The PIONEER

The Pioneer is now part of the recommended reading for the Spiritualists' National Union's education courses.

The effect of the Vagrancy act

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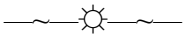
THE EFFECT OF THE VAGRANCY ACT

THE WORK OF THE SPIRITUALISTS' NATIONAL UNION



In the January 2015 issue of Psypioneer was a report on the case of Claire Frances Cantlon and Miss Mercy Phillimore. Early in April 1928,[1] Detective Inspector Walter Burnaby of Scotland Yard had ordered three policewomen to visit the London Spiritualist Alliance at 16, Queensberry Place (today it is known as the College of Psychic Studies.[2]). In July of that year, medium Mrs Claire Cantlon was charged at Westminster Police Court for "professing to tell fortunes", and the society's secretary, Miss Mercy Phillimore, was charged with "aiding and abetting".

Eighteen months later, former London Spiritualist Alliance President Sir Arthur Conan Doyle led a delegation of United Spiritualist Organisations to meet the Home Secretary, J.R. Clynes, M.P., on Tuesday, 1st July 1930. The official printed minutes of the official deputation seeking a change in the law of England were published in Psypioneer July 2012.[3] Amongst other representatives and societies, Conan Doyle and Lady Conan Doyle represented the Spiritualist International World Federation (International Spiritualist Federation), Lady Conan Doyle was its Honorary President and its President was Ernest Oaten. Oaten also represented the Spiritualists' National Union with Hannen Swaffer (journalist), George Berry (General Secretary) and John Stewart (Treasurer). Maurice Barbanell represented the Jewish Spiritualist Societies. The London Spiritualist Alliance would not join in the delegation to the Home Office; Doyle resigned as President as a result just a few days before his death on July 7th 1930. See Psypioneer July 2006: "New light on the final days of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle".[4]

The outcome of the 1930 delegation was negative; Parliament had been lobbied since the arrest of Henry Slade, shortly after seeing the first imprisonment of a Spiritualist medium, Francis Monck, under Section 4 of the 1824 Vagrancy Act.[5] The British National Association of Spiritualists (BNAS) 'Spiritualists' Defence Committee' was the first to challenge the Conservative government's Right Honorable R. A. Cross, Secretary of State for the Home Department, as to the rights of Spiritualist mediums in November 1876.[6]

Under SNU President Ernest Oaten (1915-1920), a campaign for legal recognition was instituted in 1916. This was called: "The Spiritualists' National Union Ltd. Parliamentary Fund (Witchcraft Acts

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[1] Psypioneer: Volume 11, No. 01: January 2015: "Claire Frances Cantlon & Miss Mercy Phillimore".

[2] Psypioneer: Volume 10, No. 12: December 2014: "The College of Psychic Science – Change of Name".

[3] Psypioneer: Volume 8, No 7: July 2012: "Deputation to the Right Honourable J.R. Clynes, M.P. by the United Spiritualist Organisations".

[4] Psypioneer: Volume 2, No 7: July 2006.

[5] Monck styled himself Dr Monck and sometime previously he was a minister at a Baptist Chapel at Totterdown, a suburb of Bristol. See Psypioneer: Volume 2, No 9: September 2006: "Rogues and Vagabonds".

[6] A copy of the petition addressed to R. A. Cross is in the College of Psychic Studies, 16 Queensberry Place, London archives.

Amendment)". The official SNU statement outlining the problem of the Acts was published in the April 2014 issue of the SNU Pioneer.[7]

In the 1930s Austin Frederick Hatcher was a well-known physical medium but in September 1942 undercover police officers attended one of his séances, which was disrupted by the officers, resulting in Hatcher and his secretary being charged under the 1824 Vagrancy Act. The expert witness called by the defence was John Brown McIndoe, former SNU President 1930-1938. The report below is taken from the *Two Worlds*, November 20th 1942, page 374:

Medium Sentenced to three months

AFTER several adjournments and a hearing which occupied five days at the Cardiff Police Court, Austin Frederick Hatcher was sentenced to three months hard labour and Emily Hilda Little, his secretary, to one month, for pretending to hold communication with the spirits of deceased persons and deceive the public. Mr. Russell John, defending, gave notice of appeal. The case has exceptional features and, in view of the nature of the charge, the S.N.U. exercised a close watch over the proceedings, which might become a precedent for many others.

Austin Frederick Hatcher

On September 27th Hatcher held a seance at his headquarters, at which, amongst other sitters, were two police officers. They were disguised as sick soldiers and dressed in hospital blue. The wife and sister of one of the officers were also present. It was apparently a family party. Some of the women had been to previous seances. One woman witness admitted in evidence that she knew the police were using them as "stooges."

Within ten minutes of the opening of the seance the police flashed a torch, and the resultant scene was a matter of acute controversy. The police witnesses contradicted one another in important matters. One of them stated that Miss Little was standing on a chair holding a trumpet in each hand, whilst the testimony of another witness was that she held Miss Little throughout the whole of the seance, even after the lights went up, and she was in her place. This was confirmed by several witnesses. In the course of the case, Mr. Russell John called the attention of the magistrates to the contradictory testimony of the police witnesses, which he said gave clear evidence of wilful perjury. The witnesses for the defence, on the other hand, gave consistent and corroborative testimony.

Mr. P. J. Richards, who said he was not a Spiritualist but had 35 years' experience of psychic phenomena, told how he had roped Hatcher in a chair at several seances—stood behind him and held his shoulders—yet levitation occurred beyond the medium's reach. One witness claimed that she had received an apport of silver earrings which she thought came from the spirit world. The

[7] The Pioneer: Volume 1, No. 3: April 2014: http://www.snu.org.uk/spiritualism/pioneer

magistrates examined them and declared they were made in Birmingham. Mr. Richards explained that apports were undoubtedly produced at seances, but there was no doubt they were obtained from this world and were merely transported by occult power. Mr. Russell John asked permission to call Mr. J. B. McIndoe as an expert witness. After hearing objections from the prosecuting solicitor, the magistrates said they were not trying the case for Spiritualism and could not allow propaganda Mr. John pointed out that the prosecution had quoted Mr. Harry Price and suggestions had been made that Hatcher possessed no psychic powers. He thought Mr. McIndoe's opinions would help the bench to come to a decision. He (Mr. John) knew nothing of psychic phenomena and his friend (prosecuting solicitor) seemed to know less.

John Brown McIndoe

Mr. McIndoe was then examined by Mr. John. He said he had studied the phenomena for 25 years. Most Spiritualist seances were held in light, but with certain phases of physical phenomena darkness was helpful, as white light had a deleterious effect on psychic structures. Trance was an incidental condition, not essential to the phenomena, though it was frequent. Trance had many stages and was often difficult to determine, especially in darkness. Hatcher was not a member of the Spiritualists' National Union, but had asked the Union to sponsor his work. He had been told that if he submitted to a series of seances under test conditions decided by the Union, they would report upon him. Hatcher had agreed to six sittings, of which two had been held. These proceedings had interrupted the series. At the two seances which had been held he and his colleagues were satisfied that supernormal movement of objects and materialized hands had actually occurred when the medium was roped in his chair and held by the shoulders. If a light was suddenly flashed on an entranced medium or any sudden shock occurred the medium might be seriously hurt. Witness had seen such effects on many occasions.

Cross examined by prosecuting solicitor, Mr. McIndoe said he knew Mr. Harry Price, who was certainly not a "prominent Spiritualist." Price had never claimed to be a Spiritualist, but only a psychical researcher. Asked if he agreed with Mr. Price that "many mediums, after sitting successfully under test conditions for a long time, had subsequently been discovered to be fraudulent," witness asked for the names of such mediums.

"Do you deny Mr, Price' s statement?"

"I don't believe Mr: Price said anything of the kind! Will you read his exact words?"

The solicitor read an extract from "Fifty Years of Psychical Research," to the effect that many mediums, after sitting a long time, were found to be fraudulent when test conditions were imposed.

"That," said Mr. McIndoe, "is a totally different statement, and I agree with it."

We Spiritualists say that test conditions should always be imposed before mediums give sittings for the public.

Witness then related Mr. Price's record of the materialization of "Rosalie," from Page 130 ("Fifty Years of Psychical Research"), which Mr. Price admitted would have convinced him had it occurred in his own laboratory. He agreed, however, that phenomena of this degree were rare. Materialization covered a large field, from ectoplasmic rods, hands and faces, up to the phenomena of Rosalie. Voice phenomena, too, were very varied. Some people received good evidence at their first seance, others received messages which were thought to be false, but were subsequently proved true. It was not difficult to establish fraud where it existed without adopting the dangerous method of flashing a light.

He agreed that the guides would do their best to produce phenomena at the test sittings he had attended, but it did not follow that the best results would be obtained. The deciding factor would be the medium, rather than the guides. His health, mental attitude, nervousness, weather conditions, and the sitters, had all to be taken into account. Knowing that the results might be built up from the medium, the voice may be quite distinctive, but to some extent they will have a resemblance to the medium's voice. It is a question of the degree of development of the medium, and probably also of the experience of the communicator.

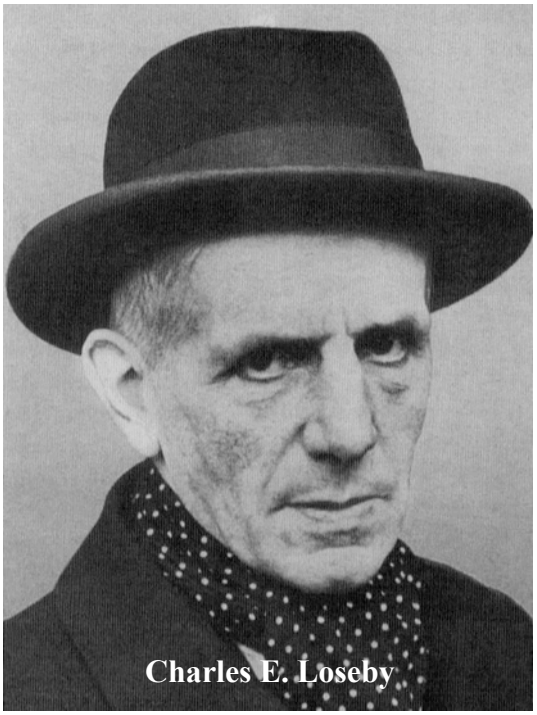
It is quite usual to hold hands during circles for physical phenomena. The theory is that the sitters contribute much of the energy which is used, and the linking of hands enables it to flow in the direction of the medium.

The magistrates, in summing up, again asserted that they were not trying the case for the religion of Spiritualism and complimented Mr. John on the excellent way he had conducted the defence.

Since Mr. John knew nothing of Spiritualism prior to this case, he deserves high praise for the splendid manner in which he grasped essential principles. It's a pity this case was not heard by a jury.

Several friends who were in court expressed their opinions that the verdict was against the weight of evidence and I am glad there is to be an appeal. As far as Spiritualists are concerned, it is the nature of the charge, rather than the person prosecuted, which will concern us in the long run.

Captain Charles E. Loseby, who had previously defended mediums arrested under the 1824 Vagrancy Act as early as 1929, undertook the appeal of Austin Hatcher and Emily Little. Below is taken from *Psychic News*, January 23rd 1943, page 2:


Charles E. Loseby

Hatcher, Convicted of Fraud, Loses His Appeal

HE MUST NOW GO TO PRISON

THE Cardiff Recorder last week dismissed with costs the appeal of Austin Frederick Hatcher and Emily Little who had been convicted and sentenced by the Cardiff magistrates to three and one month's imprisonment respectively.

They had been charged with "unlawfully using subtle means by pretending to hold communication with the spirits of deceased persons to deceive and impose upon certain of His Majesty's subjects."

The Recorder found that both were guilty of the offences with which they were charged.

"This is a gallant effort on the part of the authorities of Cardiff to put back the hands of the clock. They might as well try and dam the ocean itself."

So said C. E. Loseby, in opening the case for Hatcher.

Saying that it was a case of far-reaching importance, Loseby said that there was nothing to prevent the police doing what was done in the bulk of such cases and proceed for fraud.

PLEA BY COUNSEL

Psychic research had many branches. There were people, and he was one, who thought that with greater knowledge of the subject and given greater research into it by the medical profession, there was no reason why the profession within 20 years should not advance its science by not less than 100 per cent.

Hatcher had been told that he had brought happiness incomparable into the lives of people, because not only had he satisfied them that their "dead" ones were still, alive, but had been able to identify them and were able to see, hear and speak to them.

The police visited a seance to arrest Hatcher, and by a chance got the only evidence in the case of any value, because if it were true that Miss Little was standing in the way described and Hatcher was sitting with the plaques and a tambourine in his hands, then that would be evidence of fraud.

REASON FOR SINGING

Hatcher in evidence said he was a direct-voice medium and in seances his "voice-box" was taken out of him and materialised in a part of the room or a trumpet.

He asked the people to sing lighter songs to create light-hearted conditions in the seance—which was helpful. On the date in question a hymn was started and before it ended he was in a trance. The next thing he remembered was finding the room in light and the people in confusion, and then felt a stabbing pain in the solar plexus.

In cross-examination he admitted that he had been convicted at Birmingham on a similar charge.

Carey Evans, who represented the town clerk's department, asked him about a Sister Agnes who appeared at the seance there and who, when the police turned on the torches, turned out to be Hatcher dressed up. He replied that he did not know what happened. He was in a trance.

"You had a plaque with a cross on your chest?" said counsel.

"I have not the slightest idea," was the reply.

"Did you have a white handkerchief over your head?"—"The white handkerchief was what the police said was the dressing up."

Speaking as an expert witness and a psychic investigator for 25 years, J. B. McIndoe, treasurer of the Spiritualists' National Union, said the phenomena Hatcher purported to display were not common.

After the Birmingham case he was present at two test sittings with Hatcher. Hatcher was securely roped in a chair on the first sitting. At the second sitting the additional precaution of placing luminous bands on him was taken. Materialised hands appeared and voices were heard. It was the opinion that he possessed genuine powers as a materialising medium.

Loseby in his address said the police case put bluntly was that Hatcher was a rogue and Vagabond and had no psychic powers, but there could be no doubt but that shrewd scientific observers thought he had those powers.

DUTY OF POLICE?

Carey Evans said that in his opening Mr. Loseby had referred to the miserable and contemptible action of police, but, he asked, was it miserable and contemptible for the police to do their duty? If anything was miserable and contemptible in the matter it was that people should pretend that they were acting by supernatural means when they knew quite well that they were faking.

After hearing counsel for the defence in mitigation ask him to take the view that they both had a good side also the Recorder said that it was a long sustained course of activities, and he felt that there was nothing that made it desirable for him to alter the sentences which had already been passed.

The first article on Hatcher/ Little stated: "The case has exceptional features and, in view of the nature of the charge, the S.N.U. exercised a close watch over the proceedings, which might become a precedent for many others." We can note that the defence counsel, Mr. Russell John, appears to have given an excellent defence, bringing in an experienced, high-profile respected Spiritualist, John McIndoe. The magistrates, in summing up, complimented Mr. John on the excellent way he had conducted the defence. Other comments at the end of the article included "It's a pity this case was not heard by a jury"[8] and "Several friends who were in court expressed their opinions that the verdict was against the weight of evidence and I am glad there is to be an appeal. As far as Spiritualists are concerned, it is the nature of the charge, rather than the person prosecuted, which will concern us in the long run." Under the 1824 Vagrancy Act, Section 4, a medium or his associates have no defence.

It was my understanding that all prosecutions under this Act came from this source, which states:[9]

> "every person pretending or professing to tell fortunes, or using any subtle craft, means, or device, by palmistry or otherwise, to deceive and impose on any of his Majesty's subjects; …"

but according to the appeal Hatcher and Little had been charged with:

> "unlawfully using subtle means by pretending to hold communication with the spirits of deceased persons to deceive and impose upon certain of His Majesty's subjects."

There is no such clause under the Vagrancy Act! In the cross-examination during the appeal Carey Evans, who represented the town clerk's department, mentioned Hatcher had admitted that he had been convicted at Birmingham on a similar charge (this also included Emily Little). Hatcher had been seized by undercover police officers in May 1940 and subsequently charged with fraud:

> "deceiving and imposing on members of His Majesty's subjects by pretending to hold communications with the spirits of deceased persons"

Charles Loseby conducted Hatcher's defence. A letter by Loseby can be noted in the correspondence column of the *Two Worlds*, August 23rd 1940, page 286:

> Sir,—In your issue of the 12th July, and again of the 16th inst., reference was made to the charge made against a Mr. Hatcher at Birmingham Police Court of having been guilty of a bogus materialisation.
>
> It is quite true that the learned magistrate, who tried the case with scrupulous fairness, was of opinion that the charge was proved. That, however, was only the opinion of the magistrate. There were several experienced psychic investigators in court who also heard the evidence, who expressed the opinion to me that they would not have hanged a dog on the evidence as it was given.
>
> As I defended Mr. Hatcher with all the vigour of which I was capable, I ought perhaps not to express a personal opinion on the merits of the case. It can perhaps be guessed.

---

[8] Under the Vagrancy Act 1824, Section 4, trial by jury was not an option, as the maximum penalty was three months, which did not give the right to trial by jury.

[9] Vagrancy Act 1824, Section 4: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo4/5/83/section/4

But I may be allowed to say: That had I been sitting as magistrate I should not, upon the evidence as it was given, have hesitated for a fraction of a second before giving my verdict. It would have been emphatic.

It was seriously given *as evidence against Mr. Hatcher* that in the seance room were found a trumpet and a luminous disk. A handkerchief was also found—so it was said. Nothing else of an incriminating nature was found, although the place was searched.

It seemed to me that the conjuror was a little short of apparatus.

Mr. Hatcher, I asserted—and I think rightly—was one of two things, a completely innocent man or a blasphemous fraud.

He was, however, fined a trifling sum only. *Verb sap*.[10]

C. E. LOSEBY.

Ernest Oaten

Alarm bells were being echoed in the Spiritualist press with concerns about some of the implications arising out of the methods now being used by the police. Usually the prosecutions were based under the Vagrancy Act, Section 4. Ernest Oaten, editor of the *Two Worlds*, published an article on these concerns. Below is a quote from the *Two Worlds*, July 25th 1941, page 236:

THE Police are changing their tactics in the persecution of psychics. For many years they insisted that all clairvoyance was "fortune-telling" under the Vagrancy Act, and those accused were generally convicted on the unsupported, and often fictitious, evidence of a paid "agent provocateur."[11] In a recent case however, a second witness—not a paid spy—was put into the box for the first time in my memory. The accused, however, did not hesitate to affirm that the police witnesses wilfully lied. That, of course, is customary in such cases.

