the PIONEER

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The Pioneer (bi-monthly) is now part of the recommended reading for the Spiritualists' National Union's education courses.

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Special thanks to Leslie Price and Charles Coulston for their work in sub-editing this issue

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National Federation to National Union

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Details of the Spiritualists' National Federation gaining legal status and becoming the Spiritualists' National Union, and the adding of our declaration of principles, are somewhat sketchy and contradictory. The transition was rather complicated and took over five years from when Thomas Todd first broached the matter at the 1896 Federation Conference until the Federation was wound up and its affairs handed over to the Union at the 1902 Federation Conference. Below is a summary of the events that took place to gain legal status.

The Seventh Annual Conference of the Spiritualists' National Federation was held at Daulby Hall, Liverpool under the presidency of Mr A. J. Smyth (Birmingham) on Saturday and Sunday, July 4th & 5th 1896. At this Conference two important proposals were down for consideration, notably the suggestion from Clitheroe "of a Board of Examination for speakers." Please see Pioneer, Vol. 2, No. 4, July 2015: "Early S.N.U Education History".

The second proposal, from Thomas Olman Todd (Sunderland), President of the 1896 Lyceum Union Conference, was for legal status. Smyth in his Presidential speech stated:



A. J. Smyth
Federation President 1896

> The Federation is called upon to remedy these things, but at present it is little more than a propagandist body, and is not educational, benevolent, protective, or legislative. It certainly has been empowered by a special resolution to inquire into and consider the question of "Legal Status," and that is all it has done in accepting Mr. Todd's offer to publish his "Appeal," not necessarily endorsing that scheme. For myself, while strongly in favour of obtaining a legal standing, and feeling indebted to Mr. Todd for his generous efforts, I cannot unreservedly accept his proposals, but still think they are entitled to a full and fair discussion. Judging from the refusal of the Local Government Board to register the London Spiritualist Alliance as a company, and of the Home Secretary to receive a deputation in defence of mediums, as well as the hostile attitude of the law, Spiritualists as a body will be confronted with tremendous opposition when they make their first claim for legal and religious equality.

Todd at his own expense had prepared a draft copy[1] stating at the Conference under the section "Open Council":


Thomas Olman Todd

> … the question was not one to be decided in a few minutes, as it affected the future life and welfare of the movement. The declaration had been criticised by various people; but he was only taking up what had been left undone in the past. That was why he had stepped in, and it did not matter to him personally whether it was taken up by them or not. They wanted laws for the government of societies and the movement, just as they had laws which governed the universe. They had laws for the protection of the people, and they wanted laws passing for the protection of Spiritualist societies. A charge of autocratic authority was laid against the proposition, but it was in reality true democracy. We have been looking upon the question in a wrong light. It is one of morality, to prevent, if possible, persons of low moral character stepping upon their public platforms. We have the right to ask offenders to step down. With regard to trustees, their liability was one of honour, not legality, and they cannot build property with Spiritualists' money, for the latter are not legally entitled to hold property. The draft he had prepared was simply to let them know what they were doing, and might act as a guide. The poll deed would give them the key to the situation, and would not take it away. He did not ask that the question should be settled that day, but proposed that a committee of inquiry be appointed or sanctioned.

At the following Annual Conference held at the Blackburn Society under the presidency of Joseph Armitage (Batley Carr) on July 4th & 5th, every Society had been sent a copy of Todd's proposed Deed Poll; the response was mixed. Below is a quote from the Conference published in the "Two Worlds", July 9th 1897, pages 455-457:

[1] That a Committee of persons be this day appointed by this National Spiritualists' Federation Conference, which committee, together with the President, Secretary, and Treasurer of this Federation for the time being, shall be vested with the following powers: 1. To prepare a Deed containing (*a*) A declaration of the principles of the Spiritualist movement; (*b*) Definition of membership and privileges; (*c*) Definition of a society and its powers, including the election of trustees and successors; (*d*) Definition of a District Council and its composition and powers; (*e*) Definition of Auxiliaries, their acceptance and status; (*f*) Definition of Annual Legislative Conference, its composition, powers, and officers; (*g*) The Status of Legal Signatories and their powers, either conserved or delegated to Conference, and the method of electing successors; (*h*) The necessary clauses for legally securing property and dealing with same. All rights and privileges of members and societies to be left intact, so far as possibly may be done without infringing on the powers necessary to hold property for the general body. 2. To seek such legal advice and assistance as may be deemed necessary. 3. To raise and disburse funds for the furtherance of the powers hereby delegated to this Committee. 4. To elect its own officers; to elect successors; to add to its numbers. 5. To report at the next Annual Conference of the National Spiritualists' Federation, or at any intermediate Conference of either Spiritualists or Federation, which may be convened for that purpose.

AFTERNOON.

Mr. T. O. Todd, in submitting the Deed Poll, said it was not as a personal fad, but as a remedy for an existing state of things, and had been framed to secure the largest possible liberty for all.

Moved by Mr. Todd and seconded by Mr. Kitson:—"That the Deed Poll submitted by the Executive of this Federation be, and is hereby, adopted so far as regards the general principles contained therein, save that the references to associate membership shall be eliminated therefrom, and that on the adoption of this proposition, the Conference do consider the Deed *seriatum*."

Mr. Kitson seconded the proposal. Mr. Johnson objected to giving power *for life* to 50 individuals to govern us. He felt that such a Deed would much interfere with our rights, but was in favour of *some way* being found to hold property legally. Mr. Proctor (Barrow. in-Furness) thought the Cause ought to be organised, and the time had come to endeavour to get Legal Status. Mr. J. B. Tetlow said look at your balance sheets to find if the associates are of use to the Federation.

Mr. E. W. Wallis objected to voting to accept the general principles of the Deed without it having been thoroughly discussed clause by clause and voted upon, and proposed as an amendment:—

"That the copy of Deed Poll be referred back to the Committee with instructions to them to make all inquiries necessary as to whether the required Legal Status cannot be gained in any other more simple yet effective manner, such as a Limited Liability Co., a Friendly Society, or as an Educational Effort, failing any satisfactory result from those inquiries, that the Committee be instructed to carefully eliminate from the Deed Poll all that would savour of government except what is strictly essential to secure the Legal Status so much desired."

Mrs. Porter, Patricroft, seconded the amendment, and Mr. Brookhouse, of Longton, did not think the time had arrived for such a Deed, and supported the amendment.

Mr. J. Lamont desired to give all due credit to Mr. T. O. Todd for, his labour, loyalty, and earnestness, but most Spiritualists were such in virtue of their love of liberty and he feared the Deed, as at present drafted, would divide us up into various sections. We have taken a lot of trouble to strike off the fetters, and, being free, we should maintain that freedom and unite for *work.*

Mr. G. H. Bibbings supported the amendment, as also did Mr. J. J. Morse, who claimed that he had always advocated organisation for business purposes. Ours is no common movement; it did not originate with the people of this world, but was directed from the other side. He felt that the Deed Poll had not been sufficiently digested, and we must go carefully, and make it perfectly clear, whether we are to alter the character of the Federation into a *legislative* instead of a working body.

Mr. Kilby (Southport) made a racy speech. Mr. P. Lee and Mr. S. S. Chiswell thought that something might be devised to meet the case. Like others they had suffered and had come out, and felt disinclined to put themselves under any kind of autocratic control.

Mr. Todd made an able reply, and said if anyone could show him a better way to secure the desired end he would adopt it.

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Below is from James J. Morse's "Spiritual Review", which he founded and edited in April 1900. The monthly publication continued until circa May 1902. The quotes show the sequence of events the Federation took to achieve legal status:

November issue, 1900:


James J. Morse

The Poll Deed of the S.N.F.

THE Executive of the Spiritualists' National Federation are still carefully considering the Draft of the Deed for that body. The solicitors engaged have completed their draft, and after it has again been considered by the Executive, copies will be distributed for consideration by the movement at large. We are in receipt of the Draft, but it would be manifestly improper for us to deal with it yet, nor until the Executive have settled their own revisions thereto. This reference is made merely to advise the movement that no time is being lost, and that all the very needful care is being taken in the premises. Ultimately the Executive will call an interim Conference of the Federation, and when such is held it is anticipated that the deed will be finally ratified, and that thereafter the needful steps *towards legal incorporation will be taken immediately*.

December issue, 1900:

Injudicious Economy.

BUT there is one thing at least that may be mentioned, and that is that injudicious economy is usually disastrous. The National Federation is approaching a legal status, slowly, but surely. When that is reached the Secretarial duties will be enormously increased, and then the appointment of a permanent and adequately paid Secretary will become an imperative necessity. While a permanent Home for the organisation will be an equally pressing necessity. The "Britten Memorial" meets the latter case nicely, and no doubt, when there is a national body on a Legal basis to accept that Memorial, the funds for its creation will flow in much more rapidly than has hitherto been the case. If Spiritualism is to become a powerful cause in this country, Spiritualists must not only maintain their present generous financial support, but they must be prepared to increase it, for the next few years at least.

January issue, 1901:

The Nationalization of the Movement.

The Executive of the Spiritualist's National Federation have at last settled the Draft of the long-looked-for "Deed Poll," which, by the time this is in our readers' hands, will have been sent to all Societies in the Federation, and all Associate members of that body. The Federation will hold a special *interim* Conference on the last Sunday of next month, in the Spiritual Church, Blackpool, when the Delegates from the Federated societies, and the Associates, will meet to finally consider and pass upon the Deed in question. The history of the Deed is interesting from the fact that it has virtually passed through four stages; first, what is known as the "Blackburn draft," prepared by Mr. Todd; secondly the "Wallis-Morse draft," prepared by those gentlemen; thirdly a sub-draft prepared in Manchester under the direction and suggestions of Mr. Todd, and lastly the present draft, the outcome of 'legal advice and direction, and which utilizes as far as possible the various ideas expressed in the three preceding efforts. It is a most important matter, and one requiring care and skill in dealing with. When passed by the National conference, and if subsequently registered as a Legal Document, there will have been inaugurated a tremendous change in the status of all Federated societies, private members, and public work and workers included within the area of the operations of what will then be the representative National organisation.

Long Looked for.

