

Europe backs NSS initiative, and forces Government's hand on Equality Bill

A complaint from the NSS has led to the European Commission issuing a "reasoned opinion" requiring the Government to use the Equality Bill to remove the current *carte blanche* exemptions that religious organisations have to discriminate against gay people in employment.

Our complaint, made in 2004, (written by Anna Behan assisted by Keith Porteous Wood) concerned religious exemptions contained in the Sexual Orientation Regulations, drawn up in 2003. We argued that the exemptions went further than the Commission's Employment Directive allowed. The "reasoned opinion" – which is, in effect, a final warning to the Government – ordered that the Regulations be brought in line with the Directive. The Equalities and Human Rights Commission has congratulated the Society on this success.

The opportunity came when the Sexual Orientation Regulations were incorporated into the new Equality Bill. The Government duly narrowed the exemptions for religious organisations, but the wording they chose proved too much for religious leaders. As soon as the Equality Bill was published, a large-scale campaign by religious organisations was launched to water it down.

Panic-mongering headlines in newspapers like the *Daily Telegraph* and *Daily Mail* gave the impression that the new Bill would force the Catholic Church to drop its doctrinal ban on women priests and that gay marriages would have to be celebrated in churches, whether the churches liked it or not. None of this was true, but when the Bill reached the House of Lords, religious peers raised more objections to these changes than to any other matter.

The Archbishop of York told fellow peers he wanted the *carte blanche* to remain, in effect using his position in the Lords to incite the Government to break EU law to satisfy the churches' self-interest. (Yet another argument for removal of the Bishop's Bench.) It remains to be seen how the Government will react.

It is significant that the wording held to be in breach of the Directive was:

1. *as demanded by the Church of England Archbishop's Council in their letter of 23 January 2003 to the relevant Government Department seeking discussions "at a very senior level of Government [usually code for*



Council Prayer Campaign

MEMBERS' HELP NEEDED: WHAT YOU CAN DO

The National Secular Society has taken legal advice about local councils starting their meetings with prayers. The action follows an approach from members and supporters in Devon who have complained about councils at all levels, even county councils, starting meetings with prayers, to the discomfort of anyone who does not wish to participate.

Our lawyers tell us that there are valid legal objections to prayers forming part of council meetings. It does not seem reasonable to expect non-religious councillors to sit through prayers or to absent themselves. And those who don't join the meeting until after the prayers are over may often miss out on useful pre-meeting exchanges. We are not attacking freedom of worship. If councillors wish to pray, no one is stopping them doing so before or after the meeting.

Local authorities are having increasing difficulty finding people willing to take on the responsibilities of being a councillor. One of the reasons – and we have evidence of this – is that some potential councillors are actually put off by the prospect of the religious elements in council business, and particularly prayers, and therefore refuse to stand as candidates.

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◀ “Europe backs NSS” continued

the Prime Minister] ... if a satisfactory solution cannot be found”,

- 2. after the public consultation had closed, and therefore giving the Church privileged access,*
- 3. without further consultation with parties likely to be affected, despite concern over this lack of consultation being raised in the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments (JCSI). During a JCSI evidence session held in public, a civil servant (later – understandably – “corrected” by his manager) sought to justify the omission on the grounds that the Church thought the exemptions did not go far enough,*
- 4. despite similar other concerns raised by the JCSI over the wording’s compatibility with the Directive,*
- 5. despite similar concerns raised by the Joint Parliamentary Committee for Human Rights and*
- 6. despite concerns raised over the Regulations in the House of Commons Bill Committee, for example by Dr. Evan Harris and in the House of Lords by Lord Lester QC.*

◀ “Council prayer campaign” continued

Prayers have therefore become an obstacle to the efficient operation of local and regional democracy and councils are increasingly unrepresentative of the local population.

We are about to write to a number of councils that currently have prayers asking them to stop and saying that we are contemplating legal action if they do not. If we are successful, whether by persuasion or legal action, we will roll this out over the whole country. In preparation for this, we have started compiling a list of councils which do have prayers and those which do not.

The campaign was announced before Christmas in *Newsline* and, of the results members have sent in

so far, we have found a significant proportion of councils do hold prayers. They are at all levels from the smallest right up to counties, in all parts of the country. Even some of the relatively recently-established councils, such as the London Boroughs set up in the 1960s, hold prayers.