Last week a new variant of the Vagrancy Act was brought forward against a Mrs. May Reeves, of Southwick, Brighton. She was accused of "using certain subtle means, namely, by crystal reading to deceive and impose upon Mabel Read and another of His Majesty's subjects." The other witness, however, was the driver of a police car. Mrs. Reeves did not claim to be a Spiritualist. Her claim was that she was a palmist and clairvoyant. She had been bombed out of London and came to Hove to practise. She had a firm belief in her own powers—the crystal merely helped her to concentrate—and she claimed that she was able to state facts about her clients, whom she had never seen before. She believed what she told Miss Read.

[10] Austin Hatcher was fined £10 and £2 costs; Emily Little, who was in charge of Hatcher's séance, was fined £5. John Sharpe, the medium in whose home in Birmingham the séance took place, was discharged.

[11] Agent provocateur (French for "inciting agent"): http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agent_provocateur

Now! in such a case it is simply silly to suggest that the clients were deceived. Paid police spies are sent in order to get a conviction, and the wheels are generally set in motion by detestable methods. Inspector Lovell said the prosecution was undertaken "as the result of complaints." I know those complaints! They are nearly always anonymous letters and are often sent by order of the priest of a certain denomination, whose antipathy to anything savouring of the occult is well known.

Psychic News reported in its January 23rd 1943 issue on page 4:

FOR FREEDOM?

"USUALLY, when the Vagrancy Act has been cited, it has been interpreted to mean that the pretence to foretell the future was a necessary part of the "offence." Prosecutions were instituted when the police alleged that messages regarding the future had been given.

"Now, by deleting the phrase referring to pretending to tell fortunes, and substituting the one under which Hatcher was charged, the police have given an interpretation to the Act which threatens the whole Spiritualist movement. As the law does not recognise the fact of spirit communication every seance is a "pretence" in its eyes, and every medium liable to conviction.

"More than that, it could be held that every Spiritualist service at which mediumship is demonstrated and every home circle is illegal. It might also be argued in the future that every Spiritualist who takes part in the "pretence" of holding communication with deceased persons is an accessory and, therefore, a lawbreaker. Moreover, the thousands of people who attend Spiritualist services throughout the land could also be regarded as potential wrongdoers."

"WHO is to decide whether there is a pretence of spirit communication, or a reality? Is the decision to be left to policemen, magistrates and judges who, too often, unfortunately know nothing about Spiritualism?

"We do not condone fraud in Spiritualism. Indeed, every exposure of a fake medium has always been made by a Spiritualist who, by virtue of his experience, is competent to detect the difference between genuine phenomena and the attempts to simulate them.

"In the Hatcher case the police could have acted on the ground of trying to obtain money by false pretences. But interpreting the Vagrancy Act in this new way may have profound reactions on the Spiritualist movement. Who decided on the new move? What is the reason for it?

"Spiritualists already suffer under many disabilities. They are denied religious freedom. Their mediums are at the mercy of agents provocateurs. Bequests for the development of mediumship have been held invalid.

"Now, there is a new threat, one that strikes right at the core of Spiritualism. It is ironical that at a time when we are fighting for freedom there should emerge what may prove to be one of the gravest threats to our liberty."

The 41st Spiritualists' National Union AGM held on July 3rd 1943 at Brixton Spiritualist Church was followed on Sunday the 4th by a Consultative Conference at Conway Hall, Holborn. Charles Loseby addressed the meeting with a "summary of the repressive state of the law as it affects spiritual mediumship". Dr Sidney Peters MP continued with an account of the efforts he and other members of Parliament were making to put the grievances of Spiritualists to fellow members. In John Stewart's (retiring) Presidential address he stated: "So acute has the situation become since our last A.G.M. that the Executive decided to open a "Freedom Fund." It is almost unbelievable that it should be necessary to do so in the mist of a war that is being fought for freedom."

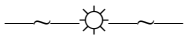
The Parliamentary and Freedom Fund were then merged and steps were discussed as to how best to defend mediums. This included the appointment of a special Litigating Solicitor and the retention of Counsel with the object of ensuring that sufficiently uniform procedure should be followed throughout the whole country. John McIndoe was appointed Chairman, former SNU President John Stewart as Secretary, and Mr J. M. Raffill, Vice-President, Financial. Over a hundred local representatives of the Freedom Fund Committee were appointed throughout the country. Their purpose was to maintain effective contact with the Churches and mediums so that immediate steps could be taken and adequate legal advice given whenever a medium was accused or charged of any offence.

It should be noted that similar lines of action were being taken by the Greater World Christian Spiritualist League[12] and were in full support of the Union. The SNU solicitor was Mr Godfrey Elkin; one of the first prosecutions they dealt with under the Vagrancy Act with fortune-telling was that of Ann Novack. Elkin appeared but the case was lost; on the advice of Counsel it was decided not to appeal, as it was considered it could not be won and money was needed for other mediums.

Action was taken in the case of Stella Hughes. The Home Secretary was asked by Hannen Swaffer to advise the King to grant her a free pardon in respect of a former conviction on the evidence of two policewomen who a year later were themselves convicted of "long systematic felony"; both were sent to prison for twelve months. Herbert Morrison refused to grant Stella Hughes a King's pardon, saying he had been unable to find any grounds which would justify him recommending any interference with Mrs Hughes' conviction.

On July 27th 1943, Mr Osbert Peake, M.P., Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Deputy Under-Secretary of State Sir Frank Newsam and Mr Graham Harrison received a deputation to the Home Office from the Spiritualists' National Union …

To be continued in the next issue



[12] It later became the Greater World Christian Spiritualist Association.

THE EFFECT OF THE VAGRANCY ACT

THE WORK OF THE SPIRITUALISTS' NATIONAL UNION

Continued from the last issue:

On July 27th 1943, Mr Osbert Peake, M.P, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Deputy Under-Secretary of State Sir Frank Newsam, and Mr Graham Harrison received a Deputation to the Home Office from the SNU supported by Air Chief Marshal Lord Dowding,[16] Sidney Peters M.P. (Spiritualist Healer), Thomas Brooks M.P. (Spiritualist),[17] E. A. Radford M.P. and Captain Charles Loseby (M.P. 1918-22), Barrister-at Law.[18]

The SNU delegates: Harold Vigurs, President, John McIndoe, (past President), Treasurer, John Stewart, past President (attended the first 1930 Deputation), A. J. Raffill, Vice-President, Ernest Keeling, (past President), General Secretary, and Union Solicitor Godfrey A. Elkin.

Loseby delivered the desired changes and amendments required for fair and safe practice of genuine mediumship without the fear of unfair prosecution under a law to which there was no legal defence. 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. Below are quoted some of Loseby's submissions to Mr Osbert Peake and company:

> "Now I think it only right and only fair to commence with this: that our opposition to the Vagrancy Act, 1824, Section 4, which is the main cause of the trouble, admits of no compromise. It is, in our submission, the embodiment of ignorance, intolerance and injustice. It must go. Those of us who either know or think we know the facts of the matter must not and cannot rest until it is removed in toto–that the matter must not and cannot rest until it is removed in toto–that particular Section–from the Statute Book.

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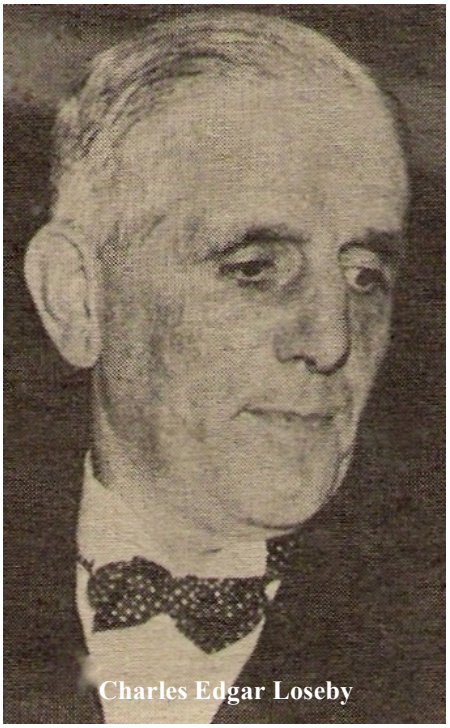
[16] See Psypioneer: Volume 7, No. 12: December 2011: "Lord Dowding – Philip Paul – *Two Worlds*" & "Beauty – Not the Beast – Lady Dowding".

[17] Thomas Judson Brooks MBE, JP. 1880-1958, was a devoted Spiritualist; for some years he was connected with and President of the Castleford National Spiritualist Church, which he opened in May 1912. See Psypioneer: Volume 7, No. 09: September 2011: "Tom Brooks" – Paul J. Gaunt, "M.P. for Spiritualism passes on" – The Two Worlds, "Castleford National Spiritualist Church" – Paul J. Gaunt & Judith Seaman, and "Tom Brooks' Church is Re-dedicated" – Psychic News.

[18] Charles Edgar Loseby, 1881-1970, was a captain, lawyer and British politician, being Member of Parliament (Conservative) for Bradford East. Some sources suggest that Loseby in 1943 was young and not very experienced at the Bar but this is incorrect, as he was called to the Bar in 1913. He founded a Society for Psychical Research in Leicester, of which he was President. He was also honorary legal adviser to the Essex Healers' Association (John Britnell), forerunner of the National Federation of Spiritual Healers, which Harry Edwards joined. *Psychic News* published his obituary January 17th 1970, front page: "Loseby was outspoken when Mrs Duncan passed on six weeks after Nottingham police seized her at the last materialisation seance she gave in 1957. He said that in law any person who by "gross negligence accelerates the death of another is guilty of murder. I personally, therefore, am satisfied that Helen Duncan was murdered." " His image can be seen: National Portrait Gallery Collection: http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/person/mp50884/charles-edgar-loseby


Charles Edgar Loseby

"All of us here realise and appreciate the difficulty of introducing matters which might be deemed controversial in time of War. We think however there are many things the Home Secretary could do if he were good enough to do so."

"Now the material words of Section 4 are these, "Any person professing to tell fortunes or using any subtle means or device by palmistry or otherwise" commits an offence and is liable to punishment.

"MR. PEAKE: It goes on does it not "to deceive and impose on His Majesty's subjects?"

"CAPTAIN LOSEBY. Yes, and it has been held in a Court of Law that these words are not of any importance because the mere fact of a person "subtle means or device"–in this case to be a Spiritualistic medium–of itself and ipso facto, shows that the person intends to deceive. The effect of the words has been established by judical decision. The words "by palmistry or otherwise" cover the case of any person professing to hold communication with departed spirits. A Spiritualistic medium is such a person. I refer you to the case of Monck v. Hilton, 1877, in which it was held that it was not necessary to prove fraud, as I have stated. The allegation of itself carries with it the presumption of fraud.

"Section 4, therefore, in my submission, as judicially interpreted and established, reads as follows: "any person professing to tell fortunes or professing to be a Spiritualistic medium commits an offence and is liable to the penalties under this Act.""

"Now here is the list of persons with whom Spiritualistic mediums are classified. I want you to note the people inter alios who are listed and stand in the dock with those persons sometimes called sensitives, and not inappropriately so called.

"No. 4. A woman deserting her bastard child.

"No. 8. A person in a public place exposing indecent prints or exhibitions.

"No. 9. A person lewdly and obscenely in a public place exposing his person with intent to insult a female.

"No. 10. A male person who lives on the proceeds of prostitution or in a public place importunes for immoral purposes.

"Fortune-tellers and mediums come under No. 11.

This is the list of people who are placed in the same category as Spiritualistic mediums.

"I am reading from the Act. I ask you, Mr. Peake, to consider for a moment–with what is this woman charged. What is the seriousness of the offence in Law, of this person who stands in the dock charged alongside the woman who has deserted her bastard child, and the man who has exposed his person in a public place and the male person who lives on prostitution, whose offence is deemed to be ejusdem gencris and such that if she is found guilty she is liable to the same handling."

"She is a person who has been heard to *speak* no more–

"(like Socrates) "A voice not my own speaks through me."

"(like Joan of Arc) "Spirits from another world use me."

"(like Luther) "Here stand I, I can do no other."

"Let her but admit such words and she must be told by counsel defending her that she has no defence in law. They are the words, however, that every medium if she is honest must say. Every medium does not say them because of the law and because every medium is not honest."

"Under the Vagrancy Act, 1824, any person may arrest a professing medium without a warrant. A policeman refusing to arrest when requested to do so is himself liable to penalties. Is that fair to the police? In fact it is the practice for the police to proceed by arrest rather than by summons. Worse than that, in many cases the police arrest upon request. I am satisfied that many mediums are only safe from persistent persecution under the above powers by reason of one thing, and one thing only, namely that these powers given by law to officious and unofficial people are not widely known. A veritable spate of attacks, however, might come at any time. They will come if mediums prove their value to the community in the way we hope and think they will."

"The reasons are twofold. Firstly, the muddled state of the law; secondly, the fact that under Section 4, the right of trial by indictment and by jury is not given.

"I want to deal quite quickly with No. I. The matter of amending the law could be dealt with simply if some member of the Government initiated some such amendment as this; "No proceeding under this Section shall lie against any person claiming to be a Spiritualistic medium and proved to be acting at the time as a representative of a recognised religious or scientific society or body." That would suffice.

"Of course, I visualise that the onus would be on the person accused to prove that she was acting at the time as a representative of a recognised religious or scientific body when it had once been established that she claimed to be a Spiritualistic medium.

"Secondly, the fact that under Section 4, the right to trial by jury is not given. A one line amendment would put that right. "Any person charged under this Section shall be entitled to trial by jury."

"Now how do we establish that claim? I am quite satisfied that the present unsatisfactory trial method is due to an oversight and nothing but an oversight. It is of course a fundamental principle of English Law (dating back as far as the Magna Charta)

that any person placed in grave peril on a criminal charge is entitled to trial by jury. The extent of the trial is dogmatically fixed by the rule that any person liable to imprisonment for more than three months is entitled to trial by jury. A Spiritualistic medium is imperilled to a much greater extent than three months imprisonment. I want to leave that for the moment though.

"Is it really true, this assertion that trial by jury ensures anything? The answer is "It is true." Trial by jury is the only known method calculated to ensure Justice at every stage. It enables the accused to examine the evidence of hostile witnesses, reduced to writing, and to protect himself against unscrupulous evidence and surprise–a vital point for mediums. It is the only system that enables a person in peril to prepare his defence knowing what the evidence against him is and insuring that he can prepare his defence having examined it with his legal adviser; it is the only system which ensures careful direction of the presiding judge on the facts, the law and the admissible evidence–the judge works throughout in a public court with a fierce glare upon him the whole time and is liable to have his directions and decisions examined the Court of Criminal Appeal; this form of trial carries with it the right of appeal to the Court of Criminal Appeal, who will unhesitatingly quash conviction if there is any irregularity proved at any stage. Is this important? I say it is of vital importance."

"What is the punishment that I say is greater than three months imprisonment? I have given you a list of the rather odious people with whom mediums are classified. No differentiation is made between them. For the first offence a medium is liable to three months imprisonment and to be put on a certain black-list known as the List of Rogues and Vagabonds. Any practising lawyer will tell you that being put upon this list, is rather a terrible punishment. You are on the list for all time. Whatever you do you cannot be removed from that list. At the top of it,–I think it is hardly an exaggeration to say this–might well be written the words "Abandon hope all ye whose names are written here."

"The penalty of being black-listed is such that I would undertake to destroy any medium as a medium, however valuable to Science, within a short period of time. I say I know of one case in which a medium this year, as a medium, has been destroyed–and through this list.

"For the second offence a person goes to trial knowing that the Court is told as she is being tried: "This is a person who has been condemned of using a subtle means to deceive and impose." For the second offence, on conviction, the punishment is one year's imprisonment a whipping, and her name is placed on a different black-list, namely a list of Incorrigible Rogues. By a subtle gesture under the Vagrancy Act, 1824, things were so manipulated that there was no right to trial by jury in this case either."

"By one of the law's vagaries a medium convicted and sentenced to imprisonment has it recorded not only that she has been sentenced to imprisonment but also that she has been found guilty of using "subtle craft to deceive and impose," although she will not be allowed to submit in evidence that she was in truth and in fact a genuine medium. The mere fact of holding yourself out to be a medium has been held, by the Court of 1877, of itself to prove that you are a fraud. That might do for the year 1877, but who is there who would be heard to-day to say that from such facts such a conclusion and such a deduction is an inevitable and right conclusion in the year 1943.

"Now, if nothing is done in the matter quickly, will great harm be done? The answer is that great harm may be done. Nothing was done by Mr. Clynes thirteen years ago and great harm was done. It is only fair to remember that the Government of that time were warned of many dangers and apparently took no steps in regard to any of them.

"The wrongness of inactivity is made plain by a consideration of the qualities and nature of these people under discussion–these people who are treated by the Legislation as coming naturally under the Poor Law Administration, who are being treated not as gifted persons of high potential value, but as being odious. The quality and nature of them was well described by the last Deputation all of whom had mediums under observation for many years."

"There is one final word I must say. There is not a person in this room who would not wish to disassociate himself from me and repudiate me if I were to suggest by implication or otherwise that the Home Office had been a conscious party to injustice. No such suggestion of course is made. The suggestion and submission is that the Home Office could help to rectify matters.

"Now for my precise proposals. These are the proposals which I most respectfully put forward for your consideration and I prefer to do so without argument. I attach the greatest importance to No. 4."

"If that were considered then of course it would govern all the others. It would satisfy me personally, better than anything. Of one thing in regard to this Committee I am sure. You would discover a surprising consensus of opinion by the Home Office representatives and the representatives of ourselves as to what is desirable and could be done. You would certainly find no desire on the part of any representatives of Spiritualistic organisations to weaken the machinery of Government regarding fraud or chichanery [sic]. Anything in the nature of fraud or chicanery is, of course, deadly to the Cause we are representing.

"I will not argue the other points. I will but read the proposals. I would put No. 4 first. We ask for no more than that and I realise myself that we can hardly expect more. The detail would obviously have to be discussed on either side. When I said I had something in mind to cover an amendment proposed earlier I was thinking of this. The amendment in question would have to be considered as to whether it could be put forward at all, as to whether it was in the best form or in what form it could be put."

PROPOSALS HANDED IN.