FOR upwards of twenty-five years the Editor of the REVIEW has, by tongue and pen, constantly urged the national organisation of the movement, not the creedalization of Spiritualism, which is a totally different matter. Among the things desired was, that societies could be put on a firm basis, that our finances and property might be secured against the machinations of the designing, or the obstinacy of the opponents of progress within our own ranks, and that some healthy supervision should be exercised concerning those who may desire to represent us on our platform. It is somewhat pleasing to find that our quarter of a century's labours are likely to bear fruit, and it is an additional pleasure to be still on earth to see their consummations realized. It is also satisfactory to see the new comers, our young workers, are equally desirous of helping on the result that is now almost in sight. And if they will bring judgment to their zeal, when attending the conference at Blackpool, their counsels will be valuable, as representing what the new spirit is that they tell us is abroad in our midst?

February issue, 1901:

The S.N.F. and its Deed

The Spiritualists' National Federation will meet in the Spiritual Church, Blackpool, on the 23rd, of the present month to consider, and if accepted, to adopt, the deed to legalise that body. It has been carefully drafted by an able solicitor, and as far as it goes is a workable document. It will create a representative trust, and aims at providing a representative body to which the movement can refer in times of need. It is simply a business document, involving no declaration of Faith, save that which is expressed in the term that it is a body of Spiritualists. It does not seek to establish another sect, nor demand assent to any creed or dogma. Whether it will be accepted remains to be seen. Give it a fair and full consideration, and let the result be based upon that, and the rest can be decided at the conference itself.

The REVIEW neither endorses nor condemns it.

March issue, 1901:

At Last.

After a little over three years and a half, the Conference of the Spiritualists' National Federation has accepted the draft of a new Constitution, and upon the Registration of the same the above body will become the 'Spiritualists' National Union.' The Conference assembled, as an interim gathering at Blackpool, on the last Saturday and Sunday of the past month, and after a painstaking discussion of all the points involved, unanimously accepted the Constitution with the amendments made during the discussion at the above meetings. When duly registered, the movement will have a National body duly constituted according to the Law as applicable to the cause. The event referred to occurred too near the date of the publication of the REVIEW to enable us to more than simply record the facts as stated above.

April issue, 1901:

Federation cum *Union*.

As briefly mentioned in the March REVIEW the National Federation held its interim Conference in the Spiritual Church, Blackpool, on the last Saturday of February. The able legal adviser of the body, Mr. Tallent-Bateman, was speedily able to scatter the dust that had been industriously stirred up to obscure the real issues involved. While the calm deliberation of the delegates soon enabled them to realise that what the Executive had to present was not quite what some authorities had witting, or unwittingly, led them to expect. One objection that was frequently urged was that it was a species of degradation to the cause for the National body to seek incorporation under the Companies Acts, though those responsible for that cry forgot that there are already four companies existing in the movement. The hall and buildings of the Barrow-Furness society, one of the most successful undertakings in the movement, is one. Then comes the *Two Worlds* Printing and Publishing Co., Limited, a purely business corporation trading in the movement, incorporated under the commercial sections of the Acts in question. The other two bodies being, first that exceedingly prosperous and high class organisation, the London Spiritualist Alliance, Limited, and the second the Manchester Spiritualists' Alliance, Limited, each being incorporated under the non-trading sections of the Companies Acts. Companies "not formed for profit and limited by guarantee," under which sections the Federation is seeking incorporation.

Another point.

Another point was, whether or not there should be a declaration of principles? This was settled by Mr. Wm. Johnson, on behalf of the Executive, presenting a simple summary of the opinions held generally by Spiritualists, which summary was adopted. A variety of amendments to the draft were presented, some of which were accepted and incorporated in the document. A more precise definition of the fact of Spirit return was desired, but the solicitor showed certain legal difficulties in the way. As a Spiritualist body must accept Spirit return to be a body of Spiritualists as in the sense of the term in common usage, there need be no cavilling on the matter. After discussing the draft for three sessions the amendments were added to it, and the Delegates and Associates accepted it in its amended form. The next step now is for it to be sent to the authorities for registration. Acting on the suggestion of the solicitor, however, it was decided to change

the name of the body from Federation to Union, which, therefore, will be the name of the National organisation, if the deed is registered.

A Constitution not a Deed Poll.

It will be as well here to make it clear that the document referred to above is not a Deed Poll, but simply a constitution, for the national organisation. No society or person that is not associated with the body can be in any way interfered with. And only when cause arises can the Union exert any of its powers, while even in such cases the ultimate court of appeal is the Annual Conference itself. So non-interference outside, and democratic government inside, is the rule in all matters. The matter has been before the movement for a considerable time, none too long, considering the importance of the various interests concerned. It was the topic of debate at the Blackburn conference in 1897, and thereat a resolution, moved by Mr. E. W. Wallis, then of Manchester and now of London, seconded by Mrs. Porter, of Patricroft, was adopted, instructing the Federation executive to procure incorporation either under the Companies Acts or under the Friendly Societies Acts, or in any other way that might be found expedient, points that were not within the knowledge of some of the critics of the action of the Executive. It is just as well to state these points, merely as a matter of history. Until the document is registered, and so made effective, we reserve any further references to a matter fraught with much importance to the national body and the cause.[2]

December issue, 1901:

A Happy Consummation.

After many months of anxious consideration and conscientious labour by all concerned the Spiritualists National Federation has achieved a Legal status. The body was duly Registered as 'The Spiritualists' National Union,' on October 22nd, and the invaluable services of the Solicitor, Mr. J. T. Tallent-Bateman, greatly assisted the result recorded above. The Law expenses were naturally heavy, reaching almost £100, but for the generous treatment of the gentlemen mentioned they would have considerably exceeded that amount. In due course the Federation will be 'wound up' and its affairs handed over to the new body. As a means of aiding the body to increase its funds, and to assist in liquidating the legal expenses, it has been decided upon the initiative of Mr. Wm. Johnson, President elect of the 1902 Conference, to start a Ten Thousands Shilling Fund, and contributions can be sent to the Secretary of the Federation, Mr. W. Harrison, 42, Hilary Street, Burnley. Will the readers of the REVIEW note the fact, and send their shillings to the secretary, and so bear some small share in the work of establishing a national and representative body for Great Britain?

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[2] April issue 1901 paper report: - THE NATIONAL FEDERATION.—After many years of vigorous discussion, says the "London Daily Chronicle," of the 18th ulto., the growing body of Spiritualists in this country have at last resolved to secure a legal status. The leaders have been in conference at Blackpool for two days, and they debated whether they should apply for a Royal charter, register under the Companies Acts, or appoint trustees after the manner of the Wesleyan community. Eventually, it was decided to incorporate under the Companies Acts, the denomination to be henceforth styled "The Spiritualists' Union," while a declaration of principles was also settled.

Up until now we could only speculate as to when the declaration of principles was added and by whom, as there is little information given. We now know this was done at the National Federation interim Conference at Blackpool on February 23rd 1901 and William Johnson, on behalf of the Executive, presented a simple summary of the opinions held generally by Spiritualists, which was adopted.

Emma Hardinge Britten, at the National Conference of British Spiritualists on July 6th 1890 (the following Conference in 1891 becoming the Spiritualists' National Federation), gave "a summary of religious faith". It can be noted that William Johnson does not mention Emma Hardinge Britten; Emma claimed her summary of religious faith was given by the spirits – "…the creed which is evolved from Spiritualism". A lengthy AGM report was published in "Light" on July 12th 1902, reporting on the transition from Federation to Union and publishing our Seven Principles, probably for the first time. This does not mention Emma; her name becomes associated later.

A contradiction also can be noted: "The body was duly Registered as 'The Spiritualists' National Union,' on October 22nd" but some other accounts state October 18th 1901.

For additional information see earlier issues of "Pioneer":

Volume 1, No. 1, August 2013: "The Formation of the Spiritualists' National Union"

Volume 1, No. 4, July 2014: "How many Principles made up Emma's "Creed of the Spirits"?"

Volume 2, No. 2, March 2015: "Were the S.N.U. Seven Principles changed?"



EILEEN GARRETT

1893-1970



William Frederick Neech was well-known in the 1950s for his Spiritualist writings. In the "Two Worlds", he ran a series titled "World's Greatest Psychic Stories". Number twelve in the series, published on October 25th 1958, was "The Queen of Spiritualism"; this is referring to Emma Hardinge Britten and an 1851 painting of her which hangs at the Britten Memorial Museum, Stansted. Reference to this can be seen in "Psypioneer", December 2010.

Neech also published two well-known Spiritualist books, "No Living Person Could Have Known", Spiritualist Press, London 1955, and "Death is Her Life", Spiritualist Press, London 1957.

Below, in his series, "World's Greatest Psychic Stories – 15", he tells the remarkable story of spirit communication with the medium, Eileen Garrett. This was published in the "Two Worlds", November 29th 1958, page 7.

"*If this seance does not prove survival, then nothing ever will*"

Medium solves air disaster mystery

EXPERTS AMAZED BY SEANCE EVIDENCE

EARLY IN THE MORNING OF SUNDAY, 5, 1930, A CUMBERSOME AND BEAUTIFUL GIANT OF THE SKIES, THE R101 AIRSHIP, CRASHED ON A HILL NEAR BEAUVAIS, FRANCE. FORTY-SIX OF THOSE ON BOARD WERE INCINERATED IN THE WORST TRAGEDY OF ITS KIND IN BRITISH AIR HISTORY. TWO DAYS LATER, THE "DEAD" CAPTAIN OF THAT AIRSHIP COMMUNICATED ONE OF THE MOST DETAILED AND IMPRESSIVE MESSAGES EVER TO BE RECEIVED FROM THE BEYOND.

He gave a mass of technical details regarding the cause of the crash which at least two experts admitted could only have come from him. It is one of the most remarkable and dramatic examples we have of a person supposedly dead conveying information that could not have been in the mind of any living person.

Like so many other important events in psychic history this classic case of Spiritualism was wholly unexpected and unheralded. In fact the "dead" airman's intrusion at a seance was at first resented! If the journalist who admits to this resentment had had his way and dismissed the intruder, he would have robbed the world of one of its most sensationally strange stories and deprived Spiritualism of a classic example of spirit communication.

