

President's Report

Earlier this year the BBC broadcast a programme called *What the World Thinks of God*. It included an international poll about religion. The programme producers concluded: "Overall, the results of our poll show that levels of belief and religious activity in the UK are consistently lower than in most of the other countries polled".

At the same time, statistics gathered by the Home Office showed that 80% of people in this country rated religion as the least important factor in their life in a list of ten.

And this is reinforced by official figures published by the Church of England earlier this year that showed that in 2002 the average number of people attending a CofE church at least once a week was 1.16 million, down 108,000 from 2000. The statistics also showed a 7% decline in formal church membership in 2002 compared with the last time the figure was revised in 1996.

What these figures indicate is that Britain almost certainly takes the prize as the most irreligious country in the world.

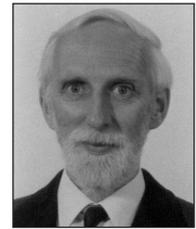
And yet our secular principles are being eroded, perhaps most obviously in our education system. Last year we raised the alarm about the Church of England's plans to increase the number of its publicly funded

church schools. This year there has been an even more startling incursion into our schools by extremist evangelical groups that put creationism and hard-line religious teachings at the centre of the curriculum in 'academies'. And our Prime Minister not only explicitly approves of such extremism being taught at public expense, he actually opened one of the schools that are teaching creationism.

While the sponsors of academies contribute only £2 million (and, even then, often only over several years), the taxpayers typically stump up a further £23 million plus the total of the running costs in perpetuity, which can even include payments to evangelical organisations for their "efforts".

The Government intends to open 200 of these academies in the next ten years – and many of them will be under the control of religious sponsors with extremely dubious motives and an almost free hand to work the system for their own advantage. Another privilege is that academies, unlike other maintained schools, are freed from the constraints of the national curriculum.

The NSS has been working hard over the year to oppose much of the new national framework for religious education, which we consider places far too much emphasis on Christianity at the expense of most other belief systems. Yet



Denis Cobell

non-religious philosophies are optional. Our campaign on this continues.

In a related area, we achieved some success on school transport. For years, the children of religious families have had school transport subsidies to ferry them to appropriate 'faith schools'. Atheist parents who wanted to avoid such schools had to pay their own transport costs. After much agitation by the NSS we managed to get a parliamentary education committee to accept that non-believers were being discriminated against by not having the same privileged access to transport subsidies to avoid 'faith schools'. The Government's intransigence in the face of repeated recommendations even earned it a rebuke from the Joint Parliamentary Human Rights Committee, which concluded: "We were persuaded by the evidence of the National Secular Society ..."

An innovation this year for the NSS was the formation of a Scottish campaigning caucus, which we hope will increase our effectiveness north of the border, where religion hangs on to its unique privileges with grim determination.

And because the UK is now part of the European Union, we have been reinforcing our alliances with our sister groups on the continent, co-operating with them in opposing the privileges being demanded by religious groups – particularly the Vatican – and look set

to be perpetuated if the latest draft EU constitution is adopted by member states. We will be co-operating with our European partners in staging a demonstration against this outside the European Parliament in Brussels next year.

On a more positive note, because of the NSS's campaigning, the Government has at last accepted that the views of atheists and non-believers of all kinds must also be taken into account when they consult with 'faith communities'. A statement on the Home Office website reads: "A significant minority of the population have no religious affiliation (15.5% according to the 2001 Census). Some of these may subscribe to a non-religious belief system such as humanism; others may have no organised belief system at all. The Government has an obligation to ensure that those who do not hold any religious belief are not disadvantaged in any way. The recent report of the Government's 'Interface with the Faith Communities' highlighted this issue and made a series of recommendations to Government Departments. Some of these recommendations are designed to ensure that the views and interests of those with no religious belief are considered alongside the views and interests of those of the faith communities."

It seems that almost weekly there is some event that requires a comment or a reaction from the

NSS and our team is always on hand to respond. We have had enormous media coverage over the past year, further raising the profile of the NSS and, at the same time, increasing the membership significantly.

