



the DURHAM UNION

MEETING OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE Minutes – Wednesday 18th March 2020

Please note: - Details relating to attendance may be found in the General Committee register, housed at the Union Office on Palace Green. Permission to access the register may be granted upon request by the Secretary, Returning Officer or the Union Society Office Manager.

The meeting began in the Debating Chamber, Palace Green at half past two o'clock

Miss Kuszynski in the Chair, Mr Enamorado minuting.

The President, Miss Kuszynski, opened the meeting, thanking members of the committee for their attendance.

The President ceded the Chair to the Deputy Returning Officer, Mr Wroe, who read out the valid proxy votes for the meeting.

The question was put that Miss Tara Jackson-Rigchung be ratified as Debates Competitions Secretary. This was taken on a general aye.

The Deputy Returning Officer ceded the Chair to the President.

Mr Wroe introduced an emergency motion relating to coronavirus and the possible cancellation of Easter term. The motion noted the likely disruption to Easter term caused by the coronavirus and made provisions for the Union to continue operations.

Mr Wroe read out the motion and explained that General Committee meetings would be suspended until further notice as would Ordinary and General meetings. All officers currently elected would continue to serve until further notice and Rules Committee could make alternative arrangements for the election to the Epiphany 2021 presidency. All currently elected members of the General Committee will continue to serve until further notice and the President and Presidents-Elect will continue to serve for the terms they were elected to.

The President asked if there was any formal opposition to this emergency motion. None was forthcoming.

The motion passed on a general aye.

The President invited the President-Elect, Mr Enamorado, to give his report.

Mr Enamorado gave his report noting the likely disruption to the Easter term in light of the coronavirus. He stated that he would move toward online events where possible and was looking into the possibility of moving debates into another term.

The President thanked Mr Enamorado for his report.

The President invited Mr Wroe to move an amendment on behalf of Mr Filippopoulos.

Mr Wroe moved Mr Filippopoulos' amendment, given his absence from the meeting. Mr Wroe explained that the amendment would create a new officership the Debates Schools Secretary, who would have the responsibility to organise Durham Schools.

Mr Wroe explained that the Debates Competitions Secretary is overloaded with work and that the work required to organise Durham Schools has grown significantly in recent years such that it required an additional officership.

Mr Wroe stated that the officer will be a debating officer and elected in the same way as Debates Training Secretary and Debates Competitions Secretary. The officer will be elected as soon as students return to Durham after the coronavirus pandemic is over and will begin work on Durham Schools 2021.

Mr Wroe noted that this officership will be merged with the Outreach Officer and a footnote to that effect will be inserted into the Constitution. This is because Durham Schools is the biggest 'outreach' that the Union does in a year and the competition is a significant part of what the Outreach Officer's original mandate was supposed to be. The Debates Schools Secretary will focus on other charity efforts for the parts of the year that they are not organising Durham Schools.

Mr Kendix asked the effect of cancelling Durham Schools 2020 on the Union finances.

Miss Kuszynski stated that she will explain this in her report.

The President asked if there was any formal opposition to the amendment. None was forthcoming.

The amendment passed on a general aye.

The President invited Mr Wroe to move his amendment.

Mr Wroe moved his amendment noting that he had two amendments to move both on the subject of Consultative Committee. He stated that the first is more straightforward and he hoped would pass quickly, whereas the latter would require more discussion.

Mr Wroe explained that the amendment changed the name of the committee from 'Consultative Committee' to 'Secretary's Committee'. He explained that Consultative Committee do not 'consult' anything in the commonly understood sense of the word and that this name is more in keeping with the naming of the other committees.

Mr Wroe stated that the amendment abolishes the Ustinov Representative position, noting that Ustinov only has ten Union members and that the position has become something of a rotten borough. Much of the point of Consultative Committee is to get freshers involved in the Union but there are no freshers in Ustinov.

Mr Wroe stated that the amendment altered the description of the committee to better reflect what they actually do and also changed the procedure for election of members if no first-year students from the college in question are forthcoming.

Mr Adamson proposed a second-degree amendment to include a South College Secretary.

This was taken on a general aye.

The President asked if there was any formal opposition to the amendment. None was forthcoming.

The amendment passed on a general aye.

The President invited Mr Wroe to move his second amendment.

Mr Wroe moved his second amendment noting that it brings more widespread changes to the committee.

Mr Wroe explained that the amendment would reduce the size of the committee by about half by making it so that members of the committee represent two colleges rather than one. The amendment would also make the committee elected twice a year at the beginning of Michaelmas and the beginning of Epiphany.

Mr Wroe outlined his reasoning for the amendment, conceding that it is a significant change but explaining that he believed it would bring significant positive reform. He stated that the current size of the committee is 19 and this is completely unmanageable – the second largest committee is 10 with most committees being 4 or 5 in size. He also noted the benefits of electing more than once per year but stated that this would only be logistically possible with a smaller committee.

Mr Wroe believes that the change will make a more cohesive and manageable committee with a better work-ethic and productivity. He envisages that such a committee will be able to meet more regularly and discuss other issues such as recruitment, which it has not hitherto been possible to discuss.

Mr Kendix asked if paring colleges would not undermine college links.

Mr Wroe responded that he sympathised with Mr Kendix's fears but believed that the benefits outweighed the costs.

Mr Adamson asked about the impact of fewer people sharing events.

