

imagine

a democratic alternative to the monarchy



IT'S ON AGAIN IN OZ

New Australian PM expected to revisit republic question

John Warhurst on why Australia deserves a republic

ALSO: Full Annual Conference report inside
Challenges, opportunities set out



Australia set to rock the monarchy



▪ GRAHAM SMITH

After eleven years in opposition the Australian Labor Party took power on November 24th.

Now the stage is set,

and once again Australia will be asked: "Do you want an Australian Head of State?" This time around they're unlikely to say no.

Labor's defeat of pro-monarchy PM John Howard will have a huge effect on the republican debate. Their new star leader, Kevin Rudd, has already committed to allowing Australians a second chance to abandon the Crown in favour of an Australian Head of State. The first attempt was in 1999, and was defeated by a pro-monarchy campaign led by none other than the former Prime Minister.

LESSONS LEARNT

Contrary to the fantasies pedalled by monarchists back here in the 'mother-country', the '99 vote was not an unswerving pledge of loyalty to 'Her Maj'. In fact it was quite the opposite – the Australians weren't saying 'no' to a democratic alternative, they were saying 'yes' to the most democratic alternative, but one that wasn't on offer: a Head of State elected by popular vote.

Australians have wanted their own Head of State for some time now, since well before the 1999 referendum. According to Professor John Warhurst of the Australian National University and the Australian Republican Movement, since 1993 the Australian Election Survey has shown the republican majority "has always been about two-thirds of the electorate". Among young Australians a staggering 90% want Australia to cut its last colonial ties with the UK. The issue is genuinely cross-party, with Labor, the Australian Democrats and the Greens (now Australia's third party) all supporting a republic. The conservative Liberals have been held back only by their leader, who is now on his way out. Given that widespread support and the lessons learnt from the first

attempt, it is all but certain that Australia will be a republic within the next five to ten years. The debate could get underway as early as the middle of next year. Labor sources have suggested the referendum could take place in 2010, the likely date of the next federal election.

Such a move would be a major earthquake under the foundations of the monarchy. For the first time in living memory (perhaps in history) a peaceful and prosperous democracy will freely choose to abandon this feudal relic in favour of a democratically elected Head of State. Australia will be big news back here in the UK and around the world – news about the debate; news about the referendum and the result; news



▪ New PM, Rudd the republican.

about the transition; news about the election of the first Australian-born Head of State. Every time this topic is raised, the question will automatically be asked: if Australia, why not Britain? And every time it is asked, supporters of the status quo will find it that much harder to answer, because there is no good answer. What Australia can and wants to do, Britain can and should want to do.

Moreover the debate will be further reinforced by Canada and New Zealand, not to mention other smaller Commonwealth nations, all of whom would likely follow Australia down the republican path. New Zealand's Prime Minister is on side, and recent polls show that over half of Canadians now support severing ties with the British monarchy – and that support is across the political spectrum. The Australian debate could set off a chain reaction which would, at the very least, leave the UK as the only remaining Commonwealth

country with the Queen as Head of State.

Perhaps the biggest effect an Australian republic will have will be the inspiration it will give to republicans in the UK, and the example it will set for all of us. Australians will prove beyond doubt that this change is not the enormous undertaking monarchists like to think it is. Australia will show that pride in one's nation, love of one's country, does not have to be articulated by a backward looking obsession with outdated institutions – it can be demonstrated loud and clear, around the world, by taking a strong and bold step toward a more democratic and forward looking society. Australia will prove false all the hollow arguments of the monarchists: that the constitutional changes are too complex; that the transition too painful; that from among our citizens we cannot choose one upstanding woman or man to represent us; that national identity is bound up with the Windsor family.

CHANGING ATTITUDES

Although the headline figures in UK opinion polls have barely shifted in recent years, attitudes towards the monarchy have. Much of the institution's support is reserved solely for the Queen. At 81 she is approaching the twilight years of her reign, and the debate about the succession will grow in tandem with the debate in Australia. Had Australia chosen a republican future twenty years ago the effect back here may have been limited. Today news travels further and faster, and our changed attitudes toward celebrity and royalty will make the ground that much more fertile for the republican cause. The changing of the guard in the Australian House of Representatives is set to have long lasting implications for the House of Windsor. ■

A version of this article originally appeared on the Guardian newspaper's website www.guardian.co.uk/comment

Letters

I would like to add my voice to Republic's campaign to mitigate the BBC's clearly biased report to covering the royal family. I have already seen the internet page that you have created, and I have just today written to Points of View to express my dissatisfaction with this situation; is there anything more I can do? (Ed: See page 11)

Thomas Abbott
Cheshire

I'm just writing to say how much I enjoyed October's AGM. It was a great opportunity to get to know other

Republic members, and the speakers were all very interesting to listen to. As I was born near Tregaron, I was glad to see Leanne Wood having such a prominent role and providing such a good voice for Welsh republicans.

