

Republican campaign moves into top gear

RECORD support for republicanism has sparked interest in moving the campaign up a couple of gears.

The Republican Movement has facilitated debate so far, but now it is time to start generating debate and greater support.

The Republican Movement is planning actions in five broad areas over the next 6-12 months:

- Launching a clear campaign for a referendum on New Zealand becoming a republic.
- Making republicanism a living issue, by giving supporters the symbols and information to express their support.
- Starting an annual event at Parliament, where prominent republicans will speak out.
- Initiating republican debate with the Human Rights Commission complaint about the monarchy, and rebranding Queen's Birthday as Republic Day.
- Recruiting over 200 members and 400 email list members.

The Republican Movement will be hosting a meeting in Wellington on Saturday April 7 to prioritise and plan out these ideas. Anyone wishing to attend should contact Dave Guerin.

New Zealand takes republic lead

BRITISH republicans are looking to New Zealand to lead the way in getting rid of royalty, says one of the architects of a landmark legal challenge to the monarchy.

That is despite major steps forward in Britain, where Attorney-General Lord Williams of Mostyn this month gave his backing to the Guardian newspaper's campaign to end the ban on Roman Catholics ascending the throne.

Jonathan Freedland, policy editor of the Guardian newspaper, said Prime Minister Helen Clark was likely to be called to give evidence to an eventual "un-royal commission" on the monarchy's discriminatory succession rules.

"We are calling for the British Government to set up a commission of inquiry, a really serious and resourced body that could sit for two or three years on the future constitutional arrangements, and the Commonwealth would be a big part of the argument."

Freedland visited New Zealand to speak to Clark earlier this year, and told the Dominion she seemed very sympathetic about republicanism.

The Guardian filed a high court claim last month, under European human rights legislation ratified by Britain last year.

It argues that the royal succession rules in the 1701 Act of Settlement discriminate against women, Catholics, and children born out of wedlock.

Cardinal Thomas Winning, leader of the Catholic Church in Scotland, has attacked the Act of Settlement as a "grubby little secret that shames our nation".

But in the short term, Freedland said the Guardian and British republicans were looking to New Zealand's lead.

He pointed to the Republican Movement, which is preparing a Human Rights Commission complaint against the monarchy.

spoken

"There is a great irony there that Britain will have to look to its former colonies for the lead on how to reform its own system, and New Zealand, now led by a republican-leaning prime minister, could be at the head of the queue." — *Guardian policy editor Jonathan Freedland*

"At least William and Harry seem to be realising that their role is increasingly ceremonial and economic. In other words, they should be wheeled out for pomp and circumstance only to maintain the British tourist industry." — *The Evening Post*

"It is unfortunate that the Deputy Prime Minister has been quoted as asserting that the values of the Government were reflected in the composition of the honours list. Although political involvement cannot be excluded, the honours list should at least be presented as non-partisan in nature, for these honours are in the name of the Queen."

— *Monarchist League of New Zealand chairman Noel Cox*

"Despite sometimes reasonable criticism that the judiciary in this country is removed from the real world, the fact remains that New Zealand judges are more attuned to this society and its social climate than are a bunch of law lords on the other side of the world." — *The Timaru Herald*

"The Privy Council as New Zealand's final court of appeal has been led to the chopping block so many times in the past 25 years that it would be a kindness now to let the axe fall."

— *The Dominion*



Privy Council 'anomalous' – Chief Justice

CHIEF JUSTICE Dame Sian Elias, the first woman to sit on the Privy Council, says New Zealand can do without it.

Attorney-General Margaret Wilson has issued a discussion paper laying out options for replacing the Privy Council with an indigenous final court of appeal.

"It strikes me as so anomalous," Dame Sian told the Evening Post on her return from sitting on the Privy Council.

"Apart from anything else, few people can afford to go to the Privy Council, and that is not good or the administration of justice."

She said permanent members of the Council were "a little intrigued" that New Zealand had retained appeals to the body for so long.

Judges needed to keep their heads and take a long-term view: "We can't hope to be popular but I think we might hope to make law more valued."

Two judges a year sit for short periods on the Privy Council, and Sir Kenneth Keith is due to attend in October.

THE Government's move to abolish the right of appeal to the English-based Privy Council has garnered support from across the political spectrum, and from Maori.

Wilson's discussion paper lays out three options for an indigenous legal appeal structure.

- Having one level of appeal, making the Court of Appeal New Zealand's

final appeal court.

- Two levels of appeal within the Court of Appeal — a criminal and civil division, each made up of three judges, and a full court of five judges at a higher level.
- An appeal division in the High Court, made up of three judges, and a full court of five judges at the Court of Appeal level.

The public has until next month to make submissions on the proposals, and Prime Minister Helen Clark has indicated that changing the law will then be a priority.

New Zealand is one of the last countries in the world that still allows appeals to the Privy Council.

the way forward

by Dave Guerin

The Australian Republican Movement has almost completely rebuilt its organisation since the 1999 referendum, national director James Terrie told me in Sydney last month.

The ARM has focused on building a stronger grassroots involvement and on establishing a long-term political strategy.

A Labor win at the next election could bring in Kim Beazley, who has outlined plans for future referendums, and promote republican Peter Costello to the leadership of the Liberals.

A highlight of my meeting was discussion of a visit to New Zealand by key people from the ARM. We are tentatively planning a visit that will include a formal dinner at Parliament (and possibly in Auckland too), a one-day conference for supporters, and discussions with politicians.

Overall the meeting continued the close co-operation between the two countries, along with some good-natured competition about who gets to a republic first.

Monarchists mark Victoria's death

THE Monarchist League of New Zealand marked the centenary of Queen Victoria's death with pomp and ceremony.

They held a picnic in Albert Park (named after Victoria's husband) and unveiled a floral garland to pay tribute to the late Queen.

The garland was placed around the Auckland statue of Queen Victoria on January 21, 100 years after she died.

Takapuna Floral Art members Carmel Cunningham (pictured) and Colleen Fernie prepared the garland, working on it for three hours a day with large bright flowers.

"It's no good having little flowers," Fernie told the North Shore Times Advertiser. "They can't be seen and don't photograph well."

A military reenactment group



marched, a cannon gave a salute, and the Auckland City Brass Band entertained passing members of the public.

The Monarchist League's next event is a dinner to mark Queen Elizabeth's 75th birthday, on April 19 in Auckland.

Governor-General sees move to republic

OUTGOING Governor-General Sir Michael Hardie Boys says he detects a greater interest in republicanism recently, though not yet a strong tide. Lots of people

want to meet the Queen when she visits, he says. "But she won't have made an impact on nearly as many New Zealanders' lives as the governor-general does."