

NEW WORLD NEWS

Vol28 No48 1 Nov 1980 10p



Henry Marsh,
Mayor of Richmond,
welcomes Councillors
George Richards (left)
and Robert Smith
at the City Hall.

AVON'S CALL GOES TRANSATLANTIC

THE WORK OF AVON COUNTY educators to arouse concern about the moral climate in which their pupils grow up has stirred interest across the Atlantic. Last month some of them visited Richmond, Virginia, at the invitation of the city's Mayor and Superintendent of Schools, who had asked them 'to exchange ideas and experiences on transmitting a sense of purpose to young people'. Among the group were Avon's Director of Education, Geoffrey Crump, and Assistant Director, Peter Coleman.

Their initiative began in 1977 with a report by Avon's Committee of Education pointing out that while schools were expected to be 'temples of pure thought, speech and action,' society was 'increasingly violent, dishonest and immoral,' and that this would have to change if children were to grow up with a sound basis for their lives. They called too for schools to concentrate more on their 'truly educative role, particularly constructive social education programmes for the next generation of parents'. The *Daily Telegraph* called the report 'so far the most valuable contribution to the Great Debate'—the debate on British education launched by the Prime Minister—while *The Guardian* described it as an attack on society's 'double standards'.

Since then, through distribution of the report and of guidelines for parents, and through conferences in several parts of England, they have, in the words of Peter Coleman, 'set out on the big task of changing society'.

Others in education and local government have responded to their action, and the visiting group included Councillors Robert Smith from Avon and George Richards from Norwich, and their wives, and Subbiah Kistasamy, head of the Geography department at a London comprehensive school.

Their first engagement was at the City Hall, where the television cameras were out to record their welcome by Henry Marsh, the Mayor, Richard Hunter, the Superintendent of Schools, and the City Council.

During the following days they met with school officials, teachers and administrators for discussions. Their common concern was how to give children a sense of moral purpose. 'There is a lot of double-think,' Mr

Crump said, 'Society professes one thing and does another. If the school authorities have ideals that help parents know what to aim at, we should say them.' Teri Caldwell, member of the Richmond School Board, responded, 'We need to identify exactly what we need to do to build character, and make it consistent.'

Their discussions concentrated on several areas of concern. Since desegregation of schools was first enforced 10 years ago, many white families have moved out of the centre of Richmond, and now send their children to private schools. So the state schools — public schools — are predominantly black. The School Board is attempting to encourage integration by advertising campaigns and other means; and recently there has been a trickle of white families back to the city centre and the public schools. But wholehearted integration is still a distant dream.

Enriching diversity

'Until recently I felt pretty smug about our race relations,' said Councillor Smith. 'Then just before my visit here, a black girl came to my office to see me. She felt her life had been shattered by the treatment she had received from white people. I felt that God had sent her to see me, so that I would not go to America with a brash approach.'

There was lively discussion when Mr Kistasamy spoke to the Urban Institute

about ways of making a multi-racial school and society work. He told the Institute members—Richmond citizens, black and white, who are concerned to answer their city's racial problems—that he had only become effective in encouraging integration when he had compared his life with absolute moral standards, and had seen where he needed to be different, starting in his own home. Through this he had been 'freed from the bitternesses, frustrations and reactions' by which he had been engulfed. Over the past 12 years since then, he and his wife have used their home steadily to bring people of all races and cultures together. 'Diversity,' he said, 'is an enrichment.'

Another area of concern was family life. 'Training in how to strengthen the family is essential,' said Nathaniel Lee, Assistant to the Superintendent of Schools. Much was expressed on how this could be done better. Dr Hunter, who was present at most occasions, remarked, 'It is not often that we have time to sit and discuss like this.' Later, hosting a lunch given by the School Board, he told the visitors, 'I have gained much this week.'

The visitors summed up their feelings in a letter to the *Richmond Times Dispatch*. 'We have learned from you how we can tackle some of the problems in our schools,' they wrote. 'We return to Britain with fresh hope and inspiration to meet the challenges around us.'



Richard Hunter,
Superintendent of
Richmond Schools, with
Geoffrey Crump, Avon's
Director of Education.

