

ICONOCLAST

FOR RATIONALISM, SECULARISM, FREETHOUGHT & SOCIAL PROGRESS

VOL. 1. NO. 3. APRIL 1966 6d

Home News:

BILLY GRAHAM'S CAMPAIGN

In June, Billy Graham, the American evangelist, is starting a new campaign in Britain to win back the pagan British to Christianity. His London based campaign committee, headed by industrialist Lord Luke, has raised some £300,000 to pay for it. This sum has been raised by special appeals to wealthy industrialists, in addition to the usual appeals to supporting denominations.

Religion a Money Spinner The Protestant evangelical churches may not dispose of the enormous resources of the Roman Catholic Church when it comes to missionary work of this kind, but nevertheless the sum raised for this coming campaign cannot be sniffed at. The secular movement in Britain by comparison could not raise 300,000 pence, let alone pounds sterling. It is, however, significant that the evangelical churches are feeling the effect of the movement away from the churches, which is shown by small congregations and near static - and in many cases a declining church membership and thus of their financial income. But it is unlikely that the highly personalised Billy Graham campaign will stop the drift. For the movement of the times is essentially against the fundamentalist approach to Christianity. True, gains in converts will be announced. But how many of those who respond to the emotional appeals which will be made and join one of the churches participating in the campaign will retain their membership for any length of time?

Billy Graham's Appeal What is it that Billy Graham has got that all the other British clergy lack? It cannot be said that he is a "great" preacher like Spurgeon was in the last century, for example. Nor does he show a positive response to the great social problems of the day. Nor can it be said that he even tries to make his own particular brand of Christianity of interest to intelligent people. He is, of course, photogenic and has a certain amount of personal charm. But that is about all.

Good Organisation How is it then that he succeeds in getting the tremendous audiences that he does, particularly in the US? Undoubtedly the secret of his success is not his "message" but the fact that he is backed by an extremely well-oiled machine. His services and rallies are packed by the "faithful" who are brought by coach or special train to attend.

It is these supporting local church groups who canvass and bring along the potential "converts" who publicly demonstrate that they are "saved" to impress the press, the TV and stray individuals who attend out of curiosity. Not only are mass rallies being held in large auditoriums, but link-ups by closed circuit television are laid on in smaller towns and centres. How costly these can be is shown by the report that supporting churchmen in Glasgow have abandoned their planned link-up campaign because it is too costly. The Rev. George Duncan of St. George's church stated:

"We feel the outlay would be too great. There is no auditorium in Glasgow which can hold more than 3,000 people." The cost of the closed circuit link-up campaign for this city - £8,000!

World Aflame As part of the campaign, two new books have been published, the first an authorised biography by John Pollock and the second, the "World Aflame" which contains Billy Graham's "sermons". This has had a print of 400,000 and 100,000 have already been sold before publication, it is claimed. It is an extremely dull book by all accounts, as can be imagined, but no doubt the faithful will find some "spiritual" sustenance in it. Even the Archbishop of York, Dr Coggan in reviewing it was constrained to say that Billy Graham was "a conservative in Biblical matters." Small wonder, since he rejects evolution and accepts the Garden of Eden story "because it is in the Holy Bible" and this in this scientific age. All this, no doubt, must be useful ammunition for the evangelical parsons, who delight in the fundamentals without trimmings. But what is not quite so delightful to these "heavies" of the Protestant Churches is the news that Roman Catholic support is now being given to Billy Graham, which as Mr Pollock his biography says: "could open a whole new era in the ministry of the Billy Graham team." We may yet see Billy visiting the Pope!

J. Thomas.

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Editorial: All correspondence and material for publication should be sent to: Editorial Group, Iconoclast, 283, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1. Date-line for publication is the 15th of the previous month.

Subscriptions: Rates: 9/- per annum (for 12 monthly issues) post free. Single copies (post free) 9d. Bulk supplies to branches or other secular organisations by arrangement. All orders and business inquiries should be sent to: Business Manager, Iconoclast, 139, Elm Road, New Malden, Surrey.