I. The Home Secretary is asked to secure the amendment of Section 4 of the Vagrancy Act, 1824, through the following amendments: –

At the end of Section 4, add the words following:–

(a) No proceedings under this Section shall lie against any person claiming to be a Spiritualistic medium proved to be acting at the time as a servant of recognised religious or scientific society or body.
(b) Any person charged under this Section shall be liable to Trial by Jury.

2. *To advise the Police*

In the matter of proceedings against Spiritualistic Mediums to proceed under the Common Law and to avoid the use of machinery provided under the Vagrancy Act, 1824, Section 4 (and any advices from the Home Office I have no doubt are of the greatest possible value).

3. *To advise the Magistracy*

To frown upon any unfair use of the Vagrancy Act, 1824, Section 4, in so far as it relates to Spiritualistic mediums, for example, in such cases as when fraud is alleged and there are alternative methods provided under the above Act and under the Common Law.

4. The Home Secretary is asked to set up a small Committee consisting of representatives of the Home Secretary and representatives of Spiritualist and Psychic Research Organisations and kindred bodies, to consider the Vagrancy Act, 1824, Section 4, and the machinery provided under it in so far as it affects Spiritualistic mediums, and to report.

5. To move for the appointment of a Select Committee of Members of Parliament to consider the Vagrancy Act, 1824 and Section 4 of the said Act in particular. This Committee I submit should be set up as well as the Home Office Committee.

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SNU President Harold Vigurs dealt with the religious aspect of mediumship in some detail, including the Education Scheme showing the Union as a responsible organised body and the vital part mediumship plays in their religion. Lord Dowding, Dr. Sidney Peters, John Stewart and Mr. Raffill also spoke. Thomas Brooks MBE., M.P., addressed Mr. Peake, who was well known in these circles for the last thirty years as a practising Spiritualist. It was through Brooks that the letters in connection with the deputation came to the Home Office. The SNU Solicitor, Mr. Elkin, spoke briefly:

MR. ELKIN. I am not a Spiritualist, but I feel it my duty to speak. I am concerned only with justice and it seems to me the penalties under the Law are prescribed to prevent and punish evil doing. But so far as I can see of these people, there is nothing evil in this matter; on the contrary, it seems to be beneficial and therefore my stand in this matter is the stand of the millions in this country who have no sympathy, perhaps, with this cult but who stand for the freedom of the Atlantic Charter. There is no other case in which I find myself having to go to a Court of Law and having to plead "guilty" because there is no defence I can put forward. I have *no* defence. There is no other religion, or anything approaching religion, which is so penalised under the statutes of this country. Even Sun Worshipers are allowed freedom and the Law is only concerned to prevent people indulging in cults which are evil.

Mr. Peake concluded the meeting:

MR. PEAKE: I have listened carefully and with interest to everything that you have said. I notice that a shorthand report is being taken and I feel sure that in due course I shall receive a copy of the transcript, and that will be carefully studied in the Home Office in order that we may form our view as to whether anything could or should be undertaken at the present time.

I shall report to the Home Secretary not only what the Deputation has said, but also the general feeling of uneasiness which the Deputation has conveyed to me.

Four months would pass:

REPLY FROM THE HOME SECRETARY TO DR. SIDNEY J. PETERS, M.P.

Right Hon. H. Morrison, M. P.

I have now given very careful consideration to the representations put forward by the deputation from the Spiritualists' National Union which was received by Mr. Peake on the 27th July.

As was recognised by the members of the deputation, there can be no question of introducing legislation in wartime to amend Section 4 of the Vagrancy Act, 1824. In any case I fear that it would prove extremely difficult to frame an amendment of the law which, while meeting the aspirations of spiritualists, would not open the door wide to frauds and grave abuses.

I have considered the suggestion that a committee should be appointed, consisting of representatives of the Home Office and of spiritualist and psychical research organisations, to consider this question, but I have come to the conclusion that the appointment of such a committee would not be an appropriate method of dealing with the problem.

I appreciate, however, the feelings of spiritualists on this subject, and I have made enquiries as to prosecutions under this Act. I understand that it is the practice in some police forces in cases of this kind to institute proceedings only against persons whose activities have been the subject of complaint by members of the public and where there is evidence that the person is an impostor and taking money or other valuable consideration. Although I have no power to issue any directions to the police as to the manner in which they should enforce the law, I have asked Chief Constables to consider the adoption of this practice in their forces.[19] Further than this I cannot go, but, if the practice I have described is generally adopted persons bona fide engaged in the ministrations of the spiritualist churches and in psychical research should not find themselves hampered by the provisions of the law.

27th November, 1943.

[19] The Chief Constables' Association declined to receive a deputation from the SNU.

John Brown McIndoe

REPLY TO THE HOME SECRETARY'S LETTER.

7th December, 1943.

Dear Home Secretary,

Your reply (sent through Dr. Peters on 29th November) to the Deputation which was received by Mr. Peake on July 27th, has been read by us with feelings of astonishment and even indignation.

In approaching you, the responsible Minister of a Government pledged to the principles of Religious Freedom embodied in the Atlantic Charter, we had felt convinced that it would only be necessary to draw your attention to the indignities and injustices inflicted on Spiritualists in order to secure, as the very least possible response from you, the appointment of a committee to advise how these grievances could be most quickly and effectively remedied.

We stressed that mediums are important and valuable members of the community. We did not ask that they should be specially privileged, but merely that the law should cease to discriminate against them, that they should have elementary justice, the right of trial by jury when accused. That is a fundamental right of every British citizen. But it is denied to mediums charged under Section 4 of the Vagrancy Act, 1824, the harsh penalties of which entail grievous peril to those involved.

Is it seriously contended that there is in the House of Commons one single Member whose ideals of justice are so low that he would describe as "controversial" our plea for trial by jury?

How can it be that granting this to mediums–or anyone else–would, to quote your own words, "open the door wide to fraud and grave abuses?" Nothing in your letter deals with, or even begins to touch, this entirely reasonable request.

That you have suggested to all Chief Constables that they should "consider" adopting the procedure which some now follow has no bearing upon it.

To say that you can go no further than that to remedy our grievances seems to us to savour almost of insult. In plain language it means that you prefer to let mediums remain the victims of the whims and prejudices of the less enlightened of the police in their administration of an antiquated Act of Parliament; to force on them the ordeal of a trial in which Mr. Loseby, speaking as a practising barrister with many years experience, says the scales of justice are heavily weighted against the defence; and with the knowledge that penalties evolved during the dark ages may be inflicted upon them.

You refer to the "aspirations of Spiritualists" and say that you appreciate their feelings. But it seems that you fail to realise that Spiritualism is the religion of many thousands of your fellow citizens.

Our mediums, by the exercise of their psychic gifts, have proved that men live on after physical death, and thus, as well as in other ways, provide an incentive and a stimulus to higher ethical standards of life.

We demand for them respect and even-handed justice.

It is intolerable to us that they shall any longer remain liable to street arrest, even in any single town, at the whim of a prejudiced Chief Constable. It is intolerable that when brought to Court they should be denied a fair trial with adequate right of appeal. It is intolerable that they should be subject, on conviction, to barbaric penalties, including their listing as rogues and vagabonds along with the ten categories of wretched, disreputable, or odious persons thus stigmatised by the Vagrancy Act.

We have waited four months for this unsatisfactory reply, and we feel strongly that we had a right to expect better treatment from the Home Secretary of this free nation.

We appear now to have no alternative but to go back to our people, and to the public at large, and tell them that we have no hope for justice, even elementary justice, or for fair hearing from the Home Office.

Nevertheless, we trust that even at this eleventh hour you will still find it possible, on a further review of our case, to grant at least our request for a full inquiry by a representative committee.

Yours faithfully,

(Sgd.) J. B. MCINDOE,
Chairman, Parliamentary Committee.

The Right Hon. H. Morrison, M .P.,
Home Secretary,
House of Commons.

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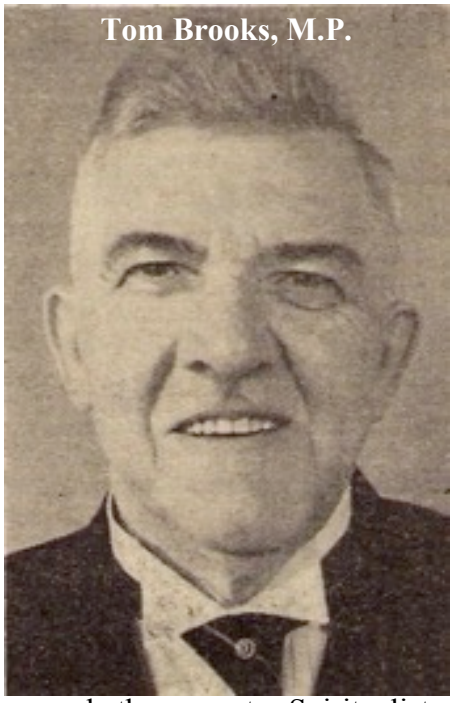
Tom Brooks, M.P.

The Home Secretary stood firm in his decisions; numerous letters were sent to Morrison from Brooks and Loseby on behalf of the SNU. But Morrison's position and general response was, "I can only reiterate what I already said in my letter of the 27th November 1943." One of the issues was for the "right to trial by jury"; Brooks in a letter to Morrison on January 14th 1944 made another attempt in this avenue.

This is the final exchange of letters at this time:

14th *January*, 1944.

Dear Mr. Morrison,

I have consulted the Spiritualists' National Union on your reply to Mr. Loseby's letter dated 21st December.

They have asked me to let you know that they consider that you have not even dealt with the main issue which is whether or not a Spiritualist medium charged, fairly or unfairly, with an offence, should be entitled to defend himself or herself according to the ordinary process of law. They do not accept the implication in your letter that the Police will not move unless invited to do so and that, therefore, such matters as fair trial and defence are formalities only.

In order to make their position plain, beyond all possibility of misunderstanding, they now, formally, ask you to initiate a one line amendment to Section 4 of the Vagrancy Act increasing the maximum penalty of imprisonment from *three* months to *four* months.

Such an amendment would carry with it automatically the right to trial by jury and, whilst bettering the position, would not favour the accused, would be non-controversial, and would take up but a few moments of Parliamentary time–certainly not so much as the Bill relating to Outlaws which we see you are to introduce this Session.

The Spiritualists' National Union note that you are unwilling to have the matter enquired into by any committee representative or otherwise and however small. They wish me to say that they regard this as a plain indication that you realise that every contention thay [sic] have made is just and would upon enquiry be so found.

Yours sincerely,

T. J. BROOKS.

Home Office, 24th Jan., 1941.

Dear Brooks,

You wrote to me on the 14th Jan on behalf of the Spiritualists' National Union, asking me to introduce legislation to increase the maximum penalty under section 4 of the Vagrancy Act from three months' to four months' imprisonment.

I have considered this proposal, but I cannot share your view that such a measure would necessarily be non-controversial, and I should not be justified in introducing a Bill to increase the maximum penalty for offences described in that section in the absence of evidence that the existing penalties are inadequate sanctions.

A Bill to increase the penalty would not in my view be justified merely on the ground that a certain type of alleged offender desired to be tried by jury. As you no doubt know a number of offences are punishable by not more than 3 months imprisonment and I cannot accept the contention that in fixing the maximum for certain offences, Parliament has thereby denied justice to persons charged with these offences.

I have given much time and thought to the questions raised by the deputation from the Spiritualists' National Union, and after full consideration I came to the conclusion that it would be right to give advice to the police in the sense explained in my letter of the 9th Jan. I have examined the problem again, but I am afraid there is no further action I can take.

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT MOIMSON.

T. J. Brooks, Esq., M.B.E., M.P.

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Around this time Maurice Barbanell published "Rogues and Vagabonds", Psychic Press 1944, which covers much of the above, with a detailed account of Stella Hughes, whom I have briefly noted. On page 60 Barbanell states: "It is the Vagrancy Act which we are determined to have amended. We do not fear the operations of the Witchcraft Act of 1735, for it is very rarely invoked. Apparently the minions of the law realise that to accuse anybody of witchcraft in the 20th century might sound just a little ridiculous."

On publication Barbanell had to add an amendment because, on January 19th 1944, Helen Duncan was seized at a séance in Portsmouth and together with some of her associates was arrested and subsequently charged under the 1824 Vagrancy Act. Other charges were later considered and added; the Vagrancy Act was upgraded to a single clause under Section 4 of the 1735 Witchcraft Act, "pretend to exercise or use any kind of Witchcraft, Sorcery, Inchantment or Conjuration…" Duncan and her co-defendants were charged upon an indictment, which contained seven counts – for the first time a Spiritualist medium was trialled by jury.

The stakes were now much higher – the long fight intensified.

To be continued…

Much of the information used in this article is taken from the AGM reports and the official SNU published report of the deputation. Anybody needing direct references, please contact the editor.

THE EFFECT OF THE VAGRANCY ACT

THE WORK OF THE SPIRITUALISTS' NATIONAL UNION

Continued from the March issue:

Over the January and March issues, 'Pioneer' has detailed the efforts by Spiritualist organisations, and in particular the Spiritualists' National Union, to amend the Vagrancy Act of 1824, section 4. Proposals and discussion with the Home Office in 1944 bore very little fruit, with no definite assurances and little co-operation from the Home Secretary, the Right Hon. Herbert Morrison. Efforts were made to try to extend the maximum sentence of a medium charged under this Act; as the law stood, the maximum sentence was three months' imprisonment and, with a longer sentence possible, the accused would have the right under common law to be tried by jury rather than in a magistrates' court.

On January 19th 1944 Helen Duncan was arrested in Portsmouth under the 1824 Vagrancy Act. There was nothing unusual in a Spiritualist medium being arrested under this Act but what was alarming and uncommon was that Duncan was refused bail and held in custody until the 25th of the same month, at which time she was bailed. Below is taken from the 'Two Worlds', February 4th 1944, under the editorship of former SNU President Ernest Oaten. This gives a good overview of the alleged offence and the continual problems which all Spiritualist mediums, and those involved, were up against:

HELEN DUNCAN IN COURT

BARRISTER CRITICISES POLICE METHODS.

SPIRITUALISTS will be shocked at the revelations made in the Portsmouth Police Court on January 25th when Mrs. Helen Duncan the well-known materialization medium, reappeared on remand on a charge of "using subtle means by pretending to communicate with deceased persons, to deceive and impose on certain of His Majesty's subjects." The court was crowded.

C. E. Loseby and Mr. T. S. Pedler (counsel) instructed by Mr. G. A. Elkin (solicitor) appeared for the defence. It was evident that the police expected a short perfunctory case of no particular importance, since they had not even troubled to instruct a solicitor.

The First Hearing.

At the previous hearing on 21st December, Detective Inspector Ford stated that a number of complaints had been received by the police and they put the premises under observation. On January 14th [should read 19th] several police officers attended a meeting. Duncan pretended to go into a trance and went behind a curtain. All lights were switched off except a faint red one, and a spirit came on the curtain. What they could see was a white shrouded figure and this figure was supposed to bring messages from the spirit world. War Reserve officer Cross dived on the figure and grabbed it but it was snatched away by a member of the audience. Such evidence is really laughable to those of us who have attended seances held by Mrs. Duncan. In the first place experienced

Spiritualists know the usual source of these complaints which have prompted many prosecutions. Most of them are anonymous and emanate from members of one denomination who make the complaints under priestly instructions. In a word the police are often used as catspaws by sectarian interests.

Again Mrs. Duncan does not "pretend to go trance" before entering the cabinet. She is always entranced after taking her seat therein. This is not the only evidence of malobservation on the part of police witnesses. The police omitted to state that before entering the cabinet Mrs. Duncan had been taken to another room, stripped and searched by three ladies, who guaranteed that she had nothing white about her. Before entering the cabinet Mrs. Duncan specifically asked whether the cabinet had been examined and was assured it had.

The Police Puzzled.

Now the police admit that a white shrouded figure was visible outside the curtain. Cross dived on the figure and grabbed it. He fell through the curtain and caught hold of Mrs. Duncan. I am informed by an eye-witness that Cross was staggered and mystified to find that the cabinet was occupied solely by the black-robed figure of the medium. He had quite expected to find two people in the cabinet—Mrs. Duncan and the white robed figure of Albert,—who had previously spoken and whose voice is totally distinct from that of the medium.

Cross was puzzled. What had become of the white stuff? Of course every spiritualist knows that it had dissolved. Cross thought that it had been snatched away by one of the sitters. I am told that he remarked that someone had got it, and that they would be searched. The sitters demanded to be searched, but the police refused the demand. Why?

Mrs. Duncan, who was naturally upset, made several requests that a doctor be called. That request was refused, though I understand a similar request was granted after the accused had arrived at police headquarters. The police had no right whatever to refuse a doctor on demand.

Last Week's Proceedings.

When the hearing was resumed on January 25th Mr. Loseby said he wanted to make a complaint in regard to the "pre-trial" treatment of his client. He was making representations on the matter to the Home Secretary and it was only right and proper that he should make his complaint publicly.

The Home Secretary, over his own signature, had given an undertaking to persuade the police not to adopt these pre-trial methods in the trial of Spiritualist mediums. "I have no doubt," he continued, "that the Home Secretary intends to keep his word. But the police, if requests have been made to them, have completely ignored them. I want to bring this to the notice of the magistrates."

Mr. Loseby continued that most of the actions about which a complaint was made in the case of the pre-trial treatment of Duncan were under Section 4 of the Vagrancy Act.

“Medium’s Body Endangered.”

Firstly they had heard of a number of police officers, presumably under instruction, doing a physical act which endangered the body of Mrs. Duncan. The next thing that happened was that Mrs. Duncan was arrested and taken to prison. And then she was charged under Section 4 of the Vagrancy Act.

“And this has been, done” said Mr. Loseby, “in a case which could have been brought forward under the common law, with the full rights of the common law. All this has been done in regard to a woman who, whatever her faults, is a person of distinguished achievement in the past, and for whom, if a chance had been given, sureties could have been easily found.” (Cries of “Hear, hear,” and “Silence in the Court.”)

He further complained that there was no reason whatever why she should not have been granted bail. Instead she had been compelled to spend five days in Holloway.

“She has been quite unnecessarily humiliated and insulted,” added Counsel.

This is a matter that has agitated the minds of a good many of us for a considerable time past. In fairness to the Portsmouth police, I would like to point out that this is not an isolated case, and that similar cases have occurred in other parts of the country.”

Police and Bail.

