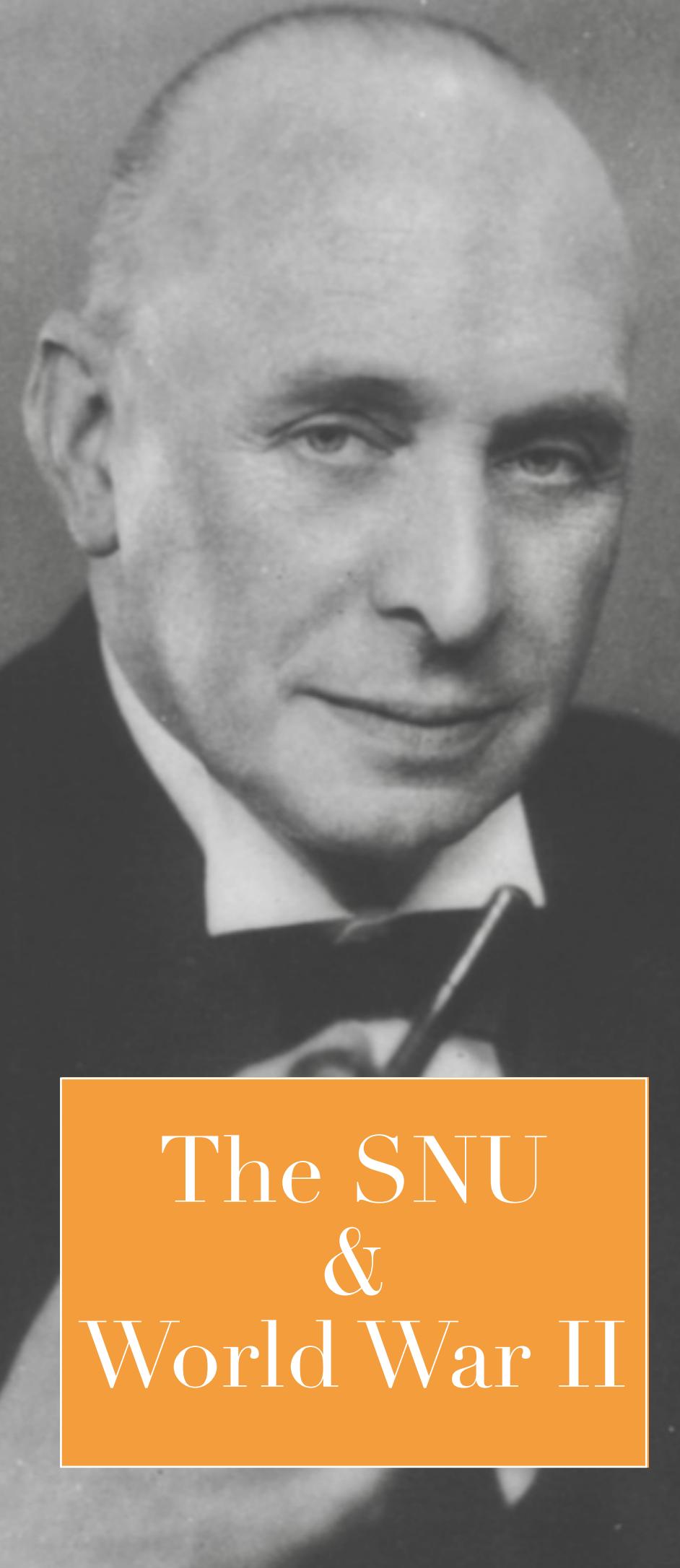
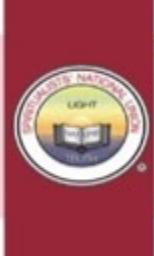


# The PIONEER

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

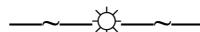


The SNU  
&  
World War II



# PIONEER

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## THE SPIRITUALISTS' NATIONAL UNION & WORLD WAR II

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Spiritualists' National Union Conference – 1943

Spiritualists' National Conference Presidential Address by Harrold Vigurs – 1944

The National Conference at Paignton – 1945

Resignation of the Union's Honorary President, Hannen Swaffer

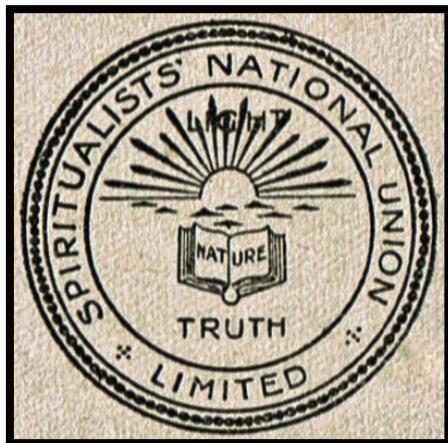
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**Special thanks to Charles Coulston for his work in sub-editing these issues**

# THE SPIRITUALISTS' NATIONAL UNION & WORLD WAR II

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*I have been asked several times for the views and direction the Spiritualists' National Union took during the war years of WWII,*

*the general attitudes of its members and of the Movement during these dark years.*

*We can note below that it brings an interesting opportunity of discussing the many avenues and decisions taken in this complex time of opinions, etc.!*

In the years running up to World War II the SNU was losing ground. This was reported at its Annual General Meeting, when some 160 delegates assembled at the Royal Hotel, Russell Square, London, on Saturday July 3rd, 1937.<sup>1</sup>

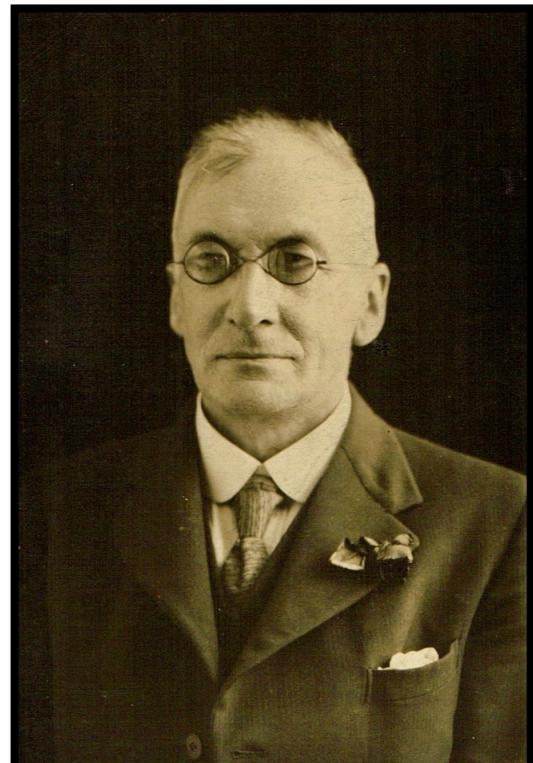
"In the National Council's report and in the address by the president, J. B. McIndoe, it was stressed that the leading body in organised Spiritualism is not making progress.

## Five Years Ago

Five years ago S.N.U. membership was 15,058 with an average membership per church of 31.4. At the end of 1936 membership had dropped to 14,939 with an average membership per church of 29.37.

The report and the discussion which followed, showed that the S.N.U. is perturbed by the growth of "one-man" churches. Some delegates declared that there were more new churches with 20 members or so than any other kind.

In the council's report there is this striking sentence, "At least 150 churches have shown no increase in membership during the last five years, though at no time in the history of Spiritualism has greater interest been shown by the man in the street than in the last few years. Yet comparatively few have become members of churches affiliated to the union."



John B. McIndoe

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<sup>1</sup> Psychic News, July 10th, 1937.

One suggestion by President McIndoe was to consider an SNU newspaper or journal to bring awareness to their churches; he was, however, frank, reminding the delegates of the “failure of their previous venture, the ‘National Spiritualist’.” This was featured in the first issue of Pioneer, August 2013.

Delegates were eager to see a journal of some kind starting right away, resulting in a resolution which was passed by 79 votes to 3 pledging support to the Council in any efforts to re-establish a national journal—this, however, did not come to fruition.

One the second day of the Conference:

## **S.N.U. Peace Debate Shows Split Over Rearming “WE CANNOT SHIRK DEFENCE”**

THE Spiritualists’ National Union, at its annual conference in London on Sunday passed a resolution re-affirming its determination to work for peace and urging the Government “to pursue its efforts to maintain peace within the British Empire and to so strengthen its defences as to keep its people safe from attack.”

Moving the resolution, which was in the name of the National Council, J. M. Stewart, who is honorary treasurer of the Union, said that the actual phrasing (which is given in the leading article on page six.) was the work of the general secretary of the Union, Frank T. Harris.<sup>2</sup>

### **Composite Motion**

It was a composite motion, drawn up in an attempt to satisfy all points of view, but Stewart considered it unlikely that the conference would give it a unanimous vote.

While many people, with whom he had a great deal of sympathy, would under no circumstance resort to war, they must remember that practically two-thirds of the civilised world to-day was under dictatorship.

### **Nations Train For War**

The Press and the cinema were being used to create a mentality which was in harmony with that of the dictator, and nations were being trained systematically in philosophy of violence.

They regarded war as glorious and considered that peace was neither possible nor desirable. The time was coming when all peace keepers would have to make a stand against all peace breakers. Defence of peace was a duty which they could not very well shirk.

He did not advocate resorting to force until every other means had been adopted to secure peace. But to repel an attack on world peace, and to repel it by means of arms, might perhaps be the only way of conserving peace. It was in that spirit that he moved the resolution.

### **“Wrong To Kill”**

A. G. Newton declared that it was in the spirit of “the protection of peace and liberty” that the war of 1914 was started.

He moved an amendment deleting the words which supported the Government’s rearmament programme.

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<sup>2</sup> A photograph of the National Council is shown at the end of this report.

It was wrong to kill even people who attacked you he said. If it was right to kill people who attacked, it was also right to hang people who had committed murder—and to this the Union had been opposed in the past.

Newton's amendment was lost by 45 votes to 32.<sup>3</sup>

"I have found that if you want a Jolly good row you can get it by putting forward a peace resolution," declared J. Slimin. A peace resolution on which there was disagreement was not worth anything and they should delete everything that was in the slightest degree controversial.

He proposed a further amendment, but that too was defeated.

Frank T. Blake, supporting the original motion, declared that he was responsible for the spirit of the resolution.

"No one desires to work for peace more than I do," he said. "I try to look at it from a world-wide angle and there is a responsibility on our empire which does not seem to be realised by some of those who have opposed this resolution,

### **"Be Strong"**

"In a sense that is both spiritual and material, we are the responsible factors for peace in the world to-day. That is our position as an empire.

"I maintain that the best method by which we may maintain peace, and assure its maintenance, is to strengthen ourselves in whatever manner is necessary so that we can say to the dictators who would destroy peace that their actions must stop."

### **Brigandage To-day**

In the conquest of Abyssinia, he went on, they had witnessed brigandage in the twentieth century and there was something of the same kind of thing going on in Spain. It would spread like a cancer unless the British Empire was strong enough to cut it out.

Mrs. Granville, a London delegate, asked the delegates whether they were prepared to say they had the right to determine the existence on this earth of any soul.



### **Those Who Are Maimed**

Ernest Oaten emphasised that the worst part of war was not killing people but maiming them so that they lived an incomplete life for years afterwards, unable to take their place in the world. The people who were killed were the only ones who deserved to be congratulated.

There was a further amendment, pruning the resolution still further, but this, too, was defeated and eventually the original motion was carried by 55 votes to 24.



<sup>3</sup> The SNU Council sustained a great loss on September 22nd, 1938 with the death of Alexander George Newton, well-known within the Spiritualist movement, being elected to the SNU Council in 1915 and Vice-President. For many years he was involved with Southampton Church as Secretary, Vice-President, etc.

John McIndoe, known as Mac,<sup>4</sup> was once again President of the Union; this was his eighth year, a record for the SNU. He made it clear he would not stand again for re-election and told the Conference,

*that it was only because his colleagues had pressed him that he had allowed himself to be nominated again this year.*

Given that the SNU voted in favour of the “Arms Resolution” an overwhelming number of Spiritualists were against it—dividing the Union and movement and bringing much criticism of the Union—as well as much debate within the pages of the Spiritualist journals.

However, at the SNU AGM the following year, held at the YMCA Hall, Dale End, Birmingham on July 2nd, John McIndoe’s Vice-President, Frank Blake, became the new Union President. The Conference showed the annual and interim reports with an increase of Churches from 511 to 539, bringing a paying membership of 13,617 against 12,927 the previous year. Subscribing members had also increased.

McIndoe continued his work within the SNU, as did J. Arthur Findlay’s brother John, the Union’s Scottish representative. Below, taken from the “Two Worlds”, March 31st, 1939, shows the victory of Spiritualists being legally able to have their marriages conducted within their churches in Scotland:

## SPIRITUALIST MARRIAGES IN SCOTLAND We Win Our Rights

AT the Annual Meeting of the Scottish District Council, Mr. J. B. M’Indoe presented a report upon Scottish marriages. At a previous Annual Meeting, a resolution had been passed that the matter be taken up with the Scottish Secretary, and through the good offices of Mr. Erskine Hill, M.P., Colonel Colville had received a deputation of Spiritualists to hear their claim. Subsequently an interview had been arranged with the Lord Advocate and the Solicitor-General for Scotland.

Mr. J. G. Findlay and Mr. M’Indoe had had a very sympathetic hearing from the Law Officers at Edinburgh in January last, and as a result, the restrictions placed upon Spiritualists were to be removed.

The position was that between 1910 and 1920 Spiritualists had exercised the right to celebrate their own marriages, and these had been registered without question. Then some time between 1920 and 1923 the Registrar-General, without intimating the fact to anyone, had decided that marriages conducted by Spiritualists were not to be registered. This came to his, Mr. M’Indoe’s notice in 1923 when two Spiritualists in Glasgow desired to wed, and were informed that such marriage could not be registered. Correspondence with the Registrar-General followed, in the course of which they were informed that since Spiritualists did not practice Baptism “in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost,” and as also they admitted Jews into membership, they could not be regarded as Christians; therefore their officers were not entitled to celebrate marriage.

The Spiritualists raised protests against this restriction of their liberties, and at the Annual Meeting of the S.N.U. at Newcastle, in 1923, a strong resolution of protest was passed. In the same year questions were asked in Parliament, and they were practically told that if they were dissatisfied, they could raise the matter in the law courts. This meant, in effect, that a marriage should be conducted, and that they should appeal to the courts to determine whether the contracting parties were really married, thus setting up an impossible position. The question

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<sup>4</sup> McIndoe first row centre, on his right Frank Blake; the end chair is Ernest Keeling, the far end of the first row is, I believe, Frank Harris, on his right Ernest Oaten. Apart from Harris all mentioned were SNU Presidents. The photograph was taken at Barrow.

had been raised with subsequent Scottish Secretaries, and a lengthy statement, accompanied by numerous documents had been made to the Commission set up to consider Scottish Marriage Laws in 1936. All these efforts had been fruitless,

Fortunately they now had a Secretary for Scotland who ignored theological questions and treated the matter as purely one of law.

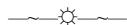
The case which the deputation put to the Law Officers that if omission to baptise in a certain manner was the real reason for debarring Spiritualists from their rights, then the law was not being impartially administered, since members of other denominations with similar practices were allowed to perform marriages. The deputation claimed that the words "minister" and "pastor" were being interpreted in a narrow and restrictive way, which if applied to other definitions in the Act would render them absurd.

When the Registration Act was passed, it had been emphatically stated that the law was not concerned with who performed a marriage, but merely with having the ceremony registered, and this had later been endorsed by the Royal Commission on Registration.

The deputation appealed to the Law Officers not to be parties to impossible restrictions and narrowing the standards of freedom, in a way which those who framed the law nearly a century ago would have repudiated

Finally, it was pointed out that no regulations modifying the procedure under which Spiritualist marriages were formerly celebrated had ever been approved by Parliament or provided by Statute.

Mr, M'Indoe was pleased to be able to report that the Law Officers had now apparently recognised the justice of the claim put forward by Spiritualists, and advised the Scottish Secretary accordingly. All that now remains is to arrange the details of procedure with the Registrar-General.



At the 1939 Annual Conference of the SNU held on July 2nd and 3rd on the premises of the Cardiff First National Church, Park Grove, about 120 delegates and members attended.<sup>5</sup> Once again there was a substantial rise in Union membership. Below is published from the "Two Worlds", July 7th, 1939:

The Secretary, in his interim report, showed that the membership had advanced from 13,620. to 14,028. In analysing the membership of churches, he produced the following interesting figures: The average number of members per church was: in Scotland, 47.3; London, 46.9; Southern, 41.6; Lancashire, 26.7; Midlands, 24.4; Wales, 18.8; Yorkshire, 18.2.



**Around this time Ernest Oaten  
laid the foundation-stone of  
Portsmouth's new £3,600 Church.**

<sup>5</sup> Featured in Pioneer, Vol. 5, No. 6, December 2018: "Cardiff SNU Church, Park Grove".

As Britain was preparing to go to war many Spiritualists were *fully content* in the idea that all would be okay—in the knowledge that it would be avoided, as many of the leading ‘spirit guides’ gave their firm assurances that there would be “No War”.

This issue of *firm assurances that there would be “No War”* and some claims that SNU Churches went into steep decline during this period are further addressed in Pioneer, Vol. 3, No. 1, February 2016, quoted below:

### **Editor’s comments on the fall in national membership:**

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

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

Nelson further reports:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We can note that both Quastel and Nelson state that at the outbreak of war the number of churches affiliated to the Union was 500 and over 500 respectively. The net decrease of 35 churches between 1937 and 1938 was “*mainly due to a revision of the records*”. This

will help to explain why the SNU Annual Report for 1938 gives the number of churches as 475.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*So no substantial long-term losses during  
the war years*



The question of the "No War" prophecies would be debated within the Spiritualist press for a long time and they still continued throughout the war to be published with few positive results. Also in debate was the question, "Are prophecies part of Spiritualism?"!

#### WAR REACTIONS

The propaganda meeting of the Bankfoot National Spiritualist Church, advertised to be held in the cinema on the 17th instant, and which will be addressed by Countess Wydenbruck, has been transferred to the Spiritualist Church, Bowling Old Lane, in consequence of local regulations.

\* \* \* \*

Mr. George T. Brown notifies us that the Spiritualist Church at Great Yarmouth has temporarily closed its evening meetings. The ladies' meeting on Tuesday afternoon will continue.

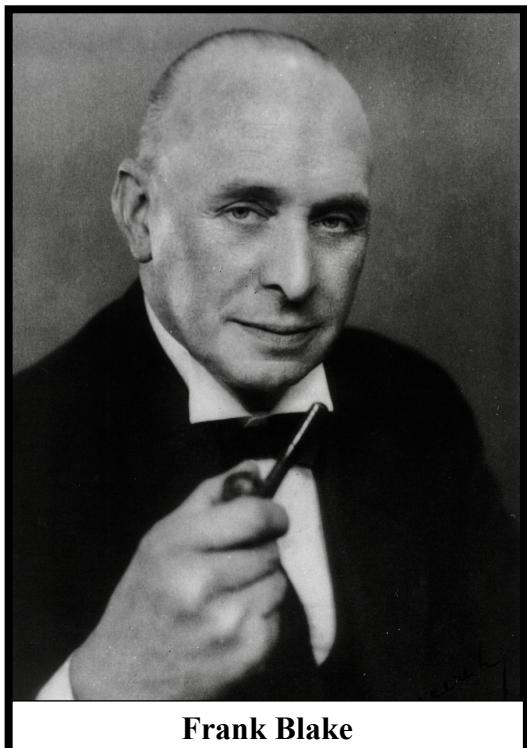
\* \* \* \*

The propaganda meeting arranged for the autumn by the Gloucester Spiritualist Church has had to be cancelled, as the hall has been commandeered by military authorities.

**Very early after Britain and France declared war on Germany on September 3rd the Spiritualist press was showing the effect it had on their meetings; this notice was published in the "Two Worlds", September 15th, 1939.**

On the same page the SNU President, Frank Blake, publishes the letter below:

## AN OPEN LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE S.N.U. To My Fellow Spiritualists



**Frank Blake**

To myself personally the outbreak of War has been as I know it must be to a vast number of us a great shock. Many of us, relying upon spirit messages or psychic vision, hoped and thought it would not occur.

This is not the time to discuss or try and explain why our prophecies have gone wrong that will form a useful matter for discussions later. At the moment our stern duty is to face and address ourselves to the reality that we are at war.

Many of our number will be called to national service of one kind or another, leaving but a thin remnant to carry on the ministry of our Movement. This will necessitate the closing up of our ranks and a consolidating of all our efforts. Churches will be very largely dependent upon local initiative and such help as may be found in their immediate district. To keep our Churches open should be the first consideration of those who are free to give their time and service. It will be a time of testing for us all.

