

Introduction from the President

Survey after survey shows that Britain's attachment to organised religion continues to dwindle at a very fast rate. Yet, religious organisations grow ever more demanding and politicised and, as a result, are increasingly finding the ear of those in Whitehall and Downing Street.

The NSS has discovered that the Government – with the specific support of Tony Blair - has quietly convened a working party of “religious representatives” to decide how best religious communities could influence policy-making across a wide area of government. Such moves are becoming the cause of alarm and dismay by a growing proportion of the population.

A steering group overlooking the working party included five government ministers and senior politicians, and even the No. 10 appointments secretary. The working party comprised a whole raft of supposed “faith representatives”, but there were no representatives of non-believers. (More details are given in the body of the report.) But how representative are these “faith representatives”? The reality is that they speak for only a tiny proportion of the population. In many instances they do not even represent the views of the communities they purport to lead. For example, many in the Liberal Jewish community have actively distanced themselves from the Chief Rabbi. And doubt is spreading

whether for many in the Anglican Church the Archbishop of Canterbury is their “spiritual leader”. The Muslim Council of Great Britain represents only a small section of the Muslim community – which in itself makes up less than 3% of the total population, yet this body is increasingly represented in official committees and consultations. Also on the committee is a member of the Baha'i faith, which has only 6,000 members in the UK.

Even before the working party was established, these groups already had ready access to Whitehall and Downing Street. Their words, however contentious or incomprehensible, are also reported and broadcast by a strangely pious media – despite the fact that readers and viewers generally have little interest. The BBC is promising ever more religious programmes and every broadsheet in the country has a “religious affairs” correspondent and regular sections devoted to religious propaganda.

The Government's addiction to religion is alarming not just to the NSS but to the many people in this country who find the idea of reactionary and unelected bishops, rabbis and imams making law and being accorded a highly privileged input into public policy making to be abhorrent. Church of England bishops in the House of Lords already boast that they always receive replies from ministers, and promptly, to any questions written on House of Lords notepaper.

Religious authoritarianism is engaged in a bitter struggle with secular liberalism, and



Denis Cobell

seems to be prevailing. Largely because of Mr Blair and his Christian Socialist colleagues in Downing Street – the religionists are becoming even more in the ascendant in public life. The NSS will continue, during the coming year, to do as much as it can to redress that imbalance.

The Catholic Church, too, has become aggressively ambitious in spreading its power base in the past year. It has pushed hard for more influence in the newly-expanded European Union and also seeks to upgrade its already anomalous status at the United Nations. It uses this status to promote its oppression of women, children and sexual minorities. Its policies on sexual matters lead directly to grinding poverty, over-population, “back street” abortions — and greatly increased mortality from AIDS. The NSS has joined with other groups to resist these anti-democratic developments.

While this generally unwanted incursion of religion into our public life continues, much damage is being done to our society that will be hard if not impossible to reverse. This applies to the insinuation of religious organisations into our welfare services and the placement of religious representatives into institutions and committees. The opening of numerous religious schools poses an even greater danger and we abhor the inevitable indoctrination of impressionable young minds. Such new schools will also lead to the splintering of education down religious lines. In areas with a significant minority ethnic presence this will also be along racial lines, and we fear it could lead to a deterioration in community cohesion.

The struggle in which the NSS is engaged is at the moment one-sided. We are up against extremely rich and powerful opponents, who are becoming increasingly slick and ruthless in their push for power. Earlier this year, the conservative Christian organisation CARE sent out application forms to join one of the major political parties to all of its 30,000 members. Millions of people in Britain hold secular views. We need all of our many supporters to contribute to the battle against privileged or covert religious influence in public life.

That is why we need more commitment from you, our supporters, to make your own voices heard. We need more secularists on official committees, on councils, school boards and Standing Advisory Committees on Religious Education (SACREs). There are thousands of secularists in parliament and the media; we need many more of them to actively support us. Similarly, there are many more all around the country who have the capacity to be skilled and determined activists – now is the time to bring that energy to the cause.

As it continues to grow, we hope the NSS will gain the resources to make progress in all these areas. Although we have achieved considerable media exposure, we cannot rest on our laurels. But the NSS is, in the end, only its members and its many supporters. We also look to you to grasp every opportunity to promote the ideals to which we are all committed.

