natural History Museum, London, has been criticised by scientists who suspect that the Creationists have come in through the back door at Cromwell Road.

Professor Michael Ruse, in his spirited defence of evolution, "Darwin's Theory: an Exercise in Science" (*New Scientist*, 25 June 1981), goes out of his way to stress that he is not suggesting that "the scientific and philosophical critics of Darwinism are in bed with the Creationists". His article was in response to happenings within the portals of the British Museum (Natural History), London, and it is only fair and reasonable to point out that his reticence in this instance was entirely misplaced.

Last year in an article entitled "Popper: Good Philosophy, Bad Science?" (*New Scientist*, 17 July 1980), I drew attention to Dr Roger Miles, the Head of the Public Services Department of the Museum, having given an assurance to the Creationists that when the new exhibition on evolution was opened in May 1981, "... it will be stated that the theory of evolution is not a scientific theory in the sense that it cannot be tested and refuted by experiment". I also referred to Dr Colin Patterson's statement in the Museum's handbook *Evolution* that the "part of the theory, that evolution had occurred, is a historical theory, about unique events, and unique events are, by definition, not part of science, for they are unrepeatable and so not subject to test".

These two statements seemed to me to be such arrant nonsense that I fondly imagined that their mere exposure would result in this stance being abandoned from either shame or ridicule. I was naturally aware that these views were supposedly based on the authority of Sir Karl Popper, "the greatest philosopher of science that has ever been", according to Sir Peter Medawar. Notions, no matter how ludicrous, can be held with confidence in the knowledge that some eminent authority also adheres to them. Even if the philosophy of the issues is not properly understood, the repeated incantation of the name Popper is deemed sufficient justification.

But then, horror of horrors, Popper himself arrived on the scene resolutely rejecting the garbage being spouted in his name. He acknowledged that one of the purposes of my article was "to defend the scientific character of the theory of evolution, and of palaeontology". He went on:

I fully support this purpose, and this letter will be almost exclusively devoted to the defence of the theory of evolution . . . , it does appear from your article that some people think that I have denied

scientific character to the historical sciences, such as palaeontology, or the history of the evolution of life on Earth.

This is a mistake, and I here wish to affirm that these and other historical sciences have in my opinion scientific character: their hypotheses can in many cases be tested.

It appears as if some people would think that the historical sciences are untestable because they describe unique events. However, the description of unique events can very often be tested by deriving from them testable predictions or retrodictions.

(*New Scientist*, 21 August 1980).

It was almost as if Jehovah had changed his mind about the ten commandments and come down after Moses and retrieved the tablets.

The Creationists who, particularly in the United States, rely very heavily on the writings and pronouncements of Popper, were taken aback, as well they might be, but they need not have worried unduly. The British Museum (Natural History) had given them a firm assurance and did not intend to let them down.

Invoking Popper

On 27 May 1981 the Museum unveiled their centenary exhibition, "Origin of Species", and there, to most scientists' incredulity, was a film loop where we discovered that the Public Services Department had indeed kept faith with the Creationists:

The Survival of the Fittest is an empty phrase; it is a play on words. For this reason, many critics feel that not only is the idea of evolution unscientific, but the idea of natural selection also. There's no point in asking whether or not we should believe in the idea of natural selection, because it is the inevitable logical consequence of a set of premises. . . The idea of evolution by natural selection is a matter of logic, not science, and it follows that the concept of evolution by natural selection is not, strictly speaking, scientific.

Barry Cox (*Nature*, 4 June 1981) dealt firmly with this, and in fact the offending film loop was quickly withdrawn. But what of all this stuff about "The Survival of the Fittest is an empty phrase: it is a play on words"? Well it all stems from, among others, Karl Popper. Albeit late in the day, Karl Popper's views (*Dialectica*, vol 32, p 344, 1978) should be heard on this issue:

The fact that the theory of natural selection is difficult to test has led some people, anti-Darwinists and even some great Darwinists, to claim that it is a tautology. . . Since the explanatory power of a tautology is obviously zero, something must be wrong here. . .

I mention this problem because I too belong among the culprits, influenced by what these authorities say. I have in the past described the theory as "almost tautological" and I have tried to explain how the theory of natural selection could be unten-

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University Finances, or Cutting off Our Head

JAMES SANG

Some of the Government's financial policies will most seriously affect those who are still too young to vote. The onslaught against the educational system will condemn thousands of children to even lower standards of teaching and deprive many of the opportunity of Higher Education. In this article James Sang examines the consequences of reduction in grants to the Universities. The writer is Emeritus Professor of Genetics, Sussex University.

Seven or eight years ago Universities were being asked to expand, some to double their size. The ink was scarcely dry on these paper plans before they were stopped. The 1970s slump had hit Higher Education. The Department of Education and Science statisticians also discovered that school populations were declining (as the birth rate had predicted) and that in due time the number of 18-year-olds likely to go to University would similarly decrease. The Universities could justifiably be asked, therefore, to tunnel through the demographic hump of a high intake during the 1980s baby boom until they came out on the flat lands of the early 1990s. Their resources would be stretched, economies would have to be made at the expense of standards, but the laboriously constructed post-war University system would survive.

We shall never know if that guess was right, for the Universities have since had to cope with Mrs Thatcher. The first policy change introduced by her Government was withdrawal of support for non-EEC overseas students. Since October 1980, overseas students, with a few exceptions, have had to pay the full economic cost of their University education. Vice-Chancellors predicted that this would result in a 30-40 per cent drop in the number of these students coming to Britain, and it looks as if this will be the case this year. But a University cannot fill this gap by taking more British or EEC students, for if it does, the Government will reduce its grant in proportion to the fee income from the extra students admitted. This cuts the already reduced University budgets by four or five per cent and hits some institutions (eg the LSE) more than others.

Except for the well-furnished, older foundations, the last three or four years have slimmed out what fat there was in the University system, and most Universities have "frozen" replacement appointments and stopped development plans during the last two years. It is against this depressing background that we must view the cuts in University

finances promulgated in the April Budget.

The Budget cuts are $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent for this year, $6\frac{1}{2}$ per cent for 1982-3 and $8\frac{1}{2}$ per cent for 1983-4. These figures tell only part of the story, for salary increments, inflation and loss of fee income will make the real deficit for 1983-4 something over 11 per cent, and perhaps as high as 17 per cent when compared with 1979-80 standards. This will have three consequences.

First: Britain has always provided University education for a lower proportion of its young people than many other countries — eg 17 per cent as against the Japanese 35 per cent. Now it will be even less. By 1983-4 there will be 12,000 fewer places available compared with 1979-80, or about 20,000 fewer than last year; this just when the demographic bulge will inflate demand, and when more female and over-age applicants are also coming forward as the pattern of applications changes.

