

THE

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ETHICAL RECORD



Vol. 77, No. 1

JANUARY 1972

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Published by

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY

Conway Hall Humanist Centre
Red Lion Square, London, WC1R 4RL

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Coming at Conway Hall

For more details see "South Place News" and "For the Record."

Sunday, January 2

- 11 a.m.—**S.P.E.S. Lecture: DAVID TRIBE on Humanism and Poetry**
Contraalto Solos: Ann Tiernan
6 p.m.—**Bridge Practice** in the Library. Light refreshments served.
Newcomers welcomed

Tuesday, January 4

- 7 p.m.—**Conway Discussion** introduced by Dr. Peter Fenwick. Subject:
Illusion, Education and the Real World

Friday, January 7

- 6.30 p.m.—**Annual General Meeting** of Humanist Holidays. Members
and friends invited

Sunday, January 9

- 11 a.m.—**S.P.E.S. Lecture: HAROLD BLACKHAM on Is There a
General Morality?** Soprano Solos: Jean Adams
3 p.m.—**Humanist Forum: The Underground Press** with Tony Elliott
and Mick Farren
6 p.m.—**Bridge Practice**
6.30 p.m.—**Concert:** London Harpsichord Ensemble. Programme:
Mozart D K285 Flute Quartet, Schickard B flat Sonata,
Telemann E flat Trio, Vivaldi Cmi Concerto and J. C. Bach
E flat Concerto

Tuesday, January 11

- 7 p.m.—**Conway Discussion** introduced by H. Lionel Elvin. Subject:
**Do We Need to Put Anything in the Place of Religious
Education?**

Saturday, January 15

- 3 to 6 p.m.—**Country Dancing** (Jointly with Progressive League). Begin-
ners welcome. Instructress: Eda Collins

Sunday, January 16

- 11 a.m.—**S.P.E.S. Lecture: LORD BROCKWAY on Religion and
Humanism** Bass Solos: G. C. Dowman
3 p.m.—**Sunday Social.** Guest of Honour: **Lord Brockway**
6 p.m.—**Bridge Practice**
6.30 p.m.—**Concert:** Martin Piano Trio. Programme: Mozart G K564,
Brahms C Op. 87 and Dvorak Dumky Op.90

Tuesday, January 18

- 7 p.m.—**Conway Discussion** introduced by Dr. Graham Owens.
Subject: **A New Approach to Teacher Education**

Thursday, January 20

- 6.30 p.m.—**Bridge Drive**

Continued on inside back cover

THE ETHICAL RECORD

(Formerly 'The Monthly Record')

Vol. 77, No. 1

JANUARY 1972

The views expressed in this journal are not necessarily those of the Society

EDITORIAL

Public service and profit

AT THE BEGINNING of another year, we are faced with increases in the prices of most public services. Notable among these are postal and public transport charges. Apparently not believing that you get what you pay for, the Post Office added when it announced the increased prices a few weeks ago that many services would also be cut. Pay more and get less!

We in South Place know to our cost how incredibly inefficient the Post Office can be at times. After the best part of a year with persistently delayed deliveries of *The Ethical Record*, and many complaints concerning the time the October issue was in the post—no less than 11 days in the case of at least one reader—we went “first class” in November, and that month’s meeting of the General Committee decided to adopt this as standard practice. True this is playing into their hands, but a journal is no use to its readers unless it arrives in time to be read.

The whole trouble with public services in Britain is that in recent years they have been told they must pay their own way, and if they don’t make a profit they don’t survive in their present forms. This is true of British Rail, the Post Office, London Transport and many of the *public services* we take for granted.

It is not so much a question of should, say postage, be a business or a service, but how best to run the business of postage as a service to the community at reasonable cost.

Broadcasting is in a particularly special position, at least as far as television is concerned. The B.B.C. operates one of the best television networks in the world, at a very reasonable charge, however much we complain about it. And this in the face of competition, although the crux of the matter is that the competition is in fact no competition, since to receive the “opposition”, one must first pay for the B.B.C.

So it is that there is a peculiar myth in Britain that in order to have good service in something, there must either be competition, or it must make a profit. Those who live in areas where unprofitable but vital rail services have been slashed or discontinued might argue otherwise.

Many other European countries can operate rail and postal services as a good public service, resigned to the fact that taxpayers must foot the loss bill: it is time Britain realised this fact.

Meanwhile, we shall suffer declining services at escalating costs for a long while to come. How long can we tolerate this?

The Nature of Self

BY

COLIN HAMER, Ph.D.

I FEEL it is a characteristic of persons engaging themselves authentically in the enterprise we call philosophy to experience peculiar difficulties in thinking. The philosopher is someone who finds it very hard to think, just as the theologian, in my view, is one who finds it very hard to believe.

Since I am the holder of academic degrees from a Papal University in Rome in both theology and philosophy, I find myself in the position, which some would regard as at least a little unenviable, of experiencing severe hardship as regards both knowledge and belief.

My mother is a Roman Catholic by birth of staunch Irish stock, and I have enjoyed the benefits of a full-scale Catholic education, having been a priest for six years.

My father held himself aloof from organised religion, and inclined towards vegetarianism, as well as involving himself in yoga exercises and meditation for a short time. He asked to be received into membership of the Roman Catholic church in his mid-sixties, and then drowned himself in a mill-pool a few months later.

I have for many years been much exercised about the question of what it means to be an authentic person, to be genuine, not to be a drifter, a yes-man, or, automatically, the odd man out in any company.

In taking as my theme the nature of self, I am not concerned primarily with the attempt to sketch out my theoretical position in order to commend it. I want to present a few personal considerations that may serve as a catalyst for shared, subsequent, existential reflection on the meaningfulness or otherwise of living.

Accordingly, I am not talking to you about the influence on my thinking of Saint Paul's doctrine of the cosmic Christ and of his mystical body, nor about the slow crystallisation within Christianity of the dogmas of the Trinity of three divine Egos in one psychological consciousness, and of the hypostatic union of a divine and a human consciousness in the unique person of Jesus. Suffice it to say that meditation on these mysteries helped me to become convinced that man is not a duality of body and soul, of flesh and spirit, of good and evil, of light and darkness, in the manner in which many Roman Catholics seemed to me to believe that he is, and in which, certainly, he is unhelpfully described as being in the Manichean, Platonist, Augustinian and Jansenist traditions, still so influential among nominal Christians. I felt I had to believe that bodies were nice, that matter was good, and that everything ought to be looked at in the light.

I was, therefore, very pleased when, almost twenty years ago now, I was introduced to Jungian dynamic psychology by a somewhat unusual priest, whose private secretary I had the privilege to be. I learned to open myself as much as possible to the whole field of human experience available to me in the rather restricted atmosphere of a seminary. I also learned to be critical of all opinions and interpretations, however persuasive and plausible, including not only my own most cherished beliefs, but, more importantly, those of my masters and guides.

I was convinced that, if there was truth, it would stand up to any test, and that, in consequence, no question should ever be left unanswered, no criticism unweighed.

As I address myself deliberately to this particular question of the nature of self, there spring to mind, first of all, the perennial disagreements among philosophers on the subject, and, in particular, the contributions of Socrates

know thyself, of Descartes' equally famous *I think, therefore, I am*, of Jean-Paul Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*, and of A. J. Ayer's studies of the person.

I practise as a psychotherapist and, in particular, I lead encounter groups, having had, in the fairly recent past, the experience of an intensive Freudian psychoanalysis, and having given quite considerable attention to group-dynamics, bioenergetic massage, and developments in humanistic psychology. All this has had some effect upon me as a person, and has, no doubt, helped to shape my ideas about the nature of self.

I do not feel I am either an eclectic nor a syncretist, and my reverence for the value of any genuinely human contribution to knowledge convinces me that the truth contains and does not exclude, that it differentiates and does not confuse, and that its simplicity rejoices in endless variety. I believe a priest can be a layman, a Roman Catholic an agnostic, a philosopher, a poet, a lover of tradition, a progressive or a detached critic deeply committed.

I am not trying to sell a doctrine, and I refuse to be a partisan, and I readily admit that this too can deteriorate into an '-ism.'

Beware the seeker of disciples
the missionary
the pusher
all proselytizing men
all who claim that they have found
the path to heaven.

For the sound of their words
is the silence of their doubt.

The allegory of your conversion
sustains them through their uncertainty.