David Wilson
Lincoln

I heard some of the remarks at the AGM a couple of weeks ago, and what the fellow said about the new warships has had me thinking. How about we at Republic have a go at getting the Admiralty (or whatever it might be calling itself these days) to re-open the consultation? I've signed the petitions on the Downing Street website, so I was thinking that we should draw up a petition along those

lines, and see how many people we can get to sign up.

Sandra Stephens
Bristol

Did anyone else see the news about the Queen's visit to Romsey? The total bill for the three-hour visit, taking in Romsey Abbey, a walkabout parade and service at the town hall, was £58,000. This included £5000 for a new toilet for Liz! What a scandal! And yet still some local people said it was all worth it. I don't know who's worse - the royals for wasting our money, or people like the Romsey councillors who said they were too embarrassed to cancel when they realised the true cost.

Gary Billings
Liverpool

Challenges and opportunities ahead



John
Campbell

It was a pleasure and a privilege to be able to meet many of our members at the recent Annual Conference. It was a particular pleasure because this conference was an opportunity to tell members more about

our exciting plans and ambitions for the coming months and years.

As Graham Smith told the meeting, the Board of Directors recently adopted a five year development plan, which includes campaigning strategies, financial targets and outlines our growth as an organisation.

In 2005 Republic received a substantial legacy which has allowed us to employ staff and expand our activities. The Board of Directors made the conscious decision to spend the bulk of this money over a 3-5 year period, in order to establish strong foundations upon which to build for the future. This single contribution has made a huge difference to our campaign. Now, in light of our plans for the next five years, Republic has secured new funds to employ a full-time fundraiser. We are confident that the new *Development Manager*, as the post

will be called, will be able to bring in the funding needed for us to meet our targets.

The development of our plans, which include growth of paid and volunteer staff, increased members, better media exposure and the launch of a major new campaign project, is particularly well timed.

With Australia now returning to the question of their own head of state, the future of the monarchy will be thrown into sharp focus. As Graham argues in this edition of *Imagine*, the debate will not stop at the shores of Sydney Harbour, it will rumble on around the world, triggering moves towards a republic in Canada, New Zealand and, we believe, back here in the UK.

The Australian movement is just one reason we are optimistic about the future of our own campaign. With the new plans for growth and funding in place, Republic is preparing a major new campaigning initiative: *Republic 2025*. This project is aimed at kick-starting a national debate about the process of reform which will lead to the abolition of the monarchy. It is intended to allow us to side-step any sentimentality people have for the Queen and to

...A message from the Chair...

create a sense of inevitability about the prospect of a British republic.

Developed with the assistance of marketing and campaigning professionals, *Republic 2025* is an exciting project, and one I'm sure will put Republic squarely on the map of public political debate.

Of course we're not there yet. All our plans rely on our ability to attract the funding we need to continue the campaign. The next five years will provide Republic with exciting opportunities, and substantial challenges. We believe we're ready to meet those challenges head on. ■

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Photographs: Stephen Burrows

If you would like to contribute an article to Imagine email imagine@republic.org.uk or call Graham Smith on 08708 508 825 and ask for a copy of the Writer's Guidelines.

An Australian Head of State



▪ JOHN
WARHURST

Australians should have our own head of state. It is no longer good enough for us to share the

British monarchy with Britain and a number of other countries. We need constitutional reform, that is, a successful constitutional referendum, to make Australia into a republic.

The republic issue should be on the agenda because this election is a contest about Australia's future. The republic is first and foremost about the future of our democracy. Clinging to the monarchy is about the past. The monarchy was appropriate for Australia when our Australian constitution came into being in 1901, but it is no longer. We should move on.

POPULAR SUPPORT

The republic also should be on the election agenda because it is clearly what people want. All the serious social surveys demonstrate this. Politicians have a duty to respond. The Australian Election Survey has tracked this question at each election since 1993 and the republican majority has always been about two-thirds of the electorate. Even in 2004, after eight years of a monarchist prime minister dampening enthusiasm for the cause, and following the disappointment of the loss of the 1999 referendum, 62 per cent of Australians either favoured or strongly favoured a republic. Analysis of the Newspoll annual Australia Day survey shows, too, that in each generation republicans clearly outnumber monarchists. Among young Australians only a tiny percentage (10 per cent) strongly oppose moving towards a republic. By comparison 23 per cent of 18-34 year olds are strongly in favour of a republic. Our political parties should get with it and recognise the direction of majority public opinion.

The republic is an issue about being Australian and about being modern. It is a substantive issue about being a democratic people. It is



▪ The republic is first and foremost about the future of Australia's democracy. Clinging to the monarchy is about our past.

no longer good enough to have our head of state at the pinnacle of our constitutional system filled through inheritance from within the British Royal family. We have no say in this unpredictable, foreign process. We must move to a system in which our head of state is either directly elected by Australians or selected by the Australian parliament.

The symbolism of the republic is also important. It is not enough just to be an independent nation, as we are. We need to show our independence to the world and reinforce it to ourselves by jettisoning our links with the Crown. Once appropriate to our history and circumstances these links have now become anachronistic baggage. We need to update and upgrade our political system. Just as the Prime Minister has now belatedly accepted the necessary symbolism of recognising Indigenous Australians in the Preamble to the Australian Constitution, we should not shy away from symbolism as a motive for action. To say that "there is nothing in this for me" is a silly, narrow-minded response.