EDITORIAL:

Why The Secular League? There has been a secular-freethought movement for as long as mankind has been able to trace his past. It has not always had a name. Indeed, it is only in the fairly recent historical past that a name has been necessary. We do not require a noun to describe men with only one head any more than we have a real use for a noun to describe the man who honestly recognises his sense perceptions and truthfully relates them, for that is, at rock bottom, all that a secularist really is. An honest man! Just that. A person who only knows what he knows and no more. And if theologian or savant want to tell him that without an absolute deity to hook his honesty to, then he requires an act of faith, in the same way as the Christian alleges he does, he retorts merely that he is prepared to amend his statement to read that he thinks that he knows, or as Ambrose Bierce amended the celebrated "I think therefore I am" of Descartes - "I think that I think, therefore I think that I am."...

In short, whatever limitations of knowledge bind the secular free-thinker - or honest and truthful person - to give him his full title - are equally binding on the theologian. That is, freethought ends where deception begins and religion begins where truth ends. Therefore at best, religion is the inability to face up to the fact that human knowledge is not infinite, and at worst, the exploitation of human ignorance. In fact, it is, of course, both of these at once; every permutation of ignorance exploiting stupidity to stupidity exploiting ignorance; that is Christianity. And the concept that a special noun is required for those who fall outside of this is a sad indictment of human society, for as stated, the Christian is not the two-headed man he thinks he is - merely a pathetic little cripple, whose disease is that he refuses to believe that he is a real, solid finite flesh and blood material human being like the rest of us - the Pagliaci of philosophy and the Quasimodo of reason.

If historically there has ever existed a

freethought movement, as long as religions did not possess great temporal power, their existence was unseen and unsung for the obvious reason that religions which are always regressions from secularism, invariably claim to be evolutions from secularism. That is, there was no one who had not had measles before there was someone who had had measles. But if the majority of the people in the world get measles, then it is easier to invent a name for those who have not got it.

The analogy with religion compared to a disease like measles is of course not a true one. A true analogy would be, if those who had say measles, taught everyone else that they had it from childhood, whether they really did or not. Of course, if you did this, the majority of people would either eventually realise that this was not true, or not think too much about it, neither really knowing or caring what measles actually was. The analogy now with Christianity in Gt. Britain is very accurate. Except that we can carry it one stage further. Not only are most of us not Christians, but neither are most of us apathetic persons who do not care either way. For this is an elaborate and carefully nurtured untruth that can have but one purpose.

We are all led to believe by the combined resources of the pulpit, press, newspapers, radio, TV and other means of establishment propaganda, that whilst we ourselves are not believers, most of our neighbours are - or at very least, would be hurt and indignant if we attempted to deprive them of the "moral" teaching that stems from Christianity. From this we can draw only two conclusions. The first is, that the "morality" or inculcation of certain behaviour patterns are of great service to the status quo. The second is, that a minority, wish to convince us that their will, that they clearly wish to impose upon us, the majority, is really what we want for ourselves.

In order to combat this, the Secular League has been formed, but clearly it is impossible in the space of one article to give more than a brief outline of one facet of what we regard as our function, and later issues of Iconoclast will have to deal with matters more fully.

Donations: The Secular League will pay postage or other carriage charges on donations of freethought, rationalist or other books for either our library or literature fund. We will also accept money for the above purpose. All monetary donations should be accompanied by instructions for purpose donated and all contributions will be acknowledged. Send to: Mr J.A. Millar, Secretary, 139, Elm Rd, New Malden, Surrey.

TWO SECULARIST TRADITIONS (1) - THE BOURGEOIS

The modern secularist and freethinking movement may be said to date chronologically from the two great social revolutions of the 18th century, the Industrial Revolution (1750-1800), which created both modern mass production and the modern working class, and the French Revolution (1789-1794) that created political democracy in Europe. The earliest anti-religious and anti-clerical movements stem from these two revolutions. For it is the spokesmen of Deism, in particular, Voltaire and "Tom" Paine, who were the first modern critics of Christianity to enjoy mass circulation for their iconoclastic attacks upon revealed religion in general, and upon Christianity in particular. Prior to this period, there had of course been isolated freethinking critics of religion, such as Democritus and Lucretius in antiquity, and Bruno and Spinoza in modern times, but they were not linked up with any mass movement of critical protest.