The coming year will be even busier – with a threat from the Home Secretary to reintroduce a law banning “incitement to religious hatred” and the Labour Party promising even more privileges for religion in its manifesto, such as “faith based welfare”.

All this has to be done on very limited

resources. So much more could be achieved if those resources could be increased. And it is with this in mind that we look to you, our loyal members and supporters, to help us out. The Society is running at a substantial deficit, which we cannot sustain indefinitely. Please do what you can to help us keep going – it is important that we maintain our presence in the political arena and continue to function as by far the most effective organisation looking to protect the rights of non-believers in the present climate of religious power-seeking.

Denis Cobell, President



This cartoon first appeared in The Independent and is reproduced with the kind permission of the cartoonist, Dave Brown

A Year In The Life Of The NSS

November 2003

The NSS was deeply involved – along with our European partner groups – in efforts to stop religion being given special privileges in the EU constitution in the run-up to the final negotiations on the charter. Efforts by the Vatican to have references to Europe’s “Christian Heritage” mentioned in the preamble were vigorously opposed, and so was the inclusion of Article 51, which gave a specific right of consultation to religious groups in advance of legislation. The NSS signed a joint declaration with our French counterpart Libre Pensee calling for secularism in Europe to be protected. Our Honorary Associate A C Grayling gave a lecture on the Society’s behalf at the European Humanist Federation’s conference in Rome entitled *Secularism is Essential*.

Home Secretary David Blunkett gave a speech which encouraged “faith communities” to engage more in the political arena. He said, “Religious faiths have a vital role to play in promoting citizenship” and praised the work of different faiths in community projects and opening their facilities to local people.

Questions were asked in the House of Lords about the legitimacy and make up of the Home Office’s controversial “faith liaison committee” which is supposed to be advising the Government on policy-making.

The NSS launched an attack on the evangelising charity Samaritan’s Purse after it was discovered it was putting Christian literature into shoeboxes that had been filled with gifts for disadvantaged children in the developing world. The campaign took off after member Andy Armitage spoke for the Society on the Radio 4 *Sunday* programme and resulted in several high profile supporters – including the Co-operative Society – promising to withdraw from the scheme in future.

Media profile:

The NSS was featured in programmes on Sky News, Radio Newcastle and ZeeTV.

December 2003

The Executive Director spoke at a meeting in the European Parliament in Brussels about Article 51 of the EU Constitution.

The NSS took part in a conference in Paris, which it jointly organised with Libre Pensee, to

bring together Europe's secular and humanist groups in an effort to protect the continent's secular values from religious power seeking. Soon after the conference, the summit meeting to finalise the constitution ended in disarray and the document was put on hold.

The Independent Television Commission announced its new code on the broadcast of TV programmes involving the paranormal and occult. It had incorporated a suggestion from the NSS that a warning about the veracity of what was being claimed should be shown immediately before and after the programme.

Media profile:

The NSS featured on the Radio 4 Today programme, Radio Wales (twice) and Capital Radio. It was also quoted in news stories in The Times and The Independent.

January 2004

The NSS launched an attack on a new centre at Aberdeen University that aimed to prove a link between health and 'spirituality'.

Dr Younis Sheikh was released from death row in Pakistan after being retried on blasphemy charges. The NSS had taken an active part in the International Humanist and Ethical Union's

efforts to save Dr. Sheikh. He is now living in Europe.

Media profile:

NSS campaigns resulted in our appearing on Sky News, BBC News 24, Radio Scotland and Talksport Radio. We also appeared in The Guardian, The Times, The Sunday Times, The Sunday Herald, The Tablet and The Times Higher Educational Supplement.

February 2004

The NSS attacked Roman Catholic Archbishop Mario Conti of Scotland for trying to stop the BBC criticising his Church. The NSS's objections to the Archbishop's efforts at censorship were carried on the front page of *The Herald* newspaper and caused debate in the Scottish media about whether the BBC was anti-Catholic or whether the Catholic Church was trying to stifle investigation.

We complained to the Royal Pharmaceutical Society after a pharmacist in an Asda supermarket refused to supply a woman with the "morning after" pill on religious grounds.