To this end, I would suggest that where there are two or three churches in close proximity, an agreement should be arrived at between them for the present to close down one or two, as the case may be, and to concentrate upon the one elected to keep open. By pooling effort in this way, the Movement could be kept active in many a district where otherwise it may, through divided effort, be forced out of existence. With a will to agree and co-operate, minor difficulties could be overcome and a really live interest maintained. Financial considerations could be adjusted to meet the new situation. This arrangement, if approached with goodwill, could be adopted as between Union and non-Union churches.

It would help churches considerably if those booked for platform engagements, and through existing circumstances are not now able to keep them, would let the churches concerned know as quickly as possible, Churches not able to maintain their services should inform engaged workers as quickly as possible.

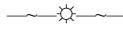
The Union office will be maintained, and will be willing, as far as it lies within its power, to advise and assist churches to carry on.

Lastly, I make an earnest appeal to *all* Spiritualists—those in membership with the Union and those who are not—to give themselves generously to whatever service they find possible in this hour of human need.

The battle we are called upon to fight is not against human comrades, but against an evil power. Whatever immediate personal sacrifice we are called upon to make will be made if—as it will—it helps to destroy for ever the evil force that seeks to dominate our world.

I pray most devoutly that God and His angels with strengthen, protect and comfort you all.

FRANK T. BLAKE



Within the next two months the "Two Worlds", November 3rd, 1939 published the Spiritualists' National Union's Manifesto:

## Spiritualists and the War

### Manifesto by the Council of the Spiritualists' National Union

THE Officers and Council of the Spiritualists' National Union feel it necessary to make public their attitude in the circumstances which have disturbed Europe and the world, especially since the declaration of war by the British Commonwealth and its Allies.

The fundamental principles of Spiritualism emphasise the essential value and sacredness of individual life, the right of the individual to mental and spiritual liberty, (always provided that its exercise does not impose restrictions on the similar activities of his fellows,) and the bounden duty of the Spiritualist to exercise the principles of brotherhood in assisting and protecting his weaker brethren in the attainment of these principles.

Whilst we recognise the folly of war and bloodshed, which is a survival of primitive times, and which should in the course of time lead up to higher spiritual conceptions, we cannot be unmindful of the fact that the peoples of several nations have had their freedom and liberty restricted by brute force, that they are being enslaved both physically and mentally, and are thus being deprived of their rights as individual souls.

We regard this liberty as one of the most sacred and cherished possessions of mankind, arising from man's inherently divine nature.

This liberty is now threatened, and the right of the individual to determine and control his actions and destiny is so seriously endangered that it may be lost for generations.

Whilst, therefore, this Council still affirms the right of an individual to act according to the dictates of his conscience, we feel that the principle of man's common brotherhood involves the duty of assisting the weak and oppressed; of contesting by every means in our power for the maintenance of that freedom, both mental and spiritual, which has taken centuries to achieve, which is man's spiritual right, and which ultimately must be established.

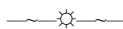
In our opinion it is the duty of Spiritualists to serve the cause of liberty in any and every way which conscience dictates. To do less would be a denial of the value of that freedom which has been attained, and would hinder the realisation of those higher ideals for which we constantly strive.

Our ultimate object must be the attainment not only of an honourable peace, but the establishment of such a world order that honourable men shall never again be compelled to choose between the possible sacrifice of their physical lives and the surrender of ideals of supreme value to humanity.

On behalf of the Council,

FRANK T. BLAKE, President.  
ERNEST A. KEELING, Secretary,

21st October, 1939.



However, not all members were in agreement with the Union's Manifesto, as the "Two Worlds", December 1st, 1939 reported:

## THE S.N.U. MANIFESTO

WE have received the following communications with reference to the Manifesto recently issued. We are publishing them because we consider it right that those who differ from the Manifesto should be allowed to present their point of view. It must be clearly understood, however, that our space is restricted and we cannot undertake to continue similar publication in the future.

### From Parkstone Church

The Committee of the Parkstone N.S.C deplore the lack of helpful direction to be found in the Manifesto, "Spiritualists and the War." It feels that such a Manifesto should only be published after the opinions of the affiliated churches have been ascertained. so that such a publication shall express at least the voice of the Movement as well as that of its officers.

### Nine from Blackburn

"In view of the fact that we, the undersigned, have arrived at the profound conviction that war under *any* circumstances is wrong, and that we have arrived at these opinions primarily from the teachings of Spiritualism as taught in the Lyceums to-day, we respectfully but earnestly protest against the Manifesto recently issued by yourselves respecting the Spiritualist's attitude toward the present conflict between the nations.

"We feel that, in consideration of the grave importance of the matter, it was the duty of the Council to first secure a referendum from the members of all the affiliated churches.

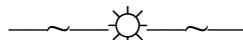
As this most directly affects the younger members of our Movement, it is only fair that their opinion at least should have been ascertained before publishing such a Manifesto, which not only undermines the standing and case of the Spiritualist Conscientious Objector, but also negates the teaching of the Philosophy of Spiritualism.

Further, if as stated in the Manifesto the individual should follow out the dictates of his own conscience, it is apparent that the issuing of such a document was unnecessary, and its effect would be to influence Spiritualists in a pro-war direction, which is contrary to all the principles of our Movement.

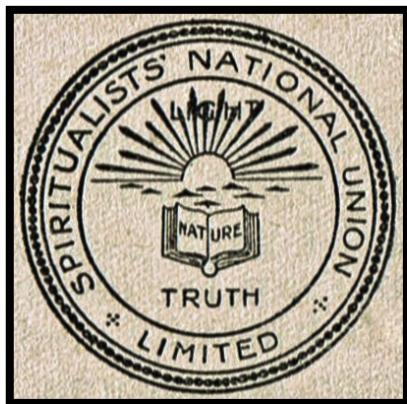
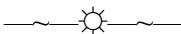
"We, therefore, respectfully request the early retraction of the Manifesto until such time as a consensus of opinion can be obtained."

Yours very sincerely  
(Acting Secretary for the undersigned),  
A. V. Moorey  
and eight other signatures.

To be continued....



# THE SPIRITUALISTS' NATIONAL UNION & WORLD WAR II Continued ...



*I have been asked several times for the views and direction the Spiritualists' National Union took during the war years of WWII,*

*the general attitudes of its members and of the Movement during these dark years.*

*We can note below that it brings an interesting opportunity of discussing the many avenues and decisions taken in this complex time of opinions, etc.!*

The first part of this was published in Pioneer, Vol. 6, No. 2, concluding with the SNU's Manifesto, "Spiritualists and the War", October 21st, 1939, under the presidency of Frank Blake.

**1940:**

The Two Worlds, August 2nd:

**S. N. U. News**  
**General Secretary: Ernest A. Keeling**

**Churches in Restricted Areas**  
**IMPORTANT NOTICE**

THE Government have found it necessary to restrict the entry of persons into a considerable section of Great Britain, extending from Berwick-on-Tweed to Weymouth. As this made it almost impossible for churches in this area to maintain their platform supply, the matter was taken up by the Union with the Ministry of Home Security, who have agreed to our suggestion that Platform Workers shall be provided with an identity certificate bearing their photograph and the seal of the Union.

**Speakers and Demonstrators, Please Note.**

**The Spiritualists' National Union is prepared to grant a "Spiritualists' Minister's Identity Certificate" to Platform Workers who have to fulfil engagements with churches in areas where entry is restricted.**

**Applications, accompanied by a "Passport" photograph and a postal order for 1s., should be sent to the Local District Council Secretary of the area in which applicant resides.**

This was followed with the names and addresses of Secretaries of District Councils; during this period it was further noted:

## The Ambulance in Sight

We are pleased to report that donations to the Ambulance Fund are rather more satisfactory, and at the present rate it seems certain that in the next few weeks we will be able to complete the Fund.

It was further noted in **S.N.U. News** two weeks later in the **Two Worlds**, August 16th:

## Identity Certificates

From information which has reached us it would appear that the purpose of the Identity Certificates, as well as the conditions governing their issue, are not fully understood.

The sole purpose of the certificate is to enable workers to travel, without hindrance, to conduct church services, particularly in restricted areas. They are intended to meet the present emergency, and do not confer upon the holder either membership of the Union or any implied acknowledgment of the holder's qualification as a platform worker.

We would therefore restate the position as follows :—

“The Spiritualist National Union is prepared to grant a Union's Identity Certificate to known platform workers serving churches distant from their home town and its immediate vicinity to facilitate their travelling in areas where entry is restricted under the Home Defence regulations.”

Applications must be accompanied by a letter of recommendation from a member of the National Council or from the secretary of their local District Council, together with a “passport” photograph vouched for by the writer of the letter of recommendation and a postal order for one shilling to defray cost.

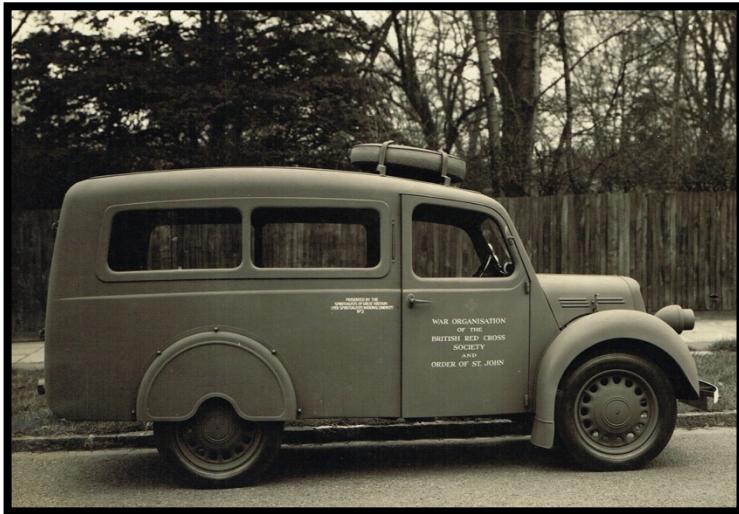
## The Ambulance Fund was updated and published in the same issue of the Two Worlds

During the great war (1914-18), on the suggestion of W.H. Evans,<sup>1</sup> the **Two Worlds** under the editorship of James J. Morse opened a subscription list to provide Red Cross Ambulances for service overseas; Spiritualists rallied to the call. Spiritualist papers, *Light*, and *Psychic Gazette* supported the **Two Worlds** effort, resulting in five ambulances being purchased and presented to the Red Cross. Later a sixth was purchased in a joint effort of the Spiritualists of New Zealand and Great Britain.<sup>2</sup>

|  | £     | s.  | d. |
|--|-------|-----|----|
| Previously acknowledged .....                            | 4     | 18  | 9  |
| Bournemouth (Charminster Rd.).                           | 6     | 15  | 6  |
| Shoreham .....   | 0     | 15  | 0  |
| Chester-le-Street .....                                  | 2     | 0   | 0  |
| King's Lynn .....  | 5     | 0   | 0  |
| Wisbech .....  | 2     | 0   | 0  |
| Mrs. W. Tuck .....                                       | 0     | 10  | 0  |
| Mrs. M. McLaughlan .....                                 | 1     | 0   | 0  |
| Mrs. Tibbs .....   | 0     | 10  | 0  |
| Glasgow Central (9th) .....                              | 4     | 4   | 0  |
| Sheffield Centre .....                                   | 8     | 4   | 0  |
| Hyde .....   | 4     | 4   | 0  |
| Plaistow .....   | 1     | 10  | 0  |
| Wombwell (Collected by Mrs. Birkett and Mrs. Swann)..... | 5     | 0   | 0  |
| Nursing Sister .....                                     | 1     | 10  | 0  |
| G. Johnson .....   | 1     | 0   | 0  |
| M. McDonald .....  | 0     | 10  | 0  |
| D. T. .....  | 0     | 4   | 0  |
|  | <hr/> |     |    |
|  | £     | 464 | 0  |
|  |       | 3   | 0  |

<sup>1</sup> Pioneer, Vol. 6, No. 5: “W.H. Evans – One of Spiritualism's finest philosophers: Fifty Years with the “Two Worlds” – My Jubilee”, by W.H. Evans”.

<sup>2</sup> Pioneer, Vol. 1, No. 3: “The Story of the Motor Ambulances – A Landmark in the History of Our Cause”.



By August 1941 two Ambulance Cars were purchased; they were expected to be used overseas but I am not sure whether this was the case, as firstly they were used in this country for the transport of the sick and wounded.

**"WAR ORGANISATION OF THE  
BRITISH RED CROSS AND  
ORDER OF ST. JOHN**  
**"PRESENTED BY THE  
SPIRITUALISTS OF GREAT  
BRITAIN**  
**(PER SPIRITUALISTS  
NATIONAL UNION LTD) NO2"**

During the history of the Spiritualists' National Federation / Union their AGMs were for over a century conducted on the first weekend of July; very rarely were these changed, but one such AGM was abandoned in July 1940, with notice given under the Two Worlds "S.N.U. News" page by the Union's General Secretary, Ernest A. Keeling, Two World's issue, July 5th:

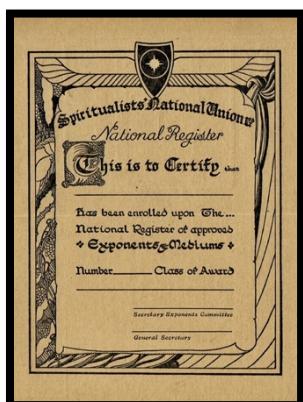
### S.N.U. Conference Abandoned!

AT the expressed desire of H.M. Ministry for Home Security, the Annual General Meeting convened for Saturday, July 6th, has been cancelled. All members of the Union will be advised later of any revised arrangements which conditions may permit.

Yours sincerely,

ERNEST A. KEELING, General Secretary.<sup>3</sup>

### Spiritualist Ministers and Military Service



One or two platform workers who are serving our churches have applied for exemption from Military Service on the grounds that they are Ministers of Religion. As in the last war, everything reasonably possible will be done to secure official recognition of Spiritualism as a religion. At the same time, it should be made clear that the National Union can only sponsor platform workers who are on the current list of certified exponents and/or demonstrators.

In one instance, the Ministry of Labour and National Service have referred to us the name of a worker who is neither a member of the Union nor a certified exponent.

### Make them Welcome

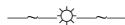
From information which has reached us, we learn that many of our churches have been visited by members of H.M. Forces, and in several instances it has been revealed they were from some other Spiritualist church. We hope that church officials will make a special point of looking out for such visitors, making them welcome and, whenever possible, affording them whatever facilities the church may have to offer.

<sup>3</sup> Former SNU President, 1928-1930; see Pioneer, Vol. 1, No. 1: Mr. Ernest Allan Keeling, A.N.S.C. – *The National Spiritualist*.

## Church Delegates

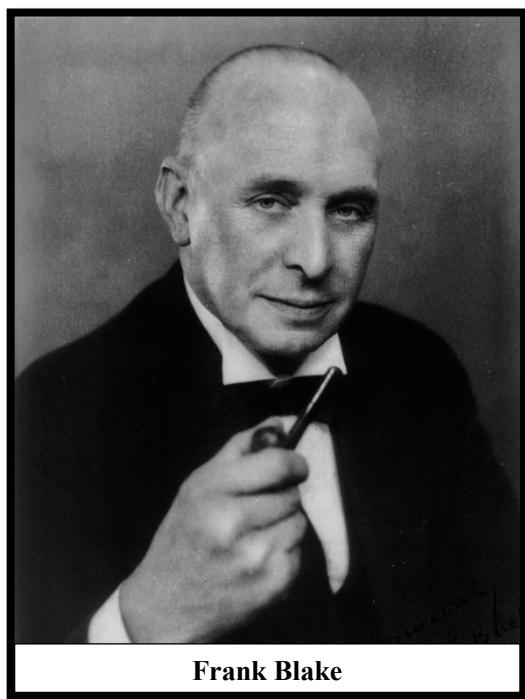
Although we have previously called attention to the matter, there is still a considerable number of churches which have not yet registered with the Union the name and address of their delegate (Class A member). As meetings of District Councils are, in fact, district meetings of Union members, it follows that those churches which have failed to register their delegate, and consequently have not had a credential card issued to them, are disqualified from voting either at a District or National meeting.

All District Councils have been advised of the names of the persons in their district who are entitled to vote, and informed that the voting must be restricted to those so entitled.



An emergency AGM, for legal reasons, would take place at the later date of August 31st, with the meeting experiencing a series of air-raid warnings; however, it flowed smoothly. The quote below is reported in the Two Worlds, September 6th, 1940:

THE Annual General Meeting of the Spiritualist National Union was held on Saturday last, August 31st, at the Brixton Church, St. Michaels Road, London, S.W. The usual date of the event is the first week-end in July, but owing to war emergencies it was thought inadvisable to draw delegates from every part of the kingdom in times of stress and railway restrictions. However, it was found that the requirements of the Board of Trade necessitated the calling of an Annual General Meeting, and hence the gathering became an emergency meeting, and churches were notified that nothing but formal business, in addition to the reports and balance sheets, would be dealt with. Under the circumstances, an attendance of some forty members was sufficient for the purpose of the meeting.



Frank Blake

Mr. Frank Blake, President, explained the circumstances, and urged that in view of the possibility of interruptions from air activity, the business should be transacted as expeditiously as possible.

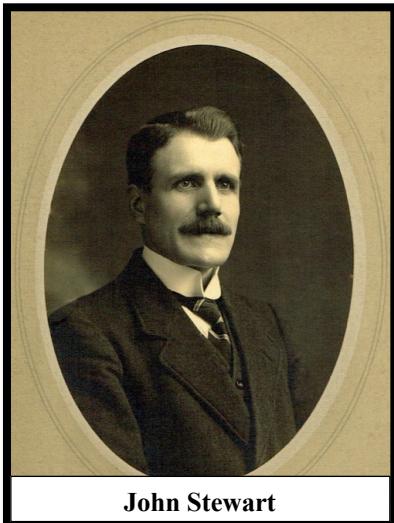
The reports and balance sheets were accepted and adopted. It was pointed out that the abnormal conditions of the present day had restricted activities at many churches, while the black-out regulations had meant decreased attendances in the winter months. Many of our workers had been drawn into the armed forces, while industrial activities are occupying the whole time of others. This was, of course, reflected in the finances. While the activities of the Union were steadily increasing, such emergencies had caused a reduction in income, and it was estimated that there may be a deficit at the end of this year of possibly £130. It was hoped that representatives of

churches and District Councils would do their best to reduce the loss to a minimum. The growing activities of the Union were hindered by insufficient office accommodation; it was hoped that this, too, would be borne in mind.

Mr. Blake pointed out that although he knew many churches were suffering from reduced income, it was a fact that there had been a big increase in the amount of wages paid every week, and a large reduction in unemployment. It was his opinion that some of the added income of the workers might well find its way into the church.



**1941:**



Sadly, the SNU President, Frank Blake, died in March and took over his work. Stewart was an ardent worker for National Spiritualism and was a founder member of Croydon National Spiritualist Church, being its President in 1930 for over a decade.<sup>4</sup>

John Stewart's official unopposed move to office as SNU President was announced at the Annual Conference held on July 5th and 6th at the Charnwood Street National Church, Derby. Maurice Barbanell was himself a former candidate for SNU President. In 1928 Barbanell became a member of the SNU Council, taking over from the veteran Spiritualist, Richard Boddington (brother of Harry), as London Area Representative, a position he would hold for many years.<sup>5</sup>

Barbanell considered a most effective path the Union should take; he published an 'Open Letter' in *Psychic News*, April 5th,<sup>6</sup> shortly after Blake's death, addressed to the next SNU President, John Stewart:

## **Plan For Post – War Spiritualism Now !**

### **AN OPEN LETTER TO JOHN STEWART, PRESIDENT OF S.N.U.**

DEAR JOHN,—What about a post-war plan for Spiritualism? Let me explain what I mean.

Because of the passing of Frank T. Blake, you have been called upon to fill the highest office in organised Spiritualism—the presidency of the Spiritualists' National Union.

All who know you, and have worked with you for years, are familiar with your sterling qualities, your wholehearted enthusiasm, your complete grasp of all the implications of Spiritualism.

You have been called to your high office at a time when, because of the blitz, Spiritualism in this country has been in the doldrums, from which it is only just beginning to recover.

It is a paradox, indeed an ironic jest, that at a time when this country needs our knowledge most the conditions produced by total war prevent us from broadcasting the truth of Spiritualism as we would like to do.

### **TO AID RECONSTRUCTION**

How then, can we play our part in the great days that lie before us? I suggest it can be done by envisaging the problems of the future, by realising our post-war needs and by planning so that, when the present restrictive conditions end, we shall be ready to provide that evidence, comfort and knowledge which will aid the citizens of this country in the difficult period of reconstruction which is inevitable.

<sup>4</sup> Vol. 3, No. 3: "First Croydon National Spiritualist Church – The benefits of Union affiliation! – Pioneer retires from active service – Farewell to John Stewart".

<sup>5</sup> Vol. 2, No. 6, November 2015: "Maurice Barbanell, the S.N.U. and his Propaganda Work".