The precise best way forward on the republic issue is still to be agreed upon, of course. The same is true about deciding the type of republic best suited to Australia. That should not be seen as a flaw in the case for

a republic but an opportunity for further public debate and ultimately public decision. Political parties and candidates have a chance now to put their own stamp on the best way to move forward.

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

There are approaches already on the table. The Australian Republican Movement (ARM) supports a two-stage community plebiscite, or preliminary vote, to determine the way towards a referendum. One vote would be on the general principle, the second on the most suitable type of republic. As a non-partisan grassroots movement we recognise the need for a bottom-up approach to the issue, while remaining uncommitted about the details of the final outcome. After the 1999 referendum loss we also recognise the need to get the process right this time.

But the issue also badly needs energetic political leadership and now, during an election campaign, is the time for that leadership to be shown.

There have been some good signs. The Labor Party has re-affirmed its positive republican commitment at this year's Labor national conference. Kevin Rudd has carefully committed a future Labor government to begin

the plebiscite process, broadly along the lines that the ARM has suggested, though not as a first order issue. In spontaneous moments, such as in responding to the news that Prince William saw himself one day becoming Governor-General of Australia, Rudd has wittily demonstrated his own personal republicanism.

NOTHING TO FEAR

The Democrats, who have played such an important role in generating republican momentum over the years, and the Greens, have maintained their own party's republican commitment. Individual Liberals, including the future leader, Peter Costello, have been openly encouraging about declaring their own republicanism. That leaves the Family First Party leader, Senator Steve Fielding, who is dismissive of republicanism, and the Nationals who are formally a monarchist party. They both need to rethink their position if they are to keep pace with the public mood. Let's hope they do.

The community deserves more than these snippets from its political leaders and candidates on the republic issue. Republicans from all parties need to throw off the shackles of their conservatism about the republic. They have nothing to fear on this score. Republicanism is a winner in the electorate because of what it stands for and signifies. It is a unifying, forward-looking issue that is recognised by voters as distinguishing candidates looking to the future from those rooted in the past.

Candidates and leaders from each of the parties should make a contribution of the sort called for by Bill Shorten, Labor candidate for Maribyrnong, in the Melbourne Age newspaper recently; that is, measured and clear-sighted, and imbued with the spirit of goodwill and free of partisanship. It is only this type of community discussion that will take the issue forward in the productive way that voters expect.

In the case of the Labor leadership

team Australians would welcome greater detail from Kevin Rudd about his ideas and priorities. It is just the issue on which he can shrug off criticisms that the major parties are mirror-images of one another, like Tweedledum and Tweedledee. He can do far more to take the lead in creating the environment for a dynamic relationship with the Liberal Party, one that the Liberals would reject at their peril. And we need to hear from others in Labor within their electorates about their particular hopes and aspirations for a republic. Voters want to know.

In the case of the Liberal Party Peter Costello has a great chance, so far not acted upon, to go beyond his personal public support for a republic and to say how the republic fits into his vision as the next Liberal leader. As he himself said last year there is a vacant spot in the pantheon of notable Australians for the political leader who delivers an Australian republic. Perhaps he can be the one to carry that mantle. Other republican Liberals need to show some courage too, like the now retired senators, Amanda Vanstone and Robert Hill, and stand up for their own beliefs. It is worse than useless to declare that you are a republican, as Greg Hunt, the member for Flinders did recently in *The Age*, but then to demean its prospects as "at best a third order issue".

The Democrats and the Greens,

too, have a clear opportunity to present themselves as bolder than the major parties and to differentiate themselves further from each other and from their minor party competitor, Family First. It can only be to their advantage to do so. Just this week the Democrats, to their credit, have done this by issuing a republic policy calling for a plebiscite on the issue in 2009 at the same time as the promised reconciliation referendum.

DESERVES NO LESS

The republic is an issue on which supporters are double the number of opponents. These supporters want an indication that all parties and candidates are applying themselves to the issue in an intelligent, creative, non partisan way. Australia deserves no less. ■

John Warhurst is Professor of Political Science in the Faculty of Arts at the Australian National University and a leading member of the Australian Republican Movement.

This article was originally published online, during the election, at www.onlineopinion.com.au and is reproduced here with John's kind permission.



Unlike the monarchy the 100 Club is a lottery you can win!

The 100 Club has been a great fundraiser since it was set up last year. Make it an even greater success by joining today. Each month a member of the Club wins a cash prize - and the more members the Club has, the bigger the prizes.

You can enter as many times you like by setting up a standing order membership - each pound paid is equal to a ticket in the draw.

Go on, give it a go! Either visit www.republic.org.uk/100 or call us on 08708 508 825 to have a form sent to you.

The winning numbers:

- July: Ticket number 1087, B Burfoot, **WON £74.00**
- August: Ticket number 1080, M Quinn, **WON £74.80**
- September: Ticket number 3414, L Smith, **WON £75.20**
- October: Ticket number 1044, C Wilkinson, **WON £75.20**

Remember, you need to be in it to win it!

