

imagine

a democratic alternative to the monarchy



SPREADING THE WORD

Annual General Meeting ④

Party Conferences ⑦

London Action Days ⑧

The Way Forward

Join the debate on a British republic

There was a great response to the last edition of *The Way Forward*. We were asking what people felt about Republic's policy; we asked; should Republic retain its current preference for an Irish-style ceremonial presidency? Should we opt for an executive Head of State, or follow the Australian example and provide the voter with a choice or should we not have a Head of State at all?

Here are some of your replies.

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"Although I've heard that the Australian vote went against the Republican movement because people didn't know what they were voting for as an alternative, I think giving the choice of alternatives shows a strong democratic stance. I would be in favour of following the Australian model, and I think we should see that even those who vote against a republic still have the opportunity to vote for the type of republic they want should the vote go that way." Andy Mason

"We should retain the preference for an Irish-style system, but *only* a preference. We should keep open the possibility of voters choice."

David Spreckley

"I have given this some thought and I agree personally with the view that the Irish or German model would be the best way forward, as we don't want a US or French style of president. What we must at all costs avoid, however, is what happened in Australia. Although it appeared that most people were in favour of having a republic, the referendum was lost because the people could not agree on the model being put forward. My

those who vote against a republic still have the opportunity to vote for the type of republic they want should the vote go that way.

preference therefore is [the] option where we first have a plebiscite where we can agree to abolish the monarchy and then once that is carried have a second plebiscite to select the exact model which people would prefer. Democracy at last!"

Derek Allum

"A key reason for my republicanism is the invisible power and latitude extended to the government due to the existence of the royal prerogative. Acting in the name of the crown, Government wields wide ranging powers that are subject to no democratic scrutiny or opposition, nor

to scrutiny or opposition legally, in the courts.

My objection to this is also an objection to any future head of state with executive powers. It is only in the chamber of a parliament that executive power can be democratically held to account. On this basis, Republic's current policy seems to be the correct one, keeping the Head of Government in parliament. But is it possible for Republic's policy to go further? I would like us not just suggesting that the role of a future President be ceremonial and limited to reserve constitutional powers, but explicitly stating that those powers currently the prerogative of the crown be transferred exclusively either to the Government or to Parliament, and in both cases exposed to genuine democratic scrutiny."

Andrew Copson

"My vote is for the third choice - no Head of State at all. Why have one? We have the most neutral (if there can be a most neutral!) figure in the Commons Speaker who could very conveniently sign legislation, know when the government does not command a majority and do something about it; indeed could perform all the functions now, theoretically, carried out by the monarch. As for the ceremonial, we are well off for nonentities who would be delighted to launch ships and so on." Bill Simcock ■

The next debate

In this edition of *The Way Forward* we are looking at our strategy for progressing the debate and achieving our ultimate aims.

Republic's aims are stated clearly in our constitution:

- to mount a successful campaign to persuade a majority of voters to support the replacement of our hereditary monarchy with an elected head of state.
- having done so, to participate in and try to guide the process of change.
- to promote democratic republican forms of government, and to facilitate a debate on the best model for a future republic.

Our strategy, adopted in late 2004, is focussed first and foremost on attracting practical support and recognition among the 20% or more who firmly agree with our cause. In addition to that we will be targeting those most likely to be persuaded, with a view to building strong public backing for the campaign.

To do this we must maintain a positive, single-minded approach, not allowing ourselves to get too sidetracked by related issues and not getting drawn too much into personal criticism of the royals.

We need our audiences to warm to us as much as to our campaign. People must be able to relate to us and see Republic as a group of people they can support.

Ultimately, the political decisions required to turn Britain into a republic

will only be made if there is substantial majority support in favour. So Republic will be using a variety of tactics, events, initiatives and PR stunts to firstly raise the profile of the campaign, bringing on board our natural support, and secondly to convince the undecided or indifferent majority that this cause matters. And not only does it matter, but they should support a republic.

What are your thoughts on the strategy Republic must adopt? Are we right to target popular opinion or should politicians be our main focus. Let us know your views.

