

Minutes of the meeting of the NCP/BPA Transitional Committee at Oxford on Tuesday 13 May 2003

Present: Robin Attfield, Robin Cameron (=JRC), David Evans, Brad Hooker, Dan Hutto, Dudley Knowles, Dudley Knowles, George MacDonald Ross, Alan Montefiore, Jonathan Rée, Christopher Taylor, Jo Wolff, with Roger Trigg in the chair.

Apologies: Ruth Chadwick (=RC), Sarah Hutton, Tony McWalter, Sandra Marshall, Tom Sorell; David Hamlyn, Peter Strawson.

1. Membership

Letters of thanks would go to the Honorary President and Vice-Presidents expressing appreciation of their involvement with the National Committee over many years.

It was noted with regret that Sandra Marshall had intimated that she would have to resign from the Committee immediately, upon her appointment as acting Deputy Principal at Stirling, and that Ruth Chadwick had indicated her desire to resign as Treasurer as soon as was consistent with a smooth hand-over to the whoever would take responsibility for the finances of the BPA. It was agreed not to move to fill either of the resulting vacancies on the Committee.

2. Minutes of the meeting on 17 January 2003 were approved.

NCP business:

3. NCP Matters arising from the Minutes

There were no matters not covered elsewhere in the Agenda.

4. Chairman's business: (i) *Progression in honours courses.* The Chairman, in his capacity as former Chairman of the Philosophy Benchmarking Panel, had written a letter to Heads of Departments (circulated via NCP representatives) reiterating the position stated in the Benchmarking Statement that it was possible to provide appropriate progression between the second and final years of honours while continuing to teach the two cohorts of students together, and that Departments could quite properly resist pressure, based on the supposed requirements of the QAA's Qualifications Framework, to separate the teaching of the two years completely, since the QAA itself was also responsible for the Benchmarking Statement. The statement would be circulated more widely (to Heads of Departments not affiliated to the NCP), and included in the next issue of the Gadfly, with a copy sent also to the QAA.

(ii) *Enquiry about a city academy incorporating teaching in Philosophy.* Following an enquiry from Leeds about an approach it had received, the Chairman was investigating further a proposal to set up a city academy in which the teaching of Philosophy would have a central place. The precise nature of what was envisaged needed to be clarified before any decision could be made about the Committee or the BPA offering any professional advice to those putting the proposal forward.

5. Treasurer's Report

RC, who was unable to be present, had provided a statement of the current position. The apparently healthy balance of £3104 would be eaten into substantially by costs of publicity and recruitment circulations for the BPA (some of which had already been incurred), and bringing Robert Audi over to speak at the Inaugural Conference. There was also the promise of £1000 from the Mind Association towards costs of launching the BPA.

6. Secretary's business

(i) *Submissions.* Submissions had been made to the BA in response to its enquiry about endangered areas, and to the Department for Education and Skills about the Higher Education White paper's proposals to target still more narrowly the funds provided to support research. In relation to the latter, an invitation had been received from the Royal Geographical Society to send a representative to a meeting it was organising on 27 May. It was agreed that DH should attend on behalf of the Committee.

In connection with the White Paper proposals, a paper from DE about the issue of provision for research postgraduates vis-à-vis concentration was discussed. Collaboration in provision (either across institutions or across disciplines within institutions, or both), it was agreed, was the alternative to a narrow concentration of provision. There might be a role for the BPA in facilitating discussion of how collaboration could be established. At the same time, there should still be a place for postgraduate provision purely within an individual institution, especially for part-time or disabled students.

(ii) *Taking over responsibility for Philos-L.* The Committee had already responded favourably to an enquiry about this from Professor Stephen Clark. In discussion, it was agreed that: the different functions of Philos-L – broadcasting information about jobs, conferences, &c; providing a vehicle for enquiries among professional philosophers; and a forum for general discussion (the last of which required special monitoring) – might be separated out; that the possibility should be explored of *The Philosopher's Magazine* contracting to take on the day-to-day running of some or all of the site (which would be associated with the Association's website); and that the arrangements proposed for the hosting of the site after handover should also be clarified.

In this connection, the question of administrative assistance for the Secretary and other officers of the BPA was discussed. It was agreed that an application be made to learned societies for transitional assistance, to enable the Association to be properly resourced in its crucial initial years until its income from its own members built up. The request, looking for a total of £4000 for 2003-04 and £2000 for 2004-05, would go to the Mind Association, the Aristotelian Society, the Scots Philosophical Club and the Royal Institute of Philosophy.

(iii) *The Times league table of philosophy departments.* It was agreed that public comment on this table's very strange rankings was not appropriate, but that an article on the table might be sought for *The Gadfly*. The findings of that article might then provide ammunition for a (not-for-publication) letter of protest and advice to the editor.

(iv) *AHRB ring-fenced post-doctoral fellowships.* In order to discover whether it would be appropriate for the Committee to submit a bid for any of these fellowships in Philosophy, it was agreed that enquiry should be made of the AHRB about the *raison d'être* of these awards, and about whether they would be made at the cost of fewer unrestricted awards.

7. The Gadfly

The Editor, DH, reported that the last issue (focused mainly on the White Paper) had stimulated a considerable response. He proposed to put the next issue out in June, and already had a good volume of material for it. It was agreed that it should also serve as a vehicle for publicising the July launch in Belfast and the October Inaugural Conference and AGM.

8. Further high profile events

TS, who was unable to be present, had provided a report on attempts to reach out to wider audiences through broadcasting and talks, through the ICA and the Economist, the BBC and also in collaboration with the Australian Centre for Philosophy and Public Ethics; the latter two appeared more promising than the first.

