

AFA Secretary's Report Annual General Meeting 2017

I look at the state of the human world today and I feel thankful that, in this particular time and place, we enjoy the freedom to gather as we do, to express our evidence-based thoughts and to make a difference by our efforts. This thankfulness is no kind of complacency. We all know that our secular liberty can be quietly legislated away. Combine an ill-considered stroke of a pen with the hasty votes of some pious politicians; freethinkers here would start to feel the heat.

Our strength in preventing such things lies not so much in the difficulty of herding cats like us, though that may help. Our better strength is in our ability as autonomous people to co-operate in a context of mutual respect, to combine our vigilance and our carefully directed efforts; to educate the wider public; to campaign; to make some fuss and some noise when necessary.

When I think about how to focus this co-operation, again I feel very fortunate. Being part of this organization and having the task of recording what we do, I see some many examples of dedication in my fellow Committee Members. I was there for the 13 meetings which AFA's Committee of Management had this last year and while those were essential to co-ordinate out efforts and determine our priorities, a great deal of importance was done between meetings.

You can see from all the different reports, how many sub-committees we have and the fields they cover. Even if you don't think being on a committee would suit you, there are plenty of activities you can contribute. All of this variety and activity adds to our strength in a practical sense. We need to hear what you want to do.

Another source of strength for atheism is philosophical. There is a growing popular interest in the cosmos and science discovers more each year. What we find out there is not a comfortable environment for fairies, unicorns, demons... especially not comfortable for any deity who wastes its omniscience obsessing about the sexual activities of a specific kind of primate. The universe may not be all that comfortable for us at times but the difference is, we ARE here. The real universe, in all its magnificence and peril, is our home.

So in our tiny corner of a vast expanse, this group of atheists gathers of an evening in an effort to preserve the locally permitted freedom to think and act reasonably. Don't be deceived by the illusion of insignificance. It matters, because we are real and it matters to us. We could work in isolation but what I have seen recently, convinces me that we will have more effect working together and in co-operation with other groups. AFA is one example of many groups doing such work and it's a good thing when our members get involved as well.