Simply send an email to imagine@republic.org.uk or write to 'The Way Forward', Republic, PO Box 69, Brighton, BN50 9GS. ■

Republic more than doubles membership

Republic was able to announce to this year's Annual General Meeting that its membership has more than doubled in the last twelve months.

This is thanks in part to a new commitment to improving our recruitment and retention strategies. It also has quite a bit to do with the wedding between Camilla and Charles earlier in the year.

Graham Smith, of Republic, explained, "In the run up to the wedding we received a significant boost to the number of visits to our website. Once we ran our adverts in the national press applications to join Republic soared."

"There is still much to be done and many more members to be recruited," said Executive Chair Ruby Lescott. "We are still relatively small considering the amount of popular support there is for a republic." Ruby added, "While this doubling of our membership is very welcome news our campaign team will be working hard over the next twelve months to achieve even greater gains in membership numbers." ■

Conservatives Wanted

It may come as a surprise to some, but Republic does have members and supporters who are also paid up members of the Conservative party.

Following on from Republic's successful attendance at the Lib Dem and Labour party conferences some attention is now being turned to how best to attract those on the right who are disaffected with the monarchy. Graham Smith explained, "Campaigns like this are won when a substantial section of conservatives are convinced of our cause. One of the tasks ahead of us is to develop ways of communicating our message in a way that will appeal to the broadest political spectrum and therefore attract people from the right, centre and left of British politics."

Graham is asking any conservative supporters to get in touch, to help develop ways of targeting this key audience. "If we can appeal to those elements of the conservative tradition that are in line with republicanism then we can begin to make real progress in broadening our support base," Graham concluded ■

Volunteer Opportunities

• Scotland organisers

Republic needs committed volunteers to help build a strong support network in Scotland.

• Writers for the *Imagine* team.

Join our team of writers for *Imagine*. We are also looking for volunteers with editing and production skills.

• Events organisers.

Do you have experience organising public events?

• Designers, artists and models.

We want to improve our range and marketing of our merchandise. As well as designers we need people who can model our products.

For details email Graham Smith at g.smith@republic.org.uk or call 08708 508 825. ■

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Letters

The fundamental question that needs answering is "Can we as a nation be trusted to elect all those who have political power and influence in regular free and fair elections?"

If the answer is "yes" then we should be electing all the House of Lords and a non-executive president. If the answer is "no" then we should not be pretending to be a proper democracy and hypocritically trying to tell other nations (eg. Iraq) how to govern themselves.

In my opinion our system of hereditary monarchy has far more in common with Saddam Hussein's and Castro's regimes than a proper democracy like Ireland or France.

After all, the Queen is above the law. She cannot be prosecuted nor forced to give evidence.

Once the monarch is in, it is next to impossible to remove him or her.

Finally, it is very misleading to try to equate loyalty to the monarch with patriotism. Monarchy dilutes patriotism.

I have always been happy to be loyal to my country.

I certainly have no intention of being loyal to anyone who has inherited political power and influence.

This is the 21st century after all.

Philip Smith
Beverley, East Yorkshire

I have often been asked by friends why Republic does not put candidates up at elections. I hope Republic shares my view that such a tactic would be disastrous. Republic needs to win support from all the other parties, not challenge them at the ballot box.

Not only this, but anyone who knows a thing or two about elections will know

that they are bureaucratic minefields and a huge use of resources. And for what? The last election saw many minor and one-issue parties which received no attention from the media.

I believe Republic must remain a pressure group aimed at building popular and political support within the current political system.

Gerry Richards
Hove

We'd like to hear from you. Are you organising any local activities or do you have some views on the campaign or the issues that you'd like to share? Send your letters to imagine@republic.org.uk or to *Imagine*, PO Box 69, Brighton, BN50 9GS.

If you would like to contribute 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.

Annual General Meeting highlights

This year's Annual General Meeting was said to be the 'best yet' by many who attended the London event. One member commented, "I, and some others I spoke to, thought there was a new spirit of getting-on-with-it in the movement. We enjoyed the feeling."

Another member contacted Republic after the meeting to say, "how very impressed" he was with the AGM and that, "the quality of presentations was superb... one got the sense of an organisation on the move."

The AGM which was held at the University of Westminster, in London, began with the election of the new Executive Committee. There were 15 members elected (see below).