<sup>6</sup> *Psychic News* had begun on May 28th, 1932 with Barbanell as founding editor. He continued in this role until 1946, when (following a disagreement with Arthur Findlay) he left. Sixteen years later, on June 20th, 1962, Barbanell returned to his previous role and continued as editor of *Psychic News* and *The Two Worlds* jointly until his death in 1981.

The Angel of Death has been active in our land. Besides the misery caused by destruction of homes and loss of property, thousands have experienced mental and spiritual anguish. They have had to face bereavement. They have had to experience the desolate ache that comes when death separates them from the ones they love.

Thousands of soldiers, sailors and airmen, who have lost their comrades in battle, will want to know about Spiritualism. They will want to inquire for themselves, to find out whether the statements Spiritualists make will stand the test of personal investigation.

## PREPARING THE GROUND

To some extent the ground has been prepared. As you know, we have distributed thousands of copies of *Psychic News* and Spiritualist books to men in the Fighting Services.

These have been handed round from colleague to colleague. There have been eager discussions. Many already have begun to inquire by visiting Spiritualist churches in their neighbourhood. Others await the end of the war, so that they can start their investigations.

I write as one who is familiar with the Spiritualists' National Union, who, for many years, took part in the deliberations of its council as area representative for London. My sympathies have always been whole-heartedly with the ideals of the S.N.U., though as Editor of *Psychic News* I have never hesitated to criticise its shortcomings if I thought I could spur it to greater action.

Now I ask you and your colleagues, who I know are anxious to spread our knowledge, and all its implications, to grasp one of the greatest opportunities that destiny has placed in your hands. I ask you to consider a seven years plan. "Why seven years?" you may ask.

In 1948, Spiritualists will celebrate the centenary of our movement. It will be 100 years since the Fox Sisters heard the rappings in their home. I ask you to plan so that we may indeed have cause for celebration.

I am convinced that the Union could take the initiative in preparing a bold, vigorous and comprehensive scheme which would fire the imagination and stimulate the zeal of Spiritualists.

It may be that not all the hoped-for ideals will be achieved, but at least we shall have tried. Better a glorious failure than sheer inertia; better a partial success than lack of vision.

## NATION-WIDE PROPAGANDA

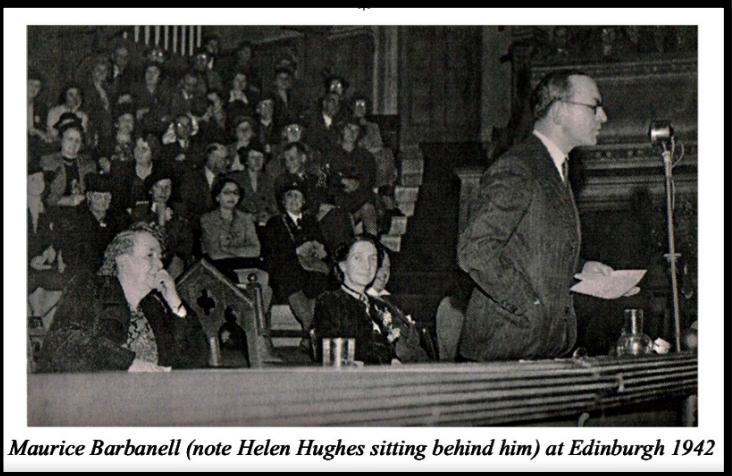
What should be embraced in the seven years plan? The first step is a national propaganda scheme to put Spiritualism literally on the map. Using an atlas there should be flagged the towns where Spiritualism is strongest. Where from your records you can see there are churches with a story of continued progress, these do not call for attention, except in one category.

Then on the map there should be indicated the areas where Spiritualism is still not represented, where there are no churches and no public activities of any kind.

In addition there should be charted the weak churches, the societies where no progress has been made for years, or even where losses have been recorded.

These territories should provide the soil of our labour. A propaganda campaign should be compiled. It should envisage the opening of mission churches to be nursed by the stronger societies, where they are in adjacent districts.

Where, at present, our message is not being given, the S.N.U. should make it its business to start new churches in conjunction with its district councils.



Maurice Barbanell (note Helen Hughes sitting behind him) at Edinburgh 1942

Propaganda meetings, with first-class speakers and mediums, should precede the effort. Then there should be trained speakers and mediums, working under the auspices of the S.N.U., who would be ready to give their services for the time that it is necessary to put the new church on its feet.

You will see that this will require careful planning, for it will require courses for speakers

and a scheme for the development of mediumship. Mediumship, of course, is the backbone of Spiritualism. Without it we have little to offer.

Part of the seven years plan would be to arrange for the development of mediums, no matter how modest the beginning might be. We want, however much in miniature, a "School of the Prophets," some kind of "training college"—I am not thinking of a large building—where, under the skilful guidance of proficient and experienced mediums the powers of budding psychics can be unfolded.<sup>7</sup>

The plan should take into account our bombed churches, so that from the time peace is declared meetings can be quickly re-started.

Then there is the question of publications. The present method of producing our literature is haphazard. There is no central or co-ordinating body. Too much is left to chance. Our knowledge is strewn through old and new books.

## OUR THINKERS' LIBRARY

I see that in "Light" a plea has been made for the formation of a Psychic Press Association modelled on the lines of the Rationalist Press Association, whose one shilling volumes, part of their Thinkers' Library, are known throughout the country.

One great defect in our presentation is that our literature is too expensive. It should be possible for us to produce one shilling booklets which lucidly set forth our evidence, phenomena, teachings and all their implications—scientific, religious, philosophical and moral.

We want books for beginners, books for students and books for the more advanced Spiritualist. Much of our literature is old-fashioned. It was written in Victorian days and is redolent of the atmosphere of the antimacassar, the horse-hair sofa and wax fruit in glass cases.

<sup>7</sup> Early December 1870, "The College of Mediums" was founded at the James Burns Spiritual Institution (Pioneer, Vol. 7, No. 3), with Mr Cogman as its first President. During January 1871 a term/course of six Wednesday evenings at the Spiritual Institution would cost 5s. Although this College was fairly short-lived, it is an interesting part of history; it was post-1876, following the publication of *Art Magic* (edited by Emma Hardinge Britten), that the concept of any college/school was popularised.

Robert Cogman (1810-1876) was the first in London to establish a successful training school for mediumship. His *East End Spiritual Institution* was responsible for helping many mediums develop, like James J. Morse, Frank Herne, Miss Eagar (later Mrs Wallis) and E.W. Wallis. Edward Walter Wallis (Pioneer, Vol. 5, No. 5) would later credit Cogman and his "School of the Prophets" as he called it. Some of Cogman's students became key figures in the foundations of the National Federation / S.N.U.

See Pioneer, Vol. 5, No. 1, February 2018: – First Public Developing Circles – Robert Cogman & Mrs. Mary Main.

We have to appeal to the modern mind which is throwing off the yoke of creedalism and the dead hand of Orthodoxy and which does not worship the past just because of its antiquity.

## PLACE FOR YOUTH

Our seven years plan must embrace the youth of Spiritualism so that they can take their rightful place in Spiritualism.

Yes, I know about the Lyceum movement. Its system of child education was in advance of its day when it was outlined by Andrew Jackson Davis more than 70 years ago, but now much of it is old-fashioned. It is crying out for revision and adaptation. The world has advanced in the last 70 years. We must take the best out of the Lyceum teaching and introduce new ideas, more fitted to the moods and needs of our own generation.

Then there is the Vagrancy Act, that stumbling block to Spiritualism which relegates us to the rank of rogues and vagabonds.<sup>8</sup> We must plan, as part of our campaign, for its repeal, so that the stigma of illegality may be removed. We must strive to win our religious freedom and compel Authority to recognise mediumship as part of man's natural faculties.

Then, too, we must revise our hymn book.<sup>9</sup> Many of the hymns must go. I shudder when I sing:

“Should swift death this night o'ertake  
us,  
And our couch become our tomb.”

I have laughed during this war when I have heard audiences declare,

“They are winging, they are winging,  
Through the thin blue air they come,”

and have heard whispering voices say “Parachutists!” We must ruthlessly throw out the hymns that cause ridicule. We should include some of the magnificent ones written by Mrs. M. A. St. Clair Stobart.<sup>10</sup>

## WHAT ABOUT A TUNE BOOK ?

We also want a tune book so that at least we shall all sing the same tunes for the same hymns—something that does not at present happen at Spiritualist meetings throughout the country.

We want a volume that will give us naming, marriage and funeral services—our American colleagues have already done this. At present we only have the funeral service, the one at the beginning of the hymn book. When it was written by J. J. Morse, it was admirable, for his time. Much of it is still eloquent; some of it is out of date. It cries out for revision.<sup>11</sup>

Then the head office must be removed from Manchester to London. It is no longer true—if ever it was—that what Manchester thinks today . . . I cannot see any reason why the headquarters should be in Lancashire. The metropolis is the natural centre for Spiritualism, as for nearly everything else. A national body should be directed from the capital of the country.

<sup>8</sup> Pioneer, Vol. 2, No. 1, “The Effect of the Vagrancy Act – The Work of the Spiritualists’ National Union”.

<sup>9</sup> Vol. 4, No. 3, June 2017: “Spiritualists’ National Federation – Our First National Hymn Book”.

<sup>10</sup> Psypioneer, Vol. 9, No. 8: “Mrs. Mabel Annie St. Clair Stobart – Paul J. Gaunt”.

<sup>11</sup> Vol. 5, No. 4, August 2018: “When the spirit bids adieu to mortality – J. J. Morse”.

Now all this is a very rough blue print. It may mean the appointment of a national organiser. It may mean hours, weeks and possibly months of arduous frank discussion by Spiritualists who have vision and who want to see our movement take its rightful place in our national life.

## MONEY WILL COME

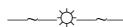
It will require money, you may say, but that does not worry me. I am convinced that for such a campaign the money will be forthcoming, as it always has been for good causes.

I suggest, in all seriousness, that for some years organised Spiritualism has lost its missionary spirit. I ask it to recapture the evangelical fervour of our pioneers. I ask it to give a lead to the thousands of loyal Spiritualists throughout the country who are wondering how they can serve in the fateful days that lie before us.

Such a daring campaign will appeal to their imagination, to their hearts and to their minds. All petty differences will be sunk, I am convinced, in the unanimous desire to sweep the country with our great message.

Give the rules and regulations a rest. Forget about the by-laws governing district councils for a time. Set up a small committee, a planning committee, a "brains trust," if you will, so that they can draft their schemes for giving Spiritualism the greatest impetus it has ever had.

THE EDITOR



Psychic News editor Maurice Barbanell received a hearty response from the SNU under its new Presidency and published it in the April 26th, 1941 issue of Psychic News:

## S.N.U. HEAD AGREES WITH 7-YEARS PLAN

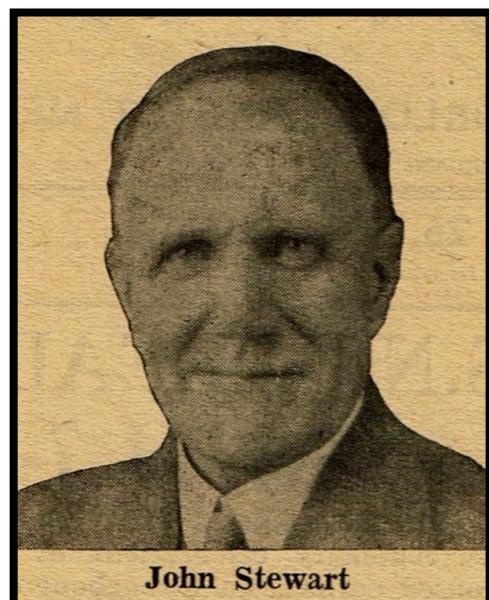
Our Seven-Years Plan for Spiritualism, timed to mature with the centenary celebrations of modern Spiritualism, in 1948, has aroused enthusiasm throughout the country. It was published as an Open Letter to John Stewart, President of the Spiritualists' National Union. Here is his answer:

By John M. Stewart

IN replying to your Open Letter, I would like to say at the outset how much I appreciate the friendly terms in which it is couched. I know that you have the best interests of the Union at heart. You have shown that many times and in various directions.

The fact that you have an inside knowledge of the Union and its work, coupled with the wide experience gained through contact with the people in your editorial capacity, makes anything that you have to say worthy of the most careful consideration.

Let me say at once that I am in general agreement with your plan for post-war Spiritualism. A number of the suggestions made have already been discussed by the national executive, but it is opportune that you should raise



them again and set them out in such clear and comprehensive fashion. The whole statement constitutes a problem which must lie heavily upon all who seek to take a large view, and a long one, of what the Spiritualist movement may and should do for the public enlightenment.

It is quite true that the national executive devotes a great deal of time to rules and regulations in the conduct of its business; more especially is this necessary as through its trust property and pool schemes it is responsible for an ever-growing number of buildings which are dedicated as Spiritualist churches. It would, however, be a mistake to conclude that this is its only or even its main concern, for the members of the executive give a considerable amount of time, both in and out of committee, considering the best way in which the Spiritualist movement can be advanced.

## SPECIAL COMMITTEE

It was for this reason that plans for the centenary celebration in 1948 were relegated to a special committee, though doubtless this was not generally known outside the executive. This committee will be meeting in London shortly and will no doubt review the whole position in the light of your Open Letter.

The need for propaganda is conceded on all hands, but our concern as an executive is to devise an effective form of propaganda which is suited to modern needs. Large and successful meetings have frequently been held in the past, but results show that such efforts have not materially added to those who are associated with us as a movement. No doubt such meetings have influenced current thought, but they have not built up an ever-increasing and solid membership.

The fact is that gifted speakers and mediums, who are available for such meetings, are all too few, and inquirers after such a meeting who follow up their interest by visiting the local church are sometimes disappointed by contrast. This is not always the fault of the church. Church officers, as a rule, are anxious to secure as good a platform supply as possible, but the shortage of really adequate speakers and properly developed mediums makes this problem very difficult.

Our best platform workers are usually booked to capacity. In fact they are overworked, and at times become psychically depleted and stale. Hence, as you rightly point out, the imperative need for a training centre where speakers and sensitives, under sympathetic and knowledgeable guidance, can be prepared to take up this pressing work. As a Union, we are anxious to correlate the problems of propaganda and platform supply so that where we hold big meetings to stimulate already established churches we shall be assured that the subsequent appeal at those churches shall be adequate.

To a lesser extent the same consideration applies to those areas where Spiritualism is not yet represented. We have a large scale map at the headquarters of the Union already prepared in the way you suggest. If support is forthcoming meetings in these virgin areas could be planned and organised, and followed up later by personal visits so that a church could be founded.

To begin with such a church would be a mission church, under the care of the local district council, as has already been done in some areas. It is an experiment which has justified itself and could be extended with obvious advantage. This is where a national organiser would be of immense benefit.

The question of cheap booklets has already been explored by the Union. Given the necessary finance, such a scheme could soon be self-supporting. We could immediately produce cheap editions of certain books, or parts of them, which should be readily available to the modern public.

When we considered this problem we soon found that our real difficulty was that certain aspects of Spiritualism could only be presented if we got down to the task of writing the books ourselves.

## **OUT-OF-DATE STYLE**

The question of style, as you rightly point out, is a factor. Modern taste does not take kindly to the serious writing of 50 years ago. These booklets need to be modern; not only up-to-date with current scientific thought but also told in a way that appeals to the present day. In addition the public emphasis has changed. Today Survival is accepted, but the masses are quite content to leave it at that and to concern themselves with affairs of the moment. In one way that is salutary.

We really need to bring home to those same masses that without Spiritualism they are missing something that enriches life here. We have the knowledge which can completely transform life, satisfying current intellectual questionings and reconciling man's deepest intuitions. That is why Spiritualism to us is religion and that is why we need to write our books anew, showing our larger knowledge and understanding in a way calculated to meet modern needs.

## **CO-OPERATION WELCOMED**

There is our problem. As an executive we are alive to its supreme importance and should welcome competent co-operation from any source. This war has called for a united national effort and, when it is over, the great period of reconstruction that will follow will demand that same wartime spirit of sacrifice, but directed to the progressive purposes of peace. In this campaign Spiritualism must lead. Now is the time to reorganise ourselves so that we shall be prepared for those conditions.

I would ask all Spiritualists, firstly, to ponder deeply what Spiritualism has meant to them and, if it has meant anything of real value, to dedicate their whole activities in furthering our cause.

Secondly, let us remember that finance is essential to any movement. I am of opinion that no body of people is doing so much work with so little money as the Spiritualists' National Union. In consequence, our efforts are hampered by cheese-paring economy. That is wrong. Spiritualism demands the best and we must see that progressive work is not restricted because of lack of funds. I agree with you, however, that the money will be forthcoming. I am convinced that no work for which there is a real need will ever perish for want of money while it has behind it people of faith and purpose. I believe there is a law of spiritual attraction which will draw to it all that is necessary for its support when the need is made clear.

We want effective propaganda and a modernised youth movement. We sorely need a centre to train suitable workers and an office so equipped and supplied that it can originate schemes to bring these things about.

I invite readers who are in sympathy with these ideals to join our Union and make common cause with us. Become subscribing members of the Union, if they are not already members, and then write and tell the office in what manner they can help.

In this way they will enable us to continue the work of building the Spiritualist movement till it becomes a mighty force, influencing all aspects of social, economic and religious life.

## **Barbanell responded:**

I AM delighted to see that the S.N.U. is tackling the urgent problems of post-war Spiritualism envisaged by the Open Letter to John Stewart. I have been asked to co-operate and have been invited to join the planning committee which is shortly meeting in London.

I have since thought of two other ideals which should be included in this plan. The Spiritualist movement requires a country or sea-side home where its aged exponents could spend the winter of their lives in comfort and sympathetic surroundings. This home could include facilities for recuperation for mediums and speakers faced with illness.



Then we ought to have a psychic museum similar to the one established by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle many years ago in Westminster. All the seance-room mementoes he exhibited are still available, though they are all stored away.<sup>12</sup>

### **VALUABLE EXHIBITS**

Scattered throughout the country, however, there are dozens of valuable psychic exhibits—apports, photographs, pictures, wax moulds obtained at seances—to enumerate only a few. These are at present lost to the movement.

The plea for a plan has brought a large correspondence from Spiritualists. Mainly they underline what I have already said.

James M. McLintock, a South-East London reader, points out that it is easy to get people interested in Spiritualism, but what they want is evidence. The movement needs more mediums. Pointing out that we depend on mediumship, he says that one medium who can produce results is worth ten books. He considers that insufficient is being done to produce mediums and urges a national campaign to encourage greater development of psychic powers.

### **SMALL CHURCHES' PROBLEM**

Alfred R. Scarfe, of the Spiritualist church in Woodbridge, Suffolk, puts the problem of the small country churches. "One of our difficulties has been to obtain mediums," he writes, "for we have to have nearly all London mediums. This entails considerable travelling expenses on top of fees."

He has been considering the possibility of a federation of East Anglian churches, with a live organiser at its head. This could arrange for reputable mediums to be booked from a central organisation, large and small churches all contributing to the common pool.

He stresses the value of Spiritualist churches publicising their activities and encloses a copy of one of the large posters which is displayed on local hoardings.

J. D. Turner, a South-West London reader, points out that in the same week that we published the Seven-Years Plan "Light" printed a plea for Spiritualists to use co-operative advertising.

<sup>12</sup> See Psypioneer, Vol. 5, No. 5, May 2009: "Sir Arthur Doyle's Psychic Bookshop, Library & Museum".

"There is no doubt that action should be taken to put some of these plans in operation," he writes. "But I venture to suggest that it is not a matter for one organisation only. The best results could be obtained by a concerted effort on the part of all the main Spiritualist organisations throughout Great Britain. What can be done about it?"

I am convinced that, with bold planning, the use of vision and the marshalling of the talent this movement possesses, we could transmute the activities of Spiritualists throughout the land and make Spiritualism a leading, if not the leading, religious force in this country.

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Below is the National Conference report as published in the Two Worlds, July 11th, 1941:

### NATIONAL CONFERENCE AT DERBY

THE Annual Conference of the S.N.U. was held on July 5th and 6th, at the Charnwood Street National Church, Derby. The attendance was small, owing to the inadvisability of workers leaving their own districts in the present circumstances, and by agreement it had been decided that only essential business should be done. The Council and Emergency Committee, however, have been working hard to continue and extend the Union's activities.

Mr. John Stewart presided and welcomed the delegates and friends, making special reference to the presence of Mr. Hannen Swaffer, our Hon. President, Mr. Fruin,<sup>13</sup> of the B.S.L.U., and Corporal Hancock, of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, a member of the Spiritualist Church at Edmonton, Alberta, who was accepted as a fraternal delegate. The visitor, who was received with applause, said he had been in England over twelve months and had found that Great Britain was home. They had their problems in Canada, but were steadily growing in strength and he hoped to learn something from his British colleagues. We want you to send the people to Canada who will help us to get legal recognition. The authorities want us to take out licences to practice mediumship at a cost of 200 dollars. We refuse to do so. We will not pay the Government for the right to worship in our own way. Religious freedom is every man's right. He thanked them for their brotherly welcome.