Persuading you, they struggle
to persuade themselves.

They need you
as they say you need them:
there is a symmetry they do not mention
in their sermon
or in the meeting
near the secret door.

As you suspect each one of them
be wary also of these words,
for I, dissuading you,
obtain new evidence
that there is no shortcut,
no path at all,
no destination.

The nature of self is a vast subject. I am not going to consider the innocence of infancy, the oceanic feeling of the unborn babe and the unweaned child, the primitive roots of separation anxiety, envy and gratitude. I do not offer any analysis of the identity crisis that is so common among adolescents in our culture. I do not even wish to examine the main characteristics of a normal or healthy state of personality. Instead, I address my

attention principally to questions relating to the state that Rollo May calls creative consciousness of self.

My experience inclines me to say that we do not have bodies; we are bodies. And even this is not a satisfactory mode of expression. The Russians do not say 'the sky is blue'; they say 'the sky is bluing.' Somewhat similarly, I wish to say 'I am bodying.' I do not experience myself as a body, as a static or precisely assignable object; I experience myself dynamically involving myself in being and living bodily in and about the world. My body is the subject more than an object of my conscious living.

The world is only an object for me to the extent that I am alienated from it. Civilisation is an extension of the body, a development in human bodying, thanks to which we come to live comfortably and to feel at home in the universe, to experience ourselves on a world scale instead of feeling ourselves to be encapsulated in our skin.

When my telephone is functioning satisfactorily, I am not conscious of it as an object; it becomes purely a medium of communication, and places me in direct contact with the other person at the end of the line. It is only when I get a wrong number, or an engaged signal, or something goes wrong, that I turn my attention to the telephone as an object. To the extent that the telephone fulfils its purpose as a medium of communication, it does not exist for me as an object, it is nothing in my world, as far as I am concerned; the telephone annihilates itself in linking me directly with some other person with whom I communicate. In the same way, I suggest, the body ceases to be an object in proportion as our living in and about the world is fully personal and our mutual domestic and social intercourse authentic.

Taken as a collection of doctrines about the nature of the objective state of affairs, pantheism is a naive bundle of blunders. It is also a fair expression of a way of experiencing reality which those of us who do not share it may well envy.

I feel I do not want to rest my life on any ideology that I have understood intellectually and to which I may have given an at least provisional measure of assent. I am not a computer-triggered automaton, but a living symbol, influenced by images, myths, stories. My feelings are of basic importance.

It is easy to illustrate this point. In my work as a psychotherapist I listen to what my client is saying to me, and attach even more importance to my perception of his state of tension or relaxation in the context of his developing relationship with myself. I may be more easily persuaded by a convincing tone of voice than by a logically developed argument, even to the extent of feeling, with Cardinal Newman, that what can be proved to be true, just must be false. A consultant psychiatrist may dismiss an efficient secretary with a harsh voice in favour of a honey-toned answerer of the telephone whose office skills are far from adequate. The Reichian-oriented therapist may take his client's directly apprehended state of bodily tension more seriously than any verbal report on his past or present situation.

Grimm's fairy-tales, Tolkien's "The Lord of the Rings", the parables of Jesus, the pageantry of Coronation day or the State Opening of Parliament move me more deeply than Emmanuel Kant's presentation of his Categorical Imperative.

If living animals are more interesting than stuffed ones in museum cases, living thoughts in the heart of popular tradition are richer far than the blood-less anatomical specimens delineated for us by the professional thinkers.

The Self is larger than anything we shall ever know.

I remember a retired army colonel telling me that, when on foreign service, he could smell a rain-storm several hours away. A traveller's tale, perhaps, and possibly a partial return to that primitive *participation mystique*

which we think of as characterising the social consciousness of preliterate man.

I feel that my consciousness has no assignable limits. It is intersubjective from the start. In my encounters with others, I become more fully 'I' involving myself with 'You' and so responsible for 'Us'. In the experience of encounter I appreciate what it is to have acquaintances, companions, colleagues, friends, lovers

Consider, for instance, how, thrusting aside every instinct of brutal violence Francis, the poor man of Assisi, passed his life in a spirit of unlimited dedication, with a sense of loving responsibility towards every man or beast or bird. He called the animals 'brothers' and 'sisters', and knew how to gain their confidence. He belonged to a sort of cosmic brotherhood. The veils of objective categories and thought-patterns were removed from the eyes of Francis, and he was able to see all things in unity, and unity in all things. Thomas of Celano tells us that while Francis was alive the fields were rich and fertile, the birds sang, and the sky was serene. But when he was taken from among us, there came famine, pestilence, sedition, war and death. In Francis the Self found peace . . .

The Zen Buddhist, the Christian mystic, the Guru in his transcendental meditation, the LSD tripper may have a keen appreciation of the unity of consciousness, the unrestrictedness of its field, and the need for its subject to resist the tempting demands of objectivity.

Yet objectivity is needed in the human world of language, art, literature, science, philosophy and history. The developed self is differentiated from within. Our experience is complemented by understanding, judgment, and practical decision. Man freely assigns a meaning to himself and his world, creating families, societies, states, providing himself with education, customs, laws, economies and technologies.

In speaking to you now I am, in human terms, not merely acknowledging but also contributing towards the creation of your existence as distinct from mine and of mine as distinct from yours. Speech acts do not only express meaning; they constitute it. We are who we say we are, and because we say we are.

Such saying is, of course, not the achievement of audible words only. The language in which we bring ourselves into existence is the whole universe of man's creative self-expression—art, literature, science, technology, society and history.

Thanks to language we can refer to what is absent as well as to what is present, concern ourselves with what is remote and distant as well as with what is close at hand, living not only in the actuality of the present moment but in realms of future possibilities, in the world of the ideal and of what ought-to-be.

Life in this larger real world mediated by language is insecure and fraught by anxiety, and the self is threatened in this world even more than within the world of immediate sensory experience. For, if there is truth, there is also error; if there is fact, there is fiction too; as well as honesty we encounter deceit, and all our science is adulterated with myth. Reflection on meaning and control of meaning are not easy, and it is hardly surprising that today so many people are trying to retreat from the game into the cloud-cuckoo land of hallucinatory experience.

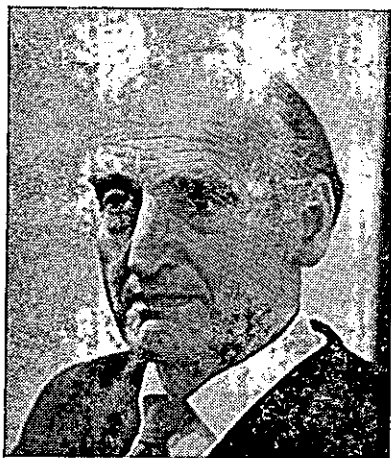
I know that we cannot retreat. Like Socrates I feel self-knowledge is crucial. Today, too, myth and magic exercise their fascination on many minds, including my own. They are both instances of meaning—myth declares a meaning, and magic commands one. However, the declaration of myth is mistaken, and the command of magic is futile. As I have said, objectivity is needed. And objectivity includes learning to live with questions.

(Summary of a lecture given on June 20)

Meet the Movement

Harold Blackham— “High Priest of Humanism”

Interviewed by the Editor



*(Photograph by courtesy of
Rationalist Press Association)*

Q You have been connected with the Humanist movement for 38 years, and are now associated with four organisations and president of the Humanist Housing Association. You have thus come to be known variously as the High Priest of Humanism. Others have bestowed different honours upon you, such as the Patron Saint and the St Paul of the movement. Just how far do you regard Humanism as a religion?

A I must say I am unaware of these honorary titles you mention, and I would wear them very uneasily; for I do not regard Humanism as a cult. On the contrary, I have said that Humanism is not merely a rejection of Christianity but mainly a rejection of the religious categories: the divine, the holy, the sacred, the absolute. It is an age-old difference in thinking about the way things are, with a different strategy for living.

Q What is it about Humanism that has maintained your enthusiasm and your interest in it through the years, and what about it gives you most satisfaction today?

A It is like religion in representing the spontaneous idealism of human beings, though in different terms; and this aspirational side of human nature is the one consoling feature of human history. I am encouraged by the appeal of humanism to thoughtful younger people, and by the public recognition it now has. The word is commonly understood and the position commonly respected, as it was not when I set out to rebuild the Ethical Union on the basis of humanism after the war.

