



INTERNATIONAL HUMANIST NEWS

International Humanist and Ethical Union

May 2003
£5



Humanism in Andhra Pradesh

INTERNATIONAL HUMANIST NEWS



May 2003

IN THIS ISSUE

News	3
A New Start for IHEU! <i>Levi Fragell</i>	5
Collateral Damage <i>Roy Brown</i>	6
Humanism in Andhra Pradesh <i>Babu Gogineni, Levi Fragell, Kotapati Murahari Rao, Sonja Eggerickx</i>	7
A Godly Future for the European Union? <i>Gert Van Eekhout</i>	14
Religious Privilege and the European Union <i>Keith Porteous Wood</i>	15
A History of IHEYO <i>Gea Meijers</i>	16
Non-Denominational Citizens in the Czech Republic <i>Joseph Haubelt</i>	17
Humanism in Russia <i>Alexander Razin</i>	18
Peru: A Non-Secular State in the 21st Century <i>Manuel Paz-y-Miño</i>	18
Humanism in Brazil <i>Daniel Sottomaio</i>	19
Campaigning Against Sectarian Education in Scotland <i>Keith Porteous Wood</i>	20
Helping Sexual Assault Survivors in New York <i>Matt Cherry</i>	21
American Boy Scout Expelled for Non-Belief <i>Mary Ellen Sikes</i>	21
UN Report: UN and Global Governance <i>Sylvain and Phyllis Ehrenfeld</i>	22
News in Brief	23

Cover: Children of Andhra Pradesh at play, at school (Viveka Vidyalayam Humanist school) and, tragically and all too often, at work, tending livestock and labouring in the fields.

ISSN: 0929-4589

Views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the viewpoint of IHEU.

IHEU Headquarters & Editorial Office
1 Gower Street
London WC1E 6HD, UK
Tel: 00 44 20 7631 3170
Fax: 00 44 20 7631 3171

President: Levi Fragell
Email: fragell@human.no

Executive Director: Babu Gogineni
Editor: Latha Menon
Email: editor@iheu.org

Website: www.iheu.org

Printed by RAP, Clock Street, Hollinwood,
Oldham, Lancs OL9 7LY. Tel: 0161 947 3700

From the Executive Director

The war on Iraq casts its shadow over this issue of *IHN*. Anti-war protests around the world show an awakening moral conscience with which politicians and decision-makers must contend. In recent years, activists have made their voice heard on global issues. People's power will be an important factor in influencing world developments in the decades to come – a much-needed corrective in a unipolar world. IHEU, of course, added its own voice of protest (see p. 4).

A key theme of this issue is the visit of an IHEU delegation to Andhra Pradesh, India. Andhra Pradesh (my home state!) is remarkable for its rich and long tradition of Humanist and rationalist activity (pp. 7–13). Despite the generally deplorable situation in Hindu nationalist-dominated India, hope is kindled when we see the efforts of our courageous colleagues.

Meanwhile in Europe, recent attempts to bring God into the European Union Constitution have highlighted once again the need for Humanists to be vigilant in order to keep Europe's institutions non-discriminatory (pp. 14–15). The European Humanist Federation has an important role to play in European affairs and in stimulating Humanist groups in Europe to take a pro-active stance to defend what has already been achieved.

The forthcoming General Assembly of IHEU, to be held in May in Washington DC, is planned as a different kind of GA leading to greater involvement of member organizations in IHEU work. Levi Fragell, with whom I have had the privilege of working for over five years, will step down as IHEU President to concentrate on Humanism in Norway (p. 5). Levi was instrumental in increasing the membership of the Norwegian Humanist Association from a few thousands to nearly 65,000 today. Cultivating Humanism can be adventurous, and Levi has had his own adventures: as a young teacher on a sparsely populated island close to the North Pole; as a Humanist leader campaigning in Nigeria or Pakistan; and, of course, as the only one daring to take a dip in the choppy sea at Chirala beach in India! Here's wishing you many more adventures, Levi!

Babu Gogineni

INVITATION FOR ARTICLES

- *IHN* welcomes original, previously unpublished, non-academic contributions on subjects of interest to the world-wide community of Humanists. Articles should be around 1000 words.
- It is *IHN's* policy to use the word HUMANISM without adjectives or qualifications where the 'secular approach' is intended.
- *IHN* aims to be a source of reliable information – authors should ensure accuracy of facts and figures.
- Articles in *IHN* are widely reproduced or translated in various Humanist magazines all over the world. Articles submitted for consideration may not be submitted to other magazines before a decision is conveyed by *IHN*. A decision will be conveyed generally within three months of submission, but articles cannot be returned.
- Contributions should preferably be word processed and sent via e-mail text, but not as attachments, because of virus complications. Photographs and illustrations are welcome.
- Contributors should include a complete address as well as a telephone and fax number where possible, along with a three-line biographical note.
- Contributors should note that articles published in *IHN* can be freely reproduced, but the *IHN* requires that the source and the author's name be acknowledged.

Contacting IHEU

General:

IHEU Office (*supporters, donations, change of address, etc.*)

International Humanist News (*articles, letters to the editor*)

IHEU Campaigns

IHEYO

IHEU Funding Programme

humanism@iheu.org

office@iheu.org

editor@iheu.org

campaign@iheu.org

youth@iheu.org

funding@iheu.org

News

Agreement between IHEU and EHF

IHEU and the European Humanist Federation (EHF) made an important agreement in February 2003. Having discussed different structural models, the organizations agreed to work towards a vision of a united organization, with EHF as a regional section of IHEU.

Both organizations are working for Humanism and trying to attain the same general goals, and both see the need for cooperation so that the goals can be achieved. As a consequence of this, they agreed to work together in

a spirit of cooperation and non-competition, using a protocol as the basis of their work.

The agreement to work towards a unified organization and the working-together protocol was agreed by both IHEU and EHF Executive Committees and will be reported to the respective General Assemblies later this year.

The unification may take some time, but the IHEU Executive Committee was delighted that the first step has been taken.

Two Letters to IHEU

A Letter from Kerala

THANKS TO HUMANIST CAMPAIGNERS!

In March 2003, IHEU launched a campaign for Rationalist leader Sreeni Pattathanam in Kerala to highlight his harassment by the Kerala Government for writing a book questioning the activities of Mata Amritanandamayi, also known as the "Hugging Mother". With help from IHEU member organizations, especially the American Humanist Association, the issue was given wide publicity.

Dear Mr. Babu Gogineni,
The excellent propaganda and public awareness work done by IHEU had its positive effects in the Sreeni Pattathanam vs. the Hugging Mother case. The Principal Secretary of Kerala State Govt. Home Department summoned Mr. Pattathanam along with his printer and publisher on March 19. Two senior lawyers appeared for the mother's devotee Advocate Ajan, who filed the complaint. The Principal Secretary of the Home Department, taking into audit the international opinion created by IHEU in the case, asked the lawyers whether they had served the copy of the complaint to the author, printer and publisher. ... They were in need of time up to April 9 to serve the said copy of the complaint to us. The Secretary told them that he won't be waiting so long and he would be constrained to dispose the complaint at an earlier date. I suppose that it seems the Chief Minister of Kerala is perhaps in

a face saving exercise. Thanks to IHEU initiative in the matter.

The newspapers in Kerala like *Deshabhimani* (the CPI(M) organ), *Malayala Manorama*, *Deepika* (a pro-Catholic paper), and *Mangalam* published reports about IHEU's intervention in the matter...

Sincerely,
C.I. Oommen, President
Bharatiya Rationalist Association (Kerala), Affiliated to Rationalist Association of India

A Letter from Bangladesh

In the last issue of IHN, we reported the arrest in Bangladesh, for the second time, of the Humanist activist Shahriyar Kabir: Kabir heads the Nirmul Committee, demanding that those responsible for genocide during the Bangladesh War of Independence in 1971 be brought to justice. He was detained under the Special Powers Act. Shahriyar Kabir writes:

28 January 2003

Dear Gogineni,
I was released from jail on 7 January and admitted to hospital for treatment. This time my days in police remand were real nightmare. Yesterday I was released from hospital but I have to continue medical treatment for couple of weeks. While watching my e-mails I have seen your wonderful statement demanding our release. Please accept my thanks and gratitude.

I am not sure how long our govt. would allow me to stay out of prison though I consider Bangladesh a prison for religious minorities and

IHEU Headquarters Move

Having reached the end of the five-year lease period, *The Humanist Centre* at Bradlaugh House, 47 Theobalds Road, London, has relocated to the prestigious address of 1 Gower Street in Central London. The move was accomplished on 1 April, 2003.

The newly refurbished office building offers comparable space, but vastly superior facilities to the three tenants: British Humanist Association, Rationalist Press Association and IHEU. In this four-storey building there are two meeting rooms equipped for media interviews and training purposes and a dedicated space for volunteers in the lower ground floor, next to IHEU's offices. Space is also available for IHEU's archives from the past ten years.

A few minutes walk from the British Museum, the new office premises are easily accessible from Tottenham Court Road Tube station on the Northern Line, and Russell Square Tube Station on the Piccadilly line.

Our new postal address is: 1 Gower Street, London WC1E 6HD, United Kingdom. Telephone: 44 207 631 3170. Fax: 44 207 631 3171

secular intellectuals. Before my next confinement in the smaller prison I am working hard to complete two white papers, one is on communal persecution and the other is on the rise of religio-fundamentalism in Bangladesh. I am confident about the merit of the publications that would help to create awareness among our people in resisting fundamentalism and communalism. With best wishes,
Shahriar

Dr Shaikh Case

IHEU President Levi Fragell visited Pakistan in January to meet with Humanists, human rights activists, and diplomats concerning Dr Shaikh's conviction for blasphemy. The High Court judgment on Dr Shaikh's appeal against his death penalty has once again been postponed, though we are hopeful of an early positive outcome. While in Islamabad, Levi also addressed a well-publicized meeting on Humanism, attended by all the major NGOs.

IHEU Letter to George Bush

Reproduced below, for the record, is the official letter of protest sent by IHEU Executive Committee to the government of the United States concerning its disregard for the authority and role of the United Nations Security Council over the matter of Iraq. A military invasion of Iraq led by the US and the UK went ahead, of course, despite massive worldwide protests.

President George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500
USA

18 February 2003

Dear Mr President
The Executive Committee of the International Humanist and Ethical Union, representing over 90 Humanist, Secularist, Freethought, and Ethical Culture organisations in 35 countries, hereby calls upon you and

your government to refrain from any military action against Iraq without the explicit approval of the United Nations Security Council.

We respectfully remind you that to initiate military action without the approval of the Security Council would be in breach of international law. Such action could lead to long-term global instability, severely damage the reputation of the United States and its allies, and could seriously jeopardise the future of the United Nations and the rule of international law on which world order depends.

Signed by:

Mr Levi Fragell, President, Norway
Mr Roy Brown, Switzerland
Mrs Sonja Eggerickx, Belgium
Mr Larry Jones, United States
Mr John Leeson, United Kingdom
Mrs Robbi Robson, United Kingdom

Humanists and the Natural World

We received the following question from a reader in Ireland:

Your fourth article of the IHEU Amsterdam Declaration states "... and recognises our dependence on and responsibility for the natural world."

How do you propose to honour your above-stated commitment? Or is it just an aspiration?

We replied as follows:

It is because human beings are top of the evolutionary tree that we have a responsibility for the natural world. It is hubris to believe that somehow we have become independent of it and are no longer part of it. And the longer we continue to exploit the Earth and foul our own nest the worse the day of reckoning will be when it comes.

The Earth is finite. The history of Easter Island provides a chilling example of what can happen when a finite environment is over-exploited. But over-exploitation is not only a question of numbers; it is also a question of consumption. A child born in southern India today will, in its lifetime, consume less than 3% of the energy and natural resources of a child born today in the United States. We must develop low-consumption lifestyles if we are to avoid the fate of the Easter Islanders. Their population crashed by 90% in less than 100 years.