We complained about a *Thought for the Day* by Clifford Longley that he used to rally support for the Catholic Church's attack on the BBC. We



Dr Sheikh



Jonathan Miller
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wrote to the acting Director of the BBC who assured us that the BBC would not give in to pressure. We also had our complaint read out on the Radio 4 *Feedback* programme. Alan Bookbinder, the head of religion and ethics at the BBC, was interviewed on the programme. Mr Bookbinder admitted that Clifford Longley had misused the slot but that the NSS's complaint had no value because: "I don't think that the secular mind can understand the distinction between a political message and spiritual message."



Martin O'Neill, MP

The Society's stall at the Fabian Society annual conference at Imperial College in London generated much interest in the NSS by delegates. A debate about secularism, with honorary associate A.C. Grayling, went overwhelmingly in favour of the NSS position.



Dr Evan Harris, MP

NSS Honorary Associate Jonathan Miller walked out of the BBC programme *What the World Thinks of God*, appalled by its triviality and its insulting approach to atheists.

Another Honorary Associate, Martin O'Neill MP, spoke out against religious schools in the Scottish Parliament's *Holyrood* magazine, saying: "Personally, I feel there is no place for faith schools in modern society, and I think we

are getting near the time where we will have to move on. I want a secular system of education without any nod towards the direction of religion. We won't get that just now, because we have a minority that feel it has rights to which it is entitled. I'd far rather we address whether religion is a necessary part of the school curriculum."

Member Melanie Osborne succeeded in having a poster reading, "He who does not believe is a fool" taken down from her local station. She asked what the reaction would be if she put up a poster saying all believers were idiots.

Honorary Associate Dr Evan Harris MP introduced a Bill into parliament seeking to outlaw religious selection entry criteria in state schools. It was defeated after opposition from Labour MP Kevin McNamara, a practising Catholic, who said it was an "attack on religious belief".

Media profile:

The NSS had huge national exposure over the publication of the Institute of Public Policy Research report, starting with a front-page quote in The Observer, and then a spot on BBC TV News, which was broadcast on every bulletin for a whole day. Director Keith Porteous Wood appeared on

BBC News 24. He also appeared on the Richard Littlejohn show on Sky Television, and spoke on BBC GMR. Terry Sanderson gave interviews to BBC Radio Leeds and the Asian Network. Keith was interviewed on BBC Radio Wales and Radio Derby.

Honorary associate Paul Holmes MP represented the Society on Radio 4's education programme The Learning Curve about discrimination in school transport that also featured our member Ian Abbott and his daughter Laura. Keith Porteous Wood appeared with another honorary associate, Alice Mahon MP, on Radio 4's Westminster Hour talking about the government "faith liaison committee."

The NSS commented in The Sunday Times, BBC1's The Politics Show, Five News, Sky News, and Radio Solent and in The Western Mail.

March 2004

Council member Anna Behan wrote on behalf of the Society to Paul Bremer, an American ambassador in charge of the transition process in Iraq, asking that he ensure that Yanar Mohammed, head of The Association of Women's Freedom in Iraq, was given personal protection. Ms Mohammed had received many death threats for her efforts to protect women's rights in the country after the war.

NSS President Denis Cobell took part in a debate at the London School of Economics with the theme: "Islam or Secularism – which way forward?" Despite a largely Muslim audience, Denis was complimented on the effectiveness of his presentation – "masterful" and "powerful" being two compliments he received from audience-members.

Media profile:

The NSS featured on Radio Five Live, and Channel Island Radio. We were also quoted in The Times Educational Supplement, The Guardian, Education Guardian, The Times Higher Educational and Research Opportunities and Candis, a women's magazine.

April 2004

The NSS launched an official complaint, prepared by council member Anna Behan, to the European Commission about the scope of religious exemptions from the new employment discrimination regulations.