Mrs. Harrison (President) welcomed the Conference on behalf of the Spiritualists of Derby.

Owing to the transition of Mr. Frank Blake, in March last, the Presidential Address fell to the lot of Mr. J. M. Stewart, who said:

"In the hearts and minds of all freedom loving people to-day two resolutions stand dominant and unswerving: (1) to win the war and (2) to render impossible any repetition of the wanton aggression caused by Hitler and his associates.

As regards (1), this war has caused some strange reversals of peace time valuations and standards. We long for the stable and unchangeable, but find in time that the only everlasting thing is change.

It has always been our practice to pass a peace resolution at each A.G.M., but at London in 1937 a new note was introduced by appealing to the Government to strengthen the country's defences against possible attack. I am glad now that that resolution was passed despite opposition. It indicated a desire to make a stand against the peace breakers.

Two years later our country did make a stand against aggression, culminating in the ruthless attack upon Poland. In all, fourteen countries have one by one fallen victims in this

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<sup>13</sup> Vol. 2, No. 3, May 2015: "Remembering our old workers" – Albert Fruin 1888-1969".

way and it is plain that neither for us nor for any other country can there be security or hope of peace until Hitlerism is destroyed. This is a task which must come first and to which everything else must be subordinated.

When the war is over the period of reconstruction will demand the same war-time spirit of sacrifice directed progressively to the purposes of peace and the recasting of society. In this campaign the Spiritualist Movement must play its part. Now is the time to make our plans!

This A.G.M. affords us an opportunity to survey our position, to consider methods, ways and means as a preparation for a fresh advance. We must try as best we can to anticipate the issues of the future and to define our objectives in relation thereto.

A start has already been made, due to the foresight of our General Secretary, for in April, 1940, Mr. Keeling asked for the appointment of a Committee to prepare and submit plans for post-war development, including the raising of an Endowment Fund of £50,000 and culminating in special arrangements for the celebration of the Centenary of Modern Spiritualism in 1948. In this way, what has come to be known as the Seven Years' Plan was born.

Some of the things we are planning will be put into operation before our next A.G.M. Others may take longer, as, for example, the proposed publication of a series of books on various aspects of Spiritualism on the lines of the R.P.A. Thinker's Library, and plans for the achievement of a higher standard of Mediumship as well as its orderly training and development.



Shaw Desmond

Our friend, , in a recent article in the *Psychic News*, goes to the extreme when he says that the Movement is moribund. It is easy to criticise, but the man who only points out weakness and mistaken endeavour is of little value to progress.

Most of his strictures appear to be based upon experiences met while working with leading London bodies of Spiritualists. It would be unfair to apply them to the Movement at large and I do not accept them as applicable to the Union or its Churches.

There is one direct reference in his statement to the Union in which he asks if it is showing 'vital drive, constructive action, and illuminating propaganda' during what he calls 'a heaven sent opportunity of the war.' The opportunity is no doubt there, but surely it is not heaven sent.

Shaw Desmond is an Honorary Vice-President of the Union. It is a pity he is not better informed as to what the Union is doing and there is undoubtedly need for him to widen his contacts. I am sure if he had been aware of our work, even under war conditions, and particularly of the work of the Planning Committee, he would not have written in such despondent mood.

The Union exists to strengthen fraternal relations between Spiritualists and to facilitate co-operation in everything affecting their common interests. Deep in the hearts of us all there is this desire for co-operation. It brought the Union into being and has sustained it for half a century. No great movement has ever been consummated except by organised co-operation, but many Spiritualist bodies have been slow to recognise the need for a National Organisation, and this includes the very bodies Shaw Desmond complains about.

There is nothing for them to be afraid of, for the Union is essentially a free association of Spiritualist Churches, Societies and individuals. It is sufficiently comprehensive to include within its ranks all shades of opinion and should command the practical support of all sections. Until this is achieved, we will be denied the strength which comes from a united movement.

The world requires some new and unifying force to reach better times. I believe that behind all the destruction that is going on there are great purposes being worked out. The spirit people are not idle, and as long as we remember that we are co-partners with them, and in a measure co-partners with God, our Cause will radiate life and truth Spiritualism will be seen and known for what it is, a truth essential to the welfare and progress of the human race and will go forward to bless the world."

#### The Elections.

The election of Officers and Council were declared as follows:—

President: Mr. John M. Stewart (unopposed).

Vice-President: Mr. Harold L. Vigurs (unopposed).

Treasurer: Mr. Robt. F. Brewer (unopposed).

Area Representatives:—Midlands: No nomination. North-Western: Mrs. Lorna M. Andrews. Scottish: Election in progress. Southern: Mrs. Eva L. Vickers. National Councillor: Mr. Percy Wilson. Subscribers' Representative: Mr. E. W. Oaten.

Mr. Harold Vigurs voiced the annual tribute to "our arisen friends," which was received by a silent standing vote. Mr. Vigurs said: As we meet year by year gaps in our ranks remind us of the growing band of helpers in the larger life. We are conscious of their continued presence and interest in our work. We reverence them all—great and small—known and unknown. An exceptional case this year is that of our President, Frank Blake, who has joined greater army, and, if I speak of him in particular, it is as the representative of the whole band. Blake always struck me as an illumined mind with vision behind him. He was more a friend than a leader. He could minister not only to our earthly needs and sorrows but to our inner life. He helped us not by relieving us of our work, but by strengthening us to do it. Blake's work was not finished but he's completing it, and through him I thank the hosts of helpers and colleagues in the higher life.

The Annual Reports and Accounts were adopted. There had been a drop in membership but this was largely due to war conditions and was to be expected.

A discussion on the question of the proposed Youth Movement elicited speeches from Messrs. Fruin, Wilson, Mrs. Petz and others. It was generally agreed that something must be done to prepare for a larger future, and the President extended an invitation to the B.S.L.U. to join in the effort. The Secretary reported that, to meet the requirements of the Government, a panel of ministers—who need not necessarily be platform workers—had been formed and some sixty appointments had been made.

Amendments to the Trust Property regulations extending the scope of these measures were unanimously adopted.

Notices of Motion on the agenda were rejected by an overwhelming vote.

About 50 delegates were present and the meeting was a very happy one.

Thanks to retiring officers, Messrs. J. G. Findlay, R. Boddington and Mrs. Pickles were heartily adopted.

The proceedings ended with the greetings of the Hon. President, Mr. Hannen Swaffer, who said: We are meeting under difficulties I have often criticised, but I believe this is not the time for criticism. We are carrying on—that's as much as can be expected at present. We shall not draw large audiences when everyone is busy on national emergencies work. Remember this country has not been saved only by famous generals and administrators, but by the courage of the rank and file. They will carry on till it ends. Then more difficult times will come. There must be a new world, but it must be worked for and we must be

worthy of it. We must strive for equality in colour, in religion, in social service and economics.

We Spiritualists are hampered in our work by inequality under the law—that must be mended.

Everybody knows the world's wrong been no two bodies agree as to the changes necessary. In the new world Spiritualism will be important. However humble your position, you must be true to the past and the future. Carry on ! There's a greater time coming.

—~—

**1942:**

## A trivial matter?

What may have been seen as a trivial matter at a time of devastation as WWII continued to rage, a speech at the 41st annual convention of the Spiritualists' National Union's London District Council, would cause turmoil within the Union. Some considered the ongoing bickering unnecessary but would continue for months; this was spurred on by the founding editor of Psychic News, Maurice Barbanell. The matter involved the editor's close friend, the Honorary President of the Union, Hannen Swaffer, and former SNU President Ernest Keeling, the SNU's Secretary. It began on the front page of Psychic News, June 6th, 1942:

### Hannen Swaffer Throws A Bomb At Spiritualists

By Maurice Barbanell



INTO the Conway Hall, practically the only building left intact in a square which is the scene of devastation caused by air raids, Hannen Swaffer threw a bombshell last Saturday. The occasion was the May Meeting, the 41st annual convention of the Spiritualists' National Union's London District Council.

Swaffer, who is the Union's honorary president, flatly contradicted many of the statements made that evening by Ernest Keeling, the S.N.U.'s secretary. The climax was reached when Percy Wilson, president of the London District Council, forgetting that a chairman should be impartial, administered a public rebuke to Hannen Swaffer ! The controversy centred around the question of religion.

The meeting began on a quiet note with an address from John Stewart, president of the S.N.U., showing how Spiritualism had been effecting a reconciliation between science and religion. He regretted the many separate bodies in Spiritualism and pleaded for more co-operation.

### LIVING IS THE TEST

Stewart made some references to religion. "The best exposition of a man's religion should be his life," he declared. Then he stressed the practical application of Spiritualism: "While we are demolishing superstition regarding life after death, we can join hands with those who are trying to improve the lot of man on earth."

Keeling, a distinctive figure with his snow-white hair, made an earnest speech. It was 52 years since he became associated with the Spiritualist movement. "I pledged my life to the spirit world," he said. "It was one of the most solemn moments of the whole of my life."

Then came one of the statements to which Swaffer later took exception. "I have come to believe that the Spiritualist movement has missed its way," he said. "I cannot explain how it has come about." Later he gave as one reason—"The average Spiritualist church is not a religious institution."

He spoke as one who had held all the leading offices in one of the oldest churches in Britain and was fully acquainted with all the difficulties. But we had to realise that religious needs were the paramount needs.

Keeling then dealt with mediumship, which he said was the foundation on which the whole movement rested. "There would be no Spiritualist movement if there were no mediumship," he said. "But I cannot see anything religious in the phenomena of Spiritualism."

There were three main types to which the name Spiritualist was given. There were those who belonged to the infants' class, who were merely convinced that life was continuous and communication was possible. There were thousands of the second class, people who were always going to our phenomena meetings in the hope of getting a message, and who were not interested in anything else.

"That is where I think we missed our way," he said. If he had a Spiritualist church the public would be admitted to psychic demonstrations only once a month. The other Sunday services would be for "communion" and restricted to its members. What form that "communion" was to take he did not explain.

He regarded his talks with the next life as "the most sacred and hallowed experiences I have ever had," adding, "I have a horror of parading the sacred and the hallowed."

Keeling went on to plead for more humility on our platforms and among our church officials. He complained that there were hundreds of mediums giving public demonstrations who had not emerged beyond the apprentice stage. It would be infinitely better if they went back to their developing circles, for they were not properly trained.

The third type of Spiritualist was the one who realised the implications of the continuity of life.

## HUMAN AND HOMELY



Bertha Harris followed with a demonstration of clairvoyance that was replete with human and homely touches.<sup>14</sup> It was mainly made up of those trivial incidents to which our critics frequently allude. The "dead" who returned showed they were still interested in all the little circumstances, the commonplaces that surrounded the loved ones they had left on earth.

There were one or two notes of drama as she referred to a group who passed because of an air raid. The group included five children who were "killed" when they left their shelter for a cup of tea. With them came a woman who jokingly referred to the fact that she and the recipient of her message "swopped furs." The "dead" woman regretted that she could not borrow her shoes, because their feet were different sizes.

Then there was a "dead" individual who referred to a blazing car which overturned. He gave his name as Sandy and mentioned how he was wrapped in bandages as he lay dying.

<sup>14</sup> Vol. 3, No. 5, October 2016: "Bertha Harris Tells: How I See The Dead".

## NO RELIGION EXCEPT—

There was a woman who had passed on in the blitz, in a house near the Elephant and Castle, in South London. “I had no religion,” she said, “except just doing my bit.”

Whether by accident or design, the clairvoyance contradicted Keeling’s statement that spirit communication was sacred and hallowed.

There was mention of a Siamese cat that would come back, and a budgerigar in which another cat was interested. A “dead” woman told her daughter that she wanted her to have her diamond ring.

A man told how, when some property was left, he was omitted in the bequest, but the two who inherited the property had played ducks and drakes with it. There was a spirit father who said he used to deal in old mangles and irons. He jokingly said that if he were on earth now he could make his fortune. There was a humorous surgeon who mentioned how he used to “carve beautifully” and who “died” because he “helped himself to gas.”

Percy Wilson introduced Hannen Swaffer with glowing praise. He described the famous journalist as a columnist who stripped shams and pretences and revealed naked truths.

Swaffer immediately began to do so. He thought it strange, he said, that Keeling should have travelled 200 miles to “say some extraordinary things.” The secretary of the S.N.U. had spoken about sacred and hallowed communion. Yet the medium who followed him revealed that spirit return was merely part of a natural law. There was nothing sacred about the Siamese cat, the budgerigar, the diamond ring and property and all the clairvoyance which Keeling had obviously enjoyed.

“It has taken the spirit world 90 years,” said Swaffer, “to demonstrate that communication is a human thing.”

He referred to his home circle, which he had attended that afternoon, describing some of the visitors—the daughter of a marquis, a well-known knight and industrialist, and a leading Australian journalist. The circle that afternoon had been composed half of Gentiles and half of Jews.

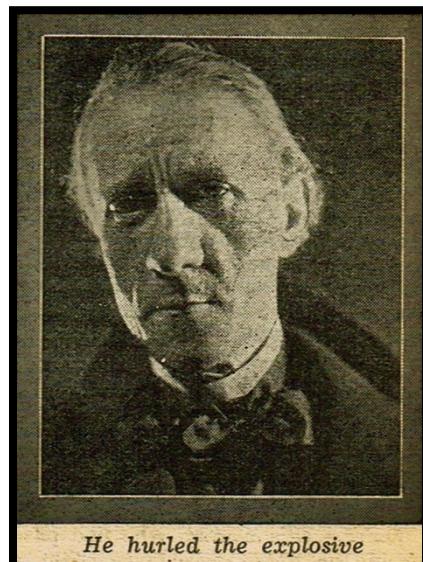
## THE GREAT LEVELLER

He mentioned all this to show that Spiritualism, and seances in particular, was the great leveller.

“I want to undo all that the secretary of the S.N.U. has done,” said Swaffer. “I deny that one’s religion is the ‘most important thing in the world.’” And he referred to the woman who passed on in the blitz and who came back to say, “I haven’t any religion—except just doing my bit.” “That is all we have to do,” he commented. “That is religion.”

“The Spiritualist movement has not lost its way,” said Swaffer. “It has done so much to destroy the fear of death that there is a new idea right across the world. It has brought hope into thousands of lives.

“Public worship is not the end of our movement. We shall be judged by our contribution to the society in which we live. This movement cannot fail because of the things it is teaching.”



*He hurled the explosive*

Swaffer said that he was in a position of some embarrassment. "Although I am the head of 500 Spiritualist churches, I do not believe, in public worship," he said. "I never go to our churches, except to speak. We have a job to do, and religion is only of use as long as it helps us to do our job. What is important is not going to church, or singing hymns, or praying, but doing your job."

## **WORLD OF TOMORROW**

"We have got to build a new order of society. Religion is not an end. It is merely a means. The end is a world in which there will be no creed, caste or colour bar, in which all races and all classes contribute to the common good."

"If there had been no religion in India there would now be a settlement instead of interminable disputes between Moslems and Hindus.

"Our task in the future is to spur on the purpose of building a new social order. The old world is gone. We have to rebuild. And, in the building of the new world, Spiritualism will either be of great use or of no use at all."

Then came the sensation—Percy Wilson's reproof of Hannen Swaffer ! After declaring that with much Swaffer had said he profoundly disagreed, and that with some of it he heartily agreed, Wilson went on: "I venture to say that Mr. Swaffer has not read and imbibed the teachings of the spirit world."

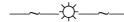
Swaffer afterwards told me that, because he was seated directly behind Percy Wilson, he neither heard his fulsome flattery in introducing him nor the intended rebuke at the end! He was never concerned with praise or adverse criticism. He had thought, for example, that John Stewart's lavish tribute to him in *Psychic News* last week should not have been printed. That issue of *Psychic News* was dated the same day as the May Meeting !

In it Stewart praised Swaffer for the "fearless way in which he so consistently upholds freedom of thought and does his best to counteract tyranny in high places. His support of unpopular causes has won for him the esteem of all true lovers of humanity."

## **PAST TROUBLES**

There have frequently been arguments about Swaffer's speeches. Once, after addressing a meeting at the Queen's Hall, at which he declared that the home circles were the strength of our movement, he was accused of attacking professional mediums. An outspoken address, given by him at the Grotian Hall opposing Mrs. Stobart's view that Spiritualism should be handed over, "lock, stock and barrel" to the Churches, did not please her and some of her supporters.

And, many years ago, he and two other speakers who, at an Albert Hall remembrance service, stressed the need for applying Spiritualist truths to life's problems, were accused of being too political !



Above is the full published account by *Psychic News*; it would naturally create a backlash with Spiritualists in general, relationships of the S.N.U and the press, and, of course, within the Union itself, and would indeed call on the position and role of Honorary President of the S.N.U. Below, Barbanell in *Psychic News*, issue June 27th, 1942, continues to keep up the pressure resulting from the May meeting of the Union's District Council. This article also brings in other points of our history, its workers and their views:

## CRISIS IN OFFICIAL SPIRITUALISM FRANK WARNING TO OUR LARGEST ORGANISED BODY

**THE SPIRITUALISTS' NATIONAL UNION, OUR LARGEST ORGANISED BODY, IS NOW AT THE CROSS-ROADS. SOMETHING APPROACHING A HERESY HUNT IS BEING CONDUCTED. THERE ARE WHISPERS AND HINTS THAT HANNEN SWAFFER SHOULD BE ASKED TO RELINQUISH HIS HONORARY PRESIDENCY OF THE S.N.U.**

All this is a result of the May Meeting of the Union's London District Council held a few weeks ago, when Swaffer challenged some of the views expressed by Ernest Keeling, the S.N.U. secretary.

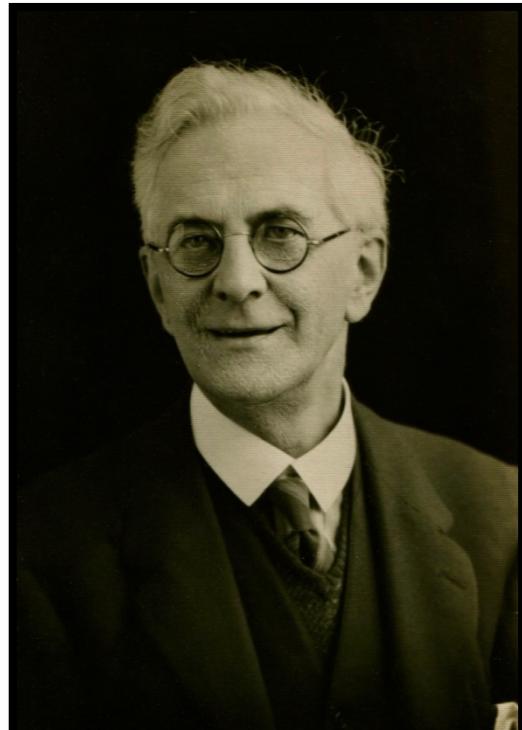
As inevitably happens in controversies, the main issue has become a little obscured. In the "Two Worlds," more or less the official organ of the S.N.U.—the exact relationship has never been defined<sup>15</sup>—Keeling recently said, among other things, of his visit to the May Meeting, "The question of whether Spiritualism is or is not a religion was raised in a rather acute term" He went on to say that Swaffer disagreed with him.

There was a disagreement—but not on whether Spiritualism is a religion. The main controversy dealt with public worship and the place of religion in a man's life.

### BE ONLY FAIR REPORT

If you want to know what happened and were not present at the meeting, you could only learn from the report published in *Psychic News*. Only two papers reported the meeting, ourselves and the "Two Worlds." Ours was as fair as human beings could make it. Every news-worthy point was recorded.

The "Two Worlds" neither printed Swaffer's speech nor referred to him by name ! He was described first as "a visitor" and then as "the person." In the past Spiritualists have



Ernest Keeling

<sup>15</sup> Pioneer, Vol. 1, No. 2: "It has been stated that *The Two Worlds* is controlled by the Spiritualist National Union. That is not true. (The fact is, the Union was started as the result of agitation in *The Two Worlds*.) When the paper started in 1887, many Spiritualist Churches subscribed to its capital; they are still on the list of shareholders, so that many of the Churches rather than the Union have an interest in the paper. Further, every editor of *The Two Worlds* has been a member of the National Council, and several of them have been its President. Members of the Council of the Spiritualist National Union have always been invited to a position on its Board of Directors. There is no obligation in the matter, but *The Two Worlds* has always considered that an organised Movement is essential to the well-being of Spiritualism, and has considered it wise to work in the closest collaboration with such organisation. While individual effort can be useful in propaganda, we believe that organisation is necessary for consolidation." Ernest W. Oaten.

rightly protested against the way in which national newspapers have often unfairly dealt with our case. Here a difference of opinion in Spiritualism was fairly dealt with by a Spiritualist journal.

