

Ethical Record

The Proceedings of the Conway Hall Ethical Society

Vol. 119 No. 10

£1.50

November 2014

LONDON THINKS - SHOUTING BACK



L to R: Samira Ahmed, Laura Bates, Caroline Criado-Perez

How is sexism still a problem in the 21st century, and what can be done about it? That was the question challenging the packed Conway Hall at the inaugural London Thinks event on Thursday 8 October, chaired by Samira Ahmed.

It featured two speakers who have both experienced such pervasive sexism but have also confronted it and run very successful campaigns to combat it. Caroline Criado-Perez made headlines earlier this year when campaigning to have a woman featured on a banknote (and then depressingly again as she received relentless abuse on the internet) and Laura Bates is the founder of the Everyday Sexism project.

Both speakers gave a short talk outlining their perspectives, followed by Samira chairing a discussion and a question and answer session with the audience.

(Report continued on page 3)

REPORT: SHOUTING BACK	Liz Lutgendorff	1
RADICAL OPPOSITION TO WORLD WAR I	Duncan Bowie	4
VERSE: THE GREAT DELUSION	Ed McArthur	9
BERTRAND RUSSELL AND WORLD WAR I	Chris Bratcher	10
BOOK REVIEW: BURNE-JONES TALKING	Ellen Ramsay	15
IS UKIP ETHICAL?	Tom Rubens	17
VIEWPOINTS <i>D. Forsyth, R. Ward, D. Cobell, B. Smoker, C. Purnell</i>		19
VERSE: AFTERLIFE DIALOGUE	Barbara Smoker	21
ESSAY: VENTRICULAR TACCHYCARDIA	John Anderson	22
FORTHCOMING EVENTS		24

CONWAY HALL ETHICAL SOCIETY
Conway Hall Humanist Centre
25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL.
www.conwayhall.org.uk

Trustee Chairman: Liz Lutgendorff; **Vice-Chair:** Giles Enders
Treasurer: Carl Harrison; **Editor:** Norman Bacrac

Please email texts and viewpoints for the Editor to: bacrac@fsmail.net

Staff

Chief Executive Officer:	Jim Walsh	Tel: 020 7061 6745	Jim@ethicalsoc.org.uk
Administrator:	Martha Lee	Tel: 020 7061 6741	admin@ethicalsoc.org.uk
Finance Officer:	Linda Lamnica	Tel: 020 7061 6740	finance@ethicalsoc.org.uk
Library:	Farah Wise	Tel: 020 7061 6747	library@ethicalsoc.org.uk
Hon. Archivist:	Carl Harrison		carl@ethicalsoc.org.uk
London Thinks:	Sid Rodrigues	Tel: 020 7061 6744	sid@ethicalsoc.org.uk
Lettings Officer:	Carina Dvorak	Tel: 020 7061 6750	lettings@ethicalsoc.org.uk
Caretakers:	Eva Aubrechtova (i/c)	Tel: 020 7061 6743	Eva@ethicalsoc.org.uk
<i>together with:</i>	Brian Biagioni, Sean Foley, Tony Fraser, Rogerio Retuerma		
Maintenance:	Zia Hameed / Chey Green	Tel: 020 7061 6742	Zia@ethicalsoc.org.uk

New Members

The Society welcomes the following new members:

Marianne Baker; Julio Cesar Stacchini de Souza; Margaret Crowley;
Blaise Egan; Ian Glendinning; John Graham; Beverley Grigor;
James Grindrod; Tim Hughes; Dean Ismail; Camille Jacob;
Jasper Judd; Desmond Kelleher; Roger Knight; Jennifer Lawson;
Robert Lilley; James S. Lynas; Darian Mitchell; Stephen Ollington;
Anjay Pillai; Fiona Pryor; John Rockel; A J Runco-Farrands;
Alom Shaha; Michael Story; Edward Turner; Isobel Whittaker;
Angharad Williams; David Williams; Thomas D Williams.

THE HUMANIST LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES

The Humanist Library and Archives are open for members and researchers on Tuesdays to Thursdays from 1000 - 1700. Please inform the Librarian, Farah Wise, of your intention to visit. The Library has an extensive collection of new and historic freethought material.

When evening courses are running, the Library will remain open on selected evenings. These will be advertised on the website.

Tel: 020 7061 6747. Email: library@ethicalsoc.org.uk

CONWAY HALL ETHICAL SOCIETY

Reg. Charity No. 1156033

Founded in 1793, the Society is a progressive movement whose aims are:

the study and dissemination of ethical principles based on humanism and freethought
the cultivation of a rational and humane way of life, and
the advancement of research and education in relevant fields.

We invite to membership those who reject supernatural creeds and are in sympathy with our aims. At Conway Hall the programme includes Sunday lectures, discussions, evening courses and the Conway Hall Sunday Concerts of chamber music. The Society maintains a Humanist Library and Archives. The Society's journal, *Ethical Record*, is issued monthly. Memorial meetings may be arranged.

The annual subscription is £35 (£25 if a full-time student, unwaged or over 65)

(Report continued from page 1)

Caroline talked about how the representation of women is a fundamental part of 21st century feminism. She reeled off a litany of depressing statistics, such as for every 5 men there is only 1 woman in parliament and that only 20 out of 107 high court judges are women – putting the UK in the same company as Azerbaijan and Armenia. However, it also extends to popular culture with only 28% of speaking roles in Hollywood films belonging to women. The final and most staggering statistic being that a woman is killed every 2.38 days in Britain.

Laura opened with the very personal, scary and disheartening story of being sexually assaulted on London transport and despite being surrounded by others, nobody came to her aid. Another incident, happening around the same time, made her stop and reassess why this happens. Asking other people, she found that the same sorts of assault happened to women all the time. @EverydaySexism has become a force for good, highlighting the pervasive sexism that is at the heart of our culture and the sum total of which seems to be leading towards a real change.

Laura also had depressing statistics: out of 2300 works in the National Gallery only 10 are by women and only 15% of public statues of women. Laura's take-home message was that sexism needs to be tackled at every level: There's no point in fixing political representation if the media keeps portraying women as sex objects and no point in promoting women in Parliament if it results in media coverage talking of 'The Downing Street Cat-Walk' (as we saw recently in the *Daily Mail*).

During the discussion section, Samira raised the issue of class and the intersection with feminism – bringing up the Rotherham scandal and how class-assumptions led to inaction on the part of the authorities.

Contributions from the audience included questioning why 'feminism' is perceived as a bad word, even among young women, which political parties are worst for women, Emma Watson's speech at the United Nations, and the disbanding of the LSE Rugby Club following allegations of sexism.

There was thunderous applause for Samira, Caroline and Laura and many positive tweets following the event. It was a very successful start to what will hopefully be a very interesting and engaging London Thinks season of events.

Liz Lutgendorff

The next London Thinks event is **Nate Phelps - leaving hate behind**, about Nate's very personal story of leaving the Westboro Baptist Church. This event will be on 13 November and will again be chaired by Samira Ahmed. Tickets are £15 for non-members and £5 for members of the CHES.

CHES'S SUNDAY CONCERTS, AUTUMN 2014

Artistic Director: **Simon Callaghan**

Doors open at 1730 Concerts start at 1830 Tickets £9; students £4; under 16 free

Full details on: www.conwayhallsundayconcerts.org.uk

RADICAL OPPOSITION TO WORLD WAR I

Duncan Bowie

Lecture for the series 'Opposition to WWI', Tuesday 21 October 2014

On the declaration of war against Germany, four members of Asquith's cabinet offered their resignations – John Burns, John Morley, John Simon and Lord Beaumont. They were joined by one junior Minister, Charles Trevelyan. These resignations demonstrate that the Liberal Government was far from united – and there is a case that in fact there was a majority of cabinet members opposed to joining the European war and that the British entry into the war was driven not so much by the German invasion of Belgium, but by the Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey's secret commitments to France and Russia and by the First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill's premature mobilisation of the fleet. The British entry into the war was far from inevitable. The purpose of this talk is to trace the origins of the Liberal opposition to engaging in the carnage.