Det. Insp. Ford said he had been asked by the Chief Constable to ask for a remand for two weeks in the case. The matter was being reported to the Director of Public Prosecutions, and the full facts were going to be placed before him. The police had no objection to bail, provided two sureties of £50 each or one surety of £100 were forthcoming. The police would also like an undertaking that the prisoner would not communicate with any witnesses for the prosecution.

Mr. Loseby: “I don’t want any misunderstanding in this case. I am quite prepared to give an undertaking that Mrs. Duncan will not communicate personally with any of the witnesses. But I will be calling practically everybody who attended the meeting, and I will communicate with them through my solicitor.”

Det. Inspector Ford: “The police have taken statements from most of the persons who attended the meeting, and it seems quite improper to me that the defence should also take statements from them.”

The Chairman: “that seems quite reasonable request.”

John McIndoe undertook to be surety for Mrs. Duncan in the sum of £100.

I am glad to know that the public prosecutor is to be approached and I hope the case will be in his hands. When Mrs. Duncan arrived at Holloway Gaol on December 21st, she was immediately ordered to hospital.

A Wretched System.

Apart altogether from this particular case, is it not time that the whole system of "common informers" and agents provocateurs was abandoned and something honest, straightforward and British took its place. Such methods are out of place in a democratic country. The duty of the "agent provocateur" appears to be, to get a case at all costs whether the accused is guilty or not guilty. I have been complaining about such methods for thirty years or more. They are degrading to the police who have to adopt them. They foster deceit and I am convinced they lead to systematic perjury. They certainly destroy public confidence in the administration of the law.

The following week the 'Two Worlds' gave further developments in the case:

FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS.

The case of Mrs. Helen Duncan (who was charged at Portsmouth with "using subtle craft by pretending to communicate with deceased persons") is likely to develop into one of first-class importance. It will probably awaken intense national interest both from the legal and Spiritualistic points of view.

I hear that further warrants have now been issued by the police and a charge of "conspiracy" is to be raised. Spiritualists could wish for nothing better than that every aspect of this case should be thrashed out in the public courts.

I understand that the public prosecutor has now taken charge of the case.

When Mrs. Duncan appeared to answer her bail on Tuesday last the proceedings lasted only a few minutes and were further adjourned until the 28th.

The case will then be heard before the local magistrates, who will decide whether there is a case against the defendant. If so, it will be remitted to the Assizes, where a jury will be empannelled.

Under the Vagrancy Act it is not possible to have trial by jury, but by raising the charge of conspiracy, such limitations are over-ridden.

On February 8th the charge against Duncan and her co-conspirators, Ernest Homer, Elizabeth Jones and Frances Brown, was *upgraded* to a charge of 'conspiracy to defraud', replacing the original charge under the Vagrancy Act, which would have secured only a maximum of three months' imprisonment. Now there would be need for a trial by jury and, if found guilty, a custodial sentence of up to one year could be imposed.

Later, on March 15th, at a meeting with the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), the prosecutors, John Maude K.C. and Henry Elam, were still on thin ice. Even with the 'conspiracy to defraud' charge, they would still need to *prove* that monies were paid to see materialised forms at the Duncan séances in question; these séances did not come with guarantees. In addition, there was no physical evidence, as the claimed white sheet, which was 'claimed to be the control Albert' had disappeared when grabbed by War Reserve officer Cross.

At this time a clause from the 1735 Witchcraft Act was discovered and it was decided by the prosecution to include this act – Section 4 – in the first two counts of the charges against the defendants; the relevant words in this section are 'pretend to exercise or use any kind of witchcraft, sorcery, inchantment or conjuration'. This would change the whole ball game; Maude and Elam only needed to show that Duncan and her co-defendants had all conspired together to 'pretend to exercise or use a kind of conjuration, to wit, that through the agency of the said Helen Duncan – pretended to exercise or use a kind of conjuration, namely, that spirits of deceased persons should be present in fact in the place where Helen Duncan then was, contrary to section 4 of the 1735 Witchcraft Act.'

This is not to say that Helen Duncan and her co-defendants were in *fact* charged with witchcraft. John Maude K.C., in his opening words, made this statement as to what he claimed was meant by the first two counts of the indictment regarding the Witchcraft Act:

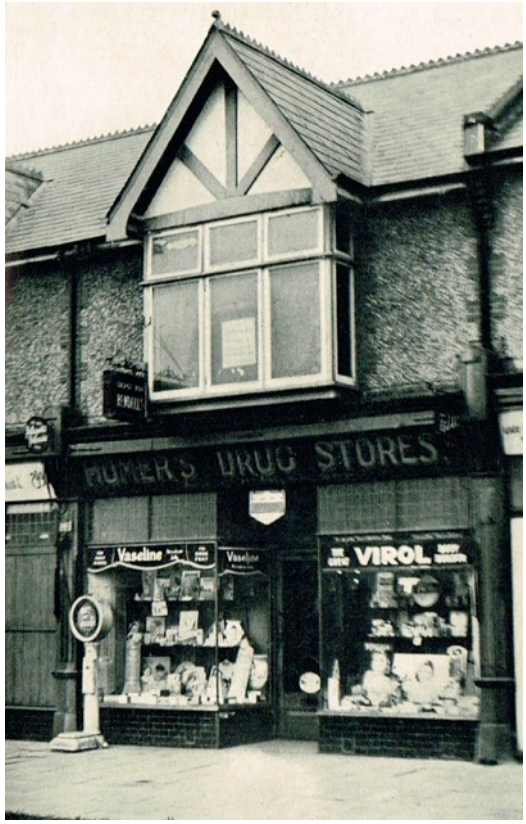
> I want to make it abundantly clear at the very commencement of this prosecution that this is in no way connected with witchcraft; it is in no way aimed at honest beliefs, whatever they may be, of any man or woman. What it is aimed at is something quite different. It is aimed at just ordinary common fraud.

The trial held at the Old Bailey started on Thursday 23rd March 1944; on day seven of the trial, Friday 31st March 1944, Mrs Helen Duncan and her co-defendants were found guilty on the first count of the indictment for conspiracy to contravene the Witchcraft Act. The jury was discharged from giving a verdict on the other six counts. The Recorder considered his course of action over the weekend and sentenced the accused on the morning of Monday 3rd April 1944. Printed below is taken from *The Trial of Mrs. Duncan*, edited, with a foreword by C.E. Bechhofer Roberts, Jarrolds Publishers, London 1945.

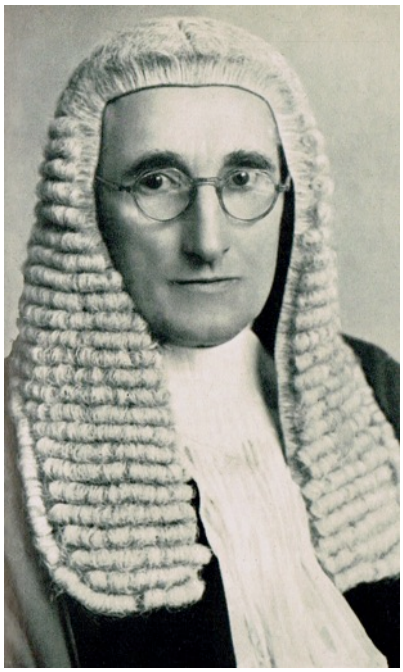
The 'Master Temple Psychic Centre', 301 Copnor Road, Portsmouth

It may not look as its name suggests; the 'Master Temple Psychic Centre' was situated above Ernest Homer's drugstore,[13] where he lived with his partner, Elizabeth Jones, who was known as Mrs Homer.

Helen Duncan was grabbed and arrested in this building with Mr and Mrs Homer and Helen's companion, Frances Brown, on January 19th 1944.



[13] Ernest Homer came from Staffordshire; he was a druggist, not a qualified chemist. He was looked upon by the court as a man of good character.



The Recorder of London, Sir Gerald Dodson, passes his sentence:

EIGHTH DAY - MONDAY, 3RD APRIL, 1944.

SENTENCES

THE RECORDER: Helen Duncan, Ernest Homer, Elizabeth Jones and Frances Brown, you have been found guilty of conspiring together to commit an unlawful act, namely, of pretending to recall spirits of deceased persons in a visible and tangible form; the emphasis, of course, is upon the word "pretending". Whether genuine manifestations of the kind are possible, the verdict of the jury here does not decide, and this court has nothing whatever to do with any such abstract questions. The jury found that the methods adopted by you in the exhibitions covered by the charge amounted to a fraud upon those who witnessed them.

It has been argued that the Statute of 1735, which makes false pretending an offence, is old and out of date, but fraud existed long before that Statute was passed and has prevailed in one form or another ever since. It was also suggested that Mrs. Duncan should be allowed to give a demonstration of her powers. Well, as I have said already, if this had taken place and nothing had appeared, Mrs. Duncan would have been condemned even before she had been tried. It would have been in effect a reversion to the dark ages, and to something very akin to trial by ordeal. It was not a question of Mrs. Duncan taking the risk; it was a question of her being tried according to the laws of the land, and there was nothing in this Prosecution directed against Spiritualism as such; and all those who may believe in genuine manifestations of a spiritual kind will, I imagine, welcome the expulsion of fraud from any of its observances. In law there is no uncertainty at all about the position of Spiritualists, among whom there are many sincere and devout persons. They are free to go their own way, and they are only responsible to the law when fraudulent practices are proved. In this respect they are no different from any other section of the community.

In this case the jury appeared to have little hesitation in finding that all of you had participated in a common fraud, and I must deal with the case upon that footing. There are many people, especially in War-time, sorrowing for loved ones. There is a great danger of their susceptibilities being exploited, and out of this yearning for comfort and assurance there are those unfortunately who are ready to profit. Many of those persons who seek that solace are trusting by nature and poor in circumstances, and the law endeavours to protect such persons against themselves. Now in this case Mrs. Duncan made £112 in six days, which is some indication of how willing people are to dabble in the occult. That being so, it is highly important in the interests of the community as a whole that these demonstrations should be conducted without fraud.

I have considered very anxiously the course that I should take, and I have come to the conclusion that, as the jury have found this to be a case of plain dishonesty, I can make no distinction between the accused and others who are similarly convicted. In the case of Mrs. Duncan, she has made the most out of this, and the sentence of the Court upon her is that she be imprisoned for nine months.

So far as you, Frances Brown, are concerned, it is a long time ago since you were convicted of shoplifting, and I dismiss that from my mind altogether. It is quite plain that you took an active part in this, particularly by the exhibition of these photographs. It is quite true that they were so crude that you could hardly imagine that they would deceive anybody, but you were active in trying to impress upon them the genuineness of these exhibitions by the handling of these photographs. The matter cannot be therefore passed over in your case without there being some penalty, but I make it as lenient as I can, and the sentence of the court upon you will be one of four months' imprisonment.

So far as you, Ernest Homer, and you, Elizabeth Jones, are concerned, I think you are in a somewhat different position, both of you. I think it may well be that, like other people, you engaged Helen Duncan, and it may well be that your enthusiasm for what you may believe led you to close your eyes to what was going on. You both of you have good characters, and under those circumstances I do not think it is necessary to pass any sentence of imprisonment upon either of you, but I trust in future you will be on your guard against those who are only too ready to make money at the expense of credulous people. I am willing to believe that you belong to that class, although it is not a matter which can be regarded as altogether a matter without doubt. However, I am going to give you the benefit of that doubt, having regard to all the circumstances of the case, and particularly with regard to your good character hitherto, and I trust you will guard against such a situation in future to the utmost of your power.

In those circumstances you will both be bound over to be of good behaviour for a period of two years in your own recognizances in the sum of £5, which means you will hear no more about this if you behave yourselves and keep out of trouble; otherwise consequences are apt to follow, you understand.

Helen Duncan, after a failed appeal on Monday 19th June 1944, was released from Holloway prison on Friday 22nd September 1944. It should be noted that there is a lot of myth and speculation given for the time Duncan spent in prison, for example she was given the keys to the cells; she was a personal friend of the prison governor; she held séances for the prisoners; there were high-profile visits by Winston Churchill and members of the royal family. None of these claims are substantiated, referenced or appeared in the Spiritualist press or in any of the research in the various referenced works on Helen Duncan. Helen died at home in Edinburgh on 6th December 1956.

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The photograph shows the Central Criminal Court, known as the Old Bailey, taken before the World War II blitz; where it was bombed was severely damaged.

Afterword:

Was Helen Removed by the British Intelligence Services?

There was a chain of events from Helen Duncan being arrested under the Vagrancy Act 1824, being refused bail, the charge against her being upgraded to conspiracy, which, in turn, if proved, would increase a prison sentence, her being tried by jury, then the further upgrading of the charges to include two counts from a clause of the antiquated Section 4 of the 1735 Witchcraft Act, an act which, at the time of its introduction, was a good one inasmuch as it ended the terrible witchcraft trials, hangings, etc. but carried a maximum sentence of a year's imprisonment for anyone found guilty under its indictment.

As the 1735 Witchcraft Act no longer recognised sorcery or spirit communications, genuine spirit communication and materialised spirits, etc. (as the later 1824 Vagrancy Act) in the eyes of the law were untrue. Hence the words 'pretend to exercise or use a kind of conjuration', which sent Duncan to prison. We can note that in this series other mediums were charged under the Vagrancy Act, like Austin Frederick Hatcher, highlighted in the January issue (and the allegations made against him were far greater than in the case of Helen Duncan!). There was no evidence that Duncan secreted a white sheet, as the prosecution witnesses suggested, as it was never found, or of any accomplice, only that Duncan had charged for her services.

So why did she receive such rough justice, with an expensive high-profile trial at the Old Bailey, especially during wartime, for basically a charge of *fraud*, which could have been dealt with at Portsmouth under the original charge under the Vagrancy Act? This is what gives rise to the fact that this case was much more that a simple case of falling foul of the vagrancy law. In 1941 Duncan, during her séances, firstly in Scotland and later at Portsmouth, via her control, Albert Stewart, reported the sinking of two British warships, naturally causing concerns for British security.

With D-Day being planned in 1944, had Duncan's mediumship become a danger? It is clear that, if this was the concern of British security, she needed to be *removed*. A charge under the Vagrancy Act would secure her imprisonment for only three months; a clause from the Witchcraft Act could secure twelve months' imprisonment and have her safely locked away until the operation was completed – she was released shortly after.

If in fact this is what actually took place, which is widely accepted to be the case, it is rather silly to accept that while Duncan was being kept *away* in Holloway Prison, she would be given the keys to the cells, allowed to hold séances, hold friendships with important persons and receive visits from Britain's wartime Prime Minister, Winston Churchill!

To be concluded in the next issue …

THE EFFECT OF THE VAGRANCY ACT

THE WORK OF THE SPIRITUALISTS' NATIONAL UNION

Continued from the July issue:

The last issue brought us up to, and covered the period of, the Helen Duncan trial under Section 4 of the Witchcraft Act of 1735; Duncan was tried (the first Spiritualist medium by a jury) at the Central Criminal Court, known as the Old Bailey, in 1944. For a period after the trial and the imprisonment of Duncan it did appear there might be further lasting repercussions with this section of the Witchcraft Act. Another medium, seventy-two-year-old Jane Rebecca Yorke, was also prosecuted and tried at the Central Criminal Court and was found guilty on September 12th 1944 on seven counts. Yorke was fined and bound over to be of good behaviour for three years; the light sentence appears to have been due to her ill-health and age. It is interesting to note that Sir Gerald Dodson was the same Recorder (trial judge) as for Helen Duncan. Shortly after Yorke's conviction police banned a Spiritualist meeting scheduled to be held on October 8th 1944 in Altrincham near Manchester to hear a trance address by healer William Lilley's spirit guide "Dr. Letari" on "The Science of Spiritual Healing". A police superintendent in Altrincham declared the meeting illegal under the Witchcraft Act. The meeting was in aid of Altrincham General Hospital, and the Ravenswood Spiritualist Society's building fund. The Home Secretary, Herbert Morrison treated the matter as a "joke", in the House of Commons ridiculing the Spiritualists fight for religious freedom.

The full story can be read on line, or downloaded from Psypioneer Vol.9 No.03 March 2013.

Shortly after, there was an incident against the President of Redhill Christian Spiritualist Centre Mrs Emily Johnson, Ernest Oaten editor of the "Two Worlds" reported in the February 9th 1945 issue:

> On the 12th December, two police officers, in plain clothes, called on Mrs. Johnson at her home, stating that they had been sent by the Superintendent of Police. They stayed for nearly an hour. They asked a series of questions concerning the Church, Mrs. Johnson's position therein, and its various activities, which were frankly replied to. They stated that they had been collecting evidence for some time. When Mrs. Johnson asked what she had done wrong, she was told: "It's not what you have done—but what you might do!"
>
> The senior officer then produced some papers and said he was reading from the Witchcraft Act, 1735. He told Mrs. Johnson that trance speaking, trance healing, clairvoyance and psychometry were offences, as they amounted to "conjuration"; that if these activities continued she was liable under the Act, and that if other mediums were employed they would be liable as well as her.

Although nobody was arrested, it resulted in the Centre's closure. A new Church was formed at Redhill a few months later. Below is taken from the "Two Worlds", January 26th 1945 in this earlier report Oaten had referred to Emily Johnson as "Mrs. Thompson"; he had received the news by phone and made an error publishing the name as Thompson, I have corrected

this. The article sums up the confusing contradictory issues of the time, to which the movement was subjected:

Spiritualism Prohibited

The police strike again

THE plot thickens! That there is a deep and well-conceived plan to crush Spiritualism and close the doors of communication with the spirit world is becoming increasingly evident by the course of events.

There seems little doubt that the resurrection of the Witchcraft Act was deliberately invoked for this purpose. The latest development has arisen at Redhill, Surrey. Mrs. ~~Thompson~~ Johnson, President of the Christian Spiritualist Church, in High Street, has been notified by the local police that unless demonstrations of trance mediumship, clairvoyance and psychometry are stopped, at meetings of the church, the said church must close down, as these demonstrations are a form of conjuration and are an offence under the Witchcraft Act, 1735.

From which it is plain that all evidential forms of mediumship are prohibited under the Act. This ancient Witchcraft Act was taken out of its dusty pigeon hole for the purpose of obtaining a conviction in the Duncan case. Counsel has expressed the opinion that genuine mediums have no valid defence under this disreputable Act. If spirits appear, a medium is guilty of conjuration; if they do not appear the medium is guilty of pretence.