We have been asking members and supporters to help us find out what the situation is in their own local councils – Town, Borough, City or County. **If you would like to help this research, please go to www.secularism.org.uk/campaign-to-stop-council-prayers.html to see a list of councils for which we already have information and how to go about contributing for the many remaining councils.**

Global Blasphemy Protest

The NSS has joined with more than 100 other groups from more than 20 countries to protest against a so-called “**global blasphemy law**” proposed by the United Nations. For the first time ever, a UN body proposed a **legally-binding treaty to combat the defamation of religions, which would threaten freedom of expression and any criticism or debate about religion.** The concept of ‘**defamation of religions**’ is fundamentally **inconsistent with the universal principles outlined in the United Nations’ founding documents, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which affirms the protection of the rights of individuals, rather than ideas.**

Equality Bill in Lords

Now that the **Equality Bill** (which applies to England, Scotland and Wales) has passed to the Lords we have been working hard exerting as much influence there as possible. We were in at the very first stage, giving the front bench spokespersons at the LibDems a list of concerns which they described as “important”. Our concerns were used for their first top level meeting with the Government and fed into their front bench amendments. We have continued to propose amendments and assist them during the passage of the Bill for which they have expressed their appreciation.

Our main focus has been attacking discrimination in employment permitted by the law which disadvantages those of the “wrong” faith or none. Our prime targets were discrimination against non-religious teachers and headteachers and discrimination by religious organisations engaged in faith-based welfare. Honorary Associate Baroness Turner of Camden from the Labour benches kindly tabled amendments for us on some of these issues. Other amendments she tabled for us were technical ones to correct apparent errors in the Bill or to make clearer on the face of the Bill

the extent of additional protection afforded by case law. Debating time is under considerable pressure because of the impending General Election, so not all the



Thought for the Day

Our first attack on the exclusion of non-believers from *Thought for the Day* was in 1962, when a former secretary of the Society, Colin McCall, spoke about it on the-then Home Service. Our latest attempt to get the ban lifted – as you’re probably aware – also came up against a brick wall.

We had hoped with the creation of the BBC Trust – which is supposed to give equal weight to the interests of the viewers as well as the Corporation – that we could bring an end to this discrimination once and for all. Early last year, Keith Porteous Wood and Honorary

Associate Evan Harris met the BBC Trust, and the NSS later submitted a [powerful dossier](#) making the case for opening up *Thought for the Day* to non-religious voices.

We had high hopes of success, because we had identified several obvious breaches of the BBC’s Public Purpose Remit, in particular the Corporations’ Purpose Plan to “Reflect the different religious and other beliefs in the UK”. We also assumed, in retrospect naively, that as a separate entity the newly-established Trust would insulate us from the self-serving, religion-obsessed management of the Corporation that had treated us so shoddily in the past.

Clearly this should not be trial by mob, but the level and strength of public support for our position was overwhelming. Just before the Trust’s adjudication, we wrote to them about Radio 4 Controller Mark Damazer’s defence of his position, posted on the BBC website – “[Thought for the Day: a genuinely difficult question.](#)” We said:

“No reference to Mark Damazer’s [defence] can fairly be

included in the material for the adjudicators without noting that less than one in six [of the 500] responders on the website supported his attempted justification for retention, compared with over five in six that specifically did not. Indeed, the adjudicators might find the frustration verging on anger expressed in the responses to be both revealing and relevant – reactions to which Mr Damazer seems unaccountably oblivious.

“We suggest that the reason Mr Damazer finds the question so ‘genuinely difficult’ is simply because he seemingly feels he needs to both justify the unjustifiable and ignore the overwhelming weight of listeners’ opinions.”

In the end, as was widely reported, the Trust ruled that the BBC was entitled to make its own policy on this issue and that it had no power to enforce a change. We thank members who helped on this campaign, some of whom also became individual complainants, although we were the only corporate complainant.



matters we wanted to pursue could be addressed. Throughout the passage of the Bill in the House of Lords, we have been in close contact with the Government’s top advisors and the Government and LibDem front benches, raising concerns and making suggestions.

Caste

Following our role in the first international conference on untouchability, reported in the last *Bulletin* page 4, we have been working with Lord Avebury and Lord Lester QC from the LibDems to introduce an amendment to

outlaw caste discrimination. We have had substantial assistance from Honorary Associates in the Lords, especially Lord Desai and Lady Flather, both of whom are cultural Hindus. Lady Flather spoke powerfully in the debate from personal experience.

Keith has been leading our work in the Lords on the Equality Bill and spent most of Parliament’s Christmas recess tracking down supporting material and suggesting speakers for the debate on caste. This appeared to move the Government some steps closer to agreeing it should be a protected characteristic.