Q What is the most memorable Humanist event or development for you?

A Perhaps the foundation of the International Humanist and Ethical Union in 1952, and its development since. Dr. J. P. van Praag and I took the preliminary steps leading to the inaugural Congress in Amsterdam which brought together the older constituents of the Ethical movement and the post-war humanist movements.

Q How do you see the future for the Humanist movement? All the organisations are just about breaking even financially, and some are in difficulties. Do you foresee any mergers?

A Most voluntary organisations, and many others are in chronic financial difficulties. Mergers offer some economic advantage but occasion upheavals and throw up problems. So long as each constituent organisation has a distinctive character and role, probably close co-ordination and co-operation serve the interests of members better than a common identity. But the public are confused by the historical differences.

Q Why do you think there is so little growth in membership within the Humanist bodies today? Do you take this as a sign that much of the work the movement set out to do has been done?

A The anti-religious propaganda of the movement is not popular today, and is probably regarded as otiose. Most of the social causes which humanists support have their own specific lobbies. I believe there is a general social role for the humanist movement in the context of today, but we are still groping to find it. Our main concern is what it always has been, helping to form socially responsible people and helping people in their personal lives on humanist assumptions; but we have not developed effective modern ways of giving effect to this concern.

Q Do you see any remedy for declining membership? Do you think the various organisations should play more important roles in social issues, and play down the anti-religious aspect?

A Increased membership comes in the train of activities that are seen to be effective and felt to be worthy of support. Therefore I do think that we need to be seen to be making a significant contribution to improving the quality of life. This may even be in co-operation with church leaders, as on the Social Morality Council. The problems of our time are too formidable and too global to be tackled on a sectarian basis.

Q Turning to South Place now, how long have you been an Appointed Lecturer?

A Since 1965.

Q What value do you think the Sunday morning lectures have, bearing in mind the small number of people attending?

A There is a regular attendance of some 50, and the encouraging aspect is that these always seem to include a high proportion of younger people. In these days of the mass media it is more than ever important to have opportunities for face to face meeting and discussion. The South Place tradition of an open platform for speech without fear or favour is worth maintaining.

Q What do you see as South Place's particular role within the broad movement, and how best can it contribute to "the cause"?

A The platform and the concerts have a certain reputation which it is the responsibility of the Society to maintain. The quality and usefulness of the discussions promoted have, I believe, notably improved and can be further improved. The property which provides a centre for these activities and for other "events" is a major responsibility of the Society, and its fuller use for humanist purposes could be explored.

Q South Place is the only London-based organisation which has its own hall, a sizeable meeting place. Why do you think the other bodies do not have such places, bearing in mind that like-thinking people enjoy discussing their ideas with each other?

A I long ago hoped that there would be a local humanist group in every sizeable town with property of its own as a base for activities, perhaps with a part-time warden. It is quite a modest ambition for the movement, but there is no sign that it is likely to be fulfilled. Local groups everywhere seem to be too unsure of themselves and lacking in growth to commit themselves to ownership and give hostages to fortune.

Q If we believe that Humanism has an importance for the world, may we consider some of the problems which face mankind now, and see if Humanism has any answers? The nearest to home, of course, is the Northern Ireland situation. Do you believe that a Humanist ethic could play a part in bringing peace?

A I do not see how the humanist movement can directly help to settle the troubles in Northern Ireland, which are communal rather than merely religious. There are useful humanist groups in both Belfast and Dublin, and they are in touch with one another. I understand that the outside tensions, muted and moderated, are reflected within the groups. The overriding difficulty seems to be that there is no solution that could command a majority that would accommodate and content the minorities.

Q On a wider scale, we are faced with extinction at our own hands from pollution. Do you think Humanists should be urging Governments worldwide to legislate against pollution-making commodities and machines, e.g. the non-return bottle and the motor car?

A A humanist and colleague, Dr. D. MacEwan, did start the Conservation Society, and this was the theme of the Hannover I.H.E.U. Congress in 1968. The R.P.A. have just published Jack Parson's *Population versus Liberty*, a formidable engine of propaganda in the struggle for survival. The issue can be said to be a main preoccupation of humanists everywhere—and it was so before "pollution" became a topic of popular concern.

Q May I turn to more personal matters? Are you a "world government man"?

A "World order" rather than "world government". Terrifying global problems have brought mankind together, and there is no hope of tackling them successfully except by international collaboration on "a human programme". There is a trend towards regional integration on an economic basis, and there will have to be inter-regional bridge-building. But "world government" could mean a world policed by U.S.A.-U.S.S.R. hegemony. There are viable methods and forms of world order short of centralised world government, which I believe would be far more favourable to liberty and the quality of life.

Q Do you believe in proselytising? Many Humanists believe that folk have a right to believe what they will, and do not try to spread their own beliefs.

A I think Humanism is on offer as an alternative for those who are unable to find a religious faith. I would not be anxious to save people from their religious faith if they have one. Nor do I like sneers and contempt for the faith others may have. On the other hand, I think

humanists should bear witness to their own convictions and explain and recommend them on proper occasions. Mutual interest in and respect for the fundamental convictions by which people live is the reasonable and civilised way. Attack on the social privileges of the churches is another matter.

Q Of all the great men and women who have gone into the history of the movement, which one do you admire most in retrospect?

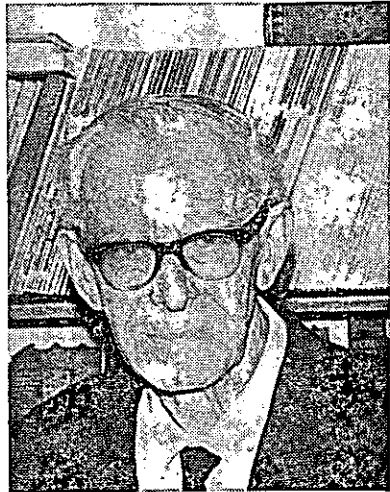
A The Greeks are too remote. I find Hume very attractive. But Diderot combines intellect with passion in a way that gets my love. At South Place, I admired Delisle Burns and J. A. Hobson, two very different men, enthusiastically.

Q What do you most wish to be remembered for?

A I do not think of being remembered at all; but I have striven to remind the movement of its roots in history, to regain its entire patrimony, to lay hold of its permanent tradition. Perhaps the answer is, for a book not yet written.

Mr. Blackham, thank you.

Lord Sorensen Remembered



MANY MEMBERS and friends of South Place, together with representatives of kindred organisations, gathered in Conway Hall on Sunday, October 31 to pay tribute to Lord Sorensen, who died earlier in the month. Lord Sorensen was to have given a lecture that morning, and it was thought fit to hold the memorial meeting in its place.

Addressing the meeting were two extraordinarily differing personalities, one remembering Lord Sorensen as a Humanist, and the other remember-

ing him as a religious figure. The one was Lord Brockway, and the other Rev. John Robbins, a Unitarian Minister.

Opening the meeting, general secretary Peter Cadogan read an extract from the writings of Bertrand Russell, and asked Lord Brockway to speak first.

Lord Brockway conveyed the regrets of Lady Sorensen at not being able to attend, and said that she appreciated the gesture embodied in the meeting.

"My association with Reg—Lord Sorensen—has been strangely close" he began, and went on to describe the peculiarly parallel development of his own and Lord Sorensen's lives, even to the extent that the two men married sisters and thus became brothers-in-law. They were M.P.'s for two constituencies in the same borough, Leyton, and both were defeated in 1931.

Indian Associations

"We both became mainly concerned with fighting for the right of independence, particularly for the people of India, and Reg became chairman of the India League," continued Lord Brockway. "This was in spite of that country's associations with Communism".

"Reg did more for Indian independence than any man appointed to that Parliamentary Commission in 1946."

There was one major point of difference between the men, however, namely that when the rift came in the Labour movement, Lord Sorensen stayed with the Labour Party, while Lord Brockway left with the Independent Labour Party. Although the speaker did not see this loyalty necessarily as a quality.

"One fault of Reg's might be this extreme sense of loyalty to his party and colleagues" he said. "Reg suffered deep regret when Patrick Gordon-Walker needed his Parliamentary seat, and Reg was elevated to the peerage.

"Reg was a Christian" Lord Brockway went on. "But his wide view of religion allowed him to be a South Place lecturer, because of his views on ethics. He did not see ethics as exclusively Christian.