Thatcher supporters in social groups one and two, whose offspring dominate the University undergraduate population, will have cause to curse this change of entry policy which ignores the Robbins Report rule that all qualified applicants have the right to enter a University. This break with the past leaves us with no rule at all, only the law of the jungle. No doubt many of these young people will find places in Polytechnics (due for their further share of the cuts as local authority budgets are squeezed again) and so displace others down the line. As usual, those at the bottom of the pile will suffer most.

The Wreckers

Secondly, the Government does not finance Universities directly, but through the University Grants Committee (UGC). This is a quango of 20 more or less self-selected members, responsible to no one and beyond the criticism of Parliamentary questions. Rather than resign, as it should have done, the UGC has agreed to implement the cuts, apparently with relish, although to do so is outside its terms of reference and well beyond its competence. It has made a mess of things. No academic will ever again believe that the UGC stands as a buffer between the autonomous Universities (each an individual employer with its own Charter giving it the legal right to make its own decisions) and the central Government. This destroys a Government-Universities relationship which has existed since 1919.

The UGC's plan, promulgated just as the summer

vacation started, crudely divides Universities into three broad classes. The top class includes Oxbridge (of course) and some of the "cheaper" Universities such as Bath, which have had their budgets cut by only four or five per cent. Interestingly, that fount of monetarism, the London Business School, uniquely gets an increased grant. The bulk of Universities have budget cuts of between seven and 14 per cent, and a few are clobbered with cuts of 17 to 30 per cent. The Press has been full of the screams of agony from this group (Salford, Bradford, Manchester IST and Aston), the very places which have built up close relations with industry, as the Government has encouraged them to do. Perhaps the UGC fondly harbours an ideal picture of the perfect University which it would like the others to emulate, but it is difficult to infer this from its actions. The immediate outcome of the way the cuts have been distributed is that Universities are divided among themselves.

Since there is now an official "pecking order", careers masters in the schools will presumably use it to direct their pupils to the "top" places, and the Universities suffering most from the cuts will have their difficulties compounded. This revolutionary change of UGC policy will reverberate through the years, as will the effects of its "advice" to individual Universities.

Job Tenure

In general, the UGC is cutting Arts subjects; Social Sciences by about half, and some of the "minority" languages. Science may have a relative increase in Mathematics and Physics (but are the schools producing these people?), and Biology will be cut. Architecture, Town Planning, Agriculture and Pharmacy will also be cut, but Medicine, Veterinary Science and Dentistry may be allowed to grow a little. Within these general rules, however, Universities are treated differently: here a subject is supposed to increase, there to decrease. One can sympathise with the lecturer who has spent a decade building a good course which he is now told should be "phased out" by 1983-4, especially when he learns that another University is encouraged to create a similar course. Since the UGC is not accountable, it cannot be argued with, and in any case the funds have now all been distributed; the die is cast. Within each University the haves and the have-nots will be defending their position during the next three years. And the brightest faculty members will get out of the unnecessary strife by emigrating, as they easily can.

Thirdly, cuts mean lost jobs. Some 5,000 posts will have to go, perhaps 2,000 of them by natural wastage. Of course, this is the worst way to replan the Universities since the strength of a subject may go simply because two or three senior members

decide to retire early, as has already happened in some places. The crucial issue is, however, job tenure.

Academics, after a proving period, are appointed until retirement age, now usually 65. They have tenure so that they can pursue their subjects honestly, without interference from Church or State. It is ironic that the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), with a Labour chairman, should ask the UGC to look into tenured appointments to see if the Government is getting value for money. Tenure raises the question, "Can Academics be made redundant?". No one knows the answer and the Association of University Teachers is prepared to fight the first redundancies all the way to the House of Lords. The UGC's chairman guesses that redundancies may cost £100-£200 million, and if one adds to this the cost of putting many 18-year-olds on the dole queue or placing them in Job Opportunities, etc, plus the cost of administration, there may be no budget saving at all. Cutting University funds is an ill-conceived, fatuous exercise, even in financial terms. Perhaps that is why the PAC gave its approval in advance. But the principle of Academic Tenure is of more importance than the money. It is the legal base of academic freedom. That is what has now come under attack as a direct result of the Government's economic policy.

About twice as many non-academics (secretaries, technicians, administrators, porters, etc) as faculty members will also lose their jobs and they have no tenure clause to protect them. Research and teaching organisation, laboriously built up, will be destroyed. And where Universities are the largest employer in a town, unemployment will increase as a direct result of the University cuts, and further still as the money available in the community is reduced. Undoubtedly there will be industrial unrest as these groups try to protect themselves. The ivory towers will shake with justifiable revolt.

False Economy

In a recent "Analysis" programme on Radio 4, Mary Goldring said that there was no real difference between closing down a University and a steel mill. She was supported by Shirley Williams, speaking for the Social Democratic Party. Politicians seem to be the only people who do not understand that we are suffering more from the slump than our economic competitors are because of past parsimonious and inflexible attitudes to higher education generally. Where we get to after the slump will similarly depend on our level of higher education—today's not tomorrow's. Already trained graduates are being thrown on the scrap heap, and many who had aspirations to become academics are finding all

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God's Blotted Copy

JAMES MacDONALD

Henry Marshall's article, "Little K", published in our June issue, considered the question of infant euthanasia. He argued that the love and care lavished on chronically handicapped children conceals the realities and that they should be allowed to die. An opposing viewpoint is put forward in this article by a congenitally disabled man, now aged 32, who lives a full life with minimum dependence on others.

To pre-empt any misconceptions at the start, let me declare my allegiance to both the pro-abortion lobby and the campaign for voluntary euthanasia. Each seems quantitatively to enhance rather than to restrict or diminish the freedom of the individual and the dignity of existence, which I take to be the foundation of an ethical system of behaviour. In the first instance, so I have been taught, a foetus that is not viable is not yet a human being—in any case it is for the parents (perhaps only the mother) to decide whether or not to abort. As to voluntary euthanasia, a more clearly defined issue, I think, each of us has the right, commensurate with the responsibility, to determine our lives as we wish. Here even religious doctrine, placing its own emphasis on self-determination and individual responsibility, cannot offer full-bodied resistance.

Infant euthanasia is altogether more equivocal a question than the ones cited above. Here we are dealing with a post-natal situation where second party responsibility is at issue. As with abortion, I would say categorically that it is for the parents to decide in the matter of the severely disabled, and I would certainly not convict any parent who found the care of such a child too much of a handicap and opted to terminate life rather than continue it at perpetual disadvantage and detriment to the family as a whole. At the same time, there seems to me something morally reprehensible about empowering the state (in the form of paediatricians and government agencies) with an option that should be solely reserved to the individual. As readily as I acknowledge parental stress in such cases, I am against institutional discretion in virtually any example. Corporate responsibility here is, paradoxically, abrogation in every sense; it is the antithesis of a normative ethic, within an ace of social inhumanity.

