

**Minutes of the 2007 Annual General Meeting of Scientists for Labour
10th July 2007, Committee Room 21, House of Commons**

Present

Apologies

Sean Munro, Gordon Adam, David Whalley, Dianne Hayter, Robin Weiss, Sir Tom Blundell, David Maslin

Before the business meeting, there were two presentations.

Malcolm Wicks MP, Minister of State for Energy, reflected on his brief time as Science Minister and emphasised the need to mainstream science in the public conscience in order to build a skilled society and a scientifically-literate democracy.

Martin Yuille, Archive Director of the UK DNA Banking Network, compared the organisation of research in the EU and the UK, proposing the establishment of a UK Ministry of Research structured along the same lines as DG Research.

Full reports of these presentations will appear in Science Matters.

1. Minutes of 2006 AGM

The meeting voted to accept the minutes as a true record of the 2006 AGM.

2. Matters arising

None were raised

3. Chair's report

John Unsworth drew the meeting's attention to his written report. He said that science is riding on the crest of a wave at the moment, as evidenced by its prominence in major speeches at the Party conference. Gordon Brown has been a strong supporter of science, and the new Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) could become essentially the Ministry of Research that Martin Yuille had called for in his presentation. There is a real opportunity to engage with the government. However, SfL is a small organisation made up of busy people, and needs to focus on a limited number of activities. Over the coming year SfL will attempt to engage with the new Secretary of State at DIUS, John Denham. John thanked Paul Connell and David Caplin particularly for their help during the year.

The meeting voted to accept the report.

4. Secretary's report

Steve Keevil drew the meeting's attention to his written report. He said that the deputy leadership election had provided SfL with its first opportunity to participate as an affiliated socialist society, and the process had been greatly simplified as the Party had engaged Popularis to conduct the ballot with central funding. He reported the first preference results as follows.

Valid ballot papers:	98
Spoilt ballot papers:	20
Total ballot papers received:	118

Total ballot papers dispatched: 275

HILARY BENN	24
HAZEL BLEARS	8
JON CRUDDAS	23
PETER HAIN	6
HARRIET HARMAN	28
ALAN JOHNSON	9

The meeting voted to accept the report.

5. Treasurer's report

In Sean Munro's absence, Steve Keevil read highlights of his report. SfL's financial situation continues to be healthy, with £1,075 in the current account and reserves of £4,500. Sean plans to coordinate membership payments with the membership list and hence improving the issuing of subscription reminders. He still intends to move the SfL bank account to the Co-op Bank or its online subsidiary, Smile.

Martin Yuille pointed out that this change of bank account would require all existing direct debit instructions to be changed. John Unsworth suggested that the existing account should be retained to receive these direct debit payments, and the balance then transferred to the new account.

John Unsworth reported that the previous two years' accounts had now been audited.

Owais Rajput asked how much the Labour Party affiliation fee costs SfL. John Unsworth said that it was around £250.

The meeting voted to accept the report.

6. Editor's report

Paul Connell said that the major achievement this year had been to produce a conference special edition of Science Matters. This year, Science Matters will include summaries of the annual meeting speeches. Good ideas are needed for the conference special. Paul plans to improve coordination between Science Matters and the SfL website.

Martin Yuille suggested including greetings from related organisations and unions such as Unite in the conference special.

The meeting voted to accept the report.

7. Report on Socialist Societies

David Caplin said that affiliation gives SfL a means for two-way communication with the Party and input to the National Policy Forum (NPF). It also makes it easier to secure meetings with ministers and to access shared meeting facilities at conference.

Willie Russell asked whether SfL's membership is sufficient to maintain affiliated status. David Caplin said that a special case had been made, but it is important to maintain or increase membership to retain affiliation.

John Unsworth said that SfL had a loyal membership, despite high-profile issues that had eroded membership elsewhere in the Party. He called for recruitment ideas.

Willie Russell suggested that the NPF would have increased influence under Gordon Brown. Some of the socialist societies have an anti-science agenda, so it is important to contribute a strong positive message.

David Caplin said that the socialist societies have three representatives on the NPF, who report back but are not mandated or accountable. Although SfL could nominate, we are a small organisation and would need to engage with others. This may not be the best route to gain influence.

The meeting voted to accept the report.

7a. Membership Secretary's report

Ann Kingsbury reported that her main task during the year had been to prepare an address list for the deputy leadership ballot. There had been a steady trickle of new members, but there is an ongoing need to coordinate membership and subscription records. She suggested a recruitment drive via local councillors and CLP general committees, perhaps also publicity among Unite members by advertising in their publications. David Caplin suggested a mailshot to UCU members, and Paul Connell suggested the Association for Science Education magazine.

The meeting voted to accept the report.

8. Election of EC members

The following were elected to serve for 2007-2008:

Bobbie Nichols, Fred Mellon, Ann Kingsbury, David Caplin, John Unsworth, Nigel Titchen, Paul Connell, Sean Munro, Peter Stern, Willie Russell, Steve Keevil, Owais Rajput, Kevin Gilligan, Martin Yuille, David Taplin.

9. Future strategy and activities

It was agreed that Willie Russell will continue his efforts to arrange a meeting with the Director General of the European Research Council.

Paul Connell offered to seek additional ideas through Science Matters.

10. AOB

Peter Stern said that SfL has very limited resources, whereas the Fabian Society attracts 700 people to its annual conference. This is held at Imperial College in January, and it might be feasible to hold a parallel session on science. He agreed to check the conference topic – it may be the millennium development goals.

David Caplin said that contact with the Fabians had been attempted previously – there is always a positive response, but no practical outcome. Bobbie Nichols suggested that Martin Yuille's proposals for a Ministry of Research might be attractive to the Fabians, as it is a policy proposal.

The meeting adopted Peter Stern's motion

This AGM instructs/requests the incoming Executive Committee, to approach the Fabian Society, with a view to holding a joint meeting on a relevant topic.

It was agreed that David Caplin would take this forward with the Fabian Society.

Stephen Keevil
25th July 2007