"We were both influenced in the early days by R. J. Campbell, who preached the new theology, which rationalised Christian beliefs and shocked everyone. Reg of course became a Unitarian. But throughout his life he constantly sought basic truths

"He was one of the sweetest and kindest men I've ever known".

What might have been news to many present was the fact revealed by Lord Brockway that Lord Sorensen had a great way with children and possessed a remarkable ability as a ventriloquist.

"He was a practical idealist", said Lord Brockway in his closing remarks. "His attitude to life was an adherence to certain deep principles, tolerant, seeking truth, working for ideals. He has made a great contribution to freedom and justice in the world".

The Clerical Side

Rev. John Robbins said there was so much to say about Lord Sorensen he hardly knew where to start. Although he would not use the word "great" lightly, it was no exaggeration to call Lord Sorensen a great man.

"Lord Sorensen had so many gifts, talents and abilities, his warm humanity was felt by all" said Rev. Robbins. "He gave forth a deep and genuine love for all men, with the rarest of qualities, humility".

Lord Sorensen's "liberal religious faith", thought Rev. Robbins, inspired his political life. "He gave devoted service in the religious sphere" he added and went on to say that Lord Sorensen had been a "pioneer of the new theology." The Order of Pioneer Preachers, to which Lord Sorensen had belonged, was taken over by the Unitarians, and in 1916 Lord Sorensen

took over the Walthamstow Unitarian church. "In this he helped to foster fellowship with other congregations. As chairman of the World Congress of Faith, he was undoubtedly pleased to see for the first time a World Congress service held in a Roman Catholic church this year.

"He was also a bridge builder between Humanists and Theists. Although associating with Humanists very closely, he accepted extra-sensory perception and psychic phenomena, and was the vice-chairman of the Society for Psychical Studies".

Among Lord Sorensen's great virtues, concluded Rev. Robbins, were tolerance and dignity without pomposity. "He was always just plain Reg, and Uncle Reg to many children.

"Reg died almost in harness. His life included attending the Lords, chairing, presiding or speaking at all sorts of functions, and he was even an honorary chief of a Nigerian tribe! He was active to the end. Reg Sorensen will be mourned by many creeds and races".

Members' Tributes

Those in the audience wishing to pay tribute to Lord Sorensen included Barbara Smoker, who thought that too little had been said of his sense of humour which was keen and made much use of irony, sometimes at his own expense, and often about the House of Lords.

Miss E. Pracey, who had known Lord Sorensen for many years, revealed that he had also written several plays, including "Tolpuddle", about the martyrs, and "1848".

A member of the audience from India said that, together with that of Lord Brockway, Lord Sorensen's name was "revered greatly" in India and Ceylon.

Vi Hassid spoke of Lord Sorensen's tirelessness in his duties, and recalled a party visit to the Lords, conducted by Lord Sorensen during which he continuously imparted information to the party, and although the visit lasted a very long time, it was not long enough for "Reg", who wanted to go on. Miss Hassid showed a book Lord Sorensen had given her, inscribed with a poem he had composed.

H. J. Blackham regretted that he had only known Lord Sorensen casually, but he had noticed "the total availability of the man", which Mr Blackham thought should have been "marvellous" for an MP. He had found the "simple humanity" and the "sweetness of disposition" of Lord Sorensen, praiseworthy features.

Dr. A. Lovecy said that once, while chairing a meeting, he had introduced Lord Sorensen as an atheist. He was politely rebuked, Lord Sorensen saying that in fact he was an agnostic, not being prepared to make the positive assertion assumed by atheists. "Reg Sorensen was a straight speaker, saying what he thought, with the rare combination of candour and kindness".

All who encountered Lord Sorensen even briefly, cannot have failed to feel the warmth and genuine interest for his fellow man which came forth. His wide span of human relations was epitomised by the presence in Conway Hall, speaking for him, of both a clerical man and a humanist speaker. Although some present clearly could not determine for themselves Lord Sorensen's stand on religious matters, the truth, perhaps, has something to do with this. No creed doctrine or set of assertions would do for Lord Sorensen. These could be divisive, to which he was totally opposed. He was a "uniter", in religion, international affairs and local matters. Unity, not division, was his life's work.

His warm, almost homely, Sunday morning talks in Conway Hall will indeed be missed.

E.W.

HUMANIST FORUMS

If Liberal Democracy is Dead What are the Democratic Alternatives?

PETER CADOGAN who, with Maurice Hill, led the discussion, warned against an excessive Utopianism. Dreaming about a differently constituted, happier society, should not be allowed to take precedence over practical thinking as how best to bring these changes about. The visionary sense should be tempered by a gritty approach so as not to inhibit us from taking action.

Before suggesting alternatives to Parliamentary Democracy, it may be as well to take a good, long look at the present situation. Inflation is rife and constitutes a serious threat to our national survival. Soon, like the Germans in 1923, our earnings may have to be taken home in a sack. A graph published in "The Times", showed an almost terrifying gap between wealth and production. Pay is unrelated to the value of the work done; it has become bound up with power. Even Trade Unions seem to have aligned themselves with the powerful and have become the capitalists of the working classes. Wage increases are demanded—and granted—with *no* corresponding rise in productivity. Added to which there are whole armies of people commanding high salaries, but who do not produce anything to be sold or used by the public. Since the last war Whitehall has become a veritable rabbit warren of civil servants who do not spin, nor do they reap or sow.

These ills are rooted in centralised government itself. It has become too remote. London is not even physically related to our problems. Westminster cannot control the army of experts at Whitehall. Parliamentarians seem to be as helpless as the ordinary citizen against bureaucracy, this vast machinery of government they themselves created.

The Government is losing credence. The public has no faith in its ability to come to grips with our problems. It is not good enough any more just to vote in the next general election. We need more voluntary organisations to do more of the work of government themselves. We are driven to solve problems which can no longer be solved on parliamentary level. England has a fine tradition of voluntary societies taking effective action against the authorities. Stansted was a recent case in point. Inhabitants, volunteers, experts fought the Government, until victory was theirs and Foulness accepted as the new airport. Private citizens should be elected by lot to serve on local committees, each according to his ability. All those who feel concern, should band together and act as the watchdogs of democratic government. The strength of the private citizen should be such as to make the corridors of power redundant.

Maurice Hill went along with Mr. Cadogan about the lack of participation, attitudes of apathy and withdrawal, shown by many people. But, unlike Mr. Cadogan, who wishes to work through and improve existing voluntary institutions, Mr. Hill advocates sweeping much of the present structure of society away.

He pinned his faith on the younger generation to achieve the longed-for changes. To fit them for this responsible task, schools should be democratised, liberalised and pupils elected to serve with teachers on school councils. Education should be changed so as to teach children not just to give orders and join the elite when they are grown-ups.

There is too much authoritarianism about. No Head or Governors of a school should have the power to expel a boy or punish him for writing a poor essay. Restrictions we have imposed in the past have led to anti-

social behaviour. The sex-film, "Growing-Up", should be shown; the Little Red School Book freely distributed.

Acceptance of the system is passed on by the family—conformity, obedience, loyalty to family, country and school.

The alternative to the family structure, is the commune, a cluster of buildings, preferably in the country, inhabited by a group of not more than 20 in number. The older people would still feel part of a community, adults will have companionship, children would act on councils to teach their responsibility. Those with problems will get far more help than from their parents. We must not impose solutions on children. We should teach them loyalty to the whole human race.

In his summing-up after the discussion, Mr. Hill reiterated that we must get rid of the authoritarian family, religion in schools and start communes. We need to transform the structure in which we live.

Peter Cadogan, summing up, disagreed with the over-all condemnation of all schools. His own daughter, for instance, had received an excellent education at a Grammar School. The many nervous breakdowns among teachers, especially at Secondary Modern Schools, may indicate that they do not find teaching the young is any kind of a picnic. The first responsibility for education are the parents not the schools.

He reminded us again about the value of work, which is satisfying, as opposed to labour which is mere drudgery. There should be no compulsory retirement, people should be allowed to contribute to the community for as long as they are able.

The future lies with regional government, not national. The nation-state is on its way out.

Mr. Tony Brantingham, the third speaker, who was going to tell us about The Dwarfs, a community of young people in Holland, failed to materialise. Another member of the same group, Mick Kinshott, took part in the discussion.