In the Duncan trial, the Recorder, Sir Gerald Dodson, said "If Mrs. Duncan, by simulating trance, pretended to hold communication with spirits, that was the kind of conjuration referred to in the statute. This prosecution, as framed against these persons, in no way attacks Spiritualists as a sect, and by no possible exaggeration can this case be magnified into anything more than a common-place prosecution alleging fraud. There is no religious persecution even remotely connected with it."

In a reply to Mr. Loseby, Sir Gerald intervened with the remark: "This case involves no attack upon Spiritualism." And again, in the course of his summing-up, he said: There is nothing in this prosecution directed against Spiritualism as such, and all those who believe in genuine manifestations of a spiritual kind will, I imagine, welcome the expulsion of fraud. In law there is no uncertainty at all about the position of Spiritualists, amongst whom there are many sincere and devoted persons. They are free to go their way, and they are only responsible to the law when fraudulent practices are proved."

Mr. Herbert Morrison has adopted a similar attitude. Replying to a question in the House of Commons, on October 31st, 1944, Mr. Morrison said: "Although the Witchcraft Act, 1735, is over two hundred years old, it is not an archaic or obsolete statute. It abolished proceedings for witchcraft, sorcery, enchantment, or conjuration, and substituted a provision penalising fraudulent pretences to exercise or use such arts or powers. The question whether an offence against the Act is committed is a matter for the decision of the Courts, and I see no reason to introduce amending legislation."

In view of these statements it would seem that a medium is not liable under the law until an offence has been committed, yet the police take a totally opposite view and threaten proceedings before the event. They evidently take the view that the actual claim

to obtain communication with spirits is a pretence. At Altrincham, a meeting was advertised at which Mr. W. H. Lilley was to give a trance address. The police notified the promoters of the meeting that if such meeting were held, they would prosecute, as such procedure contravened the Witchcraft Act.

The police at Redhill have adopted the same interpretation of the Act; consequently we are faced with the position that the claim that spirits may communicate is evidence of pretence. A medium is thus convicted before trial, guilt being taken for granted. Such a view is the direct negation of law and of commonsense. Thus it would appear that there is a direct clash between the Home Office and the Recorder and the Police Administration. Such confusion among the administrators of alleged justice is deplorable and cannot but bring the law on this matter into disrepute. The common citizen is expected to know the law, yet the authorities are divided in its interpretation.

In the circumstances it would appear that the demand of the Spiritualists' National Union for the appointment of a committee to enquire into the state of the law is reasonable and justifiable. The Home Office refuses to appoint such a committee. What can be the objection? The Witchcraft Act and the Vagrancy Act were both placed upon the Statute Book before modern Spiritualism was known. In those days it was evidently the opinion of legislators that communication between men and departed impossible, and that opinion determined the nature of the Acts. We have progressed since then, and to-day such communication is one of the certainties of modern research. There are thousands of volumes recording well-sifted evidences on the matter. The Home Office is supporting the view that Modern Research should be strangled with the rope of ancient theological error.

Make no mistake about it, the hidden hand of theological prejudice is behind this continued persecution. I have reason to believe that there are murmurings in the sacred precincts of the Home Office concerning the wisdom of resurrecting this ancient Act. I had thought that the days of the Spanish Inquisition ended before the Witchcraft Act was passed, but it is evident that the placid submission of the public to restrictions on freedom of thought and action are encouraging a system of repression reminiscent of those days. One of the Four Freedoms, proclaiming the objectives of this war, was Freedom of Religion. Spiritualists demand this fundamental right and are determined to obtain it. We shall fight, in every legitimate way, for this freedom. The Freedom Fund Committee of the S.N.U. have taken up the case at Redhill and will fight to the end. We may lose in the Courts, but we shall win in the minds of all free men. I understand that public meetings of protest are to be held in the locality.

This is a matter which should engage the sympathetic attention, not only of Spiritualists, but of all men and women who love freedom. All such are heartily invited to attend and support these meetings, if only to discover the facts of the situation at first hand. The result can be confidently left to their sense of justice. This fight for freedom will be costly. We are sometimes told that justice applies equally to the rich and the poor, but experience shows that a well-filled purse is essential to the proper presentation of a case. The Secretary of the Freedom Fund, Mr. A. J. Raffill, 3, Lake Road North, Cardiff, will gladly acknowledge all contributions.

It is noted Mr Raffill was the Secretary of the Freedom Fund he was the vice-president (1943-1945) of the Union, and had taken over control of the Fund of Benevolence in 1938. His first move was to increase the amount of benefit which was being paid to the existing "pensioners". He also started a vigorous campaign to publicise the fund among the Churches and individual Spiritualists. The result was that sufficient support was enlisted within twelve months to maintain the Fund on a sound financial basis, and to widen the scope of its benevolence; he was assisted by his wife. He was part of the SNU delegation to the Home Office on July 27th 1943.

The Spiritualists' National Union 1944 AGM was held on July 1st at Leicester Spiritualist Church, Causeway Lane; today it is situated at 82 Vaughan Way. Below is the report from the "Parliamentary and Freedom Committee". Although it briefly coves our ground it outlines the beginnings of a more "active and aggressive campaign on constitutional lines":

> Perhaps the work which has loomed largest in the minds of the general public during the year has been that of the Parliamentary and Freedom Committee. The outstanding events of the year were the conviction of Helen Duncan at the Old Bailey under the Witchcraft Act, 1735, the rejection of our strong plea of a miscarriage of justice by the Court of Appeal and the refusal of the Attorney General to allow an appeal to the House of Lords. These events constituted a set-back to the Movement, and when they were followed almost immediately by a second case under the Witchcraft Act, and then the Altrincham ban, it became abundantly clear that a determined attempt was being made to stamp out mediumship.
>
> By means of legal articles, Declarations, and in other ways the Committee has endeavoured to make known the seriousness of the position. The urgent need was and still is to correct wrong ideas about Spiritualism in the public mind. We are much indebted to Mr. Hannen Swaffer for his letters and articles in the National press and also to the "Psychic. News" [Maurice Barbanell] and the "Two Worlds" [Ernest Oaten] for their valuable co-operation by continuously emphasising and keeping our legal and other disabilities a live issue.
>
> The policy laid down by the Council is that the Committee should pursue an active and aggressive campaign on constitutional lines. Working through the agency of Area, Local, and Church representatives, an endeavour is being made to create a live and efficient organisation, ready to meet whatever situation arises. A pre-election campaign has been launched and plans have been approved for the General Election and the campaign to follow. Reports to hand show that our representatives are exercising initiative and resource and that the work is being pursued with keenness and energy.
>
> Our ultimate remedy is legislation and all M.P.'s have been informed of our position under the law. By means of personal approach in the constituencies and in the House of Commons a list of M.P.'s who are prepared to help us has been compiled. This list of 38 M.P.'s should be considered augmented as a result of the "Memorial" Scheme. Mr. Hannen Swaffer and Mr. C. E. Loseby addressed a meeting of M.P.'s at the House of Commons and a further meeting was agreed upon. The Committee is deeply indebted to Dr. Sidney J. Peters, M.P., Alderman T. J. Brooks, M .P. and Mr. Clement Davies, K.C., M.P., for their valuable assistance.

All the forgoing activities require money as well as enthusiasm. A reference to the published accounts show there would be only a small balance in hand at the end of l944, after discharging the liabilities. Finance is the touch-stone whereby the campaign can be given effective expression. We shall need a fighting fund of not less than £10,000.

With WWII drawing to a close and the prospect of a change of government with the general election in July 1945, the Union's "Parliamentary and Freedom Committee" published its Annual Report, updating the committee's work as shown below. It is interesting to note at the end of 1945: "… there were 460 Churches affiliated to the Union, with a total membership of 14,924, thus recording an increase of 60 Churches, and 1669 members over the previous twelve months. An increase of 407 in the number of Class B. members also shows some development during 1945."

GENERAL ELECTION. Following the pre-election campaign the bulk of the candidates at the General Election were approached by means of a Questionnaire and of those elected to Parliament, pledges were obtained from over 100 of full support and about an equal number promised qualified support. The post election campaign is now in full swing and will continue until we have secured our freedom which we are not likely to get without a fight, for which funds will be required.

Mr. Hannen Swaffer addressed a meeting of 12 M.P.'s at the House of Commons on the 21st February and as a result, Mr. Clement Davies, K.C., M.P., with other 8 M.P.'s saw Mr. Morrison on the 8th March when he promised to consider certain suggestions put to him with regard to prosecutions. Mr. Morrison took the matter a stage further when in reply to a question in the House by Mr. T. J. Brooks on the 3rd May he said that the police had been advised by the Home Office "that proceedings should be instituted only against persons whose activities had been the subject of complaint by members of the public and where there is sufficient evidence that the person is an imposter and is taking money or other valuable consideration." When Mr. F. Montague pointed out that under the existing law it was criminal to undertake a seance, Mr. Morrison replied in the negative and referred to the Lord Chancellor's letter to Lord Dowding in which he said that "there must be evidence that the medium is an imposter and is pretending to have powers which he is conscious of not having." This is not confirmed by the earlier Judgments of the Courts and the Lord Chancellor's statement will not be admitted in any Court proceedings. It is clear that under the Witchcraft and Vagrancy Acts mediumship is an offence apart from any element of fraud.

The pre-election campaign was well publicised in the "Two Worlds", June 8th 1945 issue "Our Election Campaign". This gave a full template of instructions issued by the Freedom Committee for all Church Representatives "for the launching of a vigorous campaign among all Candidates for the General Election.[4] This is the "Scheme B," it suggests:

(A) Letter to each Candidate, enclosing
(B) Questionaire, calling for signed acknowledgment.
(C) List of questions for Election Meetings.

[4] Approaching candidates prior to a general election had been enthusiastically done in previous elections, but not on such a large scale.

Letter templates were included together with a long list of questions. Former SNU President (1941-1943) John Stewart, who was now the Hon. Secretary of the Freedom Committee stated: "Bombard the candidates with questions". Some of the letters and replies to the various Churches, and replies from Election candidates were published in the "Two Worlds". Charles Loseby, defence counsel for numerous mediums charged under the Vagrancy Act, and also the defence at the Helen Duncan trial the previous year, was co-opted to the Committee. He understood the legal position and had Parliamentary experience as an M.P. it was decided that the campaign should be directed by a Council of Action in London, on the policy laid down by the Committee. Loseby was appointed chairman of the Council of Action, and John McIndoe continued as Chairman of the Freedom Committee.

Previously on Friday September 22nd 1944, Helen Duncan, after serving 172 days of her nine-month sentence, was released from HM Prison Holloway. In March 1945 Duncan resumed her materialisation séances, reports were very poor and allegations of fraud were presented, Barbanell stated in "Psychic News", "This time the sentence is likely to be not nine months, but five years." Duncan was placing the S.N.U., in a great dilemma, as she held their diploma as a physical medium and so was sponsoring her seances. Given the arduous work in hand by the Union to secure religious freedom, another high profile court case would no doubt cause untold damage. In the previous issue of "Pioneer" September 2015, the full story is given: "Why did the S.N.U. remove Helen Duncan's diploma in 1945?" The whole matter was kept in low profile, though an official SNU statement was published in the "Two Worlds" "S.N.U. News" August 24th 1945:

> Mrs. H. V. Duncan's Diploma.[5]
>
> The withdrawal of Mrs. Duncan's Diploma was mentioned in the Press Reports of the Union's Annual Conference at Paignton. It is felt, however, that a fuller statement is desirable.
>
> The National Council, for some time, has been investigating reports by various sitters of seances given by Mrs. Duncan in Lancashire and North Wales early this year.
>
> It was clear that these seances were held under conditions of which the Union could not possibly approve and the results indicated that Mrs. Duncan's mediumship had apparently deteriorated so seriously that, for the time being, it was most undesirable that she should continue to give sittings as a professional medium.
>
> After correspondence with Mrs. Duncan, the Council felt reluctantly compelled to withdraw her Diploma.
>
> This decision must not be regarded as in any way altering the opinion previously expressed by the Council that Mrs. Duncan has genuine powers as a materialising medium.
>
> Until, however, she has re-developed her mediumistic gifts and is prepared to sit only under conditions approved by the Union, conditions desirable alike in the interests of the medium, the sitters and the Spiritualist Movement generally, the Union cannot give any official recognition to her work.

[5] This should read V. H. Duncan (Victoria Helen)

On August 1st the Union was devastated to learn the news their vice-President, and former Hon. Secretary of the Freedom Committee Arthur James Raffill, who was the chief regional officer at the Ministry of Pensions in Wales, was found hanged in a room at the Headquarters of the Ministry at Cardiff.

The Questionnaire submitted by electors in each Parliamentary Division was as follows:—

1. Are you in favour of religious freedom?
2. Are you in favour of Spiritualists having the right to practise their religion without interference?
3. Will you support legislation designed to remove legal handicaps which interfere with the right of Spiritualists to practise their religion?
4. Will you support an effort in the House of Commons to bring about the repeal of the Witchcraft Act, 1735, and the Vagrancy Act, 1824, in so far as they apply to mediums?
5. Do you favour the principle that Spiritualists and members of other unorthodox religions should be allowed to broadcast?

Out of 450 Questionnaires and letters of support returned to-date, 163 are from successful candidates. About half of these have answered "Yes" to all the questions, others have qualified their replies, and the balance have given letters expressing sympathy and general support.

For convenient reference I have divided the pledges into the S.N.U. Areas as follows:—

	Yes to all.	Qualified	Letters of support	Total
London	28	16	17	61
Midlands	9	5	8	22
Northern	13	1	4	18
NorthWestern	10	5	7	22
Southern	3	4	6	13
South Wales	5	1	—	6
Yorkshire	4	—	3	7
Scottish	7	5	2	14
	79	37	47	163

The qualified replies relate, in the main, to questions 3 and 4, and may be summarised under three heads as follows:—

(a) The proposed legislation must provide adequate safeguards against imposters.

(b) Unable to say "yes" owing to lack of knowledge.

(c) Would like to see and study the legislation before committing themselves.

(d) The mischief aimed at in the 2 Acts in question was imposture and fraud and the Home Office had so advised the police.

We can have no objection to the first three qualifications, but the forth needs correction. Neither the Witchcraft nor the Vagrancy Acts assist in the smallest degree in dealing with imposture. There is ample provision for that under the Common Law.

The names of the M.P's, in alphabetical order who have pledged support in each S.N.U. Area, are as follows:—

In the "Two Worlds", September 7th 1945 the Freedom Committee issued their Interim Report on the General Election. A list was published of the M.P's who had pledged their support in the amendments of the two Acts to make mediumship legal. The list is too long to include. Any one wanting a copy of the names please contact the editor.

In the list for the "Northern Area", who said "Yes" to all questions is the name J. Chuter Ede, South Shields (Lab).

The 1945 General Election resulted in the election defeat of the government led by Winston Churchill and the landslide victory of the Labour Party led by Clement Attlee, who won a majority of 145 seats.

James Chuter Ede, Baron Chuter-Ede (1882-1965) was a British teacher, trade unionist and Labour politician. He would serve as Home Secretary under Clement Attlee from 1945 to 1951.

On the surface it may have seemed to many Spiritualists that they had won the long battle which started in 1876 with a medium being sentenced to three months hard labour, under the Vagrancy Act; because in 1935 the newly elected Prime Minister Clement Attlee had pledged his support, that he was "in favour of freeing spiritualists from restrictions on their liberty and of repealing obsolete Acts."[6]

Maurice Barbanell founder editor of "Psychic News", summed up the political situation with the new elected government under the leadership of Clement Richard Attlee, later 1st Earl Attlee. Attlee took up office on July 26th 1945, having previously served under

[6] "I HAVE received the manifesto, draft Bill and questionnaire. The Labour Party stands for the complete freedom and equality of all religious bodies.

"I should, therefore, be in favour of freeing Spiritualists from restrictions on their liberty and of repealing obsolete Acts.

"I am in general agreement with the purposes expressed in the Bill and would support legislation designed to give freedom under proper conditions in those engaged in psychic research."

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.

Below is quoted from "Psychic News", front page August 4th 1945:

WILL LABOUR GIVE US OUR LIBERTY?

Attlee Has Pledged His Support: Morrison Is Concerned About Our Freedom

ARE our chances of getting religious freedom increased or lessened with the advent of the Labour Party to power? Though Spiritualists would not agree on the answer to this question, we think that our prospects have improved, largely because so many new M.P.s have given written pledges of support.

Though many are sceptical about pledges made during an election, it does seem, for the first time, that we have in the House of Commons many M. P.s who are not only sympathetic to Spiritualism but also convinced of its truth.

One welcome newcomer is Viscount Corvedale, the Labour M.P. who is perhaps better known as Oliver Baldwin, son of the former Prime Minister. Corvedale has made no secret of his Spiritualism.

Up to last Monday the parliamentary committee of the Spiritualists' National Union had received about a hundred pledges and there are still those to come in which were collected by area representatives.

CAMPAIGN GOES ON

As soon as opportunity permits, Clement Davies, the Liberal, whom all Spiritualists are glad to see re-elected, will be asked to continue our campaign in Parliament. Of the 14 M.P.s who gave us great help in the last House 10 have been re-elected. Seven of these represent Labour. One of these is our own T. J. Brooks, the Spiritualist who rendered great service in the last House.

Naturally, we must not look for speedy results from the new Government. It is pledged to certain priorities like housing, to give one example, which will take precedence over our demand for religious liberty.

The fact that Herbert Morrison is the Lord President of the Council, in charge of Parliamentary business, will assist us. Though for a long time Morrison was recalcitrant, he had the courage to change his mind when he met the deputation of non-Spiritualist M.P.s headed by Clement Davies.[7]

[7] M.P's. Interview Morrison: A deputation of M.P's. saw the Home Secretary in his room at the House of Commons on the 8th of March, 1945. It was an all-party representation, consisting of Mr. Clement Davies, K.C., Sir Herbert Williams, Mr. S. P. Viant, Col. A. M. Lyons, K.C., Mr. T. E. Naylor, Mrs. S. S. Silverman, Mr. Edward P. Smith, and Mr. T. J. Brooks.

Mr. Morrison was accompanied by Miss Ellen Wilkinson and officials of the Home Office.

Mr. Clement Davies, K.C., who led the deputation, took his stand on the general ground of liberty, of conscience, which was a cardinal principle of the Liberal Party. Every man, he said, should be free to state his opinions without fear of prosecution. [Continued on the next page footnote]

Previously he had contented himself with repeating the stereotyped formula prepared by Home Office legal experts. When he realised that our religious freedom was involved he expressed his deep concern and said he would do his utmost to get things put right.