GOOD LUCK FOR NEXT MONTH!

Opinions expressed in articles and letters are not necessarily the view or policy of Republic, its staff or its Board of Directors.

Annual Conference 2007



▪ DAVID
HOUGHTON-
CARTER

On the afternoon of 27th October, Republic held its Annual Conference

and Annual General Meeting at The Resource Centre, Holloway Road, in London. Turnout was good, and the afternoon's events very lively. Joyce, one member I met up with later, told me, "I think this meeting was the most vibrant I've been to in the fifteen years that I've been coming along."

Republic's Executive Chair John Campbell commenced proceedings, welcoming the assembled members to the meeting, before Honorary Chair Stephen Haseler took over for the first part of the meeting. This began with the election of six members to the Board of Directors: Suzanne Campbell, Joe Coten, Jon Croker, Stephen Haseler, Cyril Meadows and Gareth Robson, who were all elected unopposed.

WINNING THE ARGUMENT

Following the election, three motions to amend Republic's Articles of Association were put before the meeting, each carried unanimously. Firstly, the right of all Republic members to attend meetings of the Board of Directors was amended, altering the current framework from one of an automatic right of attendance to a right of attendance on an open invitation basis. With the growth of Republic in recent years, this amendment has been made to grant the Board some discretion over who can attend Board meetings, and help to ensure that confidentiality can be maintained where necessary and avoid the possibility of disruption to meetings.

A motion was also passed to grant the Executive Officer a position as an ex officio Director, as well as a motion, supported by Stephen Haseler, to abolish the position of Honorary Chair, which has sometimes been considered inconsistent with the principles of our campaign.

As outgoing Honorary Chair,

Professor Stephen Haseler then offered the meeting a commentary on the state of play of our campaign in 2007. Professor Haseler argued that we may have, for all intents and purposes, won the battle of ideas, as most people would now answer 'no' if asked if they really believe in the principles that underpin the monarchy. With the monarchy on the defensive and its support beginning to weaken, the perception of a royal right to rule is rapidly dissipating amongst the British public.

The next five years will be crucial to our campaign, he remarked, as the public relations campaign emanating from Prince Charles' office moves into high gear in an attempt to sell to the British public him taking the throne, and it will be up to us in Republic to counter this campaign.

NEW PLANS

Additionally, it seems increasingly likely that their will be a referendum on the monarchy in Australia, and very possible that the Australians will vote overwhelmingly in favour of an republic, and so we can be optimistic of seeing a ripple effect through the Commonwealth countries which still retain the monarch as head of state.

After Professor Haseler concluded his speech, John Campbell took the chair and offered a few remarks in praise of Stephen's hard work, energy and commitment during his tenure as Honorary Chair and previously as chair of the Executive Committee. He also took the opportunity to thank John Atkins, who had served as Treasurer for a number of years before stepping down several months ago. John went on to deliver the Executive Chair's report. The campaign for a republic in Britain, he noted, is one which transcends party and has national, grassroots support. We are, he said, in the business of going out of business, and our campaign to see the abolition of the monarchy represents the dawn of an epoch of belief and a spring of hope for democracy in Britain.

Next came Treasurer John



Pictured TOP: Guest speaker Norman Baker MP talks with Graham Smith • MIDDLE: Republic Chair John Campbell delivers his conference report • BOTTOM: Former Honorary Chair Professor Stephen Haseler pictured with Graham Smith, guest speaker Graham Watson MEP and John Campbell • TOP RIGHT: Guest speaker Leanne Woods AC/AM sets out her views on republicanism • MIDDLE RIGHT: The conference audience applauds three excellent guest speakers • BOTTOM RIGHT: Treasurer John Tarrington reports on steps being taken to secure Republic's financial future. ■

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Managing our finances

Annual Conference Report from
JOHN TARRINGTON
 Treasurer and Chair of the
 Management Committee

In the last year Republic has made considerable progress in improving accounting processes and financial controls to give you, our members, confidence that your contributions are being accurately accounted for and applied for legitimate purposes. Key improvements are that:

- ◆ Accounts now processed through inter-linked excel spreadsheets, soon to be transferred to a low cost accounting software package
- ◆ The accounting function now reports directly to the management committee, where financial results, procedures, and controls are discussed and acted upon
- ◆ Monthly management accounts are normally prepared within 7 days of the month-end and presented to the management committee and the board
- ◆ The treasurer has on-line access to Republic's bank accounts providing daily scrutiny of movements in the bank statement and offering real-time controls on security issues, such as identity theft, and fraudulent transactions
- ◆ A financial policies and controls manual has been completed and will be improved to meet the demands of the organisation as it expands
- ◆ The current positive cash balances have been consolidated and will shortly be invested in short, medium and longer term products in line with our investment strategy.
- ◆ A succession plan for the current treasurer is in progress, this development will provide trained cover for the treasurer and should obviate the financial reporting problems experienced last year during serious illness of the then incumbent

The Management Committee are confident that the above improvements, plus others that are in train, guarantee the integrity of the organisation's finances.