The elections were followed by a proposal from the committee to change the subscription structure, creating a single minimum rate of £10, with a student rate of £5. Graham Smith, who introduced the motion, explained that promotional material and application forms will continue to encourage members to pay what they can over and above the minimum rate.

A new Affiliate Membership category was introduced, with different rates for national, regional and local groups. It was made clear that this does not apply to local Republic groups.

The motion also introduced a Life Membership, which can be granted by the committee to anyone who has "made an outstanding and continuing contribution to the republican cause."

The motion proposed by Nina Tuckman, aimed at reaffirming Republic's policy of preferring a ceremonial elected Head of State, triggered a lively debate about the nature of our policy and strategy.

The motion was amended by the AGM, with a view that the amended text was clearer about its aims, and then passed with an overwhelming majority. There was some concern among members that there was insufficient time to debate the motion, something committee members have promised to address in the future.

There was then an opportunity for officers to report to the AGM on the



■ John Campbell, Republic's outgoing Executive Chair; "upbeat about recent developments".

previous year's activities (see extracts opposite). John Campbell, Executive Chair since the 2004 AGM, reported on a substantial legacy that had been left to Republic. He said, "We immediately looked at doing something we have wanted to do for sometime; take on an employee." John was upbeat about the difference Republic's new found funds are making, citing increased activity and media exposure. "I was pleased and honoured to be chairperson for the year 2004/5; it has been a momentous and optimistic year."

A brief questions and answers session followed, in which various points about campaigning were raised.

After the break Stephen Haseler and Graham Smith made a short presentation on the royal finances, under the title, "Value for money or royal rip off?"

Stephen focussed on the Crown Estates and the avoidance of personal and corporate taxes by senior royals.

At the end of the meeting members were given an excellent and fascinating talk by Geoffrey Robertson, who spoke about John Cooke, the subject of his new book. Cooke was the barrister who, aside from championing many social and legal reforms, prosecuted King Charles I. ■

Motions

The motion regarding subscriptions was passed unanimously.

The motion from Nina Tuckman

was amended to read "The AGM confirms Republic's commitment to recommend the Presidential model as expressed in the current policy document: 1. That the Head of state have a ceremonial role with reserve constitutional powers, and; 2. That the precise powers of the Head of State should be decided by a Constitutional Convention." The amended motion was then passed. ■

The New Executive Committee

The AGM formally elected the 15 nominated members to the Executive Committee. Those members are:

- Matthew Angus
- John Atkins
- Suzanne Campbell
- John Campbell
- Joe Coten
- Alan Crowe
- Stephen Haseler
- Ruby Lescott
- Cyril Meadows
- Scott Reeve
- George Stern
- William Summers
- Nina Tuckman
- Nick Yapp
- Jake Yapp

Stephen Haseler remains Honorary Chair for a further two years and the EC has elected a new Executive Chair, Secretary and Treasurer at its first meeting in November.

ights progress and road ahead

Campaign Report

▪ GRAHAM SMITH

Republic has come a long way in the past twelve months. We have really begun to build strong foundations for the campaign ahead.

Twelve months ago, in my report to the AGM, I set out our new strategy, one based on first targeting our core audience, on putting forward a positive, commonsense message and attracting the widest possible audience.

That strategy is now paying off. Since the last AGM we have more than doubled our membership, something we are aiming to do again over the next twelve months. We have adopted a new focus on membership recruitment, improving our retention process and driving to recruit more and more members. Our new *Welcome Pack* has been introduced to improve our relationship with our members.

Republic has had increasing media attention too, particularly at times of royal stories about the wedding, royal finances, the antics of Harry and the recent visit to the US.

In April we led the way in forming Common Cause, an alliance with other republican movements around the Commonwealth.

And, for the first time, we have exhibited at party conferences, which was a valuable opportunity to test ideas and develop our case for a republic.

Republic has come a long way, but there is still a mountain to climb ahead of us. Because of this the next twelve months promise to be even better and even busier.

In 2006 we will be campaigning throughout Scotland, a natural heartland of republican support. We will also be looking at ways of targeting the north of England and Wales.

Plans for a Republic Day in Trafalgar Square are back on track and other events and activities are being prepared over the winter months.