WILBERFORCE GIVES THE LIE TO THE HELPLESSNESS SYNDROME

200 years ago this week a young MP took his seat in Parliament with every promise of a brilliant career ahead of him. To his own ability, William Wilberforce added the friendship of William Pitt, soon to become Britain's youngest Prime Minister. Yet when Wilberforce died 50 years later his achievement lay not in his own career, but in the reforms—such as the abolition of the slave trade—which had made conscience a force in British political life.

GOD'S POLITICIAN, a new book about William Wilberforce by **Garth Lean**, was published yesterday. Here Mr Lean explains his purpose in writing it:

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE proved that one man can change the spirit of his times.

In his middle twenties he gave up the glittering prizes which could have been his, including the possibility of high office. Instead he set out to fulfil the two great objects which he felt God had set before him—the abolition of the slave trade and the 'reformation of the manners' of England.

It took twenty years to induce the House of Commons to abolish 'the Trade'. And only on his death bed, twenty-six years later, did he hear, rejoicing, that all slaves in the British territories were to be freed. Meanwhile an extraordinary change of climate had come about among the heartless aristocracy of England. The future Lord Shaftesbury noted a few years after Wilberforce's death that 'philanthropy' had 'become fashionable'.

The carrying of Abolition and the new moral climate engendered a spirit of optimism. No reform was felt impossible. The way was opened for the revision of the vicious penal code and for prison reform, for the abolition of child labour and the

improvement of conditions in mines and factories, and even for the reform of the franchise itself. Many of these reforms were initiated by Wilberforce and his friends—or carried through by their successors.

A new era had also started in Britain's attitude to India and Africa. 'If any particular moment marked the change from looting to paternalism (in India),' writes Lord Birkenhead, 'it was the renewal of the East India Company's Charter of 1813'—a bill which Wilberforce and his colleagues helped to shape.

'Paternalism' is not a popular word today. And the new enthusiasm for philanthropy had its patronising side. But paternalism is a great advance on 'looting', and a society where good works are the fashion is preferable to one which closes its eyes to suffering.

The initial advance was made possible not only by Wilberforce's dramatic change of direction, but by the way in which people of talent—MPs of all persuasions, researchers, lawyers, publicists and clergy—gathered round him. All had accepted the same Christian

Clapham's cabinet of saints

In these extracts from his book, Garth Lean describes the growth and quality of life of the Clapham Community:

IT BEGAN AS an entirely informal body of friends drawn together by shared views and a common aim. Then in 1792, when the battles against the slave trade and for the reformation of manners were well under way, the arrangement took on a somewhat more definite shape. In that year Henry Thornton suggested to Wilberforce that the two of them set up a 'chummary' in Clapham, in and around Battersea Rise, the sturdy Queen Anne house on the west side of the Common which he had bought after his father's death.

Like most of Thornton's schemes, it was a carefully premeditated affair. He felt that living together in such a community would much facilitate 'The Saints' twin aims of a deeper personal commitment and a more concerted influence on affairs.

Battersea Rise proved to be an ideal centre for such a community of friends, some of whom lived there, while others came to stay for short or long periods. Thornton added several wings to the house, until it eventually had 34 bedrooms. In the extensive gardens he also built two smaller houses, Broomfield Lodge, which was rented by Edward Eliot and after his death by Wilberforce, and Glenelg, which was bought by Charles Grant, Member of Parliament for Invernesshire and a Director of the East India Company.

Granville Sharp, the man who forced Chief Justice Mansfield to free the slaves

within Britain, and William Smith, the Unitarian and Radical MP, already lived in the village. And as the years went by others joined them. James Stephen, Master-in-Chancery and an MP, had a house across the Green. Zachary Macaulay, who had been a slave-overseer and estate manager before his conversion, settled there when he returned from being Governor of Sierra Leone. John Shore, now Lord Teignmouth, joined them when he retired from being Governor-General of India in 1802.

Meanwhile, the Thorntons, in whose gift was the living of Clapham, had acquired John Venn, the son of one of the pioneers of evangelicalism and himself a great preacher and wise counsellor, as their parson.