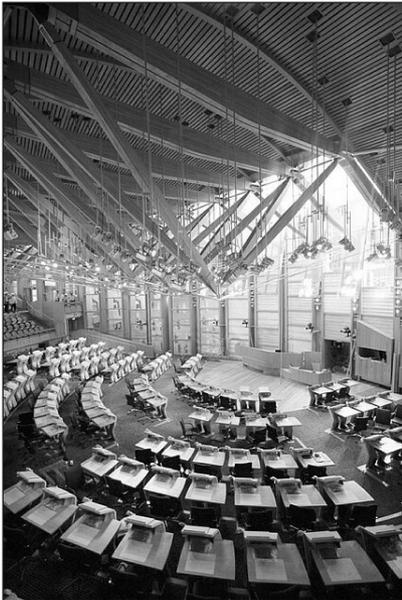
The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority launched its recommended guidelines for a Framework for Religious Education. The framework was condemned by the NSS as being entirely biased towards Christianity, and to a lesser extent other religions, with only a passing acknowledgement of non-religious life stances.



Anna Behan

The Scottish Parliament

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The NSS submitted a response to the consultation on the BBC’s Charter Renewal. It suggested that the BBC needed an independent complaints procedure to prevent the BBC “closing ranks” as it had done over our *Thought for the Day* complaint.

The Government announced that it would not be requiring animals that were ritually slaughtered for religious purposes to be pre-stunned. This was despite being told by its own advisory body that halal and kosher slaughter methods were cruel. The NSS had made an impassioned plea to the government to reform its slaughter practices, but as usual, concern not to offend the religious has prevailed.

Lancashire County Council admitted that our member Ian Abbott had a case when he said his daughter’s human rights were being violated by a discriminatory school transport policy being operated by the Council.

Media profile:

The NSS had a major splash in The Observer with the Ian Abbott case. The Times Educational Supplement also picked it up. Keith Porteous

Wood was extensively quoted in The Herald: “The Scottish Executive last night was accused of ‘running scared of religious interests’ over apparent plans to disregard key advice from a review group set up to modernise religious observance in schools.” Our “running scared” quote was approvingly repeated by the Sunday Herald in an editorial.

In a big month for publicity, we appeared in The Times, Education Guardian, Third Sector, The Scotsman, The Herald, BBC Online and The Church Times. Our broadcast appearances included Radio Five Live, BBC Scotland TV, Czech Radio, and local stations in Lancashire, Cambridge, Gloucester, Coventry, Shropshire, London, Berkshire, Stoke, Sheffield, Humberside, West Midlands, Oxford, Cleveland and Belfast.

May 2004

The NSS gave evidence to a House of Commons select committee considering the future of School Transport. Keith Porteous Wood and member Ian Abbott (whose daughter had been discriminated against) made the case for an end to discrimination against non-believers in the provision of subsidies – if religious families get free transport to a distant faith school, then non-religious families should have similar privileges to avoid them. This appearance made a big impact on the committee.

Anna Behan made a formal complaint to the Judicial Studies Board about a new publication the *Equal Treatment Bench Book*. She expressed concern that atheists and those with non-religious belief systems have been effectively overlooked in considerations about religious diversity and religious discrimination. The Board look set to act on our concerns.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister published a report entitled “Social Cohesion and the Divide Between Religious Groups in Britain” warning that the growing number of faith schools risked worsening the divide between racial groups – the government’s enthusiasm for “parental choice” was causing completely segregated schools in some cities, the report said. A poll in *The Daily Telegraph* showed 82% opposed “faith” (religious) schools while only 7% approved of them.

NSS President Denis Cobell took part in an Oxford Union debate with the proposition “Religion has caused more problems than it has solved.” Also taking part were Elaine Storkey, Lembit Opik MP and the Northern Ireland Secretary Paul Murphy.

The NSS wrote to the Welsh Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning, Jane Davidson AM, to enquire whether the Welsh Assembly Government can examine the

current legal requirement regarding collective daily worship in Welsh schools – with a view to abandoning it.

The Government launched a consultation on its proposed new Commission for Human Rights and Equality that will bring religion and belief and sexual orientation for the first time under the same anti-discrimination umbrella. It acknowledges – after pressure from the NSS – that non-believers have rights that must be taken into account, too.

The Home Office published statistics showing that 80% of the population don’t regard religion as being in any way important to the way they describe themselves.

