

Minutes of the Forty-second Ordinary Meeting of Convocation held in Lecture Theatre 1, Herschel Building, University of Newcastle upon Tyne on Saturday 5 June 1999.

MINUTES

Present:

Lord Walton of Detchant (in the Chair), The Vice-Chancellor (Mr JRG Wright), Mr NP Richardson (Chairman of the Alumni Association), Colonel R Belas, Dr EU Bell, Dr SM Bell, Dr J Beveridge and guest, Dr K Broomfield, Mr P Byrne and guest, Dr KR Coghill, Mr CS Cook, Ms K Denham and guest, Mrs H Dixon, Mrs M Emslie-Smith, Mr D Fitzpatrick, Mr R Fothergill, Miss C Frazer and guest, Mr AE Gibbs, Mrs I Holmes, Mrs L Richards, Mr J Jeffery and guests, Mr HF Lake and guest, Dr D Lincoln, Mrs K Ludlow and guest, Mr JR Megson, Dr E Miller, Mr RPG Moulding and guest, Professor D Murchison, Mr W Oliver, Mr A Pape, Mr B Randall, Mrs E Randall, Mr GC Reay, Mr H Regnart, Dr J Robson, Mr P Robson, Dr ML Robson and guests, Dr LM Rozner and guest, Mr B Sadler and guest, Miss JA Scott, Dr C Scott and guests, Mr R Theaker, Mr R Thorn QC, Mrs A Timlin and guest, Mr F Ward and guest, Mr R Hardy, Ms B Landless, Mr JD Soden-Bird, Mr G Smithson, Professor R Storer, Mr H Faulkner-Brown.

In attendance:

Mr DET Nicholson (Registrar), Mr PS Mitchell (Deputy Registrar), Mr MAH Bond (Deputy Registrar), Mr TT McCarthy (Director, International Office), Mrs W Lister (Secretary, Agricultural Society), Mr CJ Cox (Alumni Development Officer), Miss WJ Taylor (Assistant Alumni Development Officer).

Apologies for absence were received from:

Mr ML Cunliffe , Dr C Mclean, M JDRB Percy, Mrs PAM Percy, Mr J Ryan.

1. MINUTES

Minutes of the Forty-first Ordinary Meeting of Convocation held on 25th April 1998 had been circulated. The minutes were approved and signed by the Chairman as a true and accurate record.

Matters arising from the minutes

No matters were arising.

2. HONORARY DEGREE NOMINATIONS

Reported:

a) That honorary degrees had been conferred on the following at an Honorary Degrees Ceremony held on 8th May 1998:

DCL Mr Harry Belafonte
DCL Dr Marjorie Mowlam
DCL Mrs Margaret Barbour
DSc Professor Sujin Jinahyon
DLitt Lord Jacob Rothschild
DD Reverend Dr Donald English

b) That honorary degrees were conferred on the following at an Honorary Degrees Ceremony held on 14th December 1998, to mark the retirement of Lord Ridley as Chancellor of the University:

DCL Mr Cyril Davies
DCL Mr Harry Faulkner-Brown
DCL Mr Alan James Beith
DCL Lord Carrington
DCL Lord Glenamara

3. THE CHANCELLORSHIP

Reported:

That, in accordance with Statute 6(4), the Convocation of the University, at a meeting on 26th January 1999, warmly approved the recommendation of Court and Senate sitting in joint session earlier on that same date, that The Right Honourable Christopher Patten, CH, be appointed Chancellor of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne. Mr Patten had confirmed his acceptance of the appointment.

4. VICE-CHANCELLOR'S STATEMENT 1997-98

Received:

a) The Vice-Chancellor's Statement from the Annual Report of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne for 1997-98 (the Statement had been sent to all members of Convocation).

b) An oral report from the Vice-Chancellor.

The Vice-Chancellor commented that, building on a position of great strength, the University had continued to grow. The managed expansion of student numbers, which had now reached 16,000, was an economic imperative. However, the challenge would be to successfully manage this growing superstructure alongside a static infrastructure. Core funding had continued to decline and, whilst growth in student numbers was a measure of the University's success, this had inevitably meant a decline in resource per student.

The Vice-Chancellor stressed the continued excellence of teaching and research at the University. There had been an increase of 40% in the value of research grants and contracts the University had attracted over the course of the previous year, and Newcastle remained the largest research institution between Leeds and Edinburgh. In the previous year the University had accounted for over 60% of all the research income earned by the five universities in the North East.

The Vice-chancellor drew attention to the development of the 'Joint Infrastructure Fund', a new initiative which would increase the capacity of universities to renew their infrastructure for international research. Of the 140 bids made nation-wide, a total of 20 had been successful. Newcastle was one of only eight universities in the country which had received more than one successful bid.

Collaboration with other universities in the region had continued to strengthen. Of special note were the schemes to widen access to higher education with programmes such as 'Students into Schools'.

The Vice-Chancellor also stressed the importance of continuing to increase the institution's interaction with regional business and industry, through initiatives such as the Newcastle Gateshead Partnership.

c) Questions to the Vice-Chancellor

The Vice-Chancellor answered questions from graduates on the following subjects:

-The effect on the number of applications to the Faculty of Medicine as a result of the Medical School's 24/24 score in the recent Quality Assurance Agency inspection.

-The change, if any, in government's attitude to Higher Education under the Labour government.

-The effect of the introduction of tuition fees on the number of applications the University had received.

-The predicted trend of an increase in the numbers of students choosing to study at their local university.

