

Committee & AGM Minutes - Minutes of the Annual General meeting of the Utopian Studies Society Madrid, 29th June 2003

The Utopian Studies Society is an interdisciplinary society that aims to co-ordinate and encourage the diverse work currently taking place on the subject of utopianism.

1. Present.

Ruth Levitas (Chair), Jim Arnold (Treasurer), Lorna Davidson (Acting Secretary), Gregory Claey's, Fatima Vieira, Alex-Alban Gomez Coutouly, Catherine Durieux, Tom Moylan, Maria Aline Seabra Ferreira, Lyman Sargent, Jorge Bastos da Silva, Amanda Cole, Darren Webb, Michele Madonna Desbazeille.

Apologies: Lucy Sargisson, Filio Diamanti, Ian Donnachie, Vincent Geoghegan, Yaacov Oved.

2. Minutes of last AGM.

The minutes of the AGM held at Nottingham 26.6.02 were unanimously approved.

3. Matters arising.

L. Sargent reported that Toby Widdicombe of the English University of Alaska in Anchorage has been appointed as Editor of the Utopian Studies Journal with initial funding for 2 years and a reduced teaching load.

4. Chairperson's Report.

Ruth Levitas expressed enormous gratitude to Alex-Alban Gomez and his colleagues for undertaking the organisation of what had turned out to be the USS's largest conference to date, with 174 delegates from all over the world. The conference, held in collaboration with the European University of Madrid, had proved to be a truly memorable occasion.

RL advised members of Lucy Sargisson's prolonged ill-health, and thanked Lorna Davidson for acting as the Secretary of the Society in the meantime. She proposed that we should arrange to send flowers to Lucy. This proposal was unanimously approved; LD to action.

5. Treasurer's Report.

Jim Arnold circulated a financial statement and copy of the Society's current bank balance, £2,378.15. While modest, this represented a marked improvement on the previous year's balance of £809.80. As usual all the transactions were related to the annual conference and the website. It was confirmed that the Treasurer was authorised to move the Society's account if it was deemed beneficial, but that there was no particular benefit in doing so at this time. The financial transactions for the 2003 conference had been handled by A Gomez and his colleagues and no information was available at this stage, though it was understood that some refunds for over-payments were due to individual participants, and that arrangements for this were in hand.

6. Committee and Office Bearers.

As the Constitution adopted in 2001 stated that Office Bearers were elected for a period of 3 years, there was no requirement to re-elect until 2004. In addition to the office bearers, existing

committee members were confirmed as L. Davidson, V. Geoghegan, T. Moylan, G. Claeys, F. Vieira, A. Gomez, P. Coupland, F. Diamanti, N. Pohl. Amanda Cole was elected to the committee on the nomination of Gregory Claeys, seconded by Ruth Levitas.

7. USS Mailing List & website.

LD advised members that she had taken over the mailing list from LS. She asked everyone to notify her of changes in e-mail addresses at lorna.davidson@newlanark.org and if they had more than one, to use the address that was least likely to change. T. Moylan requested that his address should be checked as he felt he had not been receiving Committee information – LD to check. A-A Gomez agreed to make available to F. Vieira an e-mail list of 2003 participants, to facilitate arrangements for the 2004 conference. LD agreed to have a link put on the USS website to the Porto Conference website – FV to supply details. LD asked A-A Gomez to advise her when the 2003 website link should be removed.

8. Conference Plans for 2004 and 2005.

It was confirmed that arrangements were well in hand for the 2004 conference which will take place at the University of Porto 8-10 July 2004. F Vieira, assisted by Jorge Bastos da Silva, had circulated advance information and a website is in the process of being set up. F. Vieira confirmed that the aim would be to cover conference costs from the Registration Fees and that as no funds were available for interpreters, the recommended language would be English. Papers would be accepted in other languages, but would be arranged in separate panels - similar to the arrangements in Madrid.

RL reported that there was a possibility that the 2005 conference would take place in Germany, in Frankfurt or Freiburg, but no confirmed details were yet available. She agreed to contact Nicole Pohl as soon as possible to clarify the situation, and advise the Committee accordingly. It was noted that a firm proposal would require to be received and agreed by the Committee before any conference could be held in the name of the Utopian Studies Society.

A. Cole expressed interest in hosting a conference in Australia (Sydney or Melbourne) in 2006. This would clearly involve high travel costs for most members. R Levitas suggested that it might be more appropriate to seek to hold a joint conference with ICSA or another of the international associations, as there was no obvious reason for the European-based Society to hold its annual conference in Australia. A Cole agreed that she and J Dutton would prepare an initial proposal and send it to LD for circulation to the Committee for further consideration.

9. Any other competent business.

D Webb suggested that an independent keynote lecture on a Utopian theme from a well-known speaker might give an added attraction to the Society's conferences. Various members commented that the fee for such a speaker would usually be high (around £2,000 plus accommodation etc.) L. Sargent commented that the policy of the American Society for Utopian Studies was not to use Society funds for this purpose, but if separate funds or sponsorship were available, it could happen. T Moylan suggested that it could perhaps take place on the eve of the conference as a separate but linked event.

TM commented that if funds were available it would be good to offer some assistance in the form of a travel grant to a Post-Graduate student.

RL felt that it might be helpful for Conference Organisers if the Committee were to provide some guidelines for the organisation of USS conferences and for panels/ presentation of papers.

L Sargent suggested that it would be useful to look at those provided by UEA for the 1999 conference held in Norwich as a model.

LS intimated that the Communal Studies Association's 2004 conference would be held at the Hancock Shaker Village, while the ICSA one was planned for the Amana Colonies in IOWA 26-30 June 04.

10. Date of next meeting.

The 2004 AGM will be held during the 5th International Conference in Porto.