Henry Marshall's particularised response to the dilemma confines the focus of debate to one of mainly religious concern. In attempting a more secular appraisal, I quarrel less with Mr Marshall's position on infant euthanasia than with his approach, which calls to account fewer pertinent people than there are in the mainstream of the

controversy. This is certainly true in the United States, where Mr Marshall bases his evidence. (And I take exception to his argument no less as an American than as a congenitally disabled person.) The constitutional division of Church and State broadens the American consensus, and State legislation prohibiting separate education for the disabled denotes a decided shift in that nation's attitude from what it was a generation ago, and from what it may yet be in this country. Britain may well have stolen a march on the Americans in every other moral and social crusade, but in this instance perhaps the directive is reciprocated. If America enjoys fewer freedoms than does Britain, her citizens are equally enslaved, with no greater distinction made between mental and physical condition than there is between race, creed and social position.

The proscriptive attitude that informs action on infant euthanasia suggests a false assumption being made from a fundamentally inappropriate perspective. Argue for infant euthanasia, by all means, from the point of view of the parent or guardian. But to do so on behalf of the primary victim, on humanitarian grounds, is to adopt a frame of mind to which you are not entitled and for which there is no justification. It is also to become the unwitting proponent of totalitarian dogma. Mr Marshall, in other words, is perfectly entitled to voice his opinion as someone who may be responsible for the care of such a child. But he cannot speak for the child himself, to say categorically whether or not his limited life is worth continuation.

Value and Limitations

The comparison to be made here is with modern attitudes toward death and the dying. We cannot know what death is like. Any living manifestations of tribute or bereavement are for the survivors, not for the dead. To attempt to speak with authority about the quality of life for a severely disabled person is to place your own valuation on his life, and this is impossible. You might well suffer unendurably in his position based on your knowledge of a life with fewer limitations, but he has neither the same knowledge nor the same aspirations. If his horizons are narrower, his threshold of happiness is lower. This is not to say that his appreciation of life is any the less intense than yours, or that he does not value his opportunities—limited though they may be—any less than you do yours. We are talking, I think, of a universal characteristic—the love of life in whatever form. It is instinctive as breathing.

before human consciousness even.

Two years ago, at the annual general meeting of the National Secular Society, Barbara Smoker, the president, brought a motion that the NSS should actively support infant euthanasia. To charges that she was favouring a form of selective breeding, Miss Smoker countered that she was not addressing herself to the problem of coping with adult or adolescent disability. Then and now, my argument is that endorsement of such a policy places in the hands of ignorant officials the capacity to determine the quality of life for a whole section of the community when, in fact, not enough has been done to enhance the character and quality of life for an even greater section, among whom the disabled ought to be included, especially by a humanitarian body like the NSS.

The Disabled are Human

For a number of years now I have actively campaigned for the integration of the physically and mentally disabled into society as far as possible. Barbara Smoker, no doubt, would favour this as well up to a point. The principal objective, as I see it, is not so much to remove prejudice or to lessen an impregnable barrier, but to a far greater extent to emphasise the similarities that exist between all people, whatever their disadvantages. Before any attempt on the part of the social services to improve conditions for the disabled, the disabled must be made to perceive themselves in human terms. They are not, because of their misfortune, blessed, as churchmen would see them, but neither are they the object of soporific pity, "frosted buds that could never open and bear fruit", to recall Mr Marshall's closing sentiment. This, indeed, is not charity, but unmitigating degradation.

The advent of post-industrial development may very well redefine the meaning of life for the majority. The 21st century may well introduce a new proletarian elite, capable of overseeing the majority by virtue of their privileged positions as the employed and employable. I am not at all certain about the character and quality of life for most of us as the age of the silicone chip takes hold. In the face of this revolutionary prospect, I find it difficult to countenance an imperative that seeks to determine the outcome of one segment of the community with this degree of finality. Perhaps what is needed is a revaluation of terms like responsibility.

Henry Marshall may well find it advisable to leave the fate of his granddaughter in the hands and the wisdom of the medical experts; I revere the day my parents ignored the prognosis of my doctors who foresaw little beyond a life of perpetual dependence and limitation for me.

MAN MUST CHANGE THE WORLD

"Humanists should feel a very special responsibility as they know that any changes in the world must come from man himself," Lord Fenner Brockway told the annual conference of the British Humanist Association at Leicester.

The veteran politician and campaigner for peace said that the humanist movement had made a significant contribution to liberal ideas and the recognition of respect due to minorities. "But," he added, "they are insignificant when compared to the real danger of nuclear war which threatens the present generation.

"A recent United Nations report, compiled by leading scientists, reveals that there are now enough explosives for three tons to be dropped on every man, woman and child in the world. People say that this will never happen, but the report points to the danger of accident, a misunderstood command or a local war becoming an international war.

"The second most important issue is starvation in the world today. There are 800 million people on the border of death from lack of food. It makes me very uncomfortable to realise that 50 per cent of the people of Asia and Africa are in need of food. If we are humanists then we must give our minds to this matter. . .

"We are living at a time when technology permits production that could end poverty. The people of the world are asking for a new order of economic independence. The system today was decided by the great industrialised countries and it must be altered if hunger is to be eliminated from the world.

"These are some of the issues facing mankind. We, as humanists, have a responsibility to seek their solution. We know that man, not God, must act."

Centenary Appeal

Donations to the Centenary Appeal are still being received—the Appeal continues until the end of the year—and we gratefully acknowledge those listed below. Anon, £5; Anon, £250; J. Arkell, £5; E. and P. Biles, £10; B. Clarke, £1; P. A. Forrest, £5; S. M. Fuchs, £3; A. E. Garrison, £7; E. Goodman, £5; L. B. Halstead, £2; J. R. Jones, £2; Lewisham Humanist Group, £2.25; G. S. Mellor, £10; M. P. Morf, £2; J. E. Morrison, £1; J. T. Morrison, £10; V. S. Petherham, £5; R. B. Ratcliffe, £2; G. and N. Reece, £10; P. Skjaeveland, £5.40; A. E. Smith, £3; C. Stephenson, £2; F. M. Tiffany, £2; J. C. Tugwell, £4; J. D. Verney, 50p; K. Waddington, £1; H. W. Williams, £2; D. Wright, £4.

Total for the period 18 July until 8 August: £361.15.

SANCTIMONIOUS MR STOKES

Mr John Stokes' speech in the House of Commons just before the Summer Recess provided the answer to those who wonder why the Palace of Westminster is often referred to as "the gas works". The Conservative Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge was at his most dolorous and sleep-inducing as he endeavoured to persuade fellow-MPs that the relationship between Church and State "is highly relevant to many of today's problems which . . . are moral and spiritual as much as social and economic".

Honourable Members, no doubt straining like greyhounds on the leash to get away for the hols, must have groaned when Mr Stokes rose to give an end-of-term history lesson. He told how great kings were converted to Christianity, and how "Churchmen, being well-educated people, were engaged in the administration of the kingdom. In the Middle Ages it could be said that the Church and the State were one."