The Anti-War Traditions

Within the Liberal party there was a strong anti-war tradition. In fact there were a number of different traditions. Firstly there was the free trade and anti-war tradition of the Manchester School, represented by Richard Cobden – the perspective that war interrupted free trade and that trade between nations was the way to avoid a European war but also that trade rather than imperial conquest was the most effective way of extending civilization to what were seen as the least civilized parts of the world. This perspective was adopted by Gladstone both as Prime Minister (despite his reluctant sanction of a number of imperial adventures) and in opposition (for example in the Bulgarian atrocities campaign of 1876) – a tradition inherited by John Morley, Irish secretary, Gladstone's biographer and the elder statesman in Asquith's 1914 cabinet, and by leading Liberal intellectuals such as James Bryce: Thirdly there was the positivist tradition -- in effect a belief that both national and world progress depended on cooperation between national states rather than aggressive imperial competition – this perspective was best demonstrated in Richard Congreve's *Essays on International Policy* and the Anti-aggression League established by the positivists and active Liberal, Frederick Harrison, to argue against the wars in the Sudan and Afghanistan in the 1880s.

There was then the Quaker pacifist tradition, exemplified by the Peace Society led by the Welsh radical MP Henry Richards, but also represented by John Bright, who resigned from Gladstone's government in 1882 in protest against the naval bombardment of Alexandria in Egypt. There was an even earlier Liberal tradition of world federation and international governance originating with Jeremy Bentham in the 1820s which influenced radical and socialist thinkers throughout the 19th century, notably the Owenites, and especially the radicals in the years before the first world war.

There was also a strong internationalist tradition within working class Liberalism. This can be traced back to the chartist William Lovett*, who adopted Bentham's arguments for international government, the international solidarity movements of late chartists such as George Julian Harney and William Linton, which with the increasing propaganda efforts of European republicans such as

Mazzini and Kossuth, generated significant support among radical Liberal MPs such as Joseph Cowen of Newcastle and Peter Taylor of Leicester. Important and less studied by historians of the Labour and radical movements (with the notable exception of Paul Laity) is the active engagement in international peace movements of a number of London based trade unionists. Both the Reform League of 1865 and the International Working Men's Association (or First International) of 1864, actually emerged from international solidarity movements established by London radicals and trade unionists, which focused on solidarity with Polish republicans and French trade unionists. A number of London trade unionists had been active supporters of the north in the American civil war. In 1870, while Marx was writing his polemics on the French civil war and the commune, William Randal Cremer together with other London trade unionists, George Odger, Ben Lucraft and Thomas Mottershead, established a Workmens Peace Committee, with Edmond Beales of the Reform League as chairman.

As is well known, Cremer and other London trade unionists including Mottershead, Robert Applegarth and George Howell withdrew from the First international, in the case of Odger and Lucraft, who had both played leading roles within the organisation, when Marx added their signatures to his *Civil War in France* pamphlet supporting the Paris commune without asking for their agreement. Cremer switched his attention from international trade union solidarity to the international peace movement and established the Arbitration and Peace Association. He became the Liberal MP for Haggerston and Shoreditch in 1885 and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1903. He was also co-founder of the Inter Parliamentary Union and the International Arbitration League. A number of other working class Liberal MPs known to posterity as the 'Lib Labs' were also active in the international peace movement, including the Northumbrian miner, Thomas Burt, the agricultural workers leader, Joseph Arch, Frederick Maddison, compositor, TUC president and MP for Sheffield Brightside, James Rowlands, watchmaker and MP for East Finsbury and then for Dartford, Henry Broadhurst, stonemason, TIC secretary, MP for Stoke and Home Office under secretary under Gladstone in 1885 and Ben Pickard, miner and MP for Normanton in Yorkshire.

Opposition to the Boer War

The Boer War of 1899-1902 witnessed growing opposition to imperialist ventures within the leadership of the Liberal party. While Liberal imperialists such as prime minister Lord Roseberry, Grey and Asquith support intervention, critics of the war included Henry Campbell Bannerman, who was to become prime Minister in 1906, James Bryce, Henry Labouchere, Leonard Courtney, John Morley and William Harcourt, who had been Home secretary in Gladstone's last government. Campbell Bannerman attacked 'methods of barbarism' while Labouchere chaired 'Stop the War' rallies. Cremer's International Arbitration League in 1899 also included almost the full compliment of Lib-Lab MPs – Arch, Broadhurst, Maddison, Pickard, Burt, together with Charles Fenwick, Will Steadman and John Wilson.

By the mid-1900s, with Grey pursuing an imperialist foreign policy first under Campbell Bannerman and then under Asquith, the anti-imperialists were joined

by a group of radical journalists – G H Perris, Henry Nevinson**, H N Brailsford, W C Stead, Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, and Norman Angell***, author of *The Great Illusion*, together with the journalist and economist, J A Hobson****, who had been a critic of the Boer war and of broader imperialist policies and in fact the source of much of Lenin's thinking on the subject.

Given this historical background, it is therefore not surprising that in the late summer of 1914 there was strong the opposition to engaging in a European war both within Asquith's Liberal government and within the wider Liberal party. Douglas Newton, in his recent book, *The Darkest Days: The Truth Behind Britain's Rush to War*, demonstrates that there was in fact a majority within the cabinet in favour of some form of neutralism and avoiding a commitment to support France or Russia. He also demonstrates that Britain was committed to war before the Germans invaded Belgium, though this invasion provided a useful retrospective justification. He also demonstrates that there was no treaty obligation for Britain to support France, though the Foreign secretary, Grey, thought there was a moral obligation and considered that Britain was honour bound to intervene to support its Entente ally. In fact he threatened to resign if Britain remained neutral, and Asquith would have resigned with him. In fact it was the possibility of the Government falling and being replaced by a Liberal imperialist/ Tory war coalition that kept some of the more neutralist Ministers within the government.

Churchill pre-empts the Cabinet

It was in fact Winston Churchill as Lord of the Admiralty who actually pre-empts Cabinet decisions by ordering the mobilisation of the navy, which encouraged both Russia and France to adopt a more aggressive position. The *Times* led a pro-war campaign, and Churchill certainly encouraged the Tory leadership of Andrew Bonar Law and Austen Chamberlain to adopt a pro-intervention position. It is Newton's study of the Liberal neutralists which is perhaps most interesting. John Burns, often criticised by socialist historians, was the strongest opponent of intervention and resigned first, to be followed by John Morley. John Simon, the solicitor general and future Liberal leader and Lord Beauchamp, Liberal leader in the Lords, also resigned, but were persuaded to keep their resignations secret and to rejoin the cabinet once was actually declared. In fact Beauchamp was to chair the Privy Council meeting with the King which signed the declaration of war. Interestingly, neither parliament nor cabinet formally debated the declaration of war. Some 16 backbench radical MPs managed to speak on an adjournment debate just before the declaration, but no vote was taken, and the Liberal leadership, including the cabinet dissidents, absented itself from the debate.