Such was the nucleus which gathered round Wilberforce and sustained him in his struggles as he did in theirs. They were 'a group whose brains could not be denied, even by those who sneered at their religion', and they possessed between them an astonishing range of capacities: encyclopaedic knowledge, ('Look it up in Macaulay' was a common cry), a capacity for research, sparkling wit and literary style, business sagacity, intimate knowledge of India and the West Indies, legal ability, oratory and parliamentary skill.

Necessary and enjoyable

The Clapham men and their families lived together as a true community. They strolled into each others' homes uninvited and seem always to have been welcome. Even on what Lady Knutsford said 'may ironically be called their holidays', they frequented the same watering places, or turned up at each others' country houses. In fact they lived, worked and planned together in a kind of per-

manent committee. Sometimes it was just useful chat, as when Thornton noted in his spasmodic diary: 'Talked with Wilber a few hours on politics gaining much information from him.' Sometimes they met for those friendly times of self-criticism which Wilberforce, Babington and Thornton valued so highly.

Often they gathered in 'Cabinet Councils' in Thornton's library over the public cause or personal needs of the moment, for private as well as public plans were common property between them. They aimed to make every decision on a basis of what, as far as they could see, God desired for the whole fellowship and for the country; they believed this perspective was not best found alone. So, 'Decided with Grant and Thornton' or 'Cabinet Council with Stephen, Thornton and Macaulay' became frequent entries in Wilberforce's diaries. When is it right to go into Yorkshire? Should I move from Clapham to Kensington Gore? Do I give up the county seat? In these and many other decisions he naturally consulted his friends and they him.

They were, then, bound together by a common commitment and way of life. Each had, in his own way, been through an experience of rebirth similar to that which had transformed Wilberforce.

Like him, they had gone on from this initial experience to face and find the cure for the subtler temptations of political life, such as ambition, rejoicing when an opponent failed or when one outshone a colleague, together with the multitude of prides, hurts and jealousies which often frustrate the best intentions of most political combinations. Among them, St Paul's recipe for teamwork ('each humbly considering the other the better man') came near to

commitment as he had. They were said to be an abler team than any contemporary Prime Minister was able to assemble. They not only provided the leadership necessary, but stimulated the groundswell of public opinion to back reform.

God's Politician is a protest against the cruel 'helplessness syndrome' which has gripped so many in every country today—the submission to the lie that individuals can no longer affect events around them. Changes no less radical, I believe, can be wrought in today's world, if groups of people are as dedicated, as open to change in their own lives and as intelligent in their work as those around Wilberforce.

One can think of many current problems—from industrial relations and inflation to issues further afield—which could be affected by such a team. What, for instance, would happen if a British Prime Minister ever seriously faced and admitted Britain's historic sin towards Ireland as Wilberforce—and Pitt himself—faced the harm she had done to Africa?

And what about the slave trade of our era—the imbalance between the rich and the poor nations? After the Brandt Report, agreed unanimously by leading personalities in eight rich and eight poor nations, there can be no doubt that a new order is needed and that the world will be hard put to it to survive without it. As long ago as 1970, Robert McNamara, President of the World Bank, recognised the need and said: 'There is no physical obstacle to the rational, measured and progressive solution of the problems of development. The only obstacles are in the minds of men.'

He instanced ignorance in the minds of the poorest people and collective self-interest in the minds of the most 'influential', in both rich and poor nations. Writing on this in *The Times* Claude Julien

achievement. They learnt from and respected each other, while feeling free to help each other overcome their various defects of character or temperament. Each was pledged not only to the great causes which they undertook together, but also to help their friends attain the character and destiny which God revealed for them.

They talked straight to each other: 'Stephen frankly and kindly reprov'd me,' writes Wilberforce on one occasion. 'Two of the best friends I have in the world have endeared themselves to me by the same friendly frankness,' he tells another who hesitated to speak his mind.

They lived in such intimacy not only because it was necessary but because they enjoyed it. Clapham was often a place of relaxation and delightful time-wasting, as any place where Wilberforce lived was bound to be, in spite of his best resolutions. He would meet one of his friends on the stairs and stand there talking for half an hour, or be drawn off from a 'Cabinet Council' for riotous games with the children.

In the House of Commons the whole group acted as men who, as one contemporary said, 'look to the facts of the case and not to the wishes of the minister, and who before going into the lobby required to be obliged with a reason instead of a job.' Nominally they may have been Tory, like Wilberforce and Stephen, or Whig like Babington and Smith, and they would normally vote with their parties, but to uphold their principles they would support or oppose any Government—even though their action might embarrass their own party or friends.