TINA DELIUS

(Report of a Humanist Forum held on May 9, 1971)

Humanism and the Role of South Place

THERE clearly were two things to consider, said Peter Cadogan, in the introduction to the Humanist Forum under the above title. The first was Humanism and the second was the part this Society played, and could play, within Humanism.

Humanism is non-sectarian, he said. This did not mean that we were always free of the sins of sectarianism but we had made a break with them and it was useful to be aware of what they are. Religious and political sects could be easily recognised by three things: the dogmatic character of their ideas, the authoritarian nature of their leadership and the conspiratorial form of their organisation. To be non-sectarian meant, therefore, being non-dogmatic, non-authoritarian and open.

"Humanism is a compound of a number of different elements." First was, and is, the philosophy, science and arts of the Renaissance and their roots in Ancient Greece and Augustan Rome. Second is the Humanist challenge to the Church and many, but not all, of its works (clearly there is a grass-roots tradition in organised Christianity of which Humanism, South Place in particular, is in a sense part). Third is the rationalist, one might almost say Darwinian, challenge to all forms of dogma. Fourth is

the ethical challenge to codified, rigid, authoritarian, religious morality. Out of all four emerge Humanist beliefs in freedom, justice and peace and in the task of translating them into actual achievements on the moving frontier of progress.

Humanism, like any other philosophy, wrestles in the widest sense with the major problems and dilemmas that beset us all. This does *not* make the situation a political one since the truth is much deeper than that. It is not a matter of what Governments should or should not do. It is rather what individual and groups can do in the light of their own understanding of their own condition and nature.

Relics of the Past

In this country we face "the English sickness". Until 1914 we had firm foundations on which to work. This does not necessarily mean that they were good but they were unmistakable and strong. We had an ethos, a national outlook of values based on a great empire; Britannia ruling the seas, sterling ruling the world's money market, powerful Churches, a strongly based Victorian family system, a greatly respected Parliament, well-defined social caste values and a great tradition of freedom. We also had bitter poverty and suffering but the social and moral climate was essentially unquestioned except by a tiny handful of people whose voices were not heard. Today none of these things are credible in the same way, but they are all still with us in some vestigial way, especially in the mind. "We are imprisoned by the now inert ideas of the past", said Mr. Cadogan.

On the List

There had been "a great deal of successful criticism and reform since 1914", but the major change has been, one might say, physical—in that two world wars have eliminated and transformed so much of the Britain of 1914.

There has been much for organised rationalism, secularism and ethical humanism to attack and replace—superstition, the Papacy, the Church of England and a long list of manifest social injustices. Today the clergy who used to be so self-confident and arrogant are now, many of them, almost embarrassing us with the protestations of *their* humanism! But against them and ourselves there is now to be set a new evangelical revival, usually imported from the U.S., in the form of the Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists, Jesus "freaks" and special phenomena like Scientology. At an even deeper level, and certainly with more native roots, we face mass subscription to the values of football (and the pools), bingo, green shield stamps and astrology.

So part of our trouble is that our very battlefield has changed almost out of recognition in the last sixty years while we are still very largely geared to the needs of times that have past. Given that we are as clear as ever about our negative message, which is still important, that of rejecting the supernatural, what do we *positively* have to say? This is the question. Why should millions of humanists, with a small "h", witnesses to our success, bother with Humanism with a capital "H"? Why should they "join"—and what should they join?

"This brings me round to the problem of the answer that we have, or might have, on behalf of ethical humanism at South Place. Every month the back of our published programme says what we are about. It is at one and the same time a very good statement but one which is so generalised that it can mean as much or as little as the individual cares to read into it. What we are, more specifically, we indicate by what we *do* and what we say is made meaningful by what we *do*".

Peter Cadogan was in rather a difficult position here since he was speaking as an individual but could not forget that he was also the General Secretary of the organisation he was talking about. "I just hope you will bear with the complexity of that position!" he pleaded.

Life and Love

"Ethics is the art of living, the art of taking individual decisions in all kind of personal, social and professional situations, decisions involving what one feels to be right and wrong", he declared. This meant that ethical humanism is *humanism in the round* as a personal and social philosophy to live by. When we live up to this on our public programme and concentrate our thinking and activity accordingly (this means paying special attention to the arts, psychology, education and philosophy) and reinforce that with getting to know people and creating a real atmosphere of belonging, then we grow and prosper. This means keeping away from politics and redressing the balance that has given science too great a place in the scheme of things. It means, too, having a deepening sense of human potentiality, of what we have in us that we have yet to realise. This is the transcendental, the religious element in ethical humanism and it does not require any faith in the supernatural. At the centre is what the Greeks and the early Christians called love, friendship and concern (*eros*, *philia* and *agape*) three different qualities about which Christian theologians have for centuries been hopelessly mixed up—especially in this country partly because the label for all three *different* feelings was translated into English by the *one* word "love". By digging this up, going over it and understanding it, we can hope to see where people in the past, including some Humanists, have gone wrong.

An explosive debate was needed that would rock the whole Humanist movement to its foundations. Without it those very foundations would not be properly re-examined. We need a debate about values, ideas and relationships, *not* a debate about power and personalities. This ought not to be too much to ask for since we have a remarkable tradition from which to start and four long-established and well-endowed organisations. This means that at the beginning we start *without* the problems of monopoly and centralisation.

We also need to appreciate that no organisation, no matter how old, how strong or how rich, has any immaculate or everlasting mandate to carry on. We have to earn every inch of our progress. "The society that rests on its laurels will soon rest with the dead."

"At South Place we are growing", said Mr. Cadogan. "We are experimenting step by step. We are probing the possibilities of new forms of activity in keeping with new ideas. We hold to both continuity and change. In our General Committee, and in the other fifteen or so committees that run the Society, you will hear some of the plainest speaking that has ever been known in any part of the Humanist movement ever, but somehow we manage to stick together. We were originally a congregation and we remain a congregation—this is a source of strength peculiar to South Place. We have had a great past and it is within our power to have an even greater future."

(*Report of a Humanist Forum held on March 28*)

The measure of a man's real character is what he would do if he knew he would never be found out.—*Thomas B. Macaulay*

CONWAY DISCUSSION

The Sensationalising of Science

DAVID DIXON, opening on this subject, pointed out that science was of its nature sensational and that we had therefore to distinguish between *authentic* sensation and its exploitation for purposes alien to science. What, after all, could be more sensational than Galileo's use of the telescope or Faraday's work on electricity? So it is that science provides legitimate material for the fantasies of science fiction.

Newspapers are reporting science more and more but they tend to regard it as any other kind of copy, have it written up by journalists without scientific training and tend to emphasise the sensational at the expense of the accurate. So we get alarmist reports about test-tube babies, heart transplants, miracle cures and all sorts of things that make for unwarranted hopes and fears. Science gets headlined like a bank robbery!

There are three particular conflicts between science and the press. The first one is time-scale. To a newspaper man something that happened 48 hours ago is ancient history and of no interest, but science works on a time-scale of years—and this makes for trouble. Secondly there is space pressure—a newspaper can spare three paragraphs where the scientist, covering the same ground, will need a "paper" thousands of words in length which will be the product of years of work. Thirdly there are different scales of importance since the press, catering for millions of non-specialists, looks for novelty and sensation. That means values quite different to the careful, sceptical, long-term values of science.

Editors know that their papers will only be read casually and that the "copy" has to be simple, vivid and brief. The temptation to liven it up is often irresistible. Gross over-simplification is often the result and there is an unbalanced emphasis on biology and medicine because of their short-term personal interest.

Influence in Print

An important part of the answer was to have more trained scientific journalists. They are important people because "what the papers say" has an influence on the way that science develops, since it tends to influence priorities when it comes to voting public money for research and development. Yet the fact is that very few science journalists have had any training in science!

Misreporting can have serious consequences. There was a recent misunderstanding over something said by the Medical Officer of Health for Eastbourne. The press got hold of the wrong end of the stick and the story was artificially blown up into a front-page storm. Side-effects of science journalism can be momentous. The treatment of the story of the "pill" can effect the birth of hundreds of thousands of babies!

The scientist tends to cut himself off and get isolated in the area of his own research. This tends to diminish his sense of social responsibility and make him feel alarmed and disconcerted by publicity.