LATEST LEGAL VERDICT

Formerly he upheld the Witchcraft Act, declaring that it was not obsolete. Last May he stated in the House of Commons that the holding of seances was not illegal. He had advised the police not to prosecute mediums unless there were complaints by the public and the persons concerned were impostors taking money. The police, of course were not bound to accept that advice.

The interpretation that Morrison gave to the Witchcraft Act, "after consideration of judgment in the courts," was contrary to the one held by all the judges concerned in the Helen Duncan case. When this contradiction was pointed out to him, Morrison stated that his view was supported by the Government's legal advisers, which included Lord Simon, then the Lord Chancellor, "no mean lawyer."

And Morrison insisted in reply to a further question, "I am advised that there is no real dubiety about the law."

Naturally, with the end of that Parliament in sight, it was too much to expect fresh legislation to be introduced. It was clear, however, that, despite Morrison's sympathy with our just claims, the position would not be clarified until the Witchcraft and Vagrancy Acts were repealed or altered in such a way that they no longer penalised us.

The position of Clement Attlee, the new Prime Minister, is in a different category. 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.

This freedom did not apply to Spiritualists because of the use made by the police of the Witchcraft Act, 1735, and the Vagrancy Act, 1824. Under these Acts, as interpreted by the Courts, deception and fraud were not material. The mere fact that mediums assumed or professed to communicate with the spirits of deceased persons rendered them liable to prosecution.

Mr. Davies told Mr. Morrison that he, and the other M.P's present were deeply disturbed by this state of affairs. It meant that in the practice of their religion, the fear of prosecution hung over thousands of decent citizens, a thing which was most objectionable, apart altogether from any subsequent action which might be taken by the police.-

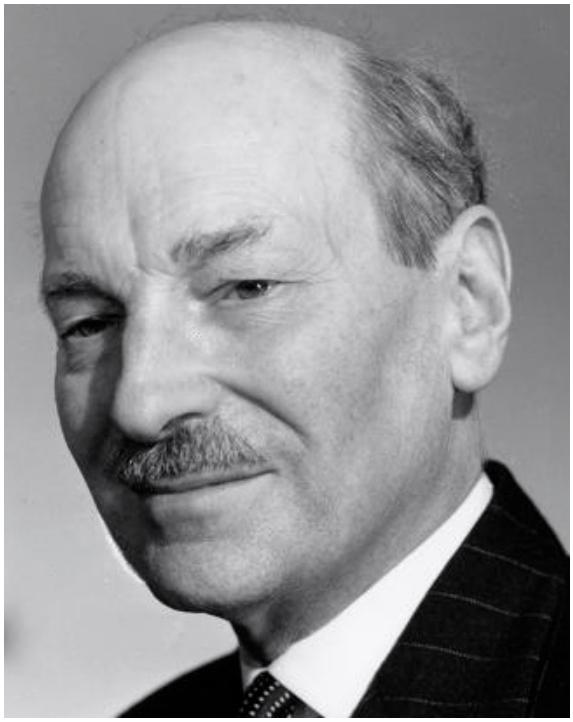
Sir Herbert Williams, Conservative, and Mr. S. P. Viant, Labour, strongly supported Mr. Davies. Although they could not speak for their parties, they felt that there would be overwhelming support for the views expressed by Mr. Davies.

Mr. Morrison, in his reply, was most sympathetic and understanding. He referred to the request made by a previous deputation for a Committee of Enquiry but did not think that would be of much help. The real remedy was legislation but he could not hold out any hope of that at this late stage in the life of the present Parliament.

He was open to consider any helpful suggestions and Mr. Davies outlined several to which a Mr. Morrison promised to give careful consideration, in consultation with his legal advisers.

The other M.P's. added a few words and the meeting lasted for over an hour. Although nothing tangible resulted, it marks another step forward in the campaign which will be followed up. JOHN M. STEWART. *Hon. Sec., Freedom Committee*. Taken from the "Two Worlds", March 16th 1945.

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."



Then he resorted to the stereotyped formula, obviously prepared by the anti-Spiritualist legal advisers of the Home Office. In fairness to Attlee, it must be stated that his reply was given last January, at a time when Morrison had not then changed his mind.

Now, with Attlee's pledge in our hands and Morrison's promise of help, it should not prove difficult for the new Government to give Spiritualists that freedom for which so many have laid down their earthly lives. Included in that "great sacrifice" are the Spiritualists who fought in the three Services.

Attlee has announced that his new Government is pledged to social justice. In one of his election broadcasts he stated that it was part of Labour's gospel to make Britain a land "where men and women may live finally and happily, free to worship God in their own way, free to speak their own minds, free citizens of a great country."

If words mean anything these certainly must include Spiritualists, the only body of people in this country whose religion is illegal and whose activities are subject to police interference and arrest.

Our case for liberty is unanswerable. We shall not go cap-in-hand begging for it. We shall demand it as part of our right as citizens of this country.

If the Labour Government refuses to give us our freedom, then we shall go to the people of Britain, the same people of Britain who gave Labour its overwhelming majority, and enlist their support throughout the length and breadth of the countryside.

We know what their answer will be, for freedom is precious to the people of Britain whose record for toleration is unmatched in the annals of history.

To be concluded in the next issue …

Photograph – Prime Minister:
Clement Richard Attlee who took up office on July 26th 1945

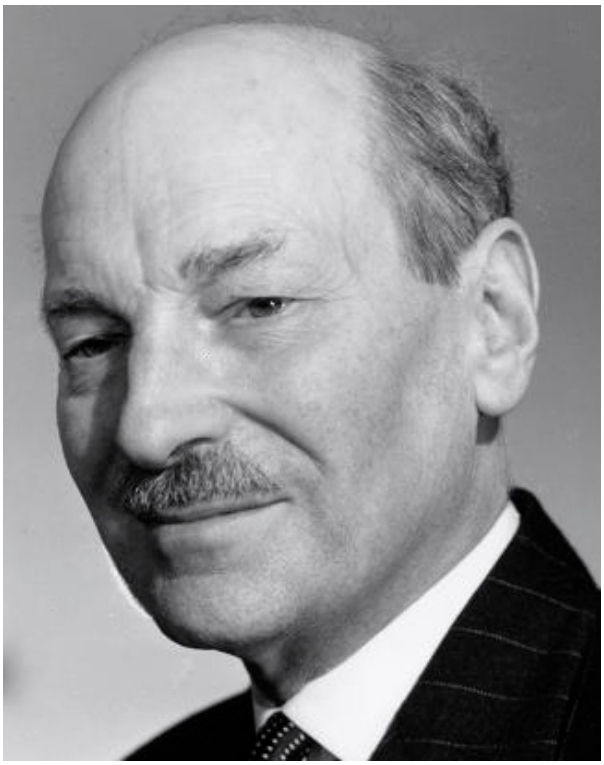
THE EFFECT OF THE VAGRANCY ACT

THE WORK OF THE SPIRITUALISTS' NATIONAL UNION

Continued from the November issue:

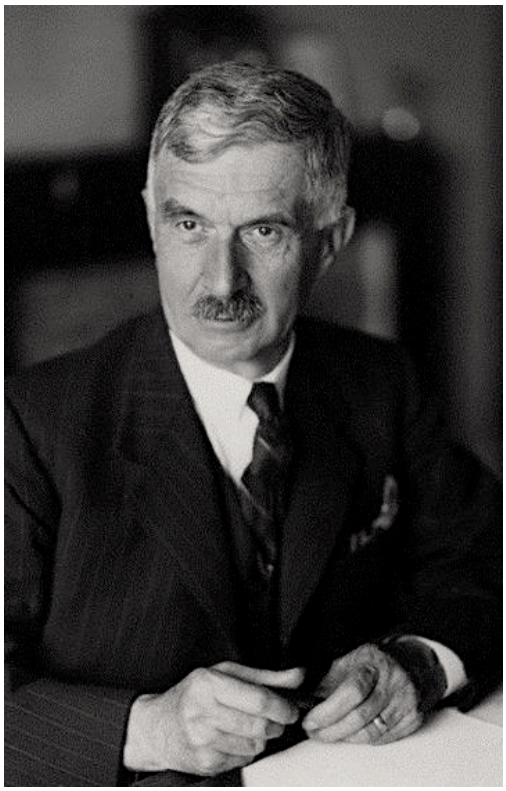
In the last issue we finished with the incoming Prime Minister, Clement Richard Attlee, who took up office on July 26th 1945, having previously served under Winston Churchill in the coalition government formed in 1940 to fight the Second World War. Attlee was Britain's first ever Deputy Prime Minister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

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.

THE EFFECT OF THE VAGRANCY ACT

THE WORK OF THE SPIRITUALISTS' NATIONAL UNION

Concluded from the February issue:

In the last issue we finished with the Spiritualists' National Union's deputation to the Home Secretary, Mr. Chuter Ede, on 6th March 1946, regarding the operation of the Witchcraft Act 1735 and the Vagrancy Act 1824 in relation to Spiritualists. It was already seventy years since the first prosecution, resulting in the first approach to the Home Secretary, and in 1946 the reply came after another six months of deliberation.

Dated September 9th 1946 it ended with these words:

> 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.

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While awaiting the Home Secretary's reply the fight for legal recognition and religious freedom was secretly infiltrating the House of Commons, with positive effect in persuading willing MPs to learn about the legal disabilities under which the movement had suffered for decades. Secret private dinner parties hosted by Tom Brooks were soon revealed; below is taken from "Psychic News", February 1st 1947:

CLAIRVOYANCE AT THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

ESTELLE ROBERTS AND HELEN HUGHES DEMONSTRATE BEFORE M.P.S

ESTELLE ROBERTS AND HELEN HUGHES—UNDOUBTEDLY BRITAIN'S TWO FINEST PLATFORM EXPONENTS—HAVE MADE HISTORY BY DEMONSTRATING SURVIVAL TO MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT IN THE PRECINCTS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

This has been one of the best-kept secrets in Spiritualism. Although the editors of at least three psychic newspapers attended, not a word of it was breathed to the rest of the movement or to the public—until one of the M.P.'s present dropped a hint to a Fleet Street reporter, with the result that accounts appeared first in the "News of the World," then in the "Daily Mail" and again in the "Star."

None of the Spiritualists broke the confidence reposed in them by their host, Mr. T. J. Brooks, M.B.E., Labour M.P. for Rothwell, who is a convinced Spiritualist and has appeared on our platforms on many occasions.

Those Spiritualists to whom we spoke—including Mr. A. H. L. Vigurs (President of the S.N.U.), Mr. John Stewart (Treasurer). Mrs. Estelle Roberts, Mr. and Mrs. Challis and Mr. Brooks himself —were all puzzled by the disclosures. The leakage obviously came from outside the movement.

But now the secret is out, Spiritualists have a right to know something of the events leading up to these remarkable demonstrations—for they were very evidential—as well as the reason why a ban of silence was imposed in the first place.

WHY THEY WERE HELD

In view of the difficulty Spiritualist leaders have experienced in their efforts to persuade Parliament to change the law so far as it affects mediumship, it was felt that an interest in psychic matters must be aroused among Members of Parliament themselves, so that the rank and file of the House of Commons would realise the difficulties under which we labour as a Movement.

And what better way was there of interesting them in Spiritualism than by allowing them to witness demonstrations of mediumship by some of our finest exponents?

Accordingly, then it was arranged that a series of private dinner parties should be held in the House. Mr. Brooks acted as host and the cost was defrayed by private subscription among prominent Spiritualists.

There were four dinners in all, at three of which demonstrations of clairvoyance were given by Helen Hughes and Estelle Roberts.[8] These demonstrations were not really the purpose of the dinners, the main object of which was to interest M.P.s in our case, and to let them know the legal disabilities under which we suffer.

[8] Helen Hughes: see "Pioneer", Vol. 2, No. 3, May 2015: "Helen Hughes Profile & Helen Hughes at Sheffield". Estelle Roberts: see "Pioneer", Vol. 1, No. 5, October 2014: "Estelle Roberts and the House of Red Cloud".

Mrs. Hughes and Mrs. Roberts were really invited to contribute to the speeches, but on each occasion the medium felt impelled to give spirit messages from the loved ones of the members assembled.

Helen Hughes

The first dinner was held on April 11. Mr. Brooks presided and addresses were given by Mr. C. E. Loseby, Mr. A. H. L. Vigurs, Miss Lind-af-Hageby, Mr. Hannen Swaffer and Mrs. Helen Hughes.

It was so successful that it was followed the next month, on May 28, by another dinner at which Mr. J. B. McIndoe, former president of the S.N.U., and Miss Lind-af-Hageby gave addresses. Mrs. Helen Hughes again spoke of her experiences and, as on the first occasion, went on to give clairvoyant messages.

At the third dinner on July 25, Mr. Brooks again presided. Speakers included the Dowager Duchess of Hamilton, Mr. H. F. Bendall (President of the Greater World Christian Spiritualist Association), Mr. John Stewart, Lord Dowding and Mr. Maurice Barbanell. Mrs. Roberts was present on this occasion and she gave a talk on her own psychic experiences.

Then, as had happened with Helen Hughes, the spirits she could see were so insistent that she also gave clairvoyant messages to the members.

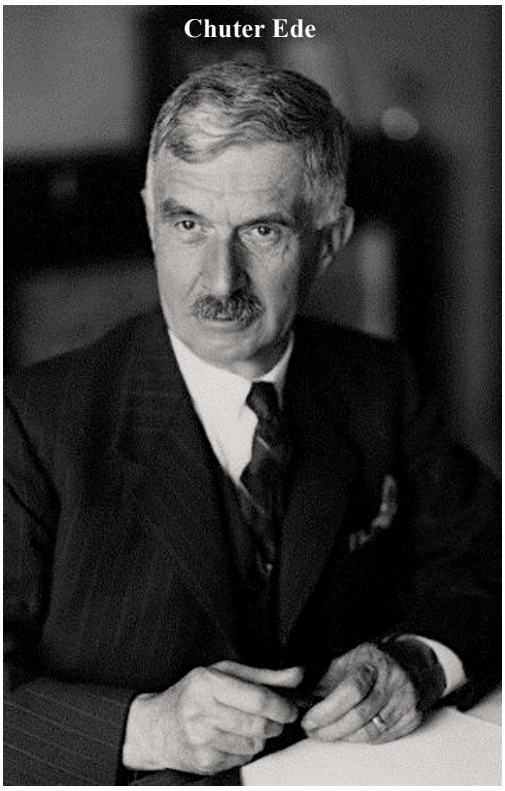
40 M.P.s ATTENDED

At the last dinner, on December 5, no medium was invited to attend. There were only speeches this time by Mr. A. H. L. Vigurs and Mr. Hannen Swaffer.

In all, upwards of forty Members of Parliament have attended these dinners, some more than once, and it is felt that good work has been done in preparation for the next attempt to get an alteration in the law.

Since the Home Secretary‘s reply to the deputation which saw him in March of last year, there has been a further approach to Mr. Chuter Ede and future plans are held up pending his reply.

In 1948 came the first positive move by Mr. Chuter Ede, the Home Secretary, who introduced a "New Clause" restricting the arrest of mediums *only to police officers;* up until this time it was lawful for any person whosoever to apprehend a medium or an associate who was thought to be offending against the Vagrancy Act. Below is taken from the "Two Worlds", Friday March 19th 1948:


Chuter Ede

Criminal Justice Bill Concession

Only Policemen now allowed to Arrest Mediums

Ever since the beginning of the Spiritualist Movement mediums have been liable to arrest for using their natural psychic powers to communicate with those who, having passed from earthly life, now continue their existence in the spirit world. This has always been a potential menace to Spiritualism when taking part in their services.

Mediums have, from time to time, been arrested and Spiritualists have constantly appealed to the legislative authorities to have those archaic Acts of Parliament, the Witchcraft Act 1735 and the Vagrancy Act 1824, repealed on the grounds of religious freedom.

New Clause

The first results of the long years of struggle, though very small, have now been achieved.

Mr. Chuter Ede, Home Secretary, has moved a new clause *restricting* the right of arrest, without warrant, in the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Criminal Justice Bill.

The clause dealt with a person pretending or professing to tell fortunes or using any subtle means, or device, by palmistry or otherwise, to deceive and impose on any person.

Powers of Constable

Under section 6 of the Vagrancy Act, 1824, it is lawful for any person whatsoever to apprehend any person who is thought to be offending against this Act. This power of street arrest, without a warrant, is now limited to a police constable, under a new clause proposed by the Home Secretary, in the following terms: Notwithstanding anything in section 6 of the Vagrancy Act, 1824, a person found committing the offence of pretending to tell fortunes, or using any subtle craft, means or device, by palmistry or otherwise, to deceive and impose on any of His Majesty's subjects, shall not be apprehended under that section except by a constable, and shall not be so apprehended by a constable, unless the constable has reason to believe that that person will abscond unless arrested, or is not satisfied as to the identity or place of residence of that person."

Amendment Accepted

This amending clause; put forward by the Home Secretary, was the outcome of a clause tabled by Mr. T. J. Brooks, M.P., Mr. Sydney Silverman and other M. P.'s on behalf of the Spiritualists' National Union, which covered the same ground but with this addition that the officer in charge of the police station to which the person is brought, should have the power to release the person arrested, if in his belief, it would not tend to defeat the ends of justice. The Home Secretary's amendment was accepted on his assurance that he would give further consideration to this aspect of the case and see what could be done to meet it on the report stage of the Bill.

Ruled out of Order

The Union, through its Parliamentary supporters, tabled a number of other clauses and amendments to the Bill designed to remove the unfair restrictions from which we suffer as a religious body, and to prevent the prosecution of genuine psychic mediums under the archaic Acts which make "witchcraft" and "fortune telling" criminal offences. The most important of these made it necessary, in offences with which mediums are charged, for the prosecution to prove intent to deceive. This was ruled out of order, as not coming within the scope of the Bill. When questioned on this ruling, the chairman said the clause related to a new offence, and the Bill did not alter the law with regard to any specific offence.

Home Secretary's Statement

Another clause which the Union was instrumental in putting forward related to evidence by practical demonstration, and after about an hour's debate it was withdrawn, in view of the opposition of the Home Secretary and his statement that he would be disappointed if some opportunity was not given to him, or to an early successor of his, to deal with the question of wiping out, or bringing up to date, archaic Statutes. Another clause dealing with evidence of agent provocateur was also debated at length and negatived when the question was put.