Denis Cobell, President

A Year of Vigorous Campaigning Helps NSS to Grow

This report covers the year to 31 October 2003

We have had another busy year campaigning to protect and promote secularism in Britain and throughout Europe. Areas that we have been active in include:

- Protesting about the privileges being offered to religion through the faith liaison working party set up by the government
- Challenging religious exemptions in the new employment regulations that aim to outlaw discrimination at work
- Pressing the BBC to devote more time to issues of relevance to non-believers
- Resisting the inclusion of a reference to Christianity in the new European Constitution
- Continuing our opposition to the establishment of more religious schools in this country
- Seeking to end discrimination in the provision of school transport on religious grounds

Faith Liaison Committee

The NSS was the centre of controversy when it uncovered the existence of a working group set up by the Home Office, as noted above, to examine “the Government’s interface with the faith communities”. The Home Office minister chairing the group, Fiona Mactaggart MP, had told Parliament that the aim of the group was “to consider the most effective means of achieving greater involvement of the faith communities in policy-making and delivery across Whitehall; to identify the specific policy areas where this input would be most valuable...”

The working group includes representatives from the Church of England, Evangelical Alliance, Catholic organisations, the Muslim Council of Great Britain, National Council of Hindu Temples, Network of Sikh Organisations, the Chief Rabbi and the Bahá’ís.

After our protest was covered by the *Observer*, the NSS was invited to meet Fiona Mactaggart, who assured the Executive Director that the “faith committee” was being consulted on a limited range of issues, but that no secular or humanist groups would be consulted or invited to participate. A number of positive action points came from the meeting and will be followed up by the Minister and ourselves.

It later emerged that the Home Office had established a Faith Communities Unit specifically to create “effective dialogue with faith communities and to ensure that the views

of faith communities are considered in emerging policy." The Home Office signified formally however that it had taken some of our concerns on board when it said: "The Faith Communities Unit will be giving some consideration over the coming months to what the Government can do to safeguard the interests of those with no faith in areas where the faith communities have an input."



Cartoon kindly drawn for the NSS by Martin Rowson

Employment Regulations

The NSS has been at the forefront of the resistance to wide-ranging religious exemptions in the new employment regulations combating discrimination on grounds of religion and sexuality that are due to come into effect in December. The Executive Director discussed them in detail last year at the cabinet

office with the Minister for Equality as part of the consultation process. After the consultation period ended, however, massive religious exemptions were inserted, it is claimed on the Prime Minister's direct instructions, following threats from the Church of England's Archbishops' Council. The wording of the exemption was almost verbatim as dictated by the Church. A cabal of evangelical organisations had also lobbied the Government in similar terms.

Despite warnings from an independent parliamentary scrutiny committee that the exemptions for religious groups were too wide and were likely to be *ultra vires*, the regulations were approved by Parliament. Through our Honorary Associate, Dr. Evan Harris MP, we managed to raise a raft of objections in the House of Commons, but to no avail. Lord Lester of Herne Hill QC put up a similarly valiant fight in the Lords, but with the same result.

The NSS is petitioning the European Commission to take out infraction proceedings against the UK for faulty transposition of the Employment Directive into UK law. This catalogue of complaints has been drawn up by council member Anna Behan and the Executive Director, with help from member Sue England, who specialises in European law. It will be reviewed by leading human rights lawyers before being finalised.

Since the regulations were approved, the Evangelical Alliance and other Christian groups have launched employment handbooks

to advise Christian employers how best to ensure that all jobs in their organisations can be reserved for believers. The NSS has protested most strongly about this, and it was taken up in a major story in *The Times*.

We have also had significant input into the preparation of non-statutory guidelines to the regulations aimed at both employers and employees. These are being drawn up by the arbitration service ACAS in co-operation with the Department of Trade and Industry. Our interventions have resulted in worthwhile improvements.

NSS and the BBC

After a series of meetings with the head of religion and ethics at the BBC over its policy of excluding non-believers from participating in the *Thought for the Day* slot, the NSS made an official complaint to the Board of Governors. When this failed to produce a positive outcome, the Society resorted to legal action alleging discrimination and that the BBC had failed to deal adequately with our complaint.

In response to this, the BBC commissioned a report from the very department responsible for the programme, which concluded, predictably, that "*Thought for the Day* has always been a faith based programme" and the ban was "reasonable" and no discrimination was involved in the policy.

