

## **NATIONAL ASSEMBLY REPORT (8-10 October 2010)**

### **Finances and Literature Workshop**

This was held on the Friday evening before the Assembly and run by John, the OAGB treasurer, and Sam, the Literature Liaison.

#### **Finance**

- John talked through the accounts for the last 4 years, in order to help non-accountants (ie most of us!) to understand what they mean. One particular issue that was raised was that before John took on the role of treasurer, an accumulation of funds had built up, and money had not been passing up the service structure to Region 9 and the World Service Office. This was due to the fact that the accounts had previously been presented in a way which did not make it clear that there was more money being held in reserve than was actually needed. Once this was brought to light, OAGB made donations of £2000 to Region 9 and £10,000 to WSO. Decisions were also made to spend £10,000 on hiring a PR company to help us do public information work with the media, and money was also spent to allow the literature service not to charge postage costs this year. In order to prevent this situation reoccurring, John is committed to ensuring that all board members are kept up to date with the accounts and understand OAGB's finances.

#### **Literature Service**

- The online ordering of literature has been going well, and there has been a slight increase in sales over the year, whereas sales had been declining in previous years. Two thirds of all orders are now being made online.
- Most of the books and leaflets are produced in the US and imported, however some of the leaflets are printed in this country, which means that we can put the OAGB contact information on there rather than contact information for OA in the US.
- Members asked if it was possible for the literature service to consider selling steps and traditions banners, however, there were concerns over whether this would be cost effective. It was raised that the Sydney, Australia intergroup offered the banners on their literature service and at least one group had ordered some from them!
- Also, it noted that the literature service currently only sells recovery coins up to 9 months, this will be looked into.

#### **Public Information Workshop**

- Maureen ran a Public Information workshop on the Saturday morning before the Assembly.
- There have not been enough members on the Board in previous years to allow much PI work to be done, so a decision was made to pay for the skills and experience which we didn't have ourselves. A short list of PR companies was considered, the Board interviewed people from two of them and chose a company to work with, Project PR.
- The PR company have produced a basic information sheet for journalists, have conducted interviews with OA members to compile case studies, and have sent out press releases to generate interest in the press.
- There have been a number of newspaper articles and radio interviews, including the two page article in the Mail on Sunday, and the PR company are continuing to create interest by producing topical press releases. One release used statistics from the recent survey of OA members, which showed that over half of OA members considered that their eating disorder had started before the age of 10. This led to articles in the Evening Standard and the Scottish Sun, as well as interviews on Radio 5 Live and other local stations.

- £5000 has already been spent on the campaign, and another £5000 has been set aside to continue until the end of January. After that, a decision will need to be made about whether to continue this work, and how to fund it.
- A suggestion was also made that we could ask the PR company to help with the PI work we do in our groups, giving advice and helping to design professional looking PI posters etc. Maureen explained that this wasn't really their area of expertise, but that if the decision was made to stop working with the PR company in January, then more work with PI at group level might be possible.

## National Assembly

### Board Member Elections

- Our Intergroup had put forward two nominees, Sam and Maureen, and both were elected to the Board.
- Ruth from South Coast intergroup had also been nominated, and as she was not able to attend the Assembly, the Vice Chair of the intergroup spoke on her behalf. She talked about Ruth's service history and commitment to OA, as well as the voting procedure by which she was nominated. Ruth was also elected to the Board.
- John from the North of England intergroup was part way through his service and remained on the Board.
- This gives us a Board with only 4 members for 2011, when we have a legal requirement to have 5 or more. Therefore the articles of association for OA, which govern our legal status, will need to be rewritten.

### Motions

- **Motions B** (whether to count abstentions during voting) and C (establishing guidelines for deciding what is emergency new business) were put on the consent agenda, and voted on without being debated; both motions were passed.
- **Motion A** (whether nominees for the National Service Board should be required to attend the Assembly) was removed from the consent agenda and debated. Those in favour of the amendment felt that it was very important for a potential board member to attend the Assembly so that people could get a real sense of who they were voting for, their suitability for the role, and the opportunity to ask them questions. Those against, said that it didn't make sense to pass this motion since we had just voted in a new board member without her being present, and that it would be contradictory to then vote that doing this should not be possible. They also felt that the requirement for nominees to attend the Assembly could prevent the election of an otherwise suitable candidate, and therefore reduce numbers on the Board and weaken the OA fellowship in GB.  
An amendment to the proposal was put forward, adding the words "other than in very exceptional circumstances". The proposal was debated, and then accepted. The amended motion was passed.
- **Motion D** (whether to remove the restriction on OA members being members of the National Service Board for more than 8 years in a lifetime) was also removed from the consent agenda and debated. Those in favour felt that removing this restriction would help strengthen the Board, and prevent OAGB losing the benefit of the experience of those who had served before, and also increase the number of members serving on the Board. Those against the motion were concerned that certain members would end up having too much influence over OA as a whole by being on the Board a number of times. They also felt that having some members with many years of experience might put off newer candidates, because they think they are not needed or would not be able to contribute as much as the more experienced candidates. After having the debate and questions, the motion was passed.
- **Motion E** (whether intergroups should be allowed to bid to host the National Assembly two years in advance) was amended by the proposer (us!). This was not to change the meaning of it, but in order to simplify and clarify the wording, as other attendees at the Assembly said it was not clear. The first three paragraphs remained as before, and then the original last three paragraphs:

“At the National Assembly, bids to host the next year’s assembly will be voted on before any for two years in advance.

If no two year bid is successful, then the following year bids will be considered as usual to host the assembly the following year.

If a two year bid is successful there will be no bids considered at the next assembly for the following year”

were replaced with:

“The National Assembly will first vote on bids made to hold the Assembly for the following year. It will then vote on bids for two years hence, if any have been made.”

- **Motion F** (whether to change instructions for informing groups/intergroups about the National Assembly from “will receive written notification” to “will receive notification”) was withdrawn. This was because the intention of the motion was to allow the notification to be sent by email rather than post, but the Board had been informed that email did count as written notification, so the amendment was not needed.

### **Emergency New Business**

There was once emergency bylaw amendment, and two emergency resolutions to the Board, however only one was discussed due to lack of time.

### **Emergency Bylaw Amendment**

- “If one or more of the 14 National Service Board positions held by OA members are vacant, the serving board members may co-opt additional members to fill those vacancies at any time, provided they meet the requirements and have the support of their intergroup.”
- The intent of the amendment was to enable people to be co-opted to the Board throughout the year, not just to fill vacancies where someone had resigned. The motion was discussed, but two of the current board members spoke against it, saying that it would make things more difficult because it may require board members to change roles part way through the year, and also that it gave possibly too much power to the board if they were able to appoint new board members without them having to stand for nomination in the usual way. The motion was defeated.

### **Emergency Resolution**

- An emergency resolution was put to the Board, asking them to investigate the possibility of the Northern Ireland intergroup affiliating with OAGB. The resolution was debated, with the point being made that there would be a number of legal issues, for example relating to our status as a charity, that would need to be looked into. The resolution was passed.
- Thank you for the opportunity to attend the Assembly on behalf of the Intergroup, it was great to meet OA members from all over the country and get involved in the group conscience of OA at the national level.