

at a glance

ANOTHER RIDE

Ride! Ride!, has been staged in Perth, Western Australia, by the Albany Methodist Music Society. This follows an earlier production in Albany.

The President of the Western Australia Methodist Conference, Rev Wesley Lutton, writes, 'The audience participation was magnificent: they laughed, they wept, their hearts were warmed.'

WOMEN'S LIP

The voices of women who spoke on 'Home Truths for International Women's Year' continue to echo round the world. Copies of the hour-long cassette containing highlights of the 4 June meeting at the Royal Festival Hall, London, are in demand on every continent. This week alone orders came from as far away as Norfolk Island in the Pacific and included a request for five cassettes from a businessman in South Africa.

Further orders, accompanied by cheques or postal orders, should be sent to Chris Hartnell, 12 Palace Street, London SW1E 5JF. Price £1.60. Postage and packing is 20p (UK), 25p (Continent, airmail) or 65p (Australia, airmail).

EVERYONE'S CHANCE

Men and women from different walks of life on the South Coast of England have convened a weekend conference for Moral Re-Armament (17-19 October) at Wickham, near Portsmouth, with the theme 'Everyone's Chance'.

They write in the invitation, 'Every nation seems to be going through difficult, even desperate days. Can we let God show us how every difficulty can be turned into a solution, and let our own lives, and our country's face be

NEW WORLD NEWS

FOR MORAL RE-ARMAMENT

VICTORIAN TELEVISION

Belfast Report and *A Man for All People* were shown in July on Channel 9, Melbourne's popular commercial television channel. *The Age*, Melbourne, announcing the showing of *Belfast Report*, described it as 'a film in which men and women of the factories and shipyards of Belfast, both Catholic and Protestant, tell their own stories of how they are creating unity and living an answer to the violence which often makes the headlines'.

A Man for All People, the film about Dr William Nkomo of South Africa, will also be shown on Norwegian Television - on Sunday 24 August.

MRA feature and documentary films have been shown on television in twenty seven countries.

GOING PROFESSIONAL

The Stage and Television Today announced on its front page last week, 'The Methodist Church is going into the professional theatre with the formation of Aldersgate Productions, whose chairman is Dr John Gibbs, with Ronald Mann as secretary. The opening production will be the musical *Ride! Ride!*, with script and lyrics by Alan Thornhill and music by Penelope Thwaites. With a cast of 24, *Ride! Ride!* will be staged in March next year and will have a ten-week provincial tour before coming to the West End.'

turned towards answering the basic needs of individuals and nations?

'We are some of those who met at a weekend conference for Moral Re-Armament at Park Place, Wickham, last October. Since then we have experienced afresh how faith can be worked out in our daily lives, and have begun to see the impact on society around us.

'Now is everyone's chance to be a remaker of the world.'

KITCHEN HELP

The Isle of Man Weekly Times reports that members of the catering staff of the Ramsey Grammar School meals centre who visited Tirley Garth, the MRA centre in Cheshire, noted that more kitchen equipment was needed and decided to raise money for it.

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Cast of 'Song of Asia'

Photo: Rengfelt

●THREE WEEKS AGO we announced the coming to Britain of *Song of Asia* and of the launching of a fund* (target £50,000) to make the visit possible.

Many generous gifts have already been received and many initiatives are being taken. One of the most interesting ideas comes from a South London housewife, Indrani Kistasamy.

She and her friends will be holding an Indian supper party in the Sanderson Room of the Westminster Theatre on Saturday 6 September. It is hoped that all the ingredients for the meal will be given so that the £2 a head which is being charged will all go to the *Song of Asia* fund.

Mrs Kistasamy told *New World News*, 'I am ready to travel to any part of the country to help prepare Indian meals for similar fund-raising campaigns. I can be contacted at 76 Shrewsbury Lane, London SE18 (01-855-2524).'

*Cheques should be made payable to P L George SOA Fund and sent to Peter L George at 12 Palace Street, London SW1E 5JF.

A life of change

by
Jean-Jacques Odier

THE WORD 'CHANGE' is an 'in' word just now. It figures prominently in the jargon of every politician concerned about his popularity. Who would dare oppose it except 'reactionaries' or 'the forces of reaction'?

Fifty years ago Frank Buchman had already made this word, or rather the reality it stood for, his constant theme. For him the sequence of change was imperative: change yourself, change others, change society.

The second of these merits our attention. It is the one which most often escapes our understanding. Men who pride themselves on their virtue sometimes stop at the first stage. Those who wish to turn our age upside down want to jump with both feet directly into the third stage.

To change oneself is certainly the basis, the ABC of morals. But the specific contribution of Buchman was to introduce into the spirit of his contemporaries the idea that if we want to help our neighbour, one of the most realistic ways, and the most lasting, is to set him on the road of change.