The truth is that Hannen Swaffer at the May Meeting was Hannen Swaffer. If Percy Wilson, the London District Council's president and chairman of the meeting, wanted to hear conventional views conventionally expressed, he should not have invited Swaffer to speak. Swaffer is always challenging and disturbing.

## REASON FOR HIS CHOICE

That is why he is well known. That is why he is valuable to Spiritualism. That is why the Union, 12 years ago, when Sir Arthur Conan Doyle passed on, asked him to be the next honorary president.

John Stewart, its present president, who said at the May Meeting almost the same thing as Swaffer—his words were “The best exposition of a man’s religion should be his life”—did not meet with any objection. But then John is more conventional. Swaffer later amplified that statement in his inimitable fashion.

When he said, “I want to undo all that the secretary of the S.N.U. has done,” he did not deny, as Keeling now says he did, that Spiritualism was a religion. What Swaffer did deny was that religion “is the most important thing in the world.”

**He cited a “dead” woman, described that evening by Bertha Harris, who came back to say, “I had no religion—except just doing my bit.” Then Swaffer made the point: “That is all we have to do. That is religion.”**

He criticised the idea that religion and public worship were one and the same thing. He did not believe in public worship, he said. He stressed, “Religion is only of use as long as it helps us to do our job. What is important is not going to church, or singing hymns, or praying, but doing your job.”

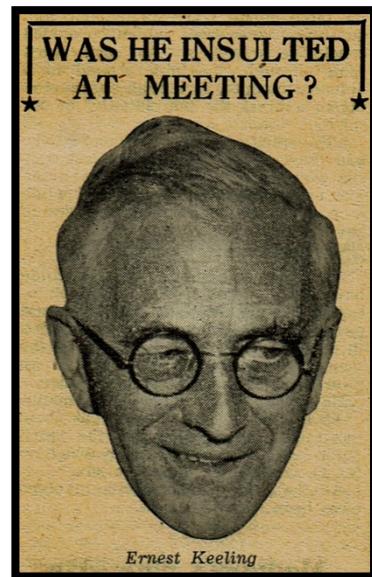
Visualising the World of Tomorrow, Swaffer concluded, “We have got to build a new order of society. Religion is not an end. It is merely a means. The end is a world in which there will be no creed, caste or colour bar, in which all races and all classes contribute to the common good.”

## PRACTICAL APPLICATION

**Now that is the application of Spiritualism, as I understand it, and as most Spiritualists understand it. Anyway, it is what the spirit world teaches.**

In last week’s “Two Worlds,” in “London Topics,” a similar point of view was stated another way. It declared that the spirit teachers worked “to alleviate the suffering of humanity by removing the misconception concerning ‘death,’ and by uplifting the mind so that the circumstances of life shall be improved.”

It is now being alleged that Swaffer made an offensive and insulting attack on Keeling. I can only say that I was present and saw no offence. If there was any offensiveness that evening, surely it was in Percy Wilson’s rebuke to Swaffer, rather surprising after his fulsome praise.



## **JOKE ABOUT NORTH POLE**

In characteristic vein, Swaffer referred to Keeling's travelling from Liverpool to London by joking about the man who came from "somewhere near the North Pole." You must be very thin-skinned to regard this as offensive and insulting !

**You might agree or disagree with the views expressed by Swaffer, but free speech is the essence of democracy, and healthy controversy can never harm truth.**

A few years ago, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, when he was the Union's honorary president, advocated the adoption of an eighth principle, one accepting the leadership of Jesus. This was rejected by the movement. But no heresy hunt followed.<sup>16</sup>

## **CONAN DOYLE'S PLEA**

Later, at a general election; he pleaded, because of a promise from the head of the Liberal Party to amend the Vagrancy Act, that Spiritualists should vote Liberal. This did not find favour with thousands of Spiritualists. But no heresy hunt followed.

Mrs. St. Clair Stobart and Shaw Desmond, both honorary vice-presidents of the Union, have propagated views diametrically opposed to those held by many Spiritualists in the S.N.U. But no heresy hunts have followed.

Now I know Swaffer's views better than any other Spiritualist in the land. I know that his outward, mocking cynicism hides a burning, passionate sincerity. I know that Spiritualism has been a tremendous influence in his life, which, ever since he became convinced of its truth, has been dedicated to the upliftment and betterment of the illtreated and the impoverished.

His political campaigning, his fight for social justice and his enthusiasm for reform are fortified by his Spiritualist knowledge.

I have spoken with him on hundreds of platforms. He and I set up the record for Spiritualist propaganda by addressing 250,000 people in three years. I have sat up half the night with him discussing Spiritualism and a thousand-and-one other subjects in cars, trains and hotels.<sup>17</sup>

## **SERVICE WITHOUT FEE**

I know his embarrassing frankness. I know all about his idiosyncrasies. But I do know his great contribution to our movement—and he has never charged one farthing for his services or his expenses.

**He has been the means of spreading our knowledge among thousands, who include the influential and the well known, with whom he is on intimate terms. He is our biggest draw with the public, for his name will fill the largest halls where others do not.**

His advocacy has earned for our movement a respect which it never before possessed. And the marked change in the Press attitude towards us is largely due to his activities.

## **"MY RELIGION"**

He has not changed his views on Spiritualism and its religious implications ever since I first met him almost a score of years ago. When in 1935 he contributed to a "My Religion"

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<sup>16</sup> Vol. 2, No. 6, November 2015: "Maurice Barbanell, the S.N.U. and his Propaganda Work".

<sup>17</sup> As above reference.

series in *Psychic News*—his article was reprinted in its entirety four years later—he began by saying:

"I am in religion a Spiritualist and a Socialist. To me both those words mean the same thing." Then he went on, "In accepting the Brotherhood of Man as a cardinal principle of everyday life in all its aspects, I believe that Spiritualism and Socialism, when joined in the practice of the lives of all of us, will abolish all creedal differences, end all class and caste hatreds, join us all in one great human family and build up a new world, in which the only distinctions will be the degrees of our service to the general good."

We are fighting, among other liberties, for the right of free speech. It would be folly of the direst kind for Spiritualists to resent freedom of expression on our platforms—especially as we have always boasted that we possessed no creed, no dogma and no pope.

## ROOM FOR ALL

**The S.N.U., if it is to succeed, must be inclusive and not exclusive. It must break down barriers, not add new ones. It must find room within its ranks for all who are fired by similar enthusiasm to propagate the new-old gospel enunciated from the Other Side.**

We must not create a new rigid orthodoxy. We must not introduce anything approaching a Star Chamber or a Grand Inquisition.

Narrowness is a restriction. Cliques must be avoided. Cabals must not be imported. Regimentation and dragooning are foreign to Spiritualism.

There is a hungry, bereaved world awaiting our message. That is our important task—not a new heresy hunt.

## FALLING MEMBERSHIP

Besides, the S.N.U. has urgent problems claiming its attention. The number of Spiritualists has grown in the past few years. This growth is not reflected in the S.N.U.

Ten years ago it had 479 churches with over 15,000 members. Today it possesses 65 fewer churches and has lost 2,600 members—one-sixth of its membership gone in a decade. At that rate, there will be no S.N.U. in a half-century !

## BLUNT WORDS

### Should Swaffer Be Sent To Coventry?

**T**HREE was a very heated and surprising discussion when the quarterly meeting of the London District Council was held last Saturday and Percy Wilson presented his report of the May Meeting. After many delegates had spoken, a resolution was carried asking the S.N.U. council to invite Swaffer to "explain" himself to the annual conference at Coventry on July 4. This stormy quarterly meeting was held at the Friendship Centre.

"Religion attracts but the churches repel," said Cosmo Gordon Lang, indicting the Orthodoxy he led for years. Can it be that Spiritualism attracts and some S.N.U. churches repel ?

Now I am not criticising individual members of the S.N.U., many of whom have given splendid service to our cause through their churches. But I warn the Union that unless it adopts a more far-sighted policy, unless it is guided by toleration and broadmindedness, it will fail the post-war world and the spirit world.

It has reached a crisis in its history. I hope it sees the writing on the wall. I trust that when it is weighed in the balance it will not be found wanting.

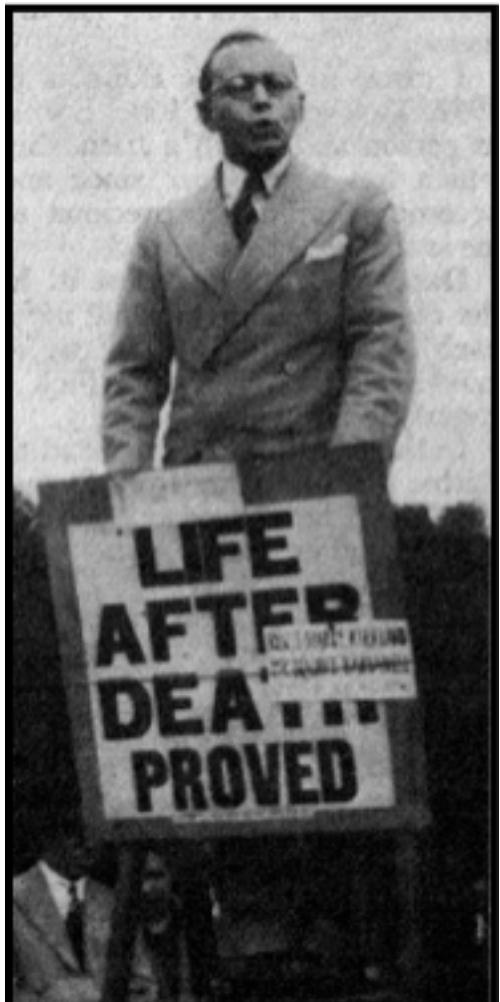
There were no signs of relenting as controversy continued in *Psychic News*; sliding away was not an option, especially as the 1942 AGM was soon to take place. Barbanell continued the pressure in *Psychic News*, July 4th, 1942:

**We Are Now Accused Of Hatching A  
“Sinister Plot”**

**S.N.U. SECRETARY HAS NOT HEARD OF CRISIS !**

**Maurice Barbanell**

THOUGH HE IS THE SECRETARY OF THE SPIRITUALISTS' NATIONAL UNION,  
ERNEST KEELING DOES NOT KNOW THAT THERE IS A CRISIS IN HIS  
ORGANISATION ! IN FACT, HE DENIES ITS EXISTENCE, AND ACCUSES ME  
OF “APPARENTLY TRYING TO CREATE TROUBLE IN THE S.N.U.”



Maurice Barbanell: Hyde Park 1936

I did not create the trouble. It was created by the S.N.U. *Psychic News* merely did its duty by reporting what has happened.

If Keeling does not know what is going on in his organisation, I am sorry for his ignorance. His own words are, “It might be thought that the Union’s office would be aware if there was a crisis, but we have no knowledge of one.”

Well, the office may not know, but John Stewart, president of the Union, to mention only one official, knows all about it.

**THE INDICTMENT**

Keeling does not like the article I wrote on this page last week. In “S.N.U. News,” under the heading “Is It A Plot?” he deals with the aftermath of the London May Meeting in this fashion:

**“The manner in which the whole incident has been dealt with and the somewhat extravagant innuendoes and misrepresentations which have been made all seem to point to a sinister plot. What its purpose may be we cannot surmise, but it is obvious that it is not intended to benefit the S.N.U.**

“There appears to be a desire on the part of a single individual to use the power of the press to create a crisis and dictate to the members of the Union what they shall think and what they shall do.”

That is the accusation. What are the facts? *Psychic News* is a newspaper. It prints the news. As part of its normal duties, it reported the May Meeting—and the aftermath.

The “Two Worlds,” which publishes “SNU News,” left out Swaffer’s speech—that led to all the controversy—and even refused to mention that he was present!

## PRESIDENT AGREES

**As Keeling is so abysmally ignorant of what has since transpired, I will pierce the veil for him. Seeing that he accuses me of indulging in “extravagant innuendoes,” of “misrepresentations” and of hatching a “sinister plot,” I will tell him that his president, John Stewart, read the article on the day before it appeared last week and expressed his agreement with it. Will Keeling now accuse Stewart of joining in a “sinister plot”?**

It was intended, at the quarterly meeting of the Union’s London District Council, held on June 20, to move a resolution that the office of honorary president should lapse. This was an adroit move to get rid of Swaffer, for he is the honorary president.

When he heard of this first step in the heresy hunt, John Stewart announced that if Swaffer were forced out of his honorary office, he would resign his presidency of the Union.

John would automatically continue in office for another year, for he is unopposed in the election that takes place at Coventry on July 4.

Keeling says that he has no knowledge of any crisis. Do presidents resign every day in the S.N.U.?

After learning of John’s decision, the original resolution was dropped. In its place, one was moved and carried, as reported by us last week, asking Swaffer to “explain” himself to the annual conference at Coventry.

This meeting of the London District Council was a very stormy one. It was at first impossible for John Stewart to get a hearing ! He was shouted down by a bigoted opposition. All he attempted to do was to report Swaffer’s views, following a conversation with him. And being a man of peace John wanted them to vote against the resolution. Dealing with the heresy hunt, he announced that his sympathy was with the hunted and not the hunters.

## DOESN’T KEELING KNOW ?



Ernest Keeling

So disgusted was he with the proceedings that John seriously considered resigning from the London District Council as a protest. Yet Keeling says he has not heard of any crisis.

Let me repeat that if the heresy hunt is continued at Coventry, John, unless he changes his mind by then, has announced that he will no longer be the Union’s president.

I pleaded at the London District Council’s meeting that the right of free speech was vital in Spiritualism, that even if Swaffer was wrong—and I do not admit that—he had a perfect right to express his views on Spiritualist platforms.

## MY RESIGNATION

Because of the heresy hunt I resigned from the planning committee of the Union. This is the committee that was formed to adopt the “Seven-Year Plan” I proposed in these columns. At John’s request I agreed to defer my resignation until after the annual meeting at Coventry.

Because of all these happenings, which I thought and still think constitute a crisis in the S.N.U., I wrote the front page article last week. It was a frank warning. It was a plea for toleration.

I have been associated with the Union for a score of years. I have been a member of its national council. I know its virtues and its failings. But loyalty to Spiritualism must come first. I cannot place the S.N.U. before the spirit world.

**The Union has wasted years on rules and regulations, on altering and revising its articles of association while a perplexed world awaited our message. If half the time spent on tinkering with its machinery had been devoted to fostering mediumship and to propaganda the Union would not be in the parlous state it is in today.**

Keeling now agrees that "it should be possible to differ without quarrelling." That is why I opposed the heresy hunt. My reward is to be accused of "indulging in wild statements," and of hatching a plot."

Honest criticism never harmed anybody. If the Union or its secretary resents it, I am sorry for them. It is the life-blood of democracy. It is one of the principles for which we are fighting.

I will oppose any attempt to start a new orthodoxy in Spiritualism. I have nothing to withdraw or to retract. My warning to the S.N.U. still stands.

"The cause is greater than the Union, the church or the individual," says Keeling.

That is the lesson the S.N.U. must learn. If it does not, it will decay—as have all organisations which preferred vested interests to spiritual freedom.



The Two Worlds, July 10th, 1942, report is partly quoted below. The fortieth Annual General Meeting of the Spiritualists' National Union was held at Parkside Spiritualist Church, Coventry on July 4th. Regarding the controversy, alleged crisis, etc., apart from Swaffer's letter shown below and a rather pointed comment noted below, it appeared to be business as usual:<sup>18</sup>

### ANNUAL MEETING OF THE S.N.U.

"The annual Reports were accepted and were supplemented by interim reports for the last 6 months. These showed an increase over last year of 40 churches and 1,000 members, resulting in an increase of £90 in fees. Class B. (subscribing) members showed an increase of £24. The war had, of course, brought increased expenditure, including insurances and fire watching, amounting to roughly £50. The Building Fund pool had made two further advances to enable churches to secure premises, but war damage had affected the ability of some churches to keep up to their repayments. Every building society had the same difficulty to face, but these disabilities are probably temporary. A fund is now in existence to assist blitzed churches (and some have been assisted), but the response has been disappointing.

"A long discussion took place on the proposals of the Council for an organization to meet the needs of the young. These had been circulated and were presented for the Council by Mr. Vigurs. He stressed the need some organization to meet the youth of to-day. He could not agree that the welfare of the young was the sole concern of Lyceum Officers. The needs of youth were not being met. The scheme before them was placed there for discussion, and the Council asked for help in its evolution, to meet present any needs. A long letter was read from Mr. A. T. Connor. The Council stressed the point that it had tried

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<sup>18</sup> Although I have not seen the Presidential address at present.

conscientiously for several years to secure the co-operation of the Lyceum Union, but had failed. It could no longer divest itself of responsibility for the welfare of its children and young people: but still held itself open to accept co-operation from every quarter.

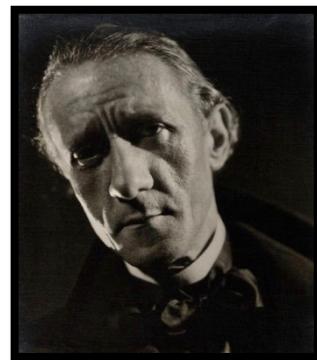
“Some twenty delegates took part in the discussion, after which the following resolution was adopted by an overwhelming majority, “That this annual Meeting of the S.N.U. agrees to the proposals now before them and instructs the Council to proceed with the scheme, and to solicit the co-operation of the British Spiritualists Lyceum Union.””

“Mr. Stewart, from the chair, moved the following resolution, “That this Annual Meeting of the S.N.U. affirms that it is one of the main objects of this Union to secure the legal recognition of the religion of Spiritualism, and whilst insisting on the right of each of its members to individual interpretation of the Seven Principles,<sup>19</sup> disassociates itself from certain reported statements of its Honorary President at the recent London May Meetings.

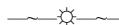
“On the contrary it expresses its appreciation of the work done by well conducted Spiritualist Churches in their public services for devotion and worship, and emphasises the value of the devotional atmosphere, not only for the highest type of spirit communion, as apart from the psychic communication, but also as an aid to individual spiritual unfoldment.” The resolution was unanimously carried without a dissentient voice.”

“The Credentials Officer, Mr. Lorraine Haig, reported the following attendance:—  
Council Members 11, B.S.L.U. 1, District Councils 8, Church Representatives 32, Visitors 15, Total 67.

“Mr. Stewart read a letter he had received from Mr. Hannen Swaffer which expressed regret that any remarks of his at the May meetings should have caused hurt to Mr. Keeling, and assuring him that the last thing he intended was to inflict hurt to one with whom he had had a long friendship. Mr. Swaffer thought that far too much had been made of a trivial incident. Mr. Keeling assured the meeting that he accepted such expression without reservation, and hoped the matter would now be forgotten.



“A lengthy discussion took place on the notice of motion by the Council to increase the capitation fee of the Churches from 1s. to 2s per member per year. The proposition was opposed by the Representatives of the Northern, South Midlands and Yorkshire districts, though Sheffield strongly supported it. Mr. McIndoe explained that costs were rising in every department of life, the Churches were continually adding to the work of the Council, which had had to carry on its work recently with an emergency committee, because they could not afford to meet as a full Council. Restricted income meant inefficiency, and this always meant waste. The proposal would double the income of the District Councils, as well as that of the Union. Over a dozen delegates contributed to the discussion. The resolution was subsequently put and carried by 23 votes to 4.”



<sup>19</sup> Charles Coulston, SNU Consultant, notes: “Liberty of interpretation issue: the Council of the Union, which was at that time the policy-making body of the Union, agreed to accept this [legal] advice from the Union’s solicitors and the Council’s acceptance of it was relayed to members at the Union’s 1988 Annual General Meeting. The reference to liberty of interpretation was accordingly deleted from the Union’s Articles of Association and elsewhere from that point in time.”

Given Swaffer's rather straightforward letter, one may be forgiven for concluding that, as Swaffer put, it "a trivial matter" would be the last of this "heresy" and life would return to business for the Union and reporting on Spiritualism for Barbanell in *Psychic News* !

**But,**

Barbanell in *Psychic News*, July 11th, 1942, writes:

## Hannen Swaffer Throws Second Bomb

### HE RESIGNS HIS HONORARY PRESIDENCY OF OUR LARGEST NATIONAL ORGANISATION

**HANNEN SWAFFER HAS THROWN A SECOND BOMB—ONE THAT HAS BLASTED HIM OUT OF HIS HONORARY PRESIDENCY OF THE SPIRITUALISTS' NATIONAL UNION !**

**It was a delayed action bomb, for I carried it about with me for a whole day last Saturday, when it should have exploded. Skilful tactics on the part of the council of the S.N.U at its annual conference at Coventry last week-end prevented me from hurling the explosive then.**

And yet Ernest Keeling, the Union's secretary, and the "Two Worlds," more or less its official organ, denied last week that there was any crisis !

### START OF HERESY HUNT

All this is the aftermath of the May Meeting of the Union's London District Council at which Swaffer threw his first Bomb. He disagreed with some statements made by Keeling on the value of public worship and the place of religion in a man's life.