Many countries have long been aware of the problem of rapid population growth. India initiated a population control programme almost 50 years ago. It was a total failure in a society where children were seen as a gift from God and any government programme was viewed with deep suspicion. When India's family planning programme became coercive it set back any hope of reducing family sizes for a generation. But since the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994 there has been a worldwide consensus on what needs to be done. Steven Sinding, now Secretary General of the International Planned Parenthood Federation, showed that simply giving women the right to choose how many children to have, and when, would do more to stabilize population growth than any government target-driven population control programme. The proof of this can be seen in

Western Europe today, where women have complete control over their own fertility and total fertility rates have fallen well below replacement level. The reason this has not happened worldwide is because in developing countries women are still denied the right to choose; contraception is still not widely available; and western governments, in particular the United States, have reneged on the commitments they made in Cairo to provide adequate funding for family planning programmes – largely, it has to be said, because of intense political pressure from the Vatican and its allies, and from the Christian Right in America.

For an excellent analysis of how we are damaging the environment and what we can actually do about it, I recommend almost any of the publications of the Worldwatch Institute: www.worldwatch.org. They produce an annual "State of the World" report. The introduction to this year's report states:

Building a world where we meet our own needs without denying future generations a healthy society is not impossible, but the challenge is to mobilize governments, businesses, and civil society to construct economies that are healthy for both people and the planet.

There are a number of European organizations working in the field of reproductive health (the new politically correct term for family planning and related services). Notable among them is the Irish Family Planning Association (<http://www.ifpa.ie>).

The IFPA is a member of the European Network of Population NGOs and takes a keen interest in family planning programmes in developing countries.

Humanity is, and always will be, part of the natural world. We continue to foul our nest at our peril. Support for NGOs like the IFPA, World Population Foundation (<http://www2.tribute.nl/wpf/uk/main.html>), the International Foundation for Population and Development (<http://www.ifpd.org>) and the Worldwatch Institute (<http://www.worldwatch.org>) will help raise awareness of the problems of population growth, resource consumption, and sustainability, and hopefully inspire our politicians to help fund worthwhile programmes that can have a real impact in these areas.

Roy Brown, IHEU Vice-President

A New Start for IHEU!

By Levi Fragell

The first thing I did after becoming President of the Norwegian Humanist Association in 1976, was to take the train to the Netherlands – to learn more about Humanism. Norway at that time had but a small Humanist organization, and I felt that we should learn from our more mature friends how to grow and develop. I learnt a lot. But the Netherlands was just one stop on a long journey into the world of Humanism. Knowing that we had a world movement out there gave me courage and faith. I learnt from the Germans, the Belgians, the British, the Americans... Back in Norway we successfully implemented the good things we learnt from other members of the International Humanist and Ethical Union. But more importantly, we learnt what we should *not* do.

What should we not do? First and foremost, we should not fight over unimportant philosophical matters. Secondly, we should not use time and energy to argue or compete with other groups within the freethought movement.

What *should* we do? Fight the *real* enemy. Most people with red blood in their veins love a good fight, an activating controversy. Being good, kind and friendly, which we all should be, is a bit boring as the only agenda for an organization. That goes for some Humanist groups as well. They are nice, cooperative and tolerant – so tolerant that attacking other peoples' beliefs or behaviour for many of our colleagues has become the capital sin of Humanism – independent of what the other side says, thinks or does.

Humanism is not about being human, just as feminism is not about being feminine, or socialism about being social. Humanism is about fighting irrationalism, supernaturalism, theocracy, dictatorship, sexual suppression and abuse, limitation of freedom, discrimination based on race, gender, or conviction. Here we find the real enemies of Humanism.

If any of those violations of Humanist values are fostered or promoted by a church, mosque, synagogue or political party – we should oppose that church, mosque, synagogue or political party!

As one of the leaders of IHEU for two decades – and President for the past 5 years – growth and development had become for me an increasing concern, as I observed misguided tolerance and cultural relativism attacking the backbones of many of our groups, inspired as they were for a period by postmodernism and even by New Age mysticism. Had we become so laid back that we were almost lying down? But over the past few years my optimism has been restored. Why? How? My work for IHEU has brought me to areas outside the industrialized world, to Asia and Africa (though, regrettably, not to South America). I have met people with friends in prison because of their Humanism; groups who combat religious cheaters and faith healers; doctors who conduct illegal family planning; and writers who risk their life for the freedom of expression. I have realized that



Photo: Axel Sandberg.

Humanism is the only organized lifestance in the world that can contribute to the liberation of individuals and societies in these cultures. It has been a privilege for me to cooperate with an executive committee and a director who have shared these visions. Our common concern has been: how shall we get our member groups to understand the fantastic potential for Humanism on continents where significant and growing minorities are just beginning to move away from traditionalism and dogmatic religion? They need our moral support (spend your next vacation in Uganda or Pakistan!), they need monetary support (have you joined the 100 Club yet?), and they need a strong headquarters in London that can provide competent assistance, magazines, books, and information via the Web (does your group pay a decent annual fee to IHEU?).

As I will step down as IHEU President at the Washington General Assembly in May to concentrate on Norwegian Humanism, my appeal to delegates, members, and groups is this: let us not only give IHEU a new president, let us give it a new start!

Levi Fragell became President of IHEU in 1998 during a turbulent time and steered IHEU into calm waters and into achieving steady progress. During the five years of his leadership IHEU organized two World Congresses (in India and in the Netherlands) and several international conferences, achieved a higher profile in the media as a campaigning organization, and created a closer international network of Humanist organizations. Levi Fragell is a strong advocate of a common Humanist identity for the movement.

Collateral Damage

by Roy Brown

Roy Brown, IHEU Vice-President, explores the events and attitudes that culminated in the American-led invasion of Iraq, and the broader implications of that action. The war is continuing as we go to press.

Whatever the merits of the war against Iraq – and few would argue that the removal of Saddam Hussein and his evil regime was a bad thing – the damage inflicted on international relations by America's headlong rush into war has been enormous. The attempt by the US to seek UN approval for the war was at best half-hearted and at worst cynical, and the work of the weapons inspectors was doomed to failure by American pressure and unreasonable deadlines. It was apparent from the outset that the Bush administration wanted war and that its timing would be dictated solely by military considerations.

Lacking as it does the explicit support of the Security Council, the war against Iraq is illegal – a point underlined by the International Commission of Jurists which met in Geneva on 18 March, and confirmed by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Earlier Security Council resolutions did not, as claimed by Britain and the United States, authorize military action.

How quickly and carelessly George W. Bush has squandered the sympathy of the world since the terror attacks of September 11th! For a few short weeks then we were all Americans. Now the US, aided and abetted by Britain and with token support from a handful of other nations, has embarked on a war of aggression – a "pre-emptive strike" against an enemy chosen, many believe, because – unlike far greater threats to American security such as North Korea or the elusive international network of Islamist terrorists – Iraq was an easy target, too weak to defend itself.

The Security Council and most of world opinion are opposed to this war, not because of French duplicity or the failure of the international community to face up to its responsibilities, but because the United States failed to persuade the world of the merits of its case. After months of intelligence gathering and weapons inspections no credible evidence was presented that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction. Nor was the world convinced by Bush's new-found desire to "liberate" the Iraqi people from tyranny.

Since the fall of communism, America has stood alone as the world's only remaining superpower and has rarely troubled to disguise its disdain for international agreements or institutions that it doesn't control. But since September 11th it has also shown a new willingness to use its overwhelming military power and technology in pursuit of its geopolitical goals. America was humiliated that day, and for the first time in their history many knew real fear. The fear and humiliation have left deep scars, and America wants revenge. From now on, no-one messes with America. Never mind that Iraq had

nothing to do with the attacks on September 11th, Saddam Hussein was evil and that was good enough. He was doomed.

A large part of the Islamic world believes that the invasion of Iraq marks the beginning of the "War against Islam". But despite the peculiar brand of Christian fundamentalism that informs much of US government policy, and President Bush's ignorant blunder of 12 September, this war is not a Crusade. Nevertheless, many are wondering "Who next?" Many Americans, too, have misgivings. US Senator Robert Byrd, speaking on 19 March 2003, said:

"This Administration has directed all of the anger, fear, and grief which emerged from the ashes of the twin towers and the twisted metal of the Pentagon towards a tangible villain, one we can see and hate and attack. And villain he is. But, he is the wrong villain. And this is the wrong war."

As America's reputation has plummeted, so has that of Great Britain. In one catastrophic miscalculation Tony Blair offered his unequivocal support for the Bush administration's punitive, illegal adventure. By blindly following Bush and his cohorts down the headlong path to war Blair gambled and lost not only his own but Britain's reputation for legality and fair play. Where now the moral high ground?

Bush may believe that the United States does not need international approval for its actions. But every other nation does, and America will again. The United Nations will recover. But trust and goodwill between nations has been shattered and will take decades to rebuild. The myth of European unity has been exposed as ... a myth. Bush has demonstrated that the checks and balances of international law no longer apply when perceived national interests are at stake. How many lesser nations will now be drawn down the slippery slope into unilateral, violent and illegal action? And who now will be able to gainsay them?

The reaction from the Arab world is likely to be sustained and violent. There is an enormous risk that hatred of America for its one-sided policies – for attacking Iraq while ignoring the growing plight of millions of Palestinians – will grow even stronger. Millions of ordinary Muslims could be drawn into the arms of the fundamentalists as they see the Ayatollahs' and bin Laden's view of America vindicated.

A war that was supposed to make the world safer from terror will have done just the opposite. Aided and abetted by the ill-judged response of the Bush administration, Osama bin Laden may have succeeded beyond his wildest dreams. The world may pay a very heavy price.

21 March 2003

Humanism and Rationalism in Andhra Pradesh

By Babu Gogineni

The publication by the Telugu Academy of *History of Rationalist and Humanist Movements in Andhra Pradesh*, by Ravipudi Venkatadri and Penmetsa Subba Raju, is the inspiration for this overview of Humanism in a state which sent the largest delegation – 120 members – to IHEU’s World Humanist Congress in Mumbai, 1999.

Andhra Pradesh, in south central India, is one of the country’s 26 states. Its capital, Hyderabad, founded 400 years ago by a Muslim ruler, has been described by *National Geographic* magazine as a city to watch in the present century, thanks to its booming software and service industries. Along the popular promenade of Tank Bund that dams the Hussain Sagar Lake linking Hyderabad and its twin city Secunderabad, are statues of illustrious people, honoured for their contributions to society. Among the 33 statues are Hindu kings, Muslim rulers, Indian freedom fighters, Telugu and Urdu poets, and an Englishman. My interest is in the statues of those who laid the foundations of the Humanist and Rationalist movements in the state: the 17th-century deist and poet Vemana; the late 19th-century social reformers Gurjada Appa Rao and Kandukuri Veerasalingam Pantulu; and the early 20th-century playwright Tripuraneni Ramaswamy who, as the inscription declares, slayed orthodoxy with his literary “sword of rationalism”. The Government of India issued a postage stamp in Ramaswamy’s memory in 1987, and the Telugu University has instituted an annual Rationalist Award in his name.

In the centre of the Hussain Sagar Lake, on the other side of the promenade, is a 72-foot-high, 450-tonne, monolithic white granite statue of the Buddha, reminding the visitor of the region’s Jain and Buddhist heritage. Nagarjuna, the second century AD founder of the Madhyamika School of Buddhism was born here. Andhra Pradesh was an important ancient centre of Buddhist learning. One half of the Amaravati Stupa was removed by the colonizers and can be found today in the British Museum in London.



