

NCA — Report of Executive Committee

Dr A. N. Walker [chair]

EC has held three full meetings since the last AGM, and has also conducted much business by e-mail. In the interests of openness, we have released minutes as soon as they were produced, and not waited, as in previous years, for them to be confirmed at the following meeting. In the same vein, we have advertised forthcoming meetings, and have invited expressions of interest from NCA and club officers wishing to submit items or to attend. Brian Hayward and Simon Scott have availed themselves of the opportunity, and have made valued contributions.

We have been somewhat depleted. We did not succeed in replacing either the out-going President, Tim Walker, or Neil Graham, who resigned. NCA in general, and EC in particular, owes them both a great deal. Inevitably, this placed a greater burden on the five remaining members; everyone played a part, but perhaps special thanks are due to Robert Richmond, who took upon himself the principal negotiations with Gambit CC in the attempt to find ways forward for NCA, the fruits of which were seen at the RRM.

Our activities over the year have been adequately recorded in our minutes. In addition to the usual financial considerations, and discussions about and reflexions on our chess activities, we are going to have to take on board developments in junior chess, notably in relation to child protection.

Gambit CC has asked that EC make a statement about its role in the C4 controversy. At the end of the 2015 RRM, EC was tasked with investigating whether there was any way in which the C4 proposals could be taken to the AGM. The answer was that yes, there were several ways[†]. The proposal that, with adequate notice, we could change the Constitution, change C4, and finally replace the Constitution was rejected as too complicated. We chose rather to treat C4 as a matter arising from the RRM. Whether we were right to do so is a matter of opinion; whether any of the other ways would have been more satisfactory is equally a matter of opinion. These opinions were not tested at the AGM. For the avoidance of doubt, I am not aware of anyone proposing that the AGM should flout the Constitution, even less that EC would have supported such a proposal. The attacks on EC that were made later, and especially the accusations of bad faith, therefore have no basis.

Everyone concerned, present or not, knew that C4 was to be discussed, and had had the chance to influence the debate both before the RRM and before the AGM, and had had the chance to raise objections to the procedure either before or during the AGM. My personal view is that if those chances were not taken, then it is too late to start objecting after the AGM. We cannot know what would have happened had the AGM rejected the use of the ‘matter arising’ device; there were several other possible ways around the problem, and one of those might have proved acceptable. As it was, a good debate was held, some eloquent speeches were made, and several of those at the meeting — including me — changed their minds as a consequence.

EC was then faced with calls for an SGM which would have amounted to a motion of no confidence. Had those calls borne fruit, there would have been further resignations, the conduct of the SGM would have been fraught with difficulties, and the intended result of the SGM was, in practice, no change. These consequences were not in the interests of NCA. For those reasons, EC did not support proposals for an SGM. The view of EC was that the AGM had decided, rightly or wrongly, on the revised C4, that for the current season that decision was final, and that the right way to change, or even to regularise if that was thought desirable, the decision was at the next RRM. I hope we can now draw a line under this affair.

Andy

[†] Off the top of my head, I can think of six more-or-less ingenious ways, and no doubt a skilful lawyer could find a few more.