

National Assembly 2016

National Assembly this year was held just outside Glasgow, from Friday evening to Saturday afternoon 14-15th Oct with a convention running concurrently with the OAGB board meeting on Sunday 16th.

I traveled up by train from Euston and arrived on Friday for 5pm. After dinner all reps were asked to attend a service workshop from 8-9:30pm which was run by Stella, currently the trustee for our Region (Region 9). She discussed the way the NA business meeting is run, the use of Robert's Rules and center mic etc. It was useful to have been attending IG the past few years and be familiar with some of these formal procedures. Stella ran a further one hour workshop on Saturday morning discussing the Traditions and the Concepts of Service as vital to the smooth running of our business meetings which was also helpful.

From 10am-5pm the National Service Assembly ran, beginning with readings, establishing of a quorum (25% of voting members), board officer introductions, approval of minutes etc. 77 voting members were present (of 217 possible) plus 21 non voting visitors.

Four board members made up the NSB (out of a possible 14 positions) with two due to step down at this assembly. Emma (North of England IG) was co-opted as Chair in June when the previous Chair had to step down for personal reasons. Elena (West of England IG- now closed) was Treasurer and Company Secretary; Alan (SEEIG) was Literature Liaison Officer and Hilary (Heart of England) was Secretary. Each officer had provided a report and we were given time to ask questions although only a few were asked.

Four candidates had applied to become officers on the NSB: Caroline (previously our IG chair), Chris (Heart of England IG), Lisa (North of England IG) and Sandra (Caledonian IG). They had each provided personal statements/OA biographies and were given time to briefly present their applications before questions them and voting by ballot. All were voted on to the board with 75, 72, 75 and 77 votes respectively. We were later informed that Board roles going forward had been allocated as follows:

Sandra- Chair

Caroline-Communications Officer

Chris- PI Officer

Lisa- Treasurer and Company Secretary

Whilst Alan and Hilary are to continue in their current roles.

North of England had submitted a bid to host the 2017 NA and were given time to present this bid to us. It was then voted on and accepted by those present.

Heart of England had also put together a late bid to host the Assembly for 2018 and this had been added to the agenda. However it was subsequently ruled out of order since notice had

not been given at the Chairs meeting in June (a requirement of our bylaws) and so the bid was not presented.

After lunch the Assembly heard about progress made by the committee investigating the employment of a Board Administrator to serve OAGB (Deborah, who runs the literature service has, until now, been our only paid employee). As soon as the new board is settled after the Assembly, the post will be advertised as widely as possible within the fellowship which is where we would hope to recruit from. It will initially be a fixed term contract for 2 years and will then be reviewed.

The only motion brought for debate at the Assembly was the bylaw amendment put forward by our IG regarding Intergroup representation at Assembly- that larger IG's would be granted the option of bringing one rep per 15 meetings in their area. I presented this motion to the Assembly which was a slightly nerve-wracking experience since opinion was divided and in some cases very strong!

Objections to the motion (Cons) were as follows:

- The South will be over-represented
- It will discourage your meetings from sending their own reps
- If too many members from one area come to do service on the board it will become imbalanced e.g. When one IG previously dominated the board it moved to make every Assembly in the same central area of the country rather than being hosted by different IG's
- That too many members from one meeting/ area bringing their food plan might try to influence others with that
- There is nothing to stop us paying for extra members to attend and experience the NA but they need not have a vote
- Your IG is too big and you should split it to encourage more members to come

After my initial speaking to the motion, other support (Pros) were:

- SEEIG has 77 meetings and they are not being represented at NA
- It doesn't matter where people come from to give service on the NSB
- IGs have closed in our area and that's why we have become so large, most recently Kent and Essex, we cannot split our IG.

A question was also asked as to whether the change would influence our quorum i.e. Would we then have another 10+ potential votes (as other IG's would also qualify to bring extra voting representatives) to factor in to our 25% quorum? The answer was yes which would make quorum harder to reach if those IG's were not able to send all their possible reps for financial or other reasons.

The motion was defeated with a vote of 34:38 although we required a 2/3 majority for a bylaw amendment.

We had been asked to sign up on arrival for committee sessions from 3:30-4:45 on the Saturday and I joined the literature session. I committed to writing an article for a Literature newsletter and to helping with survey of the service. Our committee was not as productive as some other groups as it was unclear what might be added to the already functioning standing committee for literature. However, groups which covered Twelfth Step Within, Step by Step (the OAGB newsletter), Electronic Communications, PI and PO seemed to have been more successful. Committees and sub committees were formed, plans were made and members were enthused.

No other business was brought and the 7th tradition for the Assembly was announced as £264.75. We closed with the Serenity Prayer at 5pm.

It was a great opportunity to see the group conscience of OA in this country in action and to get the experience of participating by presenting our motion for debate. It was also good to be in the company of fellow compulsive eaters, to talk over meals and break times and hear their experience strength and hope on all sorts of things.

I observed two hours of the OAGB board AGM on Sunday morning and managed to squeeze in listening to two inspirational chairs and some general sharing at the convention before heading off at lunchtime to catch my train back to London. Thank you for the chance to serve.