In the last few days before the war, the radicals established a British Neutrality committee. This was led by Arthur Ponsonby who established a Liberal Foreign Affairs Group, and Charles Trevelyan, who resigned his junior ministerial role as parliamentary secretary to the Board of Education, with the Fabian Graham Wallas. Trevelyan had previously published a pamphlet for the National League of Young Liberals on *Democracy and Compulsory Service* which opposed conscription.

The foreign policy dissident, Norman Angell, established his own British Neutrality League. On the eve of the declaration of war, on Sunday 2nd August, a mass anti-war rally of 20,000 people was held in Trafalgar Square, called by the British Section of the Second International, whose leaders had just returned from a crisis meeting in Brussels. Keir Hardie was among the speakers, together with Arthur Henderson, Ben Tillett and Bob Smillie and the leaders of the labour women's movement, who had been active in opposing the rush to war - Charlotte Despard (General French's sister), Margaret Bondfield, Mary MacArthur and Marion Phillips.

A number of radical Liberals favoured neutralism, but did not publicly oppose Grey and Asquith and stayed in the cabinet. The role of Lulu Harcourt, chief whip and son of Sir William Harcourt, is critical here. Radicals such as Reginald McKenna, the Quaker Joseph Pease (who was actually president of the Peace Society) and Herbert Samuel also supported Asquith and Grey and stayed within the Government. Charles Masterman, radical on domestic issues, was a Liberal imperialist when it came to foreign policy. So an administration with a neutralist majority was forced to adopt an interventionist policy under pressure from Grey, Churchill and to a lesser extent Asquith, combined with the 'force of events'. The British government, despite the large number of neutralists within it, actually contributed to the outbreak of the continental war. This was not inevitable. Grey rejected a number of opportunities for negotiation and on a number of occasions clearly misled the cabinet and parliament. Churchill could not wait to get the war started. He kept arguing that a quick naval war would cost very little to the British taxpayers.

Union for the Democratic Control of Foreign Policy (UDC)

With their attempt to keep Britain neutral unsuccessful, Trevelyan and Ponsonby, together with Norman Angell and Ramsay MacDonald, considering that it was the secret commitments pursued by Grey, that had dragged Britain into the war, established a new organisation – the Union for the Democratic Control of Foreign Policy, to be known as the UDC. Appointing the anti-colonialist, Edmund Morel, as secretary, the UDC was active throughout the war and in the interwar period, campaigning against secret treaties and for open government.

In the early years of the war, the UDC published pamphlets by Norman Angell, Bertrand Russell, Brailsford and Ponsonby. Ponsonby published in 1915 *Democracy and Diplomacy – A Plea for Poplar Control of Foreign Policy*, which put forward the idea of a foreign affairs committee in parliament. In 1918, the UDC published the text of the secret treaties with Russia, Italy France and Japan relating to the break up of the Ottoman Empire, the division of Persia, the transfer of Istria from the Austro-Hungarian Empire to Italy and the west bank of the Rhine. The UDC also acted as a forum for radical Liberals to co-operate with anti-war socialists, and a route by which Trevelyan, Morel and Ponsonby among others, transferred their allegiance from the Liberal party to the Labour party.

Some of the radicals later wrote their own justifications for their actions. Morley's 1914 *Memorandum on Resignation* was not published until 1928 after

his death. Morley had in the pre-war years supported Anglo-German understanding as a bulwark against Russian expansionism. He was highly critical of what he saw as 'Russian barbarism' and did not consider Russian dominance of Europe as good for western civilization. He wrote that "to bind ourselves to France is at the same time to bind ourselves to Russia." He considered Russia not Germany as the real aggressor and did not consider German aggression against Belgium as a justification for the British declaration of war on Germany. He considered that "the atmosphere of war cannot be friendly to order in a democratic system." Morley refused to follow Simon and Beauchamp in rejoining the cabinet - he considered himself as a notorious 'peace man' and 'Little Englander.'

In contrast, Burns never publicly recorded the reasons for his resignation, though he recorded his views in his diary. He was an isolationist – believing that Britain should not get involved in the continental war. He was not a pacifist – in fact he had an interest in military matters, especially regimental history. He was in 1906 a member of Haldane's cabinet committee on army reform and attended military manoeuvres on the Salisbury Plain. In 1915 he commented that his position was 'splendid isolation, no balance of power, no incorporation in the continental system.' He had also been active in Cremer's International Arbitration League, and at one dinner gave a toast to Anglo-German friendship. The main reason for his resignation was his shock to discover Grey's secret diplomacy. He was also disgusted with the warmongering of much of the press. Once taken, his decision was final.

The Country was Misled

Trevelyan gave an explanation for his resignation in his memoir *From Liberalism to Labour*, published in 1921. Like Burns, he was opposed to Grey's secret treaties and the commitments given to France. When Asquith supported Grey, while denying that Britain had any legal commitments, he felt there was no alternative but to resign. In his memoir he wrote that:

"On August 3 1914 it was proved that the information given to parliament on the most vital question in a hundred years was incorrect, I therefore resigned my subordinate position in the Liberal government which had misled the county." He added that "the war was settled by the cabinet before parliament was consulted. Parliament had no power of choice left."

Other radicals were also to put their position on the record. Robert Reid, Earl Loreburn, who had been Lord Chancellor between 1905 and 1912, published in 1919 a critique of Grey's foreign policy in *How the War Came*. The first detailed narrative of the diplomatic manoeuvres which led to the war was actually published in 1915 in New York by the former Liberal MP and playwright, Francis Neilson in *How Diplomats Make War*. Neilson argued that the arms build up and secret diplomacy of Grey contributed to the outbreak of war. The book was written within six weeks of his resignation from parliament and his 'flight' to America.

The UDC was in fact to continue in existence until 1966 – in the period after the second world war it published pamphlets on colonialism in Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia, a pamphlet on the Suez crisis by Frank Allaun and on the Russian intervention in Hungary in 1956 by Basil Davidson. One of its last

pamphlets was in fact a critique of misgovernment in the Seychelles by a Peckham vicar, Charles Roach. Ponsonby was to become under-secretary of foreign affairs in Macdonald's first government in 1924 – Macdonald acted as his own Prime Minister.

Ponsonby introduced a new constitutional convention: that any proposed treaty should be put to parliament 21 days before ratification. This reflected his experience of 1914, when there was no parliamentary vote, and where the declaration was made by the king in Privy Council. The convention was not followed when Tony Blair's government decided to invade Iraq. The Ponsonby rule was actually incorporated in British statute on 11 November 2010 under Part 2 of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act – 96 years after the start of the First World War.

* Lovett's manuscript is in the CHES library

** Henry Nevinson gave the 1911 Conway Memorial Lecture entitled *Peace and war in the balance*.

*** Norman Angell gave the 1913 Conway Memorial Lecture entitled *War and the essential realities*.

**** J A Hobson was a SPES Appointed Lecturer

THE GREAT DELUSION

Ed McArthur

There Is Some Corner
 of a Foreign Field
That is Forever
A Graveyard
For All The Poor Fools
Who Died
Under The Delusion
That They Fought
 For Some Cause Noble
When In Fact
They Were Tools of
 Cynical Politicians
Who Serve Only
 The Interests Of Capital,
Who First Made Them
 Killers Of The Innocent
Then Sent Them To An Early Grave



BERTRAND RUSSELL AND WORLD WAR I

Chris Bratcher

Lecture for the series 'Opposition to the Great War' 7 October 2014

Bertrand Russell was born in 1872 into the Liberal aristocracy; his grandfather had twice been prime minister, and it is said that his grandmother, who brought him up after his parents' early death, wished to groom him to one day become her husband's successor.