Turning to the question of ongoing

finances, it is obvious from the figures included in the annual report that over recent years Republic's expenditure has greatly exceeded its income. The position has been exacerbated in this financial year by some significant one-off publicity and equipment expenditure. As many of you know the income shortfall of previous years has been funded from a major legacy obtained in 2005.

Currently the annual fixed costs of the organisation including staff, admin expenses and the newsletter are around £42,000, whilst our income from current membership fees, donations, 100 club receipts and interest is around £26,000, these figures lead to an operating deficit, in the steady state, of circa £16,000. The erosion of the legacy means we can only fund this deficit for a couple of years. We need new sources of revenue if we are to retain the campaign staff which are so vital to our development.

The current financial shortfall aside we have the question of the substantial investment required to ramp up the promotion of our message and attract new sources of income and members. As you will read elsewhere in this edition of *Imagine*, steps are being taken to deal with our future funding requirements - notably the adoption of a new five year development plan and the recruitment of a full-time fundraiser.

The Management Committee intends to play a crucial role in ensuring the continuing financial viability of this organisation during this developmental stage for it will:

- ◆ Closely monitor all current income and expenditure
- ◆ Ensure the board pre sanctions any significant new areas of expenditure
- ◆ Ensure any proposals for new expenditure is fully justified, costed, competitively tendered for, approved at board level and regularly monitored
- ◆ Ensure that no new projects are embarked upon unless appropriate funding is in place or assured or the project is self financing in the short term or if the project is demonstrably self-financing



- ◆ Activate existing contingency plans to further cut reduction if the new revenues don't materialise

As we continue to work to ensure Republic's finances are well managed, be assured that the Management Committee will always encourage and support all initiatives to promote our cause, but it will also apply the cool hand of financial prudence to these developmental endeavours. ■

A full record of Republic's finances was included in the 2007 Annual Report, sent to all members prior to the Annual Conference. If you would like a copy, please call 08708 508 825 or email enquiries@republic.org.uk or write to PO Box 69, Brighton BN50 9GS

Answer Back

Welcome to *Answer Back*. In this column we highlight the common arguments in favour of the monarchy - and answer back.



They Say - "A bad president can veto hugely important healthcare bills (Bush); he or she can suspend the entire constitution and lock up the top judges (Musharraf); he or she can bring an entire country to its knees (Mugabe) or threaten the security of an entire continent (Putin). Our monarch cannot do these things - a bad monarch would, at worst, be an embarrassment or a hindrance, but never a national disaster as some elected heads of state are. The role of our monarch is above the sort of politics that people distrust so much, providing oversight, stability and continuity." (taken from an online discussion page)

We Say - This comment, posted on the Labour Party constitutional consultation website, is just one example of the "all presidents bad – all monarchies good" argument. It is as daft as it is simplistic. Leaving aside, for a moment, the presidents and presidential systems the comment refers to, it is just as easy to cite the monarchs of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Brunei, Oman, Swaziland and Nepal, (not to mention monarchies thankfully consigned to history during the twentieth century), whose rule is characterized by poor governance, lack of democracy and a systematic abuse of human rights.

Of course it would be absurd to compare the despotic monarchical rulers of these countries with the rather constitutionally pointless monarch of the UK. Equally it is nonsense to compare Musharraf, Mugabe or Putin with any future elected president of a British republic.

The reasons are three-fold: Firstly, this argument is another of those 'Britain is rubbish' arguments put forward by monarchists. The argument goes: "We the people can't possibly be trusted with governing ourselves, or choosing a constitutional system, or a president,

which can be relied upon to continue the good governance we've enjoyed for so long." Well, that simply isn't true. We are good enough, we can trust ourselves and we can choose our own head of state from among the citizenry. The notion that the people of Britain would choose a Mugabe-like character, or a military dictator to lead them is clearly the stuff of monarchist fantasy.

A MODEL PRESIDENT

Secondly, this argument suggests that all presidents have executive or even despotic powers. There is a debate within Republic about what sort of presidential system Britain should have, but let's for now assume it will be the model Republic adopted at last year's AGM. That model is one very similar to the system in Ireland. It retains the office of Prime Minister as head of government, parliament remains central to the constitution and the president is a titular figurehead, granted some reserve powers. This is a far cry from the sort of presidential arrangement you find in Zimbabwe, Russia, Pakistan or even the US. Our president would be above politics, non-partisan and greatly limited in their power by a written constitution. Those powers the president *does* hold would be properly codified in the constitution, which would mean that he or she can use the powers granted, but can do no more. Our monarch can rarely even use those powers the constitution gives her, precisely because she is so unaccountable. They are instead taken from her and used in her name by the Prime Minister.