French Trip Invitation

Members of the Society have been invited to join our French colleagues in Libre Pensée at their annual commemoration of the death in 1766 of Chevalier de la Barre, who was the last person to be executed in France for blasphemy. The ceremony will be held in Abbeville on Sunday 4 July 2010 at 10 am, followed by a banquet. Abbeville is an hour or so by car from Calais and near the picturesque Bay of the Somme and Le Touquet. Please contact the office for more information.

More rights for non-religious

A residential consultation was held at Windsor Castle in November about the impact on education and wider society of *Faith Schools: Freedom of Choice or Recipe for Division?*

The participants included the great and the good in education: educational top brass from the Church of England, senior representatives of other religious groups, and professors from educational establishments. As usual for events at Windsor Castle, the religious were very much in the majority, and so the NSS, represented by Keith Porteous Wood, had its work cut out. This was even more challenging than expected as one of the professors from an ostensibly non-religious standpoint kept extolling the virtues of religious schools.

Separate sessions were held on religious schools in principle, and various aspects of religious schools: religion, community cohesion, the impact on students, on “students’ spirituality” and on teachers. Keith was the “opposition” speaker on this last topic, teachers.

On religion, there was agreement that, while religiosity varied among religious schools, some community schools were even more religious than their ‘faith school’ equivalents. On community cohesion, there was a disturbing lack of awareness of (or determination to ignore?) the adverse impact on community cohesion of minority schools.

On students, the prevalent view was to emphasise the greater

examination successes of faith schools. The session became notably animated when interpreting the relative performance of religious schools, with their privileged selection, compared with their community counterparts. Academics backed up by Keith sought to present evidence showing that pointing to better exam results for religious schools compared with community schools was just simplistic. The evidence showed that the average academic level of pupils in religious schools is higher than that of pupils in their catchment area. This is consistent with “creaming off” the more aspirant pupils through selection privileges, to the detriment of local community schools.

An interesting suggestion from the academics was that eliminating problem children from classes was an even greater contribution to creating an environment conducive to successful teaching than importing a higher percentage of gifted pupils. If, as we suspect, this is correct, religious schools’ ability to insist on a “vicar’s certificate” is

in itself a powerful tool (denied to community schools) to avoid taking difficult pupils and enhance the learning environment.

When it came to “spirituality”, religious participants surprised themselves by having to acknowledge that most of what they regarded as spiritual, such as encouragement, empathy, wonder and curiosity was equally recognised as valuable by the non-religious.

Perhaps the greatest heat was generated in the last session when Keith set out the increasing discrimination against the growing numbers of non-religious teachers in favour of the shrinking number of religious teachers. Participants were shocked at the string of specific examples he gave of the Church proposing more discrimination, often using its bishops in the House of Lords to make their self-serving demands, and the Government demonstrating its obedience by ensuring the requisite legislative changes reached the statute book. This produced an understandably hostile reaction in one particular quarter. Keith cited the example of

Not content with just seeking to persuade the delegates at Windsor Castle, Keith took his arguments to the media, where his call for an end to this discriminatory legislation was picked up by the Press Association and the BBC. This provided a further telling example of the lengths to which the Department of Children, Schools and Families will go to protect the interests of the churches and the religious, regardless of the equality implications. The BBC observed that the Department was uncharacteristically “jumpy” when asked for a reaction. Just how rattled the Department was can be judged from their press release which specifically attacked the NSS with phrases such as “This is a distortion of the facts ... It is nonsense to infer...”. This would be unusual enough if what they had said was true, but it wasn’t and the Department was forced later, humiliatingly, to withdraw their press release.

s teachers

the atheist who had been refused a job in a Catholic school in Scotland. Most of the religious participants seemed to think it adequate to say it was unreasonable of him to apply, oblivious to the fact that it was a publicly-funded facility and he was obliged to support the ethos of the school.

Keith called for: the repeal of discriminatory legislation against teachers “not of the faith”; for appropriate transitional provisions for those adversely affected by the recent ratcheting-up of this legalised discrimination (affecting appointments to headteacher positions in Voluntary Controlled schools); and for investigations into potentially discriminatory “jobs for the (pious) boys” religious teaching certificates. Some jobs are open only to holders of these certificates and we understand there are plans to substantially increase their use.

He concluded by asking for an independent enquiry by Human Rights experts into the adverse effects on the Human Rights of the non-religious in maintained schools and academies. This should cover: employment and the matters raised in this report; admissions; the opening, classification and closure of schools and academies; worship; and Religious Education.