Helping others is an expression which makes us think immediately of some humanitarian gesture, of moral or material help, of lending a hand to someone in some kind of difficulty. For Buchman, to help our neighbour is to help him to become the man he is called to be.

This is a new dimension which goes much further than convincing someone of the rightness of our ideas. So many people today think they have made the world better when they have persuaded someone to think like themselves. Changing another is to get him to the point where he puts himself in question, discovers for himself the flaws of his way of living and thinking, and then makes the decisions which are shown to be necessary. The result may not be at all what we expected. So much the better!

What does change imply? First, that the other person is placed in my field of vision and that I get myself out of the central position in my preoccupations; what the other person can become is more important than what I become myself. Secondly, my own change is not destined essentially to make a better

person of myself, but to become a lever for the transformation of the other person, and the world.

Must I therefore be a saint, one who is beyond reproach, before I can be of use? The reply of Frank Buchman to this question was eminently practical; at the risk at times of making a mistake or giving offence he encouraged all those who had taken a sincere step towards change to tell about it at the right moment, to the right person. Sometimes the greatest sinner, when he can bring evidence of his change, can help the most 'perfect' of his contemporaries.

Sometimes Buchman was criticised for using this expression, changing others, as if he had believed that a man could have the power to change a person's psychological and moral genes. It was said that people's consciences were forced. However, we do not need reminding that continually or aggressively our materialist sex-obsessed civilisation works on our consciences and little by little blunts our sense of right and wrong. Thus it is no more than a legitimate defence to do the opposite and try to render consciences proof against the infections of our age.

Frank Buchman also never claimed to be able to confer on anyone the power to transform his neighbour. That is God's alone. We can only act as witnesses or developers (in the photographic sense of the word).

But even if our role is secondary, it is not passive. Some Christians think that God works, whatever our behaviour may be, and that cannot be denied. But the genius of Buchman consisted in helping men to understand that their testimony, private or public, however slight, is a powerful factor, the influence of which they themselves cannot assess.

Questions

How then, can I put myself in the best conditions where my life can be used to bring about change in another? It means a whole new dimension of living, a 'commitment' born out by long experience. It would be impossible to summarise it in a few sentences. Here are certain questions which could help to direct us in our daily touch with others.

Am I more interested in the future of the one I am talking with than in putting across my own points of view? If so, that means to say that I will listen to the end, that I shall be alert to what interests him, what is on his heart. This may mean to 'hold my horses', to be willing to keep silent for hours before being able to put a word in. A good experience for my pride!

Have I tried to understand the nature of the problems and the difficulties which he faces? Frank Buchman believed one could read a person like a book, to the point where the first glance would give you a glimpse of his secrets.

Hugh Steadman Williams has been associated with the Westminster Theatre for fourteen years as actor, stage manager, literary manager, director and playwright. Two of his plays have been broadcast by BBC radio. He is co-author with Alan Thornhill of *Return Trip* and directed the recent production. 'A theatre of change' is from a talk given to an Education Conference at the Westminster Theatre.

A theatre of change

by
Hugh Steadman Williams

WE HAVE two great alternatives: a theatre of hope, or a theatre of despair. The theatre of despair is a *dead end*. The theatre of hope is the future. But what sort of hope? Certainly not in man's return or progression to some state of perfection. It is the hope of redemption. The hope of change. Human nature can be changed. That is the forgotten factor in most of today's equations.

The mirror has been the great metaphor of drama. To hold a mirror up

The pitfalls into which prominent have recently fallen show how much this art is needed in the intricacies of the modern world especially when it comes to governing nations.

Have I tried to imagine what my companion could become? I shall not be able to help him unless I have for him a 'divine ambition' greater than he has for himself. When we listen inwardly we can be given a 'vision' of what the other can be.

Would it not be a barometer of love to see in each person what he can become instead of only seeing him as he is, with all his faults? This brings us to the question: do I really love the other person? You cannot help someone whom you put upon a pedestal or whom you despise. François Giroud in his book *If I Lie* says very rightly that 'we pass our time in putting absolute values in a human being, only to declare later what a disappointment he is'.

Conversely, if we feel superior to our

to nature, by which we largely mean human nature. But a mirror only reflects life as it is. If it isn't a perfect mirror, and who can claim that his work of art is a perfect mirror, it easily distorts. I think we have outgrown the mirror concept. Consider television; merely reflecting something corrupt into 13 million homes just compounds corruption. Perhaps the time has come to see theatre more as a prism or as a lens, breaking up the essential elements into their separate parts, and then reuniting them, focused in a beam with concentration, direction, and greater power. What we have tried to create here at the Westminster Theatre is a theatre of change to hold before people the forgotten truth, the possibility, the hope, that people can change, that they needn't stay the same.

