

INSTITUTE OF SHORTHAND WRITERS

ONE HUNDRED AND NINETEENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

held at

Fleet Arbitration Centre,
6th Floor, Hulton House,
161-166 Fleet Street,
London EC4A 2DP

on

Wednesday, 25th April 2001

at

6 p.m.

MS. VALERIE DOYLE

(President)

P R O C E E D I N G S

THE PRESIDENT: Ladies and gentlemen, we are about to start, but I have to say that we are not quite quorate. We should have a few more members here, but with everyone's permission we could start. (Agreed)

Agenda Item 1

Notice of Meeting

THE PRESIDENT: Mary Sorene, our Secretary, will open the meeting.

(The Notice of Meeting was read)

Agenda Item 2

Apologies for Absence

THE PRESIDENT: We now come to Apologies for Absence.

(Apologies were received from: Anne Mills, Rita Fox, Joan Webb, Jackie Roper, Jean Gough, Pauline Humphreys, Lynn Briault, Robyn Nott, Christine Lawton, Ann Hill, Naomi Forrest, Fiona Pettitt, Helen Tennyson-Spelman and Julie Milliken)

Agenda Item 3

Minutes of the 2000 AGM

THE PRESIDENT: Are the Minutes of the last AGM agreed? They were sent to the membership. (No response) As there are no comments, we take them as agreed.

(The Minutes of the 2000 AGM were agreed and signed as a correct record of the meeting)

Agenda Item 4

Presidential Address

THE PRESIDENT: Ladies and gentlemen, this is the One Hundred and Nineteenth Annual General Meeting of the Institute. I have to say that it has been a fairly quiet year compared with some that the Council has experienced.

Some members were worried earlier this year when Possum Controls announced that they were considering a sale of their Palantype Division. The news this week from Possum is that there was an offer for sale and interest was shown. However, in the end, no sale took place. Possum continues to own the Palantype Division and carry out repairs and servicing of machines, so matters go on as before.

A large sum of money -- I believe £94 million -- has been made available by the Lord Chancellor's Department to modernise the Crown Court system; that is, by introducing new technology in a very practical way into the court room. This includes evidence in electronic form, in fact, bringing computerisation into the court room in a much wider way, and documents behind the scenes being forwarded and accessed much more speedily.

With regard to the Review of Criminal Courts being conducted by Auld LJ, no report is available yet. The report is in a state of preparation still and is expected to be published shortly.

On the subject of reports, Sir Andrew Leggatt is conducting a review of tribunals. We will, no doubt, be informed of its findings at its conclusion.

We have in attendance this evening Mr. Martin Bangs from TalkWriteBack, who will speak to us about the digital recording of proceedings and its transmission over the wire for transcription. A lot of interest has been shown in this system. I am sure it will be an interesting talk and I know that many of us are looking forward to it.

The Institute has been invited by the National Association for Deafened People to organise a seminar covering training and technology with emphasis on providing text support for deafened people. The seminar has been made possible because the NADP has obtained a Lottery grant of £5,000 for this purpose, a sum which will go a long way towards its costs. Members who have booked to attend will pay a small contribution and the rest of the cost is being met by the Institute.

It will be noted that, although our bank balance is healthy and remains in credit, our expenses this year have been more than our income. This is because the membership is falling and, therefore, subscriptions, which are our main source of revenue, are fewer. The shortfall is met out of our capital. This has been the pattern in the past few years. As investment capital dwindles, combined with low

interest rates, interest earned is less.

The Institute pegged subscriptions at their current rate some years ago, and rightly so, because members did take a drop in income. We will look at our expenses again and we hope to be able to reverse this trend.

Two Council members, Sue McIntyre and Jean Gough, tendered their resignations this year. We are sorry to lose them, but I thank them for their work and support which they gave to the Council and for their promised support in the future.

I give special thanks to Pauline Humphreys, our Treasurer, who has also resigned this year, and Mary Sorene, our Secretary. Pauline has looked after our accounts and dealt with queries for many years. She cannot be with us tonight because of work commitments. Mary has kept order in the correspondence department and keeps a watchful eye on matters of interest which crop up on the Internet.

That brings me to the end of my speech. It has not been a terribly busy year. No major matters have come to light. If any members have questions or comments that they would like to make, perhaps they would like to mention them now. (No response)

Betty Willett would like to say a few words on reporter training.

MS. BETTY WILLETT: The President has given me permission to

mention something which has happened only in the last couple of weeks. An organisation called the United Kingdom Council of Deafness, known as UCOD -- some of you who are palantypists or stenotypists will realise how funny that comes out as sometimes -- is very concerned about the shortage of stenotypists and palantypists to provide a text service for deaf people. So they are looking into the training possibilities and are trying to get some funding to see what they can do. The stupid thing is that they have set up a committee without any in-put at all from any technician in the field, which is the usual way things are done, so those of us who are working in this field get e-mails from all and sundry asking for advice on various matters. However, it shows that somebody is trying to do something about training.

I apologise to my Council members that I did not mention this item in the meeting beforehand, but we did not really have much time available. I will keep everyone up to date on this subject and will let you know what happens through the newsletter. This, of course, means that some people will be available who will not necessarily go into the deaf world but who might be prepared to work in courts, if there are any courts in future, or in the private field. Thank you.

Agenda Item 5

Treasurer's Report

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on to the Treasurer's Report. This has been circulated to the membership, but more copies are available if you wish to see them.

Are there any questions on the Treasurer's Report?