Mr Wroe replied that, in his view, all General Committee members should be sharing Union events.

The President noted the importance of equalising the work of each of the committees.

The President asked if there was any formal opposition to the amendment. None was forthcoming.

The amendment passed on a general aye.

The President ceded the Chair to Mr Buxton-Carda.

Mr Buxton-Carda invited Miss Kuszynski to move her amendment.

Miss Kuszynski moved her amendment to give the Steward the option to appoint a senior member of House Committee. She explained that all other committees have this as a feature and there was no good reason for House Committee to not. Such a senior member could help to take work off the Steward.

The President asked if there was any formal opposition to the amendment. None was forthcoming.

The amendment passed on a general aye.

Mr Buxton-Carda invited Miss Kuszynski to move her amendment.

Miss Kuszynski moved her amendment to alter the combination of office requirements to include Publicity Officer, Technologies Officer and Deputy Technologies Officer.

The President asked if there was any formal opposition to the amendment. None was forthcoming.

The amendment passed on a general aye.

Mr Buxton-Carda invited Miss Kuszynski to move her amendment.

Miss Kuszynski moved her amendment to alter the eligibility requirements for President to require that someone had attended fifteen General Committee meetings rather than ten before being eligible for President for Michaelmas or Epiphany terms.

Miss Kuszynski stated that this gives someone the opportunity to see three president's styles and have more experience before running. She stressed the importance to the Union finances, particularly for Michaelmas term, of someone experienced in the Society.

There was general discussion on the amendment.

Mr Buxton-Carda asked if there was any formal opposition to the amendment.

Mr Enamorado rose in formal opposition.

Mr Enamorado stated that it was unnecessary to reduce the opportunity to run for President in this way and that it would damage the reputation of the Society.

The Committee continued general discussion on the amendment.

Miss Jackson proposed a procedural motion to move to a vote. This was taken on a general aye.

The committee moved immediately to a vote on the amendment. In this vote the ayes were 29, and the noes were 10. Two thirds of the votes of the members of the committee having been in the affirmative, the amendment was approved.

Mr Adamson proposed a procedural motion to hold the election for Publicity Officer. This was taken on a general aye.

Mr Buxton-Carda ceded the Chair to the Deputy Returning Officer.

The Deputy Returning Officer opened nominations for the position of Publicity Officer, with the following candidates being nominated:

1. Mr Romer Palad of Josephine Butler College, proposed by Theo Burman and seconded by Samuel Radford
2. Mr Elliott Boyd-Stringer, of Trevelyan College, proposed by Alexander Buxton-Carda and seconded by Emily Gordon
3. Re-open Nominations, of no such fixed abode

Both candidates and their proposers hustled for the position of Publicity Officer.

A vote was duly taken, and it was announced that Mr Boyd-Stringer had been elected by 20 votes to 19.

The Deputy Returning Officer ceded the Chair to Mr Buxton-Carda.

Mr Buxton-Carda invited Miss Kuszynski to move her amendment.

Miss Kuszynski moved her amendment which would alter the eligibility requirements for President so that someone would have to have served as a Full Officer of the Society for 30 term-time days before being eligible for President for Michaelmas and Epiphany terms in the first instance.

There was general discussion on the amendment.

Mr Buxton-Carda asked if there was any formal opposition to the amendment.

Mr Adamson rose in formal opposition, stating that it would deny the ability of many people who could be good Presidents to run. He noted that he did not disagree that someone should have served on Standing Committee before being President but stated that he felt it should be up to the general membership to decide if a candidate is qualified enough.

The Committee continued general discussion on the amendment.

Mr Page proposed a procedural motion to move to a vote. This was taken on a general aye.

The committee moved to a vote on the amendment. In this vote the ayes were 28, and the noes were 13. Two thirds of the votes of the members of the committee having been in the affirmative, the amendment was approved.

Mr Buxton-Carda invited Miss Kuszynski to move her amendment.

Miss Kuszynski moved her amendment to increase the length of the hust for President from five to ten minutes and their proposer from four minutes to eight minutes.

The President asked if there was any formal opposition to the amendment. None was forthcoming.

The amendment passed on a general aye.

Mr Buxton-Carda ceded the Chair to Mr Wroe.

Mr Wroe invited the President, Miss Kuszynski, to give her report.

Miss Kuszynski gave her report noting the wide range of debates and addresses that had taken place during the term including 8 debates, 22 addresses and one emergency debate. She expressed the need for better officer attendance at debates. She stated that the Re-freshers drive had been a success and she hoped that it will continue into next year.

Miss Kuszynski stated that membership numbers for the term had been strong and that the Union had over 700 members for the year. She stated, however, that the Union should aim for 900 members, especially considering the expansion in student numbers.

Miss Kuszynski thanked the Standing Committee for their help during the term and stated that the opportunity to be President had been one of the proudest achievements of her time at university.

Miss Kuszynski explained the need to cancel Durham Schools and explained the actions that were being taken to remedy the hole in the debating budget that cancelling the competition had created.

Miss Kuszynski handed over the presidential gown to Mr Enamorado.

Mr Pahl proposed a Vote of Thanks to Miss Kuszynski. This was taken on a general aye.

The President, Mr Enamorado, assumed the Chair.

There being no further business, the President closed the meeting.

Acting Secretary: ***E. Enamorado***

President: ***E. Enamorado***