The NSS later withdrew from the legal case on the grounds that taking it further would have been disproportionately expensive. We did not want to risk the Society's funds on such an

action, when the BBC would be using public money to fight its own case with the most expensive lawyers in the country. Had we not been successful, their costs would have been awarded against us.

In an effort to find out whether the BBC's claims that the non-believing perspective was adequately represented on the BBC were well founded, members monitored a week's output on Radio Four (19 - 26 July 2003) and found that religious programmes accounted for 3 hours 25 minutes, plus two religious speakers on the *Today* programme apart from *Thought for the Day*, and four directly religious items on the news, as well as one on *Woman's Hour*. In comparison, the amount of time allotted to secular humanist issues amounted to 30 seconds, when Matthew Parris defined himself as an atheist on *Any Questions* (while answering a question on religion!).

Our campaign generated considerable positive publicity, and the majority of public take our side. It has also made the BBC more conscious of the non-religious voice. The NSS intends to continue pressing the BBC to provide more and better programmes of interest to secular humanists.

The European Constitution

Ministers from around Europe are working to agree a new constitution for an expanded European Union. The Vatican and some Orthodox Churches have been pressing to have a specific mention of Europe's "Judeo-Christian heritage" included in the preamble.

The Society has been told by the Minister for Europe that the UK Government does not intend to support such an insertion. The Society's position has been reported in the European press, generally as the sole specifically non-religious view.

Of even greater concern, however, is Article 51, which "respects and does not prejudice the status under national law of churches and religious associations or communities" and undertakes to "maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue" with them. We are convinced that this Article will be invoked to frustrate attempts at secular reform such as disestablishment.

The NSS has joined with its French equivalent, Libre Pensée, to issue a joint declaration calling for Europe to defend its secular heritage and to oppose religious references in the constitution. We have organised a joint event, to take place in Paris on 6 December 2003, to launch this declaration.



Religion in Education

The Government is determined to press on with an expansion of church schools despite the number of pupils in education declining for demographic reasons, and the seventy years of continuous decline in religious belief and observance showing no sign of abating. Now only 7% of the population is in church on an average Sunday.

The Church of England is taking full advantage of the Government's enthusiasm for the creation of more "faith schools". It is doing so at a rapid rate by converting community schools into Voluntary Aided establishments, and opening new schools. Although the C of E gives the impression that it is contributing to the capital costs of these schools, the truth emerged in the *Church Times*, when it was revealed that the Church is paying little or nothing towards them. Much of their paltry 10% contribution (whittled down from the 50% required under the 1944 Education Act) is being met by other sponsors. In return for this pittance they are in some instances able to restrict admissions almost entirely to Christians, even though the running costs are entirely met from public funds. It was revealed this year that the Canon Slade CofE School in Bolton required parents to attend church at least 48 times a year before they could be considered for a place. It is widely accepted that parents pretend to believe in order to gain entry to such schools.

The growth in CofE schools is an encouragement to other faiths to establish their

own schools, as we are starting to see in Leicester, likely to be the first example of education splintered down religious and hence racial lines.

DfES Privileges Religious Schools

Government school funding rules encourage sponsorship by organisations or individuals, and these are in practice very often religious organisations. Recently reissued guidance by the Department for Education and Skills, on local decision making on statutory proposals for changes in school organisation, advises adjudicators (except in extreme situations) to ratify Church vetoes against any reduction in the proportion of denominational (church school) places. It is inexcusable that adjudicators are not required to take into account what is best for all pupils in the local education authority, rather than privileging "faith" schools to the detriment of community schools in yet a further way. The Executive Director spoke to senior officials at the Department for Education and Skills expressing concern about the proposal to halve to one month the minimum period allowed for the public to lodge objections to school reorganisations. A compromise solution was reached. Our objections came in the wake of an order from the CofE to its dioceses not to cooperate with secular groups who were seeking to discover where and when new religious schools were planned, nor is it possible to find out information from the DfES. It is only by local vigilance that plans for new religious

schools come to light. We have a pack available to assist those fighting such proposals locally.

All but one of Catholic schools are Voluntary Aided so all places are reserved first of all for Catholics. It is only when they cannot find enough Catholic children to fill them that they are opened to other Christians or, as a last resort, to non-believers – even though this may be their nearest school.

