

Committee & AGM Minutes - Minutes of the Annual General meeting of the Utopian Studies Society University of Porto, 8 July 2004

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.

Committee members - Ruth Levitas (Chair), Jim Arnold (Treasurer), Lorna Davidson (Acting Secretary), Lucy Sargisson (Secretary), Gregory Claeys, Fatima Vieira, Alex-Alban Gomez Coutouly, Maria Aline Seabra Ferreira, Vincent Geoghegan and 53 other members. Apologies: Filio Diamanti, Amanda Cole, Nicole Pohl, Tom Moylan

2. Minutes of last AGM.

The minutes of the AGM held in Madrid on 29 June 2003 were unanimously approved.

3. Matters arising.

None.

4. Chair's Report.

Ruth Levitas expressed enormous gratitude to Fatima Vieira, Jorge Bastos da Silva, Marinela Freitas, Jose Eduardo Reis and all their colleagues for their excellent forward planning and organisation of the 2004 Conference, and congratulated them on attracting a satisfyingly wide range of international delegates. It was extremely encouraging that there was such a healthy interest in Utopian Studies and research, and it was good to see so many new participants at this year's conference. On behalf of all the members, she welcomed back Lucy Sargisson, and expressed delight that she was now well enough to attend the conference. She also thanked Lorna Davidson for standing in as Secretary over the past year, and all the Committee members for their help and support.

5. Treasurer's Report.

A financial statement was circulated by the Treasurer, Jim Arnold. The Society's current bank balance stood at £2,003.68. He reported that the main expenditure in the past year derived from decisions taken at the last AGM, to send flowers to Lucy Sargisson (LS expressed her appreciation), and to allocate a modest sum for travel grants. 3 travel grants, each of 150 Euros had been awarded. £1,035.92 was still to be transferred to the US Society, being the sum raised from the agreed levy on the 2004 conference registration fees, in accordance with Society policy; this was being arranged. In answer to a question from V. Geoghegan, the Treasurer confirmed that no tax was payable on the funds in this account. The Report and Financial Statement were accepted unanimously by the meeting.

6. Committee and Office Bearers.

The office bearers were due for re-election. Aline Ferreira moved that the existing office-bearers should be re-elected; motion seconded by Annette Magid. The Chair, Secretary and Treasurer confirmed their willingness to stand again, and were unanimously re-elected. LD advised that

there two spaces available on the committee; nominations from the floor could be taken, provided that the person nominated was present and willing to stand. Lyman Tower Sargent was nominated by L.Sargisson, seconded by F Vieira; Jorge Bastos da Silva was nominated by R.Levitas, seconded by V.Geoghegan – approved unanimously.

7. Conference Plans for 2005 and 2006.

2005. Chair reported that some uncertainties had arisen relating to the arrangements for the 2005 Conference which was expected to take place in Frankfurt 30 June – 2 July 05. The Committee had planned to discuss these with Nicole Pohl; unfortunately, for very good reasons, she was unable to attend this year's conference, and no-one else from the Frankfurt organising committee was present either. There were two matters of particular concern – first that the deadline for the Call for Papers (1 May 2004) had been extremely early, over a year in advance of the conference; second, because of the unusual funding arrangements at Frankfurt University (whereby all speakers would have their expenses paid) a very much reduced number of papers had been accepted. There was general concern that the conference would not therefore be compatible with the Society's policy of encouraging a wide and diverse range of speakers, and encouraging contributions from post-graduate students. The Chair proposed to arrange to meet Nicole Pohl as soon as possible to try to resolve these issues. Meantime she urged anyone who had not yet submitted an Abstract (or even a title) to do so, and to send these as soon as possible to nicolepohl@yahoo.com. Chair sought approval for the USS Committee to negotiate with the Frankfurt organisers. This was unanimously agreed. Following clarification of the details, members would be advised by e-mail of any revisions to the arrangements for the Society's 6th International Conference.

2006. A formal offer to host the 2006 conference had been received from the University of Rovira I Virgili, Tarragona, Spain. Chair invited Pere Gallardo Torrano, Director of the Dept. of Anglo-German Studies at URIV, to address the members, and speak in support of this proposal. It was subsequently agreed that a copy of the Society's Guidelines for Conference Organisers should be sent to PGT (LD to action) and that dates in early July would be preferred.

2007. A tentative proposal to hold the 2007 conference in Parma, N. Italy was put forward. It was suggested that the proposers should speak to the Porto organisers to find out the extent of resources, human and financial, that were required, but agreed in principle at this stage. T. Miller advised that the ICSA conference for 2007 was also being planned for N. Italy, and therefore it would be essential to co-ordinate dates carefully to avoid a direct clash.

8. Travel Grants.

IAs discussed at the last AGM, a modest sum from Society funds had been allocated to provide assistance to attend the conference. See Item 5 above. Chair sought approval for the decision about the allocation of any funds for this purpose in 2005 to be delegated to the Committee, following clarification of funding arrangements for the Frankfurt conference. Members granted approval.

9. USS Mailing List & Website.

LD advised that any participants at the 2004 conference not currently on the USS mailing list would be added to it, using the list of e-mail addresses provided in the Conference Programme.

All were urged to check that these were correct, and advise LD or RL if not. As usual the minutes of the AGM and the Abstracts of the Papers presented would be posted on the website as soon as these were available. FV to provide the relevant document to LD. Members were also reminded that the website address had been changed to www.utopianstudieseurope.org.

10. Any Other Competent Business.

Language: Filippo Salvatore questioned why English should be the official language of the conference, and suggested that the 5 working languages of the European Union (English, French, German, Italian and Spanish) would be more appropriate for a European society. In this he was strongly supported by Alex Alban Gomez. A number of arguments were put forward in support of this proposition. There was much discussion of this very complicated and thorny issue. The current position was that while English was the official language, conference organisers had the discretion to accept papers also in the local language. The Society did not have the resources available to provide simultaneous translation on the EU model. The purpose of the conference was to share ideas, and if as many as five languages are used, the result could be a series of parallel conferences. English offered the most commonality. Chair put the issue to the vote. In answer to a question from the floor, it was made clear that everyone present was entitled to vote.

The first motion, that the 5 working languages of the EU should be adopted as the official conference languages, attracted 4 votes in favour.

The second motion, that the current policy of having English as the official language, with Conference Organisers having discretion to organise some panels in other languages, should be maintained, was supported by an overwhelming majority of the members present, with only the 4 votes in opposition.

Chair declared the second motion clearly carried, and this will remain the Society's policy in the meantime, as being the best means of maximising the sharing of experience. It is likely that the issue, which is acknowledged to be a very difficult one, will be revisited in the future.

Publications. The publication of conference papers was discussed. Alex Alban Gomez confirmed that the publication in *UTOPOLIS* of the papers given at the 2003 conference was in hand. Agreed that this was not always possible, and the Society itself did not have the resources to undertake to publish the conference proceedings. L Sargent advised that the *Utopian Studies Journal* accepted papers in many different languages, but that in any case, it should be recognised that not all papers given at any particular conference would be regarded as worthy of publication by a rigorous Editorial Board. Fatima Vieira said that they hoped to publish the 2004 papers in 2-3 volumes, and also possibly on *ETOPIA*, their electronic newsletter. The current arrangement of making the Abstracts and authors' contact details available on the Society's website was considered a pragmatic solution.

11. Date of next meeting.

The 2005 AGM will be held during the 6th International Conference –to be confirmed.