Bourgeois Revolution The fundamental course of this metamorphosis involved in the transformation of militant secularism from the individual to the social plane is to be found in social, rather than individual, causes. For historically, secularism has only been able to function effectively as an auxiliary to the current social revolution. Thus, in lands where the advent of the social revolution was retarded by current social backwardness, the rebels against the "dead hand" of the church remained isolated. For lands like Catholic Spain and Tsarist Russia remained in this happy state until within living memory. However, since the 18th century, two social revolutions have successfully challenged the traditions of orthodoxy in both church and state. The first of these successful revolutions was the bourgeois revolution against feudal society, again in both church and state, a serial succession of social revolution that began with the French Revolution itself and which from 1848 onwards dominated the successive political revolutions in modern Europe. For in its radical origin the cosmopolitan bourgeois revolution is both politically, economically and ideologically, the expression of a revolutionary class. For in the sphere of revolution it opposed not only the feudal lords who then controlled current society but also, and equally, their spiritual "co-adjutors" and their ideological "gendarmes", the Christian Churches in particular the Vatican which prior to the turn of the present century (and in some backward countries even later) remained the intransigent enemy of both the revolutionary bourgeoisie itself and (naturally!) of its freethinking auxiliary and ideology.

First Secular Tradition Accordingly, the chronologically initial secularist movement must be regarded historically as the ideological wing of the bourgeois revolution. For it rose and fell along with the frequently fluctuating portions of the revolutionary bourgeoisie from Holy Russia to Bourbon Spain. For apart from the militant adhesion of the then rising bourgeoisie, or at least of its more radical section, secularism was merely an "also ran" and its articular spokesmen merely functioned as targets of clerical abuse and often downright persecution; just as their

premature mediaeval predecessors in the "Ages of Faith" when heresy was systematically proscribed and persecuted. For, we repeat, in pre-industrial ages, that the active support of a contemporary ruling class, "heresy was not a viable pastime".

Radical Bourgeoisie Thus we should surely be justified in affirming that without the bourgeois revolution, no mass secular movement and no anti-religious ideology could or would have appeared, except as a "hole and corner" manifestation. For all the major spokesmen of militant secularism between the initiation of the Industrial Revolution and the Russian Revolution of 1917 (which may be said to have inaugurated the second proletarian tradition) were subconscious spokesmen, often in politics as well as religion, of the most militant section of the radical bourgeoisie. For Voltaire, Paine, Ronan, Huxley, Bradlaugh, Haeckel, etc., all conformed with this general pattern and they thus may be regarded with historical accuracy as spokesmen of the bourgeois revolution. This was so particularly in the ideological sphere of religion, that clerical support for the current political reaction, as exemplified in the "Holy Alliance", frequently drove the militant atheist into the van of contemporary revolutionary politics as well. Thus, for example, such men as Paine and Bradlaugh were equally effective spokesmen of the current radical and democratic political movement. We repeat, without the existence of the bourgeois revolution and without the concurrent active support of the militant bourgeoisie, these religious and anti-clerical movements would merely have been "nine days' wonder" or perhaps free fuel for the contemporary timber trade, like their mediaeval predecessors, to be placed by the Holy Inquisition, in the fires of Smithfield!

Revolution - Backwards Modern secularism, accordingly, made its initial bow to universal history as primarily an auxiliary of the bourgeois era of revolution that itself began in
(cont.pg.6 col.2)

International News:

by John A. Millar.

THE VATICAN AND THE COMMON MARKET.

With the farce of another election over, we are once again forcibly reminded that "democratic rule" means a system for convincing us that most of our neighbours really want what we are all going to get, but which none of us want. And this was never so true as in the case of the European Economic Community.

Classic Moves The classic moves are already being made. Wide press coverage to varying statements ranging from de Gaulle's change of heart, to the need to co-operate for survival on space and aircraft projects, to the simple statement that despite these factors, the matter is not an election issue as whichever political party gets in Britain must go into Europe. According to whether one agrees with Jefferson: "Where freedom is, there is my country" or Thomas Paine: "Where freedom is not - there is mine", one's ideas of the best way to cope with this matter will differ. But on one thing, we ought all to be agreed; to enter Europe is to succumb to Rome!

Vatican Economic Power In the first issue of the Iconoclast, I pointed out that according to figures produced by the Espresso, no less than 70 per cent of all Italian industry is Vatican owned! And in exact accord with a dictum of Marx that in any given era the dominant ideas are those of the ruling class, we find Rome occupying the position of ideological leadership in that area, where she possesses great economic power. Further, we observe the spread of Vatican economic power being accompanied by the accession of Catholic leaders such as Adenauer, Brandt, de Gaulle, to join the existing Catholic Dictators Franco, Salazar and co., with the mass infiltration of the leftist parties in Holland, England, and even Denmark, Sweden and Norway. In short, all the common market countries are Vatican dominated. Those European and Scandinavian countries still outside the EEC are heavily infiltrated by Catholic Action and openly avowed Catholic politicians.