Mr Stokes' grasp of history is rather dicky. In fact most early Churchmen were as ignorant and illiterate as their followers. (From St Paul to the bishops who opposed the 1807 Education Act, education for this life was never an urgent Christian priority.) Certainly the Church saw to it that there were enough literate priests and monks to play an important, if disreputable, role in national life. They acquired enormous wealth for the Church through their influence in political circles and pressure exerted at the death-bed. Many a dying and fearful merchant and landowner, after being reminded of the wrath to come, "purchased heaven" by leaving his property to the Church. If the threat of hell-fire was ineffective, the educated Churchmen resorted to forgery of wills and documents. (By the time the first Mortmain Statute was passed, nearly half the land of England was vested in religious houses.)

During the period when "the Church and the State were one", England was governed by the most brutal, licentious and unprincipled bunch of kings and bishops imaginable. They raised money for their wars and church building through taxes and rents from brothels. In 1192, rules for the conduct of such establishments in Southwark were drawn up by Henry II and the Bishop of Winchester.

Warming to his subject, Mr Stokes recalled a golden age when "it was assumed that everybody should be a member of the national church". Never let it be said that he is in favour of persecution — Christians seldom are when not in a position to persecute — but he did think "there was something to be said for fining people who did not attend church regularly". The Anglican Ayatollah did not inform the House if he thought there was "something to be said" for burning heretics at the stake, conver-

NEWS

sion at sword point or crusades against the infidel.

Mr Stokes clearly regards one of "today's problems" as being those bishops who, "instead of insisting on personal holiness . . . seem to be more concerned with promoting vague and general social issues". Their lamentable failure to condemn enemies of England, Home and Beauty, such as the Family Planning Association and the Brook Advisory Centre, led him to denounce them as "false patriots".

It is the duty of Government, according to Mr Stokes and the Prayer Book, to maintain "true religion and virtue". He obviously believes that "true religion" is embodied in the Bible and the 39 Articles, and castigates bishops for their failure to "preach the gospel fearlessly and proclaim the great historic truths of Christianity". Never mind: Mr Stokes can feel secure in the knowledge that, whatever the bishops' spiritual shortcomings, the Church Commissioners, controllers of Church funds and property worth hundreds of millions, are maintaining a great Christian tradition.

At no time while he was huffing and puffing about "defending the fundamental tenets of Christianity . . . this wretched, permissive society . . . return to decency and morality", did Mr Stokes utter a word of criticism of those pious robbers, intriguers, murderers and assorted villains who led the Church in past times. His vituperation was directed solely against 20th-century bishops who "appear to be almost embarrassed by patriotism or any commendation of our long and glorious history as a nation".

Our long and glorious history that inspires a self-proclaimed "loyal Anglican" like Mr Stokes includes the slave trade, the Opium Wars, the plunder of India and the massacre of conquered peoples. It was not without cause that the British flag was known as the Butcher's Apron. The bishops' embarrassment is therefore understandable, particularly in view of the Church's role in "our long and glorious history as a nation".

Only 974 of the 5,800 Jews who have left the Soviet Union this year have chosen to go to Israel, according to Israeli sources. There has also been a drop in the number of Jews going to Israel from Britain, Argentina, South Africa and Romania. It is also reported that Rabbi Meir Kahane, leader of the Zionist Kach organisation, has called for inter-marriage and sexual relationships between non-Jewish men and Jewish women to be made illegal.

AND NOTES

NON-MOTHER THERESA'S BAD ADVICE

Anyone who questions the value of Mother Theresa of Calcutta's work is likely to be accused of bigotry and indifference to human suffering. Her supporters become either embarrassed or cross when reminded that she is, first and foremost, the servant of a church whose condemnation of birth control is one cause of the misery she strives to alleviate. Her work among the starving and dying is widely publicised, but how much is published about the Catholic Church's vehement opposition to family planning programmes in India?

But even Mother Theresa's most ardent admirers—unless they are fanatical Catholics—will be hard pushed to defend her remarks during a recent visit to Egypt when she advised women in Cairo to “have lots and lots of children”. It is difficult to determine if Mother Theresa was being plain silly or trying to undermine the effect of a series of television programmes urging Egyptians to limit their families to two or three children.

By using her considerable influence to encourage indiscriminate breeding in Egypt where the population increases by a million every year, and in other countries where over-population is a major problem, Mother Theresa is being both irresponsible and inhuman.

Children should be brought into the world because they are wanted and not when their starving bodies provide a backdrop for Mother Theresa.

TRIBUTE TO PAINE

The Civic Trust of Alford, in Lincolnshire, has placed a plaque on the Windmill Hotel, once the excise headquarters, to commemorate Thomas Paine's association with this attractive little market town. The choice of date, 4 July, was most apposite, for Paine was a major contributor to the American fight for freedom. If he were alive today, the Moral Majority and other Reaganites would be after his blood.

The plaque, which was unveiled by Robert Morrell, secretary of the Thomas Paine Society, has crossed British and American flags and bears the inscription: “Thomas Paine, 1737-1809, author of the *Rights of Man* and *The Age of Reason*. Excise Officer, Alford, 1764-1765, at Customs Office on

this site.” Those in attendance included Mr T. D. Murphy, Collector of Customs and Excise for Lincolnshire.

Following the unveiling ceremony, a framed portrait of Paine was presented by the Civic Trust to the manager of the Windmill Hotel. It now occupies a prominent position in the hotel lounge.

Some 40 members of the Civic Trust and the Thomas Paine Society attended a commemorative dinner at which the guests included Peter Tapsell, Conservative MP for Horncastle. He expressed his admiration for Paine, describing him as “the John McEnroe of his day” (a role that would not endear him to conservative and authoritarian elements in British society). Mr Morrell spoke on the life and work of Paine, and George Hindmarch, a retired excise officer, spoke about the excise in Paine's day.

The event concluded with a tour of Alford Manor House, which displays a collection of Paine publications and tokens. These have been presented to the Civic Trust by Christopher Brunel, chairman of the Thomas Paine Society.

HOPEFUL SIGNS

The Freethinker has perhaps given insufficient coverage to the situation in Northern Ireland, which is an outstanding example of the way in which religious beliefs can interlock with economic and historic social divisions to create disorder and hostility. Much attention is given in the media to the Maze prison hunger strikers, the antics of Paisley, the dilemmas of the new Irish premier, and the failure of Mrs Thatcher and Mr Humphrey Atkins to bring practical solutions to the problem.

A small news item brings a glint of optimism to a gloomy picture. A new school in Northern Ireland, opening this month, has declared itself opposed to the rigid sectarian education in Northern Ireland. The school is the idea of “All Children Together”, a pressure group campaigning for greater religious integration in schools. The school will be privately funded at first, although the group's secretary said, “We never wanted to open an independent school, but we found that we have no choice”. The group hopes that the school will become voluntary aided and mainly State-funded in three or four years.