We are also starting to think seriously about how we can broaden

our support and attract those who are not traditionally thought of as our supporters, such as conservatives.

It is vital that we build a coalition of support, a majority of whom will eventually be ex-monarchists, people who have been won over by our simple and positive message about the democratic alternatives to the monarchy.

A lot of work has been done this year to prepare us for the campaign ahead. I am convinced we can win this campaign, but we must understand the enormity of the task ahead. We need to continue to build a strong, focussed movement. The real hard work lies ahead.



▪ William Summers thanked local volunteers.

Local Groups Report

▪ WILLIAM SUMMERS

There have been numerous local group action events this year. Around the royal wedding we had several groups leafleting with our 'End the Royal Farce' leaflet, which led to new members and many new petition signers.

Republic has also been undertaking regular Action Days outside Downing Street that have been well received by the public. We intend to continue holding scheduled Action Days throughout next year.

There has been much excitement amongst the campaign team recently regarding our new Supporter Information Management System database - more concisely known as SIMS! This has been developed specifically for our needs, and contains contact details of every one of our supporters. Group coordinators will have recently received their SIMS access password enabling them to access up-to-date information on supporters in their area with just a few clicks of a mouse.

At present we have a total of 31 local groups around the UK covering most major towns and cities in the

country. This includes our first official group in Scotland, which has recently set-up in Glasgow. We still need to fill in the geographical gaps however, and in coming months I'll be focusing on getting groups started in the cities where we currently have a lot of support but, as yet, no group coordinator.

We've come far in the last 12 months, but we also realise there is a long way to go in order to ensure we have a stable and robust long-term network of local groups. In addition to ensuring our network of local groups continues to grow throughout 2006, I'll be scheduling a series of visits to meet with our local supporters face-to-face. This will enable me to get feedback about our current campaigning and to answer any questions local groups may have.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have been involved in local campaigning so far. There are too many of you to mention individually, but - as they say - you know who you are! Your efforts are making a real difference to our campaign, and long may that continue. ■

Feelings

▪ DAVID SEDDON

Here's a familiar occurrence It is school parents' evening. The parents of a Year 9 ne'erdoowell have seen seven teachers, each of whom has said how lazy, silly, low-achieving and objectionable their son is. They reach the Form Tutor, who points out what a dismal catalogue the reports make. After he has finished mum says: "Yes but he's my son and I love him!"

What is happening is that a reasoned logical series of arguments is being met (and completely overpowered) by an emotional response, and it seems to me that we Republicans are up against this problem most of the time. All our reasoned arguments, articles and pamphlets do not get the acceptance that their contents deserve because people in Britain use their hearts not their heads when they are considering the monarchy. I'm sure I'm not the only one to have heard the "Yes, but..." reply!

It is as though getting rid of the monarchy is literally *unthinkable* to most citizens. The same attitude is taken of course to God, the Pope, Will Young, Bob Dylan, Richard and Judy etc... - we all have no-go areas for too much thought, in which we prefer our emotional prejudices to reign supreme, but if we Republicans are to build up to achieving our aim of having an elected head of state then we need to think hard about this *feel-don't-think* phenomenon. A particular problem with the monarchy (which does not apply in the case of Richard and Judy!) is that the emotional prejudices surrounding it were formed very early and were inculcated in us without our hardly knowing it.

So what might we do? First I think it is a good idea if we learn to realise, acknowledge and recognise that this is often happening as we campaign. Perhaps we will then not get too frustrated by the way our proselytizing is treated!

Secondly, I think we should, in order to stir people emotionally, sometimes allow ourselves the indulgence of attacking the personalities of the Windsors, rather than adhering to our principle that it is the institution not the present incumbents to which we are opposed. If we point out how

A New Chair

Ruby Lescott is the new Executive Chair of Republic. Ruby, who was elected at the Executive Committee's first meeting after the AGM, has been involved with Republic for a number of years.



After serving as secretary for some time, and as Vice-Chair for the past twelve months, Ruby is keen to take on the increasingly important role of Chair.

"I'm very excited about the new direction and energy in Republic now," Ruby said, "I'd like to play my part in shaping the way the campaign develops over the next twelve months."