Instead, Bertie, once at Cambridge, became seized by the great issues of philosophy and mathematics, and lived off a relatively modest inheritance to labour for a decade to produce *Principia Mathematica* in 1910, upon which he was made a Fellow of the Royal Society, and granted a five year lectureship – but not fellowship – to teach the new mathematical logic. He had found time to engage in politics: he regularly participated in pre-war elections – but he was not a party politician as we have, unfortunately, come to know them; his main cause in the pre-war period was women's suffrage.

Before war was declared, he had no doubt whatsoever that it was his duty to oppose it. He organised a petition, signed by over 60 Cambridge dons, expressing “their conviction of the supreme importance of preserving England's neutrality .. considering .. no vital interest of this country is endangered such as would justify our participation in a war.” This appeared in the *Guardian* and *Daily News* on 3 August 1914, the day that Sir Edward Grey, the Foreign Secretary, carried the House of Commons in support of a declaration of war, duly made the following day. That day, Russell had the enthusiastic support of the editor of the Liberal paper, *The Nation*, to publish the following letter, only for agreement to be withdrawn. After vehement protests, it was printed on 15 August, and later in New York. Here is an extract.

“Sir – Against the vast majority of my countrymen, in the name of humanity and civilization, I protest against our share in the destruction of Germany. A month ago, Europe was a peaceful comity of nations; if an Englishman killed a German, he was hanged. Now .. he is a patriot. We rejoice when we read of innocent young men, blindly obedient to the word of command, mown down in thousands by the machine guns of Liege.

Those who saw the London crowds, during the nights leading up to the Declaration of War, saw a whole population, hitherto peaceable and humane, letting loose, in a moment, instincts of hatred and blood lust .. Dim abstractions of unimaginable wickedness conceal the fact that the enemy are men like ourselves, neither better nor worse – men who love their homes and the sunshine, and all the simple pleasures of common lives.. And all this madness, all this rage, all this flaming death of our civilization and its hopes, has been brought about because a set of official gentlemen, living luxurious lives, have chosen that it should occur, rather than any of them should suffer some infinitesimal rebuff to his country's pride... The diplomatists ... restrained by punctilio from making or accepting the small concessions that might have saved the world, hurried on [in] blind fear to loose the armies for the work of mutual butchery.

And behind them, stand vast forces of national greed and hatred .. fostered by the upper class as a distraction from social discontent, artificially nourished by the

sinister influence of the makers of armaments, encouraged by a whole foul literature of 'glory, and by every text-book of history by which the minds of children are polluted.

Our diplomacy has not been guiltless. Sir Edward Grey refused, down to the last moment, to inform Germany of the conditions of our neutrality or our intervention ...”

It is hardly surprising that mainstream newspapers were henceforth closed to Russell.

The Rules of War and Dead Babies

Here is extract from his September 1914 article in the *Labour Leader*, *War, the Cause and the Cure: Rulers cannot be trusted with Peace negotiations* (I exclude his extensive excoriation of the latter and analysis of the steps to war)

“ ... The business of war, like a ghastly game, is nominally subject to certain arbitrary rules. In the absence of an umpire, each side accuses the other of infractions, which are called “atrocities”. The rules are roughly these: A man must only fight if he belongs to a regular army, and must confine himself, in the main, to fighting people who belong to another regular army, and who are called the “enemy” [NB These rules are nowadays relaxed], and he must only kill them so long as they are still fighting; but if a man who is not in a regular army attempts to defend his home, he may be legitimately be shot .. It inevitably happens that each side disregards the rules when there is any military advantage in doing so. Disregard by one’s own side is concealed, whilst disregard by the other side is at once reported and magnified.

When an army succeeds in inflicting greater losses upon another army than it suffers, there are rejoicings, and thanks are given to God. But when it kills men not belonging to an army, no one rejoices, and it is not suggested that the Deity has any share in the matter.”

Why the *Labour Leader*? Battle lines were being drawn. The Labour party and TUC had declared its support for the war on 24 August, and only the I L P had come out against it on 13 August, and its paper, the *Labour Leader*, edited by young Fenner Brockway, was the only UK one to entertain Russell’s pieces. These two encapsulate two strands of Russell’s crusade.

The criticism of Sir Edward Grey was expanded into a 100 page tract, *The policy of the Entente, 1904 – 14, a reply to Professor Gilbert Murray*, analysing the diplomatic errors that led to war. (Murray’s July 1915 pamphlet in support of the war was one of 87 such published by the Oxford Clarendon Press, and 50,000 copies of it had been distributed secretly by the Government to those it considered opinion makers) Russell’s reply, written through 1915, was published early that December by the *National Labour Press* (and praised in glowing terms by Ramsey MacDonald in the *Labour Leader*), and is the major component of Russell’s collection of anti-war essays, *Justice in Wartime*.

That book also contains his Nov 1914 article *Why Nations love War* – Russell’s analysis of the second reason for “all this madness, all this rage” – atavistic nationalism. He expanded this, and sought answers to it, in lectures delivered in 1916, published as *Principles of Social Reconstruction* (*‘Why Men Fight – a method of abolishing the International Duel’*, in the USA). Much of it is a

critique of the state, property relations and war as an institution, and – which will echo with you - the religious element in patriotism. (His qualified advocacy of socialism was published as *Political Ideals*.)

Russell energetically replied to fellow academics (such as, here, the Knightsbridge Professor of Moral Philosophy at Cambridge, in the *Cambridge Review* of Feb 1915), who objected to what they regarded as his descent into unseemliness:

“Professor Sorley’s main argument is that, though we do not hate the Germans, we ought not to attempt a reconciliation, because they are in the habit of bayonetting children in trenches. If Prof. Sorley believes this, it seems surprising that he should not hate them; but it is not surprising that they should hate us, if we believe such things. ... How many instances does he know of “bayoneted children found in the German trenches” established on such evidence as would convince him if alleged against *English* soldiers? ... Professor Sorley must have read the accounts of the Christmas Truce, and of the great difficulty found on both sides in compelling the soldiers to cease fraternising. Does he really think that our soldiers would have been so ready to be friends with men who bayoneted children? Apparently he has a lower opinion than I have of our soldiers’ humanity...”

For Conscience Sake

Russell, right from the start, was active in the No Conscription Fellowship of conscientious objectors. He edited their journal. Tribunals hearing their appeals against conscription usually, if at all, exempted them only from combatant duties. Refusal to serve predictably led to court martial. The first contingent of war resisters arrived in France on 8 May 1916, with a real likelihood of being shot. MPs Philip Morrell and Philip Snowden asked Russell to join them in a private deputation to Asquith on 11 May, “to supply any ginger that may be lacking”. Russell was successful: on condition of secrecy from the delegation, Haig was told that day that “no conscientious objector in France is to be shot for refusal to obey orders”: although 34 men were sentenced to death, the sentence was commuted to prison once it was read out, and then reduced on return to Britain and civilian authority.

One of the first prosecutions in Britain (April 1916) was of a school teacher called Everett, who said in his defence: “I am prepared to do work of national importance which does not include military service, so long as I do not thereby release some other man to do what I am not prepared to do myself”. He was sentenced to two years hard labour. Russell wrote a leaflet for the Fellowship setting out the facts, which ended

“Everett is now suffering this savage punishment solely for refusal to go against his conscience. He is fighting the old fight for liberty and against religious persecution. Will you join the persecutors..?”