Rationalism past: Tripuraneni Ramaswamy

The Humanists and rationalists of past and present have worked in desperate social conditions and a hostile cultural atmosphere. Despite their establishment of smooth administration and an equitable legal system, the colonizing English did little on their own to civilize Indian social customs for fear of antagonizing the locals. Legislation enabling widow remarriages, for example, was only introduced by pressure from Indian social reformers, despite claims of civilizing missions made by the colonizers. Unfortunately, the present rulers are not radically different... And if there has been some limited progress it is because of brave and dedicated life work by Humanists, rationalists and atheists like Tapi Dharma Rao (1887–1973), Gora (1902–1975), and others. In the 1900s Andhra Pradesh was fertile soil for the Radical Humanist movement of M.N. Roy and his associates, the non-Brahmin self-respect movements, and the Justice Party from the South, which



Rationalism present: “Psychic surgery”, in which Vikram, an atheist activist, pulls chicken’s intestines out of a human body



Indian postage stamp honouring Gora

was founded to counter the influence of the Brahmin-dominated Indian Congress Party led by Mahatma Gandhi. There was also a time when the Telugu literary field had a clear Humanist profile.



Radical Humanist Centre, Inkollu

In a state half the size of France, with diverse historical influences, and a significant Muslim minority, it is unsurprising to find a number of Humanist, rationalists and atheist organizations with varying emphases: the Atheist Society of India, the Radical Humanist Centre, Inkollu, Chirala Renaissance Institute, two Rationalist Associations of Andhra Pradesh, the Humanist and Ethical Association of Hyderabad, and the Institute for Advancement of Women, to name a few. They publish 10 journals in Telugu and English, including *Hetuvadi*, *Rationalist Voice*, *Nastika Margam*, and *The Atheist*. *Vijayavihaaram*, a popular monthly with a Humanist orientation which fearlessly exposes the god-man Satya Sai Baba, has a print run of 35,000. A recent catalogue showed nearly 450 Humanist book titles available for sale in the Telugu language. Several universities include M.N. Roy's Humanist philosophy as part of their Philosophy and Political Science curriculum.

The Atheist Centre, an Associate Member and recipient of IHEU's *International Humanist Award* for pioneering social reform activities, and in memory of whose founder, Gora, the Government of India issued a commemorative stamp in 2002, is based in Vijayawada. The Atheist Centre's activities stand as an internationally recognized monument to atheist and Humanist social action. Not very far from Vijayawada is the independent Charvaka School run by B. Ramakrishna in Nidamaruru, with its own textbooks on atheist morality for children. In nearby Chirala is Viveka Vidyalayam, a Humanist school and an associate member of IHEU, with about 150 students (see p. 12). Several leaders of the Rationalist Association of India, a full member of IHEU, are also based in Chirala, a strong centre for Humanist thought.

Many individuals, too, have tried to support Humanism and rationalism in their own way. Volunteers run rationalist book stalls in Nellore and Nalgonda. Gurajala Seetharamayya has created a rationalist lodge in Tenali town – guests at the Naveena Lodge will find literature by rationalists like Tripuraneni in their desks, not Gideon Bibles. Some have added "Nastik" (meaning



Educator Prof. Pasala Bheemanna exposes a miracle. Prof. Bheemanna was famously kidnapped and released by Naxalites (Maoist guerrillas), for whom he held classes in Radical Humanism during his captivity

"atheist") to their names to reflect their way of life. A carpenter by profession, D. Peralingam has named his bicycle "Vehicle for Rationalist Consciousness", painted rationalist slogans on it, fixed a microphone to it, and plays Humanist songs and speeches as he travels.

Bringing together many of these diverse Humanist activities to create a strong and powerful profile and unified identity for Humanism in the state is FARA – the Federation of Rationalist, Atheist and Humanist organizations of Andhra Pradesh. It is headed by veteran journalist and Humanist, and Chair of IHEU Committee on Religious Abuse of Children, Dr. Innaiah. Under Dr. Innaiah's leadership Humanism and rationalism have received prominent publicity in the media. Jana Vigyana Vedika, a science popularization organization, is a close collaborator. The rationalist and Humanist movement has the active support of Dr. P.M. Bhargava, a distinguished biochemist, and Professor Balasubramanyam, the 1997 winner of UNESCO's Kalinga Award for Popularization of Science. Justice Sambasiva Rao, a respected ombudsman, and the feminist Malladi Subbamma are both closely associated with Humanism. With such support and leadership, but also facing the growth of Hindu nationalism, the movement has great strengths but many challenges as well.



Dr Innaiah

Humanity in Anantapur!

According to WHO statistics (2000) there are an average of 52 annual donations of blood per 1,000 population in industrialized countries. In countries like India, the figure is 1–3 per 1,000. Based on WHO methodology, for total self-sufficiency in blood products, India needs an average of 30 blood donations per 1,000 annually. Normally, all healthy men and women aged between 18 and 60 can donate blood four times a year. However, due to prejudice and ignorance, even educated people rarely come forward to donate blood. Severe shortage and inadequate screening procedures result in widespread harm: patients are forced to buy blood, and often many impoverished and undernourished individuals donate blood as a means of earning a livelihood.

For nearly ten years, a unique Humanist experiment in this field has been conducted in the semi-arid district of Anantapur, also home to the notorious god-man Satya Sai Baba. Amarnath Reddy of the Anantapur Rationalist Association, a printer by profession and a staunch rationalist, and Jana Vigyan Vedika, a pioneer left-wing science education group in Andhra Pradesh, founded Mamata, an organization that promotes the donation of blood, educates people about AIDS, and denounces popular superstition. Volunteers use radio and cable television, and organize lectures and miracle exposure camps at schools. Over the years, Mamata changed its name to Manavata (Humanity) and now coordinates 31 blood donors' associations in the district. Religious and non-religious groups, film-star fan clubs, and auto-

rickshaw drivers' associations are among those now joining hands to promote blood donation. "Drinking water may still be a problem in this district, but today Anantapur has no scarcity of blood," a volunteer told me proudly.

Like the Atheist Centre in Vijayawada, which also runs an eye bank, Amarnath Reddy sees his work as a means to take the Humanist message to everyone: "Blood knows no caste or religion and those involved in the movement naturally rise above petty considerations." Manavata achieved resounding success even among the Muslim community. Saleem Malik, a Humanist recruit from a Muslim locality, told me proudly that in his housing colony today there was at least one registered donor per family. "Even in frenzied moments one can be touched by acts of blood donation. Did you see the report from Gujarat when Muslims were being massacred by Hindus?"

Ruksana Bano's family fled Baroda city (Gujarat) and reached the Relief Camp where a mob of 8000 crazed Hindus attacked them. As the family members ran to the nearby jungle to save their lives, one amongst the marauding assailants recognised Ruksana's brother-in-law as the one who had donated blood and saved his life several years ago. He pleaded with the leaders and convinced them that the family should be allowed to leave the place safely in a truck. Their lives were saved in such strange circumstances.

Report on the Gujarat Genocide of 2002

Babu Gogineni

Humanist Bhavan at Inkollu

The Radical Humanist Centre, Inkollu, in Prakasam District, Andhra Pradesh, inaugurated its Humanist centre building, the Humanist Bhavan, in January 2003. The function was attended by nearly 250 Humanist activists from the area and guests from Belgium, Norway, Switzerland, USA, the Netherlands, and the UK. The centre, which can accommodate up to 200 people in its meeting room, also has a guest room and hopes to welcome visiting Humanists. It is the first permanent home for Radical Humanists in the state, and has been built on land donated by Ravi Subba Rao; Kodali Kamalamma, a 90-year-old activist, donated chairs for the new centre. Dr. Aramalla Purnachandra inaugurated the building, and IHEU President Levi Fragell inaugurated its library. Mr. Kurra Hanumantha Rao, President of Rationalist Association of India and of the Radical Humanist Centre, Inkollu, delivered the Presidential Address, on growing fundamentalism in the Indian context. Levi Fragell spoke on Terrorism and Religion (see p. 10) and speeches were also made by IHEU Vice-Presidents Roy Brown and Sonja Eggerickx, by Dhyen Vermeulen, and by Babu Gogineni.

A two-day study camp was held as part of the inauguration activities and covered Globalisation and Human Values, Saffronisation of Indian Society (Dr. Innaiah), Cosmology and Rationalism (Aaluri Prafulla

Chandra), and Rationalism, Humanism and Politics (Veeranna), among other topics. Dr Vijayam, from the Atheist Centre, Sambasiva Rao, from the Atheist Society of India, and Sreeni Pattathanam and C. I. Oommen from Kerala were present to extend their fraternal support. *Hetuvadi*, the Telugu rationalist monthly, brought out a special issue on globalization to provide resources for the study camp. The well-known educator Pasala Bheemanna presented a magic show to expose miracle claims by god-men. IHEU donated CD-ROM sets of 75 Humanist books from the Bank of Wisdom to the Centre's library. The events received good coverage in the media.

Prakasam District has an active Humanist tradition. In 1943 the Humanist philosopher Ravipudi Venkatadri founded a centre in the Inkollu region for the propagation of Humanism in memory of Tripuraneni Ramaswamy. Since then, the region has seen the establishment of the Chirala Renaissance Institute, Humanist Rationalist Publishers, and Viveka Vidyalayam, the Humanist School. The newly constructed Humanist Bhavan will be a focus for the training of journalists, for educating children in scientific thinking, and for conducting Humanist wedding ceremonies – a truly valuable resource for the further strengthening Humanism in the region.

Babu Gogineni

Terrorism, Religion, and Humanism



What follows is a shortened and adapted version of the speech given by Levi Fragell, President of IHEU, at the inauguration of the Radical Humanist Centre, Inkollu, Andhra Pradesh, on 17 January 2003.

In some circles it is politically incorrect to say that the growth of terrorism is due to conflicts between religions. Among these well-meaning people, it is looked upon as improper to point at religions as a reason for any kind of misbehaviour and violent conduct. This is partly because they are afraid of creating and fostering discrimination and hatred between ethnic groups, and partly because, in a Marxist-influenced tradition, they want to see all social conflicts as part of a struggle between rich and poor, the haves and the have nots.

All my life I have rebelled against the unjust division of goods and privileges. I come from a labour background. I had to pay for my education by working nights and weekends, and on the first of May I put on my best suit and demonstrate for social justice. But I think it is a dangerous mistake to explain September 11th and similar well-organized acts of terrorism as part of a poor people's war against the rich world. Of course there are elements of social revolt in this kind of violence, as there was among Hitler's followers and Stalin's soldiers, but the worst form of terror throughout history has been that based on irrational beliefs and emotional dedication to dogmas – political, philosophical, or religious. These forces are often interrelated, as in Nazism.

Today there is a special reason to focus on the influence of religion on terrorism. Hatred between religions has caused regional wars and occupation of enemies' land for as long as religions have existed. But today's globalization means that the infrastructures of the world religions are no longer limited to regions, countries, or even continents. There are more Christian churches in Nigeria than in Germany; in every city in Great Britain there is a mosque; and the followers of Krishna shout their message in the streets of Moscow. All over the world

there are religious networks that can be mobilized for any cause, good or bad. And "holy" wars are usually no longer intended to occupy the enemy's territory; they are meant to destroy it.

The German author Günther Grass gave an interview recently to the Indian magazine *Outlook* in which he, like many others, explains terrorist actions as the rage and hatred of the Third World against the affluence of the First. There is no doubt that the First World's ugly display of financial superiority has caused violent reactions. But no fatwa has ever been declared against people for being richer than others.

Salman Rushdie was not forced into hiding because he earned a lot of money from writing books, but because of what he wrote about the Prophet and his family. The author Taslima Nasrin had to flee from Bangladesh because of remarks about religion, not because she was rich. Thousands of Pakistanis live very affluent lives within a poor society. Yet a simple local doctor, Yunnis Shaikh, was the one who was attacked by the mob in Islamabad, jailed, and sentenced to death, because he uttered a few words about religion the believers did not like.

