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I am sorry that Francis Bennion resented my "we atheists" speech. My psychological intention was one of solidarity and fraternity, to make it quite clear that I was speaking on this occasion not as a notorious (i.e. announced as such in the pages of the "Daily Mirror") homosexual but as a paid-up member of the NSS. The OED defines the term "atheist" as "one who denies or disbelieves the existence of a God", Many such there must have been present, together with some who prefer to define themselves as "one who holds that the existence of anything beyond material phenomena, . . . cannot be known" (OED "agnostic") or as a follower of "the religion of humanity", the nearest the OED comes to a "humanist".

There is room for all three in the NSS but I find it strange that Francis Bennion is prepared to belong to a society- whose rules (as he calls its alms) he insists on discounting. It's precisely because of its "rules", and in particular its commitment to the a-religious idea of man the animal, expressed in the concept of extending the moral law to other animals. that many of us find our secular home in the NSS rather than elsewhere.

In his last paragraph Francis Bennion calls for singlemindedness among secularists and accuses me (and I take it Brigid Brophy as well) of intolerance and bigotry. I find it hard to see how he can have misconstrued my whole speech by fastening on one word in it or indeed her symbolic act which he so graciously describes as "antics", Clearly my attempt at fraternity was misplaced in one quarter at least.

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