The course organisers later wrote to thank us for our “substantial” [contribution](#) to the debate and paid particular tribute to the “well-researched and hard-hitting” [paper](#) we submitted in support of our case.

Vatican slated over child abuse after our attack

Shortly after the last *Bulletin* went to press, Keith Porteous Wood went to the United Nations in Geneva to take on the Roman Catholic Church over its disgraceful record on child abuse. We believe this was the first direct attack on the Vatican in such a forum.

Keith attended the Human Rights Council as a representative of our international affiliate, the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU). We are grateful to them for providing a platform. Keith used his [speech](#) to accuse the Holy See, the Catholic Church’s *alter ego* in such circles, of contravening several Articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, behaving in a manner that prolonged the abuse, protecting the offenders from criminal sanctions and of secrecy and apparent indifference at the highest level. The speech made reference to an [IHEU statement](#)



published on the UNHRC website which detailed these claims.

The Vatican’s papal nuncio [responded](#), proclaiming unwisely that it would include *just one* paragraph on child abuse by priests

in a mandatory report yet to be filed at the UN – and which is already fifteen years past its deadline. The nuncio blamed homosexuals in the Church, its latest scapegoat. He failed to acknowledge the offenders’ abuse of authority and the failure to deal with the problem for decades, even centuries, by the institution – especially at the highest level. He claimed, disingenuously, that other religions and denominations had a worse problem with child abuse and should clean up their act as he claimed the Church had done. He stated without further comment, that up to *five per cent* of clergy had been involved in abuse, something a blogger calculated to be 27,500 individual priests. There was not

one word admitting culpability, of apology or reference to victims’ suffering.

Forty newspapers and major blogs around the world reported our

[intervention](#). Most

expressed horror and dismay at the arrogance and callousness of the Vatican’s response. Even *The Tablet* reported our intervention and their lead editorial attacked the nuncio who wrote the response.

Support our Make The Pope Pay Campaign

The NSS is planning a protest at the visit of the Pope to Britain in September this year. Plans are already underway for the formation of a coalition of interested groups who oppose the Vatican’s policies on abortion, contraception, assisted dying, gay rights, women’s rights, the covering up of child abuse and its propensity for interfering in politics and policy-making. Claire Rayner and Peter Tatchell have added their names to the list of supporters.

The NSS will be organising its own events to coincide with the visit, too. Our objection is to the trip being a state visit – which could cost the taxpayer in the region of £20 million for the three days the Pope will be here. And because of his claim to be head of state as well as a religious leader, it is likely that he will be invited to speak in Parliament.

If you or your organisation would like to support this campaign or be kept up to date with developments, please send an email to admin@secularism.org.uk.



Anna Behan



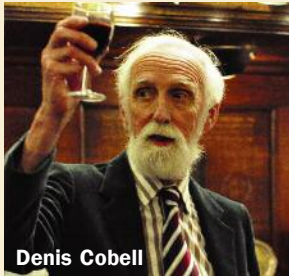
Carla Revere



Ray Newton



Stephen Dunkling



Denis Cobell



Gerard Phillips



Zoe Cox

AGM

The retirement of the most long-standing Council members at November's AGM made way for the greatest number of new Council members for many years. Two of the retirees had served for over thirty years each – former President Denis Cobell and former vice President Jim Herrick, who has also been NSS General Secretary and editor of the *Freethinker*. Also standing down were vice president Anna Behan (due to increasing family commitments), Jennifer Jaynes and Hon Treasurer Jim Nugent. All will be missed and were thanked for their invaluable service on Council. We still expect to be working with Anna, who chaired the AGM and retains a keen interest in campaigning on equality issues, and Jim who is still assisting on accounting matters.

Joining us are: Zoe Cox, a lawyer with some excellent campaigning experience; Gerard Phillips, an executive with project management experience; Ray Newton, a research chemist with business experience; and Stephen Dunkling, who was elected as Hon. Treasurer and is qualified in accounting, tax and Company secretarial matters. Each of the new members of Council is keen to get started and has already taken on a significant project.

President Terry Sanderson and vice President Carla Revere were re-elected after an exceptionally enthusiastic reception for the Society's 2009 Annual Report.

Terry commented: "This Annual Report shows what many think to be

our most successful year for decades. There is no doubt that the Society is recognised as a significant, and sometimes the only, thorn in the flesh of organisations intent on obstructing the secularisation of society, both in this country and wider afield.

