

Secretary's Report 1993

This year we encountered a problem which has been within us, potentially, since the adoption of our present constitution. It lies in the possible conflict between the unstable size of the Committee ('the number of elected members of the Committee shall be not less than eight and not more than twelve') and the rules for retirement ('elected members of this Committee shall serve for three years, provided that one-third of their number shall retire each year').

The Committee from the AGM 1992 had:
1 member to retire in 1993 (elected 1990)
7 members to retire in 1994 (elected in 1991)
3 members to retire in 1995 (elected in 1992).

In the event, it seemed closest to the spirit of the constitution to require the retirement of the member elected in 1990, together with a declaration that the two other positions which could have been filled in 1990 should be regarded as vacant in the 1993 elections. That should have produced, from the AGM 1993 a 13-person elected group on the Committee. However, only one nomination was received before the closing date, so the difficulty we faced in 1993 remains with us.

Two strategies occur to me as possible resolutions to the problem:

1. We could revise the constitution, fixing the number of elected members at something divisible by three, and insisting that either one third of that number be elected/retire each year. If there were too few nominations to fill one year's draft, we could coopt or take nominations from the AGM.

2. We could determine, ad hoc to break the current problem, that 2 members should either be coopted or elected at the 1993 AGM (or coopted and approved by the AGM); we could thereafter determine that only 4 places should be filled in the 1994 elections. That would give us 13 members from the 1993 AGM and 10 members from the 1994 AGM. Thereafter, if we have too few nominations to fill an annual draft, we coopt or elect from the AGM again to keep the shape of the Committee stable; the number of vacancies could be fixed at 3 or 4 until the size of the Committee has stabilised at the desired figure (9 or 12).

The problem with coopting 2 members now is that it would produce a complement of 13 elected members. This may seem the lesser evil (to coopt 1 leaves us a future problem of reducing the system to order). Alternatively, the difficulty could be broken if one of the members elected in 1994 were to resign and be available for immediate cooption. That, however, may be misinterpreted as unfair practice by interested parties; a charge not without its

ironies in that our problems arise in the reluctance of people to allow themselves to be nominated to the Committee (in 1990 and 1993), rather than any attempt to exclude members from nomination.

We seem collectively to face problems to which all available solutions are difficult and to which no solution may be wholly satisfactory. I urge to Committee to confront the issues with expedition and in a constructive spirit.

Annex: dates of election

1990 Burnard

1991 Hamesse, Schanze, Engwall, Ide, Lancashire, Paprotte, Dodd

1992 Zampolli, Fortier, Delcourt

T. N. Corns

Bangor

4 June 1993