The third reason rests on the differences between the US presidential system and those of Pakistan, Russia and Zimbabwe (and other despotic or semi-democratic states). Even if Britain opted for a powerful executive president, that person would operate within the law, under the watchful eye of opponents and the electorate. Their right to exercise their powers would be clearly set out in the constitution. Monarchists may bleat about the antics and actions of President Bush, but for all his faults, he is acting in

accordance with the constitution and his electoral mandate and in a society which allows a vocal and active opposition. In the UK our political system is pluralistic, diverse and advanced (although not advanced enough, obviously). Unlike in Russia, Pakistan or Zimbabwe opposition would be free and vocal, elections would be regular, free and fair and the powers of the president would be limited by statute.

None of that means we couldn't get a president who would do something unpopular - but that's the nature of democratic politics. The answer is to limit the powers of individual office holders (one reason for opting for the parliamentary republic we advocate), the other answer, provided for in all democracies, is to vote the president from office at the next opportunity.

IN PRAISE OF POLITICS

One final note. This particular commentator who made the statement above is also belittling the very idea of political process. It is a common monarchist ploy to suggest that people distrust those who must seek a mandate, but trust and respect those who take their public office without consent or accountability. As republicans it is part of our job to preach the virtues of democratic politics - not simply as the best of a poor choice, but as a system which is inherently fair and just. If someone says to you, when you profess your support for a republic "so you want another politician do you?" answer clearly: "Yes!" For what is a politician if not a citizen chosen by his or her fellow citizens to represent and govern on their behalf. Better such a person than a member of an isolated and far removed family who neither seek nor want the consent of the people to hold public office. ■



Tell us what arguments you'd like us to answer - write to *Imagine*, PO Box 69, Brighton BN50 9GS or email imagine@republic.org.uk and we'll Answer Back!

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

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Tarrington, who offered a summary of Republic's finances over the past year. His remarks highlighted improvements that have been made in Republic's financial control systems and a summary of our current financial position (see page 7).

The final report was from Republic's Campaign Manager, Graham Smith, who highlighted the growing scope of Republic's campaigning activities, and announced details of the new *Republic 2025* project and the adoption of a new five year development plan. More details about *Republic 2025*, which is dependant on Republic raising new funds, will be announced over the next twelve months.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

The issue of funding was to be addressed by the recruitment of a full-time fundraiser (see page 11). Other Republic campaigns include a online petitions posted on the 10 Downing Street website, a continued presence at party conferences, and establishing contacts in the media to help put our message across. The five year plan aims for at least three thousand members by year five and a significantly increased annual income year on year. Graham concluded his remarks by stressing that the next five years will offer exciting opportunities, but will also present us with significant challenges.

The conference was concluded by speeches from three special guests: Leanne Wood AC/AM, Graham Watson MEP, and Norman Baker MP, all of whom offered stirring and inspiring speeches. The three speakers provoked almost an hour of enthusiastic debate and discussion, during a lively question and answer session. This was my first Republic conference, but I'm guessing Joyce was right - this was a vibrant and enjoyable conference. ■

The new Board of Directors: John Campbell, Charles Brooker, John Tarrington, Suzanne Campbell, Joe Coten, Jon Croker, Emma Dent Coad, Peter Hartley, Stephen Haseler, Arthur Haynes, Cyril Meadows, Scott Reeve, Emily Robinson, Gareth Robson and Graham Smith.

ROUND UP

Lobbying

Republic has recently been asking members to add their comments to the Labour Party's constitutional consultation website. Lots of our supporters commented and stirred up the debate on the website. For more details visit www.labour.org.uk/new_chapter_in_british_liberty

A call for supporters to lobby Lib Dem leadership contenders Nick Clegg and Chris Huhne was also met with enthusiasm. Interestingly Mr Huhne's response was to make excuses for not tackling the issue, but he seemed equally unwilling to defend the monarchy.

In the news

Republic has appeared on a number of radio stations, participating in interviews, debates and phone-ins. Graham Smith has posted more articles on the Guardian website and there have been requests for interviews from Germany, Brazil and elsewhere.

School visits

Republic continues to receive a number of invitations to visit schools, to speak to citizenship or politics classes. In October it was the turn of a C of E school in Salisbury, where there was a strong level of support for Republic. The students engaged in a lively debate, asking a range of pertinent questions about our cause.

Two more schools in London have asked for a speaker over the next couple of months. Republic is committed to expanding its schools programme. Over the next few months we will be investigating the feasibility of launching a recruitment and training process, to take on volunteer school visitors. Watch this space for details.

Research

We had an overwhelming response to the vacancies advertised for volunteer researchers. As a result our research programme is well

underway, with topics including:

- International Trade and the Royals
- Royal Finances
- Crown Estates
- The Duchies
- Working Royals
- Tourism and the Monarchy
- Transparency and the Monarchy
- Public Attitudes about the Monarchy
- Modern History of the Monarchy
- Political Interference from Senior Royals

More research projects were suggested during a debate on the subject at the Annual Conference. The purpose of the project is to arm Republic with all the necessary background information we need to properly challenge the key arguments put out about the monarchy. The project will also help us make the case that a republic will be a fairer, more accountable and more democratic system.