Swaffer said he spoke with some embarrassment, for he was the head of Spiritualist churches. That started a heresy hunt. He was accused of insulting the London District Council.

Because he referred to Keeling's traveling from Liverpool to London by joking about the man who came from "somewhere near the North Pole," he was told that he had been offensive and insulting!

As part of its normal newspaper function *Psychic News* reported the May Meeting and all that has since transpired. This incurred both the

censure and the displeasure of Ernest Keeling. I was accused of "apparently endeavouring to create trouble in the S.N.U.," indulging in "extravagant innuendoes," I was guilty of "misrepresentations," and I was hatching a "sinister plot."

### SELF-CENSORSHIP

**You would have thought from Keeling denial of the existence of a crisis that everything in the S.N.U. garden was lovely. But Keeling had his doubts about his own views. In between sending me his usual copy of the "S.N.U. News" and its appearance in the "Two Worlds" he censured himself! He changed his reference to my hatching**

a “sinister plot” in my possessing an “ulterior motive.” And I, the “villain” in the piece, was not told of the lessening of my crime.

Oaten, Editor of the “Two Worlds,” and a member of the Union’s council, also took a hand last week. He accused me of “engineering a crisis” and declared, “This may be good journalism, but it’s jolly poor Spiritualism.”

This is very fifth-form—“bad show, old boy,” and all that sort of thing—but what does it mean? Bad journalism cannot be good Spiritualism.

**The “Two Worlds” suppressed Swaffer’s speech at the May Meeting. It even suppressed, in its report, the fact that he was present, describing him first as “a visitor” and then as “the person.” That is bad journalism—and bad Spiritualism.**

Oaten also denied there was a crisis. Well, he must have forgotten that he was present at the quarterly meeting of the London District Council at which Percy Wilson, its president, presented his report of the May Meeting. This was the stormy gathering at which John Stewart, the Union’s president, could not at first get a hearing. He was howled down by a bigoted opposition.

Oaten, who left before the meeting’s conclusion, said, in answer to a suggestion that he should speak, that they were in a nice mess, he hoped they would get out of it, but there was nothing happening that interested him !

John Stewart asked me to be present at this quarterly meeting so that I should speak against a resolution that the office of honorary president should lapse. That resolution was never moved. Instead one was carried asking the S.N.U. council to invite Swaffer to “explain” himself to the annual conference at Coventry.

## BEHIND THE SCENES

Two days before this conference, John Stewart and Percy Wilson called on Swaffer to discuss this crisis which according to Oaten and Keeling did not exist. John, a man of peace, tried to pour oil on the troubled waters. Swaffer immediately agreed to John’s suggestion that he should write a letter, which could be read at the conference, expressing his regrets for the alleged insult to Keeling.

Incidentally, there has been no mention of an apology for Wilson’s public reproof from the chair of Swaffer—“I venture to say Mr. Swaffer has not read and imbibed the teachings of the spirit world.” Despite the fact that I have shown Wilson my shorthand note, he says he was “misreported.”

This is the letter that Swaffer wrote to Stewart:

*“I wish you would convey to Ernest Keeling my assurance that in the speech made at the May Meeting I had no intention of causing him any hurt of any kind.*

*“Directly after he left the platform, he merely said to me, ‘I still think I am right,’ and it was not until you told me that I had offended that I had the slightest idea that I had done more than chaff someone whom I regarded as a friend.*

*“I cannot but feel that the entire incident has been magnified out of all proportion and that, in days when the whole world is in turmoil, it is singularly unfortunate that a speech made in all honesty of purpose should be regarded as anything more than a mixture of sincerity and humour.*

*“Perhaps all our nerves are frayed by the happenings in the world outside.*

*“Anyway, as I have hurt Ernest Keeling, I am assured it is only fitting that I should express my regrets to him.”*

On the day before the conference Swaffer gave me a letter to read *after* the May Meeting had been discussed by the delegates. The Union's council was very adroit. Although its secretary had officially announced that there was no crisis, it produced, after "careful consideration," this resolution which was its "unanimous decision":

**"That this annual general meeting of the Spiritualists' National Union affirms that it is one of the main objects of the Union to secure the legal recognition of the religion of Spiritualism, and, while insisting on the rights of each of its members to individual interpretation of the Seven Principles, dissociates itself from certain reported statements of the honorary president at the recent London May Meeting, and, on the contrary, expresses its appreciation of the work done by well-conducted Spiritualist churches in their public services for devotion and worship, and emphasises the value of this devotional atmosphere, not only for the highest type of spirit communion as distinct from psychic communication, but also for individual spiritual unfoldment."**

This resolution was read to the conference and, as it was unanimously carried without any discussion, I did not read Swaffer's letter.

### **SMOKE-SCREEN ?**

This "devotional atmosphere" sounds very fine. The conference, which began and ended with prayers, was held in what I hope is a "well-conducted" Spiritualist church. Most of the time, many of the 67 delegates, 15 visitors and council members smoked cigarettes and pipes !

Tea was generously given to the delegates in another Spiritualist church which meets above a butcher's shop. I find it hard to believe that the conditions which surround slaughtered animals make for a "devotional atmosphere." Does this come within the category of a "well-conducted church"?

**What sanctimonious nonsense! All the successful seances I have attended have been human, homely and natural. The guides have always asked for brightness and not long-faced solemnity. How pompous and self-righteous is "the highest type of spirit communion as distinct from psychic communication"! It smacks, too, of ersatz mysticism.**

### **VITAL OMISSION**

There isn't much to report about the conference. I found it boring. The delegates were not asked to discuss the vital need for spreading our message to the growing ranks of the bereaved. There was no mention of the message we could give to a war-stricken, disillusioned, perplexed world.

There were two bright spots. It was announced that the Union was to protest to the Board of Education against the move to foist Orthodoxy, in the guise of "religious education," on the children.

It was announced, too, that the Union was going to sponsor its own youth scheme, and the hope—it is a very faint hope!—was expressed that the British Spiritualists' Lyceum Union, which cares for the young, would co-operate.

There was some discussion on the motion, ultimately carried, that the capitation fee should be raised from one shilling to two shillings. There was some more discussion on the hypothetical question as to whether the assets of its district councils belonged to the Union if the S.N.U. went into liquidation.

There was no discussion on why the Union's membership has been decreasing while the number of Spiritualists has been growing.

# Union Loses Its (Nominal) Head

This is Swaffer's letter of resignation which he addressed to Maurice Barbanell:—

**I** WANT you to express to the S.N.U. conference my views on the unfortunate squabble that has arisen in consequence of my speech at the May Meeting. Yet in order that the whole matter shall be thrashed out in public, and that no member of the conference shall be influenced by what I have to say, I want you to withhold the contents of this letter until some decision has been reached.

I think it most extraordinary that at a time when the whole world is in despair, when ten countries in Europe are enduring slavery, and the future of the British Commonwealth, and indeed all that we call civilisation, is at stake, a few remarks that I made out of the earnestness of my soul should have given such offence that, although it happened over a month ago, a lot of people with nothing better to do are still arguing about it.

It is reported to me—and by you, whose word I absolutely trust, and whose memory is, in my view, by far the best among the leaders of the movement—that, at the quarterly meeting of the London District Council, there was shown by some speakers spite and malevolence foreign to the spirit of any gathering which professes religion, and startling even to my vast worldly experience.

## President Howled Down

Someone asked if I was gate-crashing, this although I am the honorary president of the S.N.U. Someone else accused me of being a "spoilt child" because I was "a famous journalist." Someone else asked if I had signed the Seven Principles. I was jeered at. On the other hand, so too was John Stewart, the president of the Union, who indeed was howled down during his brave and generous attempt to bring some sense of proportion into the gathering.

Now, here is a troubled world yearning for a message of hope. Here are hundreds of thousands of mourning families seeking for news of their loved ones. Here is a new world in the making. Yet all that certain members of the London District Council seem to want to do is to show spite and envy.

I was asked, when Doyle died, to take on the honorary presidency. It was a post I did not seek or desire. I thought that, if I accepted it, I might be of some service to the movement. I have spent considerable sums of money on the Spiritualist cause. I have never charged anybody one farthing, even for expenses. I have championed Spiritualism publicly in several countries on the Continent, and in America, Canada, Morocco, Egypt and Palestine. I have travelled long distances, often far into the night, during my crusade for the Spiritualist cause.

## Fleet Street's New Approach

I have succeeded, in the last few years, in doing what no one could do before—utterly changed the aspect of journalism towards a Spiritualism which, before I was convinced of its truth, was made a mock of in Fleet Street.

But all that, I see, counts for nothing.

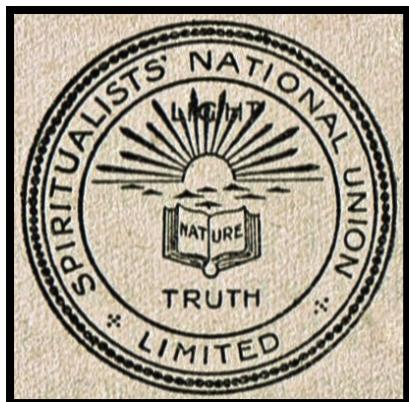
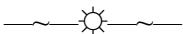
Really, I have no time to waste on such trivialities. The S.N.U. is obviously concerned more with its churches than with Spiritualism. It is not concerned with propaganda, but with holding offices. It is not concerned with conveying its great message to a grieving world, but in altering its articles of association and defending its property.

Believe me, more important work awaits me elsewhere. I have no time for silly arguments, pettifogging disputes, or parish council bickerings.

If at any time any one of the S.N.U. churches wants me to conduct, with you, a propaganda meeting on its behalf, I shall be delighted to do so if I am able. If at any time the Spiritualist movement wants my aid, it awaits it. But as for being the honorary president of a Union, members of which insult me behind my back, that, I am afraid, is now beneath my dignity.

To be concluded in the next issue ...

# THE SPIRITUALISTS' NATIONAL UNION & WORLD WAR II Concluded ...



*I have been asked several times for the views and direction the Spiritualists' National Union took during the war years of WWII, the general attitudes of its members and of the Movement during these dark years.*

*We can note below that it brings an interesting opportunity of discussing the many avenues and decisions taken in this complex time of opinions, etc.!*

The first part was published in Pioneer, Vol. 6, No. 2, concluding with the SNU's Manifesto, "Spiritualists and the War", October 21st, 1939, under the presidency of Frank Blake. The second part was published in Vol. 8, No. 1, concluding with the conflict between the Union and the editor of Psychic News, Maurice Barbanell, over the SNU Honorary President Hannen Swaffer's letter of resignation.

## 1942:

Maurice Barbanell had long argued over the importance of propaganda meets, often at loggerheads with the Union which regarded its churches as the best way to secure a more long-term avenue for new people coming into Spiritualism becoming members of a national organisation. For much of this year the editor had kept the Union under pressure; the following article was no exception, published in Psychic News, November 14th:

### **KEEP IT DARK! IS POLICY OF THE S.N.U.**

*Though it does not mention "Psychic News" by name, the Spiritualists' National Union is obviously referring to us in the following comment that it makes on propaganda in wartime.*

FROM time to time we hear of people who are so full of the idea of publicity that they give the impression that the only means of bringing comfort and consolation to the bereaved is by means of huge propaganda meetings, and they appear to delight in adverse criticism of the S.N.U. because it does not display greater activity in that particular direction.

There is no doubt that large propaganda meetings serve a useful purpose in calling public attention to the claims of Spiritualism and, in some instances, they may induce a few individuals to look further into those claims, but beyond that their value is problematical.

Generally speaking these meetings will comprise from 1,000 to 2,000 people and in, say, half an hour's clairvoyance, not more than 20 will receive any personal evidence of life after death. This fades into relative insignificance when it is remembered that every week the Spiritualist churches throughout Great Britain are attended by some 25,000 to 50,000 people. In addition many churches provide facilities for private sittings and group seances, each of which offers an opportunity for personal evidence of survival.

It may be quite true that the work of the churches is neither sensational nor spectacular and for this we should be thankful. On the other hand we think it is equally true that the really solid lasting work on behalf of Spiritualism is not done by the holding of propaganda meetings, but by the faithful activities, year in and year out, of those responsible for the maintenance of the churches.

## OUR ANSWER

WE are amazed that the S.N.U. disparages wartime propaganda. Surely it realises that its churches are very largely preaching to the converted.

We regard Spiritualism as pre-eminently a propaganda movement. Its purpose is to spread the knowledge of Proved Survival and all its implications. Every means of propaganda should be utilised especially in wartime. There may have been an excuse during the blitz for not holding large meetings, but that excuse no longer obtains.

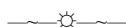
Though it is true that probably not more than 20 people receive evidence for Survival at a meeting where 2,000 are present, the fact remains that 2,000 people witness the evidence being given and, as a result many will start their own inquiry. Indeed, that is how a large number of Spiritualist churches came into their existence.

If the Union fails to conduct largescale propaganda, it is not fulfilling its mission today. Does it intend to ignore the thousands who now yearn for information on Spiritualism ? The ranks of the bereaved have been swollen by wartime casualties. Thousands of the Servicemen want information about our truths. There have been eager discussions on our subject in hundreds of camps, Air Force stations and on board ships. More psychic books are being bought than ever before.

Thousands who have met with sudden “death” are eager to return to their loved ones to prove their survival. That is our task—to reunite the “dead” with the ones they have left behind.

If the S.N.U. will not help in that great task, then it must be done by other Spiritualist bodies who are concerned with proving Survival at a time when this country needs it most.

The S.N.U. is “thankful” because the work of its churches is “neither sensational nor spectacular.” What a Victorian attitude ! Too many of them languish in the rut of self-satisfied complacent obscurity. The least they can do, if they fear sensation, is to make their existence known. We often have to tell inquirers that we do not know if there is a Spiritualist church in their locality, because the Spiritualists take no steps to publicise their meetings.



## **1943:**

No doubt the Union was pleased to move forward into a new year, as so much of 1942 was taken up with the controversy which was sparked off with Hannan Swaffer's speech at the 41st annual convention of the Spiritualists' National Union's London District Council. In the Two Worlds, June 25th, the Spiritualists' National Union made this announcement:

### **THE PROTECTION OF MEDIUMSHIP A DECLARATION BY THE SPIRITUALISTS' NATIONAL UNION.**

SPIRITUALISM is based on fact, not on tradition. It has challenged the old beliefs. It must inspire and vitalise the new.

Recently there have been renewed efforts to restrict the exercise of the gifts of the spirit, in denial of those very ideals for which the United Nations are now contending at such great sacrifice and suffering.

#### **We Demand Freedom.**

Spiritualists demand freedom to worship, and freedom to seek for truth, by the exercise of their own spiritual, mental and psychic powers, and through mediumship. At the same time, they recognise that this freedom involves a duty to see that mediumship is used in the service of humanity and not merely for personal gain. Unfortunately improper practices are occasionally resorted to. Spiritualists condemn such practices and expose them whenever they can. They are concerned both to protect the public from heartless deception, and to provide facilities, under proper conditions, whereby all who will may prove survival, and come to realise the power of the spirit. But they are hampered in their efforts, both by the ignorance of the public and by the application of archaic laws which do not distinguish between the genuine and the spurious.

The Spiritualists' National Union, the largest organised body of Spiritualists in this country, has long endeavoured, by a system of education, examination and certification, to establish a standard of mediumship, and to ensure its functioning under the most suitable conditions. There has recently been a welcome increase in applications for certification,—welcome, because the Union is assured that a comprehensive national Register of trained and trustworthy mediums would do much to enlist public support for amendment of the laws now used to penalise mediumship.

Meanwhile we must re-double our efforts to foster true mediumship, to improve its presentation and to free it from undesirable associations. Generally, our mediums are inspired by a sense of trust to the Spirit World, and a desire to give comfort and enlightenment to mankind. Their service is mainly voluntary, but even where a fee is charged, it usually represents but a small recompense for the sacrifice involved.

#### **Abuse of Mediumship.**

There are cases, however, though fortunately few, where individuals, whether for the sake of notoriety or even for personal profit, are making extravagant claims for their psychic powers and are not too scrupulous in their presentation. Sometimes exaggerated reports of phenomena are sent to the press, giving the public an impression of the present possibilities of mediumship which can only excite vain hopes.

In connection with physical phenomena deliberate fraud has undoubtedly occurred, though as Baron von Schrenck-Notzing once said, "Most so-called exposures have exposed nothing but the ignorance of the would-be exposers." The experienced Spiritualist has always been the most effective in dealing with charlatans.

In demonstrations of “mental” mediumship, it has been alleged, with some show of reason, that messages have occasionally been given in public by pre-arrangement with the recipients, and that information gleaned from normal sources has been presented as though of psychic origin. It has even been stated that in some private sittings requests have been made, in seeming trance, for expensive presents to be given to the medium.

Besides such flagrant abuses, which all condemn, there are a number of unwise practices tending to discredit mediumship. Thus, excessive gesture, or anything which, in the words of Emma Hardinge Britten, tends to “turn the public platform into a show, or religious services into an exhibition,” is to be deprecated.

### **Overwork.**

Many of the troubles of mediumship, and some of the abuses already mentioned, are largely due to over-working the psychic gift. This, in time, may lead to psychic deterioration, and possibly to physical as well. For this reason, developing mediums should not take part in public demonstrations, for the strain is considerable and overwork may cause a complete breakdown of the psychic faculty. Even amongst those mediums whose development is more advanced, the temptation to overwork is strong: they may be reluctant to disappoint members of an audience who are in seeming distress, or they may have some other equally admirable motive. However that may be, the temptation should be resisted.

The Council is aware that some Churches and other bodies sponsoring psychic demonstrations provide, and even advertise, conditions which cannot but lead to over-work; to a wrong conception of the functions of mediumship and to graver abuses. Definite promises to “give everyone a message” and the giving of twenty or more psychometry readings at one meeting are examples of practices which no sincere and reputable body of Spiritualists could endorse. From some of these activities the step to the prostitution of psychic gifts is but a small one.

### **Our Responsibilities.**

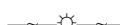
The Council recognises that in this matter it has a responsibility to the large body of honest mediums, to Churches and to the public alike; and it will do all it can to deal with any abuses that are brought to its notice. Its object must be to protect mediumship from persecution, from abuse, and from exploitation.

The Council urges all Churches to co-operate in this important task. Our joint responsibilities will only be fully discharged if we make sure that demonstrations of mediumship, even if they do not convince, at least command respect.

On behalf of the Council of the  
SPIRITUALISTS' NATIONAL UNION,

ERNEST A. KEELING,  
General Secretary.

64a, Bridge Street,  
Manchester, 3.



## SPIRITUALISTS' NATIONAL UNION CONFERENCE

The forty-first AGM of the SNU was held in London on the weekend of July 3rd and 4th 1943, at Brixton Spiritualist Church, St. Michael's Road, at 11 a.m.

The outgoing president was Mr. John Stewart, who

*"then installed Mr. H. A. L. Vigurs in the Chair and pinned on his breast the badge of office,<sup>7</sup> offering him every good wish for a successful year. Mr. Vigurs thanked the Conference for the honour, and though he disliked public life, pledged himself to use his best endeavours to aid the Union in its forward march."*

Below are some quotes of the proceedings as recorded in the Two Worlds, July 9th, 1943:

RESOLUTIONS of protest against the unfair laws under which Spiritualists suffer and against the introduction of sectarian religious teaching in our elementary schools were the high lights of the 41st Annual Conference of the Spiritualists National Union held in London: on July 3rd and 4th.



The feature of the Consultative Conference on Sunday afternoon at Conway Hall, Holborn was a summary of the repressive state of the law as it affects spiritual mediumship, presented by Mr. C. E. Loseby, barrister-at-law and reported on another page. At its conclusion Dr. Sidney Peters, M.P. in a vigorous speech told of the efforts which he and other members of Parliament were making to put the grievances of spiritualists before their fellow members and the responsible ministers. He proposed the following resolution:

*"That this meeting of Spiritualists gathered on the occasion of the 41st Annual General Meeting of the Spiritualists National Union places on record its deep concern and abhorrence of the continued persecution by the state against its bona-fide and experienced mediums and followers, and calls upon the Government to give directions which shall put an end to such proceedings: and further demands and claims their freedom to worship and conduct their services in churches and other places in accordance with their well-known principles: and demands also the right to the same religious tolerance as is shown to all other religious bodies with all that such tolerance implies."*

The resolution was unanimously carried with acclamation.

Mr. Peters affirmed that he himself had for many years practised spiritual healing with beneficial results. He was conscious of assistance from the spiritual world, and he intended to carry on that practice as far as his time and ability allowed. Another important resolution passed at the Annual Meeting at Brixton on Saturday afternoon concerned religious training in the schools. It was as follows:

*"Whilst recognising the importance of a spiritual outlook on life which is recognised in all the great religious systems of the world, this assembly of representative Spiritualists assembled in Annual Conference expresses its emphatic dissent against the proposed intention to introduce denominational and dogmatic religious instruction in the state-aided elementary schools. This Conference is of opinion that specifically denominational*

<sup>7</sup> Pioneer, Vol. 4, No. 4: The President's Badge – Robert Owen 1925-1928 – David Bruton 2010.

training of children is a matter for the home and the church, and views with great alarm the fostering of religious systems which may well promote discord not only in our social but our international relationships."

