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PRE-T.D.A.
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TAMPA

FEBRUARY 11, 1991

POSSIBLE AGENDA ITEMS

(FOR THE FEBRUARY 15, 1991 SOCIETY DELEGATES MEETING IN TAMPA, FLORIDA)

NOTE: This is an amended version of a list which has been previously distributed. Updated comments are included for several items, and recent suggestions have been added to the end of the list. When the meeting is convened, each society delegate will have the opportunity to propose additional agenda items. Following this, the delegates will vote to determine the final content and priority ordering of the agenda.

One of the proposed purposes of the February society meeting is a review of the many suggestions for constitutional modification which have been made over the past two years. Some members have called for a constitutional convention to effect a major rewriting of our constitution. Others have suggested less sweeping changes. The February meeting can discuss the various suggestions for constitutional modification and decide which should be encouraged, and to what extent. There have also been many suggestions concerning organizational matters which, while probably not requiring constitutional change, would involve significant procedural modification.

Listed below are some of the proposed suggestions for organizational change. No attempt is made to provide a balanced discussion of the positive and negative implications of these suggestions; that would be done at the February meeting. Nor is the listing intended to be complete; please add any items you think should be included.

1. REPRESENTATION FOR EACH SOCIETY ON THE GENERAL COUNCIL:

The General Council is composed of thirty six members elected by the society delegates at the Triennial Delegate Assembly. Some local societies have several members who have been elected to the General Council; others have no members serving on the General Council. It has been suggested that some structure be devised which would insure that each society had at least one representative on the General Council.

2. SHORTENING THE TERM OF OFFICE OF A GENERAL COUNCILOR:

A General Councilor is elected to a nine year term. It has been suggested that this is too long, and should be reduced to as little as three years.

3. LIMITING THE NUMBER OF SUCCESSIVE TERMS ON THE GENERAL COUNCIL:

Currently there is no such limitation. There are Councilors who have been elected to three successive terms and therefore remain in office for twenty seven years.

4. CREATION OF A SEPARATE JUDICIAL BODY:

We currently have a Judicial Committee, but it is not an autonomous entity. It is one of the nine standing committees of our organization and is subject to the overcontrol of the Executive Committee. It has been suggested that we establish a separate and independent judicial body - a supreme court - so as to accomplish the balance of power provided by separate legislative, executive, and judicial functions.

5. REPRESENTATION FOR MEMBERS-AT-LARGE:

Our current structure does not provide any certain representation for members-at-large. They have no vote. They do not participate in the Triennial Delegate Assembly. It has been suggested that we develop some mechanism which would allow members-at-large to gain the right to vote in elections and on other organizational matters.

6. EXPENSE OF SERVING ON THE GENERAL COUNCIL AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

The General Council meets at least two times each year for a period of two or three days. The Executive Committee meets at least four times each year, for a period of two or more days. Each person pays their own travel and lodging expenses. For some persons these costs can amount to several thousand dollars. It has been suggested that some highly qualified individuals cannot accept positions of organizational service because they cannot afford the expense of participation. These same considerations apply to participation in the Triennial Delegate Assembly, and to attendance at conferences. It may affect the ability of some societies to send representatives to the Tampa meeting which is the subject of this letter. It has been suggested that we try to find some way to solve this difficulty.

7. INFORMING THE SOCIETIES OF CURRENT ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES AND SOLICITING INPUT FROM THE SOCIETIES BEFORE FINALIZING MAJOR ORGANIZATIONAL DECISIONS:

Some members have expressed the opinion that the Executive Committee and the General Council do not adequately inform the membership concerning organization business, or allow the societies to express their views as part of the decision making process. It has been suggested that mechanisms be developed to provide more complete and efficient interactive communications between the representative decision making bodies and the societies.

8. OPENING GENERAL COUNCIL MEETINGS TO OBSERVERS:

General Council meetings are conducted in closed session. There have been repeated requests to open these meetings to member observers. The General Council meeting in Tampa will be open to observers.

9. IMPROVING THE TRIENNIAL DELEGATE ASSEMBLY ELECTIVE PROCESS:

It has been suggested that the triennial delegates do not have enough information about the candidates for council office, or of some of the current organizational issues under consideration, and that procedures be developed to better prepare triennial delegates to carry out their elective and resolution functions.

10. A PERMANENT NAME FOR OUR ORGANIZATION:

In addition to these issues, we also have the matter of selecting a permanent name for our organization. This has been a hotly debated topic among our membership, and there are a wide variety of views and supporting reasoning. We have got to decide upon a permanent name, and this decision is one which should involve our entire membership. Part of the Tampa meeting can be devoted to a discussion of this question, including a review of all work done so far and a consideration of some of the legal issues which may or may not affect our choice of a name. This is another matter which should be fully discussed in each society so that we can assemble a reasonably accurate sense of the desire of our membership concerning the choice of a name.

11. AVAILABILITY OF URANTIA BOOKS:

Current Foundation policies appear to be as follows. At the discretion of the Trustees, individuals will be permitted to purchase up to five books in any calendar year at a forty percent discount. Other than this, the Foundation will not sell books to individuals, including sales at full retail price. The Foundation claims to have "an active program of encouraging sales in retail outlets", but no details have been provided. Recent surveys indicate that wholesale book distributors have been unable to obtain books from the Foundation and no longer list it in their catalogs. Retail bookstore stocks appear to be declining rapidly.

12. ESTABLISHING CONTACT WITH NEW READERS:

Many new readers write to 533 Diversey Parkway seeking information about Urantia Book activities. The Foundation will not share these inquiries with the Fellowship. What can we do to overcome this difficulty? Some things have already been tried, while others are planned. These can be reviewed, and additional suggestions considered.

13. ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS AND STRATEGIC PLANNING DISCUSSIONS:

Over the past few years there has been much discussion, committee work, and several large meetings concerning organizational goals. The latest phase of this process is currently in development and will be discussed at the February meeting. Society representatives will have the opportunity to review the work done to date and offer comments and suggestions. Society of Greater New York has recently prepared a statement on this subject; it will be available at the meeting.

14. ANNUAL DELEGATE ASSEMBLY: Heart of America Society has proposed annual meetings of society delegates. The full content of the proposal will be presented at the Tampa meeting.

15. PUBLICATION OF GENERAL COUNCIL MINUTES: Minutes of General Council meetings are not widely distributed. It has been suggested that Council minutes should be available to all members.

16. MAINTAINING A GLOBAL VIEWPOINT: Some members feel that we are not giving attention to developing an organization which has truly worldwide viewpoint and appeal.

ADDITIONAL ITEMS TO BE ADDED FROM THE FLOOR PRIOR TO FINALIZING THE AGENDA.