

Telegraph & Argus

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COMMENT

Power lines

Liberals in Harrogate this week should be thirsting for power. It was Jo Grimond who once said that he was marching his troops towards the sound of gunfire. That was a long time ago. In the meantime, the Party has gained some battleground experience: it now has to mount a major offensive.

It cannot do that if it starts sniping at its general. David Steel has taken the Liberal Party closer to real power than it has been these 50 years or more. The Liberals should not waste their energies on schemes aimed at cutting him down to size. (A lot of political opponents have tried to do that, and failed.)

Community politics have brought great dividends to the Liberal Party, but on the national scene there has to be more. The critics who want to take control of the manifesto away from the party leader are not thinking straight. David Steel must have the last word on the manifesto as part of the mechanism for settling policy with the Social Democrats.

With David Owen emerging as a powerful leader of the Social Democrats, it would be foolish to clip David Steel's wings, especially since David Steel is such a clear-cut electoral asset throughout the country. If the two Davids can make a go of it, elections will be there for the winning.

An opinion poll has just shown the Alliance five points ahead of Labour, although well behind the Tories. Mrs. Thatcher is now the main target: the European Parliament elections next summer provide the stimulus for Alliance solidarity.

For Liberal council candidates to campaign vigorously on local issues makes sense. But the Party should beware of interpreting community politics to mean becoming the prisoner of every vocal pressure group, and of shying away from practical national priorities.

The Alliance needs to concentrate on the main lines of strategy. That should be foremost in delegates' minds at Harrogate this week.

Remand scandal

The Government promised in the Queen's speech that it would make proposals for prosecutions in court to be by an independent service and not, as now, by the police. Scotland and the United States both have independent prosecutors, and many people see this as an essential safeguard if police powers of investigation are to be strengthened.

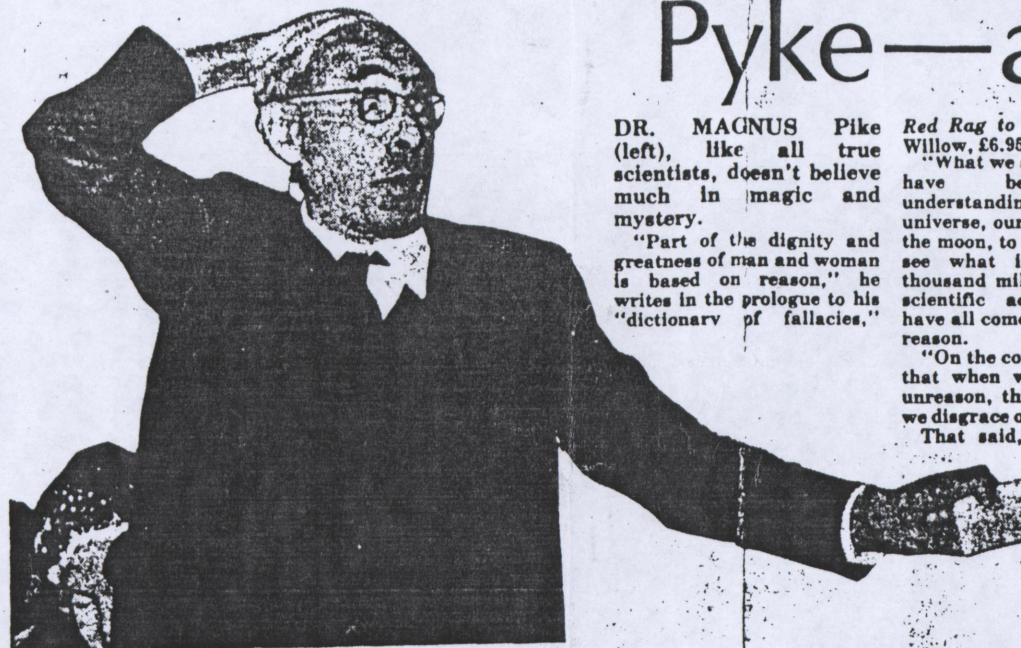
Representatives of the probation officers and the Legal Action Group point out that the new prosecution service offers the chance to limit the time people are held in custody awaiting trial.

Lengthy remands are a scandal: quite often the people remanded in custody are not given prison sentences. They may be cleared or they may be fined or given suspended sentences.