But thanks to the spirit communicator's insistence, Ian Coster was able to add to his scoops the story of the airman who came back from the dead.

They hoped for Doyle

It all began when Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who had recently died, was "invited" to a seance. This famous Spiritualist, who had attended so many seances during his earthly life, was still expected to make the headlines by attending them in spirit form.

Coster, who had been commissioned to get articles for "Nash's Magazine," conceived the idea of getting in touch with Doyle.

On October 2, 1930, he called on Harry Price and outlined his idea. Price agreed to help in the attempt to contact the famous author. While Coster was with him he telephoned that great medium, Eileen Garrett, simply asking her to give the journalist a sitting. Doyle's name was not mentioned. An appointment was made for October 7 at 3 p.m., three months after Doyle's death.

Thus at the appointed time, four people, Price, Coster, the medium and Eileen Beenham, Price's secretary, met. Eileen Garrett was soon entranced.

Uvani, her guide, gave a message to Price from a German doctor and one to Coster from an elderly woman whose described appearance reminded him a little of his maternal grandmother. There was nothing at this stage to indicate the drama that was to come.

"Dead" captain speaks

But it was not long before the voice became more excited: "I see for the moment I-R-V-I-N-G or I-R-W-I-N. He says he must do something about it. He is not coming to you—does not belong to anyone—apologises for coming, for interfering . . .

"He says: 'Never mind about me, but do, for heaven's sake, give this to them . . . The Whole bulk of the dirigible was entirely and absolutely too much for her engine Capacity . . .'"

At this stage, Flight-Lieut. H. C. Irwin, captain of the ill-fated R101, controlled the medium. Speaking rapidly in staccato sentences, Irwin said:

"*Engines too heavy. It was this that made me on fire occasions have to scuttle back to safety. Useful lift too small. Gross lift computed badly—inform control panel. And this idea of new elevators totally mad. Elevator jammed. Oil pipe plugged . . .*"

The flow of technical details continued. Miss Beenham had difficulty in getting it all down.

A copy of "Nash's Magazine," in which Coster's account of the seance appeared, was shown to Walter Charlton, who was an officer at the Royal Airship works in Bedford during the R10l's construction. He asked Price for a copy of the Irwin statement.

Charlton and his colleagues decided this was "an astounding document," containing more than 40 references to highly technical and confidential details, and furnishing

impressive information—confirmed at an Air Ministry inquiry—about what occurred on the airship's ill-fated flight.

"It appeared very evident," Charlton declared, "to us in Cardington that for anyone present at the seance to have obtained information beforehand was grotesquely absurd." The only explanation that he, a technical expert, could give was that "Irwin did actually communicate with those present at the seance after his physical death."

Mrs. Garrett had no technical knowledge of airship construction and engines, but she rattled off terms such as "disposable lift," "starboard strakes," "cruising altitude," "tension on the fabric," "fuel injection," "bore capacity," as if she had been working on the airship. And this was before the start of the official inquiry into the loss.

Comments Coster: " 'Starboard strakes started,' was one of the alleged messages from Irwin. Apart from the fact that this is, on Charlton's expert opinion, very probably what happened, how did Mrs. Garrett know that 'strakes,' a nautical term, was used to mean the longitudinal plates forming the sides of an airship?

"The rest of us knew nothing about the subject, so any suggestion of telepathy is ruled out," adds, the journalist.

"Same with S.L.8—tell Eckener," was one message from Irwin. After Charlton had been through complete records of German airships he found that S.L. stood for Schutte Lanz, involved in another air disaster. Eckener was the constructor of the German Graf Zeppelin.

"*This exorbitant mixture of carbon and hydrogen is entirely wrong," was another comment. Charlton revealed that at the time of the R101 flight highly important technical experiments were contemplated at Cardington, with the idea of burning a mixture of hydrogen and oil fuel*.

Describing the tragic flight, Irwin said: "Fabric all waterlogged and ships nose is down. Impossible to rise. Cannot trim . . . two hours tried to rise, but elevator jammed. Almost scraped the roofs at Achy."



Cast-iron proofs

Achy, a small village between Amiens and Beauvais, is not marked on ordinary maps, but it was marked on the large scale flying map which Irwin had before him on the trip. At the inquiry a French air official stated that at Poix aerodrome, 16 miles north of Achy, the R101, only 300 feet from the ground, was struggling hard against the wind.

Flight-Lieut. William H. Wood, another expert, was so impressed with the evidence that he wrote: "If this seance does not prove survival, then nothing ever will. I consider the R101 case to be cast-iron."

"My particular interest in the seance," Wood told Coster, "was due to the fact that I was an airship pilot in the first world war and I knew Irwin personally. We had been brother officers at various airship stations and were both flying airships in the Eastern Mediterranean.

"I was able to appreciate the significance of all the technical terms used in his communication through Mrs. Garrett. I was also impressed by Price's statement that Irwin spoke very quickly and disjointedly and was extremely difficult to follow.

They were convinced

"In life Irwin was always rather difficult to understand owing to his peculiar manner of speech; his quick jerky delivery was very marked. I considered this evidence very important in establishing his identity."

Charlton and Wood compared notes several times. Both were convinced that no one but an airship pilot could possibly have given the information regarding the causes leading to the disaster—and then only if he had been in the airship at the time.

Referring to the seance, Miss Beenham wrote: " Mrs. Garrett appeared much agitated and distressed when the Irwin entity came through, and her speech was so rapid I had the greatest difficulty in getting it down, including the unfamiliar technical terms.

"I transcribed the notes directly after the conclusion of the seance, remarking, I remember, as I handed the typescript to Mr. Price, that I should not have been able to make head or tail of it had I not done it immediately. Even so, I felt I had only taken down a part of the whole and, maybe, much that was garbled and inaccurate."

Yet even so, it was sufficient to convince two experts — Charlton and Wood. Charlton in fact, was so impressed that he began a thorough investigation into psychic matters and is now a Spiritualist.

Could Mrs. Garrett have pretended to be in touch with the otherworld? Even the sceptical Coster did not think this was feasible. "Price chose her." he said, "because she was not a Spiritualist and did not become emotional, and because her name and integrity as a medium were unchallenged.

Challenge to sceptics

Could she, under a spell of self-hypnosis, have allowed her sub-conscious to well up? Possibly, but where did she get those technical terms? I agree with Price that thought – transference can be ruled out because nobody present had any knowledge of airships."

Try as they may, the sceptics cannot explain the facts away. None of their far-fetched theories will suffice. Flight.-Lieut. Wood's words hold good to this day: "If this seance does not prove survival, then nothing ever will."

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Editor's note:

Eileen Garrett was not a Spiritualist in the normal sense; an interesting point, given the remarkable content of the article. She maintained during her lifetime her firm belief that her spirit guides/controls (Uvani, Abdul Latif, Tahotah and Ramah) were different aspects of her deeper self. She was not convinced that her mediumship stemmed from separate, discarnate entities. For example, it can be noted in her 1943 book, "Awareness" (quoted from the 2007 reprint), page 133:

> I cannot explain or definitely understand them. I have never been able wholly to accept them as the spiritual dwellers on the threshold, which they seem to believe they are. I rather leaned away from accepting them as such, a fact which is known to them and troubles them not at all… My own lack of a true belief in the identity of these controls troubles me, but I have maintained an impartial, but respectful, attitude toward them.

For more information on Eileen Garrett, please see Psypioneer, Vol. 9, No. 9/10, October 2013: "Archetypes, fragments of our collective unconscious, or other: Re-examining Eileen Garrett's struggle with spirit guides – Maxine Meilleur" & Vol. 1, No. 10, February 2005: "Remembering Eileen J. Garrett – William V. Rauscher".

Harry Price was critical of Spiritualism. I have checked his version of the story, as published in his 1939 book, "Fifty Years of Psychical Research". His account does not vary from Neech's telling, stating: "It is inconceivable that Mrs. Garrett could have acquired the R101 information through normal channels and the case strongly supports the hypothesis of survival." The reference to Harry Price's secretary, Eileen Beenham, appears to be a slip of the pen and should read Ethel Beenham.

For more information on the case, see the book, "The Airmen Who Would Not Die", by John G. Fuller (1978). For new archival evidence, see the journal "Light" (2014-15).

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CHARLES I. QUASTEL

SNU President 1958-1965 & 1968-1970

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Quastel was outspoken, controversial and an ardent critic of the SNU Around 1934 he became the Hon. Secretary of Meersbrook Spiritualist Society and in 1945 he became President of the Society, a post he held until 1952.

Meersbrook Spiritualist Society was inaugurated on October 14th 1913 and affiliated to the Spiritualists' National Union. For their first nine years of meetings the venue is uncertain; on October 16th 1922, however, they moved to Regent Terrace, West Street, Sheffield. The premises were later sold and their new church, opened on Saturday, May 29th 1943, was located at 109 Whitham Road, Broomhill, Sheffield. On Saturday, February 15th 1988, Sheffield Heeley Woodseats Church amalgamated with Meersbrook and became known as Whitham Road Spiritualist Church, and remains so today.

Meersbrook Spiritualist Society in its earlier days had Christian overtones; this can be noted in Psypioneer, Vol. 7, No. 4, April 2011: "Emblems of the Seven Principles – Paul J. Gaunt", quoted below:



In 1927-1928 Arthur Conan Doyle tried to introduce an extra *Christian* principle into the S.N.U.'s Seven Principles. This lovely design by Mr. H. C. Honey in 1926, may well have been created in anticipation, but Doyle's attempt was rejected at the 1928 S.N.U., AGM (see last issue of "Pioneer").

We can note the additional principle of *The Christ Ideal* with other more subtle changes.

The pillars state:

"THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE." "TRY THE SPIRITS WHETHER THEY BE OF GOD." "LET THERE BE LIGHT." "PROVE ALL THINGS." "WHATSOEVER DOTH MAKE MANIFEST IS LIGHT." "UNDER ALL CIRCUMSTANCES KEEP AN EVEN MIND."