Millionaire evangelical Christian and car salesman, Sir Peter Vardy, is to open five more "Academies", the vast majority of the cost of which will be from public funds. Following the same formula as the controversial Emmanuel Academy in Gateshead, these schools, with their heavy-handed religious "ethos", will also promote creationism in science lessons.

The NSS has taken part in several radio and TV programmes discussing this issue, and been quoted in newspapers.

Scotland

The NSS also sparked debate about the continued existence of Catholic schools in Scotland. We featured in several Scottish newspapers, after we pointed out in the *Sunday Times* that a large-scale survey had shown that a majority of Scots opposed denominational schools. We called for a referendum on the continued existence of these schools in a country afflicted by increasing sectarianism. Honorary Associate Professor Richard Dawkins weighed in on our side.

The leading RC archbishop in Scotland was incandescent and declared a "war on

secularism". This was reported on the front page of the *Herald* with a sizeable quote from the NSS President Denis Cobell. The Catholic Church has now appointed a "school czar" to make a case for the continuance of denominational schools.

The NSS also submitted evidence to a consultation on religious observance in schools in Scotland, which resulted in a long interview on Radio Scotland with the Executive Director.

School Transport

We also took up the issue of religious discrimination in the provision of school transport. We have a legal team prepared to take legal action against the wide-spread policy that permits local authorities to subsidise transport for children attending denominational schools, while denying it to non-Christian children attending the same school. This resulted in a major feature in the *Guardian* Education supplement and also made waves in the *Times Educational Supplement* and several regional papers.

Animal Welfare

The NSS has been active in campaigning to outlaw the ritual slaughter of animals without prior stunning. It made a submission to the Department of the Environment and Rural Affairs pointing to evidence of the greater cruelty of halal and shechita (Jewish) slaughter methods. The NSS joined other animal welfare groups in calling for the

introduction of pre-stunning, so that animals are unconscious when their throats are cut and they are bled to death in the manner prescribed by Jewish and Islamic law. The government was sympathetic to this argument, but was under extreme pressure from orthodox religious sources. Yet other major meat producing countries such as Australia ban cattle slaughter without prior stunning, so we assume that the UK's failure to make this change to improve animal welfare is yet a further example of the religious having the trump card with the Blair Government. Any further consultation on the proposals will bring another response from the NSS.

Psychics on TV

The NSS responded to a consultation from the Independent Television Commission on the regulation of programmes featuring purported "psychics", "clairvoyants" and "mediums". The NSS pointed out that such programmes could exploit the vulnerable by giving the impression that "paranormal" events were genuinely occurring. We proposed that such programmes should be preceded by a warning by the network to the effect that there was no guarantee that trickery or manipulation was not involved in the demonstrations of so-called paranormal powers. Our story was taken up by *Psychic News*, and vice president Terry Sanderson had the "spooky" experience of seeing his picture on the front page.

Born Again Christian on OFCOM

The NSS objected to the appointment of athlete Jonathan Edwards, and born-again Christian, to the Content Board of the new TV regulator Ofcom. We protested that Mr Edwards' much-proclaimed evangelical Christianity would not allow him to adjudicate fairly on complaints about "taste and decency". Our complaint was taken up by the media and caused much debate. We were quoted in *Radio Times*, *BBC Online* and the *Guardian* as well as regional papers where Mr Edwards lives.

Religious Offences Committee

The NSS gave evidence last year to the House of Lords Religious Offences Select Committee, and its report was released this summer. Although it was highly critical of blasphemy law and repeated many of our objections, the Committee was not able to reach a consensus on its abolition. The committee had intended to recommend the introduction of a new offence of "incitement to religious hatred". The NSS had argued that introducing such a new offence would be impossible without seriously compromising freedom of expression. After considering the various options, the committee was unable to find a safe way to bring this law into effect.

The committee chairman, Viscount Colville of Culross, concluded: "After extensive public consultation, we have analysed the merits of all the options, but feel it is up to parliament as a

whole to decide how it wants to proceed." Our role in providing extensive evidence to the committee was praised warmly by one of its leading members. Although we would obviously have preferred the Committee to recommend the abolition of the blasphemy laws, we believe that our evidence persuaded the Committee not to propose other changes which we would have found deleterious.