Then again journalists are too given, as are so many laymen, to think of the scientist as a man who makes great discoveries in a series of brilliant brainwaves. They do not see the endless hard work and the drudgery that goes with it. The claims of the sensational mean that cancer, for example, gets a great deal more publicity than arthritis or heart disease.

Science today is mostly the product of intensive team work over a long period, but journalists are always predisposed to seek out the individual.

This is understandable (one can interview an individual much more easily than a group) but it is wrong because science is no longer like that.

Possible solutions to these problems seem to lie along four lines. Firstly better education in science for *all* so that science becomes part of a common language. Secondly there needs to be much higher standards in scientific reporting without necessarily going to the length achieved in the U.S. of providing university degrees in it! Thirdly, scientific establishments themselves should give more thought to their own public relations system—that might stop a great deal of trouble at source. And last there needs to be a change of attitude in the outlook of both scientists and journalists. If both can feel they are working jointly for the same goal then this change in relationships will make for a much better joint end-product.

We need to recognise that some writers and journalists make a real contribution to the development of scientific imagination, partly because they are *not* over-specialised—consider Jules Verne, H. G. Wells and George Orwell.

TINA DELIUS

(Report of a Conway Discussion held on April 13)

For the Record

BY

THE GENERAL SECRETARY

Watchword for the future

There was a such really marvellous paragraph in the December 2 issue of New York Review of Books that I was thinking of some good excuse to quote it here. It then occurred to me that this will be published when all the pundits are doing their annual post-mortem on the old year and looking at the prospects of the new. So that is justification enough! It is by that distinguished specialist on early modern English history, Lawrence Stone, and it manages to be at once grim, cynical, hopeful and dynamic. It reads:

“Modern man now walks on a knife’s edge. On the one side is a “technetronic” society, smooth, impersonal, rational and scientific, a kind of universal I.B.M. company ruled over by the computer. While it can be supremely efficient, it is also drab and sterile, leaving no place for the emotions, including the finer ones of love and compassion, or the sense of aesthetic mystery and wonder which is at the root of all great literature, art and music. On the other side is a society at the mercy of prejudice and passion, driven forward by wholly irrational beliefs which stunt the mind and prevent human action for human betterment. While it may be warm and vibrant, it is also full of cruelty, hate and fear. The naked ape had better watch his step.”

That seems to me to be as good a watchword for South Place Man as one is likely to find anywhere! Let’s hope we “watch our steps” to good effect in 1972!

Conway Papers No. 1—“What are Europeans?”

We have just started a new venture in South Place publishing. To date we have published the *Record* monthly and the Conway Memorial Lecture once a year. It just so happens that from time to time we come upon a theme and a writer to whom proper justice cannot be done in a short space

and whose idea deserves extended publication in a pamphlet of twenty to thirty pages. There is a good deal to be said for first class pamphlets since time presses so heavily on most of us that the number of full-length books we can expect to get through is strictly limited. To be able to give careful consideration to something in the course of one sitting makes reading a more credible exercise.

George K. Young, a member of our Society and a one-time Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office, gave us the full script of his lecture "What Are Europeans?" (a summary of which has already appeared in these pages) and this is the first of our new Conway Papers. He also undertook to underwrite costs—which is very much appreciated. The pamphlet has now appeared—with a design and layout by Clive Challis—and it costs 10p. It will be yours for 13p including postage. It is an original, thought-provoking document, and well worth careful reading.

Annual Dinner, Friday February 11

After the success of our dinner at Conway Hall last year we are now planning and looking forward to the next one. The date had been fixed for Friday, February 11 and the time at 7.30 p.m. for 8.0. The after-dinner speaker last year was George Melly and this year we decided to ask Lord (Ted) Willis to come. Much to our delight he has agreed. Because we use the Large Hall and lay the dinner on ourselves (this being made possible by Margaret Pearce's own expertise as a caterer acquired before she came to us) we are able to provide a good dinner *including wine* for £1.50. This could hardly happen anywhere else in London. We can only take 100 people so if you want to be certain of a ticket the best thing is not to leave a decision to the last moment. Since last year we have provided our own public address equipment for the Large Hall and there will be music for dancing after the dinner and Lord Willis's speech. Book now!

On the January Programme

It is plain from the lessons of experience that the subjects our members and friends like best for Tuesday evening discussions are those concerned with education and psycho-therapy. When we cover those territories we pack 'em in! So we have a *very* ambitious Tuesday programme for January—five meetings on the theme "Rethinking Schooling". Dr. Peter Fenwick (on the 4th) is a psychiatrist at the Maudsley Hospital so he meets the people for whom education has failed. It will be interesting to see the problem from that angle. H. Lionel Elvin (on the 11th) is one of this country's most distinguished educationalists, Director of the Institute of Education of London University, and a committed Humanist. Dr. Graham Owens (on the 18th) is Head of the Department of Education at Trent Polytechnic and engaged in an important experimental project that he is going to talk about. Michael Duane (on the 25th) . . . all that I need to say is that we have reserved the Large Hall—and we shall need it. Then finally (on the 1st Feb.) Harry Knight is going not only to talk about an extraordinary new teaching technique—with which he is at the moment experimenting—but he is going to conduct the session in the form of teaching/learning experiment. This will make it all the more interesting. He has told me something about it—it sounds fascinating.

On Sunday mornings the names David Tribe, Harold Blackham, Lord Brockway and Dr. Helen Rosenau need no introduction. Dr. Ann Faraday is new. She is a psychologist whose articles in *New Society* and elsewhere has occasioned a lot of interest. She is, incidentally, married to John Wren-Lewis who was with us in December.

PETER CADOGAN

BOOK REVIEWS

David and Goliath

The Welsh Extremist: A Culture in Crisis, by Ned Thomas (Gollancz, £1.70).

WELSH NATIONALISM has taken on some strange and by no means wholly acceptable forms during the last few years, and it is high time that its aims, and its deviations, received some study and appraisal. This book, however, cannot be regarded as a detached or even a systematic attempt to present the problem, and the case for Welsh nationalism, at any rate as that would be assessed by the average Englishman, accustomed to regard Wales as a curious and pleasant appendage to the murkier realities of the English Midlands.

The Welsh Aura

Nevertheless, even if we do accept "The Welsh Extremist" for what it really is—that is, as an engaged and often quite emotional presentation of the Welsh case, for linguistic and cultural self-determination—that is not to infer that it is valueless or even ephemeral in its importance. On the contrary, it takes one deeply into the Welsh point of view, and the Welsh tradition, and so, it should be needful reading for every Englishman, who honestly wants to understand Wales, in its present predicament.

It is a very sincere and even eloquent book, offering the Welsh case, not unfairly, as "a small battle for humanity." Its ultimate suggestions, for solving the problem of Welsh aspirations, within the framework of some larger British comity, are sometimes visionary and impracticable, but always lucid, stimulating, and thought-provoking. In the present climate of affairs in Wales, such a book deserves a timely welcome: more so, perhaps, amongst our English acres than amongst the green hills and pastures of Wales; for, after all, it has not been written to preach to the converted. At any rate, despite my lack of Welsh and my English surroundings, I have read "The Welsh Extremist" with sympathy and absorption; and I hope that many others, of my sort and inclinations, will do so, too. It is a book which comes closest to the present diagnosis of the motivations of those strange and sometimes explosive happenings, on the Welsh side of Offa's Dyke.

ERIC GLASGOW

The Beginning and the End

The Rights of Old People (15p) and *Birth Control* (20p). National Secular Society.

THE PROBLEM of too many people has become acute since neonatal death has been drastically reduced, and life expectation extended, in the past quarter of a century. Infectious diseases once took a lot of people to an early grave; now, immunisation has prevented many, and antibiotics have provided a cure for those that remain. Thus, it is a quite a moral advance in medical science that has 'created' a surplus population, but nevertheless a number of professional moralists consider it their duty to interfere in other medical discoveries which seek to redress the balance.

It is probably a good thing that medicine is not allowed to stagnate or progress without a wide interest by a large public, but prejudicial ethical considerations should not be permitted to stop other people making their

own minds up about the rightness or wrongness of medical means for stopping death and saving life. Those who think birth control wrong should remember that it is due to earlier researches in the medical field that the *quality* of life has been improved, and not simply its *quantity*. Modern methods of birth control have been perfected with a similar end in view.