Financial Empire For some reason which we find it hard to understand, it is difficult to convince freethinkers and secularists of the importance of the unquestionable fact that the Holy Apostolic Church at Rome is the largest single economic power bloc in the world today. As Der Spiegel has so rightly pointed out, the Vatican has emerged from the development of international-finance-capitalism as "the largest shareholder and property owner in the world", and it must be frankly admitted that this could only be accomplished by a body of shrewd, far-sighted Machiavellian power-made megalomaniacs. The Wall Street Journal has reported that the financial dealings of the Vatican are so vast that it frequently buys and sells gold bullion in £1 million or larger lots. But mere figures, of them-

selves are not of great value. Perhaps we can digress a little in order to obtain a little perspective.

Financial Oligarchy According to the City Press, the richest man in Europe is Alfred Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach whose infamous dynasty of death is valued at around £400 million and has always been a worthy rival to our own war-lords, Vickers Armstrong. Singly they relegate runners up to our war-lords like the "world's richest man" Paul Getty, who qualifies for this title with a mere £300 million, to the junior divisions of international finance, yet along with other small-fry like Courtaulds (£230 m.) Aristotle Onassis (£300 m.), Steel Company of Wales (£200 m.), U.S. Steel (£600 m.), General Motors (£300 m), they are themselves dwarfed into insignificance by the real international Titans: ICI of Gt. Britain, with assets of about £1,000 m; Unilever of the now Catholic dominated Holland (£1,000 m.), Du Pont de Nemour of the USA (£1,000 m.).

Whales and Sprats The significance of these relative figures is of course, that it is an inflexible rule of international finance, that large capital must always dominate smaller capital. This law is immutable as any physical law which asserts that the larger force will alter the direction of a smaller force, or that the higher will invariably flow to the lower. In the field of power politics, an industrial colossus with a capital of say £300 m. to £400 m. is sufficient to dominate a nation and the hired lackeys of the middle-class who constitute our "government". These in their turn are dominated by the great international Titans with capitals of £1,000 m. or so. Indeed, anyone who considers that in these hey days of liquid international finance-power, any modern emperor worth his salt would limit his empire by considerations of mere geography, nationality or even politics, is naive in the extreme. Modern kingdoms transcend all barriers as surely as "money talks all languages" and are financial in form.

Only Liquid Capital Now, where in this does the Holy Apostolic Church of Rome fit in? According to Der Spiegel, the Daily Express, the Espresso and a number of other
(cont. pg. 6 col.1.)

GOING SLOW ON THE SCROLLS

Some ten years ago I was informed by a number of scholars "in the know" that the Dead Sea Scrolls revealed considerably more on the subject of comparative religion than had yet been made publicly known. Some of them stated that it was "in order to avoid sensationalism" that some of the information had not been released to the general public.

Vatican Changed Attitude But one hinted strongly that "we may see a considerable change in the attitude of the Vatican towards the Jews as a result of this". This has certainly come about; the declarations of the Pope against anti-semitism must be seen despite the hard fact of modern power politics that the Vatican is above all nowadays concerned to move in on the Moslem world, and any philo-Jewish move is viewed with suspicion in that quarter.

Crime of Deicide Yet not only are the Jews no longer "perfidious", they are no longer guilty of the crime of deicide (though how even a theologian could accuse anyone of "Killing God" has always baffled me - it is like the conjuring trick by which "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son" - apparently for a mere 30 years, a flicker in regard to eternity, and then took him back again!) Owing to its delicate manoeuvring into the Arab world, the Vatican has not so far recognised the State of Israel but it has not condemned it either.

Vatican's Guilt This is only partly due to strong feelings of guilt in the Vatican as to the equivocal part it played in the extermination of European Jewry in the Second World War. (Vide "The Representative" - it should also be borne in mind that in some countries, such as Yugoslavia, it was Catholic Action and not the Nazis that carried out the pogroms). In the main, I personally believe, it is due to a deal between certain Jewish scholars and the agents of the Vatican by which the Vatican agreed to remove age-old allegations against the Jews if the Jews did not debunk the Jesus myth all at once. It should be borne in mind that in Israel, archaeology is tied up with geo-politics; Yigal Yadin is both its leading archaeologist and its leading soldier. There is no doubt that certain interpretations of the Essene teaching, shown to Vatican scholars, were seen immediately to be damaging to the Jesus legend, and even more particularly, to the legend of the foundation of the Roman Church by Peter. In regard to the latter, some highly interesting facts unearthed by the scholars have not been revealed to the public at all so far, but immediately they were made known to the Vatican, the Pope flew to Palestine so as to provoke newspaper headlines that he "was the first Pope since Peter" to go there. The newspapermen are still illiterate enough to believe Peter was the first Pope; scholars have long since rejected this hypothesis. It will be intriguing to find the new light on

the Petrine myth when it is ultimately allowed to be unshaded.