Wilberforce was adamant that he would never use his friends' votes—votes which stretched beyond the inner circle to thirty or forty sympathisers at any one time—in order

to bribe or coerce the Government, even in the case of Abolition. There were times during both Pitt's and Addington's administrations when this could have been decisive, and some urged him to take advantage of the situation. He always refused. Wheeling and dealing was not his way, and this integrity played its part in gaining for 'The Saints' their moral ascendancy in the House. On questions of morality and humanity, as they understood it, they spoke and voted with one voice. And such causes extended far beyond the suppression of the Slave Trade and reformation of manners. For example, they took the first steps towards humanizing the prisons and the penal code, towards improving working conditions for children, and pioneered popular education.

Unique phenomenon

Wilberforce also championed Catholic Emancipation and that of the dissenting sects, and together 'The Saints' founded both the Church Missionary Society and the British and Foreign Bible Society. They intervened on behalf of the victims of the Napoleonic Wars, the Greeks then fighting for their freedom, the North American Indians, the Haitians and the Hottentots.

Abroad they sought to sustain the struggling colony in Sierra Leone, which they had founded for the accommodation of freed slaves in the 1780s, and worked for new responsibility in Britain's attitude to India.

Many of these causes were promoted in the teeth of opposition scarcely less violent than that encountered in their principal crusades. Their success was due largely to the quality and persistence of their teamwork, a process in which all their varied talents were employed. The principal re-

comments, 'This is a double obstacle which he has not been able to overcome, despite his appeals for "moral responsibility"; for the "necessary moral wisdom and energy".'

The fact is that the enormous job before us cannot be done by exhortation. It requires the rise in many countries—North and South—of people who dedicate themselves as totally as did Wilberforce and his friends. My hope is that *God's Politician* may play some small part in stimulating groups to arise who will banish the helplessness syndrome and tackle many urgent problems.

'God's Politician' by Garth Lean, published by Darton, Longman and Todd, available from Grosvenor Books, 54 Lyford Road, London SW18 3JJ, price £2.50, with postage £2.90

'Like you, I write on the whole short books, but I honestly do not think that either you or I have written anything better than this life of Wilberforce.'

LORD LONGFORD, writing to Garth Lean after reading an advance copy.

'You have compressed and heightened the story in a most readable way.'

JOHN POLLOCK, author of *Wilberforce*, whose life of John Newton, *Amazing Grace*, will be published shortly by Hodder.

'It contains the secret of the magic missing from so much of British public life.'

GRAHAM TURNER, journalist.



Garth Lean

searchers were Clarkson and Macaulay; Stephen brought an original mind and passionate hatred of evil, as well as his expert knowledge, and he and Macaulay were known as the 'authors-general' for all causes. Grant and Shore (later to become Lord Teignmouth) brought their Indian experience, as well as the influence of their positions. Henry Thornton, the practical banker, planned campaign after campaign, and kept them all on an even keel, while Babington was more and more often the one to whom Wilberforce turned for counsel. Wilberforce was the 'Agamemnon of the host'. He needed them to make him what he was, but they needed him to transform their many interests into a river of reform. His unique position in Parliament and the nation, his genius for friendship and eloquence and, above all, his faith, made him the spearhead of the whole advance.

Coupland's verdict still stands unshaken: 'It was, indeed, a unique phenomenon—this brotherhood of Christian politicians. There has never been anything like it since in British public life.'

BRITAIN

Micro-film for development

IN BEIRUT recently, at a meeting of 85 Palestinian intellectuals, the Chairman referred to the turn-about in the seemingly intractable situation in Zimbabwe. 'What has happened there introduces a new factor into our thinking,' he said.

Zimbabwe's experience is relevant to many situations. Perhaps this is why the new MRA documentary *Dawn in Zimbabwe* has attracted such wide attention. The 28-minute film looks at the new nation through the eyes of Zimbabweans from both sides of the guerrilla war who are committed to its multi-racial future. They tell what has changed their attitude and made this possible.

'In this film you see the ordinary people of Africa speaking,' said the Nigerian editor of a London-based African magazine. 'Every High Commission and embassy should see it.'