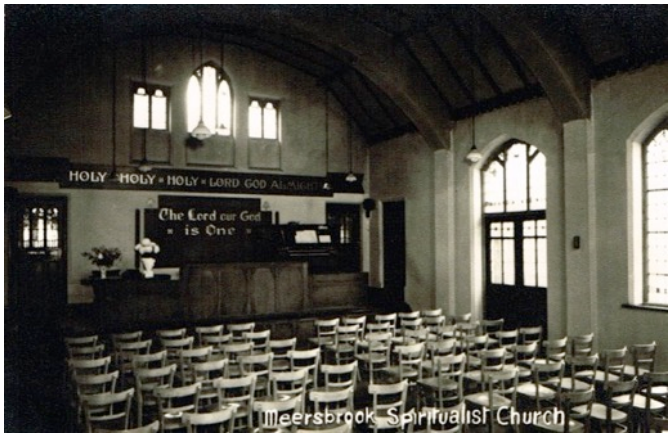
On the base is written:

Spiritualism is occupying the attention of the greatest minds in the world to-day Spiritualists claim that human survival can be demonstrated by present day evidence. They claim that they have held actual communication with those whom the world calls "dead" & that these live in the spiritual world and continue their lives in progressive form. As a result of communications with the spirit world most spiritualists have adopted the above affirmations.

The article continues:

> FROM time to time we have had requests on the part of Spiritualist churches for a set of "the principles of Spiritualism," suitable for framing and hanging over the platform or other suitable place. We have just had the opportunity of inspecting a very beautiful design which has been executed for the Meersbrook Spiritualist Church, Sheffield, by Mr. H. C. Honey.

During the early years of the Union there were variations on our Seven Principles. See Pioneer, Vol. 2, No. 2, March 2015: "Were the S.N.U. Seven Principles changed?"



Photograph of the Church's interior, taken in 1964, when Charles Quastel was its President.

In 1950 there was much controversy regarding Christian and Rational Spiritualism; Arthur Findlay's brother, John Galloway Findlay, was battling this out in the pages of the "Two Worlds", stating "the Greater World Beliefs are not the Beliefs on which the Spiritualist Movement has been Built." Christian Spiritualism was gaining in strength.

Below Quastel makes his views clear (taken from the "Two Worlds", March 4th 1950):

Merging with Christian Spiritualism

MEANS SINKING OF FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

By C. I. QUASTEL (*Yorkshire S.N.U. Publicity Officer*)

> JUST a few months ago this paper was filled with congratulatory messages from many of your readers on the fact that Spiritualists had closed their ranks and demanded and obtained the backing of the S.N.U. Council in regard to recognition of Spiritualist Churches by the Ministry as religious and charitable organisations.
>
> Our national rally had succeeded and at the October adjourned S.N.U. Conference I had the pleasure of saying that "a new era of confidence in the National Council had been inaugurated."
>
> Today, I am afraid!
>
> My fear is born of the knowledge that through the psychic press and elsewhere, a bold attempt is being made to broaden the platform of National Spiritualism by creating a 'coalition' organisation of Churches by uniting our National Churches with Christian Greater World Churches and by tolerating and, indeed, encouraging S.N.U. diploma and certificate holding mediums to work on Greater World platforms and vice-versa.

A Different Matter

It is my belief that this paper, through its Editor, is trying most sincerely to propagate Spiritualism wherever necessary, and therefore, most wisely has refused to close its columns to any shade of independent opinion.

Nevertheless, to actually advocate the merging of two distinctly separate organisations, by the sinking of the fundamental principles which are recognised as the birthright of the S.N.U. and the basis of the philosophy of Spiritualism, (at least, *our* Spiritualism!) and which *must* be propagated by S.N.U. speakers—if they are honourable in their profession—is a far different matter, which will eventually again unite all S.N.U. Churches in public condemnation.

Fundamental Difference

What is this fundamental principle in which we do and must always differ from our 'Greater World' friends?

Simply this—*they* say that God is 'Supreme Cause and Power of Life' and that Jesus 'Christ' is their sole supreme leader, by whom and through whom they can win their way to a happy eternal life.

We of the S.N.U. say that God is the Supreme Cause and Power of Life and that all evolved souls have *helped*, and do help us to find our way to a happy eternal life.

We believe that Jesus and other great Masters of past ages have simply lived their lives to the best of their abilities, just as we should, and must do, to further our own progressions.

Only S.N.U. Leadership

How impossible therefore, it is for preachers of the different organisations to share the same platform and profess agreement on this vital matter, which is of greater importance in world affairs, than psychic evidence of after-life.

It is as impossible as it would be for a member of a Conservative Club to be at the same time a member of a Socialist Club, although both in their different ways, are anxious to serve their country!

Should any readers accuse me of intolerance, may I repeat what I said at a National Conference some years ago. We welcome men and women of all shades of religious thought into our National Union Churches, in order that we might influence them and cause them to change their religious opinions but *we will not allow members of other religious groups to lead us or represent us*.

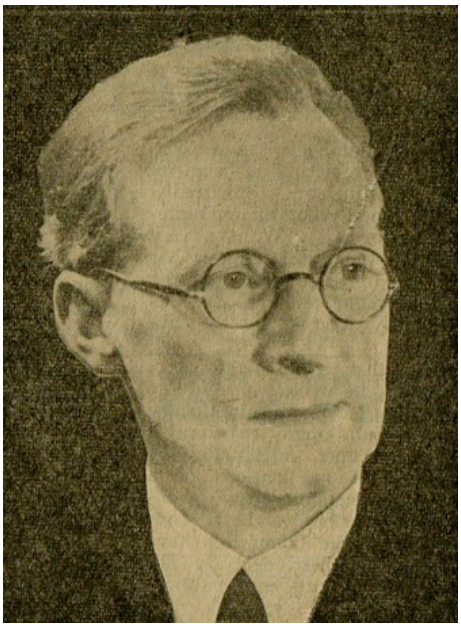
Perhaps, however, my fears are not justified. Perhaps the spate of letters and opinions expressed in your columns advocating closer active union between the two organisations have been inspired in the main by professional speakers and mediums who see in this suggested 'union' opportunities for more and bigger fees through the greater competition for their services!

Spirit Guidance

If Jesus is still actively concerned in the welfare of mankind he would be the first to tell us that he has got his work to do and we have ours, and regarding leadership, well, God is sufficient for me and if I find it impossible to understand His purpose there are ministering spirits who come to me, and to you, day by day, to help and advise us.

Sufficient unto our present days are our present leaders thereof! Finally, a word of advice to Christian Spiritualists, consider seriously which of the two organisations, by virtue of their separate philosophies, is best fitted to embrace *all* peoples of *all* countries, where God is worshipped, for that is *the* purpose of our work.

The following AGM, held at Gateshead on 1st and 2nd of July 1950, had on the second day of the Annual Conference a debate on "Christian v. Rational Spiritualism" – a lively start for the newly-elected President, Percy Wilson. Below is a quote of the report published in the "Two Worlds", July 15th 1950:



Lively S.N.U. Annual Conference

THE long expected battle, between those who favour the propagation of Christian Spiritualism from S.N.U. platforms, and those who wish to keep Spiritualism free from Christian dogmas, broke out at the Sunday morning session of the S.N.U. National Conference at Gateshead on July 2nd.

The conflict of opinion started immediately after Mr. Percy Wilson had read the following resolution which invited all shades of theological opinion to join the Union.

"That this Annual General Meeting of the Spiritualists' National Union *Reaffirms* that the Union stands for the freedom of the individual conscience in matters of religion and aims at uniting in federal union all those Spiritualist organisations and individual Spiritualists who can conscientiously subscribe to the Seven Principles:

"*Recognises* that spiritual values are to be found in all world religions that have been given to mankind by inspiration from the spirit world, including Confucianism, Buddhism, Judaism, and Islam, as well as in the Christian revelation which the Western World has made peculiarly its own;

"*Endorses* once again the policy unanimously adopted by Conference in 1929 on the recommendation of a special committee, which leaves each member of the Union free to seek for Truth wherever he may find it; and

"*Invites* Spiritualists and Spiritualist organisations of all shades of theological opinion to join the Union and so help to spread abroad the knowledge of the spiritual nature of man."

A Grave Danger

Mr. Thompson, who opposed this motion, pointed out how the first three paragraphs which introduced nothing fresh or original had been designed to provide a smoke screen for the last and positively dangerous paragraph,"

"The last paragraph," he said, "constitutes a grave danger to our Seven Principles. This paragraph invites Spiritualist organisations of *all shades of theological opinion* to join the Union.

"If you approve this resolution you authorise the inclusion of all shades of Christian Spiritualism in our Union.

A Contradiction

"How can you accept an organisation which holds to the belief of a Saviour, the virgin birth etc., and hold fast to the Seven Principles, particularly the principle of personal responsibility, which has always been the chief distinguishing characteristic between Christian Spiritualism and S.N.U. Spiritualism.

"If you accept this resolution, you will destroy true Spiritualism, and all that our pioneers established for us, under the guidance of the spirit people, and allow any crank to expound ridiculous nonsense from our rostrums,"

Seven Principles Only

After a long, tense and eager discussion among the delegates in which there were arguments both for and against, Mr. C. I. Quastel, moved an amendment, substituting the words "Spiritualists and Spiritualist organisations who subscribe to the Seven Principles" instead of "all shades of theological opinion," which was carried by a majority, and thus scored a victory for Rational Spiritualism.