Media profile:

In another high profile month the NSS was featured on BBC Scotland TV, Radio Wales (twice) and the Today programme. It also featured in the Times Educational Supplement, the Sunday Herald and Personnel Today.

June 2004

Baroness Uddin launched a report in the House of Lords calling on the government to “fast-track” 80 Muslim schools into the state system. The report created an enormous backlash opposing the idea.



Professor
Richard Dawkins

After a request from the NSS, Honorary Associate Professor Richard Dawkins wrote a letter to *The Guardian* drawing attention to the campaign in Doncaster to resist the take over of a local school by creationists. This kick-started what was to become a major campaign that rapidly mushroomed when Dawkins and the Bishop of Oxford wrote a scathing joint article for *The Sunday Times*.

The heads of the 25 states of the European Union agreed the wording of the new Constitution. There is no reference to the Christian heritage of Europe in the preamble, but Article 51, which guarantees religious privileges, survived. The constitution must now be approved by the parliaments of all 25 member countries.

Keith Porteous Wood made clear, at two separate meetings in Parliament, that the bishops' bench in the House of Lords is an anachronism long overdue for abolition, and that the disestablishment of the Church of England was an urgent priority in such a culturally diverse society.

The NSS made the arrangements for the European Humanist Federation's AGM in London. The Society was represented at the formal dinner by vice president Terry

Sanderson. The AGM unanimously accepted the NSS's proposals for EHF to undertake a study of Vatican concordats.

Media profile:

Baroness Uddin's report (above) resulted in the media calling on the NSS to give a balancing view. Keith Porteous Wood was interviewed on BBC Television News and BBC London and he gave a statement to the Reuters news agency. The story then appeared internationally. Keith appeared on Greater Manchester Radio's Drivetime programme and on Mike Dickins' show on Talksport Radio. Keith was also extensively quoted in an article on this story in The Times Educational Supplement.

We had two appearances on Sky News and a slot on Radio Five Live. Two letters from the NSS appeared in The Times during the month. We were quoted in the Church of England Newspaper.

July 2004

The Government announced its intention to open 200 new 'academies' – many to be handed over to dubious religious bodies such as the Vardy Foundation, which promotes creationism. The NSS condemned the plans as "educational vandalism".

The NSS criticised the government for its

intention to permit the continued cruelty involved in ritually slaughtering animals for religious purposes without pre-stunning. The NSS said the decision was a “shameful betrayal of the welfare of animals to pacify noisy religious interests”.

The Executive Director spoke out at the Religious Broadcasting Forum, chaired by the Minister of Culture, Media and Sport and contradicted the Bishop of Manchester’s contention and the prevailing BBC opinion that there should be more religious programmes on TV and radio.

The Vatican’s status at the United Nations was upgraded to give it more power to intervene in debates. A BBC *Panorama* programme reported that the Vatican is promulgating in the developing world the idea that condoms are permeable to HIV.

The European Court of Human Rights ruled that countries have a right to ban religious dress in educational establishments in response to a challenge by a Turkish woman who had been denied the right to wear a hijab at university.

A cross-party select committee in the House of Commons recommended that the government amends its School Transport Bill to end discrimination against atheists by making

available to them equivalent transport subsidies which religious families receive. This was in line with the NSS’s submission to the Committee.

The NSS made a stinging submission to the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority’s (QCA) consultation, critical of a proposed new Religious Education Framework.

The NSS held a preliminary meeting in Glasgow, paving the way for a Scottish caucus of activists to take up specifically Scottish issues.

Keith Porteous Wood met the Director in charge of personnel policy at the Ministry of Defence to discuss how the needs of the non-religious in the armed services can be better served. Following pressure from the NSS, the new draft diversity policy now says: “religious belief is a private matter and that due regard be given to those who have no religion or other belief”.

The NSS discovered that some Church of England schools were using brainwashing-type techniques in their religious education classes. Our protests put the CofE’s education establishment on an embarrassing spot.

Keith Porteous Wood and council member Anna Behan met the Director of Public



Nick Cohen

Prosecutions to raise concerns about the way that cases with a “religious aggravation” element were being dealt with by the Crown Prosecution Service. The DPP assured our representatives that “the CPS is a secular body”.