In the two months since it was released, the film has been shown to audiences large and small in many parts of Britain. Last week in London a showing for an African High Commissioner and a British Member of Parliament sparked off a lively discussion on how Britain could best help Africa. A

GERMANY

Flexitime bites unemployment

AS RECESSION begins to bite in Germany, people from a wide range of the country's industries came to an MRA conference on 'Tomorrow's technology—source of fear and hope'. Participants also came from five other countries.

The initiator of the conference, Hubert Eggemann, a coal miner from the Ruhr, pointed to the forecasts which predicted a steep rise in unemployment in Germany over the next five years. Both sides of industry would have to face up to the extent of change in their values and priorities that this situation demanded.

Other speakers took up this theme. 'We must look at our wasteful ways with valuable resources,' said Wilhelm Janssen, chairman of the works' council of the heavy engineering concern, Brown Boveri.

'It will mean sharing out the work,' said Willi Haller, Managing Director of a South German computer firm and pioneer of 'flexitime'. He gave instances of this happening—in certain German schools, for instance, where three teachers are now sharing the work previously done by two. In a poll



Zimbabwean publishers at their stand at the Frankfurt Book Fair whose theme this year was 'Africa—a continent asserting its destiny'. As a contribution to this theme representatives of the MRA publishing house, Grosvenor Books, screened the film 'Dawn in Zimbabwe'. Publishers from 26 African nations were amongst the 5,126 organisations from 95 nations who attended the fair.

Scottish MP described the film as 'truly impressive'. Miners arranged a showing in their colliery club. 'We need to hear of developments like these,' said one regional secretary of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers who arranged a showing for his colleagues.

In Liverpool and Bristol, the film particularly interested community development officers. In Newbury a lecturer in development economics asked to show it to his students. 'I teach development from the "macro" angle,' he said. 'This film deals with the "micro" angle—the people who make development possible.'

recently conducted by the Federal Institute of Labour, two-thirds of those questioned had said they would like to work less for less pay so as to devote themselves to other activities and provide work for the unemployed. That, of course, was not the case in less affluent nations—and the desperate need of the Third World, where 25 per cent are unemployed or underemployed, could not be ignored.

'Europe will only find new values as each of us do,' said a Swedish trade unionist, John Soederlund. He was about to visit Africa on the invitation of trade unionists there who want to build their movement on the concepts of MRA.

As one step to help bring about the new thinking in industry needed, the personnel manager of a South German firm said that 16 of their apprentices would be coming to the Ruhr the following weekend to meet with some of the conference participants.

People realised vaguely the changes that would come through such innovations as the micro-chip, said John Pate, a Sheffield trade unionist, in an interview on his return from the conference. He had valued learning what Germans were doing about the problems discussed. 'We will only answer them as we try and do it together,' he said.

The British participation in the conference had been particularly appreciated, he

FINLAND

Dawn in south

FINLAND'S FIRST SHOWING of the film *Dawn in Zimbabwe* was in Parliament. Afterwards MPs commented on the deeper knowledge of Zimbabwe and the hope that the film had given them.

Leaders of the Finnish nurses' organisations and training colleges also saw the film, and it was shown at the Nurses' Christian Association. 'You brought a new dimension to our discussion—how forgiveness between two individuals can have far-reaching consequences in the nation,' one nurse said.

At another showing one comment was, 'In the past Finland has tried to bring the Christian message to Africa. Now Africa gives us the core of the Christian faith.'

FRANCE

Midnight sun

THE FRENCH DAILY *Ouest France* described the performance of *Un Soleil en Pleine Nuit* in Nantes last month as 'a delight to the eyes and the spirit'. The musical one-man-show sets the life of St Francis in a modern context. St Francis was portrayed by Michel Orphelin 'whose talent encompassed all the moods—playful, poetic, candid, humorous and profoundly moving,' commented the newspaper. 'He was able to bring the life of St Francis alive for the audience—his golden youth, the break with his father, the life at the heart of the community, the victories and the fragility.'

went on. At a time when many Germans feel they are carrying the financial burden of Britain's EEC membership, the *Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* headlined their interview with him, 'British trade unionist believes in a positive development for Europe'.