Mr. Oaten introducing the resolution pointed out that followers of all the world's great religious systems were embraced within the British Empire. The moral and ethical standards of all of them were virtually the same, and to foster the purely Christian point of view—with all its narrow dogmatism in a world which was gradually becoming one huge parish was to set up elements which would make for discord, rivalry and misunderstanding. The resolution was carried unanimously."

**Mr. Harold Vigurs occupied the chair during the presidential address by Mr. Stewart:**

It is my privilege for the third time to welcome you all to the A.G.M. of the Spiritualists' National Union. Conference assembles again in war conditions and we miss the presence of many valued members who are serving with the forces or engaged in other forms of National Service. Our warmest greetings go out to them all and our prayers for their safe return. Other members have "fallen," and we think of them now and of those they have left behind, and we strengthen our resolve to work all the harder for a world of brotherhood and cooperation. May this be no mere thought or phrase but be in each one of us an irresistible feeling. May it breed in us the conviction that we are, in part at least, responsible for the conditions which makes the practice of brotherhood in the widest sense impossible.

The A.G.M. is the Governing Body of the Union and our constant endeavour is to make it a satisfactory and efficient instrument, to correctly shape policy for the progressive elements in the movement. We have much to learn from each other and it is only by pooling our knowledge and experience and by the open-minded consideration of each other's views, that another step forward may be taken in the well-being of the Union. Most of you are out in the field, doing the spade work, unobtrusively and often in the face of many rebuffs, carrying on the day-to-day work of your Churches. We owe you much and I hope this Conference, though governed of necessity by standing orders, may be conducted in such a way that you may gather fresh inspiration and courage to go forward with renewed enthusiasm in the cause we all have at heart. If we are to see the scope of the problems before us, we must get closer together in our Churches and District Councils, for it is only by maintaining a strong united organisation that we shall be able to fulfil the tasks before us.

The Union has passed safely through many severe tests in its long history, but none more severe than the doubling of the capitation fee which took place at last A.G.M. The fact that our Churches have responded, almost without demur, is a fine tribute to the solidarity of the Union and is a matter we can all be proud of. There will be other tests to surmount as we go on, some perhaps to-day, for you may be faced with a conflict of loyalty as between your Church or District Council and the Union. This is inevitable in any democratic organisation. In fact, life itself is a progression from lesser to greater loyalties, and the greatest of all loyalties, is loyalty to truth as each of us sees it. In approaching our business, let us try to hold the balance, and endeavour to do the best we can for the movement as a whole. If the Union is not right, then we must put it right, for we are the Union. It has no soul but yours and mine. This is the key to the varying views, often uninformed, which are held about the Union.

While the major considerations of the war inevitably overshadow our lives, I am pleased to say that the work of the Union has gone on steadily during the past year. The demands upon the Officers have increased in volume and responsibility and I feel I am doing the right thing in making way for a younger and abler man as head of the Union, in Harold Vigurs, whom you have so wisely chosen to succeed me. In retiring, I wish to

express my sincere thanks to all my colleagues on the Executive and especially to the officers and the General Secretary for their comradeship and loyal support since I took office on the transition of Frank Blake.

If the Union has stood for anything during the past 41 years of its incorporation, it has been for higher standards. It has long endeavoured, by a system of examination and certification to improve the standard of mediumship and platform supply. It is recognised, however, that teachers are far more scarce than lecturers, and our Education Scheme is designed to enable Spiritualists to extend their knowledge of Spiritualism in its various aspects and its relation to other branches of knowledge, whether or not they wish to qualify for the Union's diploma.

We have also been gradually building up a panel of Spiritualist Ministers, who have the right type of personality to act with full sympathy towards those to whom they may be called upon to minister, and who are fitted to carry out with dignity and a due sense of proportion the responsibility the various services and civil acts required of them. A handbook for their guidance is in course of preparation, and almost ready for publication. We are now instituting a more comprehensive scheme of registration, recognising that such a register is fundamental to the securing of legal recognition for the practice of mediumship.

The Spiritualist movement has been badly handicapped in the past for lack of suitable buildings in which to meet and by means of the Pooling Fund and Trust Property Scheme we have made it possible to improve not only the "building" standard of many of our Churches and have made such buildings secure for Spiritualism for all time.

The Union's Fund of Benevolence has also done something to raise the standard of living for many of our aged workers,<sup>8</sup> and at the other end the interests of Youth are now being served by an organisation within the Union. I am sure it is a matter of regret to us all that the B.S.L.U.<sup>9</sup> at its recent Conference confirmed the previous decision of its Management Committee not to come in with us as a Department of the Union. We haven't gone very far yet with our scheme, but a beginning has been made and I hope it will be taken up widely so that we can provide a distinctive place for children and young people in our churches. One of our Youth Clubs has already received official recognition as an "approved" club in the Government Youth Scheme. The grey hairs and white locks I see around me, may mean an accumulation of wisdom and experience from the past, but they give no hope of providing our leaders for the future. We have to look to our youth, and I am looking hopefully to the Planning Committee, which was set up two years ago to carry us a stage further. The future of the movement depends upon what we can do for it to-day, for it is out of the present that the future grows.

I would like to say a word or two about the informal "unity" talks which have taken place during the past few months between members of the various sections of the movement, and in which I have been privileged to participate. An excellent summary of these meetings has been placed at the disposal of the Executive and I hope something good may come from it. I was very pleased to note the exchange of greetings between the London District Council of the Union, and the Greater World Christian Spiritualist League at the May Meetings. I am sure Conference will welcome this reconciliation, for it will pave the way for more cordial and friendly relations in the future. There is no doubt that the League is doing good work in its own way and is meeting the needs of those who find it difficult to leave the old landmarks and accept all at once the full implications of Spiritualism. Even so, the Union has many Christian Spiritualist

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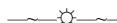
<sup>8</sup> Volume 1, No. 3, April 2014: "Badges, Symbols, and Emblems of the Spiritualists' National Union".

<sup>9</sup> British Spiritualist Lyceum Union (BSLU)

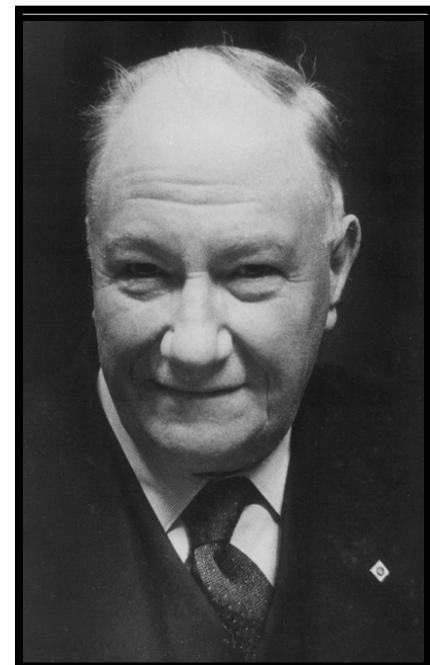
churches in full affiliation and they are happy with us for we have always tried to be tolerant in outlook and to preserve for them the widest liberty and greatest freedom.

I find that there is still a good deal of misunderstanding about the Union's attitude on the question of Jesus, and I am sure that I interpret the position correctly when I say that we all have a profound respect for life and His teachings, the essence of which was the "divinity of humanity." His was surely intended to be a representative life, and not an isolated experience, and our aim should be to say as He did "I and my Father are one," and not rest satisfied until we arrive at the consciousness of God as an Indwelling Spirit. One of the finest things ever said about Jesus was that "He went about doing good," and whatever view of Him we hold, I think the Union is taking the wisest course in leaving it a free matter for the individual. After all, the best exposition of a man's religion is his life.

Finally, and perhaps transcending all else in importance at the present time, is our campaign for religious liberty. 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 midst of a war that is being fought for freedom. You would think that the British Public is already sufficiently united in defence of freedom of thought, especially in view of the Atlantic Charter and President Roosevelt's "Four Freedoms." The fight is on, and sooner or later the Government will have to face up to the steadily progressive trend of public opinion in our favour. We are indebted to all who by public effort, by subscription or in any way have supported us in our endeavour to rouse public opinion on this issue, and later when you hear the report of what has been done to-date, I am sure that you will not only endorse the Executive's action, but give it a clear and unqualified direction to do everything in its power to ensure that these iniquitous restrictions are removed. Charlotte Perkins in one of her poems has an inspiring verse for the occasion: "Then rise as ye ne'er rose before, nor hoped before, nor dared before, and show as ne'er was shown before, the power that lies in you. Stand all as one, till right be done, believe, and dare, and do."



**Mr. A. H. L. [Harold] Vigurs**  
**Spiritualists' National Union President**  
**1943-1948<sup>10</sup>**



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<sup>10</sup> Pioneer Volume 4, No. 2, April 2017: Harold Vigurs – Spiritualists' National Union President 1943-1948, Harold Vigurs – "Fourteen Group" & The Principles of Spiritualism, SNU AGM 70 Years Ago - Vigurs' Presidential Address.

## 1944:

The President's address reflects the mood of these days with the debates and fallouts of 1942 over the question, Is Spiritualism a Religion? The President emphasises the point .....

Taken from the Two Worlds, July 7th, 1944:

### **SPIRITUALISTS' NATIONAL CONFERENCE Presidential Address**

Addressing. the Annual Conference at Leicester on July 1st the President; Mr. A. H. L. Vigurs, said :—

The interest in our Conferences is an indication of a growing recognition of the part that Spiritualism and Spiritualists are playing in our national life. He would have been a bold man, however, who, at our last Conference, would have suggested that to-day we should be on the eve of our case being considered by the House of Lords. The Duncan trial has been the outstanding feature since we last met in conference, and, though we have been assured by the learned Recorder that courts were not trying Spiritualism and the beliefs of Spiritualists, I am sure that you will agree that we do not share his view. I cannot but regard that case as a direct attack upon Spiritualism, and I suppose that it is a tribute to our growing influence that our adversaries, though sheltering under the cloak of anonymity, have been forced to open this attack. I say forced to open this attack, as I feel confident that when this matter has been dealt with in the House of Lords we shall be subject to similar prosecutions in connection with other phases of our work.



Helen Duncan circa 1942

### **Spiritualism is Religion.**

First and foremost, as a Union, we claim that Spiritualism is a religion, and, in the spirit of the Atlantic Charter, we demand the right to full and unfettered expression of that religion. Mediumship is the very foundation upon which it is based and it is in this direction that I see we need further and further publicity to educate public opinion. In the Duncan case the jury found that 'the performance at the seance was an elaborate pretence and constituted an imposture on human credulity.' As one not unfamiliar with our legal machine, I have a great respect for British justice, but one conclusion is forced: that however the House of Lords decides in this matter we must launch a nation-wide publicity campaign, so that people of this country can reasonably understand and assess for themselves the claims we make as Spiritualists, which are all based fundamentally on mediumship. I stress this feature, as I have been surprised at the bewildered amazement we have met when we have claimed Spiritualism as a religion, and I have found this state

of mind not only among prominent civil servants but among the professional classes generally, including Ministers of the Orthodox Churches.

They often sympathetically admit psychic science, but their traditional views as to what constitutes religion make them shy at any suggestion that Spiritualism is a religion. To those who look back into history to tradition and events as a source of their religion and revelation, it is not always easy to appreciate that others do not need this type of authority, but prefer to rest their convictions upon the experience of current happenings, systematically studied and followed to their honest conclusions.

We are asked what facts must Spiritualists believe. What is your creed and on what is it based? How do you select your Ministers and how ordain them, etc.? These people do not understand that Spiritualism is based solely upon personal and individual experience of spirit communication. We can partly sympathise with some of their bewilderment, as such individuals are not always totally uninformed. Some have attended our Churches and found, in the main, that they use the normal orthodox form of service, with the addition of some clairvoyant descriptions. Naturally, in such circumstances, we can appreciate how they attach the same old scale of values to prayers, Bible readings, hymns, &c., and how often they think that we have adopted the form of service of orthodoxy without accepting the religious fundamentals upon which such Orthodoxy is based. This all arises from a misconception of our claims, and it might well be that our Churches made a big mistake when they chose the present type of Sunday Service, rather than something more simple and direct, such as the Quakers use, to emphasise our fundamental of Spirit communion. We are not tied to the conception that man is a fallen animal, and that our prayers, &c., should emphasise his unworthiness and need for forgiveness and grace. We accept the scientific fact that man is an evolving creation, or, as poetically expressed, that he is God in the making; that as in the process of time, under natural law, his five senses have been evolved, so he is evolving other faculties to-day, and that the discovery and use of these faculties is part of the larger life which is the essence of all religion.

### **Mediumship is Fundamental.**

Through the use-of these faculties we obtain evidence of another type of world and find by experiment that that world is inhabited, in part at least, by people who formerly lived on this earth, and that under suitable conditions a bridge of communication can be established between the inhabitants of that world and this. This is fact, demonstrably established by individual experience. That many people are ignorant of these facts, or, having heard of them, dismiss them as pretence because they do not fall within the ambit of their own school of thought, does not affect the reality of these experiments. There may be differences of opinion as to the precise significance to be attached to these facts, but the facts themselves cannot be called into question by any fair-minded man. We are the first to appreciate that this bridge of communication is established through the instrumentality of a suitable human being, and that in consequence allowance must always be made for the colouration of the communication due to the use of a human channel. However, after making every generous allowance under this heading, there remains a residuum of fact that, we claim, cannot be explained by any other hypothesis than that the communicator once lived on this earth. On this fundamental fact we found our spirit hypothesis. The facts to establish this we derive through mediumship, and any attack on mediumship must necessarily be an attack upon the fundamental of our religion of Spiritualism.

It may have been just a coincidence that when we were fighting our case at the Old Bailey, the Archbishop of York, at the Convocation, slightly referred to the revival of public interest in "crude and materialistic forms of Spiritualism." I am not at all sure what Dr. Garbett intended when he used these words, but I was reminded of the closed upper

room, where a spirit form materialised and gave physical proofs to establish His identity to one whom He loved. I wonder if Dr. Garbett would care for this manifestation to be called "crude and materialistic" because it is typical of some of the phenomena that we seek to give to our own sceptical generation, and I wonder if he would be mortified if, in 1944, that experience was dismissed as but an elaborate pretence which imposed upon human credulity.

It is true that we do not possess valuable Churches and Cathedrals, or derive substantial income from a large national trust, but we do enjoy a direct contact with our friends in spirit, and that is priceless beyond treasure. We seek, Dr. Garbett, to bind up broken hearts by giving people tangible tokens that their so-called dead are not lost, but still live and welcome the opportunities we Spiritualists afford to assure those they have left behind of their continued love and affection. When you appreciate the real beauty of our Cause, Dr. Garbett, we are confident that you will regret your ill-advised criticism.

### **Let us stand together !**

It seems to me that the time has come when we should shew more definitely that we have a distinctive contribution to make to religious life. We do not indulge in theological speculations about life and the hereafter, but seek along scientific lines to give material and psychic proofs shewing that man, irrespective of his beliefs and character survives physical death, and that the type of life in that after-death state depends entirely upon the individual effort made in this life. That as a result of our communication with those in the after-death state, all things that separate men, such as colour, creeds and social conditions founded on wealth or rank, are artificial and temporary, and that man is only worthy as he is generous in thought, and noble in character.

Our spirit friends have told us that they know little more of God than we do, and that the best advice they can give us is to forget self in serving our brother man. That is the law; that is the test of spiritual development. We are sufficiently separated from our brother man when we are clear of his weaknesses. Through the insight given to us by spirit communication we can perceive that the message that we receive to-day from the spirit world was the origin of all forms of religion, and that gradually that channel of communication has been closed as the prophet has been replaced by the priest. As Spiritualists, we are grateful to all those prophets, of all times and places, for the heroic struggle they endured to give light and truth to this world. To all of them we give honour, and we seek, in our own way, to share that vital link with a spirit world which was their common experience.

In our public appeal let us, therefore, concentrate our energies to educate man's mind to the proofs of spirit communication, content that, with this fundamental established, his life will be the sweeter for this knowledge and experience. We can shew in our Church Services that prayers, readings and singing of hymns are not essentials in themselves, but merely aids to prepare that frame of mind that will facilitate Spirit Communication.

### **Man needs evidence, not sermons.**

War and suffering make men think. Thought leads to thought, and answers but open fresh questions. Our appeal will be effective only as we supply convincing argument and satisfactory phenomena to meet the demands of the sincere enquirer.

I believe the outlook is definitely encouraging. What though the Church condemn, and the legal machine is set in motion against us, our claims are founded on truth, and truth needs no protection.

If for a time we are persecuted, I am confident that any sacrifice we are called upon to make will only call forth a greater loyalty to our spirit friends, and in return we shall

receive from them the necessary inspiration and encouragement to so present our case that its own sweet reasonableness will win for us the freedom and recognition for which we are fighting.



## S.N.U. ANNUAL CONFERENCE:

The Annual Meeting of the Spiritualist National Union met at the Causeway Lane Church, Leicester, on Saturday, July 1st. War conditions and restricted facilities limited the attendance to about 70. All districts, however, were represented. Mr. A. L. Vigurs, from the chair, welcomed the delegates and Mr. Wm. Henson (President of the Church) extended a welcome on behalf of the local friends. Messrs. Botham (Nottingham) and Ridgway (Southport) were appointed tellers and Mr. Luke (Seaham) messenger.

The minutes having been adopted, Mr. Harold Vigurs delivered his presidential address. This was accepted with thanks after a lengthy discussion. The Annual Report and Interim Report for the last six months showed a gratifying growth in numbers, both of Churches and associated members.

The Council has been largely engaged in litigation for the protection of mediumship. The Exponents Committee has been busy with the preparation of a National Register of mediums comprising (a) Diploma Holders and certified workers. This, despite the attempt of the authorities to suppress mediumship, shows the right spirit. The interests of Youth, Education, the Fund of Benevolence, Education and Healing have all shown progressive activities on the part of their respective committees. The Financial Statement showed a welcome increase in the stability of the Union while the Trust Properties and Building Fund Pool clearly showed the demand for better meeting places. Two small amendments to the constitution of the Building Fund Pool were adopted unanimously.

The Report of the Parliamentary and Freedom Fund Committee occupied considerable time and Mr. McIndoe gave a lengthy review of the efforts made to defend mediumship. In some cases these had been successful. The case which had attracted most attention however, was the prosecution of Mrs. Duncan, very full particulars of which were given. It was clear that we are suffering not only from archaic laws but also from decisions of the courts which were made when Spiritualism was far more misunderstood than at present. Many legal technicalities were involved but the courts had apparently decided that communion with spirits was a form of conjuration and was thus a pretence and illegal. The Committee had decided to seek permission to appeal to the House of Lords. It must not be forgotten that the decision of the courts in the Duncan case would guide decisions in any subsequent cases.

A lengthy discussion centred round this question. It was suggested that the law apparently held that prayer might well be conjuration. The churches certainly attempt to conjure the Holy Spirit but no action is taken.

A proposal to protest publicly against a case which was a careful "frame-up" and in which Spiritualists were convinced that they had not been fairly treated, but had been the victims of vindictiveness and sectarian persecution was withdrawn in view of pending proceedings.

Mr. Raffill stated that the Freedom Fund had now received over £3,000. They had paid out over £2,500 and there was more expense to come. He wanted to see at least £10,000 raised as it was fairly certain that other proceedings would be taken against honest mediums and they must be prepared.

It was proposed to hold a large Mass Meeting in London when the Duncan case was concluded.

Mr. Stewart then paid the Annual Tribute to those members and friends who had been promoted to spirit life during the year. "They have joined the vast company of the invisibles. All is well with them. They will be with us to-day. Their work had been transferred to us, and we must carry on and implement their efforts." The Conference stood in silence.

A resolution was passed expressing dislike of certain astrological and other advertisements appearing in the Psychic Press, and calling upon the Council to use their influence to secure their discontinuance.

An invitation to hold the next Conference at Paignton, provided the war had ended, was well received. The final decision was left to the Council. Thanks for past services were expressed to Mr. W. Rawlinson who is retiring from the Council. Votes of thanks to Mr. Henson and the local friends for their excellent arrangements and welcome and thanks to spirit friends for their assistance and inspiration during the year concluded the Conference.

On Sunday morning a Primary Youth Conference was held Mr. E. A. Keeling in the chair. There was a good attendance.

After opening remarks by the chairman of the Youth Council, David. Dutton spoke on Youth Clubs, and emphasised the indirect benefits accruing to Spiritualist Churches through having a live Youth Club attached to them. He stressed the importance of the Church finding a Youth Club Leader who would enjoy the enthusiastic support of Club members. It was important to allow the Youth to choose their own Youth Committee and plan their own programmes. That being so it implied that Spiritualist teaching should not be thrust upon the Youth Club, but the initiative for talks on the subject should come from the Club members themselves.

