

Committee & AGM Minutes - Minutes of the Annual General meeting of the Utopian Studies Society, Tarragona, 7 July 2006

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.

J Arnold (Treasurer), L. Sargisson (Secretary) L Davidson, G. Claeys, F. Vieira, (committee members) and 39 ordinary members. In the absence of Ruth Levitas, Jim Arnold chaired the meeting.

Apologies: Ruth Levitas, Alex Alban Gomez, Tom Moylan, Vincent Geoghegan, Lyman Sargent, Amanda Cole, Nicole Pohl.

2. Minutes of last AGM.

The minutes of the AGM held in New Lanark on 1 July 2005. (Posted on website and circulated at meeting). M Campbell queried the absence of note regarding the discussion on conference languages issue. It was agreed that this had been discussed, but no change to the existing Society policy (as agreed at Porto 2004) had been made, and it was accepted that it would be reviewed periodically. (See below at 6c) The minutes were then approved unanimously.

3. Matters arising.

None.

4. Finance.

a) Treasurer's Report. JA referred members to his Report, and Financial Statement, which was circulated at the meeting. The bank account had been transferred to the Royal Bank of Scotland as agreed, and the balance of funds stood at £2,861.78. As usual, most of the expenditure had been in connection with the conference, including payment of travel grants. It was recommended that we spend approximately £270 on acquiring an additional European domain name for the USS website (utopianstudies.eu) and some new software to facilitate updating of the site. JA advised members that it was proposed to investigate the possibility of grants from the European Union's educational and cultural funds to support the work of the USS, and sought approval for this in principle; additionally agreement was sought for the grant application forms and related letters or papers to be signed by the Chair, Treasurer and Secretary. This was unanimously approved. There were no other questions. The Treasurer's Report and Financial Statement were approved unanimously.

5. Election of Office Bearers and Committee.

a) Chair: JA intimated that Ruth Levitas had written to tender her resignation as Chair, and LD read out her letter. It was agreed to write formally to RL to thank her for her enormous contribution to the Society since its inception in 1988. JA then requested nominations for Chair. Annette Magid nominated L Davidson, but she declined to stand. Greg Claeys nominated Fatima Vieira, seconded by Ian Donnachie. Fatima Vieira was elected unanimously, and she took the Chair.

b) Secretary: Lucy Sargisson intimated that she was formally tendering her resignation as Secretary. FV thanked LS for all the support she had given USS over the years. LS said that Lorna Davidson had been Acting Secretary for some time, and proposed that she be elected Secretary. FV seconded. LD agreed to stand. No other nominations were made. LD elected unanimously.

c) Treasurer: Jim Arnold was unanimously re-elected as Treasurer.

d) Committee: Nominations for 2 new committee members - Laurence Davis and Pere Gallardo - were made from the floor. According to the USS Constitution, a Committee of up to 12 members may be elected; currently there were no vacancies. However, it was noted that two of the existing committee members (P Coupland and F Diamanti) had not been actively involved for several years. After discussion, it was accepted that they should cease to be members of the committee. Kathryn Tomasek queried the gender balance of the committee, but a count revealed that it was not particularly biased one way or the other - following the 2006 AGM, the revised committee looked likely to be made up of 9 male members and 6 female, with female Chair. It was agreed that LD should contact the existing members of the committee who were not present, to confirm their willingness to continue, and that an updated list of committee members would be posted on the USS website as soon as possible.

6. Conference Plans.

a) 2007. Only one definite proposal to host the 2007 conference had been received, from the University of Plymouth, in Devon on the SW coast of England. Malcolm Miles addressed the meeting, and outlined their plans. It was agreed to proceed, but noted that dates would need to be chosen to avoid a clash with the ICSA conference scheduled for July 2007 in Italy. Final dates around the end of June/beg. July would be agreed by the Committee as soon as possible.

b) 2008. Joachim Fisher advised that the University of Limerick in Ireland was prepared to host the 2008 conference, and this was agreed in principle.

c) Languages. The issue was discussed at length. Members were reminded that the existing guidelines for Conference Organisers left it at the discretion of local organisers to accept papers/arrange panels in languages other than English, though English was preferred as the main conference language and for Plenary sessions to maximise intellectual interchange. The significant practical difficulties for Conference Organisers of accepting papers in several languages were stressed by Fatima Vieira and Pere Gallardo. Finally a vote was taken on a proposal by Jacqui Dutton, seconded by Greg Claeys, that papers could be accepted in languages other than English, provided that Abstracts were provided in English, and this was carried.

7. Website & Mailing List.

LD referred members to the list of e-mail addresses printed in the Conference Programme. She advised that anyone attending the conference who was not already on the USS e-mailing list would be added to it. She appealed to members to pass on changes in e-mail addresses, as whenever information was circulated, a substantial number of messages came back as undeliverable.

8. Any Other Competent Business.

Greg Claeys proposed a vote of thanks to the Conference Organisers and the Plenary Speakers, and this was heartily accorded.

Announcements were made relating to forthcoming conferences/meetings: Society of Utopian Studies in Oct 2006 in Colorado Springs- More info available at www.utoronto.ca/utopia. ICOSA at the Damanhur community near Turin, Italy, July 2007. Conference in 2007 in either Hong Kong or Australia. More info from Andrew.Milner@arts.monash.edu.au.

9. Date of next meeting.

This will be held in Plymouth during the 2007 Conference.