Entitled to Credence

In the committee stage of the Criminal Justice Bill, Mr. Chuter Ede, the Home Secretary said: "On the occasions that I have attended a Spiritualist seance there has been no response, and it has been said that that was because there was an unbeliever present. I have always been under the impression that that was aimed at me . . .

"I am a long way from being convinced that there is any grounds for these things at all, but there are reputable people of high scientific attainments who, on occasions, have said that they have found a response, and they are entitled to credence . . .

"I received a deputation from the Spiritualist organisations, when they laid their difficulties before me.

"I agree that the act under which this prosecution (the Duncan case) took place is archaic. It was passed in a different civilisation from ours, but in dealing with this kind of thing the proper remedy is not this Clause, but the wiping out or amendment of some of these ancient Statutes.

“I shall be disappointed if some opportunity is not given, I hope to me, but if not to me then to an early successor of mine, to deal with the question of wiping out or bringing up to date, archaic Statutes.

“In the meantime the Spiritualist organisations who came to see me made it quite clear that they did not desire to shelter fraud in this matter . . .

“After that interview I renewed previous instructions by sending a circular to the chief constables that no prosecution was to be undertaken—it was advice, not an order, because I cannot give the police an order—until after the papers had been considered by the Director of Public Prosecutions. The advice in that circular has been most scrupulously followed.

No Prosecution

“"I asked the deputation if since the Duncan case, there had been any prosecution to which they could take objection. They said there had not.

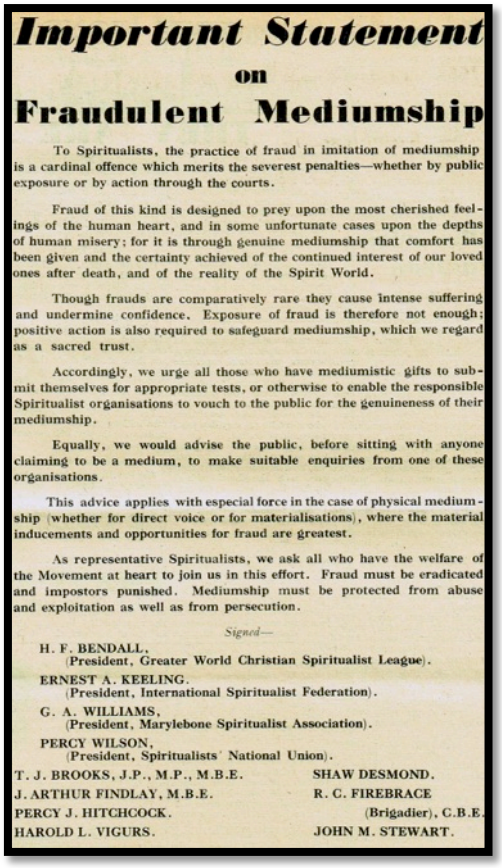
“"Since my interview with them there has been no prosecution of any kind. That is an indication that an enlightened view has been and is being taken by those responsible for enforcing the law.

“I hope it may be possible to repeal the Witchcraft Act. It is anomalous that, in these days, proceedings under the Witchcraft Act should be taken against people in this country.

“Any mischief that may be prevented by the continuance of the Witchcraft Act, or the application of the Act of 1824 to this kind of case should be dealt with in the kind of Statute I have mentioned, by some rephrasing of the old law, bringing it into line with modern conditions and modern requirements.

“I desire,” Mr. Ede concluded, “that religious opinion shall be expressed, and religious practice be given as free a range as possible, but I ask the committee not to accept this new clause.

“In view of what has been happening during the last two years, I am sure it is not necessary, and I hope that any theoretical case there may be for it will be destroyed by the legislation which I have mentioned.”



Important Statement

on

Fraudulent Mediumship

To Spiritualists, the practice of fraud in imitation of mediumship is a cardinal offence which merits the severest penalties—whether by public exposure or by action through the courts.

Fraud of this kind is designed to prey upon the most cherished feelings of the human heart, and in some unfortunate cases upon the depths of human misery; for it is through genuine mediumship that comfort has been given and the certainty achieved of the continued interest of our loved ones after death, and of the reality of the Spirit World.

Though frauds are comparatively rare they cause intense suffering and undermine confidence. Exposure of fraud is therefore not enough; positive action is also required to safeguard mediumship, which we regard as a sacred trust.

Accordingly, we urge all those who have mediumistic gifts to submit themselves for appropriate tests, or otherwise to enable the responsible Spiritualist organisations to vouch to the public for the genuineness of their mediumship.

Equally, we would advise the public, before sitting with anyone claiming to be a medium, to make suitable enquiries from one of these organisations.

This advice applies with especial force in the case of physical mediumship (whether for direct voice or for materialisations), where the material inducements and opportunities for fraud are greatest.

As representative Spiritualists, we ask all who have the welfare of the Movement at heart to join us in this effort. Fraud must be eradicated and impostors punished. Mediumship must be protected from abuse and exploitation as well as from persecution.

Signed—

H. F. BENDALL,
(President, Greater World Christian Spiritualist League).

ERNEST A. KEELING.
(President, International Spiritualist Federation).

G. A. WILLIAMS,
(President, Marylebone Spiritualist Association).

PERCY WILSON,
(President, Spiritualists' National Union).

T. J. BROOKS, J.P., M.P., M.B.E.
J. ARTHUR FINDLAY, M.B.E.
PERCY J. HITCHCOCK.
HAROLD L. VIGURS.
SHAW DESMOND.
R. C. FIREBRACE (Brigadier), C.B.E.
JOHN M. STEWART.

With the Home Secretary's positive comments:

"I shall be disappointed if some opportunity is not given, I hope to me, but if not to me then to an early successor of mine, to deal with the question of wiping out or bringing up to date, archaic Statutes.

"In the meantime the Spiritualist organisations who came to see me made it quite clear that they did not desire to shelter fraud in this matter . . ."

Major organisations like the London Spiritualist Alliance (in 1955 it became the College of Psychic Science), the Marylebone Spiritualist Association (in 1960 it became the Spiritualist Association of Great Britain) and the Spiritualists' National Union all had Committees/Researchers to root out suspected fraud and they would often work in unison. The Spiritualist press publicly exposed fraudulent mediumship; a prime example of this is the exposure of the high-profile physical medium, William Roy, by the editor of the "Two Worlds", Maurice Barbanell. "Psypioneer" gave a full issue on William Roy, Vol. 7, No. 5, May 2011.

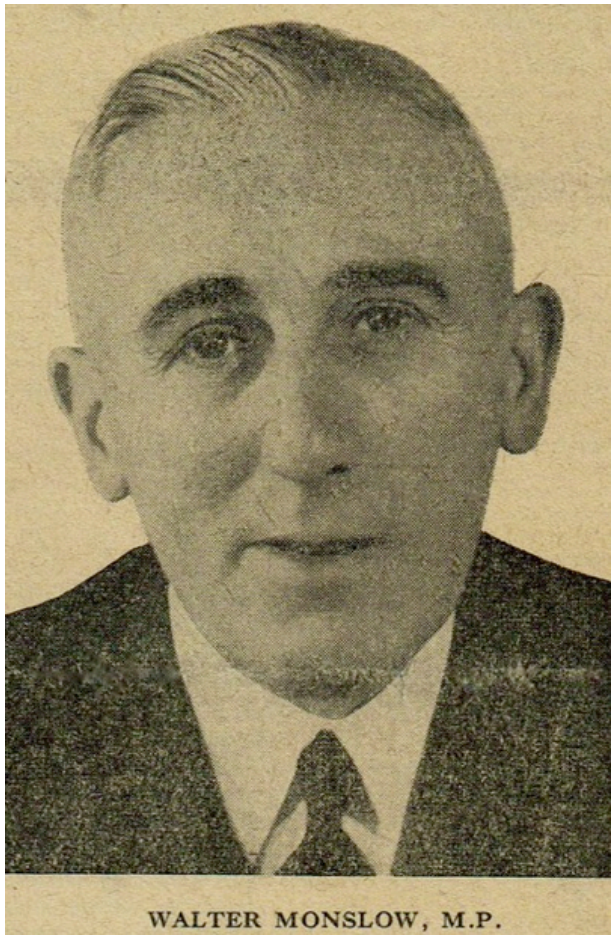
By the end of 1950 a new Bill was ready to be placed before Parliament. There were two principal aspects of the Spiritualists' Bill: the first was its power to free mediums from the restrictions of outmoded legislation; the second was the responsibility – the Spiritualist movement had given its pledge to root out fraud. The "Important Statement on Fraudulent Mediumship" shown, which was published in the "Two Worlds", August 19th 1950, indicates the commitment shown by the various organisations; it is interesting to note that it is also signed by J. Arthur Findlay.

Victory was now on the horizon. Earlier it was noted, in Vol. 2, No. 6, November 2015: "Following the pre-election campaign the bulk of the candidates at the General Election [1945] were approached by means of a Questionnaire and of those elected to Parliament, pledges were obtained from over 100 of full support and about an equal number promised qualified support." Five years later Mr. Walter Monslow, M.P. for Barrow-in-Furness,[9] offered to support the Bill. It was noted in the "Two Worlds", November 25th 1950:

[9] "Mr. Walter Monslow (Labour), M.P. for Barrow-in-Furness, is aged 53, and has his home in Wrexham. A Railway Trade Unionist, he first started work as a cleaner, fireman and driver with the G.W.R. He was adopted as a candidate by the Labour Party in 1943, and was elected a Member of Parliament in 1945, with a majority of 12,000. Under the Government of that time, he held the position of Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Minister of Civil Aviation, Lord Pakenham. He was re-elected during the election of 1950, and is now Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Minister of Food, Mr. Maurice Webb. He successfully presented a Bill last year to increase the Married Woman's Maintenance Allowance to £5 per week." Taken from the "Two Worlds", November 25th 1950.

A Member of the Barrow Spiritualist Church, Dalkieth Street, wrote to Mr. Monslow on the occasion of his first election, asking his views, and his attitude to Spiritualism. He received a very liberal reply that Mr. Monslow was all out for freedom of thought, and would give his support in any way possible.

Mr. Monslow, himself a Methodist, has certainly proved himself to be a man of his word.


WALTER MONSLOW, M.P.

The "Two Worlds", November 25th 1950:

SPIRITUALIST BILL GOES BEFORE PARLIAMENT

Brooks's efforts bear fruit at last—colleague Walter Monslow, successful in Private Members' Ballot, sponsors Bill in the House of Commons

From A PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY

WALTER MONSLOW, M.P., HAVING BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN THE BALLOT FOR PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS, INTRODUCED THE SPIRITUALISTS' BILL TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS LAST FRIDAY FOR ITS FIRST READING.

This is the first opportunity that has occurred in the last twenty years of bringing our Bill before the House, and is largely due to the strenuous efforts made on our behalf by Mr. T. J. Brooks, M.P. for Normanton, and Mr. John M. Stewart, S.N.U. Freedom Committee Secretary.[10]

Our correspondent in the House of Commons, a Parliamentary Secretary, expressed the opinion that this is the best chance our Movement has had in the last thirty or forty years, of getting a Bill successfully passed into law.

[10] John Stewart SNU President 1941-1943

KEPT HIS WORD

John Stewart S.N.U. Freedom Committee Secretary

Mr. Monslow, it is understood, had been strongly pressed by other Members (including some of the Labour Whips), to put forward measures in which they were interested, but had refused, saying that he had promised to introduce our Bill and intended to do so.

He is, thus, obviously a person of both character and determination. Labour Member for Barrow-in-Furness, he is, himself, a Methodist.

The Bill which, briefly, seeks to repeal the Witchcraft Act of 1735 and introduce changes into the Vagrancy Act of 1824, is to receive its second reading next week, the date having been fixed for December 1st.

The first reading of the Bill, more or less a formality constituting an announcement that it is to be presented to the House, took place last week, on Friday, November 17th. This, in effect, provides the authority for the Bill to be printed and distributed to Members.

SUPPORT

Sponsoring the Bill, which will be the first of twenty Private Members' Bills to receive a hearing, Walter Monslow is assured of the support of at least ten other Labour Members. Seconding the Bill will be Mr. T. J. Brooks, M.P.

The Rev. Gordon Lang, Dr. Sidney Silverman, Mr. Leslie Heal, Mr. John McGovern, Mr. W. Blyton and Mr. Viant, will be among the speakers for the Bill, which, drafted with the help of the Home Office and with the goodwill of the Home Secretary, Mr. Chuter Ede, has every reasonably chance of a successful passage through the House.

When it comes up for the second reading next week, the Home Secretary will first give the Government's view on the Bill, after which it is expected that there will be about three hours discussion on the matter.

FOUR MONTHS

The Bill will then go before Committee, before being turned to the House for its third reading. It is estimated that the Bill will take about four months to reach the Statute Book should it achieve a smooth and successful passage through the House.

A full draft of the Bill as prepared with the good-will of the Home Secretary appears on page 1046 of this issue.

There were 300 M.P.s concerned in the Private Members' Ballot: the Spiritualist Bill was the first one out. It had 12 sponsors.

Page 1046:

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM for SPIRITUALISTS

New Bill Drafted with the Good-will of the Home Secretary

The story behind the story

FROM A PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY

A LETTER was sent to a large number of Labour M.P.s by Mr. T. J. Brooks, J.P., M.B.E., M. P. for Normanton, asking them to sponsor a Bill he had drafted for the protection of genuine mediums in the hope that he himself, or some other co-operative colleague, would be successful in the ballot for Private Members' Bills.

Mr. Brooks's letter to his Parliamentary colleagues was as follows:

"For the past 30 to 40 years many unsuccessful attempts have been made to get the question of Religious Freedom for Spiritualists before the House of Commons, and another opportunity is afforded by the ballot which is to take place within the next few days.

"If I am successful, I shall put forward the enclosed Bill, drafted with the help of the Home Office, and the good-will of the Home Secretary. The short title is still under consideration, because if a person is fraudulent, he is not, in my view, a medium. I should prefer something like 'Mediumship (Punishment of Fraud) Bill.'

"I am most anxious to get other sponsors for the Bill, and as you have previously expressed your sympathy, perhaps you will kindly let me know if you also would sponsor the Bill, should you secure a place, after having signed the book for the ballot."

The text of the draft Bill is as follows:—

"To repeal the Witchcraft Act, 1735, and to make, in substitution for certain provisions of section four of the Vagrancy Act, 1824, express provision for the punishment of persons who fraudulently purport to act as spiritualistic mediums, or to exercise powers of telepathy, clairvoyance, other similar powers.

Clause (I) *Subject to the provisions of this section, any person who—*

(a) with intent to deceive purports to act as a spiritualistic medium, or to exercise any powers of telepathy, clairvoyance or other similar powers, or
(b) in purporting to act as a spiritualistic medium, or to exercise such powers as afore-said, used any fraudulent device, shall be guilty of an offence.

(2) *The aforegoing, subsection shall apply only where a person acts for reward; and for the purposes of this section, a person shall be deemed to act for reward, if any payment is made in respect of what he does, whether to him or to any other person.*

(3) *A person guilty of an offence under this section shall be liable, on summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding £50, or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding four months, or to both such fine and such imprisonment, or on conviction on indictment to a fine not exceeding £500, or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years, or to both such a fine and such imprisonment.*

(4) *No proceedings for an offence under this section shall be brought except by or with the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions.*

(5) *Nothing in subsection* (I) *of this section shall apply to anything done solely for the purpose of entertainment.*

(6) *The Witchcraft Act, 1735, is hereby repealed, and in section four of the Vagrancy Act, 1824 (which provides* inter alia, *for the punishment of persons pretending or professing to tell fortunes or using certain devices to deceive or impose on any of his Majesty's subjects) the words from "or using" to "subjects" are hereby repealed.*

Clause 2.—(I) *This Act may be cited as the Fraudulent Mediums Act.*

Clause 3.—This Act shall not extend to Scotland or Northern Ireland."

Second Reading, Friday December 1st 1950:

"Two Worlds", Saturday 9th December 1950

NOT ONE SPEECH OPPOSED SPIRITUALIST BILL!

OVERWHELMING SUPPORT IN HOUSE OF COMMONS

Triumph for Spiritualists

Friday, December 1st was a day of triumph for British Spiritualists. For four hours Members of the House of Commons spoke, without exception, in favour of giving Spiritualists the right to hold their religious meetings and services, and for genuine mediums to use their psychic powers without legal restriction. Not even the most optimistic Spiritualist could have anticipated such generous support from all parts of the House.

We pay tribute to our national legislators for such a wonderful demonstration of British justice. For this great step forward in the progress of Spiritualism great honour is due to Mr. John Stewart who has so ably looked after the interests of our 'Cause' in the legal field, and to Mr. Walter Monslow, M.P. for Barrow-in-Furness, Mr. T. J. Brooks, M.P. for Normanton, Mr. Leslie Hale, M.P. for Oldham West, and last but not least the Home Secretary himself, all of whom proved themselves to be valiant champions on our behalf.

The question of giving freedom to Spiritualism in this country became, during the Second Reading of the Fraudulent Mediums Bill on December 1st, an issue of national

prestige and honour. It was stated that the debate provided an opportunity for Great Britain to "proclaim to the world our own British way of life—our sense of respect for the religious beliefs of others. I am certain that this proclamation to-day, when the world is so sorely troubled, in so far as freedom is concerned, will enable the British people once again to give a lead to the world, and enable us to play a worthy role in the counsels of the nations." (L. M. LEVER, M.P.)

Most Important Subject

Not for many years has the subject of religion evoked such vital and sincere concern from members of the House of Commons. Tolerance in religious matters, it was stated, was one of the most important subjects that had to deal with.

The Home Secretary, Mr. Chuter Ede, considered that our Bill represented "a considerable advance in the direction of religious toleration. "No one," he added, "has the right to make people, who hold certain views very sincerely, feel that their views are affronted by conduct either of the State or their fellow citizens."

All M.P.'s present showed a lively and enthusiastic interest in this "Great Spirits' Debate."

Work of Spiritualists

It was clear as the debate went on that Spiritualists had themselves won this memorable fight for freedom by their untiring work and propaganda over the years, for it became obvious that their activities had made a deep impression upon the people, which was reflected by their representatives at Westminster, and had at last won a considerable degree of respect which manifested in a very conspicuous manner in this, the highest level of British social life.

Those Spiritualists who have given their active support to our Freedom Campaign are justified in feeling a sense of satisfaction, for every word spoken and act undertaken by them was reflected in this great triumph for Spiritualism.

