



Newsletter

of the Liberal Democrat Humanist & Secularist Group

March 2007

**HUMANIST & SECULAR
LIBERAL DEMOCRATS**

Book Now for our Birmingham Conference

To avoid disappointment, register now for our next One Day Conference **"Does Secularism foster Lib Dem values?"** at the Birmingham Council House.

The Registration Form is on page 2.

Also in this Newsletter:

-  Have your say on the Manifesto.
-  New Regional/State Reps.
-  Sign the Brussels Declaration!
-  Thought for the day.



● Birmingham Council House

Success at Harrogate

The Group had a successful Spring Conference at Harrogate.

Martin Horwood, MP for Cheltenham, addressed a packed fringe meeting organised by the Group. He gave a thought provoking presentation, pushing us to consider some of the difficult issues for Humanist and Secularists.

The Group's stand in the Exhibition was also a success – renewing existing members and recruiting new ones.



● Martin Horwood MP

Published & promoted by R O Brian on behalf of the Liberal Democrat Humanist & Secularist Group, The Lodge, Winstles, Newcastle, TD9 0TD.

Campaigning for Humanist & Secularist views within the Lib Dems

One Day Conference: “Does Secularism foster Lib Dem values?”

Following the success of our October one day conference in Northampton, we are planning another in June.

Date: 9th June 2007

Place: The Council House, Victoria Square, Birmingham

(Five minutes walk from ➡ New Street. Lots of car parks nearby.)

The day will start at 10:30 am and finish no later than 4:30 pm.

The cost (*including lunch, teas/coffees*):

- members £15
- non-members £20.

There is disabled access.

I wish to register for the Humanist & Secular Lib Dem Conference on 9th June 2007.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone No: _____ Email: _____

I enclose a cheque (payable to Lib Dem Humanist & Secularist Group) for:

- £15 (Group members)
- £20 (non-members)
- £25 (Conference and Group Membership)

I have special dietary requirements (please give details):

Email Vice Chair, **Cllr. Vera Head** at vera.head@tiscali.co.uk or

post to: 10 Cherry Orchard, Amersham, HP6 6LE.

Have your say on the Manifesto!

Now is the time for us to have our say on the next General Election Manifesto.

It is important that the, often underestimated, weight of Humanist and Secularist opinion within the Party is felt in this process. Whether it is faith schools or bishops in the Lords, it is important for us to make our voice heard.

To have your say on the manifesto go to www.manifesto.libdems.org.uk or send an email to manifesto@libdems.org.uk

New Regional Reps

There has been a great response to our call for Regional/ State Reps in the last Newsletter.

East of England Regional conference has already passed a motion calling for the phasing out of faith schools. If you want a strong secular voice in your Region/State why not get in touch?

The new Reps are:

Wales: Cllr. Ed Bridges
edbridges@hotmail.co.uk 07776 233753

South Central: Cllr. Sam Payne
spayne1701@yahoo.co.uk 02392 592072

East of England: Cllr. Richard Carden
r.carden@btinternet.com 01986 788279

East Midlands: Cllr. Richard Church
rchurch1@btconnect.com 01604 719097

West Midlands: Geoff Freeman
geoff@freeman.org.uk

North West: Mike Quinton
patmikequinton@supanet.com 01524 770220

Northern Region: Paul Cowie
p.j.cowie@ncl.ac.uk 01830 520121

Someone has also volunteered to do South East Region - details to be announced.



We are still looking for Reps for the following areas:

- Scotland
- Yorkshire & The Humber
- Western Counties
- Devon & Cornwall
- London.

The ideal candidate would be someone who attends their Regional Conferences fairly regularly, but the role would really be very much what you made of it.

If you live in one of the above States/Regions and think you might be interested then email the Group's Chair, Roger O'Brien on (hslid@obrien3.demon.co.uk) or phone him on 01387 375468.

Sign the Brussels Declaration

The Group's Executive Committee is encouraging all members and sympathisers to sign a new "Brussels Declaration".

To be effective on 25th March 2007 (the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome) it is supportive of the fact that European culture is an amalgam of the differing cultures and traditions of its

members and that no one aspect should be deemed more important than any other. It is backed by the European Parliament's All Party Working Group on Separation of Religion and Politics and (inter

alia) by the European Humanist Federation and by Catholics for Free Choice.