Religious intolerance does not automatically vanish with higher standards of living. It loses its power only where secularism develops. We must be aware that even if there is a correlation between economic growth and secularism, it is not automatic or self-evident. Some Arab countries have a very high standard of living, but at the same time the tolerance level is among the lowest in the world when it comes to other people's beliefs and lifestyles. And even in the urbanized and open societies in the West, you can be sure that when you find individuals or groups with the most extreme views on society, it will be among religious people. The killing of doctors who perform abortions in the USA is but one example.

The Norwegian scholar Torkel Brekke, in his book *Religion and Violence*, warned against the indifference with which politicians and social scientists handle the violent ideas in all world religions, including those looked upon as the most peaceful – Hinduism and Buddhism. He shows that the holy books of even of these traditions glorify warriors and the slaying of enemies. The Biblical and Koranic texts are even more grotesque in their instructions on dealing with heathens and apostates; no punishment is too cruel for those who do not submit to the one and only god. When such ideas can be looked upon as "holy", there can be no limit to the cruelty of actions in the name of religion.

Levi Fragell

For full text of Levi Fragell's speech see <http://www.iheu.org> .

Working to End Child Labour *By Kotapati Murahari Rao*

Children below 14 earning wages to support their family, and doing so at the cost of their own growth and education, are child labourers. Today, there are 250 million child labourers in developing countries, of which 61% are in Asia (153,000,000) 32% in Africa (82,000,000) and 7% (17,500,000) in Latin America.

These figures are shocking. In India, despite our hi-tech pretensions, our export of software personnel, our experimenting with nuclear weapons and space flights, we have not done anywhere near enough in the most crucial sector: the welfare of children. There were 10.7 million child labourers in 1971; by 1994, that number had increased to 13.5 million. Government statisticians may say that in percentage terms that is an improvement, as our population growth has been significantly higher than that of child labourers. Such arguments are pathetic. These figures represent real children and a real increase in the actual numbers suffering. The sheer scale of the problem should frighten us, not lead us to find excuses.

During 1995–96, out of a total of 173 million children between 6 and 14 years of age in the country, 110 million (63.5%) were out of school. The Government's narrow definitions actually mean that many of these are not included as child labourers, though almost all are toiling away in fields, factories, and as domestic help. Even by government statistics, 14.7% of child labourers are in Andhra Pradesh and these 1.66 million children represent 5% of the total labour force in the state. Agricultural labour accounts for 79% of child labour in the state.

No child becomes a labourer voluntarily. Children are led into it by poverty, parental illiteracy, and caste traditions handed down early in life. Many children come from the so-called "untouchable" families – scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Social apathy and the fact that they form cheap labour seals the fate of these unfortunate children.

My position as President of the Andhra Pradesh Seed Growers Association gave me an opportunity to undertake some initiatives, as most children in the state are employed in agriculture. Working with other employers' associations, and with guidance from the International Labour Organisation (ILO), we formed a Consortium of Employers' Associations for the Elimination of Child Labour (CEASE-Child Labour).

Being associated with the IHEU-affiliated Rationalist Association of India as its Treasurer for the past five years has given me a unique opportunity to put Humanist principles into practice in our social work. Many traditional obstacles to bringing children to school are those posed by religion and orthodoxy. Our caste-ridden society already traditionally denied the right to education to the vast majority of Hindus. While this is no longer legal, in an illiterate country with so many disparities, tradition and orthodoxy influence people's



attitudes at every step. Many do not feel empowered enough to take control of their own lives.

We need to address the social situation through education. We try, through familiar folk music and theatre, to inform, eradicate superstition, and inculcate rational thinking among villagers, and to persuade them to send their children to school. The children also need proper health care. We have negotiated with hospitals like the LV Prasad Eye Institute to perform eye tests on all the children.

At an institutional level, we have developed a model clause for inclusion in the agreements between employers and workers to the effect that their establishments would employ no child labour. Many seminars have been run and books published in Telugu to mobilize the public and create revulsion against the practice. Through these means, we have succeeded in getting 450 children admitted to regular schooling. But we quickly realized that some children needed training first in order to cope with school. So we started two residential "bridge schools" of 100 children each, where children of carpenters, potters, farm labourers, and nomadic tribes can receive basic education, enabling them to integrate easily within the school system.

All our work is inspired by Humanist principles, even though some of those who cooperate with us are religious people who respect human rights. We do not convert or influence any of the children we recruit with ideas of any particular life philosophy, but believe that by encouraging them to think for themselves and to question social injustice, and by empowering them to combat superstition we have laid the foundations for their turning to Humanism at some point in life.

Kotapati Murahari Rao is Treasurer of the Rationalist Association of India, a full member of IHEU. He is the main force behind the CEASE-Child Labour consortium in Andhra Pradesh, the success of which is spawning similar efforts in neighbouring states.

Humanist School at Chirala

By Sonja Eggerickx

IHEU organized a three-day seminar on 'A Humanist Orientation to Education' in collaboration with Viveka Vidyalayam (an Associate Member of IHEU) and STEP (a students, teachers, educators, and parents council of Andhra Pradesh) in January 2003. It was attended by 150 teachers and resource providers, as well as IHEU President Levi Fragell, Vice-Presidents Sonja Eggerickx and Roy Brown, Executive Director Babu Gogineni, Dutch educational expert Dhyan Vermeulen, Dr Innaiah, S. Choudhary Babu, Dr C. A. Prasad, and other experts from Jana Vigyana Vedika, a science popularization group. An exhibition on alternative educational resources and workshops on educating through dance and games were also organized.



It was my first visit to India and I was very curious. I did not know whether the image I had was one taken from films and television: hunger, poverty, dying children, lots of people... The last, at any rate, proved to be absolutely true! I was only a few days in India, and visited very few places, and those only in Andhra Pradesh, but in thinking of this country I immediately see lots and lots of men, fewer women, and children. Always, everywhere...

We arrived by car at Viveka Vidyalayam (literally, "rationalist school"), the Humanist school in Chirala. A nice building; we received a very warm welcome. We were to spend three days with the teachers of the school and some of their colleagues from other schools in Chirala. On Thursday morning, everyone was assembled. We were introduced and made our speeches. I emphasized the importance of Humanist education and the need for children to learn not only facts and figures but also how to live together with other people, whatever their social background, religion, or gender. I listened carefully to Professor Siva Ram, eager as I was to know how Indians perceive Humanist education. It was time for questions. Only the men spoke. During lunch, though, this changed: many of the women came to ask me about my way of teaching. We had a good discussion. They told me about the difficulties of teaching so many in a class. They listened to the solutions we have tried to find for the same problem...

In the meantime my Dutch colleague, Dhyan Vermeulen, had been organizing workshops to encourage the teachers to pay more attention to the emotional growth of pupils, rather than their intellectual development alone. There was great enthusiasm and the teachers were keen to participate in the workshops. It was a new experience for them. Their system is much

more strictly cognitive, and there is far greater discipline than we are used to in Belgium or the Netherlands.

One unusual item on the training programme was the magician's visit. He showed us some "miracles". They looked amazing, but then he explained how the tricks were done. Even more amazing! He emphasized that he didn't perform miracles at all, just tricks, and he showed us new ones, saying that he wouldn't explain them all as he wanted to amuse people – as an entertainer, not a miracle man.

I didn't follow the complete training programme: I wanted to go into a classroom and attend a normal school day. That seemed impossible. As anywhere in the world, the children of Viveka Vidyalayam reacted as one might expect when complete strangers enter a classroom. They came closer and closer; they were curious; we were so white ("Auntie, why is your skin so white?") and we looked so strange. They wanted to know all about us. And here was the opportunity: a map of the world. A lesson in geography. One child pointed out India, I indicated Belgium – so very small, so far away. They sang, I sang. They told of their culture, I of mine. And above all, we enjoyed each other's company, we listened to each other, we learned from each other. They even taught me some Telugu. Humanist education in practice!

Viveka Vidyalayam was celebrating its 10th anniversary. Ten years of very hard work, overcoming prejudice against its Humanist ethos and, of course, struggling for the money to survive. The founder and headmaster, Ancha Bapa Rao, lives at the school with his family. As the school is not in the town some pupils come by bus, and some are boarders. In contrast to what I sometimes experience in schools, I did not see or feel

any aggression here. The children were singing and playing; they really looked happy. The youngest are about 3, the oldest 16 years of age. And there is room for trainees to help the teachers. The trainees are already dedicated. It gives one hope for the future.

An official celebration took place on Saturday evening. We were very happy to congratulate the school for the work that had been done. The pupils received their exam results and we were invited to help by distributing the prizes. The setting was different, yet not unfamiliar: proud parents attending the ceremony, impatient children waiting for their names to be mentioned. They offered us a charming spectacle of singing from the very youngest, traditional dances, and also a play. It was in

Telugu but that didn't mean that I couldn't follow the story: their acting was so expressive and the sentiments so universal that I felt as though I could understand.

I congratulate Bapa Rao and his family for the opportunity they have given these children to grow up in a fine Humanist way, and also the teachers and trainees for everything they taught me about their way of imparting knowledge and working with children. My fondest memories are of those pupils who were so curious, so longing to know. I hope they will never lose that sense of curiosity and wonder as they grow up.

Sonja Eggerickx is Vice-President of IHEU and of Unie Vrijzinnige Verenigingen, Belgium. Viveka Vidyalayam: vivekahumanistschool@rediffmail.com

Viveka Vidyalayam: School of Reason

When advocate Ancha Bapa Rao, Secretary General of the Rationalist Association of India, and Editor of the Telugu language monthly *New Humanist*, considered the options for his children's education in his home town of Chirala, he was so dissatisfied with the local schools that he changed his profession and started his own. Viveka Vidyalayam ("school of reason"), the Humanist school Bapa Rao established in 1993, now has 150 students and 14 teachers, accommodated in its own spacious campus. A third of the students are boarders. Many come from impoverished backgrounds and are unable to pay school fees; they are supported by subsidies. Despite its visible Humanist identity, the school is developing a good reputation and Bapa Rao himself is currently head of the District Teachers Association. Not having been set up as a commercial enterprise, however, the school has yet to achieve financial self-sufficiency.

Traditional schools in the Indian context concentrate on preparing children for exams, insist on rote learning, and provide little scope for personality development, sports, or cultivation of the arts. Corporal punishment is the norm, and pupils are subject to strict discipline by teachers. As the most sought-after professionals in Indian society are doctors, engineers, management graduates and now computer software engineers, children are virtually obliged to consider one of these professions: their inclinations and abilities do not matter. It is no wonder, then, that schools flaunt their credentials based on the number of pupils they have helped to enter engineering and medical colleges. As a sign of the times, the government of Andhra Pradesh has even considered no longer offering history as a subject at the 10+2 level (age 16). Only widespread protests persuaded the government to withdraw this foolish plan.

The first step for Viveka Vidyalayam was to establish a child-centred learning process, where the child is respected by teachers as an individual, with his or her own pace of learning. The teacher, rather than the child, is made responsible in greater measure



Viveka Vidyalayam celebrations

for the success of the learning process. Children are not punished, and are not burdened with homework, so they may enjoy their evenings with their parents and friends. Teaching is in both Telugu (the language of the state) and in English. At school, pupils are encouraged to interact freely with their teachers, to ask questions, and to participate in discussions in the classroom. The school also reintroduced much neglected "moral science" or ethics classes and children are encouraged to think of morality in non-religious terms. Pioneering literature prepared by an earlier (now almost defunct) Humanist school in the state, Charvaka Vidyalayam, is used in moral science classes: the Indian moral science resources have a heavy religious orientation. Miracle exposure classes are organized to help young minds develop the faculty of critical intelligence. Most importantly, children are encouraged to develop a sense of self-worth, to enjoy learning, and to find fulfilment in what they can achieve rather than frantically join the rat race and meet society's demands and expectations. The few batches of school students who have completed schooling at Viveka Vidyalayam have found that they are in fact well prepared and confident to face the challenges they encounter in society.