The people of Northern Ireland can be more sensible than their religious and political leaders. Opinion polls in Northern Ireland have regularly shown two-thirds in favour of integrating schools (although this has usually meant the inclusion of minorities in schools which remain dominated by their founding church).

The governor of the new school has expressed the admirable sentiment: “What we want is a school in which any religion, or none, is respected, taught and knowledge shared a bit”.

BOOKS

VOLTAIRE by Haydn Mason. Granada: Paul Elek. £9.95

Voltaire's own incredible output (some 15m words) was an industry in itself, and is now firm foundation for a scholarly business, established mainly by the activities of Theodore Besterman. This latest item comes from the top management: Haydn Mason is general editor of *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, and is Professor of European Studies in the University of East Anglia. A team is at work to produce an encyclopedic up-to-date account in ten volumes. Meanwhile, this is a portrait of the man, seen during periods of stress in the vicissitudes of a long life of incessant activity.

Voltaire, striving against the current in turbulent waters, achieved in the end an apotheosis immensely gratifying and hardly rivalled, but the masterful display does not show the liability to make a mess of his life like the rest of us into which his weaknesses regularly betrayed him. Many times he needed to be saved from himself by luck or by others. An indestructibly vital hypochondriac, a worldly recluse, rash, headstrong, and circumspect, rootless and restless and half a dozen times settled for life, he survived not merely by good luck but mainly because the complexities and contradictions of temperament and character were compensated by an early maturity that remained steadfast, a governing seriousness and generosity of spirit, an alliance of virtue, study, and gaiety. His consolation was ever in work, the least debilitating of addictions.

He began adult life in an office (how hard to believe!), but was determined to be a writer; and that is what he always was, a professional writer. His literary ambition was conventional and classical, to make his mark with epic and tragedy. Although he did not win world renown that way, his contemporary success was in the French theatre, and temperamentally he expressed his passionate feelings in dramatic roles. However, he was never merely literary. He venerated Newton as the greatest of men, and took great pains to popularise the *Principia*. He was always a political animal, eager to have a hand in affairs. He was insatiably interested in men and manners, and wrote on the history of civilisation. He was a committed writer, *engagé* in Sartre's sense; writing was philosophical action that initiated and was sustained in practical intervention. Not least, Voltaire was a shrewd businessman, and this flair, joined with organisational ability, enabled him to protect his rear, safeguard his independence; and in the end to establish and run his flourishing industrial estate at Ferney.

The Voltaire in whom readers of this journal will be particularly interested is the freethinker, the

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hammer of the Church, "écrasez l'infâme". As a youth, his reading of the Old Testament made it clear to him that it was more mythological than theological in any philosophical sense. The Bible became an armoury in a militant crusade against ecclesiastical oppression; for re-reading the Bible in a modern light was the most direct way to penetrate the defences of an establishment that controlled the institutions of contemporary learning, and derived its authority from the Bible. The iniquities committed by the Church or in the name of salvation would appear as sheer barbarities if the luminaries of orthodoxy lost credit in the diffusion of the brighter light of the new scientific rationalism, whose torch-bearers in France were the *philosophes*.

Although physically distant from Diderot and his circle in Paris, Voltaire was one of the *philosophes* in his mission as a writer. Towards the *Encyclopédie*, their joint enterprise and instrument, edited by Diderot, he was ambivalent. He thought that so long as they remained within reach of the Parlement of Paris and of the Church authorities, they could not be radical and outspoken; they were bound to compromise and be equivocal. He proposed to Diderot that they should find an independent station, from which they could speak their minds and address Europe plainly, but Diderot made excuses. Professor Mason seems to take Voltaire's view, and underestimate the effectiveness of the *Encyclopédie*, and the strength of the position it had established. It had become a strong commercial enterprise before the Church recognised it as their real enemy, an engine of anti-religious opinions. Two articles might be chosen to show that, whatever the concessions to orthodoxy on the surface, radical religious and political opinions and principles were being put forward and argued: "Genève" by d'Alembert and "Representants" by d'Holbach. The first (written after a visit to Voltaire, and with his prompting) presented Geneva as a model of religion, all reason and morality, anti-type of the Roman Church. The second argued for representative government, fully accountable to all interests, equally represented. Voltaire could not state more plainly views that were anathema to the authorities in Paris. And when the *philosophes* did publish independently their uncompromising views, in d'Holbach's *Système de la nature* or Helvétius's *De l'esprit*, Voltaire did not at all like such materialist determinism, and felt that he had to fight on

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two fronts, against this within the ranks of the *philosophes* as well as against *l'infâme*. On the practical side, he had a shrewd point, in a letter to d'Alembert: "never will twenty folio volumes produce a revolution; it is the portable little books at 30 sous which are to be feared. If the Gospel had cost 1200 sesterces, the Christian religion would never have been established" (cp the "Thinker's Library"). He preferred his own handbook, his *Dictionnaire philosophique*. However, the *Encyclopédie* insinuated its message into the context of a general work of public instruction, and reached the general reader. And Diderot's excuse for not making a break did no justice at all to his own heroic labours in seeing the work to completion in contention with mounting official opposition. One has only to think of present conditions in the Soviet Union, in Iran, even in Yugoslavia, perhaps soon in Israel, to appreciate that tactics in this kind of warfare are not to be confused with propaganda.

Voltaire is not on the roll in the history of ideas; he was not even a great poet nor playwright. All the same, his is a very great name. Pre-eminently, he was an entertainer and a moralist; not a preacher of morality, but a reformer with a burning hatred and contempt for superstition and abuses of power. As an effective propagandist, he was rivalled only by Rousseau and Thomas Paine. Vehement in his passions, he was consistently moderate and progressive in his religious and political views. His humour and irony, and his rejections, are easily mistaken. Professor Mason ends with a gibe at Voltaireans, their complacent espousal of half-baked science and rigid anti-clericalism, and he cites Flaubert:

"In short, that man seems to me ardent, relentless, convinced, superb. His 'Ecrasons l'infâme' has on me the effect of a crusading call. His whole intelligence was a war machine. And what makes me cherish him is the disgust which Voltaireans inspire in me, people who laugh at the important things: Did he laugh? He gnashed his teeth!"

Voltaire will always be a chief hero of Freethought, and "Voltaireans" can be true to his spirit. Professor Mason has provided an authentic portrait related to the work. Particularly, he provides insight into the experiential forces that produced the enduring masterpiece that best represents Voltaire, *Candide*.

H. J. BLACKHAM

It is curious that the study of statute law should be the Cinderella of legal studies, since in Britain, contrary to Continental systems of law, Parliament is constitutionally supreme and its legislation binding. True there are numerous learned tomes on the interpretation of statutes, but until Francis Bennion, whose career as a Parliamentary Counsel has been spent in drafting legislation, emerged on the scene, there was little critical analysis of statute law.