Ruby takes over from John Campbell, who served as Executive Chair for the past year. John remains on the committee as Vice-Chair. ■

inadequately the present royals are doing the job, people might be emotionally stirred (remember The Diana Phenomenon, Harry's lifestyle, the Charles & Camilla wedding fiasco- people got really worked-up about the monarchy then). If we continue rationally to explain the scandals of the royal finances or of the royal prerogative, we are less likely to get past that emotional barrier. If we dwell on how badly the country is being let down by these people, then a bit of anger and embarrassment might result and the population might start to stir itself to action.

Of course I do not wish to suggest that we stop researching and disseminating our factual information and our theoretical political science, but if we want to get under the British public's skin and actually get the issues that we want onto the political agenda then I think we must first get over that emotional v logical hurdle. Once people take our ideas to heart, we (and they) will be ready for some strategies for real change to be proposed. I think it was Bernard Shaw who said that an idea can change the world, and we have great ideas. But we must get them into people's minds.

That lad will not get good GCSE

grades until his teachers relate emotionally to his mum. In order to get her to accept the points being made, they may need to make her *feel* anxious by telling her that he will be unemployed and unhappy if he does not change his ways - she may then change hers. We in Republic should begin to make the British people feel that we belong to a modern democracy, not a once glorious empire. We should encourage people to do, as the name of this newsletter suggests, and *imagine* Britain without a monarchy, rather than to think about it. Then we might be on our way. ■

NEW ADDRESS FOR REPUBLIC

Republic has a new postal address. The address has been moved as part of our continuing effort to improve efficiency and the speed with which we deal with correspondence and postal membership applications.

The old address will be redirected for six months before being cancelled. The new Republic address is:

**PO BOX 69
BRIGHTON
BN50 9GS**

Annual Financial Report

Acting Treasurer John Campbell presented Republic's annual financial report to the recent AGM. If you are a member and would like to see a copy of the report please call 08708 508 825 or email agm@republic.org.uk.

Committee Meetings

The Executive Committee would like to remind you that all members are welcome to attend EC meetings. Meetings are held approximately every six to eight weeks on a Sunday, and are in central London. For details email g.smith@republic.org.uk.

Opinions expressed in articles are not necessarily the view or policy of Republic, its staff or its Executive Committee.

Conference exhibitions a 'great hit'

Republic's exhibitions at the TUC, Labour and Liberal Democrat conferences proved a great hit, according to Campaign Coordinator Graham Smith. "Although there were a surprising number attending these conferences who told us they 'love the Queen' many conference goers were literally queuing up to sign our petition."

The objective of the exhibitions, held over three consecutive weeks in September, was to raise Republic's profile and recruit new support, by targeting our core audience, those on the centre and left of politics. Local Campaigns Officer, William Summers, told *Imagine*, "With exposure to so many political activists, representatives from other organisations and companies, as well as politicians, we have made real progress in promoting the campaign."

The several hundred people who signed the petition during the



■ Graham Smith and William Summers discuss the campaign with Charles Kennedy. Mr Kennedy was interested to hear that Liberal Democrats are statistically more likely to be republicans than Labour supporters.

conferences will be contacted over the coming weeks and asked to join Republic or support the campaign in other ways.

Republic representatives have also met many party members who are keen to set up internal party support groups within the Labour and Liberal Democrat parties.

"We had a good, professional stand and had on offer conference bags and lots of literature," William said. "It was a great experience and we learned some valuable lessons."

Graham concluded, "Our attendance at these conferences has certainly paid off. While we may not return to these same conferences next year we will be looking at other similar events at which we can set out our stall and promote the cause." ■

Interested in helping set up party groups? Call 08708 508 825 or email g.smith@republic.org.uk for more info. Let us know which party you belong to and we'll put you in touch with others who are keen to start a group in your party.

Order your FREE leaflet packs

Republic has produced a set of six quality promotional leaflets designed to be distributed at events and by supporters and groups around the country.

The *Republic - In Brief* leaflet range covers six themes: Royal Powers, Five Reasons for a Republic, Democracy and Republics, Common Cause, Our Supporters and Royal Finances.