Under Tremendous Pressure For the interesting thing is that the work of deciphering and elucidating the Scrolls is going on. The scholars have not yielded on that. They have been subjected to tremendous pressure; Prof. Allegro, indeed, has been placed under such strong academic blackmail and pressure that he is writing a play on his experiences for the sheer dramatic value...not of the Scrolls but of the determination to suppress them!

No Longer Christians Several newspapers have noted with surprise that Christian scholars (like Prof. Allegro) have ceased to be Christians since commencing their work. But Jewish scholars (in this context they mean Israelis) have claimed that "nothing in the Scrolls contradicts the Jesus story", surprisingly enough - to the newspapermen, not to those who appreciate that the Israelis have "exchanged a mutual courtesy" (if in the academic world one cannot say "done a deal") by allowing gradual interpretation of their findings, so as to allow the Churches to "hedge their betting" with regard to the authenticity of a historical Jesus. It is true that nobody thought of writing, during the years 1-32, "Jesus does not exist": it is true that the Christian Church was founded by human agency and therefore its Founder existed; in this sense the Gospels are not contradicted. What has been contradicted is the promise on which any sane person can continue to believe them the "Word of God."

Notice:ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE SECULAR LEAGUE

The annual conference of the Secular League will take place on Monday, 11th April, 1966 (Easter Monday) at 10.0 am., at the "White Hart" Hotel, Hampton Wick, (Opposite Kingston Bridge), on the Surrey-Midlx. border. Members should bring their current card of membership.

Emergency motions may be submitted in writing on the morning of the conference.

Full details are available from: Mr J.A. Millar, Secretary, Secular League, 139, Elm Road, New Malden, Surrey, to whom all queries should be addressed.

Cont. from pg 4: The Vatican and the Common Market:

sources, in shareholdings alone, the Vatican is worth somewhere in the region of £5,000 m. But aht is only liquid capital. If we include (as we have in the figures cited for all the businesses above) fixed assets as well, we arrive at a computation of £20,000 m. Or twenty times more powerful than any other single economic unit, and larger than the world's 100 largest companies, all rolled into one. Rome owns or controls a large number of banks throughout the world, including the Bank of America - the largest bank in the world - in which the Society of Jesus owns 51 per cent of the stock. The Curia, by a carefully devised system of financial blackmail has secured several hundreds of directorships for its nominees - Baron Nogara used to hold 74 himself when chief of the Curia, and these include the Pirelli Company at Burton-on-Trent, and was instrumental both in bringing about the Fiat-Citroen merger in France, and the ousting of U.S. and Bethlehem Steel, by American National and Republic Steel for U.S. Defence Department rocket, aircraft and other war contracts, in America.

Violence and Fraud One would like to think that the onrush of scientific progress will sweep away the anachronism of Christianity. This unfortunately assumes the Vatican to be a Church first and a power-bloc second. Just as Edward Gibbon wrote so many years ago: "The Church of Rome defended by violence the Empire she had acquired by Fraud", so in our own era, we are all witnessing, not only the continuation of this defence by the armies of Franco, Mussolini, Hitler, Stazar, Peron and Tshombe, but the even sadder spectacle of the turning back of the clock of education and enlightenment in Spain, France and Germany, whilst Protestant Britain, the errant schoolboy caught red-handed with a forbidden book, knocks timidly at the Papal door, awaiting the inevitable chastisement for her deadly sin - tasting the fruits of the tree of knowledge.

Secular League Meetings: Outdoor Meetings sponsored by Kingston, North London and Camden groups: Marble Arch, every Sunday from 4.0 pm. Speakers: J.W. Barker, L. Ebury, C.E. Wood, J.A. Millar, H. Timmins, and others.

Tower Hill Every Thursday, 12.0 - 2.0 pm. L. Ebury. Whitestone Pond, Hampstead, every Sunday 12.0 - 2.0 pm. L. Ebury.