The Crown Prosecution Service has, however, made clear that it intends to prosecute more cases that have a "religiously aggravated" motive. If an offence can be shown to be "religiously aggravated" the prison sentence can be increased to up to seven years.

The NSS has raised the alarm about this development, seeing the potential for it to become a new and much more powerful form of blasphemy law. There is an increasing and worrying tendency by government agencies to seek to treat religious "offences" similarly to race offences. We are worried that religiously aggravated offences such as insulting behaviour will gradually expand from covering insults of the person to insults of the religion. Such concerns have been raised by the Executive Director at a meeting with a minister at the Home Office.

Other Campaigning Issues

- The Society's President Denis Cobell once more called for the rationalisation and fixing of the date of Easter, a call that found its way onto the Teletext news service.
- The NSS submitted a response to the

Government's consultation on the establishment of a single equality body that is proposed to take over the duties of the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Commission for Racial Equality and also to include religion and belief and sexual orientation. The Society also submitted a response to the Government's consultation on a legally recognised partnership register for same-sex couples.

- The Society submitted a response to the consultation on social cohesion launched by the Office of the Deputy Prime minister on social cohesion. We urged the greater involvement of the non-religious and pointed out the dangers of addressing these issues through conservative religious organisations who may have their own agendas and who may truly not represent those of their faith, especially women and young people.
- The Society is continuing to fight the VAT rebates on repairs to listed buildings which are places of worship while they are not given in respect of other listed buildings. These rebates were instigated by the Chancellor after pressure from the Church of England. We have made representations to the European Commission, which later refused to permit reductions to the VAT rate in this area.
- Following a protest by the Executive Director at the absence of a secular speaker, he was invited to join the panel of speakers speaking at a seminar at Newcastle

University on "Structured pluralism: a practical legal framework for faith in the European Union". This also provided an opportunity for him to open up a dialogue with Professor Weninger, who is one of the four Policy Advisers to the President of the EU. He advises on religious matters and is a Roman Catholic.

- The NSS participated in several high profile debates this year and council members gave talks at local groups around the country. The President is particularly active in this field, having spoken, for example, at the Oxford Union, Cambridge University Humanist Group, the Inns of Court Christian Society (supported by Jennifer Jeynes). She and the Bishop of Woolwich (who also supports disestablishment) were the movers of a debate at the Oxford Union on this subject. Ian Andrews debated at the University of Durham.
- The Executive Director was the principal speaker at the 2003 Annual Conference of the Humanist Society of Scotland. Terry Sanderson was the keynote speaker at Sheffield Humanist Society's 10th Anniversary Conference on Religious Fundamentalism. Council members Ian Andrews and Malcolm Trahearn attended the National SACRE meeting in Birmingham. This led to representations to Education Secretary Charles Clarke about a more positive representation for non-religious standpoints in any new national syllabus.

Media Profile Increases

The NSS's profile in the media continues to grow. As well as stories in all the serious newspapers, the NSS has contributed to dozens of radio programmes and many TV programmes over the past year. One of the highlights included Vice President Terry Sanderson being featured on the *One o' Clock News* on BBC1 in an item about superstition, when he was filmed walking under ladders and breaking mirrors (not to mention stepping on cracks in the pavement). Another was Barbara Smoker's appearance on BBC1's *Heaven and Earth Show*, when she memorably described the NSS as "the trade union for atheists".

The Executive Director has kept up his relentless round of media appearances, dashing from the World Service to Radio Scotland to the *Today* programme and BBC1. Terry Sanderson also took part in many broadcasts, some of which were on Radio 2, Radio 5 Live, BBC World Service and Radio Scotland. Our ISDN broadcasting equipment has assisted the Executive Director and Vice President in their frequent interviews with radio stations around the country. The President has also taken part in broadcasts, as have other members of Council, and also some members. Most notably, Andy Armitage represented the Society on the *Sunday Programme* calling to account an international charity called Samaritan's Purse, which is closely associated with fundamentalist

preacher Franklin Graham. The charity collects gifts in this country for disadvantaged children abroad. What the donors do not appreciate is that bible tracts are inserted in the gifts or made available when they are distributed. As a result of our protests, some organisations have now ceased to support this charity.

The Executive Director has briefed dozens of journalists with the facts they need for their stories, and have provided sound bites galore. He has featured in the *Observer*, the *Guardian*, the *Times* as well as the *Times Educational Supplement* as well as many smaller, but nevertheless influential journals. We've also been quoted in many regional newspapers.

