

LIBERTY

PROTECTING CIVIL LIBERTIES
PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS

RESOLUTIONS AND RESULTS: AGM 2007

The 2007 Annual General Meeting was held on Saturday 19 May at London School of Economics in London. This document contains the resolutions passed and remitted and the Council election results.

Amendments to the Constitution

The following changes to the Constitution were carried by more than three quarters of those voting and therefore do not require confirmation by postal ballot.

Constitutional Amendments Group 1: Council Protocols

- **Insert new sub paragraph 7.9:**

7.9 *The Council shall have the power to make protocols relating to the expression of views in the media or at public events by Council members which are either expressly or impliedly attributed to Liberty. Members of the Council are obliged to abide by any such protocols. Protocols must be agreed by a two thirds majority to take effect.*

- **Insert new sub-paragraph 7.10**

7.10 *The Council shall have the power to expel from Council by two thirds majority any member who has breached protocols approved by Council under sub paragraph 7.9 without reasonable excuse. The member of Council will be given an opportunity to make representations to the Council before it makes a decision. A decision to expel a member may be appealed to the Conference and Appeals Committee within fourteen days.*

- **Insert new sub paragraph 12.2(f)**

12.2 (f) Expulsion from Council

Resolutions carried

Bill of Rights

This AGM welcomes the Government's stated commitment to the human rights standards embodied in the Human Rights Act.

This AGM also notes an increasing national and political debate on whether a new domestic Bill of Rights should be introduced into the United Kingdom.

This AGM welcomes any constructive conversation about ways in which to entrench and expand protection of human rights.

However, this AGM also notes with concern suggestions that an alternative Bill of Rights should provide less protection than Convention rights guaranteed by the Human Rights Act and would not extend its benefits to everyone in the United Kingdom.

Therefore this AGM resolves that Liberty:

- Continues to champion the Human Rights Act and works with the Government, opposition parties, the media, the Commission for Equality and Human Rights and other partners to increase public awareness of its benefits for everyone.
- Engages constructively with debate on the process leading to and content of any proposed Bill of Rights
- Campaigns to ensure that any future Bill of Rights maintains and if possible expands upon all the protections and rights enjoyed under the Human Rights Act.
- Discourages all misleading talk of 'citizens' rights' which undermines the principle of universality that everyone is entitled to human rights protection regardless of race, religion, nationality or other status.
- In particular, campaigns to ensure that a Bill of Rights would maintain the absolute bar on torture which prohibits the removal of foreign citizens to countries where it is likely they will face ill treatment, torture or death.

Freedom of Information

This AGM expresses grave concern at Government proposals to make it easier to refuse requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOI) on the grounds of cost.

As journalists make frequent requests for information as an integral part of their job, this AGM is concerned these proposals would result in less media scrutiny of Government policies and their impact, particularly as there are further proposals to completely remove the UK Parliament from the scope of the Act.

This AGM notes journalists have a key role to play in helping to ensure a transparent democratic process in this country but that these proposed changes undermine both their work and the cardinal principles of democracy: freedom of expression, open government and the public's right to know.

This AGM instructs the Board to campaign against the changes to the FOI Act and to urge MPs to oppose such changes in Parliament.

Statistics Bill

This AGM is concerned at the lack of progress in creating a genuinely independent basis for the collation of statistics including crime related statistics since the last time Liberty submitted evidence on the subject to a Parliamentary inquiry.

This AGM is concerned that the new Statistics Bill will not create any more tangible independence under the future Statistics Board than the present Statistics Commission.

Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Bill

Conference notes that the Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Bill currently before Parliament introduces far reaching changes to the power of bailiffs (to be known in future as 'enforcement agents'). In particular they will be given the power of entry to premises and the right to use reasonable force in order to obtain entry. In view of the well documented evidence of misbehaviour on the part of bailiffs in exercising their existing powers, Conference is concerned that this may well lead to abuse. The best protection against abuse will be if the proposed system for certification of enforcement agents is sufficiently rigorous.

Council is requested to closely monitor the proposals announced regarding the certification arrangements and make any necessary representations to government.

Civil and Religious Rights

The AGM notes, with alarm, the increasingly intemperate attitude of some mainstream politicians towards the religious and civil rights of Muslims, and other minority faiths. The AGM agrees to support broad-based initiatives to sustain the human rights of all those who choose to exercise their faith or lack of faith without harming others, provided that these do not compromise freedom of expression for all.

Prisoners' Voting Rights

That Liberty makes the case for the restoration to all prisoners of their right to vote, either at home or abroad.

Remitted Motions

Criminal Record Checks

While noting that the Independent Barring Board may have the effect of ending the enhanced disclosure system whereby mere minor allegations made to the Police about teachers and carers are reported to the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB), and repeated on CRB forms to the employers, the Liberty AGM asks Liberty staff to press the Home Office to make it clear that the CRB forms circulated after the Independent Barring Board starts work will include only a 'standard' part (convictions and cautions) and omit the 'enhanced' part (mere allegations and other so-called 'local information'). The Liberty AGM thanks the Liberty staff for their work on this issue but notes that the existing form circulated by the CRB includes both a 'standard' and an 'enhanced' part, not necessarily or always two separate forms, and that after the start of the Independent Barring Board's work it will be necessary to ensure that only exclusively standard forms circulate.

Election to Council

The following Liberty members have been elected to the Council of Liberty:

Amanda Ariss, Lucy Armstrong, Alex Bailin, Frances Butler, Louise Christian, Barbara Davidson, David Downes, Shaheed Fatima, Fiona Horlick, Tim Lezard, Michael McColgan, Sonali Naik, Nick O'Shea, Deok Joo Rhee, Stephen Ward,

These 15 join the following Council members who were elected (under 7.4a) in 2006:

Mona Arshi, Mohammed Aziz, Camilla Batmanghelidjh, Caspar Bowden, Bill Bowring, Richard Clayton QC, Madeleine Colvin, Michael Ellman, Carolina Gottardo, Jean Lambert MEP, Doreen Lawrence OBE, Sarah Ludford MEP, Steven Montgomery, Rod Robertson

And Liberty's Treasurer:

Tish Andrewartha

Election to Conference and Appeals Committee

Chris Marshall was elected unopposed to serve for three years. She joins Henrietta Hill (chair) who has two years left to serve and Adrian Marshall Williams who has one year left to serve.

Appointment of Auditors

Gotham Erskine reappointed as auditors.