Indoor Meetings: Kingston and Surbiton group meetings every Friday, 8.0 pm - The White Hart, Hampton Wick, Middlx.

Secularists living or working in the Borough of Camden, are urged to send for particulars of meetings of the Camden group of the Secular League.

Cont. from pg 3: The Secularist Tradition:

the French Revolution and eventually came to dominate the 19th century. One might even say that when the bourgeoisie fought against the feudal enemies in the political terrain, against the absolute monarchies and the feudal lords, their secular allies simultaneously fought along with them against the clerical allies of the old regime whether Catholic popes and prelates or Protestant preachers, as well as against their theological pre-industrial pre-scientific ideologies; ideologies which embodied the "dead hand" of the out-moded past.

So far, so good! The social revolution, like social phenomena in general, perhaps even more so, obeys the eternal laws of dialectics, which necessarily follows the "law of contradiction". For social classes, and accordingly the social revolution made by social classes in pursuit of their immediate class ends, also in turn close and pass into their opposites. Thus, in the course of this present century, so pre-emently characterised by rapid evolution in all spheres of life, this fate has befallen also the bourgeoisie and consequently the bourgeois revolution. For whenever and wherever the bourgeoisie has triumphed, and this is so today in virtually all the Western world, it has ceased to be revolutionary and increasingly parted company with radical ideologies, not only in the sphere of politics but also in the sphere of religion. For today, the cosmopolitan bourgeoisie represent a "satisfied" class, and "satisfied" classes cannot by definition be revolutionary classes any longer!

Retgression Today, the bourgeoisie is either returning to "Holy Church", artfully encouraged by the benevolent "New Look" inaugurated no doubt for their special benefit, by the late Vatican Council; or is dissolving the former militant secularism into a wishy-washy humanism that "night in which all cows are black". This cosmopolitan retrogression of the bourgeoisie is today not only reflected in the religious field but also in the current evolution, or rather retrogression, of bourgeois secularism, which is fast ceasing to be secular, and of bourgeois "freethought", which is rapidly ceasing to be free.

(The second part of "Two Secularist Traditions" will be published in the next issue of Iconoclast.)

Secular League Membership: Full details of the aims and objects of the recently founded Secular League, including application for membership form can be obtained from: J.A. Millar, Secular League, 139, Elm Road, New Malden, Surrey.

Review: by Joy Walker.

THE MATCH GIRLS

It seems ironic that at a time when the Labour Party, the so-called "party of the workers" appears determined to curtail both the power of the trade unions and the right of the workers to strike, there should be produced at a West End theatre a show which so vividly reminds us of the struggle by the working class throughout the 19th century to organise itself against exploitation.

The heroic story of the strike of the match girls in 1888, on which this music is based, is a prime example of capitalist exploitation of the unskilled worker for private profit. The conditions in the Bryant and May match factories, under which hundreds of match girls worked, were appalling and the constant inhaling of chemicals caused ill-health, loss of teeth and hair and on occasions even death. With their pay a mere pittance and tormented with fines and penalties, the match girls first come out on strike as early as 1885 but without the support of the British trades union movement, which had confined its activities to organising male labour, this first strike failed miserably.

However, the intolerable treatment of the unskilled woman worker in London had long concerned Herbert Burrows and Annie Besant and in 1888, Mrs Besant wrote an impassioned article entitled "White Slavery in London", in "The Link" in which she described the harrowing experiences of the match girls. This article precipitated the second strike and with Annie Besant as their leader, the girls gradually gained public support, until at length even papers such as the "Financial World" recommended that Bryant and May improve conditions in their company and "The Star" not only appealed to the owners in their private capacity to stop the strike but suggested that the London Trades Council should undertake to arbitrate. This it did and a settlement was soon reached in which the directors of Bryant and May made important concessions.

This episode marked a turning point in the history of trade unionism and the organisation of the unskilled and its adaptation as a musical, must of necessity have its limitations, yet the essence of the story comes through from the moment the curtain rises to reveal the inside of the great, dark, bare factory. The presentation of poverty, exploitation, illness and despair among the girls is not an easy task but Bill Owen, the author, succeeds admirably and one is aware throughout of working class humour and solidarity, so necessary in such a struggle and so unusual and refreshing in a West End theatre.