Before 1970, men on remand could expect to be in custody 14 to 20 days. By 1981 this had reached an average of 38 days. On June 30 that year, 1,200 remand prisoners had been awaiting trial for more than three months.

In Scotland there are limits of 110 days for indictable offences and 40 days for summary offences. There ought to be limits in England, too.

BOOKS



DR. MAGNUS Pike (left), like all true scientists, doesn't believe much in magic and mystery.

"Part of the dignity and greatness of man and woman is based on reason," he writes in the prologue to his "dictionary of fallacies."

Red Rag to a Bull (Collins Willow, £6.95).

"What we are and what we have become, our understanding of the universe, our ability to fly to the moon, to heal the sick, to see what is going on a thousand miles away — our scientific achievements — have all come from the use of reason.

"On the contrary, I believe that when we fall slave to unreason, that is to fallacy, we disgrace ourselves."

That said, he then falls

into a whole host of fallacies, some dangerous but others harmlessly daft, and proceeds to demolish them.

Astrology? Crash-Bang-Crunch! goes Dr. Pike and the beliefs come tumbling down. The people who follow their horoscopes are, he reckons, "simple and misguided" — although he does own that a study of the sky for astrological purposes did help to improve man's scientific knowledge of the universe.

Crocodile tears? A load of rubbish, apparently. Crocs do not cry with remorse when they devour people. It's their saliva glands, bursting into chomping activity, that also cause their eyes to water.

Copper bangles to ward off rheumatism? Because there's no hard evidence that it's effective, declares Dr. Pike, it's a fallacy.

Elephants possessing long memories? There's no evidence that they remember any more than other animals, is the Pike verdict.

Well how about ostriches burying their heads in the sand under the belief that because they can't see, neither can they be seen? Nonsense! declares Dr. Pike. Any species so daft and deluded wouldn't have survived as long as ostriches have survived.

Spoon-bending, rather predictably, is kicked into touch by the good doctor. So are UFOs, levitation, the powers of the pyramids, the Shroud of Turin, wart-charming and phrenology. Dr. Pike dismisses them in no uncertain manner — although a slight note of doubt creeps into his

assessment of dowling, which he declares to be a fallacy but says he is prepared to be proved wrong.

Magnus Pike clobbers, in total, 64 fallacies — "some based on ignorance, others on trickery, and others again on self-deception and gullibility," he says.

Has he done mankind a favour? Some will think he has, by saving us from our superstitions.

Others, unable to cope with the idea of a purely rational universe, will resent the spirited way he has taken some of the magic out of life.

And yet, there is one fallacy that Dr. Pike never touches upon — his own apparently-held belief that if you wave your arms around fast enough, you'll fly!

MIKE PRIESTLEY

UFOs won't go away...

DESPITE the airy dismissals of people like Magnus Pike, (above), UFOs refuse to shut up and go away.

by JOHN HEWITT

It just won't do to sweep away the testimony of serious and often very unimaginative people in their thousands, perhaps tens of thousands, throughout the world.

In *The Evidence For The UFOs* (The Aquarian Press £2.50) Hilary Evans examines the sightings carefully and with notable lack of gullibility.

Yes, people do see something: bright lights, metallic objects, great swooping discs with occupants inside, strange creatures who emerge and abduct people. The odd thing is that though the sightings follow a pattern or a number of distinct patterns, it is rare to find two sightings of what appears to be the same object.

Mr. Evans' personal opinion is that there are four sources of UFO reports. A few, he thinks, are secret government devices being tested. But that doesn't account for the vast majority.

A good many are psychological in origin. Something triggers a fantasy so detailed and lifelike that the witness himself sincerely takes it for reality. In itself, points out Mr. Evans, this is a phenomenon of the utmost significance, promising us new insight into the human mind. What the "something" is that operates the trigger is, of course, another question.

He suggests some UFOs are natural biological objects, creatures which possess limited intelligence. This is a cop-out as nowhere does he produce more than the most meagre evidence for this viewpoint.

His favoured explanation is that despite all counter objections a great many UFOs are alien craft, though their surveillance operation (if that is what it is) is being conducted "in a remarkably sporadic and unworkmanlike manner".

explanations. We just don't know.

A nudge in the direction of the psychological explanation comes in the companion book *The Evidence For Visions Of The Virgin Mary* by Kevin McClure (The Aquarian Press £2.50).

