

FIFTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE N.S.W. HUMANIST SOCIETY.

28th July, 1965.

The fifth annual report comes at a time when our membership has grown to 520 and is steadily increasing. As the Society grows, it becomes a matter of increasing importance to provide productive outlets for the variety of interests and talents of our membership. During the year I have been constantly impressed by the ability and the energy which quite a large number of our members have been able to bring to the service of the Society and to the advancement of Humanism. And there must be so many others who could and would do the same, given the opportunity, that finding such opportunity must be one of our continuing aims.

Of course, as Humanists, we must accept the inevitability of an evolutionary growth; there is no master-mind behind our Society, and we are not working out a preconceived plan. But we must constantly review our successes and our failures, and look for new paths of development. Any ideas for such development will always be welcomed by the Committee.

Public Meetings have proved as usual to be of great value, both in making contact with non-members, and in providing members with information and ideas, and the opportunity to discuss them. The need for topicality, and the limited availability of good speakers, has made it impractical to try and pursue a single theme, but the experiment has been tried lately of maintaining a constant theme for at least two meetings.

One such theme was, rather naturally, Humanism. At the May meeting Mr. Jack Taylor very ably, and at extremely short notice, discussed "Objections to Humanism", and this was followed in June by Prof. Feigl's talk on "Scientific Humanism". Prof. Feigl, of the University of Minnesota, is a philosopher, and a member of the American Humanist Association, and his talk was a stimulating experience.

Another theme was Law and Justice, which was opened in March by Mr. A. Blackshield's lucid historical survey of "Changing Concepts of Justice", and followed in April by Mr. Gordon Hawkins' discussion, from a legal standpoint, of "Problems of Homosexuality". Both these speakers are Lecturers at Sydney University Law School.

Two meetings discussed current events overseas, the first being in November, when Miss Myra Roper M.A., and Miss Muriel Crabtree M.Sc. spoke on "China Now", after recent visits to that country; while in February Col. A. W. Sheppard, in "Germany 1964" gave his impressions of current trends there.

The other three meetings discussed various aspects of Australian life. In August, "Woman's Changing Role" was the topic for a panel of three women, Mrs. Thelma Hunter, Dept. of Government, S.U.; Mrs. Madge Dawson, Dept. of Tutorial Classes, S.U.; and Mrs. Carolyn Bernstein, Journalist; and one man, the Regional Director of Labour and National Services in N.S.W. In September, Dr. K. S. Inglis, School of General Studies A.N.U., in his talk "Religious Behaviour in Australia" gave a scholarly account of the past and present character of Christianity in Australia. And in October, Mr. Owen Harries, Dept. of Tutorial Classes, S.U., spoke on "The Politics of Peace".

The attendance at Public Meetings has been consistently good, at 150 to 200. It has been noticeable that a variety of subjects makes for a variety of non-members who are interested enough to attend; and in this way we are able to make contact with a larger public than if our meetings were narrower in their subject-matter.

In September a Special General Meeting of members was held to make the necessary amendments to the Constitution concerning the purchase of Humanist House. This meeting also received and adopted the Report of the Sub-committee on Marriage and Funeral Services.

Humanist House. The acquisition of our own house was last year's major advance. Its renovation during the year has been impeded by delays in gaining the necessary permission for the structural changes in the ground-floor section, but most of the other work is complete, some by contract and some by the voluntary labour of a group of younger members. We have of course been using the ground floor throughout the year for Committee and Sub-committee meetings, and the house has had a caretaker tenant for the last couple of months. When the renovation and furnishing is



completed, the ground-floor will also house our library, and it is my hope that we may institute regular Library Evenings, when members could meet informally to borrow, exchange and discuss books.

Sub-committees. Those still active include those on Sex, Marriage and Divorce, and on Education, while others have been convened this year on Ethics and on Sex Education. Arising from the latter, a special Sub-committee has produced the Report on Venereal Disease which is presented tonight. A Medical Group has had its first few meetings, and an 18-30+ Age Group is in its formative stages.

Suburban Groups provide opportunity for contact for members unable to reach the city easily, and for group discussion and the introduction of new members. Present Groups are Turramurra-St. Ives, Kirribilli-Chatswood, Ryde-Parramatta, Hurstville-Strathfield, Eastern Suburbs, Balgowlah-Manly, and Wyong. The Kirribilli-Chatswood Group has had several guest speakers, and in June arranged a Public Meeting at which Mr. Alex Carey addressed about 40 people on "Humanism".

"Viewpoints" continues to appear monthly, and we are indebted again to Dr. Woolnough and Mrs. Weeks and the editorial committee; but there is still a shortage of contributed articles.

The Children's Club has become an important activity of the Society, and its success is a tribute to the enthusiasm, skill and hard work of the members of the Education Sub-committee. About 50 children are members of the club. This year an Adolescents' Club, with an attendance to date of 15-25, has been started, and is largely self-governing. There is clearly a great need for these Youth activities, and I would appeal to anyone who has experience or interest in this sort of work to lend such help as he is able: new members will be welcomed on the Education Sub-committee.

