

CHAIN REACTION BIBLE SUNDAY 2006

GENERAL CONFORMITY

A drama sketch written by and reproduced with kind permission from Murray Watts (*Miracle Maker*)

GENERAL CONFORMITY, supreme commander of the ARMY OF APATHY (anything from two to six soldiers); *TREND*, a man of the world

This is an extract from a full length morality play, THE TRIAL OF A TRIMMER TREND, to be published in due course. Like "How to be a Hero" from THE GRAND SLAM, it stands on its own as a sketch and has been frequently performed by RIDING LIGHTS. It is a useful item for street theatre, or for a "revue" type performance. The ARMY OF APATHY should be dressed sloppily and identically. TREND is "discovered on stage reading the Bible" – the beginning of the sketch is sometimes improvised by RIDING LIGHTS: TREND enters, holding a Bible, and starts to tell the audience why the book is important and why various sketches have been based on Bible stories. The rest of the sketch then functions like an interruption.

TREND thumbs through a Bible. There is the sound of marching.

TREND: Marching? An army? (*Enter GENERAL CONFORMITY and the ARMY OF APATHY.*)

CONFORMITY: Hep-by, hep-by, hep-by, hep-by, hep-by, squad, halt. Squad will turn to the right, to the right, turn. Squad will turn on their television sets, by the left, switch. (*The ARMY switches on imaginary TVs*) Squad will watch what everyone else watches, eyes front. Now get watching you miserable lot of non-conformists. (*The ARMY bend forward, gaping at the screens*)

TREND: Who are you?

CONFORMITY: General Conformity, laddie, and stand with your hands in your pockets and your eyes glazed when you're talking to me. Drop that jaw. I should hope so. And let's have none of this serious thinking during a routine drill. Whatsyername?

TREND: Trend, Sir.



- CONFORMITY: Private Trend, I see. Squad, shun! Squad will slope downhill in all matters of personal morality (*They slope to the side*), squad will stand at ease when facing important decisions. (*They stand at ease and stare vacantly*). Squad will stand easy and do nothing about anything (*They slouch haphazardly*). Private Trend, fall in!
- TREND: (*Hedging*) Well, as a matter of fact, I was more or less thinking of following my conscience, you know, investigating the issues of right and wrong for myself by studying the –
- CONFORMITY: Private Trend, stand stock still! Squad! Squad shun! Squad will retire one pace, by the left, re-tire! (*TREND finds himself in the army by doing nothing*)
- TREND: I feel I ought to ... go ... my own way, do what I think ... follow what my conscience tells me –
- CONFORMITY: YOU PATHETIC MUMMY'S BOY OF A RELIGIOUS NUTCASE!! (*Seeing the Bible tucked under TREND's arm*) 'Ello, 'ello, what's this, what's this? (*He takes it*) The Bible.
- TREND: (*Deprecating*) Oh – is it? Oh, my goodness me.
- CONFORMITY: Oh dear, oh dear, you've got it coming to you, laddie, if your friends were to find out that you were reading a book like this, laddie, you could be sentenced to up to two hours' public embarrassment.
- TREND: Yessir.
- CONFORMITY: From now on you will not read this book, laddie.
- TREND: Nossir
- CONFORMITY: Why will you not read this book, laddie?
- TREND: Don't know, sir.
- CONFORMITY: Well done, Private Trend, well done. You don't know why you will not read this book, laddie?
- TREND: Nossir
- CONFORMITY: BECAUSE NOBODY ELSE DOES. THEY JUST DON'T, LADDIE. Is that clear?



TREND: Right, sir.

CONFORMITY: Right. SQUAD WILL FOLLOW THE FASHION.

ARMY: *(TREND joins in)* Sah!

CONFORMITY: SQUAD WILL BELIEVE WHAT THE EXPERTS TELL THEM!

CONFORMITY: SQUAD WILL NOT INVESTIGATE FOR THEMSELVES!

ARMY: Sah!

CONFORMITY: *(To TREND)* Don't let me catch you stepping out of line again or you'll be thoroughly ridiculed, is that clear, number 892?

TREND: Sah!

CONFORMITY: And wipe that look of rapt attention off your face when you're talking to me! Next time, I expect to see a marked decrease of interest and a pretty good display of apathy. SQUAD, APATHETICALLY, MARCH. *(Exeunt, slouching and yawning in unison)* Let's have more conformity there ... I want a lot less personality in this squad ...