The consequences are set out in *For Conscience Sake*, an article published, again in America, in January 1917:

“A quarter of a million copies of the leaflet were distributed. I do not think any of us imagined that the leaflet could be regarded as illegal. In this, however, we were mistaken. Men engaged in distributing the leaflet were prosecuted and sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment with hard labour. As soon as I found out, I wrote

to *The Times* to state I was the author of the leaflet. I was charged with contravening the regulation that ‘no person shall in writing .. make statements likely to prejudice the recruitment and discipline of HM forces’. I was fined £100 on 5 June (1916).”

Shooting Themselves in the Foot

On conviction, the Government refused him a passport to fulfil a pre-war lecturing engagement at Harvard, and Trinity College dismissed him from his lectureship. Russell’s flat (sub-let: he was reduced to living on the charity of his brother, and friends) was searched repeatedly by Scotland Yard in September to unavailingly locate a pamphlet outlining the trial: he told his lover, Ottoline Morrell “there is a lot of sport to be got out of the matter – I am enjoying it”. He promptly advised in the *Labour Leader*: “Domiciliary visits from the police are one of the customs of the country. If you desire less interference with personal liberty I should advise you to emigrate to Russia.”

The result, as Russell mischievously remarked, freed him from preparing and delivering lectures on Ethics and Mathematical Logic, so enabling him to hold public meetings around the country in support of the NCF and a start to peace negotiations. The Government then banned him from entering ‘prohibited areas’.

“The power was given them for the purpose of dealing with spies. They included the whole coast, and a good many counties abutting on it, to prevent suspicious characters from being able to signal to German submarines. .. Some amusing results followed from this prohibition. I had arranged (mainly for the innocent purpose of earning my living) to give a course of six lectures on the philosophical principles of politics in various large towns ... The result of the War Office prohibition has been, of course, to afford an immense advertisement to my lectures ... In prohibited areas, they have been read by friends to crowded audiences. The first lecture, on ‘Political Ideals’ [the series eventually published in 1917 under that title], was read before one thousand people in Glasgow by Robert Smillie, president of the Miners’ Federation of Great Britain, a person whom the Government dare not offend ... So much for the wisdom of interference with free speech. The authorities have recently made repeated offers to withdraw all orders against me if I will cease to agitate for better treatment of conscientious objectors. But this I cannot do. I have never urged anyone not to enlist, though the authorities say and most people believe I have done so. The principle for which I stand is liberty of conscience - a principle universally accepted before the war, even by those who attack me.”

The German Peace Offer

By 1917, war-weariness was endemic. Then came the Bolshevik triumph that led to negotiations with Germany, and *the German Peace Offer* – the title of Russell’s article on 3 January 1918 in the journal of the No Conscription Fellowship that brought about his imprisonment.

Here is part of it: “The German and Austrian Governments have officially announced that they are prepared to conclude a peace on the Russian basis of no annexations and no indemnities, providing there is a general peace, and they have invited the Western Powers to agree to those terms. [the Germans would make a separate peace]

This action has placed [them] in a most cruel dilemma. If they refuse the German offer .. they make it clear they are continuing the war for purposes of territorial aggrandisement. If they accept the offer, they afford a triumph to the hated Bolsheviks and an object lesson to democratic revolutionaries everywhere as to the way to treat with capitalists, imperialists and warmongers. .. It is known that unless peace comes soon, there will be starvation throughout Europe. Men will fight each other for the bare necessities of life.” “The American garrison which will by that time be occupying England and France, *whether or not they will prove efficient against the Germans*, will no doubt be capable of intimidating strikers, an occupation to which the American army is accustomed when at home. I do not say that these thoughts are in the mind of the Government. All the evidence is that there are no thoughts whatsoever in their mind, and that they live from hand to mouth consoling themselves with ignorance and sentimental twaddle.” Russell ended by calling on the Labour Party to use its “enormous power” to compel a peace negotiation and prevent a bloody revolution.

Russell was prosecuted for making a statement ‘intended and likely’ to prejudice the relations with the United States. According to the draft of his defence in court, preserved by Ottoline Morrell

“one phrase in my article has been distorted into a criticism of the military excellence of the American army. Earlier in the article I agreed with Lloyd George that the Western Front constituted an impenetrable barrier, and that where the British Army had failed, there was no reason to suppose that the American army would succeed. By ‘efficient’ I meant ‘efficient for the purposes of breaking through’. I did not mean to suggest any less efficiency than has been shown by our troops; and surely it is not illegal to regard the troops of one’s own country as no less efficient as those of an ally.”

Once again, Russell claimed in court that the government had shot itself in the foot: “if I had not been prosecuted, my words would not have been heard across the Atlantic”, where he made out he felt the best hope of sanity lay. (In December 1916, when the Germans had put out peace feelers, he had had a letter advocating a peace conference smuggled to President Wilson, the contents of which was widely reported in the US press.)

Russell Sent To Prison

He was sentenced to six months in Brixton in the so-called second division prison regime, where books were not permitted, and endless sewing of mailbags was in prospect. This was altered on appeal in May 1918 to the first division, where prisoners were still banned tobacco but were able to carry on their profession: in the first fortnight he had written 20,000 words of his *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*, when not reading and writing forbidden letters put in the pages of uncut books carried in by his visitors. These included a letter to his fellow campaigner and earlier imprisoned ‘conchie’, Clifford Allen, late in June:

“The end will come – might come tomorrow – but not through us. If we have any effect on posterity, it will be owing to what we have done together with what we shall do after the war. At present, the thing is, so far as is compatible with not helping them [the Government], to avoid their ruining our capacity for work afterwards. If we could get the men out on condition they abstain from propaganda, I should advise them to promise .. Our political duty, now, is entirely to be in readiness for after the war ..”

I quote this, because the principal disseminator of the letters, NCF organiser Gladys Rinder, replied to him: “You have put into words what many of us have been groping for. Even people like Mr Bracher [sic] – devotees of the self-destruction cult – are wavering; he is no longer certain that going to prison always helps a movement”. I couldn’t possibly comment.

Sources & Reading List

Volumes 13 and 14 of the *Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell: ‘Prophecy & Dissent’* (Unwin, 1988; Routledge, 2000) and ‘*Pacifism & Revolution*’ (Routledge, 1995)

A Pacifist at War - a selection of the letters and writings of Bertrand Russell, 1914 -18 (culled from the above) (Spokesman books, 2014: £9.99; highly recommended.)

Autobiography of Bertrand Russell, Vol II (1914 – 1944): (Unwin, 1968)

Justice in Wartime, 1916 (facsimile of the 1917 edition published by Spokesman books)

Principles of Social Reconstruction (Allen & Unwin 1916) *Why Men Fight - a method of abolishing the International Duel* (The Century co, New York 1917; Open Court, Chicago)

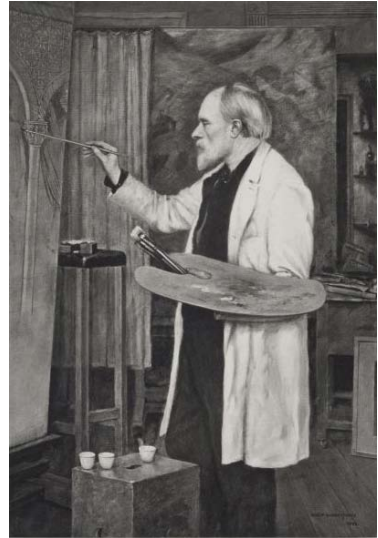
Political Ideals (The Century co, New York, 1917; Parkwest Pub., 2008)

BOOK REVIEW: BURNE-JONES TALKING

His conversations 1895-1898 preserved by his studio assistant Thomas Rooke
Mary Lago (ed), London: Pallas Athene, 2012

Review by **Ellen Ramsay**

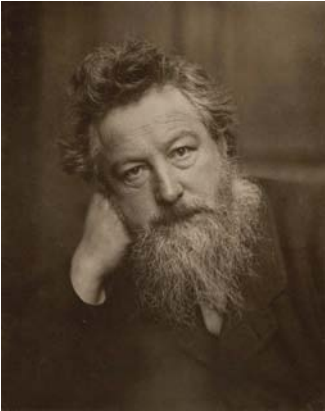
Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898), Pre-Raphaelite artist and friend of William Morris, was known to exclaim, “Belong to the Church of England? Put your head in a bag!” The Catholic Church and its services were “wicked.” The Methodists produced “psychical difficulties” in the artist and a mosaic commission for the decoration of St. Paul’s Cathedral was declined in 1891. St. Paul’s, after all, was a “bestly place” resembling a “Necropolis. Horrid doleful chill pompous display miserable to go into and to think of” [sic]; a sort of “deadman’s hole... So glad I never did those 4 quarter domes they wanted me to” said the artist in 1896.



