

Minutes of the Founding Meeting of the Council for Academic Freedom and Academic Standards, 1.00 pm, Saturday, 26 February, 1994, at the Quaker International Centre, London

1 There was a general discussion of the problems facing higher education. It was widely felt that there is a decline in standards and that academics who complain about instances of this decline place themselves in jeopardy.

2 Various matters were raised and discussed, including the lack of external Visitorial control in the new universities, the failure of existing methods of quality control, the need for positive action on standards, the increasing use of short-term contracts as a way of stifling dissent and the failure of the higher education unions to confront the crisis.

3 It was agreed that there is need for an organisation to monitor and safeguard standards and to protect academics against victimisation; this organisation should act on both the political and legal fronts and it should involve a panel of lawyers, academic and practising.

4 It was suggested that there be support for the call made by Freedom to Care for an ombudsman for higher education, but a decision on this was deferred until the next meeting.

5 After some discussion, it was agreed to constitute an organisation to be called the Council for Academic Freedom and Academic Standards.

6 It was agreed that one function of the Council would be to publish reports on declining standards and on cases of victimisation. It was agreed that a pamphlet by Michael Cohen and Colwyn Williamson on a recent case involving the University of Wales should be published as a CAFAS report.

7 It was agreed that Colwyn Williamson should serve pro tem as chair, that Michael Cohen and Anne Maclean should serve pro tem as joint secretaries and that Dr Ian Jeffries of the Department of Economics, University College of Swansea, should serve pro tem as treasurer.

8 It was agreed that joint observer status should be suggested to the Council for Academic Autonomy.

9 There was discussion of funding for the Council. It was agreed that those present donate £20 to the Council to include a fee for membership and that the membership fee should be £10 (£5 for unwaged). The question of charitable status was raised, and Sue Hungerford agreed to consider the possibility of a constitution facilitating this.

10 There was discussion of affiliation. Concern was expressed about whether permitting trade unions to affiliate might

limit the capacity of CAFAS to act independently. It was agreed that this matter be placed on the agenda of the next meeting.

11 Harold Hillman agreed to prepare a list of other organisations with which the Council might form links. George Rehin agreed to investigate the possibility of financial sponsorship.

12 Janet Collett agreed to organise a fringe meeting of CAFAS at the AUT May conference and Pat Brady and Geraldine Thorpe agreed to arrange fringe meetings in connection with NATHFE. ✓

13 It was agreed that there be a further meeting on 23rd April 1994.

14 The meeting closed at 3.10 pm.

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