The pattern here is that the visions usually appear to children around 11-14 and repeat over several weeks. Some are seen by the children alone, others by witnesses. Some form static or silent tableaux. Most of the visions ask for chapels to be built, streams to be dedicated to them and warn of impending disaster to the world if people do not return to the true faith.

At Fatima in 1917 there was the miracle of the dancing sun, which has many similarities with a UFO encounter.

McClure seems to lean towards a psychic explanation. The children involved were all more "sensitive" than others of their age and their visions have some similarities with those of mediums.

"I am far from convinced that the Virgin Mary has visited earth during the past 1900 years", he says "But I am more than ever committed to finding out why so many peo-

Good in parts

FORMER pilot John Smith's first book is inevitably about the world he knows so well — the world of flying charter aircraft and airmen who have never come to terms with life on the ground.

The book, *Skytrap*, (Century £7.95) unlike Guinness Book of Records holder Smith, never gets off the ground. It promises much, it leads the reader on, but remorselessly lets them down. There is certainly pace in the book, but it is only good in parts.

The hero of the tale Stephen Ritchie has some remarkable similarities to the author, if the publisher's notes are any guide, and it is obviously John Smith's experiences as a pilot which he has drawn upon to put into fiction.

Our hero Stephen Ritchie is an ex fighter pilot

who loses his licence at the age of 40. The loss should not worry Ritchie because he is afraid to fly but he has to go through with his last charter flight to ferry goods across Africa because he has been paid in advance.

To carry out the mission he needs a forged pilot's licence and once in Africa he finds that the charter to ferry an aircraft from Malawi to Israel is infinitely more complex.

The deal involves arms and diamond smuggling and Ritchie, the man who has lost both his nerve to fly and his pilot's licence, is caught up in the centre of a dangerous web of murder.

There seems to be no way out for our hero, but I found it a chore turning the pages and was not surprised at the final outcome.

LAWRY SEAR

Smoke signal

A RED INDIAN will shortly be stealthily creeping into Bradford — but there is no cause for alarm as he will take up a position outside a tobacconist's shop, so reviving an ancient tradition. The slightly less than half-

Fifty years ago

(From the *Telegraph & Argus* of September 19, 1933). TWO Bradford businessmen — Mr. W. E. Dinsdale and Mr. A. V. Murgatroyd — made history today. They were the first Bradford wool buyers who have ever flown to the Bristol Wool Fair — the oldest in England — which opens there tomorrow.

The annual gillies' ball at Balmoral Castle has been cancelled in consequence, it is understood, of an epidemic of mumps in the neighbourhood of Crathie.

size figure is being carved by self-taught Tingley woodcarver Peter Berry, who already enjoys a wide reputation for the creation of miniature carvings of Yorkshire characters.

Some careful and detailed study went into making the Indian, which has not yet been christened. Mr. Berry found he had to arrange for his local library especially to obtain a copy of the *Treasury of American Antiquities* to get all the details correct.

The figure, which will be colourfully painted later, has a headdress of tobacco leaves and supports a cigarette box with one arm whilst the other holds a bundle of cigars. The wampum around the neck is based on an original Indian design.

The tradition of having such a statue outside a tobacconist's shop seems to have died out and Mr. Berry

somehow it got changed to a Red Indian, he says.

At present he is forbidden to reveal the ultimate destination of the statue but it will undoubtedly make a colourful contribution to the city centre and perhaps ultimately become as famous as the figure of Napoleon in York, which serves a similar purpose.

Poet hunt

BRADFORD Writers' Circle is on the lookout for budding poets.

The circle is running its annual poetry competition and is inviting poems for two sections, light or serious verse, with a 50p fee for entry and a 24 line limit.

The rules say that any number of poems can be sent. Competitors must send a stamped, addressed

TOPICS TONIGHT

By Argus

Well spotted!

READERS of the T & A have been writing in to tell us that in our September 9 issue the date at the top of Page 9 said August 26.

Some of them have been gleeful; others have been sarcastic.

Well done, all of you, for spotting the deliberate mistake. We like to check, from time to time, that our readers are paying attention. Besides, we'd lose credibility, wouldn't we, if we were perfect ALL the time.

TODAY'S THOUGHT
It is physically