Canadian opinion shifts

A recent opinion poll in Canada has detected a major shift toward support for a Canadian republic. The poll, released by Angus Reid Strategies, indicates that 53 percent of Canadians support ending the monarchy, while only 35 percent support the status quo. Republican support jumps to 55 percent versus 31 percent when respondents are asked about retaining the monarchy with Prince Charles as the successor to the Queen.

BBC documentary to go ahead

The RDF/BBC documentary about the Queen, which caused a stir when the promotional trailer was edited out of sequence, is set to be broadcast. There had previously been concerns that the BBC would buckle under pressure from Buckingham Palace to drop the five part series.

Republic members were interviewed and filmed at length for the documentary.

Republic North West

Supporters in the North West of England have set up an online group and hope to start meeting up soon. See the website for details. ■

Britain needs written constitution



▪ STEPHEN GOODRICH

There has been a lot of talk lately about Gordon Brown wanting a new written constitution

for Britain. About time too.

The history of British constitutional reform has been one of slow mediocrity and timidity. Successive governments dating back to the 13th century have sought to adapt our polity to the political, economic and social climate of the time, yet the limits of government and the rights of its citizens still remain an undecipherable muddle of laws, precedents and doctrines.

It has been 200 years since the US signed its Bill of Rights, 70 years since the Republic of Ireland laid out its constitution in a formal document, and yet the United Kingdom remains one of the few remaining 'liberal democracies' without a written constitution.

FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

The nearest thing the UK has to one is the 1689 English Bill of Rights establishing the doctrine of parliamentary sovereignty. With this it was established that it was 'the people' (do we need the inverted commas here?), represented through parliament, that ruled and not the monarchy. This however was a hollow symbolic gesture as it was not until 1918 that the working class finally got to have a say over who governed their country.

If you were to consider the Magna Carta as the beginning of the process, it took us over 400 years to make sure the monarchy couldn't declare war on its own subjects, another 140 years to widen the franchise beyond aristocrats, then another 110 years before women were considered equal citizens in the eyes of the law.

After all of these years and the blood shed for these liberties, we still do not have fundamental and inalienable rights that our government must respect. Some have been passed down from

Europe, yet parliament has reserved the right to ignore them.

We do not have a formal covenant with our political masters. Our only opportunity to express our support for them is during a general election, leaving them free to do as they choose in between, with almost no accountability in that time. When we do vote it is for a manifesto that is rarely enacted as we wish it. This means parliament is immune whilst in sitting, even if it goes against the



▪ Written constitution may have moderated anti-terror laws

overwhelming will of the people. The Iraq war is a case in point. The majority of the British public now oppose the government's position on the war, yet all we can do is march through London and hope that someone was listening. We have no means for redress because we have no clear constitutional right to do this.

If we had a written document outlining our constitutional rights, like in Ireland or the US, we would be able to challenge an unpopular decision by enacting our right to intervene when we feel the government is not acting in the public interest.

Instead, when going on anti-war marches, protestors are intimidated by police using draconian anti-terror legislation to stop, search and harass the public. Our freedom of expression and right to peaceful protest have been erased by a mere act of parliament; passed by a government who was not given consent to rule by the majority of the British people.

It is no surprise that our

constitutional flexibility led to such a situation arising. Due to the absence of a simple document outlining what the state and government can and cannot do, we have already lost the right to express ourselves when we feel our leaders are not listening.

To lay any claim to being a democratic society we must change the rules by which our system is governed. The US started its progress towards a democratic society with the calls of 'no taxation without representation'; this is not too dissimilar to the calls made by advocates of liberty and democracy in today's Britain.

BEST OPPORTUNITY

They established a constitutional convention with elected delegates representing the interests of the independent states. Whilst Labour has made timid steps towards a similar arrangement we must ensure that our constitutional convention does not turn out to be a mere talking shop.

As the new Brown government begins to flesh out its plans for a new British constitution, we must be active - and get people active - in the debate, and push for a written constitution which enshrines the inalienable rights which we feel we should have as citizens. This is an opportunity to hold our representatives to account and ensure that this continues for generations to come.

Although Jack Straw's decision to re-establish the embarrassing practice of walking backwards in front of the Queen doesn't bode well for the government's attitude to modern reform - Brown's plans for the constitution could be our best opportunity yet to lay the framework for the establishment of a new Republic - a republic governed by the people, for the people. To pass this opportunity by would be to consign our dreams of reclaiming our state and government to the dustbin of history. ■

Stephen Goodrich is a member of Republic's new team of volunteer writers

VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT

Republic recently launched a major new volunteer recruitment campaign, advertising a range of new vacancies. The response was terrific, with a very high standard of applicants for each of the positions.

The new volunteer team includes researchers, campaign assistants, a Volunteer Support Officer and writers.

Jamie Weatherhead, who is now coordinating the team and further recruitment, will be posting more vacancies on the Republic website over the next few weeks. For more details please visit www.republic.org.uk/jobs. ■

New full-time position advertised

Republic has recently secured new funds to pay for the recruitment of a full-time Development Manager. The post has been advertised and it is hoped will be filled sometime in January.