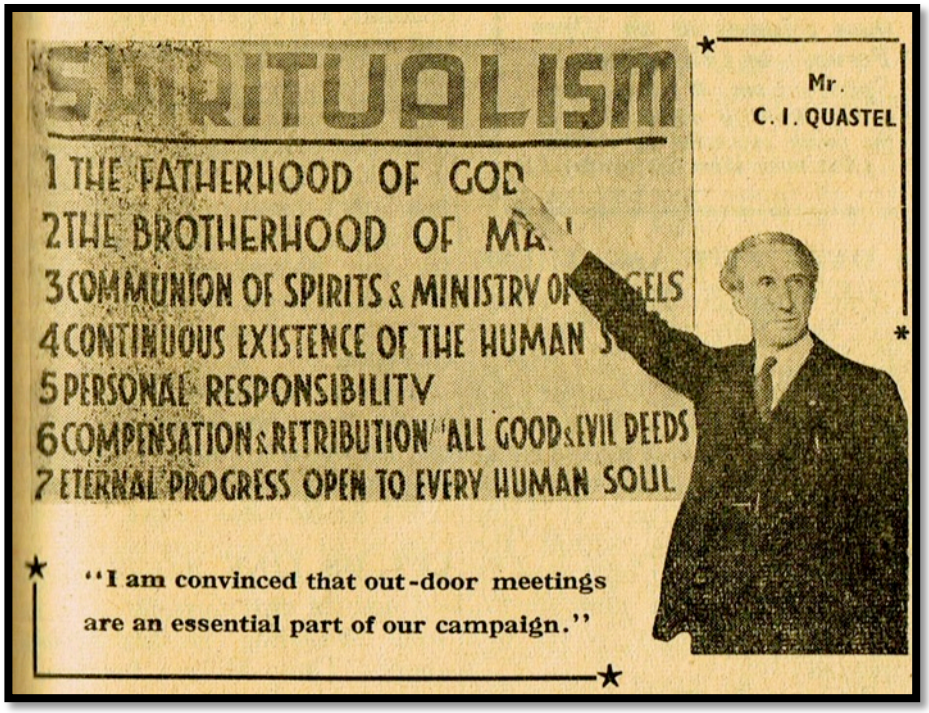
Council Advises Churches and Workers

Mr. Wilson's second resolution, which no doubt arose from the N. Lanes. District Council's decision to ban Christian Spiritualist exponents, and which called for non-interference by the Council in the question of engaging speakers, and with freedom of exponents in deciding which churches they shall serve, was also amended by the addition of the words "but advises S.N.U. Churches to engage the services of S.N.U. registered workers and diploma holders, and advises S.N.U. registered workers to give preference of service to S.N.U. churches," thus giving specific advice to churches and workers alike on this important question, which policy it is hoped, will be maintained by the Union, without fail, in future.

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In the last issue of "Pioneer" we noted the great success of Maurice Barbanell's propaganda work, concluding with his Hyde Park meetings in the 1930s. As reported below in the "Two Worlds", September 9th 1950, Charles Quastel, assisted by Mrs Moule (President of Hilsea Church) and by Mrs Godfrey, takes Spiritualism to the general public:

SOUTHSEA, PORTSMOUTH, WAS THE SCENE OF A REMARKABLE 'MANIFESTATION' ON A RECENT FRIDAY WHEN, ON THE PROMENADE—BUFFETED BY A HIGH WIND——OVER 300 PEOPLE, ALMOST ALL NON-SPIRITUALISTS, LISTENED TO A FORCEFUL AND CLEAR EXPOSITION OF THE TRUTHS OF HUMAN SURVIVAL.



"People, obviously on their various ways to find shelter from the inclemency of the weather, stopped, listened, and remained for over two hours in a solid mass round the raised figure of the principal speaker, Mr. C. I. Quastel. M.S.N.U. of Sheffield."

"By his side was a large banner, 9-ft. x 6-ft., on which, under the prominent heading 'SPIRTUALISM', were printed the" Seven Principles."

"This banner had been especially made Mr. Quastel, and it is his intention to use it on many future similar occasions.

Straight to the Point

"**From the outset, Mr. Quastel plunged into the purpose the meeting—to end the fear of death by the propagation of the Spiritualist's knowledge of the after-life**.

"He spoke of the growth of the organised Movement, and emphasised the need for moral courage in proclaiming and practising the Spiritualist way of life, in opposition to orthodox views."

"*A surprising and agreeable feature of the whole proceedings, was the fact that only one heckler attempted to interrupt the address—with a number of questions based upon an assumed biblical opposition to Spiritualism.*

"The questions were dealt with to the satisfaction of the audience, whose sympathies were undeniably with the speakers."

Started them Talking

"As the speakers departed, the crowd split up into a number of smaller groups, obviously intent upon continuing discussions on the points raised during one of the most successful outdoor meetings held for very many years.

"Mr. Quastel offers his services, **without charge**, to any S.N.U. organisation which can ensure his return to normal scholastic duties "the morning after the night before." "

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By 1953 Quastel had the support of most SNU leaders; he wanted the Union to interest itself more in the spiritual development of its members, as religious bodies tended to do. He also favoured a push towards Spiritualist unity under the SNU umbrella. SNU President Percy Wilson resigned his office and it was further announced in the "Two Worlds", December 5th 1953, that Wilson and his son Laurence had resigned from the SNU Council: "We cannot accept responsibility for decisions of the Council taken since the Annual General Meeting last July." Wilson did not want the SNU to involve itself in religious matters; he and his family, like some other early SNU leaders, had Unitarian links.

Quastel would rise through the ranks of the Union, becoming Vice-President in 1952 and, later, Hon. Secretary, Education and Exponents. At the 1955 AGM he reinforced his views: below is taken from "Psychic News", July 23rd 1955:

"Spiritualism should be non-denominational," stated Quastel:

I have not changed my opinion in the slightest with regard to membership of councils and leadership of churches.

Briefly, I believe that one's religious origin or, indeed, the type of church body to which one belongs, does not matter as long as the religious views upheld and expounded by the individual can be fully identified with our Seven Principles.

To add extra principles of belief, such as certain 'Greater World' principles, is a matter for one's conscience, but the S.N.U. church platform must not be used for the expression of these other beliefs.

We have certain beliefs which are fully contained within our Seven Principles, and it is those beliefs and no others which we should officially present.

Thus, I reiterate my opinion that within the S.N.U. there should be no leaders calling themselves Christian, Jewish or any other type of Spiritualist.

Having said that, I gladly agree that the existence of sectarian organisations, such as the Christian Spiritualist Church or the Jewish Psychic Society, are justified for those whose beliefs cannot find full expression in the Seven Principles.

We are greatly in need of speakers and demonstrators who can give a spiritual lead interpreting the humanitarian purposes involved in our Principles.

Therefore, if only to dissociate the sincere S.N.U. mediums from some of those whose dubious activities cause unpleasant press reports and legal prosecutions, I suggest that all who have our cause at heart should apply at once for registration as recognised exponents. —*C.I. Quastel, Hon. Sec, Education and Exponents Committee of the S.N.U.*

"Education is the key," stated Quastel (quotes taken from the "Two Worlds", July 9th 1955):

"An enlightened platform will bring about spiritual thoughts and practices. We are endeavouring to persuade every speaker in the Union to become conversant with a knowledge of the history and philosophy of the movement."

"He expressed the hope "that some day the Union will organise the platforms of the whole country," and ensure a uniformly high standard of demonstration and speaking.

"He revealed that students of the education scheme had nearly doubled since last year."

At the 1958 Annual Conference, held at Norwich, Charles Quastel became the Union's 22nd President.

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Whitham Road Spiritualist Church

The former Meersbrook Spiritualist Society, known today as "Whitham Road Spiritualist Church", is still situated at 109 Whitham Road, Sheffield S10 2SL.

Their President since 2008, Tim Doyle, reflects on earlier days:



> "When Charles Quastel was President it would appear that the movement was in really good times: the membership of the church was 97; today, in contrast, it's 27. The main difference today is that in the 50s and 60s the church's platform was filled by the best mediums in the country and they had three services over the weekend, with the medium staying over and doing all three (being put up by the booking secretary): Saturday night, Sunday afternoon and evening. There would be a buffet tea on the Sunday. Today we couldn't afford the best mediums in the country, so we encourage the up-and-coming mediums to have the opportunity of working on the platform with a mix of the established local-ish mediums and we only have one service over the weekend."

Tim Doyle mentioned the fall of Union membership to me and kindly sent me part of the then Meersbrook Spiritualist Society's 1949 minutes reflecting Charles Quastel's report of the SNU Edinburgh Conference. The society's Half-yearly Members Meeting was held on Saturday, 16th July 1949, following the AGM, and was chaired by Quastel, as quoted below:

> Mr Quastel delivered his report of its conference, and was somewhat critical of the order in which the business was conducted – the most importaint, being left until Sunday, when a large proportion of the delegates had left.
>
> The conference had not in any way been an inspiring one. There was a good attendance approximately 240, of whom, however, only 87 were actually church delegates; the remainder being Class B. members, or visitors.
>
> There are at present, 475 churches in the Union, which is lower than in 1938, when the figure stood at 500, but is higher than during the war, when, at one period it was as low as 300.



Tim Doyle compares the interior of the Church with the 1964 photograph shown in the article and today.

Details of the church can be found on their website; for anyone travelling to any of their meetings or to special events, advertised times, etc. should be confirmed in advance:
http://whithamroad.co.uk/

Editor's comments on the fall in national membership:

Various reports show a dramatic drop during WWII in numbers of SNU Churches and membership; Quastel states a loss of 200 churches! Geoffrey K. Nelson's book, "Spiritualism and Society", first published in 1969, is an excellent reference book covering SNU history, with statistical tables, etc. Nelson reports that at the outbreak of war the Union had over 500 churches affiliated, with a total membership of 14,028; he further states:

> "When the annual report was published in 1940 the number of affiliated churches had fallen to 361 and the number of members to 12, 460."

Nelson further reports:

> "The movement continued to decline and reached a new low in 1941, when the interim report of the S.N.U. revealed that only 313 churches were then affiliated with a membership of 10, 250."

Some of the decline would be a result of the "No World War" predictions. Leading spirit guides such as Silver Birch, Red Cloud and others assured Spiritualists there would be no war. Assurances were given, more or less emphatic, that there would be "no European War," or that there would be "no Great War," or that there would be "no war for England." SNU President Frank Blake repeatedly said in public and in the press that "war would not come."

These incorrect prophecies from the spirit world dealt Spiritualism a severe blow within the movement and no doubt caused amusement and ridicule from its critics. In the next issue of "Pioneer" I will publish more on this, together with President Blake's and Red Cloud's response to the false prophecies, which had caused bitter disappointment within the movement, as many were no doubt convinced of the infallibility of the spirit guides.

A larger proportion of the decline, I would suggest, was due to the war conditions, blackouts, travel, the Blitz and conscription, etc, adding greatly to the closures of societies and churches and loss of membership.