9. Preparations for winding up the NCP and SCP

It was agreed that short final AGM of the SCP should be convened, to take place immediately after the first BPA AGM, to pass a resolution to dissolve the NCP and transfer its remaining assets to the BPA.

10. AOB.

There was none.

Transitional Committee business:

11. BPA matters arising from the minutes of the 17 January meeting

Irish membership (January minutes, item 12): DE reported that, after a full discussion with the two

NCP-affiliated departments in the Irish Republic, the departments understood the changed circumstances, and while they would not object to being treated as a special case, they would not expect it. They anticipated that some of their members would wish to join the BPA. The Committee concurred with DE's suggestion that the Constitution be left unchanged, and also agreed that recruitment material should go out to individuals in departments in the Republic, with an explanatory note about the position of the BPA in relation to individuals, departments and learned societies in the Republic.

12. Getting the BPA going: report on progress

(i) *Publicity and recruitment:* The Chairman had written to heads of NCP-affiliated departments asking them to indicate if they did not wish to continue with the BPA. (to date, two had done so).. Recruitment literature had just gone out to individuals in the 'main' philosophy departments (a few applications had already been received). Other departments, other individuals, and all learned societies, would be the next targets.

(ii) *Belfast launch:* it was agreed that the July launch in Belfast was to serve to boost recruitment (with a BPA desk manned during the conference, and press publicity sought for the launch). There would be a place for reference to the BPA during the Friday evening pre-dinner reception at the Belfast City Hall, with a fuller opportunity to publicise the BPA at the Saturday evening reception sponsored by OUP. Publicity in the more popular philosophical periodicals should also be sought.

(iii) *The Conference:* The two speakers, Onora O'Neill and Robert Audi, were now confirmed. *Venue:* A room in Portcullis House (for which there would be no charge) could not be booked until 3 months before the event, i.e., before 24 July. It was agreed to continue to take the risk of seeking this venue rather than the alternative of the British Academy, but to enquire whether something could be linked with the Conference, preferably involving the older part of the Palace of Westminster (whether in the form of a special tour, or catering arrangements) to increase its attractiveness.

(iv) *Charitable status:* Enquiry had been made of the Charity Commission as to whether the Transitional Committee might appropriately apply for recognition for the Association, or whether the matter should wait till the Executive Committee had been elected; a reply was awaited.

(v) *Bank account:* The Committee authorised the Secretary and Treasurer to apply to open a bank account with Barclays Bank on the Bank's standard terms for an organisation of the Association's kind.

13. Preparation for the Association's first AGM

Invitations to nominate candidates for election to the BPA Executive Committee would have to go out by 12 September, with nominations being lodged by 3 October. It would be incumbent on the Transitional Committee to ensure there were at least 12 candidates for the 12 places, with an appropriate representative spread overall. The situation would be kept under review, both at an informal meeting of the Committee in Belfast in July and particularly in the period between 12 September and 3 October.

The January decision not to attempt to provide a postal vote was reconsidered in the light of continuing concern about attendance at the AGM itself, and it was agreed that possible procedures for voting by e-mail should be formulated and circulated for the Committee's consideration. Means of determining how terms of 3 years, 2 years and 1 year among the successful candidates in different possible situations were considered; it was agreed that a candidate's professed preference to serve for a lesser term than 3 years might properly play a role in this procedure.

14. Convening of the new BPA Executive Committee

It was agreed that the first meeting of the newly elected Executive Committee should be arranged to take place some time after the AGM rather than following immediately at the end of that meeting.

15. AOB

Further meeting in July: It was agreed that members of the Committee attending the Joint Session in July should have a short informal meeting to review progress in arrangements for the Conference and AGM and other matters.

Consequent action (apart from that by the Secretary):

Item 4, (ii) Chairman to convey the Committee's view about the proposed city academy to Leeds;

Item 4, (i): DH to attend meeting on 27 May [substitute in fact needed, & found – see *Update*];

Item 6, (ii): Secretary & DH to consult with *The Philosophers' Magazine* about running Philos-L.

Secretary: letter of thanks to honorary members; further circulation of Chairman's letter about progression; enquiry about proposed hosting of Philos-L; Request to learned societies for bridging funding for administrative support for the BPA; enquiry to the AHRB about ring-fenced post-doctoral awards; formulation & circulation of proposals for postal voting for the Executive Committee; enquiry to TMcW about an 'add-on' to make the Westminster conference venue more attractive; further pursuit of charitable status.

Next issue of The Gadfly: Chairman's statement on progression; item on *The Times* league table, if possible; publicity about the launch & inaugural conference.

Update (19.v.03):

Item 4, (ii): further enquiry suggests that the proposal for a city academy is not quite as it was represented; RT will continue investigation.

Item 6 (i): DH is unable to attend 27 May meeting about the White paper, & JW will go instead (in fact BH will also be attending, representing SCASS, of whose Steering Committee he is now a member).

Item 6 (iv): The SCASS Steering Committee proposes to put in a proposal for ring-fenced awards for inter-disciplinary post-doctoral fellowships.

Item 12 (iv): unhelpful reply now received from the Charity Commission to our procedural enquiry. I'll now try to get signatures from the remaining committee members and submit a formal application.

Note of brief informal meeting of some members of the Committee in Belfast, 19 July 2003

The members who were attending the Joint Session met, primarily in order to settle arrangements for the formal launch of the Association at the reception later that day. Other matters dealt with:

Returning Officer for the election of the Executive Committee

It was agreed that the Secretary (who would not be a candidate in the election) would serve as Returning Officer for the election.

Eligibility for associate membership

It was proposed, and agreed, that eligibility for associate membership should be extended to Philosophy PhD students in UK universities.