You can order any number of sets of leaflets, whether it be just one or one hundred, by emailing your details to enquiries@republic.org.uk or calling us on 08708 508 825.

The leaflets are brief overviews of some of the basic information and issues needed to promote the modern republican cause. There are also plans to expand the series, so if you have any ideas of what issues and themes you would like Republic to produce leaflets about, get in touch.

Local group coordinators will be receiving their own copies in the next few weeks, and it is hoped they will be handed out and left in venues and in leaflet racks ■

THE LEAFLETS
Royal Powers
Five Reasons
Democracies
Common Cause
Our Supporters
Royal Finances

Order yours today.



...and 'Top 5' cards.

While you're ordering your 'In Brief' leaflets, why not order a set of 50 'Top 5' cards too? These colourful credit card sized cards list the top five reasons for becoming a republic, and provide the website address, www.republic.org.uk/topfive which gives the reader more information on the five reasons. A great, and easy, way to promote the cause. You can just hand them to friends or colleagues, leave them lying around for others to pick up or hand them out in the street. ■





Local Campaigning: The First Step

Have you thought about getting a local group underway but just don't know where to begin? Start simple, says Local Campaigns Officer WILLIAM SUMMERS.

Local groups allow every supporter around the country to get involved in our campaign and really make a difference. They are a proven and effective approach to spreading our message. But apart from the glow of pride you'll feel knowing you are helping the republican cause, local groups can also be personally very rewarding. Organising a group in your area gives you the chance to do something you believe in, and can also be a great way to meet like-minded people. Republicans, just like you!

As with many things in life however, the first step is often the hardest, and transferring that burning enthusiasm from inside your head to outside your front door can all too often stifle a campaign before it begins.

So how should you go about getting your group started?

The very first thing to do is get in touch with me to let me know you want to get involved. If there isn't already a local group covering your area, we'd be delighted to have you on-board.

After you've agreed to be a local group coordinator and have subsequently received your log-in details for our supporter database (SIMS), plus your free Groups Guide, the next step is to contact other Republic supporters in your allocated area and let them know a local group is now active. The quickest and easiest way to do this is by e-mail. Not every supporter will have registered an e-mail address with Republic however, so at some stage in future it may be a good idea to use the good old fashioned Royal Mail to

get in touch with those who aren't on e-mail (Republic can help organise this for you).

Keep the first contact simple – it doesn't necessarily have to be any more complex than letting them know who you are, and that you're starting a group. Perhaps you could suggest a time and place to meet.

Ideally your group will, in time, adopt a group constitution, elect a Chair and other officers, and maybe open a group bank account. For now though, you may feel more comfortable with just getting together to talk about Republic's campaign and discuss the aims and possibilities for the local group. How much support is there in our area? Where and when can we hold future meetings or leafleting sessions? What local organisations might be sympathetic to our cause? Have we contacted our local MP to find out his or her views on the issue?

It's not necessary to make any big decisions at this meeting, but it is important you decide upon a time and place for your next meeting to keep up the momentum. Agreeing to meet up on a regular basis – say, the first Wednesday of every month for example – is an effective way of scheduling future meetings into everybody's diaries.

The fundamental point of this first informal meeting is to get to know other local supporters and to agree on the basics of how you're going to run the local group. At the next meeting, you can talk about the group activities in more detail.

Out of small seeds do big trees grow, and if you've got this far you're already a long way towards an established and active local group. Chatting about your republican views over a pint of bitter or café latte may not bring down the monarchy just yet, but it's a first step towards winning over public opinion in your own town or city. And every journey starts with a first step. ■



London Action Day

Local members in central London staged a second Action Day recently (above), with a good response from passers-by.

Organiser Nina Coten told *Imagine*, "This about being seen on the streets, it is more symbolic than anything else, but they are also a good way of getting members actively participating in the campaign."

Nina is planning to extend the London Action Days to take in high streets and shopping precincts around central London. For more info email ninacoten@hotmail.com. ■

Target Areas

Republic is looking for coordinators to establish groups in the following target areas:

Norwich, Southampton, York.

If you would like to get involved with Republic's campaign by getting a group started in one of these areas please contact the Local Campaigns Officer, William Summers. ■

www.republic.org.uk/groups