I would like to place on record my thanks to the staff, led by Keith Porteous Wood, and to the members of Council involved in campaigning for their role in this – especially Anna Behan and Carla Revere.

We must not however lose sight of the fact that secularism is under the greatest threat for a generation, so it is both pleasing and timely for me to be able to welcome this injection of talented new blood into the team on Council."

All the elected or re-elected candidates were appointed with unanimity or with overwhelming majorities. We congratulate them all.

A new Companies Act

The latest Companies Act, which has just come fully into force, is the most comprehensive review of UK Company Law for forty years. It removes, for example, the requirement for audit of companies of the Society's size and prescribes mandatory audits, aimed increasingly at large companies, become more extensive and therefore expensive. The Act includes safeguards for dissatisfied members to insist on an audit in the companies where a routine audit is

not mandatory.

It was agreed that the requirement for an annual formal audit in the Society's Articles be dropped. In place of the audit, independent accountants will carry out a review which will focus on the major assets of investments and cash, and this will be much less expensive.

Newly-elected Treasurer Stephen Dunkling presented Council's proposal for a complete review of our Articles to take advantage of other provisions in the new Act, for example that notice of meetings could be served by email. This would have been very helpful during the recent postal strike, which came close to making serving valid notice for the AGM impossible.

If you have any suggestions about changes to the Articles, please send them to Keith Porteous Wood by email to enquiries@secularism.org.uk or to the office by post by 31 March 2010. Council will take them into account when drawing up proposals for consideration on the day of the 2010 AGM.

Alan Lord

We are sad to report the death on 31 December 2009 of Alan Lord, who served on the Council 1997–2003, being Hon. Treasurer for five years at an important time in the Society's development. Keith represented the Society at his funeral.

MEDIA

The great deal of time and effort that the NSS spends in getting our message out to the world is time well invested. We have built up an impressive list of contacts in radio, TV and newspapers and have gained a reputation for giving informed comment on relevant news.

Our frequent appearance in all sections of the media continues and since the last Bulletin we have had major stories in all the main newspapers. Keith has been on the *Today* programme as well as countless other radio programmes and Terry turned up on GMTV, which brought a big response. He also has a periodic Sunday morning slot

on BBC London 94.9 reviewing the newspapers.

Terry said: "The media is our most potent weapon in the fight for secularism and we try not to miss any opportunity to use it. This means being on duty 24/7 and whatever the time, we can usually field someone to give an interview or frame a comment. Keith and I have become very familiar with the inside of Television Centre and on some days we spend more time talking to journalists than we do on almost anything else."

Of course, not all our contact with the media results in direct exposure. We often help with background research and advice to

programme-makers. This pays off with our ideas being discussed and our issues explored. We are not popular with the churches, of course.

They have become used to a compliant media treating them with the unquestioning respect they think they are due. Now it seems that every time the Church pitches for another privilege, the NSS is there to rain on their parade. The depth of their hatred is clear in the amount of flak we get from Christian bloggers who are intensely angry and frustrated, complaining vociferously that we get so many opportunities to question their privileges or misrepresentations.

Other Council Activity

Terry Sanderson was on the platform at the Fabian Conference with Government Minister Sadiq Khan debating *Faith and Secularism*. We also ran a stall at the conference, which was staffed by new Council members Gerard Phillips and Stephen Dunkling.

Gerard Philips is also co-ordinating the NSS response to the Pope's visit in September this year.

Peter Vlachos debated at Brentwood school and will be taking the lead to represent the NSS at the EHRC's Religion and Belief Consultative Group following Anna Behan stepping down.

Council member Elizabeth O'Casey is our representative in Brussels and (with staff member Tessa Kendall and volunteer Mazin Zeki) attended a meeting at the Ministry of Justice to discuss proposals for a new Bill of Rights for the UK.

Carla Revere debated '*Britain should be a secular state*' with Farnham Humanists.



Stephen Dunkling, Terry Sanderson and Gerard Phillips at the Fabian Conference

Submissions

As part as our campaigning work, the NSS regularly submits consultation documents to the Government and other bodies. In the last few months, we have made submissions to the BBC about *Thought for the Day*, to the UNHRC on child abuse and to the General Pharmaceutical Council objecting to pharmacists being permitted to refuse to sell emergency contraception.

Lawyers Secular Society

The LSS continues to take on new cases from members of the public - recent examples include victimisation in the workplace on the grounds of lack of faith. The LSS also attended the Secular Medical Forum conference on circumcision and continues to work on this issue.