5. STRUCTURE OF THE ALUMNI DEVELOPMENT GROUP AND THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Received:

A paper from the Alumni Development Group regarding the proposed changes to the structure of the Alumni Development Group and Chairmanship of the Alumni Association.

a) Elected Members of the Alumni Development Group

Considered:

Proposal 1: To increase the number of graduates appointed to the Alumni Development Group by Convocation from four to six with immediate effect.

Resolved:

That Convocation agreed to the proposal.

b) Chairmanship of the Alumni Association

Considered:

Proposal 2: That at the Ordinary Meeting of Convocation in the year 2000, elections are held for the following positions:

- (a) Chairman
- (b) Vice-Chairman;

That the position of Immediate Past Chairman be introduced.

In discussion:

a) It was noted that the Immediate Past Chairman would play an advisory role, allowing for a smooth transition between successive Chairmen.

b) Concern was expressed over the suggested two-year period of office for the Chair. It was suggested that this period might be too short for an individual to make the necessary impact. Three years was suggested as an alternative. The Alumni Relations Officer accepted that this might be an issue, but commented that this needed to be balanced against a concern that a rotation of three-year posts would entail a potential time commitment of nine years for the individuals concerned.

c) The question was raised as to whether the Chairman should be eligible for re-election at the end of his or her period of office.

d) Concern was expressed over whether the creation of the two new posts might lead to an increased expenditure on behalf of the University. The Vice-Chancellor answered that while there would be minor additional expenses, all such posts were undertaken on a voluntary basis, and the greatest resource commitment would be one of time and energy on the part of the new post-holders.

Resolved:

That the Alumni Development Group be asked to consider the above points before making a final recommendation to Convocation. Convocation did, however, give its endorsement to the broad principles proposed within the paper, and confirmed that it would be happy to elect a new Chairman the following year, based either on the

format proposed in the paper, or on whatever amended format was agreed by the Alumni Development Group.

6. ELECTIONS FOR THE ALUMNI DEVELOPMENT GROUP

Received:

Eight nominations for membership of the Alumni Development Group which had been circulated in advance of the meeting. As agreed by Convocation under Minute 5 a) above, six appointments would be made. Ballot papers were handed out at the end of the meeting.

7. ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Received:

a) Report from the North of England Branch of the Alumni Association (a copy of the report had been circulated with the Agenda).

b) Report from the University of Newcastle upon Tyne Agricultural Society (a copy of the report had been circulated with the Agenda).

c) Oral report from the Chairman of the Alumni Association, Mr NP Richardson.

The Chairman welcomed the establishment this year of an Alumni Association AGM, which would provide a forum for the discussion of major Alumni Association business. Members of Convocation were encouraged to participate.

There had been considerable progress in the Association's regional branch development. Recent events had taken place in Spain, Canada, USA, Norway, Malaysia and Singapore. The establishment of email news-groups, already active in eight different countries, was supporting this branch development.

1998 had seen the development of the Alumni Fund, a major new fund-raising initiative run jointly by the University and the Alumni Association. The Chairman reported that, in its first year, the programme had received a positive response, with committed gifts of over £150,000 from alumni. The Fund would support four key areas of University life: Student Hardship; Postgraduate Bursaries; Disabled Access and Electronic Information.

The Chairman also highlighted the ever-closer links between the Alumni Association and the Careers Service, including significant alumni involvement in two further Insight into Management Courses over the previous year.

8. CHAIRMANSHIP AND DEPUTY CHAIRMANSHIP OF CONVOCATION

Reported:

a) That, in accordance with Statute 54, Convocation was required to elect a Chairman of Convocation and may elect a Deputy Chairman, both holding office for

five years. Any retiring Chairman or Deputy Chairman shall be eligible for re-election. Neither shall be a teacher or salaried officer of the University.

b) That the current terms of office of the following as Chairman and Deputy Chairman of Convocation respectively were due to terminate on 31 July 1999;

Lord Walton of Detchant
Mr Frank Ward

Lord Walton had indicated that he wished to stand down after a period of ten years as Chairman. Frank Ward had indicated that he was willing to be re-elected, should this be the wish of Convocation.

Received:

a) One nomination, proposed and seconded, for the appointment of Mr Jack Jeffery as Chairman of Convocation for the period 1 August 1999 to 31 July 2004.

b) One nomination, proposed and seconded, for the re-appointment of Mr Frank Ward as Deputy Chairman for the period of 1 August 1999 to 31 July 2004.

Considered:

The appointment of a Chairman and Deputy Chairman of Convocation for the period 1 August 1999 to 31 July 2004 in accordance with Statute 54.

Resolved:

a) That Convocation approve the appointment of Mr Jack Jeffery as Chairman of Convocation for the period of 1 August 1999 to 31 July 2004.

b) That Convocation approve the re-appointment of Mr Frank Ward as Deputy Chairman of Convocation for the period 1 August 1999 to 31 July 2004.

Mr Jack Jeffery thanked Lord Walton for his outstanding service as Chairman of Convocation for the past ten years, a sentiment which was warmly endorsed by those present at the meeting. Lord Walton expressed his delight that Mr Jeffery would be succeeding him in office.

9. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Considered:

A proposal from the Alumni Relations Officer that the Forty-third Ordinary Meeting of Convocation be held on either Saturday 3rd June 2000 or Saturday 10th June.

Resolved:

The date of the next meeting would be agreed at the next meeting of the Alumni Development Group (subsequently confirmed for 3rd June 2000).