The outstanding choreography and direction of Gillian Lynne produce a superb integration of dance with action, while the dance routines are most invigorating and entertaining. Tony Russell's modern music is consistently good and interesting and there are some most unusual lyrics including "an amendment to a motion" which should amuse all members of trade unions. The sets, the work of Colin Winslow, were realistic and effective, particularly those in the "waiting" scene.

The leader of the match girls was played with great spirit by Vivienne Martin but I was far less happy about Marion Grimaldi's interpretation of Annie Besant as a rather aloof and reserved woman. The whole show however is expertly handled, full of life and spirit and for its theme alone deserves every support.

LONDON SECULAR PRESS

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RAMSEY IN ROME

If it is not our concern what the Church of Rome does when celebrating marriages inside its own precincts, is it any of our concern that Dr Ramsey is visiting Rome on behalf of the Church of England? Do we as secularists care two pins, as do the militant Protestants, that "Dr Ramsey is betraying England"?

By Law Established Yes, we should. So far as his position as head of the Church is concerned, it does not matter to us if Dr Ramsey kisses the Pope's toe, his ring, or any portion of his anatomy. But he has no right to speak in the name of the English people. The Church should be dis-established; if it were dis-established, it would not matter to us if Dr Ramsey united with Rome or submitted to the Vatican, any more than it would if the Methodist Connection or the Jewish synagogue did so (except insofar as this increased political domination by the Vatican). But the Church of England is "as by law established" even if under a Nonconformist Prime Minister its bishops are chosen by a heretic.

Dis-establish The Church Divorce the Church from the nation!

How many English people attend the Church of England anyway? And furthermore, the Church should not be allowed to get away with all its swag, including all its churches. The argument held by Protestants against the former Vatican claim that "Catholics built the English Churches and they should go to the Church of Rome" was that the English people built the English churches and when they ceased to be Romanist they were entitled to keep their churches.

(It is true that the extension of this argument to Ireland would be disastrous to the Church of Ireland - imagine St. Pat's Roman again - but it was said in the 19th century that every argument in favour of English establishmentarianism was an argument in favour of Irish disestablishmentarianism).

The English people having now virtually disavowed Anglicanism by "voting with their feet", it seems the churches should not be maintained as such and at any rate those no longer used as churches should be returned to the public for one purpose or another, and not merely sold to swell the coffers of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners.

Bookmakers Clerk The Church now uses one prominent London church as a book warehouse for the SPCK. This is - though an improvement on the previous use - not what "the English people built" it for. It is quite clear that given a free choice today, what they would obviously choose would be a bingo hall, but surely there is a reasonable compromise between the old and the new religions? - between the Rock of Ages and the Roulette Wheel?

It should be noted, however, that quite voluntarily the Roman churches in England are going over to serve the new god Bingo, and Bingo is being merrily called in many a Romish parish hall. Perhaps we shall yet see the vision of Anatole France, the Pope of Rome sitting among the ruins of the Vatican and acting as a bookmakers' clerk, for which his gift of infallibility will be invaluable in fixing the odds.

Ecumenical Gesture However, enough of arguments about real estate. How is the campaign for ecumenical unity getting on. On the 18th March, Pope Paul lifted the excommunication penalty on Roman Catholics who married outside their church. As the Daily Mirror put it dramatically on the following day: "There are to be no more brides crying because of covered altars, the removal of drapes, hurried vows in sacristies, a ban on music and a sense of guilt". Nothing has more annoyed some Protestants than the insistence on the children being brought up as R.C's; this is not to be altered (though the promise can now be verbal and not written).

Soul Snatching It is hard to know why Protestants should protest when they do the same thing themselves. It is true they do not insist that children of "mixed marriages" be brought up C of E; but children of unmixed marriages are baptised willy-nilly and indeed the law of England presupposes that all who have not actively dissented are members of the Established Church. Soul-snatching is by no means an R.C. monopoly. And why, after all, should not the RCs lay down conditions under which it is prepared to marry those who seek its blessing? If they insisted that all who wanted to make use of their facilities in this respect should first parade naked with a candle in their hands and cinders on their heads (as was once done), why not? So long as nobody is compelled to make use of their facilities, they are perfectly entitled to cover their altars, remove their drapes, rush the ceremony through at the speed of a Dutch auction, and play "Colonel Bogey" to the popular words. The man-in-the street, and even more the women, has an attitude of complete humbug in regard to the marriage ceremony. Far too many want to have their cake and eat it. Our objection is when these rules are imposed on those outside the church.