

Minutes of the IPSA RC 28 Annual Business Meeting, Reykjavik, Iceland, August 27, 2011

Present:

Richard Cole (University of Texas at Arlington), Jan Erk (Leiden University), John Kincaid (Lafayette College), Thomas Lancaster (Emory University), Fabiola Mota (Univ. Autonoma Madrid), Wolfgang Renzsch (Univ. Magdeburg), Michael Stein (University of Toronto), Lisa Turkewitsch (University of Toronto), Sonja Walti (American University).

1. Introduction:

The Chair, Michael Stein, welcomed the group of 9 RC 28 participants in the ECPR conference who were able to attend this annual Business Meeting. In particular, he thanked Sonja Walti, the First Vice-Chair, for coming to the Meeting, since she will be assuming major responsibilities in covering the items on the Agenda.

2. Financial Report:

Michael Stein reported that at the previous Business Meeting in September 2010 there was a bank balance of CDN \$ 1021.85. In the 11-month period since then there had been CDN \$750.92 in expenditures (salary payments to Sebastian Baglioni, Assistant to the Chair, and Tamica Charles, RC 28 Webmaster) and CDN \$185 in new membership receipts.

This leaves us with a current balance of CDN \$455.93. However, during the summer of 2011 there had been several positive responses from those who had been sent invitations by the RC 28 Recruitment Chair, Rekha Saxena, and they had promised to pay their 3-year membership fee by the end of the summer. There is, nevertheless, a need to implement more effective methods of dues collection from previous and new members.

3. Membership Recruitment:

a) Recruitment Committee:

There are currently 104 members listed under Membership and E-mail addresses on our RC 28 website, but only about one third of them are fully paid up 3 year members. We are therefore engaged in an intensive effort, initiated by the Chair and some members of the RC 28 executive, to both recruit new members, especially among younger colleagues, and implement more effective dues collection methods from established members. Michael Stein reported on behalf of Rekha Saxena that two principal methods of recruiting new members had been used by the Recruitment Committee in recent months in an intensive effort to recruit younger members working in the area of comparative federalism to RC 28. The first was essentially a "top down" method in which Rekha drew on her extensive personal file of academic colleagues and graduate students to send out invitations from the Chair, Assistant to the Chair and herself to non-members who might be interested in joining the RC. In this way we obtained positive responses from about 10 invitees who informed us of their intention to join our RC. The second method was a more "bottom up" procedure, in which Rekha invited about 10 members from different geographic regions and countries who had well-established professional reputations in comparative federalism studies or in public service to serve on her Recruitment Committee. They were assigned the task of recruiting non-members, especially younger members, from their country to our RC. This Recruitment Committee is still in the process of being selected, and should be in operation during the fall.

b) Other Possible Methods of Recruitment:

The Chair mentioned that other techniques had been used to recruit new members. They included giving prominence to recent books, edited books and journal article publications of our members on the RC website; creating a special category of “Featured Publications” on the website for those who had authored, co-authored, edited or co-edited recent book-length publications; exchanging membership information with the IPSA Secretariat; posting papers given by members at RC 28 conferences or joint conferences with other associations. He then canvassed those in attendance for their suggestions for membership recruitment based on their experience in other organizations.

Jan Erk, who is a member of the ECPR Standing Committee on Regionalism and Federalism, reported that that Standing Committee had successfully recruited a large number of members in recent years by concentrating virtually all administrative activities of this standing committee at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland. These activities included the Regional and Federal Studies Journal, a summer school for graduate students, a graduate student journal, and use of graduate students to promote membership in the organization. He also proposed drafting and distributing flyers about RC 28 at academic conferences, and taking out ads in academic journals like *Publius* and *Regional and Federal Studies*.

Wolfgang Renzsch, the IPSA RC 28 Second Vice-Chair, proposed expanding RC 28 membership by extending our network of association partners such as the APSA section on Federalism and Intergovernmental Relations, the ECPR Standing Committee’s Edinburgh group (including Charlie Jeffrey, Wilfried Swenden, Eve Hepburn and Michael Keating), and the Forum of Federations. He also specifically mentioned Finnish and Danish scholars whom he had met recently and who expressed a strong interest in federalism in the context of electoral reform.

Sonja Walti proposed that a further device for expanding our membership is to try to reframe the mission and objectives of our RC in a broader and more encompassing framework that would attract a larger research group. This could include studies of regionalism and multi-level governance (further discussion of this issue of reframing the RC 28 Mission Statement was left to item 4 below).

c) Strategies for Getting Members to Pay their Membership Fees:

The Chair called on John Kincaid and Sonja Walti to elaborate on their recent proposals for strengthening the process of dues collection in the case of delinquent members. The former (Kincaid) has proposed that we impose a password requirement for access to the conference papers presented by our members at our RC 28 conferences and joint conferences that are posted on our RC 28 website. This would enable only dues-paying members to access and obtain these papers. The latter (Walti) expressed her preference for using “positive perks” rather than “penalties” as inducements for members to pay their membership fees. For example, she proposed that we include the publications of only paid-up members on our website Publications List, and that we create a forum or online space on the website that is available only to dues-paying members. A vote on these proposals was deferred for further executive and membership discussion.

A decision was then made to move the discussion on a Proposal for a Revised Mission Statement for our RC from item 5 to item 4 on the Agenda.