Babu Gogineni

A Godly Future for the European Union?

By Gert Van Eeckhout

The establishment of a European Convention, bringing together delegates from national and regional governments, the European Commission, and the European Parliament, was decided at the Laken (Brussels) Summit of the European Union in December 2001. This is an ambitious project. The most important duty of the Convention consists in drawing up the future European Constitution. Delegates from the European countries are members of the Convention and national ministers have to adopt this European Constitution to make it legally binding. A draft version of the first part of this Constitution was discussed for the second time in the plenary meeting of 28 February.

Consulting the civil society

The citizens of Europe approve the broad aims of the Union, but see little connection between those goals and the Union's everyday activity. They want European institutions to be less unwieldy and rigid and, above all, more open. Many feel that the Union should involve itself more with their particular concerns, but without being involved at every level. They want better control of the decisions that affect them.

To widen the basis of debate, a Forum was opened for organizations representing civil society (the social partners, the business world, non-governmental organizations, academia, etc.). It takes the form of a structured network of organizations receiving regular information on the Convention's proceedings. Their contributions will serve as input into the debate. Such organizations may be heard or consulted on specific topics in accordance with arrangements to be established by the Presidium.

Humanists at Work

The European Humanist Federation (EHF) is an IHEU spin-off which specializes in European issues. Its permanent office is situated in Brussels. For the EHF the consultations offered a unique possibility for monitoring the works of the Convention. The main task of the EHF is to see that the future Constitution is in no way discriminatory and is acceptable to all citizens of the European Union. It therefore founded the working group Civitas. Since the beginning of 2002, Civitas, with the collaboration of Humanists specializing in different fields and from various organizations, has gathered information, and held regular meetings to draw up documents presenting the Humanist viewpoint.

EHF followed all consultation sessions concerning the European Convention and submitted several documents containing the Humanist view, including the document "Contribution to the Convention on the future of Europe", which stresses the consultative role of civil society organizations; the need for democratic legitimacy of organizations requesting recognition; and the removal of any special status for religious bodies within European institutions.

Humanist View vs Catholic Church View

At the Forum representatives of the Catholic Church set out the position of the COMECE (Commission of the

Bishops' Conference of the European Community) – a position that had been much mentioned in the media and was heavily backed by the Pope and the President of the Convention, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. They requested that God and transcendence be mentioned in the preamble of a future Constitutional Treaty. The EPP (the Christian European People's Party) even wanted to formulate the future Article 57 as follows: *The Union values include the values of those who believe in God as the source of truth, justice, good and beauty as well as of those who do not share such a belief but respect these universal values arising from other sources.*

EHF objected to this and pointed out that, contrary to the claims of COMECE and the EPP, churches do not represent the citizens and that the separation of state and church should at all costs be preserved. Such a reference would be against the will of a large number of European citizens and would also institutionalize discrimination against Humanists, non-believers, and others who do not believe in the Christian God. The EHF argues that political institutions must be legitimized through democratic elections, not by some divine principle. Besides, why only refer to the religious heritage? Europe is the product of the influences of different ideologies, religions, philosophies, and conquerors throughout the centuries. Where would Europe be without Greek and Roman influences? The ciphers we use are of Arabic origin. And what about the major influence of the French Enlightenment? Why should just one tradition be referred to as if its influence was superior? If this one "superior" tradition held sway, then maybe the Sun would still revolve around the Earth... The Constitution should simply state that "the Union is based on the undividable and universal principles of human dignity, on liberty, equality and solidarity; it is based on the principles of democracy and the rule of Law".

The Humanist standpoint did not go unnoticed. The reporter of the group on culture was forced to state the EHF standpoint explicitly at the hearing of the plenary session and his report did not mention the bishops' demand. The Humanist standpoint was backed by some members of the European Parliament who were attending the plenary session. The media also took notice. Agence Europe (a leading European press agency) mentioned the EHF standpoint in its bulletin of 24 June 2002.

There was no trace of a reference to God or the religious heritage in the proposed draft articles in the plenary session of early February. Immediately afterwards, Catholic lobbyists renewed their efforts. The Vatican was "not disappointed by what was written, but very disappointed by what was not written". It also expressed surprise that the juridical status of churches and religious communities had been disregarded. As it has become less likely that a reference to God will be incorporated, Catholic lobbyists are now trying to include Declaration 11 of the Final Act of the Amsterdam Treaty, according to which "the European Union

respects and does not prejudice the status under national law of churches and religious associations or communities in the Member States". The sole purpose of this Declaration is to preserve the privileges of certain churches in the Member States.

Humanists of All Countries Unite!

Although the EHF has only limited means, it is doing what it can to follow developments at the European level closely. An e-group informs all EHF members about recent developments and requests action. An important part of the lobbying can be done at the national level, although the negotiations in the Convention about the future European Constitution happen on a European level. Many Humanist associations have contacted their national and European members of parliament or even national Convention members. You can work together with the EHF Brussels team and work in groups on particular issues. You can use the EHF documents and

send copies of your press releases and letters to ministers to the EHF. Everyone must devise their own appropriate way for acting. If we Humanists work together now, we can have a say in the drafting of the EU Constitution, in the way that future European institutions are set up, and also in the way citizens are taken into account, in particular the non-believing citizens. Some of us are not yet citizens of the European Union. Some soon will be; others maybe never. Yet all can help give some real meaning to the words "concern, responsibility and solidarity".

Gert van Eekhout is European Relations Officer, European Humanist Federation. On the EHF website you can find the documents EHF submitted to the forum of the Convention. See <http://www.europa.eu.int>. The proceedings of the European Convention are available on <http://european-convention.eu.int>.

Religious Privilege and the European Union

The fundamental difficulty with religion being accorded special respect or religious institutions being given privileged access is that doing so disturbs the equilibrium of the scales of democracy. Those purporting to represent God are not answerable to parliament or the citizenry; and the significant proportion of those in positions of power in the EU who have religious affiliations are already in a position to exercise considerable influence in accordance with their religious perspectives. Any further special access or representation for religious bodies constitutes a duplication of this influence, which can often be to the detriment of those millions whose philosophical position is not bolstered by such formal representation. The EU's secular structure, that has served it so well, is under unprecedented attack – an attack which must be repelled.

Pressure groups remind Christians that it is their duty to take up positions where they will be able to exert their Christian influence. Many Christian MEPs respond to this call, especially those eager to promote their morally conservative agenda. MEPs' religious affiliations clearly influence their activities and voting patterns, and the Vatican has recently sought to oblige Roman Catholic politicians to follow Vatican dogma. This obligation applies whether they agree with the dogma or not (which a surprisingly large proportion of Catholics do not, especially on matters such as birth control). Taken together, these factors have led to conservative religious interests being exerted by MEPs to a greater extent than would be the case were MEPs picked from the EU population at random.

In addition to this, the EU already receives official representatives from around 50 religious missions. One of these – the papal nuncio – it is required to receive as a result of a treaty ratified by the EU. But even this is evidently deemed insufficient RC representation, for the EU additionally recognizes a representative from the Catholic bishop's conference. There are also regular formal representations accepted from other confessions. An example is the

biannual meeting preceding each new incoming presidency at which non-Roman Catholic religious denominations express their aspirations or demands.

Contrast this privileged and well-organized additional raft of representation with the paucity of representation of the non-religious. Depending on how the non-religious are defined, they constitute between a third and a half of the European population, larger than any one denomination. Yet their representation, in the form of the European Humanist Federation, amounts to just one, compared to fifty "missions" for the religious.

The vast majority of the non-religious would not even specifically define themselves as Humanists, so the vast rump of these admittedly disparate millions are without formal representation. Yet crucially, this is the group to be most adversely affected by many of the policies, especially on matters of sexual ethics, for which the religious lobbies will be pressing.

Realistically, there is little hope that the existing strength of religious influence can be moderated, and consequently there is no satisfactory way in which this democratic imbalance can be rectified. But what can be done is to build in some safeguards, and prevent measures that would tip the balance still further in the favour of the religious.

Principal among the safeguards we advocate are for Article 10 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights to state specifically that religious freedom enshrines the freedom *not* to practise religion and to introduce a legally enforceable freedom *from* religion. This could take the form of the non-religious being afforded legal protection against religiously motivated constraints on their freedom, such as the restriction of contraception or the complete outlawing of abortion in any member country.

*Keith Porteous Wood
Executive Director, National Secular Society, UK*

This is an extract from the National Secular Society's Statement on Religious References in the EU Constitution.

A History of IHEYO

Thanks to the efforts of Alexandre Marius Dées de Sterio, the 2002 incarnation of IHEYO has been able to find out more about its history. Alexandre represents IHEU at the Council of Europe and was a key advocate for the establishment of a youth wing for IHEU. In January 2003 he sent us some of his documents giving an insight into the history of the youth section of IHEU. This note is a summary extracted from his documents.

IHEYO or IHEU Youth Section, as it was then called, was established in 1966 at the IHEU Congress in Paris. The Youth Section arose as a means of enabling contact among the youth from different countries who were striving for common goals. In the 1970s, IHEU Youth Section was present at several international youth NGO meetings under the auspices of the UN, presenting its viewpoint on various topical issues. Paul Postma, later IHEU Treasurer, was a key figure in the Youth Section at this time. Early meetings focused on birth control (Milan, 1969), student revolt (Boston, 1970), and practical Humanism (Ghent, 1972), and the 1974 conference was devoted to the role of consumption in a world of widespread poverty and facing an environmental crisis. However, the zest of the early 1970s began to fade.

In 1982, Alexandre tried to re-establish its vitality, persuading IHEU to take up the matter, but funding for

international meetings was not always easy to come by during this time. The IHEYO committee met several times during the 1980s, and a newsletter was published. In 1989, Hans Hoekzema and Frank Dut from the Netherlands organized a highly successful summer youth camp, attracting participants from Belgium, Norway, USA, and India, as well as the Netherlands. This was followed in 1990 by an important IHEYO Congress with nearly 80 participants, which ran parallel to IHEU's World Congress in Brussels, and another parallel to the IHEU Congress in Amsterdam in 1992 with 50 participants. Yet there were problems with continuity. The high expectations needed correction, and a feeling of disappointment is sometimes noticeable in the minutes of committee meetings. A period of inactivity set in after 1993. At the beginning of the 1990s, the IHEYO secretariat, which had been based in the IHEU offices in the Netherlands, moved to Brussels. Several years later, it moved again, to Germany, before returning to the IHEU offices, now based in London, UK, by the end of 1997.

A new effort to regenerate IHEYO came in 1998. This time the initiative came from IHEU Headquarters. And that is how the present form of IHEYO emerged. It is instructive to look back at our history, and learn from it. But the future depends on us, and how we forge it!

Gea Meijers

International Secular Youth Camp in Finland, 20–27 July 2003

Prometheus Camp Association is a Finnish secular association that organizes a number of camps every summer. This year, for the first time, they will organize an international camp, for teenagers from all over the world.

The aim of the camp is to help young people find and develop a worldview of their own. Discussing issues important to young people help participants develop their own thoughts. Of course, Prometheus camps are not just about discussions. There is also time for play, swimming, sauna, and other fun activities.

Who is the camp for?

The camp is for teenagers from around the world, from 14 to 17 years of age. Prometheus camps are primarily for young people without a religious denomination, but anyone interested is welcome.