For instance in *Give a Dog a Bone* people are turned into animals. But then they can also, by a simple decision, be turned back into humans again. And what more important theme could there be for drama in the last quarter of this century? Change is going to come; 25 per cent of the world's population cannot go on indefinitely consuming 80 per cent of the world's resources. There is going to have to be a change in our standard of living. Who is going to prepare people for that change? Not the politicians. They have always fought elections by promising more. Who is going to have the courage to promise less?

There is going to have to be change if we are going to survive at all. Maurice Strong, Executive Director of the United Nations Environmental Programme, says, 'The question is whether we can make the necessary adjustments willingly and collectively or whether they will be forced on us by a series of crises that we cannot survive.' And he continues, 'The kind of changes I suggest will require an act of collective will on the

part of the rich beyond anything we have ever experienced. It will take a moral and spiritual revolution which goes far enough to alter our life style and penetrate our political and industrial systems.'

Then, with a world crisis of these proportions, there is the choice which individuals have to face. Psychoanalysts say that there are two attitudes to reality. One they call alloplastic: we try to change reality so that we stay the same. This has been our history since the Renaissance—through scientific discovery, technology and organisation we have tried to conquer nature and the environment. For many years we saw, or thought we saw, linear progress in this direction.

Credibility

The other attitude to reality is autoplasmic: we try to change ourselves in order to face the new reality or situation we are in. That is infinitely more difficult but maybe it is time to give it a try.

To portray the changing of human nature on the stage is not easy. One factor is time. It takes time to change. But in a play you don't have much time—two hours, or if it is radio or television maybe only one hour or less. Connected with this is the question of credibility of a character, for which the ground rule for the writer is generally consistency. But when you establish a character as proud and jealous and then proceed to show him shedding his pride and his jealousy, all within a brief span of time, it is very hard to maintain this credibility. Characters must have an inevitability about their actions. And that is so much easier when showing the destruction of a personality than it is when you are trying to portray the reconstruction of a personality, although that is equally valid.

Neighbour, what can we do for him? How many of us have not succumbed at some point to the temptation to consider ourselves slightly better than someone we wish to help, and thus to believe that, by the force of gravity our surplus of good will overflow to feed naturally the lack in the other. People are not a field of action for us, but potential for God and for remaking the world.

Readiness

Am I ready to sacrifice my habits and personal comfort to help my neighbour? It is sometimes necessary, at the right time, to see someone day after day so that he can advance. Never forget that a person who begins to change is particularly exposed to the manoeuvres of the Devil! How often have I regretted leaving someone halfway simply out of laziness or refusing to attack what is becoming more difficult.

Am I ready to admit to my friend

the weaknesses in my own life which correspond to his? It is often the key to open his heart. Does this mean that I cannot help someone unless I have formerly sunk as low as he in some respect? I have realised again recently that the admission of our own failings, however minimal they may be, can encourage another to open up on matters of far greater gravity.

Am I ready to give my own life again to God, or to make fresh decisions which will help my friend also to decide to take a new road? We cannot take anyone further than we are prepared to go ourselves.

The chapter is far from finished. Everyone can make his own discoveries which will put him in a position to contribute even more to the change of his neighbour, until he, in his turn, becomes an agent of change.

This article first appeared in the *Tribune de Caux*

● Following their four-week season of matinée performances at the Westminster Theatre, the entire cast and stage management of *Return Trip* with costume designer, stage carpenter and director, have just spent two weeks at the MRA world assembly at Caux where they gave four further performances.

After the first performance in Caux a Finnish teacher said, 'This must be filmed and go through the schools of my country.' A politician's son who had been on drugs, said, 'It is so real. It shocked me that anyone could have such insight into the problems of my generation.' A senior Swedish nurse commented, 'It is a slap in the face that jolts us out of our petrified state.' An eminent psychiatrist said, 'We scientists have been brought up on the theory of causality, but this play showed us the spiritual truth that one cause can have several opposite effects—and we can choose.'

Four of the cast have remained at Caux to assist with the 'creative workshops' for young people.

I was helped greatly on these points by an experienced television producer and writer, who said it all depended on what you did with the character after he or she changed. If life became a primrose path and everyone lived happily ever after then you will naturally lose credibility.

But if, as a result of accepting change, life became incredibly more difficult for the character, with opposition, persecution, mistakes, backsliding, people betraying him, then the audience accepts it as much more believable. They nearly always side with the character who is battling against heavy odds. And this, I think, was the reason for the success of Alan Thornhill's play *Mr Wilberforce MP*, which showed the emancipator of the slaves battling for twenty years against interests which opposed the abolition of the slave trade. It's what Alan Thornhill and I have tried to do with our play *Return Trip* in which we show the return of the drug addict having been through a cure to a hostile home environment. And it is also what I have tried to do with my latest play *The Fire* which is about a writer with Christian conviction trying to exist in the jungle of show business. The theatre of change is in its infancy. We have not yet begun to explore a fraction of its possibilities. But it could be the most important theatre of the century.