We welcome new members. The website www.lawyerssecularsociety.org needs volunteers to update it regularly so if you have the skills and time, please contact the NSS office and we will pass on your details.



Victories for NSS

The NSS has had great success reporting religious groups who claim to cure cancer and other diseases to the Advertising Standards Authorities and Trading Standards. Staff and individual members have made formal complaints against a United Church of the Kingdom of God poster in London, a Body of Christ International Ministries flyer in Manchester and Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries in Edinburgh. Thanks to all involved. If you would like information on how to challenge groups in your area, please contact the office.

One Law For All Rally

In November, Keith Wood and Terry Sanderson were among the speakers at a rally in Hyde Park, London, against sharia law in the UK. People in twenty three different countries joined in with their own acts of solidarity with the campaign. Honorary Associate AC Grayling spoke and said: "The principle of one law for all, with everyone equal before the law, is a vital one for a genuine democracy."



Keith addresses the rally

The NSS's Social Highlight of the Year – Will You Be There?

The annual Secularist of the Year presentation will be held this year at a glittering lunchtime event on Saturday 13 February in the heart of London's Soho.

The £5,000 Irwin prize will be presented to the person who has been adjudged to have contributed something significant to the cause of secularism. Last year it was won jointly by Dr Evan Harris MP and Lord Avebury, for their sterling work resulting in the abolition of the blasphemy law.

At this year's fabulous party we have a glamorous new venue, music and magic and a tongue in cheek presentation for the person who has delivered the

most platitudinous *Thought for the Day* (I'm sure we all have an opinion on that!).

It's a fun and convivial afternoon in which you have the opportunity to meet other members from around the country as well as some of our honorary associates.

Tickets are £45 and will include a welcome drink, a three-course meal with coffee, as well as all the entertainment and surprises you've come to expect.

You can book securely online at www.secularism.org.uk or call the office on 020 7404 3126 for more information (during office hours only, please).

Secular Medical Forum

In September, Antony Lempert was a guest speaker at the Norm-UK AGM in Staffordshire. He made the case that ritual male circumcision is a violent extension of the religious intrusion and interference many of us experience in our daily lives. In November, he chaired a strategy meeting in London for medical and legal circumcision experts. In December, the SMF and NSS responded jointly to the DPP's Interim guidance on Assisted Suicide. This followed the recent Debbie Purdy ruling in the House of Lords that the law needed to be clarified.

In January the SMF, like the NSS, made a submission calling for pharmacists' guidelines not to offer conscience opt-outs.

For further information or speaker requests please visit the website www.secularmedicalforum.org.uk or contact Dr Antony Lempert by email antony@secularmedicalforum.org.uk or telephone the NSS on 020 7404 3126.



Dr Antony Lempert

Newsline – are you getting it?

Newsline is our much-admired weekly e-zine, edited by Terry Sanderson. Every Friday it brings many thousands of subscribers a wide range of news and views from around the world. You can find out about our latest developments and initiatives, events and how you can join our campaigns. You can sign up on our website:

www.secularism.org.uk/newsline.html

New Secular Societies

We welcome two newly-formed secular societies, one in Cambridge (www.cambridgesecularsociety.co.uk) and one in West London (<http://westlondon.humanist.org.uk>).

If you would like to set up a group in your area, the office would be happy to advise and support you.

DONATIONS

The Council sends thanks to all our members who have made donations since last autumn, particularly one of £5,000 and another of £4,000. We are always grateful to members who are taking out standing orders in increasing numbers as these help us to plan ahead and to expand our campaigning work.

If you would like to make a donation, start a standing order or remember the NSS in your will to support our work into the future, please click the Donate button on the website or contact the office for details. We neither solicit nor receive any grants or government funding on principle to preserve our independence.

VOLUNTEERS

As ever, our thanks go to our volunteers for giving us their time and energy. Particular thanks to:

BRAD DAVIS of WhiteLight who designs the Bulletin and Annual Report.

BARRY THORPE and JOHN BOSTOCK for their research work.

CLAUDINE BAXTER and ALASTAIR BANTON for their tireless work in the office and at our events

DENIS PENALUNA for his campaign research

SVEN KLINGE and SABRINA AARONOVITCH for photographing the AGM and to the many others who helped out at the AGM.

We would also like to thank all the members who have put in so much effort in complaining to the BBC about *Thought for the Day* and similar issues and have helped us in any of our campaigns.

national secular **Bulletin** society

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