The Development Manager's role will primarily focus on fundraising, securing the money Republic needs to build a stronger campaign over the next few years. Republic's five year development plan, adopted at a recent Board meeting, has set out a number of ambitious targets, which the new fundraiser will work towards achieving. ■

IT'S SO EASY!

Have you thought about paying your membership subscriptions by Standing Order?

Paying this way saves Republic money, meaning more of your subscription goes on campaigning, and makes it easier for you to renew each year.

If you don't already pay by Standing Order, please consider doing so when you next renew. You can pay either monthly or annual instalments. We automatically send a new form with your renewal reminder letter, so all you need to do is complete the form and send it back to us in the post.

It couldn't be easier! ■

Tired of the BBC's pro-monarchy, pro-Windsor royal reporting? Want to do something about it?

Here's how...



Here's what you can do to tell the BBC to sort out their royal reporting:

ONE:

You can make general or specific complaints to the BBC's complaints department. Their number is 08700 100 222. You can also use their online complaint form or write to them at BBC Complaints, PO Box 1922, Glasgow G2 3WT. It's usually best to have specific incidents or reports which you can refer to when contacting the BBC.

TWO:

You can contact a programme to contribute your view or make a specific complaint. The main BBC Switchboard number is 020 8743 8000. Or you can email the programme direct - the email address will end with @bbc.co.uk and will usually begin with the name of the TV or radio programme, such as breakfast@ or today@ and so on.

THREE:

You can make use of the viewers/listeners feedback programmes. For BBC TV you can contact Points of View by email: pov@bbc.co.uk, by telephone: 0870 908 3199 (local rate) or by writing to them at: POV, BBC Birmingham, The Mailbox, Birmingham B1 1RF. For BBC Radio contact Feedback by writing to Feedback, PO Box 2100, London W1A 1QT, by calling 0870 803 4544 or by emailing feedback@bbc.co.uk.

IT REALLY WORKS!

The BBC does listen to complaints from viewers and listeners. The more feedback they get the more likely they are to respond favourably. For more details and for a full rundown of why this issue is important for Republic, visit www.republic.org.uk/bbc or www.republic.org.uk/facebook. ■

FREE BOOK OFFER!

EXCLUSIVE OFFER TO REPUBLIC SUPPORTERS

Order your **free** copy of *Monarchy: Politics of Tyranny & Denial* by William Gladys. This satirical and highly irreverent critique of the British monarchy during the twentieth and twenty first centuries is available to you for the cost of postage and packaging. In full colour with nearly 40 cartoons and matching texts, this book is a humorous take on a serious underlying message.



ORDER YOURS TODAY!

Send a cheque for £3.99 P&P to Republic Book Offer, PO Box 69, Brighton BN50 9GS. You can also order over the phone by calling 08708 508 825. ■

ONLY WHILE STOCKS LAST!

ACTION PAGE

your turn

There are many things you can do to support Republic. Our new 'Action Page' both here, in a new leaflet form and online, gives you some quick and easy ways you can make a difference.

Some actions are internet-based, but most can be done whether or not you have access to the internet. Why not tick them off as you do them?

1

Sign the Republic Petition

Add your name to the Republic petition, and get others to do the same. The petition is online at www.republic.org.uk/petition. You can also get paper copies so that you can collect names and addresses from friends and family. If you don't have internet access, we can add your name over the phone or send you forms in the post. Call us on 08708 508 825.

2

Sign the Downing St. Petitions

The Number 10 Downing Street online petitions have been in the news a lot in recent months. There are now a number of new petitions for you to sign, calling for various reforms to the monarchy, as steps toward abolition. These petitions can be valuable lobbying tools, so please add your name. Either check out the website or call us on 08708 508 825 for more information.

3

Write to your MP the easy way

Writing to your MP has just been made whole lot easier. Using the 'writetothem.com' website, which is now linked to our Action Page, you can find your MP using your postcode, and then send a message direct to their email address.

If you don't have access to the internet you can still write to your MP at 'House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA'.

4

Join the FACEBOOK Group

Meet hundreds of Republic supporters online - join the Republic Facebook group. Facebook is an online networking website which allows anyone and everyone to link up as friends or in groups, discuss the latest issues or trends or simply register your support for a cause or campaign. The Republic group can be found by visiting www.republic.org.uk/facebook.

>> There is now a range of new Republic Facebook groups, set up for different political parties and communities!<<

5

Get your Republic Merchandise

Say it in style with Republic merchandise. The Republic shop, which you can visit at www.republic.org.uk/shop has a wide range of gifts, clothes and accessories to choose from. There's also the Republic book shop, in association with Amazon books. Check out the very best in republican writing. Anything you can buy from Amazon, you can buy from the Republic book shop.

6

Lobby the BBC over royal bias

If you think that the BBC's reporting on the monarchy is biased against the republican view, you can help us put it right. Take part in our new *Lobby the BBC* campaign.

You can contact the BBC via www.republic.org.uk/bbc or you can call 08700 100 222 or write to them at BBC Complaints, PO Box 1922, Glasgow G2 3WT. You can also contact programmes directly or through programmes such as *Points of View* (TV) or *Feedback* (Radio).

www.republic.org.uk/action