With this in mind I welcome these two pamphlets published by the National Secular Society, which has been connected since its foundation with the establishment of individual sexual freedom. *Birth Control* is a shortened version of the speeches delivered at a meeting in Conway Hall on December 8th, 1970. The speakers represented a wide range of specialist and political opinion. Caspar Brook, director of the Family Planning Association suggested it was wrong to have sexual intercourse without contraception unless the two people involved actually wanted a child. Richard Crossman, M.P. and Renee Short, M.P. both emphasised the need for a full integration of family planning facilities into the National Health Service; Sir David Renton, Q.C., M.P. was appalled at the modern "plague of people". Dr. Caroline Deys gave a witty account of the difficulties encountered in getting birth control clinics established in the face of some shocked authorities, still today.

Self-determination

It all added up to a plea for people being enabled to make decisions themselves on the size of their family; I heartily concur with this, as I happen to believe it is important for people to make a whole lot more decisions in all sorts of other areas affecting their life, work and leisure.

The Rights of Old People is the report of a working party into the position of old people in our society of 'nuclear' family units. They might be better catered for in 'extended' families, but failing this, the report offers several compromises. These it terms 'rights', to— independence, respect from fellow citizens, social and financial security, adequate care and attention, ample employment opportunities and creative fulfilment.

The authors condemn various actions by our government and its institutions which prevent old people enjoying their last years after many decades of often arduous toil. Independence has been taken away from many an old person by committing them to the geriatric ward of an old workhouse-like institution, instead of assisting them in their own homes and familiar surroundings. Many have had religious observations forced on them once they have become bedridden in these establishments. The elderly cannot even refuse to go on living—every life saving measure is attempted, regardless of the quality of that life.

Old age pensions are a pittance. For those who have been existing on poor wages in their working life, and unable therefore to invest in private pension schemes, retirement brings even greater pecuniary burdens. Gradual retirement would be better for many people, rather than a sudden complete cessation of work at a fixed age. Many old people are able to satisfy themselves intellectually and physically into a ripe old age. That champion of humanism and reason, Bertrand Russell, survived nearly a century as a profound thinker and his latter years were not one whit dimmed.

The alterations of policy by government, to improve life's quality, both by the prevention of unwanted births and unnecessary pain in incurable illness at old age, are not great. But they are part of a greater campaign against human misery, which must continue beyond these otherwise limited objectives. The dark forces that stop people from achieving their reasoned aims are always busy, and ready to repress; it is up to us to make sure the backlash of recent years does not spread further than it already has.

DENIS COBELL

Your Viewpoint

Class—Myth or Reality?

The editorial in the October *Record* contained a lot of good sense but ended up with some clichés about “the class system” to which I would like to add a footnote.

I do not know whether anybody has ever suggested that a street sweeper is less human than a bank manager. Certainly we are all human beings entitled to our health and happiness, but parity of esteem is another matter. In practice the bank manager carries a bigger load of human anxiety and responsibility than the street sweeper. Some years ago I worked in a laboratory with two ambitious chemists some fourteen years younger than myself. They eventually reached high managerial status, but one is now dead and the other paralysed and bereft of speech. I who was not so ambitious can still write this letter and do a good day's work.

But somehow we have to have managers—they are necessary for the prosperity of our society—and even if they seem to be there only for trade unionists to gripe against, they are entitled to a little of our esteem while they last. This is an ethical matter which we need to consider.

But granted that the class system in Britain may have been notorious a hundred years ago and that even now the social structure is infinitely stratified, nowadays the so-called “class system” is nothing but a myth used by political propagandists for their own purposes and not an ethical matter at all.

PERCY SOWTER

Shenfield, Essex

— I only wish I could agree with Mr. Sowter. The present class system is very real. The attitude that a bank manager and a road sweeper are at varying degrees of humanity is so widespread that most people never bother to consider its validity. Since I used the example of Sweden in my editorial, it may be worthwhile to add another. It is commonplace in Sweden for a manual worker to live next to a manager in perfect harmony. I know personally a director of a paper company who lives next door to a fork truck driver at the factory. The two families are good friends and neighbours and enjoy an almost identical standard of living. When we reach that stage in Britain, I may agree that the class system is “nothing but a myth”.—*Ed.*

Humanism in the '70s

The “basics” of humanism must surely start from the obvious fact that it has its origin in a negative—in the rejection of “religion” as commonly understood. We are united, not in what we believe, even less in what we do, but only in what we disbelieve. The question which needs answering is what we agree about positively—or, indeed, whether we do.

Most unbelievers do not belong to any organised humanist body (of which there are several!) The minority of humanists who run these bodies have surely little right or title to speak on behalf of the majority who do not join them.

With the exception of the N.S.S., there is a prevailing trend to avoid attacking religion. It is felt to be “bad form” or “not done” to criticise the crumbling edifice of organised Christianity. Instead we stage lengthy and largely purposeless “dialogues” about the “Open Society”.

Yet irrational and socially objectionable religions beliefs are flourishing and gaining ground. There are far more Jehovah's Witnesses in Britain than there are humanists. Those who flock to the banners of the “Festival of

Light" outnumber us many times over. Before long, unless we mount some counter campaign, we may find ourselves in a Christian strait-jacket.

Others among us search desperately and uncritically for some new gospel of hope, whether it be the worship of communal smallness or the futilities of what is called "direct action" (presumably because it is neither direct nor active) or in espousing the cause of oppressed peoples in countries about which most of us really know nothing at all, and about which we quite certainly can do nothing likely to be effective.

For these and other reasons, Humanism *isn't* succeeding. The world isn't beating a path to our door. We function on the sidelines. I offer no ready solution—I wish I could believe there is one—but I am sure of one thing; there is no substitute for realistic and rational appraisal of our position. So long as we chase after irrelevant and illusory, if trendy, activities, then for so long will we remain an insignificant, unimportant and perhaps faintly ridiculous assortment of semi-organised do-nothings.

J. STEWART COOK

Windsor, Berks.

Facts and Figures

I feel that the figures in your report of David Stephens' address on Race Relations, Nov./Dec. issue, need comment. I refer to the 2,000 vacancies in London Transport. This figure, allied to the remark: "We are still short of people" seems to imply that London Transport still needs the services of immigrants, and fresh immigration.

Yet since 1950, about three years after London Transport began to advertise intensively in Barbados and elsewhere, and 1968, the number of people employed by London Transport dropped by a third, and by British Rail, half. In other words, the intensive shortage of labour turns out to have been a myth, and the '16,000' before 1948 could well have been replaced by unemployed British workers at higher rates of pay. Of course, London Transport, unlike the German employers, did not have to pay the social costs of the labour in question—housing, education, and so on. It would have been economic, and fairer to all concerned, to have modernised the railways.

J. LEWIS (Miss)

London, E.16

Immortal Agnostic

AT THE end of the radio programme 'Desert Island Discs' Roy Plomley always asks his guest what book he would take with him "in addition to The Bible and Shakespeare." In other words, it is taken for granted that the castaway will want both the greatest masterpiece of English religious literature and our greatest masterpiece of humanist literature.

Humanists who spend hours extolling the agnostic virtues of what are basically rather boring philosophers often fail to realise that the greatest of our poets was an agnostic through and through. You only need to read the most famous speech of his most famous character to see this at once. Hamlet quite deliberately stands the traditional Christian doctrine about suicide on its head. Suicide is not a sin but an act of courage, of which very few of us are capable. And as for the doctrine of eternal life, 'the dread of something after death . . . puzzles the will and makes us rather bear those ills we have than fly to others that we know not of.' What has this to do with the Bible, which tells us exactly what to expect? All the tragic heroes have the same gloomy outlook. Lear, for instance: 'As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods; they kill us for their sport.' Even the plucky Bishop of

Carlisle, who speaks up for Richard II in his hour of adversity, bases his protest purely on the political (earthly) consequences of deposing a king.

True, there is the odd remark about 'sweet religion' and so on; but what agnostic gets through a week without exclaiming, 'Good God!?' The Devil has almost all the best poems, as well as the best tunes.

