

## GENERAL SYNOD

### DECLARATION BY THE HOUSE OF BISHOPS UNDER SECTION 8(4) OF THE CLERGY DISCIPLINE MEASURE 2003

#### Background

1. Section 8 of the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003 ('the CDM'), as amended by the Clergy Discipline (Amendment) Measure 2013, provides that the House of Bishops may declare in writing that the "*constitution, policies, objectives, activities or public statements*" of a political party or organisation are "*incompatible with the teaching of the Church of England in relation to the equality of persons or groups of different races*".
2. If a declaration is made and comes into force in respect of a particular party or organisation, the effect is to make it unbecoming or inappropriate conduct for clergy to be members of, or to promote, or express or solicit support for that body. Declarations of incompatibility could therefore lead to complaints of misconduct under the CDM.
3. Section 8 CDM implements in respect of clergy a policy of the General Synod agreed in February 2009 pursuant to a Private Member's Motion:
 

*'That this Synod, noting that in 2004 the Association of Chief Police Officers adopted a policy whereby "no member of the Police Service, whether police officer or police staff, may be a member of an organisation whose constitution, aims, objectives or pronouncements contradict the general duty to promote race equality" and "this specifically includes the British National Party", request the House of Bishops to formulate and implement a comparable policy for the Church of England, to apply to clergy, ordinands, and such employed lay persons as have duties that require them to represent or speak on behalf of the Church.'*
4. The rationale behind section 8 CDM is that the clergy of the Church of England are required by canon law (in the form of Canon C 26.2) "*at all times [to] be diligent to frame and fashion their lives according to the doctrine of Christ, and to make [themselves] wholesome examples and patterns to the flock of Christ.*" If clergy were actively associated with parties or organisations whose aims or public statements were contrary to the teaching of the Church on racial equality, it would bring the Church into disrepute and the ministry of those clergy would be compromised.
5. A declaration under section 8 CDM does not involve any incompatibility with the European Convention on Human Rights. The Convention allows a church to require its clergy to behave in accordance with its teaching. Clergy voluntarily submit to the discipline of the Church when seeking ordination. Enabling disciplinary proceedings to be taken against clergy who, through their political affiliation or activities, defy the Church's teaching on racial equality is proportionate and justified.
6. At its meeting in December 2013 the House of Bishops considered whether it should make any declarations under section 8 CDM. The House agreed that it would not be practical to make declarations of incompatibility in respect of organisations that did not have a defined membership, or in respect of fissiparous small far-right and extremist

groups. It did, however, consider that the British National Party ('BNP') and the National Front could be potential subjects of a declaration of incompatibility.

7. The House agreed that both of those parties should be notified that the House was considering making a declaration against it, and given an opportunity to make representations which the House would consider before reaching a decision. I accordingly wrote to the BNP and to the National Front.
8. A reply was received from the Chair of the National Front. No reply was received from the BNP.
9. At its meeting in May of this year the House, having considered the matter further in the light of the representations received from the National Front, decided to make declarations of incompatibility against both the BNP and the National Front in exercise of its power under s.8 CDM.

### **The Church's teaching on racial equality**

10. The Church's teaching in relation to the equality of persons or groups of different races is set out in the House of Bishops' theological statement *Affirming our Common Humanity* published in 2010 (GS Misc 972). Important principles set out in that teaching document include:
  - "Christians should celebrate the diversity found in the human family. We acknowledge the universal bond that human beings are all made in the image of God, equal in dignity, sharing a common humanity in which God shows no partiality or favouritism." (paragraph 1)
  - "...biblical teaching does not support the idea that any nation is superior to any other, or a notion of separate development involving the segregation of people belonging to different tribes, nations or religions." (paragraph 2)
  - "St Paul taught 'there is no such thing as Jew and Greek, slave and freeman, male and female, for you are all one person in Christ Jesus'." (paragraph 5 quoting Galatians 3:28)
  - "In the actions of Jesus we find a declaration of the inclusion of all people in the worship of God; echoing the call of the prophets for a new inclusivism, when they condemn national and religious exclusivism as denying the call of God's people to be a light for all people. It is the Church's calling to witness to and anticipate the unity of all peoples that will be found in Christ at the end of time. True worship connects us with the hope and vision of heavenly worship among those from every tribe, language, people and nation." (paragraph 8)
  - "There is a theological imperative that equality must be practised and taught by the Church, and racism condemned as a 'blatant denial of the Christian faith'." (paragraph 11 quoting the *Uppsala 1968 Report* of the World Council of Churches)
  - "There is a missional call to resist the racism and prejudice that often prevents the gospel from being heard or practised. In mission the Church of England is committed to share the gospel and the life of the kingdom across cultures and ethnicities." (paragraph 10)
  - "Racism and prejudice in regard to ethnicity are sins that have an injurious impact on many others in society and undermine the proclamation and practice of God's