Practical information

The Prometheus international camp will be held near Turku, a town by the sea in western Finland.

The association doesn't pay travel costs to the camp and there is an attendance fee of €170. This includes the camp programme, accommodation, full board, and accident insurance for the duration of the camp. Travel to and from the camp is at your own expense.

To participate in the camp or for more information, please see: <http://www.protu.fi/leirit/english.phtml> or ask for more information by emailing info@protu.fi. You can also call ++358-7180-26498 (Dennis Holm) or send for information by mail: Prometheus-leirit tuki ry, Niemenmäentie 8 A, Fin-00350 Helsinki, Finland.

International Humanist Youth Conference 2003

29 August–2 September, Berlin, Germany

The youth section of IHEU is once again organizing an international Humanist youth conference! The IHEYO Youth Conference will be held from 29 August to 2 September in Berlin and will be co-hosted with the German JuHu's, the youth organization of the Humanistischer Verband Deutschlands.

The conference is for young people between 15 and 35 years of age. The programme will consist of workshops, discussions about Humanism, a city game, and visits to local youth Humanist activities. It will also include IHEYO's first General Assembly, in which participants will vote on a constitution. The organizers encourage all Humanist organizations to send youth representatives from their organization to this conference, which offers a marvellous opportunity to explore youth Humanism at an international level.

Practical Details

There will be a minor fee for participation in the conference (not more than €50-100). This fee includes all accommodation and meals during the conference. Accommodation will be in a youth hostel located in the centre of Berlin. A few travel grants will be available for Humanist youth from developing countries. An application form is available online at the IHEYO website. Applications need to be filled in and returned to IHEYO before mid-May.

For further details about the conference or to state your interest in participating, please visit the IHEYO website or e-mail youth@iheu.org.

Non-Denominational Citizens in the Czech Republic

By Joseph Haubelt

According to the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, part of the Constitution of the Czech Republic, all non-denominational citizens have the following rights and freedoms:

Chapter One, Article 1: All people are free and equal in their dignity and in their rights. Their fundamental rights and freedoms are inherent, inalienable, illimitable, and unrepealable.

Chapter One, Article 2 (1): The State is founded on democratic values and must not be bound either by an exclusive ideology or by a particular religion.

Chapter Two, Article 15 (1): Freedom of thought, conscience and religious conviction is guaranteed. Everybody has the right to change his or her religion or faith, or to have no religious conviction.

Chapter Two, Article 20 (1): The right to associate freely is guaranteed. Everybody has the right to associate with others in clubs, societies and other associations.

The preliminary results of the 2002 census show that 32% of the population of the Czech Republic profess allegiance to some church or religious community (29% of these profess allegiance to the Roman Catholic Church). Compared to 1991, this is a decrease of 15% and, for the Roman Catholic Church, a loss of 1.2 million believers.

Church and Freethought in Czech History

The Roman Catholic Church has been a powerful force in the history of the country. The martyrdom of Jan Hus at the Roman Catholic Council convened in Constance in 1415 began the Czech Reformation, which reached its climax in the 17th century. The violent Counter-Reformation that followed was, to borrow the words of the first president of Czechoslovakia, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, a horrible event not just in the history of the Czech nation but in the history of mankind as well. Thus the foundation of Czechoslovakia in 1918 meant liberation from oppression by the Habsburgs in coalition with the Roman Catholic Church. But the prelates of the Roman Catholic Church took advantage of the renewal of democracy in Czechoslovakia in 1989. One consequence was that properties formerly owned by society were transformed into private church property.

The Czech Republic is a state with deep Humanist, freethought, and democratic traditions. Yet, while the Roman Catholic Church functioned without interruption throughout the 20th century, the Humanist and freethinker's associations were suppressed three times: first in 1914 at the outset of World War I, second in 1939 when Czechoslovakia was forced to split up, and for the third time in 1952, despite the protests of the Union of Non-Denominational Citizens. In all three cases, the property of these associations, including prosperous publishing houses, was confiscated.

The Rights of Non-Denominational Communities Today

In view of the *Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*, which was adopted by the UN

General Assembly as item No. 53/144 on 8 March 1999, a number of criticisms can be made of present state policy of the Czech Republic towards non-denominational citizens.

The Czech Republic ignores the existence of associations of non-denominational citizens (atheists and those indifferent towards religion) by not granting them any legal or financial support. They do not even fall under the purview of the Department of Culture, like religious groups, but under the Department of Home Affairs.

Yet more than two-thirds of the cost of churches and religious associations are covered by the taxes of non-denominational citizens. The state offers generous support to church schools, training of priests, running of church buildings, and activities of church representatives in the army, police, and in prisons, as well as to activities of church officials in the media. Moreover the Roman Catholic Church has repeatedly claimed a privileged place in society, above even other churches.

In this way the whole of society is under the pressure of state-financed religious indoctrination, found in all spheres of public life. The census figures show that nearly 70% of the country's population is without religious confession, and therefore the majority of citizens suffer from discrimination. Moreover, this discrimination is financed by their taxes. The state authorities refuse the legitimate claims of citizens without religious confession for parity with churches and religious communities. And laws are currently being prepared that will enhance further the privileged status of the Roman Catholic Church. We believe that the situation calls for active measures to end discrimination and religious privilege. In the absence of full state-church separation, these should include legislative measures to ensure parity of representation and support for non-denominational organizations with religious groups, the ending of state funding for training of priests and church-related activities in health and social services, and the provision of education in Humanist ethics alongside religious education in schools (if not the transfer of religious education from schools to the responsibility of church authorities).

Conclusions

The policy of the Czech Republic discriminates against the community of non-denominational citizens, who form the majority of the population, thus contravening the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, which is a part of the Constitution of the Czech Republic, as well as international law. A more detailed analysis would show that it is particularly atheists who are subject to discrimination. Such discrimination impedes the non-denominational community in maintaining and developing its cultural identity. Before the Czech Republic enters the European Union, these discrepancies between its internal legal conditions and the norms of international law should be removed.

Dr Haubelt is Secretary of Freethinkers of Czech Republic.

Humanism in Russia

In former times, under the Soviet Union, Humanism was considered to be the result of socialist revolution: it would release people from social exploitation, provide guaranteed basic living conditions, the right to work and to rest, free health services for all, and so on. The ultimate form of Humanism would be that which arose in the course of the development of a perfect communist society. All earlier types of Humanism were considered insufficient, in particular the abstract form represented by Christian Humanism. Atheism was part of official ideology. It was considered to be a necessary component of a new, secular attitude to life. Nevertheless nearly 40% of people in the countryside remained believers, and the figure for the cities was 30%. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the resultant social transformation, the attitude to religion also changed. Although according to the Constitution Russia remains a secular society, many politically active people are seeking to convert religion into a new form of ideology. They speak of the need to teach religion, especially the Russian Orthodox variety, in secondary schools. Nearly 40% of the population now support the idea of teaching religion in schools as an optional course (though with the financial support of the state).

Under present conditions there is a real need to spread a new understanding of Humanism, to unite people of different political orientations on the basis of secular Humanist ideals. Among the different attempts to found Humanist organizations, to rally people against superstition and ignorance, the most successful has been the initiative by a group in Moscow University led by

Prof. V.Kuvakin, which resulted in the founding of the Russian Humanist Association in 1995. It now has ten regional divisions and a membership of nearly 400.

The Russian Humanist Association holds regular meetings, which usually involve a presentation followed by a lively discussion. There are also special events (conferences, summer schools, public discussions), and a publishing programme. Summer schools provide education in Humanism and the opportunity to share ideas. Publications include the periodical journal *Common Sense*, the annual almanac *Secular Union*, conference proceedings, and books prepared by members. Among recently published books are *Basics of Contemporary Humanism*, by I.M. Borsenko, V.A. Kuvakin, and A.A. Kudishina; a book for secondary schools, *Humanism and Civil Society*, by G.V. Givishvily; and the Proceedings of the international symposium *Science and Skepticism*.

There have been some first attempts at teaching Humanism, in Moscow State University, in the Russian State University for the Humanities (RGGU) in Moscow, and in Colomna. The Russian Humanist Association has written to the Minister of Education to suggest the teaching of contemporary Humanism in secondary schools. There are Centres for Inquiry in both Moscow and Colomna. Russian Humanists also keep in touch with Humanist groups in Kazakhstan, the Ukraine, and Belarus. We continue to strive for a truly enlightened society.

Alexander Razin, Russian Humanist Association

Peru: A Non-Secular State in the 21st Century

In March, a huge majority in the Peruvian Congress rejected the proposal of leftist Congressman Javier Diez Canseco to change Article 71 of the Peruvian Constitution, which maintains the historical role of the Catholic Church in the Peruvian state and establishes cooperative links between state and church. Diez Canseco proposed a revision to Article 71 to include an explicit statement that Peru is a secular state. Not only did this proposal fail, but on the contrary a clause was added to the Article to the effect that the Peruvian state can establish cooperative links with other religions too. These include Evangelical and Adventist churches, the Jewish community, and the Hare Krishna movement.

The impact of the closeness of church and state is evident in various areas. Peruvian public education policies have always supported the teaching of a Catholic course in state schools. Thanks to a 1980 agreement between Peru and the Vatican, Catholic clergymen receive earnings from the state and other economic aids such as tax exemptions, while religious education teachers receive approval from Catholic bishops. Dr. Carbonne, the Health Secretary, has been accused by feminist, gay, and Humanist activists of applying reproductive health policies in accordance with his Catholic views. Yet in spite of the existence of a number

of groups who share the same concerns, it has not been possible to found a Peruvian secular coalition. The real battles must be fought in the Peruvian Congress. But for that Peru needs Humanist Congressmen – a Humanist party in order to have a real secular state!

*Manuel Paz-y-Miño
Peruvian Humanist and Non-Religious Movement*

Website: <http://www.geocities.com/mphaperu>

First Secular Child-Naming Ceremony in Peru

On 9 January, the secular naming ceremony of ten-year-old Fiorella Paz-y-Miño Cerrillo took place at the Center for Inquiry-Peru (CFI-PERU).

Fiorella's parents, Manuel and Elizabeth, her six-month-old sister Sofia, her mentors Werner and Patricia (Fiorella's aunt), and her grandmothers Celia and Aída were present. Aída's son, Manuel Paz-y-Miño, is a founder of the Peruvian Humanist & Non-Religious Movement and Chairman of CFI-PERU. Each of them (except Sofia) expressed their good wishes for Fiorella.

Fiorella herself thanked everyone with emotion at the end of this private ceremony, the first such secular ceremony in Peru.

Humanism in Brazil

By Daniel Sottomaio

Brazil is the largest country in the southern hemisphere. It has 88% of the area of the United States, and 60% of its population. But in wealth production, we're not even in the world's top ten, with only 5% of the GDP of the US. As for per capita income, we barely make it to the top one hundred.

Brazil is a land of contrasts. The country is today predominantly urban and, despite severe educational problems, illiteracy rates are small and going down. The southern states, significantly more developed than average, are responsible for most of the economic and academic activity in the country. A number of major cosmopolitan cities have emerged that are not much unlike their counterparts anywhere in the world in their advantages and attendant problems.

As a Portuguese colony, Brazil inherited a deep Christian ethos. In 1950, 94% of Brazilians declared themselves to be Catholic. Forty years later, that number had declined to 83%, and today it stands at 74%. But for many of these people, considering themselves Catholic is more about respecting traditions and distant symbols than actually being a churchgoer or even following most of the church's recommendations, such as not using condoms or other contraceptive methods. Many "Catholics" feel comfortable believing in astrology or in psychics, and fear the powers of Candomblé and Umbanda – fusions of African religions with a Roman Catholic façade. Syncretism is one of the country's signatures.

