

# UNION NEWS

Leeds University Union  
Monday, 8th May, 1960

**SPECIAL**  
**No. 1**

1d.

## New Constitution:

# DAY OF DECISION

## S.G.M. on Wednesday

### 4 HOURS TO REACH A COMPROMISE

**A**FTER a bitter argument last Monday evening Union Committee referred the new draft constitution to another Constitution sub-committee.

It was decided that the document was not sufficiently thorough, and that the original sub-committee should have considered other possible forms of Union Government before reporting to Union Committee.

Before the vote was taken on David Bateman's proposal to refer the matter to another sub-committee Dick Atkinson announced his intention of resigning from Union Committee if the motion was passed.

It was passed and Atkinson gathered his duplicated minutes together, formally announced his resignation and left the committee room. He was followed by Margaret Maden and Mary Squire, who expressed their sympathy with him.

Past president Eric Schumacher had referred to the document as being 'woolly' and said that it was not 'thorough enough'... many points, he said, had escaped the attention of the committee members.

Ian Taff, who represents the Medics Representative Council on Union Committee, told of the united opposition of the Medical school to the new constitution, and deplored the lack of consideration given to the representative councils in the draft constitution.

After a short adjournment U.C. members returned to face further threats of resignation from Roy Bull and two other committee members.

After half an hour's further wrangling it was suggested that the draft document should be sent to an S.G.M. so that the Union could discuss the basic principles on which it wished the new constitution to be founded and also documents on other forms of Union government.

Thus at 10.45, after 4 hours of deliberation, the compromise was reached, Misses Maden and Squire retook their seats and the committee moved to the next item on the agenda.

### Post-Grads. Register Protest

**T**HE Post Graduate Students Representative Council have joined the protest against the General Meeting Constitution. They passed the following Resolution last Thursday.

"That the P.G.S.R.C. opposes the principle of the system of Ordinary General Meetings as a means of government of the Union"

### ★ ★ Comment ★ ★

**T**HIS special edition of Union News has been published at very short notice. Its object is to bring attention to the following:

1. There is an A.G.M. in the Riley-Smith Hall at 1 p.m. The future of the Union will be decided at that meeting. You've paid your £7 — do you care how it is spent? Do you care?

2. Voting takes place for the next Union Committee on Monday and Tuesday, (May

8th and 9th). Don't assume there will be no Union Committee next year — there might be.

We appreciate the fact that some people will be too busy on Wednesday to come to the S.G.M. Exams are in the near future. But if you can manage it, then you ought to come along.

**DON'T FORGET. IT'S YOUR FUTURE. AND YOU WILL DECIDE IT.**

### The Back-ground history

## Sub-Committee not 'thorough enough'

**F**IVE months ago Roy Bull submitted his proposals for a revolutionary new constitution to the Union executive. Union Committee then set up a sub-committee 'to examine the Constitution of the Union, taking into account the proposals submitted by the J.V.P. and to recommend any changes considered necessary.'

The Sub-committee members were David Bateman (Chairman), Katherine McGinty, Mary Squire, Margaret Maden, Dick Atkinson, Martin Forrest, Brian MacArthur, David Pollard, and Roy Bull. They were also given power to co-opt up to six further members.

After much discussion of the various systems of government, the committee took their first and most important decision. They recommended to Union Committee that "we agree in principle to a system of government by General Meetings as opposed to the present system of government by closed committee." Union Com-

mittee has never ratified this recommendation.

Due to lack of time these minutes were not available at the next meeting of Union Committee and when they appeared at the next it was along with three other sets which had dealt with a detailed examination of the new constitution. As a result the President ruled at U.C. that the minutes would be approved as reported and the whole matter discussed when the sub-committee had completed its work.

Martin Forrest told Union News, "The committee has not done the work it was supposed to do, and once having decided to adopt the principle of government by general meeting no other proposals for other types of constitution could be considered."

On the other hand Margaret Maden, a firm supporter of the new constitution, considered that its opponents thought so strongly on the subject they should have produced a minority report.

After twenty-five hours of discussion the Sub-committee finally reported to Union Committee last Monday, and next Wednesday the Union will have an S.G.M. to discuss the whole matter.

**A**T a Special General Meeting on Wednesday the Union will decide whether it wishes to be governed by General Meetings or by another system.

