

of what Mr Greet said, I will only say that far from withdrawing his support, the Anglican Bishop of Hereford, who volunteered to become a Patron at this meeting, has remained an increasing source of strength and encouragement to us in the months since. 'No official support from the Churches, or among our own people'. What nonsense! The great majority of the support for the Campaign has come from the Churches, officially or otherwise.

Giving Mr Kenneth Adam 'a public scrubbing in Trafalgar Square' would not be my solution to the present difficulties, and I, at no time, said these words. Neither have I expressed concern about the War Game being shown to M.P's. – it strikes me as a very good idea.

This business of the pathologically obscene letters really is incredible! I receive obscene letters – and phone calls – and threats of physical violence. But I don't start talking about lunatic fringes, or attribute them to members of TRACK, or COSMO, or any of the other groups who may align themselves against us. I have made a number of attempts to check whether the writers of these letters are bona fide members of the campaign, but I have been refused these facilities, and I understand the difficulties in situations of this kind. But just because such accusations are by their very nature difficult to refute, surely good sense, not to mention Christian charity, would have been better served by putting them straight into the fire. When people have to go to lengths such as this to smear the Campaign, then their motives, and the whole basis of their antagonism, becomes suspect.

I am intrigued by the suggestion that 'hell hath no fury like a woman scorned'. Really Mr Shaw! – are you as short of ammunition as that? And this 'unreasoning hatred' I am supposed to have for the B.B.C. How wide of the mark!

It is because we have so high a regard for the Corporation, so much gratitude for what it has done for the country, in the past, and for those people within the Corporation who have made it, in many respects the finest broad-

casting service in the world, that we are so disturbed by the influence now being exerted by a few people whose thinking is so inturbed and small.

We are not interested in censorship. Mr Shaw says that TRACK is interested in freedom and responsibility. So are we. I wonder therefore, why Mr Shaw, attacks us so bitterly? Could it be that we have a different concept of freedom? To our mind this is not the same as licence. We are for the responsibility which includes in its thinking a constant awareness of those who view and listen, which remembers that the essence of television is that it is home shown, and which realises the necessity of articulating a philosophy for television commensurate with it power.

MARY WHITEHOUSE

Roy Shaw comments

I will be brief. I am grateful for Mrs Whitehouse's figures, but to speak of 'a hundred thousand individual and block memberships' gives an impression of greater support than the facts warrant. Only 2,500 of these are individual members, and the rest accounted for by the membership of affiliated bodies – such as the Free Church of Scotland.

On the question of MRA finance and general support, I completely accept Mrs Whitehouse's assurances, and will refrain from any suggestion of an MRA conspiracy. Will Mrs Whitehouse reciprocate by ceasing to allege, with no evidence at all, sinister conspiracies in the B.B.C.?

No hatred of the B.B.C.? Readers can look again (in my article) at Mrs Whitehouse's statements about the Corporation *and* at the terms of her Manifesto, and judge for themselves.

Censorship or responsibility? I *do* know about the difference between liberty and licence, and invoked it in criticising Mrs Fox. I am glad Mrs Whitehouse repudiates the word 'censorship', but if she is not simply stealing liberal clothing, she should stop calling for Government intervention in television administration and programming.

2. Bernardine Bishop and Hilda Graef.

Hilda Graef's review of *Simone Weil: A Sketch for a Portrait* by Richard Rees¹ does Simone Weil a number of injustices. It seems a pity that the book should have been reviewed by

¹July 1966.

someone with so little sympathy for this admittedly 'odd' woman – by which I don't mean that reviewers should necessarily like their subjects, but it helps if they understand

them. The fact that Hilda Graef deplors the current 'craze for craziness' from which she thinks Simone Weil's reputation has benefitted suggests that she hasn't herself been crazy enough to acquaint herself much with Simone Weil's writings, a supposition born out by her review.

Simone Weil is referred to as an agnostic. It is stated that she speaks about God without believing in him and that she was not a Christian. She did not believe in an afterlife. She had 'a truly morbid love of suffering for its own sake'. Simone Weil is already difficult enough to understand, both as a person and as a thinker, and wilful or mick-taking oversimplification seem particularly out of place. All these false allegations spring from one misunderstanding. Central to Simone Weil's life and thought was a fear of comforting illusions, the 'imaginary compensations' which she felt were always ready to rush in and fill up the 'void' that God uses suffering to hollow out in the human soul in order to fill it up with grace. She was agnostic not in the sense that she doubted the existence of God but that she admitted to knowing nothing about him. It was not that she disbelieved in an afterlife but that she personally found it more helpful to discount the possibility, as any finite interpretation of the infinite would be more misleading than nothing. She wanted to serve without hope of reward. She didn't hesitate to call herself a Christian and only abstained from Baptism in the fear that the fact of having been received into the true fold would give her a warm glow of gregarious emotion. Also, perhaps, her not being Baptised reflects the feelings that generated her social outlook – her consistent sympathy and identification with the underdog made her unable to accept anything that smacked to her of privilege.

Her long letter to Fr Perrin, O.P., shows that

she understood herself well. Sentimentality, gregariousness, warm emotion were dangerous for her, for like many ascetics she had a very passionate nature. Her 'love of suffering for its own sake' was in fact a fear of ceasing to stand at the foot of the Cross – morbid perhaps in its intensity, misguided often in its expression, extremist, fanatical, neurotic, pontifical. Hilda Graef uses the word suicide in connexion with her death; Richard Rees himself says rather mysteriously that she died for the good of her soul. It would be truer, surely, to say that she died because she lived at a pitch of intensity that can't be maintained for very long. It was her morbid addiction to the Cross of Christ that really killed her. So she misunderstood. But the misunderstandings of her short and painful life contain a lesson, though couched perhaps in the form of neurotic overcompensation, for an age when comfort must be achieved at all costs and suffering is regarded as an obscene intrusion.

BERNARDINE BISHOP

Hilda Graef comments

I was interested to read Mrs Bishop's letter. As my review of Richard Rees' book on Simone Weil is not available to me at the moment, since I am on holiday, I can only deal with her criticism quite briefly.

As Mrs Bishop also uses terms such as 'neurotic', 'extremist' and 'fanatical' of Simone Weil, her views are perhaps not quite so far removed from mine as she thinks. But I have stressed the negative rather than the positive sides of Simone Weil's character quite deliberately, for I think she is very much over-rated and it is time somebody pointed out her failings.

I also must ask Mrs Bishop to allow a reviewer to express his or her opinions without accusing her of being insufficiently acquainted with her subject.