Christianity as a whole, though, has lost very little territory, thanks to the explosive growth of the Protestant denominations, which have soared from 8.6% to 15.4% in the past ten years. Most of these churches are fundamentalist, and particularly popular among the poor and uneducated. Their services often include miracle cures and exorcism in which, invariably, evil spirits reveal themselves as the cause of every single health and relationship problem of the cultists. Unemployment and bad finances too are some of the Devil's favourite inflictions, so it's never hard to find prospective clients in our country.

In every case, the "spirit" says it took over the victim's life by request of an enemy, or a lover interested in breaking up the person's marriage. But not for free. Dead animals, food, cigars, or liquor must be offered in a Candomblé ritual called *despacho*, for which it is necessary to pay a Candomblé priest, who will either perform it or give you the instructions to do so. To find out whether you have been cursed, hire another priest. Want to get rid of the curse? Just counterstrike with a bigger – and more expensive – ritual. Prices can reach thousands of dollars in this "spiritual" bidding.

You don't even need to attend church to watch such exorcisms. Years ago, the largest Protestant church in the country bought one of the seven major open channel networks. The second largest has just bought its own channel and also rents a one-hour primetime slot of an important network on a daily basis. Not surprisingly, both churches have very aggressive money-raising

techniques and insist that you only get blessings if you donate to the church. Give money even if you don't have any, they say, because the Lord will see your sacrifice and will reward the faithful with a much greater gift.

Part of the problem lies in our Constitution, which exempts religions from all kinds of taxes, even if – as in the case of the *Santo Daime* sacrament – they promote spiritual contact through the ingestion of psychotropic substances. As a result, churches get more for their money and are free from having to explain where it goes. Today the country has a stable and supposedly secular democracy, but God is mentioned in our currency and in the Constitution's preamble. Its church-state article declares that the government cannot help or hinder any creed, *except when it contributes to the public interest*. Another article states that all public schools must teach religion, though attendance is not mandatory. Every court of law, and every city hall or state house prominently displays a crucifix. The same goes for the Congress and the Senate, where many members belong to the Christian lobby. Every year the government gives millions of dollars to Catholic social programmes that presumably also acquire a lot of converts.

The only organized group actively fighting against this state of affairs is the Round Earth Society – its name a reference to all metaphorical flat-Earthers out there. It was founded just three years ago by Leo Vines, who began as a loner with a website. Today a team of 15 people runs a trilingual domain that generated 1.8 million page views in the past 12 months. Considering that most of our visitors are Portuguese-speakers (a small minority on the Internet) attracted to the site by articles on atheism, science, scepticism or church-state separation, that represents remarkable success.

Around 2,000 people across the world have already signed up as members. Many of them participate in our meetings in state capitals. They sign petitions and endorse our protests against religious education and astrology-oriented legislation. The media has acknowledged our existence and every now and then one of us is put on the spot. But when you consider that homeopathy is a fully recognized medical speciality with 15,000 practising doctors in the country, it is not hard to see how big a challenge rational thinking still faces in Brazil.

We are also trying to create two other groups, dealing separately with secularism and scepticism, but there is a lot of resistance in society and we are severely underfunded. Fighting superstition and promoting church-state separation is tough anywhere in the world, but is particularly tough in Brazil, where only 7.3% of the population is not affiliated to any religion, and probably a good part of those are theists none the less. In spite of that, we believe that fighting for the hearts and minds – especially the minds – of the thinking minority is an ideal worth pursuing.

Daniel Sottomaio is a Director of the Round Earth Society.

Campaigning Against Sectarian Education in Scotland

Scotland does not suffer the Protestant/Roman Catholic sectarian terrorism of its neighbour, Northern Ireland, but it does share some of the tensions. In Scotland as a whole, Catholics are now well integrated into society, social attitudes are becoming more liberal, and religious affiliation declining rapidly. But despite all this, sectarianism stubbornly refuses to die. The most public manifestation is played out, literally, in football games between two leading teams, one Catholic, the other Protestant. The games are marred by sectarian chanting and songs, and the parading of provocative regalia, despite efforts to eradicate them. Worse still, violent incidents (sometimes amounting to murder) soar wherever these teams engage each other.

Historically, many Catholics emigrated from Ireland as labourers, and were poorly treated by the mainly Protestant Scots. Catholic children were victimized in schools to the point that the law was changed nearly a century ago to provide for separate publicly funded schools for them. These schools remain today, but we argue they should no longer do so because of concerns about sectarianism. This is in addition to our historical objection that children should not be indoctrinated, especially not at the state's expense.

Roman Catholicism is the only religion in Scotland that has schools funded by the state. Naturally, the Church is very jealous of this privilege and it did not react well to a recent onslaught by the National Secular Society, which has been campaigning to have these schools converted to non-denominational status. "Churches unite to declare war on secularism!" screamed the front page of the *Sunday Herald*.

This latest offensive in our campaign had been prompted by a debate on sectarianism. We challenged the Scottish First Minister with a letter to *The Scotsman*, observing that politicians seemed unwilling to acknowledge that existence of Catholic schools fuelled sectarianism. The Catholic Archbishop of Glasgow, Mario Conti, responded swiftly. "Any proposal to end separate Catholic schools is equivalent to a proposal made by the Church of Scotland in 1923 that Irish people should be repatriated," he said, drawing the harshest criticism ("crass and stunning stupidity") from a major, usually pro-Catholic, national newspaper, *The Daily Telegraph*.

Conti's response to our argument was that sectarianism originates at home, not in schools. He seemed unwilling to grasp that the very existence of rival schools could perpetuate the split in communities. Catholics form a powerful voting bloc, which generally supports the First Minister's party, Labour. The Archbishop advised Scottish Catholics to take into consideration the extent of their candidates' support for RC schools when voting at the forthcoming elections, prompting us to accuse him of electoral blackmail. Wide media coverage of the dispute ensued in the national newspapers and on radio. We were further assisted by the intervention of NSS Honorary Associate Prof. Richard Dawkins, who wrote: "Today Catholic

desperation is prompted by ... falling church attendance and catastrophically plummeting recruitment to the priesthood. Keeping their grip on education is their last hope. No wonder they fight so aggressively for it ... There is no such thing as a Protestant child, Catholic child or Muslim child and we should stop the mental child-abuse of labelling them." The Humanist Society of Scotland lent sterling support too. NSS President Denis Cobell had the last word on the "war" article in the *Sunday Herald*: "It is historically typical that the Church should call for a war on secularism: war between faiths has marked the Christian era as two millennia of bloodshed."

The Church is clearly now on the defensive: it has even appointed an official whose sole *raison d'être* is to support retention of their schools. Conti has since described as "offensive" newly built schools that share facilities between Catholics and others. Shamefully, one bishop even complained that one of these schools did not have a separate entrance for Catholics or separate facilities for Catholic teachers. The First Minister eventually came out in support of the schools, saying they performed well and were popular with parents. We will never know how much of what he said was from conviction and how much from perceived electoral advantage. On the other hand, the issue is now well and truly out in the open, and an opinion poll shows that only 42% of Scots believe that separate RC schools should be retained.

What can be learned from this exercise? We face a formidable task in challenging the deeply entrenched and unquestioned privileges of the major religious groups. But by effective, focused, and well-timed campaigns, and with the much-valued contributions of our many distinguished supporters, we can achieve high-profile airing of these issues at the national level.

Keith Porteous Wood, National Secular Society

Rawa: Remember Afghanistan?

At a meeting convened on International Women's Day, March 17, the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (Rawa) declared that the country could not make progress without the separation of religion from state. According to a report from the Dawn Bureau, Rawa stressed how little had changed since the toppling of the Taliban regime. The existence of token women ministers in the new government was of little significance in terms of real change to the situation of Afghan women. Only secular democracy could bring them full rights and freedom. The Northern Alliance was singled out for criticism for its misogynist and anti-democratic attitudes. Rawa pledged to continue its fight against exploitation. The world's eyes have turned away, but no great transformation has been accomplished. For those who live there, the struggle for women's rights and true democracy goes on.

Helping Sexual Assault Survivors in New York

Every year more than 21,000 women are raped in New York State. If these sexual assault survivors go to their local hospital for emergency care, there is no guarantee that they will receive contraception to prevent pregnancy. Emergency contraception is against the religious teaching of many New York hospitals. Currently these hospitals are not required to provide contraception, information about contraception, or even a referral to those institutions that might provide both.

The Institute for Humanist Studies is working to change this unacceptable situation. The Institute's Director of Public Policy, and registered lobbyist, Dr Timothy Gordinier, is lobbying New York State Senators and Assembly members to pass a new law requiring every hospital in New York State to make emergency contraception available to every rape victim seeking emergency care. The proposed legislation would also allow a wider range of health care professionals to prescribe emergency contraception, and improve other support services for sexual assault survivors.

Members of local Humanist groups across the state have helped this campaign by writing to their local representatives requesting that they vote for the legislation. In February, the legislation passed the New York State Assembly and we are campaigning hard to get it through the New York Senate.

The Institute added the full-time staff position of Public Policy Director in 2002 in order to ensure that the Humanist voice is heard in the political arena. Dr Gordinier is the only full-time Humanist public policy director in the United States. Based in Albany, capital of New York State, the Institute's primary public policy focus is at the state level, but it also provides analysis and advocacy on national and international policy issues.

**Matt Cherry, Executive Director,
Institute for Humanist Studies**

For more information on the Institute's public policy work visit <http://www.humaniststudies.org/policy.html>.

American Boy Scout Expelled for Non-Belief

Boy Scouting has achieved independence from religious orthodoxy in so many countries that it may seem shocking in this day and age to learn of places where a boy's family traditions may disqualify him from membership. Yet, in the United States, Scouting has a long and well-documented history of exclusion involving non-theistic belief systems such as Humanism, atheism, Buddhism, and Unitarian Universalism.

The most recent victim of unyielding religious requirements in the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) is Darrell Lambert, 19, of Washington State, who in November 2002 was notified of his expulsion. An appeal for reinstatement by the Regional Council was denied in March 2003. As this issue of *IHN* goes to press, a national appeal is in progress, but its prospects for success are slim. In February 2003 BSA adopted a resolution pronouncing gay and atheist men to be unfit leaders and affirming the right of the national office to dictate membership requirements to local councils.

Darrell joined the Scouts at the age of 9. By the end of high school he had attained Scouting's highest rank, that of Eagle. Openly acknowledging his atheism, Darrell was commended by local leaders for his honesty and integrity and offered increasing responsibility as a leader of younger boys. Regional officials, however, took a different view. In a training session in 2002 for local leaders about mentoring boys for Eagle rank, Darrell, his mother, his sister, and other adults were instructed to ask Scouts about their religious beliefs. Those not expressing faith in a supreme being were to be denied the Eagle and dismissed from Scouting. When Darrell publicly expressed his refusal to be party to discriminatory policies, his own beliefs became the centre of attention at the regional office which later initiated his expulsion against the wishes of local leaders and the parents of boys in his troop.

Darrell's case has attracted the attention of the American media, Humanist groups, and those working to rid Scouting of discrimination. He has spoken on the radio, at university campuses, and at national conferences. The Secular Coalition for America (www.secular.org), a lobbying group which represents the rights and interests of the non-religious, has conducted a national Web and email campaign to build support for Darrell's reinstatement.



Photo: Darrell Lambert.

Although not the first atheist boy to be dismissed by BSA, Darrell is perhaps the first to play a public leadership role questioning the organization's moral and legal right to discriminate. In a narrow ruling in 2000, the US Supreme Court declared BSA a private organization exempt from anti-discrimination laws. Yet the BSA enjoys government funding, use of US military facilities, and widespread promotion by state employees in the nation's public schools.