The draft constitution presented to Union Committee on Monday which would set up a system of General Meetings and other documents relating to other alternative systems will be placed before the S.G.M.—but only for discussion.

If Wednesday's S.G.M. is in favour of Government by General Meeting it seems likely that Union Committee will clear up a few minor points in the existing draft proposal for that system and present it to another S.G.M. for formal approval.

Members will remember that this year's A.G.M. empowered U.C. to call such an S.G.M. in order to make constitutional changes. Normally the constitution can only be changed at an A.G.M.

If, on the other hand, Wednesday's S.G.M. indicates a preference for government by any other system which might be suggested, then U.C. would draw up a constitution on the lines indicated and present that to the Union.

Duplicated copies of the draft constitution and the other documents will be distributed for the S.G.M.

The RSH. has also been booked for 10th May, a week on Wednesday, in the event of a constitution being ready for formal approval.

### Reform is THE Election issue

**N**EXT year's Union Committee (if there is one) will probably be divided between those who favour a drastic reorganisation of the Union Constitution and those who prefer an elected U.C. to run the Union. Although we have to wait until the S.G.M. on Wednesday to discover the views of Union Members, most of the U.C. candidates have already indicated their views in the hustings and on their manifestos.

Colin Cherryman and Gerry Lynch seem most unaware of the division. Cherryman, both in his manifesto and at the hustings expressed his opposition to ordinary G.M.s. "A plethora of protest meetings" which he considers an invitation to pressure groups from any part of the Union to create a platonic form of anarchy. He believes that the interests of the Union are best served by elected representatives.

### Impossible Comparison

On the other hand, Lynch believes that it is impossible to compare the relative merits of candidates in Union Elections, and therefore he is in favour of the widening of the area of responsibility which the proposed new Constitution would give in empowering Union General Meetings with ultimate decision-making authority.

Other candidates in favour of Union G.M.s having more authority are Alan Dawe, Sarah White and Margaret Gartlan. Martin Forrest, Dave Pollard, and Pete Brown prefer Union Government by elected representatives.

Dick Atkinson asked the only question at the hustings. After announcing his resignation from U.C. because it did not intend to call an S.G.M. to discuss the New Constitution, he asked candidates how they would have acted. This came as a bombshell to the many candidates who had not been at the U.C. Meeting on Monday night, and many avoided the question. Only a handful gave a reasoned answer. Malcolm Totten, Dave Pollard, and Alan Dawe being the outstanding. Alan Dawe thought that a bye-election ought to be held with Atkinson fighting on this issue. Totten and Pollard, whilst commending Atkinson's principles thought he was wrong to resign.

## MEDICS MARCH PLAN IS FOILED

**A** THREATENED march of five hundred Medical and Dental students to the Union in an attempt to prevent a decision favouring the new constitution from being passed at the S.G.M. has been dramatically nipped in the bud.

The decision to hold the S.G.M. on Wednesday afternoon—the busiest time of the week for many Medics—

has caused a great deal of ill feeling down at the Medical and Dental Schools.

"A mass turn out seems impossible now," said Ian Taff, Dental President, "but we are making every effort to get as many Medics and Dentals as possible up to the Union on Wednesday."

J.V.P. Roy Bull denied that there had been any deliberate plan on his part to prevent the Medics from turning up in force. "I asked Pat Watson and the Medical Representative to suggest a suitable time to hold the

meeting but they were unable to come up with any suggestions. It seems that every afternoon is unsuitable for the Medics," said Bull.

"In any case what's the point of having representatives on Union Committee if they don't point out the inconveniences of a Wednesday S.G.M.," he said. Bull added that if there was a strong objection from the Medics then the time of the S.G.M. could always be changed.

The Medics are bitterly opposed to the proposed new constitution on the

grounds that it would lead to gross interference in what they regard as purely internal affairs. Colin Richardson, a member of the M.S.R.C., stated that he believed the interests of the Medics would suffer if any business, peculiar to Medics, came under the control of ordinary Union Members.

"We have every confidence in the old constitution," said Richardson, "it has suited us fine in the past and our relations with the Union have generally been excellent. If they start playing around with the constitution it might affect our position."



# GOVERNMENT 1 — of the Union

**“UNION members are quite happy to hand over the responsibility for making decisions to their elected representatives JUST SO LONG AS EVERYTHING GOES WELL.”** So said Sam Saunders at Monday night's Union Committee meeting. This is a fair statement of the status quo, but what of the suggestions that the Union should be governed by General Meetings, or by a Students' Representative Council?