kingdom. Christians should ‘nurture a loathing of the sin of racism’.” (paragraph 15 referring to a General Synod resolution of February 2004)

## The BNP

### The BNP’s manifesto

11. In making a declaration of incompatibility against the BNP, the House of Bishops took account of the party’s manifesto for the last General Election in 2010 (*“Democracy, Freedom, Culture and Identity”*) which is published on the BNP website at <http://www.bnp.org>.

12. On page 16 the manifesto claims there is an *“unparalleled crisis”*:

- *“At current immigration and birth rates, indigenous British people are set to become a minority well within 50 years. This will result in the extinction of the British people, culture, heritage and identity.”*
- *“The BNP will take all steps necessary to halt and reverse this process.”*
- *“Britain’s existence is in grave peril, threatened by immigration and multiculturalism. In the absence of urgent action, we, the indigenous British people, shall be reduced to minority status in our own ancestral homeland within two generations.”*

13. On page 17 the BNP manifesto argues:

- *“...the non-British ethnic population is increasing in number exponentially and given current immigration and birth rates, will utterly overwhelm the indigenous population of Britain well within the next 50 years, and more likely within 30 years.”*
- *“There is no escaping the fact that the admission into this country of large numbers of foreigners has, inter-alia, created a poorer, more violent, uncertain, disorientated, confused, politically correct, ill-educated, dependent, fractured society.”*

14. At page 22 under the sub-heading *Abolishing Multiculturalism and Preserving Britain*” the BNP states that it will seek to:

- *“...safeguard the existence of the native peoples of these islands and ensure they are the dominant ethnic, cultural and political group. In this context we refer to the English, Scots, Irish and Welsh along with the limited numbers of peoples of European descent, who have arrived centuries or decades ago and who have fully integrated into our society.”*

15. Under the heading *“Confronting the Islamic Colonisation of Britain”* on page 30 the manifesto states:

- *“The BNP believes that the historical record shows that Islam is by its very nature incompatible with modern secular western democracy.”*

- *“The BNP demands that Islamic immigration be halted and reversed as it presents one of the most deadly threats yet to the survival of our nation.”*
- *“Today Europe faces a renewed Muslim invasion.”*