A Humble Contribution

Particular mention was made by M.P.'s to those Spiritualists who had approached them for support. A typical case cited was that of a lady Spiritualist who had attended a political candidate's meeting. When the candidate had asked for questions, the first he received from the entire meeting was from a "very earnest lady" Spiritualist who had asked if he was willing to remove the *Witchcraft Act* from the Statute Book. Expecting questions on broad National issues he was amazed, yet deeply impressed, by this lady's concern over this issue, for he had no idea that it had meant so much to the spiritual welfare of a section of his constituents. He spoke at some length about the matter and the House, in turn, was also obviously impressed by the incident.

The Reward

What a reward for that lady Spiritualist to have her small contribution to the 'Cause' brought before the notice of the entire nation in such a manner. Indeed it was a reward for *every* Spiritualist who had gone out of his or her way during our Freedom Campaign to help in the great fight, and a strong incentive to others to do likewise in other fields of labour in the future. This small question, put at a public meeting somewhere in England,

eventually became an important factor in this vital debate, during which members demonstrated their very sincere concern over the question of religious liberty in this country.

The issue at an early stage of the proceedings was raised to a higher level than merely the interests of Spiritualists. Our Bill, it was claimed, brought an important fundamental issue before the Nation, and it became clear to those Spiritualists who witness it (the Gallery was full) that there was no doubt regarding the issue, for the general opinion was that the *Witchcraft Act* was a "blot upon the Statute Book."

Moved by Methodist

The debate was opened by Mr. Monslow, M.P. for Barrow-in-Furness, who explained that he was not a Spiritualist but a Methodist, but his sincere desire was to clear away a great injustice and a restriction on religious freedom for Spiritualists.

Two hundred M.P.'s had given their unqualified support for religious freedom for Spiritualists, and he was certain that they had not done so for electoral advantage. The Spiritualist Movement, consisting of 1,000 churches and 50,000 members, on the other hand, had given a pledge to expose charlatans.

Basis of Religion

The Bill was seconded by Mr. Brooks, M.P. for Normanton, who said, "I feel I am justified in asking every one to recognise that mediums and Spiritualists believe intensely in communion with the Spirit World, through mediumship, as the basis of their religion. More that this, we claim that in this we are restoring a basis which as been fundamental to all religions in their beginning, Christianity included. Immortality is the basic principle of all religions."

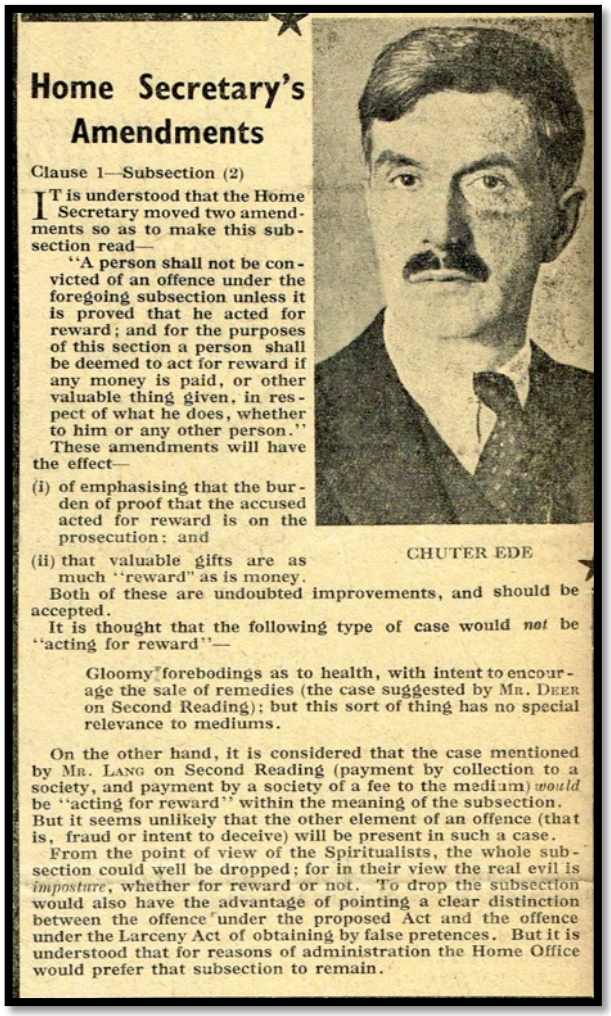
Both Monslow and Brooks are to be congratulated on an excellent resume, not only of Spiritualism's case for freedom but on Spiritualism's role in the spiritual life of the nation. They were, it should be recorded well supported by their Socialist colleagues both in numbers and in sympathy. It was obvious that Spiritualism is very fortunate indeed to have a Spiritualist member in the House, for without Mr. Brooks' efforts we would not have secured such a great victory.

Fine Example

The fact that their colleague Brooks was an ardent Spiritualist carried a considerable amount of weight in this debate, for he is obviously held in high regard in the House.

Thanks Mr. Brooks! Spiritualism owes you a great debt of gratitude.

The Bill will now be considered in committee before its Third Reading in the House.



Home Secretary's Amendments

Clause 1—Subsection (2)

IT is understood that the Home Secretary moved two amendments so as to make this subsection read—

"A person shall not be convicted of an offence under the foregoing subsection unless it is proved that he acted for reward; and for the purposes of this section a person shall be deemed to act for reward if any money is paid, or other valuable thing given, in respect of what he does, whether to him or any other person."

These amendments will have the effect—

(i) of emphasising that the burden of proof that the accused acted for reward is on the prosecution; and

(ii) that valuable gifts are as much "reward" as is money.

CHUTER EDE

Both of these are undoubted improvements, and should be accepted.

It is thought that the following type of case would *not* be "acting for reward"—

Gloomy forebodings as to health, with intent to encourage the sale of remedies (the case suggested by MR. DEER on Second Reading); but this sort of thing has no special relevance to mediums.

On the other hand, it is considered that the case mentioned by MR. LANG on Second Reading (payment by collection to a society, and payment by a society of a fee to the medium) *would* be "acting for reward" within the meaning of the subsection. But it seems unlikely that the other element of an offence (that is, fraud or intent to deceive) will be present in such a case.

From the point of view of the Spiritualists, the whole subsection could well be dropped; for in their view the real evil is *imposture*, whether for reward or not. To drop the subsection would also have the advantage of pointing a clear distinction between the offence under the proposed Act and the offence under the Larceny Act of obtaining by false pretences. But it is understood that for reasons of administration the Home Office would prefer that subsection to remain.

At the Committee stage (after the second reading) the Bill was accepted, with just two amendments by the Home Secretary; the changes were accepted by the Spiritualists.

A full explanation of the Bill, fully elaborated clause by clause, was published in the "Two Worlds". The SNU President, Percy Wilson, and his son Laurie compiled the statement on the interpretation of the Bill (a PDF copy is available from the editor).

The third reading is the final chance for the Commons to debate the contents of a Bill; further amendments cannot be made to a Bill. At the end of the debate the House decides (votes on) whether to approve the third reading of the Bill; the debate is generally short and limited to what is actually in the Bill.

The third reading took place on April 20th 1951; below are three quotes from Hansard, "a substantially verbatim report of what is said in Parliament. Members' words are recorded and then edited to remove repetitions and obvious mistakes, albeit without taking away from the meaning."

For the full report search: HC Deb 20 April 1951 vol 486 cc2163-9 2163.

FRAUDULENT MEDIUMS BILL

11.24 a.m.
Mr. Monslow (Barrow-in-Furness)

11.26 a.m.
Mr. T. J. Brooks (Normanton)

May I be allowed to support the Third Reading of this Bill, and to add my sincere thanks and that of the whole spiritualist movement to my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow-in-Furness (Mr. Monslow), who sponsored the Bill at our request? He honoured his promise to do so if he was successful in the Ballot. The presentation of his case was most efficient, proving beyond doubt his breadth of mind, deep religious feelings and his candid opinion that religious freedom should be given to the spiritualist movement. He has earned the thanks and admiration of a great number of people. His name will be remembered and revered for the great service which he has given to the spiritualist cause. No one could have done it better or more effectively.

May I also be allowed to say to the Home Secretary how much we appreciate the great help that he has given us? He has been exceptionally helpful in every way. His kindly

advice and courtesy to myself and my friends, both on deputations at the Home Office and in correspondence, has been most friendly and encouraging. The promise which he gave to us on the Committee stage of the Criminal Justice Act has been fully honoured. He gave the assurance that he would give every assistance if and when such a Bill as this came before the House.

My right hon. Friend has carried out that promise in a most kindly and sympathetic way, and we thank him sincerely for his realistic and effective help in what we hope will be the removal of a real grievance and indignity suffered by the spiritualists for many years. I hope he will forgive me if I have appeared to be a little insistent in my many calls on him during his period of office as Home Secretary. If he has been in any way put out, he has concealed it very well, for I have not been able to discern it.

I would also like to thank the Home Office officials and, in particular, the Parliamentary draftsmen, whom we met several times, for all the help which they have given us in framing the Bill, and for the cordial way in which they received us and the willing and helpful suggestions on which agreement could be reached.

I would also express my deep gratitude to my friends in every part of the House who have helped me to achieve one of the dearest ambitions of my life. When I became a Member of this House, nearly nine years ago, it was my resolve to spare no effort to secure the removal of the disability under which my spiritualist friends have been labouring for many years. I have never made any secret of my hopes, and the kindness and sympathy which I have received has moved me more than I can say.

I thank hon. Members for their excellent speeches in support of the Bill on Second Reading; the kind references they made about me and the broad picture they painted, not merely of spiritualists, but of that religious freedom and tolerance which is the right of every law abiding citizen. It may be unusual but I would like also to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your very patient hearing of our case. When the British House of Commons takes time to discuss a Bill of this character it expresses real democracy and toleration. Democracy may convey a different meaning to each of us, but to all it must mean freedom, opportunity and happiness. We accept freedom of religion as a divine right under the proposition that all men are created equal before their God. Today, by this Bill, we are giving freedom to hundreds and thousands of loyal citizens in this country, and I have pleasure in supporting its Third Reading.

11.31 a.m.
Mr. Sorensen (Leyton)

11.36 a.m.
Mr. Arthur Colegate (Burton)

11.37 a.m.
Mr. James Hudson (Ealing, North)

11.39 a.m.
The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Ede)

I share the feeling of my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing North (Mr. J. Hudson) about the Home Office. Certainly, I have never heard such eulogies bestowed on it during my period in the House, no matter what my personal relationship with that Office may have been. But at last we have been found out. I most heartily congratulate my hon. Friend the

Member for Normanton (Mr. T. J. Brooks) upon the success he has achieved for the people of his own faith and order in securing the passage of this Bill through the House with so little opposition. In fact, the only matter that may have caused a moment's perturbation was the fact that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary moved two Amendments in Committee to the Bill; but as they were disposed of in six minutes, I cannot help thinking that that was a help rather than a hindrance.

The passing of this Bill marks a further stage in the recognition in this country that what we need in religious matters is not uniformity but unity. We are all striving for the same end, but we are so constituted that one thing appeals to one man as the best approach to the common end, and another man finds his help and spiritual sustenance, and his opportunity for service, in another approach. It is the combination of all those efforts that will enable us to make the world a better place in which to live and to realise the highest ideals.

I belong to a denomination, like my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Sorensen), which was excluded from the Act of Toleration. In fact, I know of one famous Huguenot family who came from France after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and immediately they landed they declared themselves Unitarians, so that they lost the benefit in this country of the Act of Toleration. Of course, there are some people who are determined to be persecuted no matter what may be the place in which they live.

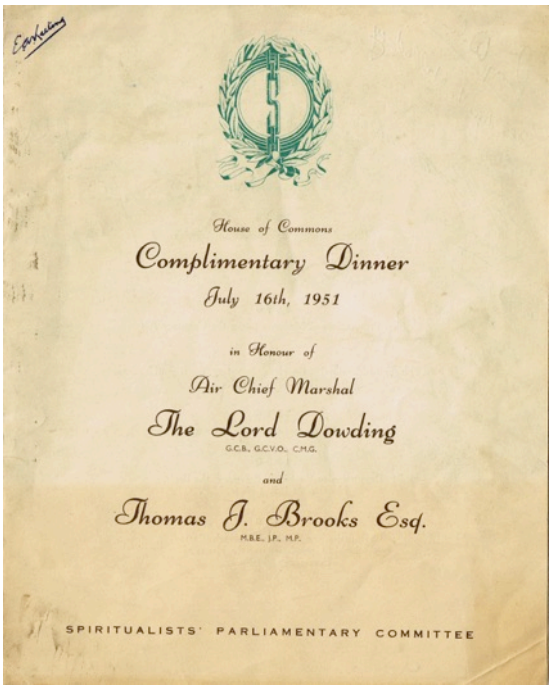
But all that has now gone. The one remaining blot on the Statute Book was the possibility that sincere, honest, religious people might find themselves the subject of prosecution under the antiquated Witchcraft Act. That now disappears. There are adequate provisions in the Bill, agreed by my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton and the people whom he represents, which prevent the use of this freedom for fraudulent purposes by charlatans or others. I commend the Bill to the House, and I hope that when it gets to another place it may have a speedy passage so that it may soon be incorporated in the Statute Book.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Royal Assent was given to the 'Fraudulent Mediums Act' on June 22nd 1951.

Victory – Religious Freedom for Spiritualist movement is at long last won, which brings us to the end of this serialisation of events. We are sorry that some of the work over the long decades of persecution by the laws of the country, of those pioneers who contributed so much to the long fight, has not been mentioned, as their numbers are so great!



House of Commons

Complimentary Dinner

July 16th, 1951

in Honour of

Air Chief Marshal

The Lord Dowding

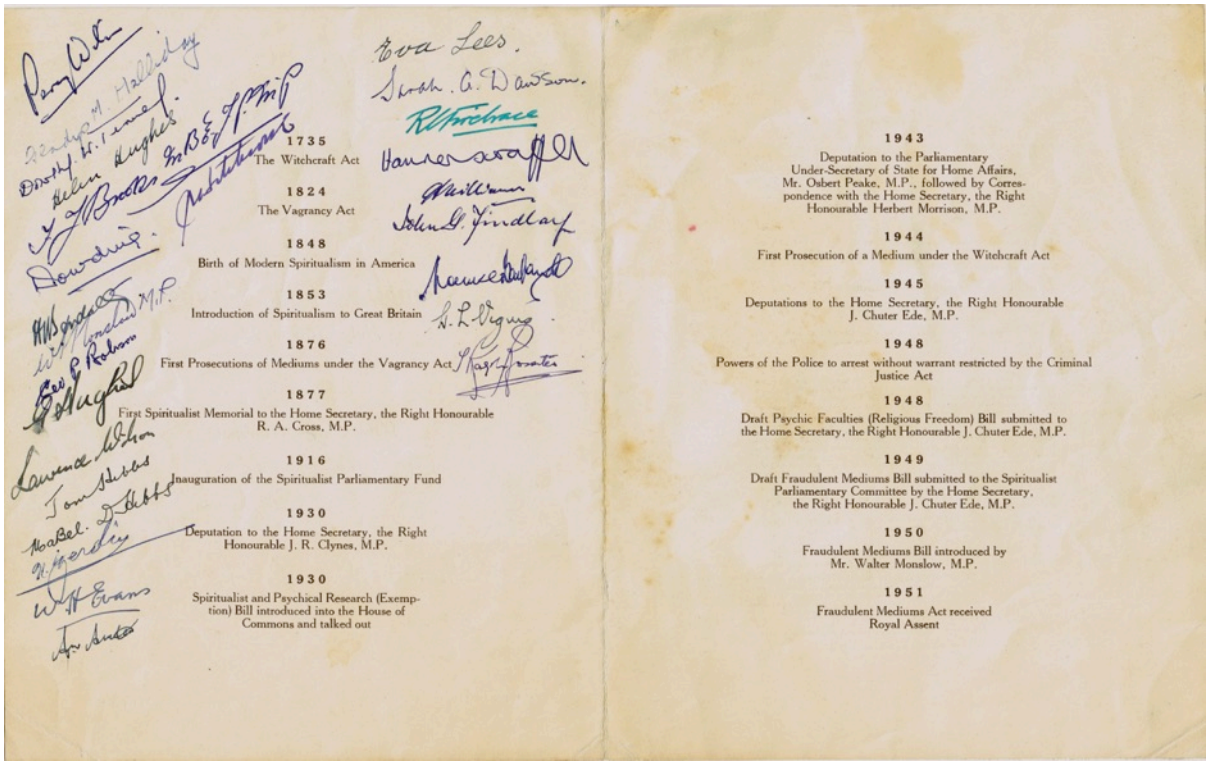
G.C.B., G.C.V.O., C.M.G.

and

Thomas J. Brooks Esq.

M.B.E., J.P., M.P.

SPIRITUALISTS' PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE



1735
The Witchcraft Act

1824
The Vagrancy Act

1848
Birth of Modern Spiritualism in America

1853
Introduction of Spiritualism to Great Britain

1876
First Prosecutions of Mediums under the Vagrancy Act

1877
First Spiritualist Memorial to the Home Secretary, the Right Honourable R. A. Cross, M.P.

1916
Inauguration of the Spiritualist Parliamentary Fund

1930
Deputation to the Home Secretary, the Right Honourable J. R. Clynes, M.P.

1930
Spiritualist and Psychical Research (Exemption) Bill introduced into the House of Commons and talked out

1943
Deputation to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Home Affairs, Mr. Osbert Peake, M.P., followed by Correspondence with the Home Secretary, the Right Honourable Herbert Morrison, M.P.

1944
First Prosecution of a Medium under the Witchcraft Act

1945
Deputations to the Home Secretary, the Right Honourable J. Chuter Ede, M.P.

1948
Powers of the Police to arrest without warrant restricted by the Criminal Justice Act

1948
Draft Psychic Faculties (Religious Freedom) Bill submitted to the Home Secretary, the Right Honourable J. Chuter Ede, M.P.

1949
Draft Fraudulent Mediums Bill submitted to the Spiritualist Parliamentary Committee by the Home Secretary, the Right Honourable J. Chuter Ede, M.P.

1950
Fraudulent Mediums Bill introduced by Mr. Walter Monslow, M.P.

1951
Fraudulent Mediums Act received Royal Assent

Photograph is taken from the "Two Worlds", February 9th 1952

Movement Says Thanks to T. J. Brooks for his outstanding services to Spiritualism.[11]

[11] For further information on Thomas Judson Brooks (1880-1958) and his Castleford National Church see "Psypioneer", Vol. 7, No. 9, September 2011.