Is there any reason why we should radically change the constitution of the Union? Under the present system there are three constitutionally determined occasions when Union members can voice their opinions, and three more which have been established by precedent. These are AGMs, SGMs, and Union Committee meetings at which any Union member may attend and ask permission to express his views (permission has never to my knowledge been refused); discussion meetings, terminal forums and private members business in Debates. The views of Union Members can be and are expressed on these occasions, and although U.C. are not forced to act on any resolution except those from General Meetings they must surely neglect such resolutions at their peril. The greatest single advantage of

the present system lies in its inherent stability. Outside bodies know who they are dealing with; and decisions are not usually altered by any large extent, since the same people vote on each occasion, which is unlikely to happen in any larger gathering.

The suggestion that the Union should be governed by General Meetings can be attacked on several grounds. Why should 250 people elected by no-one be allowed to run

**Contributed by  
DAVID HARMER**

the Union? And anyway, are these the only people who have the right to pay their Union fees? Furthermore at whatever time it is decided to hold General Meetings, there is certain to be a large section of the Union who will be unable to attend.

Finally, experience at U.C.L. has shown that a General Meeting system creates even more apathy than there was before, and at the L.S.E. the only Union other than UCL which has this system, attendances are a mere 200-250 out of between 2,000 and 3,000.

A students representative council has been suggested as a compromise between the two systems. Unfortunately, however, an S.R.C. would combine the faults of both systems.

Whether representatives were by residence, department, faculty, societies, year of study, or any combination of these, an S.R.C. would suffer, either from being excessively large or from University departmentalisation, or from some people being represented twice (which might prove undemocratic).

If one section of the Union possessed too many candidates of excellent quality, as, for example the law department used to provide a year or two ago, the best people would not get elected.

In the sphere of welfare, students live in halls, lodgings or flats, all of which are usually represented on U.C. The chief remaining functions of the Union are food and recreational facilities, in which all students are the same, so where is the need for specific representation? A Union is a union, not a conglomeration of separate parts.

In conclusion, I can only echo the words of Brian McClorry, which are the sentiments of many technologists: "Bloody hell, I don't want to govern myself." Let us stick to our present constitutional system and tighten it up where necessary, for example by allowing discussion meetings to make recommendations to U.C. in the same way as sub-committees do at present. Give us more publicity so that our present constitution can work more effectively.

# 3 — by the Union

**THE question of Union Government by General Meeting is in many ways a confused one, and there are a number of points which need to be cleared up.**

Firstly it is essential to understand that General Meetings do not mean that Union members will be directly responsible for the day to day running of the Union. Officers of the Union will continue to fulfil their functions as they have on past, and Sub Committees of the Union will continue as they do at present.

The difference is, however, that whereas these officers and Sub Committees were previously responsible to Union Committee they would now be directly responsible to the Union members in General Meetings. The function of the General Meetings would be to approve decisions taken, and to formulate the general policy of the Union administration.

This seems to be admirable in principle and be accepted by anyone who sincerely believes in a democratic form of Government as being more representative than the present system.

Supporters of the new constitution have often argued that two hundred people would be more representative than twenty two. This is rather a trite argument for obviously this need not be the case. Equally in some ways is the argument that pressure groups might take over the running of the Union in their own interests. I am

prepared to defend the idea that those most interested in the Union should be responsible for its government but I am not even prepared to accept that University students could be so irresponsible as to deliberately seek to gain control of the Union for their own selfish ends. Such an argument implies considerable mistrust and contempt of the intelligence of the ordinary Union members on the part of those who propound it and a fear of the effects of democracy that sits very strangely on the shoulders of those who profess to be its greatest admirers.

**Contributed by  
ALAN POWELL**

These fears of pressure groups are based largely on the presumption that attendances at General Meetings will be small. This attitude again seems to underestimate the intelligence of the members of the Union. We have seen clearly this year that where the interest of the Union members are affected they will respond to being asked their opinion and discuss the merits of the proposals without prejudice. If they had a direct say in running the Union instead of an annual and discussion meetings, I think a similar response to that on Lodgings would be the result.