Edward Burne-Jones

Burne-Jones Talking is an entertaining and spirited volume with ample examples of nineteenth century wit for today’s discerning secular reader. These conversations, dating between 1895 and 1898, were taken down from memory by Thomas Rooke, the artist’s studio assistant for twenty-seven years. It

would have been desirable for the assistant to have garnered the artist's permission to document the conversations. This he did not do as he explains in his "Apology" reprinted in this volume. Perhaps Rooke knew that Burne-Jones, a very private person, would not have granted permission. The resulting text, however, provides a valuable glimpse into the daily life and thoughts of an artist who was in the circle of the secular movement in nineteenth century London.



William Morris

Through these conversations, Burne-Jones introduces us to William Morris, Dante and William Rossetti, Aubrey Beardsley, Oscar Wilde, G.F. Watts, Robert Catterson-Smith, James McNeill Whistler, Frederic Leighton, Charles Faulkner, John Everett Millais and Ford Madox Brown, amongst others. The artist is greatly concerned about politics, art, and religion, the latter being a source of much amusement for him.

For secularists who appreciate art, there are some very interesting passages in this volume. We hear, for instance, about the opening of the National Portrait Gallery building in 1896 and how Burne-Jones enjoyed the gallery's excellent collection of George Frederic Watt's (1817-1904) paintings.

Burne-Jones was a staunch admirer of Watts who was a portrait painter of many luminaries in the secular movement. Watts was considered England's most important painter in the nineteenth century and was married briefly to Ellen Terry in 1864. To this day, in room 26 of the National Portrait Gallery, one may admire Watt's very sensitive portraits of William Morris, John Everett Millais, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Leslie Stephen.

Whether it is on the subject of art, politics or religion, there is much in this small volume to interest the modern reader. It is perhaps surprising to learn that not much has changed in the world since the nineteenth century with regard to religious privilege in society. It is comforting, however, to hear the striking comments of a great artist from the early movement who demonstrates to us that secularism has a long history of witty and feisty individuals who survived despite it all.

At writing, this book was available in the bookstore in the Victoria and Albert Museum and a copy of the 1982 John Murray edition is available at the British Library.

(For William Morris enthusiasts, the National Portrait Gallery in London is holding an exhibition from October 16, 2014 to January 11, 2015 entitled, *Anarchy and Beauty: William Morris and his legacy, 1860-1960*. There will be a variety of lectures and two weekend workshops to accompany this exhibition (see the Gallery's website). Included in the events is a free presentation entitled, *Visualising Portraits: William Morris in the Collection* on November at 2 pm, and a lecture (£6) on *Moustaches, Whiskers and Beards: A History of Facial Hair* on November 13 at 7pm in the Ondaatje Wing Theatre.)

IS UKIP ETHICAL?

Address to the THINKING ON SUNDAY debate, 5 October 2014

Tom Rubens

Any issue about the ethical standing of a political party must involve two questions: 1) Does the party tell the truth? 2) More especially, does it tell the truth about the groups and interest it really represents? In the case of UKIP, the answer to both these questions is emphatically ‘no’. UKIP claims to be an anti-establishment party, one representing the interests of what it calls ‘the people’. It also contends that it reflects the views and interests of ‘the people’ in advocating very severe curbs on immigration.

Is it in fact anti-establishment? Certainly not, if by ‘establishment’ is meant society’s existing economic structure. Much of UKIP’s money comes from millionaires, such as Paul Stokes (worth £650 million), Sir Frederick Barclay (part-owner of the *Daily Telegraph* and of London’s Ritz Hotel), and Stuart Wheeler (owner of the betting empire IG Index). Such people are not exactly rebels against the economic *status quo*.

The role of big-money interests in UKIP became especially clear in the 2004 European elections. Total electoral expenditure by all parties in Britain was £10 million. Of this, UKIP spent £2.3 million, which was more than either Labour or the Liberal Democrats. Only the Conservatives spent more. It can safely be assumed that most of this money emanated from exceptionally wealthy individuals and groups. And, as always in politics, such money comes with multiple strings attached.

UKIP a Defender of Big Business

UKIP defends the interests of big business and big finance. One indication of this fact is that party leader Nigel Farage now boasts that financial donors in the City of London “who would have traditionally supported the Tories are now holding talks with us.” It is indeed the case that a good deal of support, both financial and electoral, is currently shifting from the Conservatives to UKIP, and that this shift now includes the defection of some Conservative MPs. Also, we should remember that Farage himself is a former City trader, with many connections in The Square Mile. A further consideration is that UKIP’s opposition to the EU is *not* on the grounds that big business and finance are predominant in the EU economy. The party does have economic quarrels with the EU, but these are bound up with support for specifically British big business and finance.

It is true that, while endorsing the economic establishment, UKIP does profess concern about the employment conditions of workers. However, what is significant — and highly suspicious — is that it sees no major role for trade unions in improving those conditions.

If we are still searching for UKIP’s anti-establishment credentials, we will get no joy from examining its attitude to the Coalition Government’s policies on spending cuts and the NHS. In 2013, the party called for the Government to *increase* its cuts by £77 billion. It also demanded: more reductions to taxes on profits than the Government itself was proposing; the abolition of inheritance

tax; and a flat-rate of income tax of 31%, a rate which would obviously benefit the very wealthy. So: supporting the economic power-structure; opposing large-scale trade unionism; urging that the Government go further in its policies on cuts and on favouring the very wealthy: none of these actions suggests any genuinely far-reaching concern about the situation of the majority of people in Britain. To this assertion, UKIP would probably reply that, despite the above facts, it is extensively concerned about the majority, and that this is demonstrated by its severe anti-immigration proposals. It argues that most people in the country are against immigration, and view the latter as damaging society both economically and culturally.

Immigration not Unpopular

However, this contention has been called into question by recent and extensive research carried out by the University of Manchester. Surveys conducted by the University in 2013 show that 52% of the people questioned regarded immigration as either not harmful to the economy or as actually good for it. As regards immigration's cultural effects, 54% saw these as either not harmful or as good. Moreover, the research indicated that there has been a steady decline of negative attitudes to immigration since 2011. At the same time, it is true that other polls have produced different results. Given such diversity of response, what can definitely be said is that no certainty whatsoever attaches to the UKIP position that the majority of people are unequivocally anti-immigration — contrary to what the party claims.