Bennion himself, who first came to general notice when he brought a private prosecution against Peter Hain in the early seventies, has been largely instrumental in raising the study of statute law to a specialisation and in establishing the Statute Law Society. He has long been an advocate of a more rational and methodical approach to statute law and he has now produced a book in which he sets out lucidly an analysis and critique of our traditional methods of writing our laws. It is his theme that the subject has been largely neglected in legal education. It is particularly apt now when for the first time, because of our accession to the European Economic Community, our system of law-making is confronting the challenge forced on it of assimilating Continental methods and doctrines.

Statute Law is not for the uninitiated but neither is it an arid academic work of interest only to administrators or specialist lawyers. The author, after observing that our system of statute law has "grown up piecemeal" and that "it is a basic element in the social and economic regulation of a modern state performing functions undreamt of by earlier legislators", sets out to re-examine its techniques and to make them more scientific.

The book is in four parts. The first contains a useful description of how Acts of Parliament and secondary legislation come into existence, and the problems faced by draftsmen who are Parliament's and Ministers' servants, but at the same time must produce texts which will weather the storms they will have to face in the Courts. It examines the European Community's legislation and how this differs from the British model. It describes the relatively recent process of statutory consolidation and codification and has a helpful chapter on the rules of interpretation as devised by our Courts.

The remaining three parts of the book consider the processing of the text of a piece of legislation by the consumer who may be a judge, an administrator, a lawyer or other professional advisor or simply John Citizen himself, and the difficulties and doubts which the consumer faces in comprehension. Bennion examines the factors which "block comprehension" such as necessary compression, "anonymity" (lack of headings, side notes, cross

references, etc), "distortion" or uncertainties forced on the draftsman by for example the Politicians requirements, "scatter" (the law on a topic being found in different texts), legal and other errors made by the "fallible" draftsman himself.

A critical part of the book is directed to what the author calls "dynamic processing" by administrators, academics and judges by which he means a creative approach to statutory interpretation. Our common law system is based on judge-made case law. Bennion criticises the defects of the traditional judicial approach: "The root cause lies in failure to realise that techniques which led to the evolution of the common law will not lead to the evolution of any science of legislation . . . the common law method of building up legal doctrines from the decisions of judges over the centuries is inappropriate for legislation . . . the dicta of the distant past are suspect today. The changes are not taken into account . . . so a false science has grown up fuelled by the tendency of Judges to make ill-informed general observations where no general principle exists . . . the result is that modern Judges take any line they choose, a practice contrary to the basis of law." He then asks "What can be done?" and answers "It would be a start if judges and others concerned would deliberately accept that dynamic processing of legislative tracts is part of the judicial function."

It is obvious from these key passages in the book that Bennion fervently believes there is a need for a more scientific approach to statutory interpretation and indeed the book concludes with a plea for a "processing bill" (as one would expect of a draftsman, a draft bill is added as an appendix) which would give judges very wide powers to construe legislation so as to give effect to the intention of the legislator. Whilst one can understand and sympathise with Bennion's criticisms of the way in which the judiciary has looked at legislation in the past, I beg leave to doubt whether giving judges wider powers of interpretation in the future will in fact remedy the evil rather than exacerbate it. That there is a need for a more scientific approach to law-making in this country cannot be doubted, but to this reviewer's mind there is a much greater need for a much wider and more democratic participation in law-making and law interpretation, a subject which Bennion does not really touch on at all. Why should it be the preserve of politicians alone to make our laws and of administrators to apply them unaided by Tom, Dick or Harry, the consumer? Why is it that judicial interpretation is so lacking, archaic and out of touch with the needs of the common man and sometimes of common sense?

An analysis of our method of law-making and law-applying should not be made out of the social and political context in which laws are framed or out of

context of the social complexion and political ideology of the administrators and judges who interpret the laws. I suspect that Francis Bennion is something of a libertarian at heart and that, were he not so constrained by his professional approach to the subject, he would be more uninhibited in developing his critique. Perhaps this could be the subject of another book, but in saying this, I would not wish to underestimate the value of *Statute Law* which fills an amazing gap in our understanding of the mysteries and myths of law-making.

BENEDICT BIRNBERG

THEATRE

TRANSLATIONS by Brian Friel. Lyttleton Theatre. (In repertory at the National Theatre)

Translations is one of the most enjoyable, thought-provoking and moving new plays that I have seen for a long time. It transfers from the Hampstead Theatre, where it was subsidised by the National Theatre. There it was lauded with epithets such as "Tchekhovian" and "masterpiece", with which there is no reason to dissent.

In Ireland in the 1830s a village hedge-school offered, besides the staple reading, writing and arithmetic, Latin and Greek for its Gaelic-speaking pupils. At the same period English soldiers were mapping the locality, anglicising the names and listing estates and property in preparation for tax increases and evictions. This brilliant choice of historical moment provides the setting and the theme for Brian Friel's play. It is a powerful presentation of a particular incident of Irish repression by the English, which expands into a general depiction of the humour and anguish of the way in which human groups and individuals mistranslate, misread and misunderstand each other.

A superb moment of literal mistranslation occurs when the schoolmaster's ambitious elder son translates an English announcement of the soldiers into Gaelic for the hedge-school students — the conquerors have no word of Gaelic. Owen, the son, translates the pompous, bureaucratic language of the Royal Engineers' Captain into beautifully clear simple phrases, providing a contrast between the language of the controlling official and native speech. But he also omits the unpleasant aspect of the announcement, the potential tax changes and evictions. Mistranslation becomes funny and cruel and also evades reality.

Another marvellous moment of linguistic incomprehension comes in the courting between Lieutenant Yolland, who, to his chagrin, has no Gaelic, and Maire, whose English is limited to a handful of words. Lack of language is no barrier to blossoming love. But the couple quite fail to decode the nature of each other's dreams: he has fallen for rural,

Celtic charm and wants to stay for ever, she yearns for white hands and an escape route to a larger world. They unburden their romantic feelings in gestures and uncomprehended words — at one delightful moment communicating their excited emotions with lists of Irish and English names.

The play opens with an almost mute girl managing to enunciate her name, while the schoolmaster is drinking at a Christening at which the naming of a child reveals who the father is. Naming gives identity. And the renaming of Irish place-names is orthographic tyranny, stamping out identity. In George Steiner's book on translation, *After Babel*, which Friel acknowledges as an influence, there is reference to how imported English can erode "the autonomy of the native language-culture".

The differences between peoples is embedded in "the language of the Tribe". The play does not excoriate the evil British exploiters or sanctify the imaginative, Celtic spirit. British imperialism, as rarely these days, is seen, in the character of Yolland, to contain a blundering romanticism, and not be just evil exploitation. And the magnificent old drunken scholar-schoolmaster (Ian Bannen) seems to speak for the Irish when he laments that a civilisation can be imprisoned "in linguistic contours that no longer embrace the landscape of fact".