The fact that the W.E.A. chose Humanism as the theme for its Summer School is a reflection of the impact that Humanist ideas have made in the last few years. Four members of this Society were among the speakers: Mr. J. Taylor, Mr. J. Thorburn, Mrs. Gilling, and Miss Granger. And as Acting-chairman I was invited to speak at the W.E.A. Easter School, the theme of which was Alex Comfort's book "Sex in Society".

During the year the Society gained a good deal of publicity, and incidentally an influx of new members, with the controversy over the new Syllabus for Religious Education in Primary Schools, which was released on August 12 and provoked much discussion. Our Chairman, Dr. Hirshman, called it "a giant stride in the right direction", and debated it with Rev. Alan Walker on television (Four Corners). This Syllabus was withdrawn on August 28 after the Premier had paid a visit to Dr. Gough at Bishops-court; thereupon a Sub-committee of this Society was convened to draft a further submission to the Minister for Education.

When the amended Syllabus was issued in December it appeared that many of our arguments had been conceded, although some of its features were not what Humanists might wish. But the improvement over the original 1959 Syllabus was still so great that as Acting-Chairman of the Society I made a press statement that it was a "reasonable compromise".

Conferences. During the year the Society has been represented at a number of conferences. We sent observers to the meeting of sponsors before the Peace Congress in October, and delegates to the National Television Congress in March; to the W.E.A. Annual Conference; to the National Education Conference in Canberra in June; and to the Conference on Aboriginal Education in N.S.W. which was arranged in May by the Consultative Committee on Aboriginal Education and the Dept. of Adult Education, S.U. The Society is now affiliated with the Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs.

Federal Council. Preliminary moves are being made to form some kind of Federal Council of Australian Humanist Societies, and we are sending four delegates to a meeting in Melbourne on August 14-15 with representatives from Canberra, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia.

It remains only for me to thank all those who have contributed through the year to the functioning of this Society, and although it is impossible to mention everyone by name, I must pay special tribute to a few individuals. To Mrs. Weeks, our secretary, for the vast amount of work she does for the Society: she remains, I believe, our only indispensable member. To her husband, who assists her, and who has been



quietly doing a great deal of work on Humanist House; as has Dr. Jim Woolnough; and Mr. Mick Inder, who has negotiated on our behalf with architects and City Council and will be undertaking the major alteration on the ground floor. To Mr. Bob Chalmers and Miss Berenice Granger for their work in arranging speakers for our meetings. To Mr. Colin Marks, upon whom we rely for so much legal advice, and who has this year made two television appearances on our behalf. To Mr. Alex Carey and Mr. Jack Taylor, to whom we so often turn when we need speakers. To the Treasurer, Mrs. England, and to our honorary auditor, Mr. R. Taylor. To Mr. W. Meldrum for producing and distributing our monthly posters. And finally, to our Chairman, Dr. John Hirshman, who is now with W.H.O. in the Philippines, and whose absence is keenly felt: 90 members attended his farewell dinner in October, at which we expressed our appreciation of his unique role in the Society.

I. S. EDWARDS, Acting Chairman.

# NEW SOUTH WALES HUMANIST SOCIETY

## STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30th JUNE, 1965

<u>Receipts</u>		<u>Payments</u>	
Funds on hand 1st July, 1964		Advertising	£81.13. 7
Bank	£276. 4. 7	Audit fees	7. 7. 0
Petty Cash	1. 3. 6	Donations & affiliation fees	16. 2. 0
Bank Interest received	22.11. 7	Electricity and gas	4.11. 9
Donations:-		Farewell expenses - Dr.	
Bihar project	£73. 0. 0	Hirshman	£78. 0. 0
Building fund	2277. 0. 0	Less Donations	66. 0. 0
Sundry	797. 5. 0		12. 0. 0
Members' Subscriptions	530. 0. 0	Hire of halls	92.10. 0
Rent received	17.10. 0	Insurance	3.13. 4
Sale of literature	67. 7. 4	Literature	16. 8. 9
		Meeting Expenses	33.15. 6
		Petty Cash Disbursements	27. 2. 0
		Postages	31. 6. 7
		Printing & Stationery	218. 6. 2
		Rates	26. 6. 5
		Repairs & Renovations to	
		194 Crown Street	310. 1. 6
		Repayment of Loans	2140. 0. 0
		Stamp duty & conveyancing	
		costs - 194 Crown St.	47.19. 7
		Sundry disbursements	8.19. 0
		Tape recordings	9.10. 0
		Telephone	52.13. 5
		Typing fees	24.16. 0
		Youth group	26. 9. 0
		Total payments	3191.11. 7
		Funds on hand 30th June 1965	
		Bank	£869. 6.11
		Petty Cash	1. 3. 6
			870.10. 5
	£4062. 2. 0		£4062. 2. 0

## HONORARY AUDITOR'S REPORT.

I have examined the records of the New South Wales Humanist Society for the year ended 30th June, 1965, and in my opinion the above statement shows a true and correct summary of the cash receipts and payments of the Society for that year.

R. S. TAYLOR

Chartered Accountant.

Registered under the Public Accountants' Registration Act, 1945 as amended.

26th July, 1965.