The Health Development Agency sought the NSS’s opinion on the benefits – or otherwise – of “faith groups” being involved in the provision of welfare services.

Media Profile:

Nick Cohen wrote about the NSS’s protests on religious slaughter in The New Statesman. He also wrote an article about the CofE’s brainwashing tactics, which resulted in a confrontation between him and their education spokesperson, the Bishop of Portsmouth, on Radio 4’s Today programme. The story was also picked up by the Press Association, The Guardian and newspapers in Kent (the story related mostly to the diocese of Canterbury).

David Blunkett’s announcement about a new religious incitement law resulted in a busy time for the Executive Director who was a guest on Radio 5 Live, Channel 5 TV news and on BBC London’s Drive Time, and featured on BBC Europe talking on the same issue. The NSS was also quoted in a Reuters’ news report, which appeared in newspapers throughout the world. We were also quoted in a story in The Guardian.

We also appeared in The Independent, TES, The Guardian and the BBC World Service and Three Counties Radio.

August 2004

The House of Commons Joint Committee on Human Rights warned that Local Education Authorities risked falling foul of the Human Rights Act if it did not end discrimination against non-believers in school transport.

The NSS launched a detailed (24 pages, 22 recommendations) response – prepared by Council member Dr Anna Behan and Keith Porteous Wood – to the government consultation on the new Commission for Equality and Human Rights. The NSS raised fears of the body becoming dominated by religious bodies and creating a “pecking order” of discrimination. The report also demanded that the rights of non-believers be fully accommodated along with those of the religious. The Response was widely commended.

A pharmacist in Surrey refused to supply the “morning after pill” to a woman customer. The NSS protested once more to the Royal Pharmaceutical Society.

The NSS made a joint submission with the Italian Union of Rationalist Atheists and

Agnostics (UAAR) to a consultation on the Green Paper *Equality and non-discrimination in an enlarged European Union*. The NSS warned that “the EU’s secular structure, that has served it so well, is under an unprecedented attack, through both overt and covert attempts to increase religious influence. This is anti-democratic and may well endanger social harmony.”

The NSS responded to a consultation launched by the Government’s own advisors on farm animal welfare, the Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC), on *Welfare Information About Livestock Products*.

Media profile:

Keith Porteous Wood appeared on Meridian Television, Radio Wales and Talksport Radio. The Press Association reported the NSS’s response to the consultation on the CEHR. Terry Sanderson did an interview on Talksport Radio about the effects of religion in politics in the light of Islamic atrocities.

September 2004

The French ban on religious symbols in schools came into effect without the anticipated civil disobedience.

The NSS responded to a Government consultation about the labelling of livestock products. We again criticised the Government

for ignoring its own advisory body the Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC) when it called for livestock to be pre-stunned before being ritually slaughtered.

We responded to a consultation on the proposed Programme Code of the media regulator Ofcom. We argued strongly that religion should not have privileges in broadcasting, that it should not be permitted to recruit directly on TV, nor should it be permitted to raise funds through TV programmes. We recommended that programmes about the paranormal that were not entertainment or investigation should be preceded and succeeded by a warning that charlatans may be at work.

Another response – prepared by council member Anna Behan assisted by Keith Porteous Wood – was made to the Home Office consultation entitled “Strength and Diversity”. We made a renewed call for the emphasis to be taken off “faith communities” as the platform



for trying to create community cohesion in society. We deplored the conflating of religion and race and asked once more that the largest minority group in the country – non-believers – be brought into the loop instead of being consistently excluded from committees and consultative groups.

The Home Secretary announced the government’s intention to outlaw “religious discrimination”, saying: “Faith plays a vital role in people’s lives – even for those who are not overtly religious.” The NSS cautioned that unless the new law was carefully formulated, it might represent a severe restriction on the rights of non-believers and other minorities.

A response to the NSS from the newly-appointed Director General of the BBC informed us that there would be no reconsideration of the ban on non-believers

taking part in *Thought for the Day*. The BBC also banned a satirical cartoon *Popetown* at the request of the Catholic hierarchy. The BBC has spent £2.4 million of licence-payers’ money on the project.