Of even more concern to Darrell than the legal view, however, is the message conveyed to boys when influential adult leaders encourage them to fear and mistrust worldviews they don't understand. For him, Scouting has always been about loyalty, trust, and unity of purpose. His strong wish to be reinstated as a Scout is exceeded only by his desire to pave the way for a more respectful, inclusive Boy Scouts of America.

**Mary Ellen Sikes, Associate Director,
Institute for Humanist Studies**

UN Report: UN and Global Governance

This has been a critical period for the UN. Underlying the discussion about war on Iraq has been a struggle for the governance of the world order. Would the unilateralism of the US, as the main superpower, dominate – or would decisions be made multilaterally, through the UN? Disagreement within the Security Council, as well as world opinion, mobilized with astonishing speed, slowing but not stopping America's headlong rush to war.

Public opinion remains strongly in favour of an effective UN, retaining sovereignty of nations, but with important limits. If crimes against humanity occur, in spite of sovereignty, humanitarian intervention should be justified. Given the many conflicting interests of its membership, the UN is the only institution that can bring legitimacy to the management of complex international crises. Moreover, increasingly, problems are global. Active world cooperation will be needed and this depends on multilateral participation in decision-making. The UN is the only setting where this can happen.

The UN and its various agencies are currently planning the task of meeting the humanitarian crisis which inevitably follows a war. Iraq's deeply divided multiethnic composition does not bode well for the avoidance of chaos. The problem is acute. After 11 years of sanctions, Iraq's economy was already paralysed, with about 60% of the population entirely dependent on the UN food-for-oil programme, now disrupted. Infant mortality was two and a half times the level in 1990. One million children under five are chronically undernourished. About five million Iraqis already lacked access to safe water. The UN has experience in coordinating relief efforts to meet a humanitarian crisis. Whatever the form of a post-war Iraq, the humanitarian work of the UN will continue.

By Sylvain and Phyllis Ehrenfeld

Sylvain and Phyllis Ehrenfeld are IHEU representatives to the UN and the AEU's National Service Conference. This article is an edited and adapted version of their report, which can be found at <http://www.ihcu.org>. The role of the UN in the rebuilding of Iraq is under discussion as we go to press.

UNCHR Reports: Security, Terrorism, and Human Rights

As this issue of *IHN* goes to press, US troops are entering Baghdad. By the time it is published, the war itself may be over. But whatever the timescale over which it is played out, the long-term impact on the Middle East and the Islamic world must be a source of grave concern. The likelihood of a significant increase in terrorism has been much discussed. In the growing atmosphere of xenophobia that has developed since September 11th, the situation of many ordinary Muslim families in the West is also cause for concern. According to Doudou Diène, Special Rapporteur for the UN Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) on contemporary forms of racism and xenophobia, there has been a distinct rise in the number of attacks on people of Arab appearance in both the United States and in Europe. Despite statements from heads of state intended to calm intercommunal tensions, incidents of assault on Muslim students and arson attacks on mosques show a marked increase following September 11th. In his report, which was submitted for discussion by the UN in Geneva in March, he also voices concern for the potential risks to the rights of citizens and foreigners under the new laws that Western countries have rapidly approved in order to strengthen security and root out the terrorist threat.

With the eyes of the world focused on the invasion of Iraq, the situation of Palestinians in the occupied territories has slipped from the news headlines in recent months, except for the intentions declared by President George Bush, and encouraged by Prime Minister Tony Blair, to drive negotiations for a Palestinian state. Most commentators have seen a resolution of this long-festered conflict as a major priority, though it has not been top of the agenda of the "war against terror". In

the meantime, the plight of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank is highlighted in another report tabled for discussion at the UN. Mr John Dugard, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories, reports that conditions have "deteriorated substantially" during the past year, primarily as a result of repeated military actions by Israeli Defence Forces. Again, the issue is one of legitimate concerns over security and prevention of terrorism spilling over into violation of human rights. In this case, according to the report's findings, it has led to the use of excessive and indiscriminate force, and methods of control that have caused widespread suffering for ordinary civilians. The impact of curfews on towns like Jenin and Ramallah, and strict control of movement, has been to place some 700,000 people effectively under house arrest, disrupt medical services and education, and produce serious food shortages. Unemployment has risen to over 50%. While recognizing Israel's legitimate security concerns and justification for military action, the report concludes, "But when this action results in an excessive use of force that disregards the distinction between civilians and combatants, a humanitarian crisis that threatens the livelihood of a whole people, the killing and inhuman treatment of children, the widespread destruction of property and territorial expansion, serious questions must be asked about the proportionality of Israel's response and the boundaries of military necessity."

For details of these and other reports before the UNCHR, see <http://www.unhcr.ch/html/menu2/2/59chr/advancedoc>

Twentieth-Century Humanist Celebrates Centenary

Harold J. Blackham, British philosopher and author, one of the founders of IHEU in 1952 and the first Executive Director of the British Humanist Association, celebrated his 100th birthday on 31 March 2003. Blackham has been one of the leading figures in British Humanism. His published works include *Six Existential Thinkers* (1952) and *Humanism* (1976). Blackham worked with intellectuals such as A. J. Ayer and Julian Huxley, but he was also a tireless campaigner and practical Humanist, who sought to spread moral education in schools and was involved in founding the British Association of Counselling. He has lived in the Wye Valley since his retirement, where Harry Stopes-Roe, Jane Wynne Willson, and Babu Gogineni visited him last year (see *IHN*, November 2002). A celebratory lunch was arranged by Barbara Smoker and Jane Wynne Willson in London to mark his birthday. Blackham, frail now but still engaged with life, attended the event with his son Paul. Sir Hermann Bondi, himself a veteran Humanist activist, was among the speakers. It was a warm and inspiring Humanist occasion. Jim Herrick, of the Rationalist Press Association, writes of Blackham: "He lived the exemplary life of a liberal humanist – thought and action welded together."

Blackham's Best

Excerpts from H. J. Blackham republished to mark his hundredth birthday



To mark his 85th birthday in 1988, a booklet of quotations from Harold Blackham's writings was compiled and published by Barbara Smoker, who, in common with many others, looks upon him as her mentor. With additional material, it is republished to celebrate his 100th birthday on 31 March 2003.

Taken from nine of his books and from articles in a variety of publications, the excerpts are arranged under 19 thematic headings from 'Life' and 'Human Nature', through 'Morality' and 'Knowledge', to 'Religion' and 'Literature' – and of course 'Humanism'. Available from Barbara Smoker, 51 Farmfield Road, Bromley, Kent, BR1 4NF, UK. ISBN 0 8512695 1 X, £4.50 + postage.

IHEU Director of Operations

We are seeking an experienced administrator to fill a new, senior position at IHEU Headquarters in London. The successful candidate will have a sound grasp of Humanist principles, several years experience of business administration, and good management and communication skills. Experience in the not-for-profit sector would be an advantage. Computer literacy and familiarity with the Internet are essential and experience in the use of Word and Excel highly desirable. The salary is negotiable.

Please apply in writing, enclosing an up-to-date CV to:
The President, IHEU, 1 Gower Street, London WC1E 6HD

Empowering Women

IHEU International Women's Conference

Addressing the position of women worldwide is one of IHEU's priorities for the coming years. As Humanists we should promote and lobby for women's rights. The issue of gender imbalance within the organized international Humanist movement also needs to be addressed.

Two-day conference in UK

IHEU is proposing an International 2-day Humanist Women's Conference on the above themes to be held in the last part of 2003 in London, with an online conference leading up to the main conference. A limited number of travel scholarships will be available for speakers and participants from the Third World. IHEU recommends that all IHEU Member Organizations depute a representative to this important conference.

Conference participation

Those interested in speaking should contact women@iheu.org before 1 June with their full contact details, and theme of proposed intervention. Those interested in attending as participants should send an email to women@iheu.org.

Support International Humanism Support IHEU

As an IHEU Supporter you help promote Humanism throughout the world. All supporters receive free copies of the IHEU *International Humanist News*.

IHEU Individual Supporter

Name: Mr/Ms
Address
.....
City/Country
Post Code
Tel (country & city codes)
Fax
Email

Languages spoken
Year of birth
Profession
Humanist Associations of which you are a member

I would like to support IHEU as:

- Annual Supporter (£30 or US \$50 payable January)
- Life Supporter (one-off £400 or US \$650 payment)
- IHEU Club 100 member (pledge to pay £340 or US \$500 each year for 3 years)
- Donation to IHEU's Endowment Fund (for securing IHEU's future)
- Donation to IHEU's campaigns (Rights of Humanists, Religion-State Separation issues)

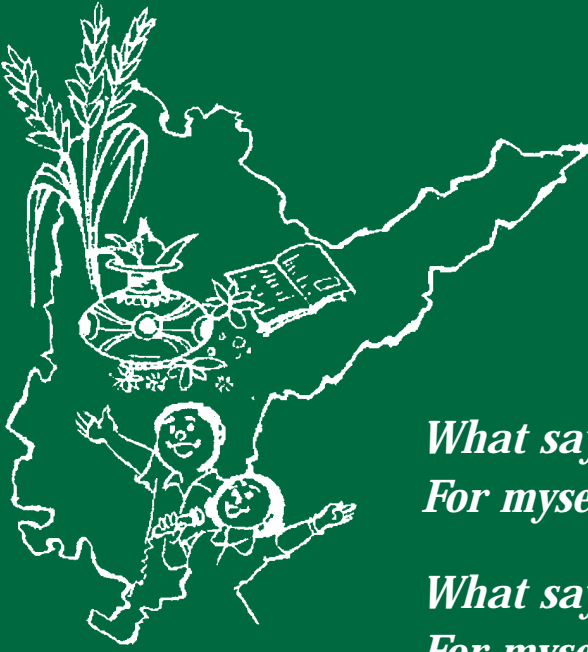
Mode of payment:

- Cheque for £..... drawn in the name of: International Humanist and Ethical Union
- Transfer to IHEU Account No. 50958840. Barclays Bank (sort code 20-41-41), Holborn, London.
- Credit Card
MasterCard / Visa / Delta / Switch
(delete as appropriate)

Card number
Expiry date
Cardholder's name
Signature

Date
(Please note that for international payments an international credit card may be the cheapest and most convenient way to pay. Transfers through banks may attract charges which may be high.)

**Mail form/photocopy to IHEU,
1 Gower Street,
London WC1E 6HD, UK
Fax 00 44 20 7631 3171**

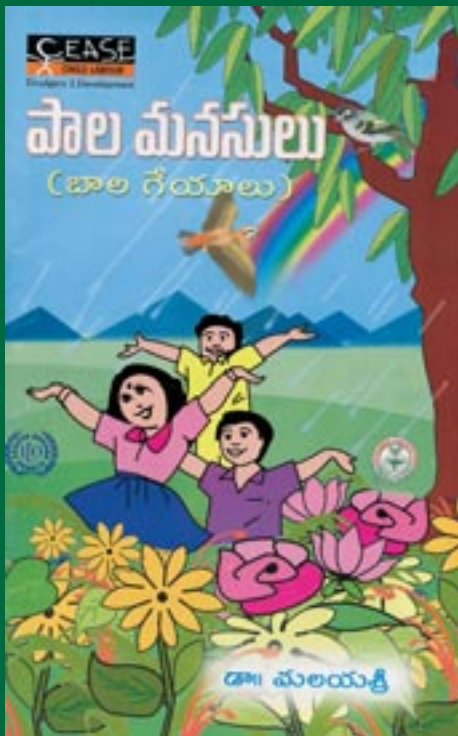


*What say you when asked what is your nation?
For myself, I say humanity is my nation.*

*What say you when I ask what is your religion?
For myself, I say being good is my religion.*

*What say you when I ask what is your morality?
For myself, I say love is my morality.*

Poem by Malyasree
Translation, Babu Gogineni



“Tender Hearts”, a book of Humanist poems for children, published by CEASE-Child Labour.