Because it is so rare to see a play streaked right through with such interesting insights, I have focussed upon the play's ideas. But the audience were gripped and laughed loud at a play that contains wit, excitement and characters that are rivetingly alive. A few moments may be instanced: Manus, the schoolmaster's younger, lame son, sobbing as he parts realising he has lost his sweetheart; Doalty jumping up and down with innocent (or not so innocent?) cries of "Cripes, cripes" as he sees the English camp burning in the distance; Owen and Yolland drinking poteen and curled in laughter at the impossibility of anglicising Irish place names; the old schoolmaster (Ian Bannen gives an outstanding performance in a production of consistently finely-judged acting) and the learned village ancient in sad, drunken laughter discussing the idea of marrying Athene.

Indeed, Friel's *Translations* contains Athene's beauty, tenderness, toughness and wisdom.

JIM HERRICK

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EXHIBITION

PICASSO'S PICASSOS. An Arts Council Exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, London, until 11 October

The big exhibition at London's Hayward Gallery ought not to be taken as comprehensive, as perhaps it will be by those to whom Picasso is merely a remote figure of history. While it contains examples from most of the ever-varying phases of his working life — studies, sketches, alternative versions of the works by which in over 70 years of professional activity he made himself the dazzling darling of the middle class art world—it does have some notable gaps, and emphatically does not pretend to be a definitive exhibition of his greatest achievements. This is not at all to say that there are not in it paintings, prints and drawings that show him at his best; it is not—and by its nature it could not be—a whole or balanced exhibition.

Those old enough to have seen the exhibitions of his work during his lifetime, before and after the Second World War, will readily identify the inclusions and omissions here. Those who have grown up since then and gone through three decades of domination of our art scene by North American artists, from New York mainly, who are themselves under the powerful influence of European artists who fled from Hitler's oppression, will have had a very different experience and expectation of the visual arts from that of older generations, an experience in which Picasso has for long been nearly a ghost. He will therefore appear to them at once as a novelty and a piece of history. I remark on this because I was very conscious of the high proportion of young people going around the gallery: for many of them—most, indeed—this would be a new experience.

The imbalance and inequalities of the collection and selection in no way reflect on the organisers. These are works left in Picasso's own possession at his death: some, perhaps many even, he had not wanted to part with; some had been forgotten in one or other of his many houses—studio debris, if you like, but of a kind to illuminate his work as a whole and provide us with particular clues to the evolution of certain paintings and sequences. Conspicuous in this category are the early steps into Cubism—when in the first decade of this century he, Braque, Juan Gris and a handful more began to free themselves from the tyranny of appearances and imitation and transform painting into a mode of invention comparable to music (some of it quite light-hearted, but seriously explored).

There is another section devoted to Surrealism. Picasso, who would play any game, turn his hand to anything, contributed to the Surrealist movement. But this section shows him as only casually, in pass-

ing, a Surrealist. There are works of a more truly Surreal kind in other places, such as the section on the Spanish Civil War, and the remarkable prints of the 1930s that combine words and images and in which the influence of Cocteau and Andre Breton can be seen. Surreal elements and effects there are also in the quasi-classical drawings and paintings of the 1920s, to say nothing of the bizarre and entertaining sculptures made from scrap and rubbish—such as the famous bull's head he created simply by putting together a bicycle saddle and handle bars.

There is nothing of the lyrical inventions from the dark days of the war and the years immediately following. Nor is there very much that leads directly into his most famous painting, *Guernica*. There is not a trace of the Korean War paintings, though there are a good many late paintings—unpleasant and dull in quality, reminders that even this wizard had his muddled and uninventive moments. There is little to represent the post-Liberation period, when he was making hundreds of light-hearted and beautiful drawings and prints, many of which are loving images of the doves that captivated him at the time and also served him and others as a potent symbol of the Peace Movement he was so deeply involved in. There are, though, some of the artist-and-model images which appeared throughout his life but which became so obsessive in later years that John Berger was provoked to speculate about the undercurrents of private meaning that flowed through the work of this most public of artists.

Picasso was a great inventor and performer, a great entertainer and inquirer, often a clown; but he was no charlatan. Immense energy, incessant curiosity, boundless appetite and self-confidence went into that long career. He was the Charlie Chaplin of painting, and the two had much in common. Always on the side of the angels, always rebels in spirit, in the struggle for a free and creative life for us all, each nevertheless was rich and famous in a world they satirised and in important ways despised, the darlings of a culture in which the great work of art, in the old tradition, had become impossible.

Each lived in exile. Chaplin, the knockabout Cockney, became the most famous star of the new-century screen entertainment which gave to the word "star" a special meaning, became rich enough, even 60 years ago, to be independent, outspoken enough to be driven at last to the end his days in Switzerland, not in the USA where his name and fortune had been made. Picasso, the essentially Anarchist painter of the most Anarchist city in Spain—he grew up in Barcelona—set out at 19 to study the work of Burne-Jones. Caught up in the art world of Paris — an international, not French world — he became the chief performer in the rising

galaxy of stars of post-Impressionism. Like Chaplin, Picasso was rich, famous, paradoxical, unpredictable — the supreme individualist. He was appointed by the Spanish Republican Government to be Director of the Prado — a symbolic appointment but by no means empty. Like his friend the great cellist Pau Casals, he would never go back to Franco's Spain, and rose for almost the only time in modern European art to the making of a heroic painting on the bombing of *Guernica*. After 1944, he was for many years not only the darling of the art world but also a member of the French Communist Party.

But the making of heroic paintings, the use of traditional visual arts for social, moral and political ends have for generations been, in Western Europe at least, unthinkable. Only in Mexico, under the leadership of Picasso's old friend Diego Rivera and his friends (sometimes!) Orozco and Siqueiros, has the modern world monumental paintings of a public kind. The heroic medium of our time is Chaplin's film, not Picasso's painting, and films are not made by one pair of hands. This is not the fault of the painters: it is the inevitable limitation of our time, our social system. To set Picasso in this frame does not underrate or denigrate him. With the most immense talent, impish genius, passion, he begins and ends as the performer of the age.

RAY WATKINSON

University Finance

doors closed in their faces. Yet these are the bright people who should be doing the research and training which will be the basis of our future prosperity.

A nation which cuts University funds might as well cut off its own head. The argument is not about money, as Mary Goldring and others would have it, but about priorities. Total public expenditure has gone up 7.1 per cent during the last two years, but Education alone has been cut by 2.9 per cent. The cost of one Trident missile or a Concorde subsidy would solve the University problem. Right now the Universities need all the public support they can get to fight these cuts and to change Government priorities, for your ultimate good as well as their own.