### **The BNP’s constitution**

16. In 2009 proceedings against the BNP under the Race Relations Act 1976 were taken in the Central London County Court by the Commission for Equality and Human Rights on the grounds that the BNP’s constitution was directly discriminatory in the way that it regulated admission to membership of the party.
17. The constitution at that time described the party as representing: *“..the collective National, Environmental, Political, Racial, Folkish, Social, Cultural, Religious and Economic interests of the indigenous Anglo-Saxon, Celtic and Norse folk communities of Britain and those we regard as closely related and ethnically assimilated or assimilable aboriginal members of the European race also resident in Britain”*.
18. Under the terms of the constitution membership of the party was open only to *“indigenous British ethnic groups deriving from the class of “Indigenous Caucasian”, i.e. white members only.*
19. The constitution at that time declared that the BNP *“is wholly opposed to any form of racial integration between British and non-European peoples. It is therefore committed to stemming and reversing the tide of non-white immigration...”*
20. In October 2009 in the course of the court proceedings, an undertaking was given on behalf of the BNP to amend its constitution so that it did not directly or indirectly discriminate with regard to any “protected characteristic”. When the BNP presented a revised constitution, known as edition 12.1, the court ruled in March 2010 that it was still indirectly discriminatory under section 1(1)(b) of the Race Relations Act and that the BNP would be acting unlawfully if it operated the membership criteria set out in that edition.
21. A further revised version (edition 12.2), published in April 2010 and in force at the time of the last General Election, stated:
  - At 3.2.1: *“Our party is a party of British Nationalism, both ethnic and civic.... We are pledged to the continued creation, fostering, maintenance and existence of a unity and of the integrity of the Indigenous British....”*
  - At 3.2.3: *“We are pledged to stemming and reversing the immigration and migration of peoples into our British Homeland...and to restoring and maintaining, by legal changes, negotiation and consent, the Indigenous British as the overwhelming majority in the make up of the population of and expression of culture in each part of our British homeland.”*
  - In Annex 3: *We are implacably opposed to the promotion by any means of any form of integration or assimilation of any indigenous peoples, including the Indigenous British, which is or is likely to deprive such peoples of their integrity as a distinct people or the distinctiveness of their cultural values or of their ethnic or national identities or characteristics.”*

22. The latest version of the constitution on the BNP website is edition 12.3. It was published in July 2011 and contains the same provisions set out in paragraph 21 above.

### **Incompatibility of the BNP with the Church's teaching**

23. The House of Bishops concluded that the policies and statements of the BNP contained in its manifesto and constitution appear to be discriminatory and divisive, seeking to segregate people and to treat them differently according to ethnicity. They are incompatible with the Church's teaching in *Affirming our Common Humanity*, and accordingly the House has made a declaration against the BNP under s8(4) CDM.

### **The National Front**

#### **The National Front's constitution**

24. Section 1 of the National Front's constitution states: *"The National Front is a radical racial nationalist movement made up of a confederation of semi-autonomous branches. The primary object of the National Front is to ensure the survival and advancement of the White Race and the British Nation..."*

25. Annex 1 of the constitution under the heading 'Statement of Principles' declares that *"The National Front is the movement of British Racial Nationalism. It is committed to preservation of the national and ethnic character of the British people and recognises that the nation must be exclusively of European and predominantly British racial descent."*

#### **The National Front's policies**

26. The National Front's policy on immigration includes the following passage:  
*"In the case of Britain the National Front upholds the wish of the majority of British people for Britain to remain a white country, with customs and a culture which have been developed to suit our character. Consequently the National Front would halt all non-white immigration in to Britain and introduce a policy of phased and humane repatriation."*

27. Under the National Front's policy on 'The White Nations' the following statement appears:  
*"Because of a partly shared cultural heritage and identity of race, the National Front would like to see more sporting and cultural contacts between these nations [i.e. 'the White Nations'].... The National Front believes that the multiracial Commonwealth is a farcical relic of an unfortunate past which should be disbanded. The National Front would in any case withdraw Britain from this organisation. Consequently the National Front cannot condone the idea of the British monarch being head of state of other foreign nations."*

### **Incompatibility of the National Front with the Church's teaching**

28. The House of Bishops considered the representations made by the Chair of the National Front. It concluded that the constitution and policies of the National Front appear to be discriminatory and divisive. They seek to distinguish people according to whether or not they are white, and to treat them differently according to their ethnicity. This is incompatible with the Church's teaching in *Affirming our Common Humanity*.

Accordingly the House has made a declaration against the National Front under s8 (4) CDM.

### **The effect of the declarations**

29. The effect of the declarations will not be to prevent a cleric from merely *expressing support* for a particular *policy* or *policies* of the BNP or the National Front (for example, an economic or transport policy), but it will prevent a cleric from taking the further step of *joining* either party or *speaking in support of it generally*, or *encouraging others to join or support it generally*.
30. Support for either party, whether expressed privately or publicly, would be unbecoming or inappropriate conduct for clergy under the new provision. This is because under Canon C 26.2 a cleric's duty to fashion his or her life according to the doctrine of Christ extends to both professional and private life.

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