Media profile:

The NSS was in heavy demand in the days after the ban on religious symbols in French schools came into effect. Vice President Terry Sanderson was invited to take part in an hour-long debate on Radio Five Live and on Sky TV News for a lengthy debate. He also gave interviews to BBC News 24, Sunrise Radio, BBC London and BBC Radio Derby. Council member Peter Vlachos flew the flag for the NSS on the BBC Asian Network on the same topic – and during an hour-long debate he was given a pretty hard time, which he dealt with very well.

We also featured in the TES, on Talksport Radio, Radio Wales, Radio WM and the World Service.

Terry Sanderson is the Society’s Media Officer and also Editor of our *Newsline* electronic weekly newsletter. (Further details on www.secularism.org.uk and click on “Newsline this week”.)

Large print and audio versions of this report are available on request.

Your Council:

At 30 September 2004 the National Secular Society Council of Management comprised:

Officers:

President: Denis Cobell
Vice Presidents: Jim Herrick and
Terry Sanderson
(Acting) Treasurer: Afonso Reis e Sousa

Council Members:

Ian Andrews
Norman Bacrac
Anna Behan
Dan Bye
Keith Charters (co-opted)
Jennifer Jaynes
Surendra Lal
Bill McIlroy
Liz Thompson
Malcolm Trahearn
Peter Vlachos

Executive Director:

Keith Porteous Wood, FCCA

Honorary Associates:

Graham Allen MP
Professor Peter Atkins
Iain Banks
Edward Bond
Michael Cashman MEP
Nick Cohen*
Professor Richard Dawkins
Lord Desai*
Rt Hon. Michael Foot
Dr A C Grayling
Dr Evan Harris MP
Christopher Hitchens*
Paul Holmes MP
Prof Ted Honderich
Sir Ludovic Kennedy
Graham Linehan*
Alice Mahon MP
Baroness Massey of Darwen*
Lord McIntosh of Haringey
Jonathan Meades
George Melly
Sir Jonathan Miller
Taslima Nasrin
Stan Newens
Martin O'Neill MP*
Lord Peston*
Sir Harold Pinter
Philip Pullman
Lord Raglan
Claire Rayner
Martin Rowson
Joan Ruddock MP
Brian Sedgemore MP
Professor Joan Smith
Dr David Starkey
Polly Toynbee
Baroness Turner of Camden
Gore Vidal



Lord Desai



Christopher Hitchens



Graham Linehan



Baroness Massey

* Newly joined this year

Honorary Associate:

Professor Francis Crick sadly died this year. By virtue of being a joint discoverer of DNA, he fell into that rare and precious category: a-man-who-changed-the-world. We are very proud that he remained an honorary associate for 43 years.

Volunteers:

The functioning of the NSS at its present level is made possible by the selfless and tireless work of our team of volunteers. On behalf of the Council and the members we would like to thank them all for their continued and loyal work and support.

Affiliated Local Groups:

Brighton & Hove Humanist Group; Bristol Humanists; Bromley Humanist Group; Chiltern Humanists; Cornwall Humanists; Cotswold Humanists; Coventry & Warwickshire Humanists; Croydon Humanists; Devon Humanists; Dorset Humanist Association; Ealing Humanist Group; East Cheshire & High

Peak Secular Group; East Kent Humanists; Essex Humanists; Greater Manchester Humanist Group; Hampstead Humanist Society; Havering & District Humanist Society; Humanist Society of West Yorkshire; Isle of Wight Humanist Group; Leicester Secular Society; Lewisham Humanist Group; Norfolk Humanists; North East Humanists; North London Humanist Group; Sheffield Humanist Society; South Hampshire Humanists; Suffolk Humanists; Sutton Humanist Group; Welsh Marches Humanist Group; West Glamorgan Humanist Group; West Kent Secular Humanist Group.

Organisations To Which The NSS is Affiliated:

Abortion Law Reform Association, Amnesty International, European Humanist Federation, International Humanist and Ethical Union, Liberty, and Network for Peace Council. We also support the Humanist Peace Forum and the Voluntary Euthanasia Society.