We have also appeared in the *EU Observer*, *Psychic News*, the *Church Times*, *The Tablet*, the *National Catholic Register* (many thanks to Muriel Fraser for her help on this one) as well as on German radio and several US stations. Our fame is growing and, as a result, so is our membership.

Conference

The NSS organised a successful one-day conference in June entitled "Secularism in the Future". Honorary Associate Joan Smith delivered a stimulating keynote speech, and there were contributions from Sue Lord (whose brainchild the conference was), Ian Andrews, Keith Porteous Wood, Denis Cobell and Terry Sanderson. Many thanks also to Jennifer Jeynes for helping with the organisation of the event.



Graham Allen

New Honorary Associates

Four Honorary Associates have joined our distinguished panel this year. We are pleased to welcome:

Graham Allen, Labour MP for Nottingham North. He was named "Backbencher of the Year" in the Channel 4 Political Awards Ceremony.

Michael Cashman, the campaigning MEP for the West Midlands accepted our invitation with "honour". Michael is also a member of the Labour Party's National Executive and is working hard to ensure that the EU Employment Directive is fairly applied.

Paul Holmes is MP for Chesterfield. He is the Lib Dem front bench spokesperson on disability, and sits on the Commons Education and Skills Committee. He has been very helpful with technical information on our schools campaign.

Martin Rowson, the famous political cartoonist. His work appears regularly in the *Guardian*, *Mirror*, *Scotsman*, *Independent on Sunday* and *Tribune*. He was voted Political Cartoonist of the Year in 2000 and is cartoonist laureate for London. (See his cartoon on page 4).



Michael Cashman



Paul Holmes



Martin Rowson

Volunteers

Special thanks to the volunteers who have helped so much with the Society's increasing workload over the past year. Grateful thanks

especially to Julian Blake, Tim Boyce, John Claydon, Sue England, Peter Hearty, Muriel Fraser, Ellen Ramsay, Dr Paul Stevenson, Barry Thorpe, and Fiona Weir.

Newsline

Our weekly email newsletter, *Newsline*, is being enjoyed by an ever-increasing readership. If you are not on the mailing list and would like to receive it, please send a blank email with "Subscribe to Newsline" on the subject line to enquiries@secularism.org.uk. Let us know also if your email address has changed. If you don't have a computer, you can still receive a printed version – just send a supply of A4 or A5 stamped addressed envelopes to Newsline, NSS, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL and we'll post it to you each week. (The printed version is only available to members.)

Merchandise

Our latest range of merchandise is proving popular with members. It features portraits of our six "Heroes of Atheism". There is a mug for each and all six are shown on the notelets and tea-towels. You can view the products on the website, and order them using our secure credit card facility.

www.secularism.org.uk/merchant.htm

25 Red Lion Square
London Wc1R 4RL

31 October 2003

The Society's Principles and Objects:

1. Secularism affirms that this life is the only one of which we have any knowledge and human effort should be directed wholly towards its improvement.
2. It asserts that supernaturalism is based upon ignorance and assails it as the historic enemy of progress.
3. Secularism affirms that progress is possible only on the basis of equal freedom of speech and publication; that the free criticism of institutions and ideas is essential to a civilised state.
4. Affirming that morality is social in origin and application, Secularism aims at promoting the happiness and well-being of mankind.
5. Secularism demands the complete separation of Church and State and the abolition of all privileges granted to religious organisations.
6. It seeks to spread education, to promote the fraternity of all peoples as a means of advancing universal peace, to further common cultural interests and to develop the freedom and dignity of mankind.

The NSS is certainly vigorous in its opposition to the forces of superstition, obscurantism, and illiberalism; but that is merely another way of looking at its support for liberal causes. When it campaigns against censorship, it is campaigning for freedom of expression; when it campaigns against faith schools, it is campaigning for educational impartiality; and when it campaigns against any of the social and fiscal survivals of religious privilege, it is campaigning for equality in a pluralist society.

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

READ the *Freethinker* monthly secular humanist journal. Many of the items in this report were covered in more detail in this journal.