Did the Union really go into decline and lose around 200 churches during the war?

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The simple answer is 'NO' but I cannot explain where Quastel, Nelson and other reports I have seen got *all* their figures from, although Nelson gave a reference to an SNU Annual Report, but his book, unfortunately, does not generally give precise references.

In 1937 the Union had 510 churches in affiliation; this was seven up on the previous year. By the end of 1938 this had dropped to 475, with 14,750 members. By the end of 1939, the year WWII started, the Union had lost another church but had gained another 250 members, making a total of 15,000.

We can note that both Quastel and Nelson state that at the outbreak of war the number of churches affiliated to the Union was 500 and over 500 respectively. The net decrease of 35 churches between 1937 and 1938 was "*mainly due to a revision of the records*". This will help to explain why the SNU Annual Report for 1938 gives the number of churches as 475.

As for Quastel's statement that "at one period it was as low as 300", and Geoffrey Nelson's: "When the annual report was published in 1940 the number of affiliated churches had fallen to 361 and the number of members to 12,460", and "…1941, when the interim report of the SNU revealed that only 313 churches…", I cannot fully explain this.

The 1940 SNU Annual Report states, page 10: "The number of Churches on the register at December 1940 was 401, with a membership of 13,863. This shows a decrease of 73 Churches and 1,137 members." In 1941, Nelson reveals, there are only 313 churches! Again, the SNU Annual Report states, page 10: "At December, 1941, there were 414 Churches on the register, with a membership of 12,457. There is an increase of 13 Churches, but there is a membership decrease of 1,406."

It should be noted that all the information I have used is taken from the published SNU Annual Reports of the day; these reports record the whole year, ending in December. So it should be noted that figures will vary throughout war-torn Britain during these years, for example in the July AGM's interim reports, etc.

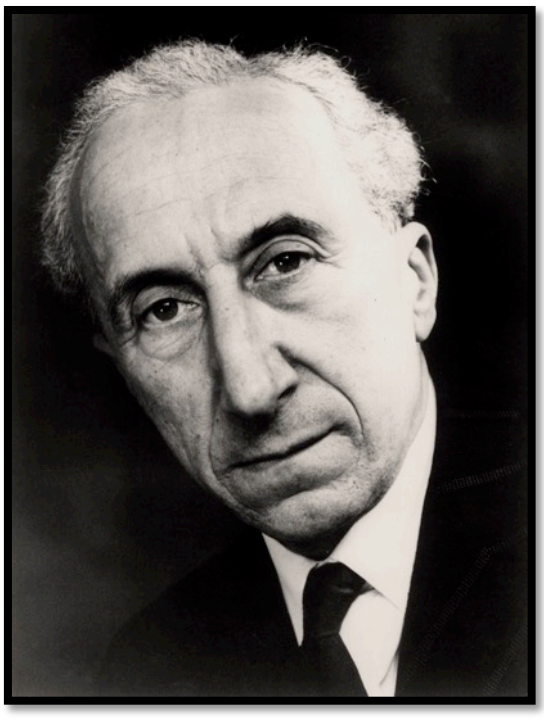
Although the SNU Annual Reports show the lowest amount of churches during the war years as 401 in December 1940, it may have dropped into the 300s earlier in the year. Figures from the SNU Annual Reports during the war period are available on request. To conclude, it can be noted:

Year-end 1939: there were 474 Churches and a 15,000 membership

Year-end 1945: there were 460 Churches and a 14,924 membership

By the end of 1946 there was an increase to 486 Churches and a 16,446 membership

So no substantial long-term losses during the war years



More on Charles Ivan Quastel in the next issue

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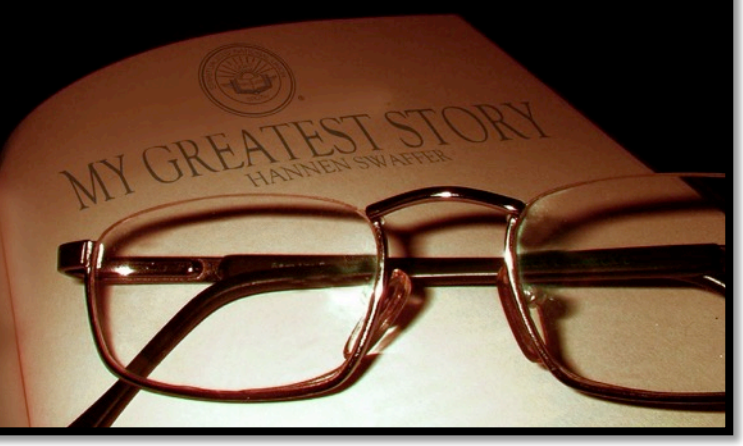
* Additional costs if required: Lunch £10, Dinner £12.50 Bed & Full English breakfast is available from £70.00 per room per night, en-suite supplements apply. Alternatively accommodation is available in the village, list available upon request.

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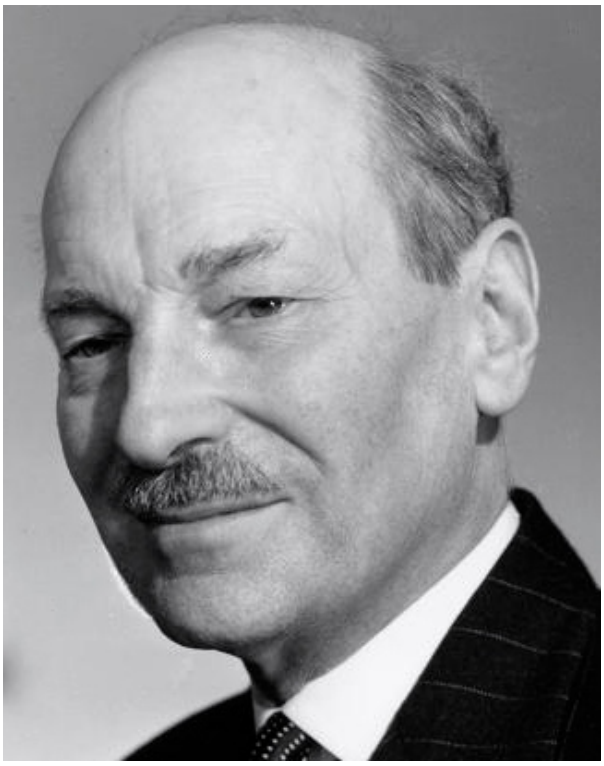
THE EFFECT OF THE VAGRANCY ACT

THE WORK OF THE SPIRITUALISTS' NATIONAL UNION

Continued from the November issue:

In the last issue we finished with the incoming Prime Minister, Clement Richard Attlee, who took up office on July 26th 1945, having previously served under Winston Churchill in the coalition government formed in 1940 to fight the Second World War. Attlee was Britain's first ever Deputy Prime Minister in 1942.

Maurice Barbanell noted in an article:



"He is no stranger to Spiritualism. We hold from him a written pledge, given at the time of the 1935 election, when he was Leader of the Labour Party.

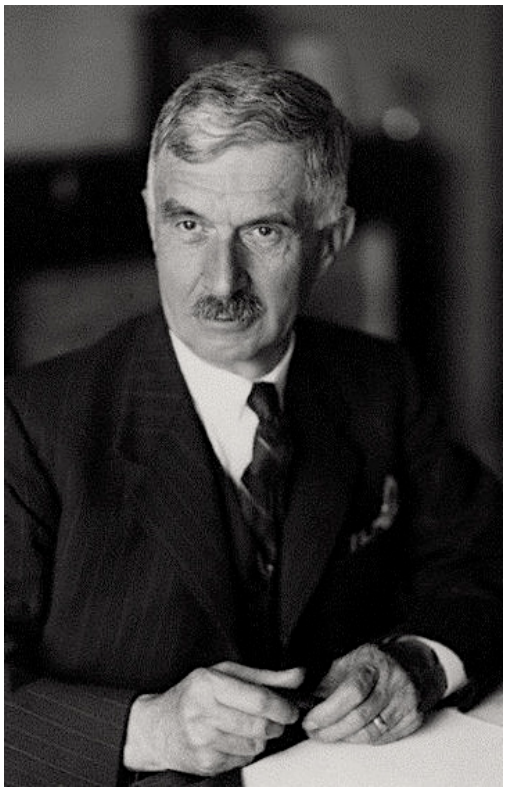
"Attlee announced, "The Labour Party stands for the complete freedom and equality of all religious bodies."

"He added that he was "in favour of freeing Spiritualists from restrictions on their liberty and of repealing obsolete Acts." He announced his general agreement with the wording of a Bill drawn up by Spiritualists to secure religious freedom.

"When he was reminded of this pledge, at a time when he was Deputy Prime Minister in the Coalition Government, he made the excuse that any such legislation was likely to prove "highly controversial" and would not be "directly related to the war effort or to the post-war social or economic problems." He added that he remained "in favour of complete freedom and equality for all religious bodies."

…"

On August 3rd 1945 James Chuter Ede, Baron Chuter-Ede (1882-1965), became the new Home Secretary, continuing to 1951, becoming the longest-serving Home Secretary of the 20th century.



The new Home Secretary is approached on behalf of the Union to receive another deputation. Chuter Ede stated:

"I shall be willing to receive them at a convenient time. I hope, however, that it will be clearly understood that it is not the purpose of the Deputation to go over again the ground which was covered by the Deputation received in 1943, of which, as you know, there is already a full record available to me."

It can be noted in this series of events that the last delegation was concerned *only* with the amendment of the Vagrancy Act; Charles Loseby in his submission stated:

"It should be noted that similar clauses against mediumship were contained in the older 1735 Witchcraft Act but this had not then been used against a Spiritualist medium."