Obviously it will always be only a small minority who are interested in the running of the Union; this is shown already in the numbers who vote in Union elections, and the majority are not concerned so long as the facilities of the Union are ade-

quate. On really major issues they will turn out as they have always done and the size of the University will not affect the response whatever the form of government.

The great merit of government by general meeting is that it ensures a more direct control of the Union's affairs by its members, a greater responsibility on the part of its officers and would also provide a medium where Union members could find a remedy for personal grievances more satisfactorily than at present.

The basic aim of those who propose the form of government by general meeting is to institute a system whereby Union Committee always acts with the support of the Union members behind them.

For anyone conscientiously interested in finding out what the Union wants done on any issue, and then doing it, it is a piece of machinery without which one is under serious handicaps when action is needed.

On many matters Union Committee has in the past been very slow to act, very nervous about doing anything radical precisely because it did not go to the Union with a policy and receive its mass approval.

The minds of leading Union figures (and many Union Members) who have not seen the need for these massive votes of confidence and have completely failed to understand their significance, have, in fact, sometimes become so petrified and conservative that they even oppose any radical actions or innovations, not content with just dragging their feet on them simply because they are new and difficult. Such people are, of course, bitterly opposed to any reform.

## DON'T FORGET

# LODGINGS QUESTIONNAIRE

Everybody who receives one should fill it in carefully and honestly. And remember to place it carefully in the Ballot boxes provided.

# 2 — for the Union

**ONE of the main problems that growth and decentralisation gives is that of the administration and government of the Union. How can the student body deal with such activities as the administration of the Union building; of students services; of sporting and cultural facilities; of grants and welfare problems . . . These must be administered by student officers, according to the wishes of the members of the Union.**

Various proposals have been made as to how an increase can be made in the working of Union administration and the representative nature of what they do.

Two years ago it was proposed that we have a representative council based on the faculties of the University. Two years ago it was also proposed that the Union Committee be increased in number. Now Mr. Bull has attempted further constitutional changes.

I would like to deal with the various ideas for Union government that have been proposed.

Firstly the present system. I consider that this system will have to be altered because of the growth of the Union and because students are being dispersed over such a large area.

Secondly, the system Mr. Bull proposes; I would consider this would be desirable but unworkable.

Looking at one or two Unions that have this system I would point to UCL that is thinking of changing to our system because of Union apathy. Out of an electorate of 3,600 they have an average attendance of 150— is this fully representative?

Discussion meetings at Leeds have not been over-well attended—perhaps lousy publicity has a little to do with this.

I would suggest that in a Union of 5,000 increasing to 7,000 a vast proportion will not have the opportunity,

ability or inclination to attend these meetings. I would suggest that a vast proportion of the Union would rather delegate the work to others.

The system I would advocate would be a mixture of these two. I would keep the present Executive Committee, whose duty is the essential day-to-day running of the Union, but I would merge the posts of SVP and JVP into one. I would keep the present Union Committee, but would give each mem-

**Contributed by  
DAVID POLLARD**

ber a specific job to do—as the recommendations of the Constitution sub-committee propose.

I would then introduce a Union Council, based on representation from Union societies, sports clubs, halls of residence, etc. Each Union Council member would represent the wishes of a certain section of the members of the Union. The number for Union Council would be about 150—a number that is workable, and yet entirely representative. Since they are the representatives of students they will (a) have to attend all meetings of Union Council, and (b) work for the implementation of the wishes of those who they are elected to represent. No-one need worry about power blocs, about not being consulted or heard.

I am convinced that this is the only system that could both be an active method of government and a fully representative method of government. I attempted to discuss this at Constitution Sub-Committee, but was unable to do so. This system is not so very far removed from the majority recommendations of Constitution Sub-Committee, but it has the advantage of being both workable and representative. It can represent the interests of and provide facilities for the members of a growing Union in the best possible way.

## HELP

- SELLING TYKE
- PAINTING POSTERS
- TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT
- SELLING CAR COMPETITION TICKETS
- DECORATING FOR RAG MAN'S BALL

### There is still time to

- BUILD A RAG FLOAT
- HAVE A BLOCK BOOKING FOR RAG REVUE
- ENTER RAG QUEEN COMPETITION (females only)

ENJOY YOURSELF and help **CHARITY**

**RAG** is after the exams.  
office is on 1st floor of the Union.

**VOTE-MONDAY-VOTE-TUESDAY**

Use your vote at Union Committee Elections

held on May 8th-9th