4. *Proposal for A Revised Mission Statement*

The proposal has recently been advanced by Sonja Walti that we redefine our mission statement to reflect our desire both to attract more members and to encourage a wider

research focus. This is desirable because of the great and increasingly large variations in types of federal, quasi-federal, decentralized or devolved unitary, and other hybrid federal and multi-level governance systems that currently exist globally. In addition, she pointed out that this broadening of our mission statement and mission would serve to distinguish our committee from other associations that foster membership and research in this area. This includes the American Political Science Association section on Intergovernmental Relations and Federalism, which defines federalism in narrower, more institutional terms and concentrates on mature western federations, in particular the US federation. It would also differentiate us from the Forum of Federations, which, although it has a more worldwide focus, also tends to define federalism more narrowly than we do. Because we are an IPSA RC, we can afford to be broader in our mission.

John Kincaid seconded this point of view and argued that a broader focus for our RC is not only a good way to attract more members, but also to appeal to those scholars and practitioners who do not think of themselves as students of federalism. Although he personally does not follow an MLG approach, he does think that broadening our mission and focus to include comparative federalism, decentralization and multi-level governance concerns would be a constructive step for our RC, and could send a signal to non-members who concentrate on other areas that are related or cognate to federalism that we wish to interact with them.

Other members in attendance then added their comments and proposals on this question. These various proposals included suggestions to rename our RC a research committee on “Comparative Federalism, Regionalism, Devolution and MLG” (Stein); “Comparative Federalism, Decentralization and Territorial Politics” (Erk); “Federalism, Regional Autonomy and MLG”(Kincaid); “Federalism and MLG” (Cole). Sonja Walti reminded those present that since different terms can be used in different contexts, we should include a term that is “catchall” in meaning, such as “comparative”, in order to avoid encroaching on the territory of other RCs. And Tom Lancaster argued that in a revised mission statement, we should also include a brief statement that we recognize that all these terms overlap to some degree, and are used differently in different contexts.

After Sonja Walti did a quick check and determined that none of the various proposals for an RC 28 name change seriously overlapped with the mission or terrain of other IPSA RCs, the Chair called for a vote on a new RC 28 title. John Kincaid moved that the name “Comparative Federalism, Decentralization and Multi-level Governance” be adopted, and there was a unanimous vote in favour of that motion.

5. Approval of the IPSA 6-Year Committee on Research and Training (CRT) Draft Review Report for RC 28

The Chair tabled his draft Review Report that had been circulated to all members of the RC 28 executive and had been approved unanimously by them after some minor revisions had been incorporated into it. He called for a Business Meeting ratification of this Executive Committee vote, and it was likewise approved unanimously. The Report will now be forwarded to the relevant executive representatives of the IPSA CRT.

6. Discussion of RC 28 Website List of Publications:

Wolfgang Renzsch raised the issue of which member publications should be included on our website, whether they should only be recent (1-2 year) publications or older publications, and whether they should only be book or edited book publications or also journal publications. Michael Stein replied that at the previous Business Meeting in September 2010 in Camden/Philadelphia it had been decided that book and journal publications of members should be included on the Publications List, but that the list should be continuously updated

so that only the publications that had appeared in the previous 3 years (since 2008) would now be posted, and earlier publications would be dropped from the list. He pointed out that an effort had been made to advertise on the website or create links to information and activities of our comparative federalism partner associations, such as the summer school activities of the ECPR Standing Committee on Regionalism and Federalism, the publications of the Rutgers University Center on US State Constitutions, and the CMF Newsletter of the Centre for Multilevel Federalism in New Delhi, India. He also stressed the importance of getting our members to take unilateral initiatives to inform the Chair and his Assistant of additions to that list, since it is impossible for them to keep up to date with all our members' new publications. There was also a consensus expressed by those attending this Business Meeting that the publications list on our website should be limited only to paid-up members.

It was underlined by Sonja Walti that RC 28 views itself largely as a clearing house for publications, rather than as a Committee that produces its own publications. Therefore RC 28 members are encouraged to take the initiative to publish their papers with leading presses and journals, and to leave it to RC 28 website officials to communicate which publications have grown out of which RC conference presentations.

7. Madrid Congress:

Sonja Walti, who is also the Conference Convenor for RC 28 for the Madrid IPSA triennial congress in July 2012, presented to the meeting participants a list of section titles and abstracts and proposed panels to be organized under RC 28 auspices. She announced that thus far 10 panels had been organized by members under her supervision, and that panel papers would be recruited during the months of September and early October until the IPSA Secretariat deadline in late October. In this congress, in contrast to the previous congress in Santiago, Chile, there is no ceiling on the number of panels that can be subsumed by each Research Committee.

8. Future RC 28 Conferences:

Michael Stein announced that Rekha Saxena, a member of the RC 28 executive, has proposed that her home university, the University of Delhi, New Delhi, India, hold the next post-Congress RC 28 conference in September or October of 2013. He also communicated that at Rekha's behest, he has written to the university Vice-Provost and the Political Science Department Head, asking them to support this conference in some manner, such as providing a university room for conference discussions, lunches for delegates at the 2-day conference, etc. He also pointed out that the university has low-cost accommodations that could partially offset the high costs of air travel to India. We are awaiting a confirmation of and further details on these conference plans from the relevant university representatives.

Sonja Walti announced that the next RC Business Meeting will be held at the IPSA congress in Madrid Spain in July 2012. Since IPSA has indicated that it is planning to switch to a 2-year conference cycle rather than the current 3-year cycle, this will have implications for future RC 28 executive elections.

The meeting was then adjourned.