But events that later followed in January 1944, with the arrest and subsequent conviction of Helen Duncan under the Witchcraft Act 1735, brought much wider implications to the Spiritualist movement as a whole. Then, under this Act, in October in Altrincham, near Manchester, a proposed trance address by healer William Lilley's spirit guide, "Dr. Letari", was disrupted: "A police superintendent in Altrincham declared the meeting illegal under the Witchcraft Act." (See Pioneer 2.6, November 2015)

Below is quoted from the "Two Worlds", March 15th 1946, page 77:

> The first approach to the present Home Secretary, Mr. J. Chuter Ede, was made on the 28th November 1945 by Mr. T. J. Brooks M.P., in which he pointed out that the Union, of which he was a member, was deeply concerned by the retention upon the Statute Book of the Witchcraft Act 1735 and the Vagrancy Act 1824. Mr. Ede was asked to receive a deputation in order that the position might be fully explained.
>
> In his reply, received on the 18th December, Mr. Ede referred to the representations made to his predecessor Mr. Herbert Morrison, of which he was fully informed, and said that he could not see his way to receive a deputation without further information as to our proposals.
>
> We publish below a copy of Mr. T. J. Brook's reply to Mr. Chuter Ede.

The House of Commons,
Westminster.
January, 22nd, 1946.

Dear Minister,

Thank you for your letter of the 18th December, 1945, which you conclude with the words "if you are in a position to give me some further information as to the nature of the proposals that you wish to submit to me, I will of course consider it."

In my previous letter, I informed you that the Freedom Committee of the Spiritualist National Union had been legally advised that it was the joint effect of the Vagrancy Act, 1824, and the Witchcraft Act 1735 that "no medium prosecuted under these Acts had a reasonable chance of escaping conviction—however innocent the medium concerned might be."

It is the opinion of the S.N.U. (trustees in this matter) for a very considerable section of the public, that the Government of the day is responsible for the retention upon the Statute Book of any Statute proved to be injurious, and they most respectfully ask to be allowed to make representations to you in the matter.

In July 1943, the late Home Secretary was good enough to receive a deputation in regard to the Vagrancy Act, I824. The value of it is made clear in the report enclosed herewith. The S.N.U. have at any rate the satisfaction of knowing that the Home Office have always before them representations which they believe to be unanswerable. They are in a position to satisfy their own people that their case has been put plainly and concisely and that they have up to date-—done everything possible in the matter. They have no desire to repeat themselves, and would wish only to inform you that it was the main contention of the Home Secretary that his hands were tied, in that the Government was pledged to avoid (in so far as it was practicable) legislation that might prove to be controversial. The S.N.U. respected the difficulty of the Home Secretary, and confined their suggestions to such as no person who believed in justice could make objection to. Their proposals will be found on page I2.

It has been an anxious duty of the S.N.U. to study the Witchcraft Act, 1735 and the repercussions of it. They are completely satisfied that it serves today no useful purpose and is wholly injurious. They seriously doubt if there is any section of the public who would venture openly to oppose the removal of it from the Statute Book. It is upon the other hand the duty of the police to use it as long as they are encouraged to do so by the retention of it on the Statute Book. They are completely confident that if you would allow them to do so, they could put their case shortly and concisely and without repetition. They particularly want to be allowed to endeavour to make good their contention that the Act is not necessary for the purpose of dealing with imposters, and in no way helps in that direction. If upon the other hand there is any sound and honest reason why the Act should be retained upon the Statute Book—if the Government have any difficulty in the matter—they would be grateful to be informed of it.

If after a short discussion, differences of opinion showed themselves, the S.N.U. would have the satisfaction of knowing that—as in the case of the Vagrancy Act—their case had been stated without any material and vital omissions. You upon the other hand

would know what the case was that you had to meet if, most unhappily, the matter had to be fought out to the bitter end.

The S.N.U. are completely committed and pledged to a non-stop campaign designed to bring about the following reforms during the life of the present parliament—

(a) to get the Witchcraft Act 1735, removed from the Statute Book, and
(b) to get the Vagrancy Act, 1824, amended in such a way that fully authenticated Spiritualist mediums, attached to recognised religious or scientific bodies, are no longer differentiated against.

They have working under them, and with them, bodies efficiently organised, known as the Freedom Committee, and the Council of Action. The feeling behind them is intense and growing. There is no doubt of any kind that it has come out of a bitter sense of injustice.

Realizing and appreciating the difficulty of the Government in time of war they waited. It has never yet been the position, however, that they thought that the Government *deliberately* restrained the Acts which seem to them to be transparently vicious. They have not even contemplated the possibility of your refusing even to hear their case. I sincerely hope that you will not do so.

They will of course appreciate your point that legislation cannot be initiated by the Government during the present session. For the moment they want you only to be good enough to hear their case put shortly and with complete moderation.

Yours sincerely,
(Sgd.) T. J. BROOKS.

In reply Mr. Chuter Ede sent the following letter.

Whitehall,
London, S.W.I.
8th February 1946.

My dear Brooks,

Thank you for your letter of the 23rd January about the Deputation which you ask me to receive on behalf of the Spiritualist National Union.

I have now given very careful consideration to what you say, in the light of previous communications between the Union, and others interested in this matter, and my predecessor, and I feel it necessary to make some comments upon some of the statements in your letter.

You repeat the statement made in your previous letter that the Union has been legally advised that it is the general effect of the Vagrancy Act, 1824, and the Witchcraft Act, 1735, that "no medium prosecuted under these Acts has a reasonable chance of escaping conviction—however innocent the medium concerned might be."

This statement seems to me to ignore the considered statement made by Mr. Morrison in reply to a Question by you on the 3rd May, I945, to which I referred in my previous letter. In that statement—which was made after consultation with the Lord Chancellor and the Attorney General—he explained what he was advised was the effect of the law. He also explained clearly the limits within which the Police had been advised to take action under these Statutes. The advice which you say has been given to the Union apparently takes no account of this statement, which, as I have indicated, was made on good authority.

You say that it was the main contention of my predecessor when he received a Deputation in regard to the Vagrancy Act, 1824, in July 1943, that his hands were tied, in that the Government has pledged to avoid (in so far as it was practicable) legislation which might prove to be controversial.

I am afraid I cannot accept this as an accurate statement of my predecessor's attitude in this matter. If you will look at the letters sent to Dr. Peters on the 27th November and on the 17th December, 1943, and to the letter sent to you on the 15th December, 1943* you will see that the proposals on page 12** of the note of the Deputation, to which you refer, were fully considered and that my predecessor dealt with them in these replies.

I am, however, most reluctant even to lie under suspicion of refusing to hear a case, and if, as I gather from your letter, it is the intention of the proposed Deputation to make good their contention that the Witchcraft Act of 1735 is not necessary for the purpose of dealing with imposters and in no way helps in that direction, I shall be willing to receive them at a convenient time. I hope, however, that it will be clearly understood that it is not the purpose of the Deputation to go over again the ground which was covered by the Deputation received in 1943, of which, as you know, there is already a full record available to me. Perhaps you will be good enough to let me know, in due course, the names of those who will constitute the Deputation and suggest some suitable dates and times.

Yours sincerely,
J. CHUTER EDE.

*See last Deputation Report.
**See page 7 of Report.

Home Secretary received a third deputation from the Spiritualists' National Union

On Wednesday, 6th March 1946, the Home Secretary received a deputation from the Spiritualists' National Union, which placed before him the Spiritualists' case for religious freedom, the need for the abolition of the Witchcraft Act and an investigation into the position of mediums under the law, with special reference to the Vagrancy Act 1824, Sec. 4.

Those present representing the Home Office were the Home Secretary, The Right Hon. J. Chuter Ede, M.P.; Sir Frank Newsam, K.B.E., C.V.O., M.C.; Mr. S. Hoare; Mr. G. M. Tucker.

The deputation consisted of the Dowager Duchess of Hamilton and Brandon; Air Chief Marshall Lord Dowding, G.C.B., G.C.V.O., C.M.G.; Miss Lind Af Hageby; Mr. H. L. Vigurs, SNU President; Mr J. B. McIndoe, SNU Treasurer; Mr. J. M. Stewart, Past President of the SNU; Mr. C. E. Loseby (M.P. 1918-1922), Barrister-at-law; Mr. Leslie Hale, M.P.; Mr. H. F. Bendall, President, Greater World.[3]

Harold Vigurs introduced the deputation and called upon Charles Loseby to state their case. The "Two Worlds" for July 26th 1946 gives an excellent account of what took place; Loseby's submission to the Home Office representatives was well in excess of forty minutes. The report is too long to publish here; any reader wishing a copy, please contact the editor. Below is a summary of the meeting as published in "Psychic News", July 27, 1946:

WITCHCRAFT ACT

Home Secretary Hopes For Religious Freedom

DEPUTATION SPEECHES RELEASED

A CIRCULAR letter from the former Home Secretary to all the chief constables in the country has effectively stopped police prosecution of genuine mediums under the Vagrancy and Witchcraft Acts, according to statements made at a meeting between the present Home Secretary, Rt. Hon. J. Chuter Ede, and a deputation consisting of well-known Spiritualists.

There were two circulars from the Home Secretary's department. The first was valueless from our point of view, for following it came the notorious prosecution of Mrs. Duncan.

Then Lord Dowding called on the then Lord Chancellor (Lord Simon), and as a result a letter was released for publication in which the Lord Chancellor laid it down that:

"The exercise of powers of mediumship in good faith and without any intent to deceive is not within the mischief of the existing law, and that to prove an offence under Section 4 of the Vagrancy Act, 1824, of using any subtle craft, etc. (as distinct from fortune-telling), there must be evidence that the medium is an impostor, and is pre-tending to have powers which he is conscious of not having."

[3] It was hoped that Hannen Swaffer would be part of the delegation but he was in America, and Mr. T. J. Brooks, M.P., was detained at the House of Commons on parliamentary business.

This was followed up by another circular from the Home Office to all chief constables, drawing their attention to this letter to Lord Dowding from the Lord Chancellor.

It advised them that "the same principles should govern the institution of proceedings both under the Witchcraft Act, 1735, and under section 4 of the Vagrancy Act, 1824."

This circular, dated February 21, 1945, was mentioned by Mr. Chuter Ede at the meeting with the deputation, when he asked the spokesman, Mr. C. E. Loseby, whether, since its issue, there had been any prosecution of mediums to which exception was taken.

"I do not know of any," replied Mr. Loseby.

"Speaking from this end," said the Home Secretary, "we do not know of such a prosecution."

The purpose of the deputation was to secure if possible the repeal of the Witchcraft Act and the institution of an inquiry into the working of the Vagrancy Act as it affects mediums.