TONY MILLS

South Place News

New Members

We are pleased to welcome the following new members: Lisa Bladon, N.W.8; Joseph Buckely, Ruislip, Middlesex; Denis and Mrs. M. Cambell, N.W.1; Neil Cameron, N.20; Peter and Mrs. B. Cronin, Dorking, Surrey; Nicholas Cane, S.W.16; David Coleman, E.7; Mrs. Florence Carr, W.1; Mark Grafton Denman, N.W.2; Florence Erasmus, W.C.1; George Griffiths, W.14; Douglas Heath, The Hague, Holland; Michael Lloyd-Jones, Camberley, Surrey; Mrs. Pattie Landau, S.W.4; Miss M. Laurenson, Ilford, Essex; Miss Jennie Lewis, E.16; B. Mann, Ilford, Essex; Jane Norcock, N.W.3; Lolita Pahwa, Ruislip, Middlesex; Francis Malins Smith, Swansea, Glamorgan; R. T. Smith, W.1; Rita Stuhlmacher, N.10; Mr. K. P. Tengra, N.W.11 and David Weale, N.W.3.

Obituary

We regret to report the deaths of Mr. Herbert Ashplant, Hove, Sussex, Mrs. G. M. Dixon of Rustington, Sussex and Mr. M. Miller, a member for more than 60 years.

Postal problems

Our most sincere thanks to all those readers who responded to the appeal in the last issue for information regarding postage and delivery times of the *Record*. Far more people than expected answered, and gave us invaluable information about the situation. This enabled us to write to the Post Office with concrete evidence. So far we have only had such phrases as "can't understand it", and "impossible" in the case of one reader's copy which took 11 days between posting and delivery, in reply.

In the absence of any hint of improvement, we are again using first-class postage for this issue, as it was considered no use to post it until after the festive season.

However, we shall be glad in future to hear from readers who think the arrival of the *Record* is very late in particular cases.

As a bonus, many of the readers who wrote to us took the opportunity of notifying us of post codes, changes of address in one or two cases, and of course enclosing letters for publication. Thanks to all!

Bit of a change

In the past, the *Record* has published details of events at Conway Hall on the inside front and back covers. This duplication has meant the use of valuable space, and has amounted, in some cases, to repetition. From this issue therefore, things are changing. Details of events at Conway Hall will be given in the style of "Coming at Conway Hall" which has hitherto been on the inside back cover. This now begins on the inside front cover, and is more detailed than before. Where necessary it continues on the inside back cover. The Sunday Concerts, for instance, are being included, with information on the pieces to be performed. All information given previously is included, and we hope this arrangement will be easier to follow.

Books Gift

The Society has received a kind gift of books and journals from a Letchworth member, Mr. H. Meyer. This includes numerous back-numbers of the *Monthly Record*, *Ethical Record* and the *Rationalist Annual*, but perhaps the most valuable item that Mr. Meyer has presented to us is an edition of the theological works of Thomas Paine, published by Edward Truelove, the famous nineteenth century freethinker, whose offices were only a stone's throw from the present Conway Hall site. Truelove's book includes an engraving of Paine from the portrait that has since found its way into the South Place Library. We are most grateful to Mr. Meyer for his generous gift.

Our library contains hundreds of historic volumes, and is constantly being augmented. It is not being used by many members at present. Our Librarian, Mrs. Altmann-Gold, is in attendance on Sunday, from 10.45 a.m. to 5 p.m., and on Tuesdays from 6.30 p.m. until the meeting closes. Books may be borrowed, and members are invited to come and have a look round.

Meeting the movement

This month's issue of the *Record* brings you the first in a series in which the leading figures in the Humanist, rationalist and freethought movement express their views in answer to questions from the Editor. The most important thing we want them to tell us about is the future for the movement, considering the precarious conditions of many organisations within Humanism today, and the lack of direction felt by many members of the Humanist bodies.

We begin with the South Place appointed lecturers, starting in this issue with Harold Blackham. Next on the list is Lord Brockway. It is hoped to run the series in consecutive issues, but pressure on space may at some time preclude this.

Photographs make their appearance in this issue, too, and we hope to see more of these in due course.

Apology

The name of Tina Delius was inadvertently omitted from her report of "The Ideology of Science" in the November/December issue. Our apologies!

Sunday Social

This month's Sunday Social takes place on the 16th, at 3 p.m. The guest of honour will be Lord Brockway, who will talk about his life and experiences. Light refreshments will be served.

• The February Sunday Social, on the 20th, will take the form of a Brains Trust. Dr. Helen Rosenau and Prof. Julius Lewin for South Place, and Margaret McIlroy and Michael Lloyd-Jones for the National Secular Society, will answer questions from the floor and those sent in advance. Questions are invited.

Kindred organisations

The annual general meeting and reunion of **Humanist Holidays** is being held in Conway Hall on January 7 at 6.30 p.m. Members and friends are welcomed, and photographs, slides and films of H.H. ventures can be taken along. The organisation is planning a skiing holiday in Norway near the end of February. Full details can be obtained from Cliff Lovett, 15 Maple Close, Clacton-on-Sea, Essex. The Easter holiday is taking place in Bristol, and details of this event are available from Mrs. M. Mepham, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey.

Continued from inside front cover

Sunday, January 23

- 11 a.m.—S.P.E.S. Lecture: Dr. HELEN ROSENAU on **Art as a Life-Enhancing Experience**. Tenor Solos: Harvey Kesselman
3 p.m.—**Humanist Forum: Naderism in Britain** with Charles Medawar
6 p.m.—**Bridge Practice**
6.30 p.m.—**Concert: Georgian String Quartet**. Programme: Haydn G Op. 77, No. 1, Shostakovich No. 12, and Beethoven B flat Op 130

Tuesday, January 25

- 7 p.m.—**Conway Discussion** introduced by Michael Duane. Subject: **De-schooling?**

Sunday, January 30

- 11 a.m.—S.P.E.S. Lecture: Dr. ANN FARADAY on **Dream Power** Cello and Piano: Francis Skelton and Edward Mandel
6 p.m.—**Bridge Practice**
6.30 p.m.—**Concert: Richards Piano Quartet** with Francis Baines. Programme: Dvorak D Op. 23, Dussek E flat Op. 56, and Schubert A Op. 114 D667 "Trout" Quintet

Tuesday, February 1

- 7 p.m.—**Conway Discussion** introduced by Harry Knight. Subject: **Suggestology—A New Teaching Method**

Sunday, February 6

- 11 a.m.—S.P.E.S. Lecture: RICHARD CLEMENTS, O.B.E., on Teilhard de Chardin and Modern Humanism

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South Place Ethical Society

FOUNDED in 1793, the Society is a progressive movement which today advocates an ethical humanism, the study and dissemination of ethical principles based on humanism, and the cultivation of a rational religious sentiment free from all theological dogma.

We invite to membership all those who reject supernatural creeds and find themselves in sympathy with our views.

At Conway Hall there are **opportunities for participation** in many kinds of cultural activities, including discussions, lectures, concerts, dances, rambles and socials. A comprehensive reference and lending library is available, and all Members and Associates receive the Society's journal, *The Ethical Record*, free. The Sunday Evening Chamber Music Concerts founded in 1887 have achieved international renown.

Services available to members include Naming Ceremony of Welcome to Children, the Solemnisation of Marriage, and Memorial and Funeral Services.

The Story of South Place, by S. K. Ratcliffe, is a history of the Society and its interesting development within liberal thought.

Minimum subscriptions: are Members, 75p p.a.; Life Members, £15.75p (Life membership is available only to members of at least one year's standing). It is of help to the Society's officers if members pay their subscriptions by Bankers' Order, and it is of further financial benefit to the Society if Deeds of Covenant are entered into. Members are urged to pay more than the minimum subscription whenever possible, as the present amount is not sufficient to cover the cost of this journal.

A suitable form of bequest for those wishing to benefit the Society by their wills is to be found in the Annual Report.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

TO THE HON. REGISTRAR, SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY,
CONWAY HALL HUMANIST CENTRE, RED LION SQUARE, LONDON, WC1R 4RL

Being in sympathy with the aims of South Place Ethical Society, I desire to become a Member and I enclose as my annual subscription the sum of £.....:..... (minimum 75p) entitling me (according to the Rules of the Society) to membership for one year from the date of enrolment.

NAME
(BLOCK LETTERS PLEASE)

ADDRESS
.....

OCCUPATION (disclosure optional)

HOW DID YOU HEAR OF THE SOCIETY?

DATE SIGNATURE

The Ethical Record is posted free to members. The annual charge to subscribers is 75p. Matter for publication should reach the Editor, Eric Willoughby, 46 Springfield Road, London, E.17, by the 5th of the preceding month.