Here are some details on its immigration proposals: (1) Admission should be granted only to those people whose “skills and aptitudes” are “of benefit to the nation.” But this is surely a difficult judgement to make. How is the term “benefit” to be interpreted? Does it chiefly mean benefit to the existing economic power-structure? (2) Immigrants must be able to financially support themselves and their dependants for the first 5 years of their time here. They must therefore have private health insurance, private education and private housing. Also, proof must be given of already-existing private-health insurance as a condition for entering the country. This, clearly, could only apply to a tiny and wealthy minority of immigrants; and most immigrants are not in this kind of economic position. Indeed, how many *British people* are, for that matter?

What is more, UKIP's anti-immigration extremism has the potential to be actually dangerous. Though not itself a fascist party, it has drawn voters to it who previously voted for the Nazi British National Party. Additionally, the leaders of the English Defence League endorsed UKIP before the 2014 elections. To retain this support from the fascist Far-Right, UKIP is likely to become even more extreme in its anti-immigration — and other — attitudes.*

Enoch Powell a Hero

As well, we need to note that UKIP's association with the Far Right does not stop at these shores. In the European Parliament, the party is in the grouping which includes the extreme right-wing United Poland Party and the Italian Northern League. Such, perhaps, is fitting company for UKIP, given that Nigel Farage has declared his personal hero to be Enoch Powell—the man who delivered the infamous ‘Rivers of Blood’ anti-immigration speech in 1968.

All the above data show that UKIP is unethical because it does not tell the truth when it claims *primary* commitment to the well-being of the majority of people. Crucially, it has no desire to alter society's economic power-structure. It is frequently described as a 'nationalist populist' party, but this description must be taken with a large pinch of salt, as previous points have indicated.

Whatever genuinely national or patriotic feelings the party may possess, and whatever real concern it may have for the majority of the population, these attitudes take second place to its endorsement of Britain's economic elite. Such an order of priority decisively modifies its populist avowals. The fully-fledged populism which UKIP espouses simply cannot be squared with economic elitism, and any claim (or pretence) to the contrary must be rejected. Nor can such populism be legitimately based on an anti-immigration policy which is virulent, the virulence being aimed at creating a mass-following. Many opponents of UKIP, including myself, actually accept the principle of immigration control, but insist that — like any principle — it should be applied in a measured, circumspect and politically disinterested way. But this is definitely not UKIP's way.

* These developments should be deeply worrying to any member of UKIP who is seeking to be politically circumspect. Imagine the reaction of members of Labour or the Liberal Democrats if their parties were now being viewed favourably by factions on the Far-Right.

VIEWPOINTS

What about UKIP's other Policies?

Donald Langdown (*ER* October p 13) asked that as he voted UKIP (seemingly only because of its immigration policy), did that make him a bad humanist? I agree with much of what he wrote but what about UKIP's other policies?

UKIP supports TTIP, i.e. the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership. This gives investors the right to sue governments who pass laws it doesn't like. For example, a Swedish energy company is suing the German government's decision to phase out nuclear power, a lawsuit expected to cost 700 million euros. Greens are the only party defending British sovereignty, which all the other parties will sign away under this transatlantic trade deal that gives power to American firms.

As he is a floating voter, perhaps Don Langdown should vote Green — that would be ethical. Greens are the only party that will end austerity — all other parties will extend the cuts.

Greens are the only party committed to paying people a proper living wage.

Greens are the only party serious about climate change.

Greens are the only party that will scrap Trident and any other nuclear weapons.

The other parties won't come clean on how they are going to pay for it.

Dorothy Forsyth – Chair of Eastbourne Green Party

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

Opposing Multiculturalism is not Racist

I doubt that I will ever vote UKIP, and I have serious doubts about Nigel Farage, but I greatly sympathise with what Don Langdown says (October *ER*, p13) about immigration, multiculturalism and, above all, faith schools. Of course, anyone who dares say such things risks being called a wicked racist, and I will not be at all surprised if Don Langdown is so attacked.

I am not a racist. I detest racism, I am utterly opposed to any form of racial discrimination or segregation, and I was for many years a member of the Anti-Apartheid Movement. But it is not racist to expect people who come here to conform to our culture and way of life, obey our laws (and most certainly **not** ask for exemptions from our laws on cultural or religious grounds) and, above all perhaps, learn English if they don't already know it. And yet when, some years ago, a judge criticised an immigrant giving evidence in his court for needing an interpreter despite having lived here for many years, saying that he should have learnt English, he was, of course, accused of racism.

And when that brave man, the late Ray Honeyford, criticised multiculturalism, particularly the promotion of 'linguistic diversity', he was suspended from his post as head of a school, reinstated after an appeal to the High Court but, after a hostile campaign (including - wonderful irony ! - the translation of his writings into Urdu!), demonstrations outside his school, and having to be given police protection, he was forced into early retirement.

Oh, and when J. Moriarty of the FCO says in his letter, reproduced on pp. 18-19, that the Middle East Peace Process is a "principle" policy priority I can only suggest he obtain a dictionary! It should, of course, be **principal!**

Ray Ward - London SE16

{Well spotted! I did notice Moriarty's error but as his whole letter was reproduced as a 'picture' (in IT jargon) it could not easily be edited. It was a sign of Civil Service illiteracy. [Ed]}

from the EVENING STANDARD 15 Oct 2014

The Cenotaph is Secular

It is good that 50,000 Irish-born soldiers whose lives were lost in the First World War are to be commemorated on Remembrance Sunday. An even larger group of the fallen who were non-believers are still not similarly recognised. The Cenotaph is a secular memorial without religious symbols, but the service is exclusively religious in format. It's time that atheist or humanist servicemen were included.

Denis Cobell, former president, National Secular Society

The Pope's Synod rebuffs him

Recently, Pope Francis called a Synod to discuss his advocacy of greater toleration towards gay and divorced members of the church. However, he was stymied by reactionary bishops and cardinals. His mistake, however, was surely to call a synod. Why did he not simply sit on the Papal Throne and exercise his ex-cathedra infallibility?

Barbara Smoker - Bromley

Government attacks the Equality Act 2010

Clause 2 of the Deregulation Bill was duly passed by the Lords on 21/10/2014 which (if the Commons endorses it) means that Employment Tribunals will lose their powers to make wider recommendation in cases where they find race, sex or other discrimination.

The ‘wider recommendations’ were ones that might deal with workplace discrimination generally as distinct from just those aspects of discrimination which affected the particular person who brought the case. This ‘reform’ is significant since it is the first serious attack by the Government on the Equality Act 2010 and the anti-discrimination principles which underlie it. It has to be opposed.

Chris Purnell - Orpington

DARWIN’S SARCASTIC COMMENT ON ‘INTELLIGENT DESIGN’

“Do naturalists believing in the independent creation of each species really believe that at innumerable periods in the earth’s history certain elemental atoms have been commanded suddenly to flash into living tissues? Do they believe that at each supposed act of creation one individual or many were produced?”
(From Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species*, 6th ed., 1872, Chapter XV.)

AFTERLIFE DIALOGUE

“Good God! You really do exist!

You’re not just callow superstition.”

“**BE SUBMISSIVE, I INSIST —**

OR ELSE INCUR DESERVED PERDITION.”

“But there is something I must know:

If you are loving and almighty,

Why do Earthlings suffer so?”

“**THE THING YOU NEED TO LEARN IS PIETY!”**

“Life’s *modus operandi*: first,

Outrageous over-propagation,

Then the cull – through sickness, thirst,

Disaster, famine or predation.”

“**QUITE SO. IT MAXIMISES SAINTS,**

AND WAS THE SPUR FOR EVOLUTION.

NOW, BECAUSE OF YOUR COMPLAINTS,

TO HELL — THE CONDIGN INSTITUTION.”