Besides Mr. Loseby there were present: the Dowager Duchess of Hamilton and Brandon, Lord Dowding, Miss Lind of Hageby; Mr. H. L. Vigurs, Mr. J. B. McIndoe and Mr. J. M. Stewart, representing the Spiritualists' National Union; Mr. H. F. Bendall, president of the Greater World; and Mr. Leslie Hale, M.P.

Mr. Loseby, stating the main case of the deputation, declared that the Witchcraft Act and the Vagrancy Act were both unnecessary to prosecutions of fraudulent mediums. He declared:

"In regard to imposters, I say that no case can be imagined in which a person, falsely claiming to be a medium, who obtained money through his false pretence cannot be adequately dealt with through, and by means of, a charge at Common Law of obtaining money by false pretences . . .

"The only imaginable case is one in which the police wished to rely upon the evidence of 'agents provocateurs' and that alone. Nothing but disaster can come out of the encouragement of such a course.

"For the purpose of dealing with a person claiming to be a medium who, in fact, is an imposter, legitimate evidence will always be obtainable."

Mr. Loseby quoted the judgment of the Lord Chief Justice, when Mrs. Duncan appealed against her conviction, that much of the evidence called by the defence "would have been rightly excluded," and stated:

"The effect of the judgment was that no medium, however innocent, had a reasonable chance of escaping conviction."

All speakers of the deputation assured the Home Secretary that Spiritualists were most anxious to stamp out fraud in the movement. As Mr. Vigurs declared. "Fraud is as

harmful to Spiritualism as it is noxious in our civic life and the Spiritualists' National Union will always co-operate in any steps to eliminate imposture."

Mr. Vigurs told of a materialisation medium with excellent powers, at whose seances in red light he had seen nine separate spirit forms. On each occasion the medium could be seen as well as the manifesting form.

This medium had never charged for his sittings. Yet, so real was his fear of prosecution under the Witchcraft Act or the Vagrancy Act and the attendance at his seance of "agents provocateurs", who might upset the sitting at great risk to the medium's life, that, in the interests of his wife and family, he dare not give further sittings.

"Mediums are very precious people," declared Vigurs. "They need our protection.

"They are priceless for our research and should not be at the mercy of ill-informed people, to be treated as rogues and vagabonds, the pariahs of society."

Others who spoke were Mr. Bendall and Miss Lind of Hageby.

WITH CONVICTION

The Home Secretary, in his reply to the deputation, stated:

"I am exceedingly anxious that there shall be no restraint or restriction on the right of every person in this country to enjoy the freedom of religion, which was one of the causes which we espoused in the war, and I say this with real conviction because I myself belong to one of the minor religious denominations, a denomination which in fact was excluded from the Act of Toleration.

"Therefore, in so far as this deputation is concerned with matters relating to the exercise by the individual of the principles and practice of his religious faith, they can rest assured that they have my complete sympathy.

"Now, you ask me to secure the repeal of one Act of Parliament and to institute an enquiry into the working of a second.

IF I FINALLY...

"Of course, the repeal of an Act of Parliament does take Parliamentary time, and if I were to request my colleagues in the Government to give me Parliamentary time in which to repeal the Witchcraft Act, I should have to prove to them that there was a case for immediate action in this matter."

Then the Home Secretary made reference to the two circulars to the chief constables, which had prevented further prosecution of the kind to which exception was taken. He went on:

"I am not saying that that relieves me of the duty, if I am finally convinced that this Act ought to go, of securing its removal, because it is exceedingly dangerous to have

outmoded Acts of Parliament left on the Statute Book, because they may be used in the most unexpected ways at some later date when somebody is looking round for a Statute under which a prosecution can be instigated.

"Of course, the classic case is that of the prosecution of the six agricultural labourers of Tolpuddle, who were prosecuted under the Act which was passed, I believe, in 1838, to suppress the mutiny at the Nore.

"You will not expect me to enter into what, for want of a better term, I will call the technicalities of this matter, that is to say, materialisation and matters of that description, because quite clearly I think you admit that the powers to produce these things are possessed by only a few people, and therefore if I say I have not seen any such thing, it does not prove that it does not exist.

FAMILY EXPERIENCE

"I know that within my own family, where generally religion has been more orthodox, spiritual experiences vary from one person to another and, when we get into this realm, we have to be very careful how we either assert or deny because of the differing powers and gifts possessed by different members of the community.

"With regard to the suggestion that there should be a Committee to enquire into matters under the Vagrancy Act, I am not in a position to make any statement this morning, but I will consider what you have said.

"I will make myself thoroughly acquainted with the extent to which the Vagrancy Act can be used in any case where fraud or false pretences could not be properly established and, after I have looked into the matter myself, I will decide whether it is necessary to have a Committee to advise the Government and myself further on the matter.

FREEDOM

"I shall consider what you have said to me to-day in the light of what I said at the commencement of this reply, the desire that law-abiding citizens of this country shall have freedom to practise their religion and to hold their religious opinions without any interference by the law.

"I am grateful for the intimation that since Mr. Morrison's second circular there has been no prosecution to which you object.

"That does not relieve me of the duty of ascertaining whether the phraseology of the existing law may not leave it open for some person to institute a prosecution to which objection could be taken.

"I will examine the whole of the case you have submitted to me with a determination that as far as possible the freedom of religion which we hope we have secured for the whole world, shall be available for all law-abiding citizens in this country."

Though the deputation saw the Home Secretary early in March, the official report (from which these extracts are taken) is only now released for publication.

In his letter to Mr. J. M. Stewart, agreeing to publication, the Home Secretary expressed regret that he could not yet reply in regard to the matters he undertook to examine further, but promised to communicate again.

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After six months of deliberation by the Home Secretary and seventy years since the first prosecution, resulting in the first approach to the Home Secretary, Richard Assheton Cross, 1st Viscount Cross, Home Secretary (1874-1880) under Benjamin Disraeli's government, who declined to receive a deputation. Below is taken from the "Two Worlds", October 4th 1946, page 309:

HOME SECRETARY REPLIES TO SPIRITUALISTS

ANY RELAXATION OF THE LAW WOULD BE DANGEROUS
NO HOPE OF LEGISLATION AT PRESENT

Home Secretary' s Reply.

Mr. Chuter Ede, has now considered this matter, and we print his reply below.

WHITEHALL,
LONDON, S.W.I.
9th September, 1946.

Dear Sir,

I have now considered very carefully the views which were put before me, by a deputation representing the Spiritualists' National Union on 6th March, regarding the operation of the Witchcraft Act, 1735, and the Vagrancy Act, I824, in relation to Spiritualists.

I have already made it clear in previous correspondence, what I have been advised is the effect of the law, namely, that the essential element in the offence both under the Witchcraft Act, and under the Vagrancy Act is fraud and imposture; and as you are aware, circulars have been sent to the police by my predecessor advising them that it is only in cases in which there has been complaint by members of the public, and there is sufficient evidence that the person concerned is an impostor, and is taking money or other valuable consideration that proceedings should be taken under either of these Acts. With a view to securing a greater measure of uniformity in the administration of the law, the Police have also been advised that they should consult the Director of Public Prosecutions about any case in which the question of taking proceedings arises.

It was admitted by the deputation that since the issue of these circulars there has been no prosecution to which the Spiritualist Union take exception. It was also, I think, common ground that there are cases in which persons exercise, or claim to exercise, mediumistic powers for fraudulent and improper purposes, and that such persons ought to be amenable to the law.

I am very anxious, as I told the deputation that there should be no restraint or restriction on the right of every person in this country to enjoy freedom of religious belief and practice, and I can assure you that if I were satisfied that anything in the existing law, or its administration, prevented or restricted the exercise of that right by believers in Spiritualism I should certainly be prepared to take such action as I could to remove such prohibition or restraint. So far as these two Acts are concerned, however, I have been advised that they have no such effect, and that the mischief at which they are aimed is fraud or imposture. "The question I have to consider therefore is whether it is necessary to retain these Acts, in respect of fraud and imposture by mediums, or whether such fraudulent activities can be left to the operation of the general law.

I am however advised that it would not always be possible in cases of fraud and imposture, by persons claiming to exercise mediumistic powers, to prefer an indictment for a common law misdemeanour, or under the statute law relating to false pretences, and that if the Witchcraft or Vagrancy Acts were repealed, it might not be possible to take proceedings with any hope of success in some cases of persons who, it is agreed, ought to be amenable to the law, in respect of their fraudulent activities. Any relaxation of the law as it applies to such fraudulent activities would be especially dangerous at the present time, when there is such a wide field for the unscrupulous exploitation of personal loss and bereavement.

I fully appreciate the language of these statutes, is archaic, and that it would be more satisfactory that the law on this subject should be embodied in terms more appropriate to the present day. I cannot, however, hold out any hope of legislation on this subject at the present time. For the reasons which I have explained, it will be necessary when these statutes are amended or repealed, that some new provision covering fraudulent activities shall be enacted.

Yours sincerely,
J. CHUTER EDE.

One aspect of Charles Loseby's submission to the Home Secretary was that fraud could be dealt with under Common Law:

In regard to imposters, I say that no case can be imagined in which a person, falsely claiming to be a medium, who obtains money through his false pretence cannot be adequately dealt with through, and by means of a charge at Common Law of obtaining money by false pretences.

"As far as I can discover, no one has yet suggested any respect in which the Common Law process fails to meet practical needs. I can but say that I suspect that an answer to my plain statement cannot be framed.

Chuter Ede makes no mention of this; in fact, it appears that no explanation has ever been given at all as to why fraudulent mediums cannot be dealt with under the normal process of law rather than the archaic Acts!

The Union's response:

The Fight for Freedom Must Go On.

Whilst we have the unqualified support of over I00 M.P.'s for our claim that mediumship should be excluded from the operation of both these outmoded Acts, it is clear that a great deal of work has still to be achieved before we can overcome the obstacles that lie before us in our struggle for legal recognition and religious freedom. The work of the Freedom Committee will continue with fresh vigour, and we hope that every Spiritualist will rally to the cause, and enthusiastically support with organised activity our great struggle for FREEDOM.

I had hoped to conclude this in this issue but owing to space it will be concluded in the next issue.