(No response)

Agenda Item 6

Appointment of Accountant

THE PRESIDENT: I now move to appoint an accountant for the ensuing year. Mr. Kypri of Woldingham, Surrey, is willing to continue. He is a Chartered Certified Accountant. We need a proposer and seconder?

(Ms. L. Gifford proposed; Ms. F. Dobson seconded)

(The Motion was Carried)

Mr. Kypri is elected as our accountant for the ensuing year.

Agenda Item 7

Election of President Elect

THE PRESIDENT: We now move to the election of our President Elect. There were no nominations for the Council, so those who retire automatically by rotation automatically offer themselves and are automatically voted back on to the Council.

The members eligible for President Elect are

Lindsay Bickers (indicated); Stephen Carter, who is not here tonight; Naomi Forrest, who is not here tonight but I think most of you know her; and Robyn Nott.

The voting slips are being passed out. Members and Fellows are eligible to vote.

(Tellers: Mr. Roger Bell and Ms. Ann Lloyd)

The President Elect is Lindsay Bickers. (Applause)

Agenda Item 8

Date of Next Meeting

THE PRESIDENT: The next item is to appoint the date for the Annual General Meeting next year. I am told that that will be on 17th April 2002.

Agenda Item 9

Any Other Business

THE PRESIDENT: Does anyone have anything that they would like to raise or comments to be made?

MS. DOBSON: Do you know when the report is expected from Auld LJ?

THE PRESIDENT: On the Crown Courts Review, I telephoned their office this week and I was told that the report was still being prepared, but they actually said it would be a few weeks. That could be three or ten, probably. They said "shortly" and "a few weeks". That is all they could say. It is still being written, so whenever it is finished. That is all I know.

MS. CHANDLER: Let me say that Virginia thinks -- she has some kind of insider information -- that it may be after the Election. It may be being delayed because of the Election.

MS. VIRGINIA WASON: That makes sense.

MS. CHRIS ARMSTRONG: Can I raise a point about Possum and it being sold or that it is up for sale. What is the position now? Is Possum still producing a machine? Can one still buy a Possum machine. Is it status quo?

THE PRESIDENT: I spoke to Colin Brooks this week. His words were that the Palantype Division -- that part of their business -- was offered for sale. Interest has been shown. It was not sold in the end, but things continue as they did before that, that they will repair and service machines. He told me that training was still continuing on palantype machines. So all was going along as it had before last summer when they offered it for sale. Matters have just reverted.

MS. DOBSON: Do we know if there is still a shorthand writer in the hi-tech court at Kingston?

THE PRESIDENT: I, personally, do not know that.

MS. CHANDLER: It is Newgate Reporters.

MR. ROGER BELL: I am currently working at Kingston. To my knowledge there are no shorthand writers in that court centre, but court no. 8 at Kingston is being rigged for digital recording, about which, I have no doubt, we have all heard and may hear more this evening, and is not currently in

use. I gather it is due to start in a month's time. I had hoped to go and see it. As I am going to be there tomorrow and Friday, I might get the chance if I can persuade security to let me in to have a look round. I think you can be pretty confident that there is absolutely no shorthand writing at Kingston. I certainly hope they do not ask me.

MS. WASON: Can I clarify a point. You said no shorthand writing, but presumably there are loggers there?

MR. ROGER BELL: Yes, of whom I am one. There will be a logger in the hi-tech court.

While I am on my feet, I popped into the House and good wishes come from Helen, Sue, Mike and various other people whom you all know extremely well who work there. I want to pass those comments on, please.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Roger. Are there any more comments?

MS. CHANDLER: I would like to ask Roger to clarify a point.

When he said that there are no court reporters or shorthand writers, there is a CAT commitment at Kingston, is there not?

MR. BELL: I did not say there were no court reporters.

I understood Lindsay's question to concern shorthand writers. There are no shorthand writers.

MS. CHANDLER: What about CAT writers?

MS. DOBSON: Specifically covering the hi-tech court?

MR. BELL: The answer to that question is that the hi-tech court

is not in use at the moment.

MS. DOBSON: But will it be covered by either a shorthand writer or a tape logger?

MR. BELL: I cannot answer that. I do not know the answer to that.

MS. WASON: I have had news that Bournemouth is going to experiment with digital in October and they will require the loggers to remain logging the digital tapes for at least the time of the experiment, which will be six to eight months. So there is no imminent loss of jobs. It will not affect the CAT writer. The CAT writer will still be required to be in attendance.

MS. DOBSON: Are you aware of any training which has been going on in relation to the hi-tech court with the court staff?

MR. BELL: Absolutely not. I learnt about it either by hearing something on the radio or reading about it in the Evening Standard. When I went today -- this is the first time I have been this year because they telephoned me to say they were short -- I asked about the hi-tech court. As I say, it is no. 8. I am afraid I cannot help you with any other information on it. I know that the court has been set up for that purpose. How it will operate, as Virginia said, I do not know.

MS. WILLETT: Let me add something on the Possum situation. Because, as a palantypist, I have become increasingly

frustrated, angry, fraught, and any other adjective you care to add, about the inability of the palantype system to do certain things which seem to me to be very simple, I have been making overtures to some of the deaf charities for whom I work, and one of them is going to write a letter for me to Possum asking what the situation is with updating software, because we have not had any new software for quite a while. It is about time we had some. There are certain things which the stenotypists do with the greatest of ease which, if we could do it, would make our output look so much better. That is being progressed imminently. I say no more.

THE PRESIDENT: Does anyone else wish to add anything?

(No response) In that case, I thank Mike Thear for taking the note this evening.

If there is nothing else, I declare this part of the meeting closed.