Questions and discussion followed.

In answer to a question as to what a Church should do if it wanted to form a Youth Club, Mr. Dutton pointed out that members of the S.N.U. Youth Committee (who came from various parts of the country) would gladly help in the initial stages with advice either by post or in a personal visit.

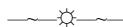
Due to the illness of Mr. N. Ainley, who was to have spoken on Lyceums and amplify the leaflet on National Union of Lyceums he had drafted, Mrs. R. Johnson deputised at short notice.

She feared that the Lyceum Movement was in danger of dying out through failing to move with the times and adopt modern methods. The Youth Committee hoped to initiate in National Union Lyceums a more modern approach. She stressed that Churches had a responsibility towards their children and it was essential that the Lyceums should be a definite part of the Church and should receive every encouragement from the Church Committee.

The children in Lyceums should not be handicapped in their spiritual training by the presence of adults who monopolised the discussions. Those adults who attend should be more in the capacity of leaders, and children be divided up into appropriate age-groups.

This question of adults in Lyceums led to considerable questions and discussions.

In the evening a Mass Meeting was held, addressed by Air Chief Marshal Lord Dowding who was followed by Sgt. C. R. Dell, R.A.F. The Church was crowded. Owing to pressure on our space particulars are carried over to next week's issue.



## 1945:

Taken from the Two Worlds, July 13th, 1945:

### **THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE AT PAIGNTON PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS**

TWICE within living memory, Europe has been deluged in blood. Many living to-day have sacrificed ten years of life to war. Not only have they endured enormous sacrifices and hardships, but they have seen their sons and daughters taken from civil life to resume a fight which they thought had been won and which they once thought was to end war for all time.

To-day, with the collapse of Germany, we have gained a partial peace; but we are still living in stressful times, with a new world in the making. These new days demand new and courageous thoughts. We dare not contemplate the possibility of a third world war. The comity of Nations *must* be so adjusted that the issue is peace. Following the last war, with its terrifying loss of life, we were content to leave the management of our national affairs to the politician, whose job it was.

As a people, we were happy to have exchanged khaki for civilian dress, and our first thought was to make up, by hectic living, for the pleasures we had been robbed of by the locust years of war. Later, when disillusionment followed, we had lost the will to intervene effectively in the atmosphere of world depression that had engulfed us. To-day, we have another opportunity to try and regulate our affairs; not only within the State but between States. This will involve many sacrifices of thought and tradition, as well as of property and power. We must think out again our basis of relationship one to another, so that the causes of distrust and enmity are minimised, and our principle of the Brotherhood of Man governs the practical application of our lives. In this we may fail (God forbid), but we dare not neglect the great experiment lest future generations curse us for our stupidity and selfishness.

Surveying the realm of human affairs, we have all been shocked by the revelations of sadistic cruelty at Belsen, Buchenwald, and other concentration camps under that self-styled superior race, which silenced the voice of a declining Church in Germany, and substituted a worship of race and might that has given the world a flood of unspeakable horrors. To-day, the panacea for our troubles is found in the key-word "Security." Security amongst the Nations, so that the voice of the small nation shall be heard in the councils of the Great Nations, and legitimate aspirations shall be accommodated by mutual consent rather than by resort to suicidal war. Security in the economic world, so that the man who fights or works for his country should not be haunted later in life by the spectre of want, but should be guaranteed a certain minimum standard of life which, if need be, shall be a charge upon the general effort of the community; security to think and express his thoughts without being compelled to submit to the patronising influences of State or Church; Freedom of conscious expression, to the limit in which it does not restrict the similar right of one's neighbour. Spiritualists are denied that liberty, in the same way that the Nazi Powers denied that liberty to the people of Germany. It is our profound conviction that no civilization can be sound and happy, no matter what measure of social security governs its civic and economic life, unless the right of the individual conscience to think and worship God without restraint is fully guaranteed to all its citizens.

In the eyes of British law, all Spiritualists are rogues and vagabonds, and now are stigmatised as conjurors, or should it be conjurors? Is it not strange that Spiritualism, which alone gives convincing evidences of that other world, characteristic of all religions,

should be spurned by an orthodoxy which itself is steadily declining because of the lack of this specific evidence?

It is both true and sad that Jesus Christ, the fountain head of Christianity, who offended the orthodoxy of his day, would, if living to-day and producing his so-called miracles, be guilty under British law, of being a rogue and a vagabond, and also of conjuration.

In spite of Mr. Morrison's statements, in reply to questions raised in the House of Commons, the position of Spiritualists under the law, has considerably worsened as the result of the Duncan case.

Before that case, it was a criminal offence to tell fortunes, or even to offer to tell a fortune. It did not matter that you believed you possessed the powers to tell fortunes; such an effort was an offence in itself, whatever the state of the mind of the person concerned.

The tender concern of the law is to protect His Majesty's subjects from "persons pretending or professing to tell fortunes, or using any subtle craft, means, or device, by palmistry *or otherwise* to impose on any of His Majesty's subjects." The words "*or otherwise*" have been so interpreted, in the case of *Monck v. Hilton*, that any Spiritualistic sitting or seance can be brought within the ambit of this offence. The sitting concerned was an ordinary one, where, in subdued light, objects were moved without contact, and messages given. The magistrates, in their limited knowledge, found that the phenomena amounted to "subtle craft, means and device to deceive and defraud."

In the high court of appeal, the findings of fact by the magistrate were accepted. In the words of Baron Pollock, "He" (i.e., the medium), "so conducted himself as to assume the power of communicating with, and calling in the aid of unseen spirits, who could do certain acts, such as the winding and playing of a musical box, and the communication of messages from persons who had died. We have therefore a craft, means and device which is beyond that of physical dexterity and a professed dealing with some spiritual agency, which is enacted, not for the purpose of individual experiment, or so-called scientific pursuit, but to deceive and impose upon others." That was the position prior to the Duncan case, and, as our counsel Mr. Loseby has pointed out, any medium similarly charged with demonstrating what we call our phenomena, and who says "I am an honest medium," has no defence whatever.

At Portsmouth, Mrs. Duncan was charged, with others, "that they did unlawfully conspire and cheat, to defraud of their money, certain peoples by falsely pretending that at so-called Spiritualist seances, that the said Helen Duncan was capable of holding communication with dead persons, and causing the spirits thereof to materialize, etc." At the Old Bailey, this was changed to the charge that the same defendants "conspired together, with other persons unknown, to pretend to exercise or use a kind of conjuration, to wit; that through the agency of Mrs. Duncan, spirits of dead should appear to be present, in fact in such place as Helen Duncan was then in, and that the spirits were communicating with living persons then and there present."

The emphasis of the charge is just common fraud. When passing sentence on the Duncan case, the Recorder stated that the defendants were guilty of conspiring together to commit an unlawful act, namely, to pretend to recall spirits of dead persons in a visible and tangible form. The emphasis is on the word "pretend." "The jury have found," said the Recorder, "that the methods adopted by you in the exhibitions covered by the charge, amounted to a fraud on those who witnessed them." He added, "In this case the jury appear to have little hesitation in finding that all of you participated in a common fraud, and I must deal with the case on that footing. The Recorder added this proviso, "Whether genuine manifestations of the kind are possible, the verdict of the jury does not decide."

Similarly, in the *Monck v. Hilton* case, it was stated, “We are not called upon to express any opinion upon the subject of Spiritualism generally; whether there does exist any real power in a medium of the nature set out, or whether its existence is a mere delusion. Such a subject would be a very improper one for argument or decision in a court of law.”

This possibly means something to somebody, but it certainly means nothing to Spiritualists. Because of their unfamiliarity with these phenomena we challenge the competency of a jury to decide what is fraud.

Spiritualists are the first to condemn fraud. They are also the first to appreciate that much that is accepted as evidence of fraud by the general public is not fraud to the experienced investigator.<sup>11</sup>

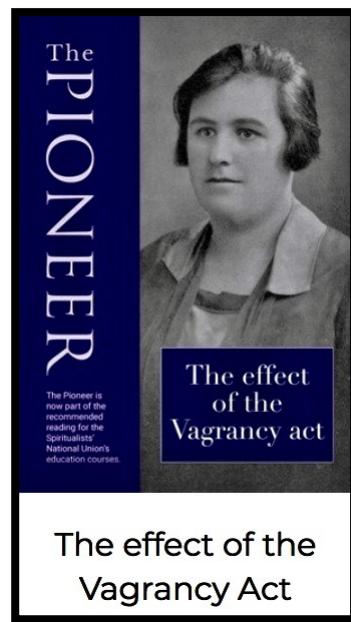
Dr. Schrenck-Notzing, in the work “The Phenomena of Materialization,” says, “Many so-called exposures have exposed nothing but the ignorance of the exposers.”

That is probably also true of the general public in their attitude to Spiritualism. Our main difficulty is to provide evidence that can overcome this great prejudice.

When the Duncan Case was taken to appeal, the Lord Chief Justice said, “What was aimed at, as shown by the language of the Statute itself, was that ignorant persons should not be deluded or defrauded, by the pretence to exercise any kind of conjuration,” and later, “it was repeatedly emphasised by the Recorder, and must be emphasised here again, that the only matter to be decided by the jury was whether there was pretence or not. That is the law as it stands at present. *It is not free from doubt*, but, inasmuch as *pretence* is the crime, the ‘conjuring up’ of real spirits is not, apparently, a criminal offence.”

As Spiritualists we can hardly be expected to be grateful. In the Duncan case, Mr. Loseby sought to establish, by evidence, and in fact did so, to knowledgeable minds, that Mrs. Duncan was a genuine materializing medium, both prior to and after the Portsmouth incident. He offered a séance to the jury, so that they could become better informed of the nature of the phenomena, and be better able to appraise the evidence. This was declined. Following the *dicta* of the Lord Chief Justice, such a course will be impossible in future, and we shall have to rely on the evidence relating to any particular seance.

I have mentioned this matter to bring home to you how much our legal position has worsened as a result of the Duncan Case. We can now be charged under the Witchcraft as well as the Vagrancy Act, and the restrictions imposed as to what evidence is admissible makes the possibility of a successful appeal to the courts more and more remote. In general we disapprove of fortune-telling, but we cannot admit that all statements concerning the future fall into that category. There is fortune-telling, but there is also prophecy, and we are fighting for the unhampered expression of the gifts of the Spirit. As to our future line of action, it is probable that our main policy will be to secure the redress of our disabilities through Parliamentary action. For this purpose we shall have to educate not only our M.P’s, but the general public.<sup>12</sup>



<sup>11</sup> See Pioneer over three issues, “A Question of Fraud!”, starting in Vol. 7, No. 3, June 2020.

<sup>12</sup> See Pioneer’s six-part series, “The Effect of The Vagrancy Act – The Work of The Spiritualists’ National Union”, started in issue Vol. 2, No. 1, January 2014. All six parts on one PDF is available on the Pioneer page of the SNU website: <https://www.snu.org.uk/the-pioneer-journal>

Our object must be more and better Spiritualists; more and better propaganda. One of the steps in this direction is the work being done by our diploma and registration of workers scheme. We are anxious that our members should be better informed about Spiritualism and more capable of demonstrating its truths. Our greatest dangers are unformed emotional enthusiasm and premature mediumship.

Development means effort, both mental and spiritual. Mediumship does not mean that your guide does *your* thinking by *your* proxy. Our Education scheme aims at removing the ignorance which retards your mental make-up, so that you can become a better and more worthy instrument for spirit use. There is nothing of less use to the Spirit World, than a mind that has become fossilised. Our educational scheme can make you, as a medium, a more capable exponent. The mere fact that a name is included on our register should be a guarantee to the general public that the person concerned has genuine powers. It is a guarantee to the sincere, enquiring public that if they come to us, they will not be exposed to fraud or incompetence. I know that some, whilst appreciating the need for the scheme, have reservations. They fear lest the organisation, with its rules and regulations, might strangle the spirit it is designed to foster, and they point to the history of the Church as an example. I want to assure you that every member of your National Council is fully alive to the danger, but in view of the National and democratic character of our organisation, they will always be zealous to see that the spirit is not hampered by technical regulations.

We face the future undaunted. Our difficulties are great, but our fighting qualities greater. What though Parliament treats us with contumely, we have the blessing of the spirit world on our mission. We have fought, we are fighting, we shall continue to fight, to bring the light and understanding of Spirit into all questions of security; to bring our principles of brotherhood to bear on all questions, both Social and economic, and not only in the structure of our Nation, but in its relations to all the Sister Nations of the world; to bring that knowledge to mankind that shall reconcile his deepest fears with an illumined understanding; to reveal that all worlds are one, both seen and unseen; that man may use the stepping stones of his worn-out ideas as a means to prepare himself for that greater vision; that wider inspiration, which leads to the wider God-given Freedom, which is the inheritance of those who truly seek.

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The Spiritualist Conference held at Paignton on July 7th, was one of the happiest I have attended for some years. Doubtless the cessation of warfare on the Continent was largely responsible for the improved fraternal and friendly atmosphere everywhere prevalent, and for the improved attendance of about 116 delegates and members.

At 10 am. Mr. Harold Vigurs called the delegates to order in the well-appointed Church at Manor Corner, Paignton, and Mr. Joe Rossiter the local President welcomed the delegates.

Mr. Geo. Stabb, J.P., in his chain of office, then extended the greetings of the civic authorities to the assembled company. He hoped that they would enjoy the amenities of the township, and that their Conference would strengthen the spiritual life of the people and add to the well-being of the movement of Spiritualism. He hoped too that they would have pleasant memories and someday return.

Messrs. Ridgway (Southport), and J. Rossiter (Paignton), were appointed tellers, and Mr. Tom Ellis, messenger. Miss May Price the new secretary of the Union was introduced to and welcomed by the delegates and in a neat speech stressed her desire to

win the friendship of all. She would put her best into the work and asked their confidence.<sup>13</sup>

Mr. Vigurs then delivered his Presidential address. It was comprehensive, analytical and stimulating, and won high compliments.

A lengthy discussion ensued in which the relationships between churches and mediums figured prominently and many useful suggestions were offered. Mr. Vigurs was heartily applauded for his fine address.

Mr. Harry Dawson (Newcastle), moved the congratulations of the Conference to "arisen Friends." Year by year the rank thinned only to be filled again, but they could not forget the faithful service of those who had been called, during the year, to a fuller life. We welcomed them in our midst to-day, for they were still ours. We thanked them for their service and fellowship. The audience stood in silence as a tribute of respect.

The minutes of the previous conference were adopted, as was the Annual Report and Balance Sheet. Interim Reports for the past six months were next considered. Mr. Wilson, for the Exponents Committee, reported that 154 Diplomas (including 81 ministers), had been issued, and 83 certificates to workers. A supplementary list would be issued shortly. Three new ministers and 18 diplomées were approved and two Diplomas had been withdrawn under clause 5. (Mr. J Benjamin and Mrs. Helen Duncan<sup>14</sup>). The Education Committee reported that examinations had been recently held and there was a large increase in the number of students applying for examination. Discussion took place on Mr. Dutton's suggestions for publicity and on the restrictions regarding the admission of strangers to seances.

A very interesting debate centred round Mr. Davison' report on the Healing Committee's work which raised general interest.

Mr. Haig reported on the work of the planning committee. In three years time (March, 1948), they would celebrate the Centenary of Modern Spiritualism. They planned to raise a Centenary Fund for the further propagation of the "Cause."

They were preparing a series of volumes under the title "Spiritualists Centenary Library." These would comprise books newly written as well as re-issues: a Hymn and Tune Book and a Ministers Handbook. They further proposed to consider the possibility of Homes for the Aged, under the Fund of Benevolence. An International Congress: Propaganda Meetings throughout the country which would conclude with a united meeting at the Royal Albert Hall on March 25th, 1948.

Mr. McIndoe reported that the Council were making an effort to re-establish the International Federation which had been broken up by the war. They were inviting delegates from Continental Countries to meet them in London next spring, with a view to an International Congress in 1948. In view of the terrible state of Europe the S.N.U. were prepared to meet the travelling and hotel expenses of the delegates to next year's meeting. It was hoped to establish International Headquarters in London. The scheme was generally approved. Mr. Stewart recounted the work of the Freedom and Parliamentary Committees and especially emphasised the efforts of Messrs. Hannen Swaffer and Clement Davies, K.C., M.P. They had decided to affiliate with the "Committee of Civil Liberties" and had established a Council of Action on which Mr. Loseby had been appointed.

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<sup>13</sup> Pioneer, Volume 1, No. 5: "General Secretaries of the SNU".

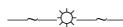
<sup>14</sup> Pioneer, Volume 2, No. 5: "Why did the S.N.U. remove Helen Duncan's diploma in 1945?"

Mr. Raffill reported that he had received in all £5,040, for the Freedom Fund, but money was still needed. The receipts for the F.O.B. had been a record, and he thanked the delegates for their efforts. There were now 44 pensioners on the list, one of them 94 years of age. There had been seven transitions since January. The work of the F.O.B. was steadily increasing and he had received and replied to over 7,500 letters in the year. The fund gave advice as well as money, and had endeavoured in every way to help the old people.

There were three notices of Motion on The Agenda. No. 1 was withdrawn. No. 2, advising all churches to adopt the words "Spiritualist National Church" in its title was unanimously adopted. No. 3, *re* appointment of a sub-committee obtained no proposal and therefore dropped.

The only change on the Council is the election of Mr. Bleasdale for the Lancashire Area.

The Conference ended with hearty votes of thanks to all the local friends for the excellence of their organization.



The reader no doubt will have noted the absence of Swaffer's resignation in the Union's reports; it appears to have been somewhat cloaked in mystery for whatever reason by the Union. Below are some remarks by Maurice Barbanell on the resignation of the Union's Honorary President, Hannen Swaffer:

**Psychic News, July 18th, 1942 – S.N.U. President John M. Stewart remarked:**

"... the resignation was withheld from the annual general meeting, it will not be dealt with now until the next meeting of the national' executive in October. In the meantime I hope that wiser counsels will prevail and that Hannen Swaffer can be induced to reconsider his decision. Apart from its effect on the Union and in other directions, I should take his withdrawal as a personal loss, for I hold him in the highest esteem and am honoured to have him as a friend."

**Psychic News, July 25th, 1942 – What Happened After Hannen Swaffer Threw His Bomb:**

WHAT has happened since Hannen Swaffer threw his second bomb, his resignation from the Spiritualists' National Union as its honorary president ?

One extraordinary thing is that the "Two Worlds," more or less the Union's official organ, did not refer to his resignation last week !

This week, however, it will publish a copy of the letter—we printed it last week—that John Stewart, the Union's president, sent to *Psychic News* expressing his regrets at Swaffer's resignation. John's letter is being reprinted in the "Two Worlds," says the Union, "so as to ensure its widest possible publicity."

**This is curiously one-sided. Why isn't Hannen Swaffer's letter of resignation reprinted so that the "widest possible publicity" should be given to both sides ?**

**Psychic News, July 10th, 1943 – S.N.U. Leaves It Out:**

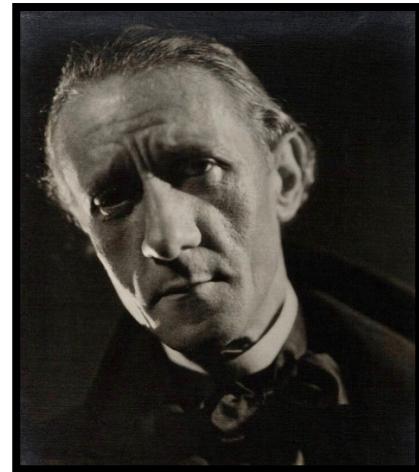
"No mention of Hannen Swaffer's resignation of his honorary presidency appears in the annual report of the Spiritualists' National Union. Officially members have not yet been told about his resignation. And the line, "Honorary President: Mr. Hannen Swaffer," which has regularly appeared on the front page of the report is this year deleted. In the S.N.U. Diary for 1943 under the words, "Hon. President," there is a blank."

“When I (Barbanell) raised this question at the annual conference, the reply was that Swaffer had never “officially” resigned. Nevertheless the council had asked him to reconsider his resignation, but as he did not reply they had declared the office vacant. I insisted that in view of his long service to the Union some mention should have been made in the annual report.”

**Psychic News, April 15th, 1944:**

One old controversy has been settled. Shrewd observers may have noticed that in an advertisement in last week’s *Psychic News* Swaff is referred to as the honorary president of the S.N.U.

Today Hennen Swaffer still remains as  
***Hon. President-in-Spirit.***



***This series shows the Union sustained no substantial long-term losses during the war years***

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

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

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

*The full three-part series of “The Spiritualists’ National Union & World War II” is available on one PDF from the SNU website:*

<https://www.snu.org.uk/important-subjects-pioneer-journals>