OBITUARIES

Mrs E Dessouki

Elsie Dessouki has died two months after her 87th birthday. There was a secular committal ceremony at Lodge Hill Crematorium, Birmingham.

Mrs R. E. Fleet

Rose Edith Fleet died recently in hospital after a long illness. She was aged 79. She had been married for 54 years. There was a secular committal ceremony at Worthing Crematorium, Findon, Sussex.

LETTERS

THE FEAR OF DEATH

I am deeply sorry for Alan Booth who "can imagine no greater horror than dying" ("It's Silly to Tell Lies to Children", July issue). He was certainly unfortunate at the age of 19 to see a man drown in his own blood.

He would feel better if he read Dr Raymond Moody's book, "Life After Life" (Corgi Books), detailing interviews with people who have had close encounters with death, many of them actually having been clinically dead. Moody states: "I have found that people who have been through near-death experiences seldom have the awful kind of dread of death which many of us seem to have".

Even if Moody does not actually convince Alan Booth that he can look forward to a happy future after death, the book should do something to relieve this morbid fear, which must be very painful and a serious handicap to him as a teacher should he have to deal with children who are bereaved or anxious about death.

He shows himself to be a confused and terribly sad man. I have heard Jesus criticised for many things, from non-existence onwards, but this is the first time I have heard him accused of cruelty for raising Lazarus from the dead, thus condemning the poor man to endure the horror of death twice. The Bible story says "Jesus wept" to see Mary, a close personal friend, crying for her brother.

Would Alan Booth, if he had the power, never restore a dead person to a grieving relative? Would he not try artificial respiration on a dead child? Does he think doctors are wicked when they work to revive someone clinically dead? We can doubtless agree that medical procedures such as prolonged the dying of Eisenhower and Franco are obscene.

RUTH ROSS

MORMONS' VIEWS

In my article in your May issue I said that Mormonism forbade "not only alcohol, tea and coffee, but also television and radio". This statement was based on an assurance given to me by a Mormon, and at the time I saw no reason to doubt it. But in the light of Bryan J. Grant's letter (July), I now realise that the speaker may well have been referring simply to a prohibition in his own household, rather than among Mormons in general.

But this, though an explanation, is not an excuse. It was unforgivably casual of me to accept and repeat the statement without taking steps to verify it, and I can only express my sincere regrets to Mr Grant and the Church of Latter Day Saints that he represents.

MARGARET KNIGHT

WHO ARE THE NATIVES?

Roger Lewis ignores the fact that a sizeable proportion of the people of Ireland wish to remain British citizens (Letters, July). True, Britain invaded Ireland 800 years ago, but then so did the people Mr Lewis calls "native Irish", those Goidelic Celts who poured into the country around the sixth century BC, driving the then neolithic inhabitants off the land.

The descendants of the invading British have as much right to regard Ireland as their nation as have the descendants of the invading Celts.

JOHN L. BROOM

PEACE PROPAGANDA IN NORTH LONDON

I am writing a history of the anti-war struggle in North London during the 1914-18 conflict. A surprising number of secularists were active in this movement, notably Jack Murphy. He was a prominent anti-war speaker at outdoor meetings—a job requiring considerable courage.

I am anxious to trace as many survivors of this movement as possible, particularly those who remember Jack Murphy. My address is 123 Lathom Road, London E6, telephone 01-552 3985.

K. S. WELLER

The Creationists

able (as is a tautology) and yet of great scientific interest. My solution was that the doctrine of natural selection is a most successful metaphysical research programme. It raises detailed problems in many fields, and it tells us what we would accept of an acceptable solution of these problems.

I still believe that natural selection works in this way as a research programme. Nevertheless, I have changed my mind about the testability and the logical status of the theory of natural selection; and I am glad to have an opportunity to make a recantation.

The theory of natural selection may be so formulated that it is far from tautological. In this case it is not only testable, but it turns out to be not strictly universally true. There seems to be exceptions, as with so many biological theories; and considering the random character of the variations on which natural selection operates, the occurrence of exceptions is not surprising.

But is the British Museum (Natural History) indulging in anything more than a mild flirtation with the Creationists or are they now part of the anti-evolution movement?

A Bonus for the Creationists

Once considered, according to *Nature*, the nearest thing to a citadel to Darwinism, the Museum seems to have slipped back to the anti-evolution stand of its 1881 head, Sir Richard Owen. Colin Patterson, a devoted disciple of Owen (quoted by Bryan Silcock, *The Sunday Times*, 24 May 1981), stated: "I am trying not to believe in evolution in the naive hope that, by trying to look at things as a nonbeliever, I'll find things that are convincing. . . The trouble is that Darwinism is treated like a religion. If you express any doubts people react like churchmen sniffing out heresy."

This very point is in fact now the major plank of the current Creationists' case in the American courts: "Evolution is a humanist religion, it is not science". They can now, to their delight and, I suspect, incredulity, call upon experts from the British Museum (Natural History) in their support. Our embattled American scientific colleagues, struggling with the Fundamentalists from President Reagan down, will not thank us for this.

EVENTS

Belfast Humanist Group. Secretary: Wendy Wheeler, 30 Cloyne Crescent, Monkstown, Co Antrim. Tel: Whiteabbey 66752.

Brighton and Hove Humanist Group. Queen's Head, Queen's Road (entrance in Junction Road, opposite Brighton Station). Sunday, 4 October, 5.30 pm. Jeremy Cherfas: "Astrology—Science or Nonsense?"

Gay Humanist Group. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London. Meeting on the second Friday of the month, 7.30 pm.

Harrow Humanist Society. Gayton Road Library, Harrow, Wednesday, 14 October, 8 pm. Claire Rayner: "Being a Meddler—the Dilemma of the Professional Communicator".

Havering and District Humanist Society. Harold Wood Social Centre (junction of Gubbins Lane and Squirrels Heath Road), Tuesday, 15 September, 8 pm. Frank Willcocks: "The French Political Scene Today".

London Secular Group. (Outdoor Meetings) Thursday, 12.30 pm at Tower Hill; Sunday, 2-5 pm at Marble Arch. (The Freethinker and other literature on sale.)

Merseyside Humanist Group. 46 Hamilton Square, Birkenhead, Monday, 21 September, 7.45 pm. A speaker from the Council for British Naturism.

Worthing Humanist Group. Trades Club, 15 Broadwater Road, Sunday, 27 September, 5.30 pm. Barbara Smoker: "Is Christianity Harmless?"

PUBLIC MEETINGS AT CONWAY HALL, Red Lion Square, London (Holborn Underground)

Monday, 26 October, 7 pm
Professor Bernard Williams
Legislation on Pornography

Monday, 2 November, 7 pm
Antony Grey
How Moral is the Backlash?

Monday, 9 November, 7 pm
Madeleine Simms
Reflections on "Irresponsible Societies"

Organisers: National Secular Society,
British Humanist Association,
South Place Ethical Society
and Rationalist Press Association

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