Annual UK subscription £15 (£10 unwaged) from Freethinker, PO Box 234, Brighton BN1 4XD, Tel 01273 680531. Email fteditor@aol.com www.freethinker.co.uk

Other Journals of secularist/humanist appeal:

Ethical Record published by South Place Ethical Society. Subscription (10 issues) £18 pa (£12 concessions) from SPES, Conway Hall, London WC1R 4RL. Tel 020 7242 8034/7. Email library@ethicalsoc.org.uk www.ethicalsoc.org.uk

Gay & Lesbian Humanist quarterly journal produced by the Gay & Lesbian Humanist Association's associated charity, the Pink Triangle Trust. Subscription £7.50 from 34 Spring Lane, Kenilworth, Warks. CV8 2HB. Tel & Fax 01926 858450. Email: secretary@pinktriangle.org.uk www.pinktriangle.org.uk

International Humanist News journal of the International Humanist & Ethical Union. Annual subscription (includes 4 issues and

support to IHEU) £30 p.a. from IHEU, 1 Gower Street, London WC1E 6HD. Tel 020 7631 3170, Fax 020 7631 3171. Email office@iheu.org www.iheu.org

New Humanist bi-monthly journal of the Rationalist Press Association. Annual subscription £15 (UK), £18 (elsewhere) RPA, 1 Gower Street, London WC1E 6HD. Tel 020 7436 1151. Email info@newhumanist.org.uk www.newhumanist.org.uk

Humanist News, journal of the British Humanist Association, published quarterly. Available from BHA, 1 Gower Street, London WC1E 6HD. Tel 020 7079 3580, Fax 020 7079 3588. Email: info@humanism.org.uk www.humanism.org.uk

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Honorary Associates

Graham Allen MP
Prof. Peter Atkins
Iain Banks
Edward Bond
Michael Cashman MEP
Dr. Francis Crick
Prof. Richard Dawkins
Rt. Hon. Michael Foot
Dr. A C Grayling
Dr. Evan Harris MP
Paul Holmes MP

Prof. Ted Honderich
Sir Ludovic Kennedy
Alice Mahon MP
Lord McIntosh of Haringey
Jonathan Meades
George Melly
Sir Jonathan Miller
Taslima Nasrin
Stan Newens
Sir Harold Pinter
Philip Pullman

Lord Raglan
Claire Rayner
Martin Rowson
Joan Ruddock MP
Brian Sedgemore MP
Joan Smith
Dr. David Starkey
Polly Toynbee
Baroness Turner of Camden
Gore Vidal

Officers

President & Chairman	Denis Cobell
Vice-Presidents	Jim Herrick & Terry Sanderson
Hon. Treasurer	Alan Lord (till February 2003)
Acting Hon Treasurer	Ian Andrews (from March 2003)

Other Members of Council

The following served throughout the year to 31 March 2003:
Ian Andrews, Norman Bacrac, Daniel Bye, Barry Duke, Jennifer Jeynes, Surendra Lal, Bill McIlroy, Malcolm Trahearn.

One member of Council has been co-opted up to the date this report was drawn up (31 October 2003): Anna Behan 26 March 2003.

Executive Director & Company Secretary:

Keith Porteous Wood, FCCA

Join the National Secular Society - Help to Fight Religious Privilege

Membership details available from:

NSS, 25 Red Lion Square London WC1R 4RL, by email to the office at
enquiries@secularism.org.uk or telephone/fax on 020 7404 3126.

Further details of the Society and join on-line at www.secularism.org.uk/join.htm

Affiliated Local Groups

Birmingham Humanist Group, Blackpool & Fylde Humanists Group, Brighton & Hove Humanist Groups, Bristol Humanists, Bromley Humanist Group, Chiltern Humanists, Cotswold Humanists, Coventry & Warwickshire Humanists, Croydon Humanists, Devon Humanists, 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, Imperial

College Union Secular Society, Leeds & District Humanist Group, Leicester Secular Society, Lewisham Humanist Group, Norfolk Humanists, North East Humanists, North London Humanist Group, Plymouth Atheist Forum, Sheffield Humanist Society, South Cheshire and North Staffordshire Humanist Association, South Hampshire Humanists, Sutton Humanist Group, West Glamorgan Humanist Group, West Kent Secular Humanist Group.

Organisations to which the NSS is Affiliated

Amnesty International, European Humanist Federation, International Humanist and Ethical Union, Liberty, and Network for Peace. We also

support the work of the Voluntary Euthanasia Society.