

Selected Articles from *The Individual* December 1993

Society for Individual Freedom

Since 2002, each new issue of the SIF's journal, *The Individual*, has been uploaded onto the SIF's website at www.individualist.org.uk as a PDF file. Before that, online availability was very limited.

To remedy this, we have reconstructed back-issues of the journal using only the core articles. We hope that you will find them of interest. Any comments should be directed to the current editor of *The Individual* at editor@individualist.org.uk.

Please note that views expressed herein are not necessarily those of the SIF but are printed as a contribution to debate.

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DISORDER POSTPONES THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Anon.

For the benefit of members who did not come on 25th November for the Annual General Meeting (and even for those who did, but are unclear about what happened and why), the following is a description of the events that led to the AGM being postponed and the National Council meeting taking place elsewhere.

The AGM notice, announcing that it was to be held at 6.30pm, was accompanied by a notice announcing the annual meeting of the National Council at the same time and place. Normally the AGM of the Society takes place first and the meeting of the Society's National Council immediately afterwards. Owing to circumstances explained below, it was decided to hold a meeting of the National Council first.

However, when Dr Barry Bracewell-Milnes, Chairman of the National Council, called the meeting to order, he was met with a barrage of shouting by some people who refused to sit down, refused to be quiet, and refused to allow the meeting to take place. Their disgraceful and contemptuous behaviour was a shock to all of us who never expected to see such incivility (to put it at its least) within our Society.

This deplorable situation came about through the conviction of a few (not all) of the younger people who became involved with the Society recently, that they could run the organisation more effectively if they could evict and replace experienced officers of the Society who stood in their way. That they were keen and latterly contributed willingly to the work of the Society is not in doubt; that they are also uncivil and over-ambitious has now been abundantly demonstrated.

Having planned to take control, in the weeks before the meeting they got some two dozen of their acquaintances to join and support them on 25th November. However, just as they doubtless thought that control of the Society lay within their grasp, they were out-manoeuvred by the President and the Chairman of the National Council, who decided

that the situation required urgent consideration by the National Council, in accordance with the Rules.

Unable to accept that they might be outsmarted, the rebels resorted to disruption. If they believed that the decision to hold a meeting of the National Council before rather than after the AGM was in any way irregular, those who were members of it could have raised the matter in a civil and proper manner as a point of order and argued their case, and any member could have done so at the AGM. In the ensuing disorder and dispute, the objection was heard that the Society's AGM had always preceded the National Council's meeting. However, nothing in the Rules requires this, and the National Council clearly has the power to decide such matters in the best interests of the Society as they see it.

The great majority of National Council members then started to hold a meeting in an adjoining office but, when even this was curtailed by the loutish behaviour of certain people (including non-members), they withdrew and continued the meeting at the nearby Grosvenor Hotel.

Meanwhile, MacGregor and others held a meeting that purported to be the AGM of the Society but was invalid. They purported to elect a new Chairman of the National Council, a new Treasurer, and many new members to the National Council. So the same people who had objected so vehemently to change in the normal order of the annual meetings, proceeded to elect to the National Council an additional 23 people most of whom had only recently joined the Society - something totally contrary to the Society's normal practice. This inconsistency shows that their guiding 'principle' was whatever suited their purpose.

Until 25th November Mark MacGregor had been Vice-Chairman for one year, Douglas Smith was Secretary, and Jason Hollands was the new Newsletter Editor. We acknowledge their recent contributions to the functioning of the Society. However, by their extraordinary behaviour as described, they have revealed something about themselves of

which we were previously unaware (or of which in one or two cases there were only vague suspicions, now more than adequately justified). Messrs MacGregor, Smith, and Hollands have spoiled their credibility and, by a decision of the National Council under Rule 3, are no longer acceptable as officers of the Society. They now have no right to represent or act for the Society.

Of the others brought in to support them, most appear simply to have been used in a way which we hope they now regret. Unfortunately a handful of them were more deeply involved in the disruptive behaviour. We hope that each of those concerned will make it clear how he or she now wishes to be regarded.

One consequence of the attempt to take over the Society (an attempt which nearly succeeded, and might have done so if the rebels had been more subtle or the defenders less alert) will inevitably be that we will have to introduce precautions to ensure

that only members can attend the AGM and meetings of the National Council. We now also need some volunteers to help with the Society's work, in particular a new editor for *The Individual*.

Michael Plumbe has been elected as Chairman of the Executive Committee in place of Peter Campbell whose resignation, announced in our October issue, was of course unrelated to the events described above. Lord Monson continues as President, Barry Bracewell-Milnes as Chairman of the National Council, and Lucy Ryder as Treasurer. We also enjoy the continuing support of Sir Richard Body MP, Professor Peter Campbell, Professor David Myddelton, Major Wakley, Peter Jackson, Robert Carnaghan, and others.

As the Society's office address has been compromised by the presence there of one of the troublemakers, all correspondence must in future be sent to our new address.

THE CIVIC EDUCATION AND RESEARCH TRUST

Anon.

Some members will recall that in the early 1970s this Trust was formed to promote public education in the field of the individual's relation to the law. Unfortunately, for reasons not now known, the Trust soon lost contact with the Society.

Last winter, however, the then Trustees informed us that they were thinking of winding-up the Trust unless the Society wished to take it over. We started discussions with them but progress was much delayed by factors beyond our control.

In May the National Council agreed by post that Lord Monson, Sir Richard Body and Professor Campbell should be the Society's first nominees as new Trustees, but it was not until October that the negotiations with the former trustees were completed.

One of our members (who wishes to remain anonymous) very kindly and generously met in their entirety the considerable legal expenses associated with the transfer of the Trust to the Society's nomi-

nees. The National Council will consider the Trust further.

We hope that the Trust will be a successful sponsor of education, research, and enlightening publication in the field of freedom. The tax concessions given to charitable trusts are an important means of enabling funds available for education, research, and appropriate publication to go further.

[Note: According to the current (September 2002) listing for the Civic Education and Research Trust (No. 264353) on the Charity Commission's website (www.charity-commission.gov.uk), its stated object is "To promote education generally in the understanding of the law more particularly as it affects the day to day life of the individual."]