Return Trip playscript (60p)



Children's fashion show for Moral Re-Armament

Photo: Isle of Man Weekly Times

AT A GLANCE *continued from page 1*

Through a fashion show (see photo), stalls, music, a slide show and a reading of the play *The Ladder* they succeeded in collecting £115.

The *Isle of Man Weekly Times* covered the event with an article and photo over seven columns headed 'Effort for Moral Re-Armament'.

The paper wrote, 'Tirley Garth has become known to thousands of people throughout the world as a centre of hope. Politicians, students, men and women from industry, agriculture, the medical profession, education and the Church, have come to regard it as a place where they discover solutions to problems and find fresh ideas for the future.'

'Situated in the lovely Cheshire countryside, looking across to the Welsh hills, Tirley Garth is one of Britain's gracious homes. It was donated by Miss Irene Prestwich for the work of Moral Re-Armament. She wrote, "Wise government and wise leadership can do much but in the end it is the character of the people that can help to move the country forward and save civilization from disaster."'

Blisters on their palms

The following article by Atul Sukhtankar appeared in the Bombay daily, *The Free Press Bulletin*, under the headline 'Experiment in self-reliance'.

AT THE STUDENT seminar held in Panchgani recently, 90 per cent planning, organising and the work on the site was done by the students themselves. They all worked as a team, deciding and acting at their own discretion.

This novel experiment, of making the delegates do their own jobs without any inspection or supervision, worked admirably well. Everything from dawn to dusk went on smoothly and with clock-work precision. And any task, from washing dishes to rehearsing for a play, was performed wholeheartedly and in a spirit of cameraderie.

The ten-day seminar on 'Tomorrow's Leaders' was held in the idyllic surroundings of Asia Plateau at Panchgani. About two hundred students from all over India, including some foreigners presently studying in the Indian universities, had participated in the seminar. Big contingents had come from the Institute of Technology, Coimbatore, St Peter's College, Agra, IIT, Powai and Grant Medical College and Topiwala National Medical College, Bombay.

The seminar enabled students with diverse backgrounds to assemble under the roof and discuss some of the present socio-economic problems, like corruption in universities, power cuts, pollution and student riots. Apart from discussions, they constructively employed themselves in workshops on Engineering, Mass Communication and Drama.

A sizeable section of the delegates had never handled a pick-axe, a sickle or a saw, yet they preferred to work on the

farm and in the carpentry section, quite unmindful of the blisters spawning on their palms.

The emphasis everywhere was on working with one's hands and in a group. All the work was systematically divided among the delegates by allotting specific tasks to each and every group. While one group was engaged in serving food, the other was busy in the scullery, washing dishes and plates or laying out the tables. Working together not only made the menial tasks look a trifle too simple, but also helped spread an informally cordial atmosphere all through.

It needs to be mentioned that the 'Talents Night' was also the night of non-talent. Virtually anyone who had the confidence to climb up on to the stage and the nerve to face the audience (which could be nasty at times) was considered talented enough. The Maharashtrian girls performing 'Garba', which seemed a curious combination of the school boys' lazim display and the African voodoo dance was, I think, the most hilarious spectacle of all. This apart, there were quite a few 'singers' who could have made even a crow laugh.

The seminar ended with the customary hand-shakes and good-byes. The seminar had made it possible for the delegates to work out some of their plans and, through mutual exchange of ideas and experiences, broaden their overall perspective and come to a proper understanding of the problems in the country. That it was a grand success is a feather in the cap of the delegates themselves.

NEIGHBOURING

One of our readers writes:

He was gardening when he started to think about a man a few houses away whom he had seen but never spoken to.

Laying aside the rake, he crossed the road and introduced himself to his neighbour who was also gardening. The conversation turned to families, and the loneliness of the man became apparent. In retirement he and his wife came to this very desirable bungalow and a year later she died of cancer. That was three months ago, and it was quietly obvious why the thought to put down that rake had come.

While listening, he silently prayed, 'Lord, help me to give this friend the faith he needs.'

During the next hour confidence grew and when the visitor left to take up the rake again, he was told, 'Thank God you came, I was thinking of the gas oven.'

HISTORIC PHOTO

O Globo, the Rio daily, has reproduced the photograph of the historic reconciliation of Marshal Juarez Tavora and Marshal Teixeira Lott at an MRA Assembly in 1961. It was describing highlights in the life of Marshal Tavora, who died last month.

Tavora, a former cabinet minister and Presidential candidate, described MRA as 'the final revolution to put right what is wrong throughout the world'.