BS.

Note: Some interesting atheist/freethought web sites can be obtained from www.c.s.e.freeuk.com/atheist_perspectives.htm

ESSAY - VENTRICULAR TACHYCARDIA –

A near death experience **John Anderson, CHES Member**

This is an account of something that happened to me though it possesses a strangeness and a distance that belongs to a third party. Walking down the road on a cold February evening I become, of a sudden, disastrously weak and rooted to the spot. I can neither go on nor back and wonder vaguely if this is death (it has to come sometime and it could very well come like this). A further vague thought is whether I should knock on a door and ask for help.

Next thing, I am an aware heap on the pavement. There is a blue flashing light and a policeman in a yellow jacket begging me “to talk to him”. A friend is also there looking concerned. I am wide awake and orientated with no pain: able to move all four extremities, to give my friend the house keys and tell him, in a somewhat slurred voice, that my poor wife is in bed with a bad back and that I am worried about her. I note that I am hopelessly weak, nauseated and soaked in that stinking cold sweat that goes with catastrophic cardiac episodes. No bones broken, my head un banged, glasses undamaged, teeth unchipped. I imagine that it has been a vertical crumple, like unto a dynamited tower block, rather than the headlong, branch snapping, topple of the felled spruce.

Is this my Final Moment?

I am an ex-GP and all too aware that I have just narrowly missed out on being a late GP. Self-diagnosis clicks into place – not a trip and fall – not another stroke or coronary but a cardiovascular collapse of some kind – most probably ventricular tachycardia. Surely every sufferer from long term heart disease must sometimes wonder about when and where and how. So in those moments when I found myself stopped in my tracks my feeling was not one of fear or anxiety but a vague questioning “is this my final moment?” before blackness descended or, perhaps more accurately, I descended into blackness.

Coming around thinking “not dead then!” and “not a stroke” then concern for my poor wife with her bad back and how worried and helpless she will feel (if you would know how much I love – know that on coming back from the dead my first thoughts were of and for you).

So there I lie prostrate, powerless and concerned but also somewhat philosophical. I have survived whatever it has been. I don’t have to do anything (which is handy because I can’t do anything) and what happens next is up to some persons else (the paramedics, in this case, who have turned up and are shoehorning me into the ambulance). And along with my current helplessness comes a sense almost of holiday – holiday from having to make decisions and do things – and a modestly triumphant sense of having cheated death (yet again YAHBOO!) and also time for some vague philosophical cogitations (philosophy being an activity only engaged in (as *Candide* suggests) by those with nothing better to do.)

Then it’s bumpity bump and swerve and jerk and off to hospital we go. And thinking thoughts vaguely thought at the time (or perhaps not so much thoughts

as inarticulate realisations) and now still only partially worked on – probably not deserving and certainly not receiving any more rigorous formulation.

Thoughts

0. I have had a few brushes with death and certainly this evening the Dark Angel made a low pass over Cheddon Road. But I am left confirmed in my opinion that the significance of imminent death is in its presentation. I expect that if death approaches me in a terrifying manner to be appropriately terrified. But if, as was the case this evening, there is no pain, no fighting for breath and no horrifying external physical threat then I can meet the situation with a degree of detached curiosity (and some small embarrassment at the possible fuss I may create).

1. I was good as dead for a time then – that is to say I was in a state of oblivion so dense that I would not have known the difference. Further if my condition had progressed to frank cardiac arrest there could have been no change in this absolute psychic absence.

2. It is not the going away that is the problem but the coming back.

3. I find it impossible to imagine that I could have woken from that black absence to anything other than my incorporated self. The idea that I could have “woken up” to some sort of disembodied consciousness is, to my living mind, an incomprehensible impossibility (if such a thing is allowed).

4. So-called near death experiences can be only experienced by those who are not utterly blacked out by the experience (those in whom awareness and memory (as in the dream state) remain intact). In my book this suggests that these “near death experiences” occur only in those who are not really that near death.

5. After life studies are only of interest to those already convinced that there is something to study. Such a conviction in advance and in the absence of proof seems to me a matter of belief. Such a belief may arise from our very natural thinking about and fear of death (and by death I mean the ceasing to exist of that which thinks the thought and does the fearing) and the equally very natural wish that the event were not a final one. But for me such investigations are like, as it were, (or very possibly nothing like) measuring an amputated foot for shoe size.

6. I have no desire to undermine another’s convinced and sustaining belief in an afterlife but confess that this experience, in its absolute nullity of experience, has confirmed in me a corresponding nullity of dread in that respect. Be that as it very well may not be the true agnostic will always question his scepticism. The jury has retired and shows no signs of returning any time soon: in due course we will all find out or not find out as the case may prove. Meanwhile I have some life left to be lived.

7. An unrelated thought but one I wish to record. Whenever sick I have feared that I might be “faking it”. So, when I realised that I had pissed myself was curiously pleased: proof positive to myself and others that something serious had happened to me and I wasn’t just lying down on the pavement to produce an effect. Spike Milligan’s famous last words, “I told you I was ill.”

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Conway Hall Ethical Society, 25 Red Lion Square, Holborn, WC1R 4RL.

Tel: 020 7405 1818 Website: www.conwayhall.org.uk

For programme updates, email: programme@ethicalsoc.org.uk

Admission to Thinking on Sunday events is free for members of CHES and £3 (£2 conc) for non-members. For other events, no charge unless stated.

NOVEMBER 2014

THINKING ON SUNDAY EVENTS

- Sunday 9 **FOR OUR CHILDREN'S EARTH:**
1100 Rebuilding the soil, sustaining the future. **Chris Rhodes.**
1400 Registration for the CHES AGM. Members only
1430 **CHES AGM**, followed by the first **AGM** of the new CIO form of CHES

Tuesday 11 CHES, The FREETHOUGHT HISTORY RESEARCH GROUP
1900 and the SOCIALIST HISTORY SOCIETY
Opposition to the Great War
Chaired by **Deborah Lavin.**
From Slaughter to Mutiny. Ian Birchall
Reactions to the Russian revolution 1917-1923. Christopher Read
£5/(£3 for CHES, SHS and FHRG members)

MUSIC UNDER FIRE – MUSIC IN LONDON AND PARIS DURING WWI
Wed 12 1900 - Curated by **Barbara L. Kelly** with sound collective and musicians from
Trinity Laban Conservatoire/Royal College of Music - £12 on the door

LONDON THINKS EVENT

Thursday 13 1930 **Nate Phelps: LEAVING HATE BEHIND**
Chair: **Samira Ahmed**
Tickets: £15. £5 CHES members/concessions. Book tickets using Eventbrite.
Complimentary wine and nibbles are available from 1830

- Sunday 16 **WHO OWNS CHILDREN? SOCIAL VISIBILITY AND STATUS**
1100 **NEAR CRADLE AND GRAVE. Jay Ginn**
Sunday 23 **CLIMATE CHANGE - THE TRUTH, THE WHOLE TRUTH AND**
1100 **NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH. David Williams**
Sunday 30 **HAS HUMAN PROSPERITY PEAKED ALREADY?**
1100 **Hazhir Teimourian**

DECEMBER

- Sunday 7 **SHOULD WE SPEND BILLIONS LOOKING INTO DEEP SPACE?**
1100 **Lucio Piccirillo**
Sunday 14 **HOW HUMANITY MIGHT AVOID DEVASTATION**
1100 **Nicholas Maxwell**
1430 *****YULETIDE SOCIAL or LONDON DRINKS*****
Including at least mulled wine, a play and a quiz plus, maybe,
your own input. Donations accepted