Well over a hundred or more prominent UK figures have already

signed the Declaration including dozens of MEPs, Professors, MPs and members of the House of Lords – and we too can sign it via

www.vision4europe.org

Brussels Declaration

We, the people of Europe, hereby affirm our common values. They are based not on a single culture or tradition but are founded in all of the cultures that make up modern Europe.

We affirm the worth, dignity and autonomy of every individual, and the right of everyone to the greatest possible freedom compatible with the rights of others. We support democracy and human rights and aim at the fullest possible development of every human being.

We recognise our duty of care to all of humanity including future generations, and our dependence on and responsibility for the natural world.

We affirm the equality of men and women. All persons regardless of race, origin, religion or belief, language, gender, sexual orientation or ability must have equal treatment before the law.

We affirm the right of everyone to adopt and follow a religion or belief of their choosing. But the beliefs of any group may not be used to limit the rights of others.

We hold that the state must remain neutral in matters of religion and belief, favouring none and discriminating against none.

We hold that personal liberty must be combined with social responsibility. We seek to create a fair society based on reason and compassion, in which every citizen is enabled to play their full part.

We uphold both tolerance and freedom of expression.

We affirm the right of everyone to open and comprehensive education.

We reject intimidation, violence and incitement to violence in the furtherance of disputes, and hold that conflicts must be resolved through negotiation and by legal means.

We uphold freedom of inquiry in every sphere of human life, and the application of science in the service of human welfare. We seek to use science creatively, not destructively.

We uphold artistic freedom, value creativity and imagination, and recognise the transforming power of art. We affirm the importance of literature, music, and the visual and performing arts for personal development and fulfilment.

Made this 25th day of March 2007, being the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome and the foundation of the European Union.

To sign now go to: www.vision4europe.org

Thought for the day

The BBC does not allow humanists on 'Thought for the Day' and is committed to keeping the slot religious.

To show how mistaken their position is, the Humanist Society of Scotland and the British Humanist Association have decided to create and podcast their own humanist TFTDs online at www.thinkhumanist.org.

The aim is both to offer an alternative to religious morality and to show the BBC and the public that humanists can be equally, if not more, thought provoking when tackling moral and ethical issues as religious thinkers.

The HSS launched the site on Darwin Day (12 February 2007) and four of the first podcasters that week were BHA supporters: comedian and "Jerry Springer the Opera" creator Stewart Lee and humanist philosophers Julian Baggini, Nigel Warburton and A.C. Grayling.

Gillian Stewart, a Humanist celebrant for the HSS who conducts wedding, funeral and baby naming ceremonies will also be podcasting as will Kate Hudson, chair of CND.

Following the launch week of www.thinkhumanist.org the HSS will invite humanists from throughout the world to podcast on the site so that there is always

an alternative for non-religious thinkers to listen to.

For more on the BHA's campaign on religious programming see <http://tinyurl.com/36ffcl>

Tell the BBC what you think!

The launch of the website is a good time to write to the BBC and to Ofcom suggesting that it's time the BBC became more receptive to non-religious ideas on moral and ethical issues.

You can find details of where to send your emails at the web links below.

<http://www.ofcom.org.uk/complain/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/complaints/>

You could point out that:

- The BBC does not allow non-religious thinkers on Thought for the Day
- That many in Britain have a basis for their ethics and morals that is not religious
- That humanist thinkers could bring a fresh perspective to the programme
- That there are different views about the idea of a reflective slot in the middle of a current affairs programme: some see no place for it, others think it is a valuable interlude, but so long as it exists it is entirely unacceptable to exclude some speakers just because they are non-religious.



More widely, the BBC fails to provide any explicitly humanist programmes, by contrast with the many hours of programmes that are explicitly religious, a high proportion of which consist of Christians preaching Christianity to their own followers.

And you can read more about the issues on the BHA website at <http://tinyurl.com/36ffcl> to give you more background for your email.

The Liberal Democrat Humanist & Secularist Group is affiliated to both the British Humanist Association and the National Secular Society.



national secular society

Why not check out their websites:

www.humanism.org.uk

www.secularism.org.uk

