

MINUTES OF AN UNOFFICIAL MEETING OF DELEGATES, ALTERNATES, AND REPRESENTATIVES
OF FELLOWSHIP SOCIETIES
PRIOR TO THE JUNE 22-23, 1991 TRIENNIAL DELEGATE ASSEMBLY (TDA)
FEBRUARY 15, 1991

At the invitation of the Executive Committee of Fifth Epochal Fellowship, delegates, alternates, and others representing fourteen of seventeen societies met in an unofficial session (i.e., pre-TDA) on Friday, February 15, 1991 at the Days Inn Motel, Rocky Point, Tampa, Florida, U.S.A. The meeting was called for 9:00 A.M. with General Councilors Harry McMullan acting as moderator and Brent St. Denis as recording secretary.

The fourteen societies were represented by a delegate/(alternate) or representative * follows:

First URANTIA Society	David Kulieke
URANTIA Society of Glenview	Paul Snider (Josh Snider)
First URANTIA Society of Oklahoma	Michael Challis (John Lange)
Orvonton URANTIA Society of Chicago	Scott Forsythe
Evergreen URANTIA Society of Washington	Howard Schoffen
Golden Gate Circles Society	*Phil Geiger (Larry Geis)
URANTIA Society of Central Connecticut	Bill Rocap (Dale Ann Lugin)
URANTIA Society of Dallas	Nancy Johnson
Rocky Mountain URANTIA Society of Denver	Andre Radatus (Joan Batson)
Pilot Light URANTIA Society of Seattle	Janet Farrington (Marvin Gawryn)
URANTIA Society of Greater New York	Lila Dogim
Couchiching URANTIA Society of Ontario	Cindy Hopper
Grand Canyon Society of <u>Urantia Book</u> Readers	Dick Johnson (Eve McMahon)
Heart of America URANTIA Society of K.C.	Betty Teresso (Don Heinerikson)

Approximately 38 persons were in attendance including delegates, alternates, society members, councilors, and observers.

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Mr. McMullan called the meeting to order shortly after 9:00 A.M. Friday, February 15, 1991.

The group was informed by David Elders that the General Council would hear whatever was decided today. The group discussed, then adopted, a set of ground rules (attached, Appendix A) to govern the conduct of the meeting. The agenda which had been proposed (attached, Appendix B) was reviewed. The following items were amended or added then a ranking was done to create high-priority and low-priority groupings of the issues.

Additions/Amendments:

- (#9) Add to this a request that TDA delegates receive more general information on the TDA well in advance of the assembly.
- (#9) Include question concerning attendance of observers at the TDA.
- (#9) Proposal that a subcommittee of delegates prepare for the June, 1991 TDA.

(#17) Cooperative society effort regarding the use of the name and marks.

(#18) Call for constitutional convention.

The group agreed to end the meeting by 5:00 P.M. and to allow the period 4:15 P.M. to 5:00 P.M. for voting on resolutions. Higher priority items would each be allocated 20 minutes for discussion with the remaining time to be divided among the lower priority items. The group could agree to add extra time for any given issue.

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(Numbering corresponds to numbering in Appendix B and Addition/Amendments noted earlier)

(#1) Representation for Each Society on the General Council

Arguments and comments in favour of this proposal included:

- The need for each society to have a voice on the Council, at least one seat
- Communications problems with the "Strategic Plan" underscores need for better liaison with all Fellowship societies
- Societies must feel empowered
- Importance of society "links"
- Good for society morale
- Current process is awkward, leads to inaction
- May not need annual Triennial Delegate Assemblies
- "Power to make change" (i.e., vote) better than "input"

Arguments and comments against this proposal included:

- The number of guaranteed society seats on the Council is tied to the number of societies. What if there are hundreds of societies?
- The relative importance of a society quota on the Council versus the need to find the most qualified candidates
- Possible loss of seats for non-society members (i.e., MALs)
- Would require massive constitutional change
- Annual TDA might solve this problem

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(#14) Annual Delegate Assembly

Comments for:

- The General Council would accept annual TDA input quite seriously
- Good "stop-gap" measure vis-à-vis representation issue
- Would allow interim improvement without major change
- Would balance importance of General Council and local societies
- There exists a sense of separateness between the General Council and societies

- Would improve the TDA process

Comments against:

- What is the value of having a "voice" but no vote?
- Consider additional expense for an additional tier of self-government
- Would divert funds and energy away from local effort
- Possible loss of conclave process

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(#9) Improving the Triennial Delegate Assembly Elective Process

Comments:

- General Council requirements should be reflected in electing new councilors (i.e., what talents are needed?) The TDA should know these needs.
- Biographies of nominees should be sent out ahead to TDA delegates and alternates, although it is difficult to fully assess candidates based on a form only (Question: Consider videotaped interview?)
- Current selection dilemma is a good argument for society representation on the Council
- Biographies should be solicited from societies which could allow TDA to "move toward" representation. The TDA could deal with any given society's request for representation.
- There is now no "cut-off" date for council nominees. Nominations can still be made from the floor at the TDA.

There was agreement that societies should solicit and submit nominations for election to the General Council and that the Council investigate ways to improve the election process.

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(#7) Soliciting Input from Societies on Major Issues

Comments:

- The current constitution provides the General Council and Executive Committee with the authority to act but consultation on major decisions should include societies anyway
- Council minutes should be circulated to societies automatically, preferably within six weeks of the meeting (the question of whether unapproved minutes should be circulated was raised)
- Minor irritants will continue to be major issues until communication procedures are improved
- Future issues of The Bulletin will include reader letters
- The president and secretary of each society now receive copies of the Council agenda in advance of each meeting

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(#8) Open Meetings

Comments:

- While the General Council should feel opening its meetings is better it should keep the right to close them for certain business matters
- Most deliberative bodies have open and closed sessions (e.g., personnel matters, elections)
- There appears to be no significant reason to close meetings
- With society representation "openness" would be less of an issue

(#2 and #3) Shorter Terms and Successive Terms for Councilors

Comments:

- Terms should be shortened to three or six years although some felt the current nine-year term was fine
- On the question of successive terms opinion ranged from "no limit" to "two-three terms maximum"
- The 1/3 rotation in council seats every 3 years does reduce the problem with longer terms
- Creating an "Advisory Board" of past General Councilors would ensure that these human resources were still available to the Council

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(#18) Constitutional Convention

Comments and Questions:

- The question boils down to starting afresh or improving the current constitution
- We should get through the current unsettled phase before embarking on major constitutional change
- Has the current constitution been fully tested?
- We must decide whether the Fellowship is a mission-based organization or one dedicated to promoting fraternal relations among readers. The current constitution leans toward the latter. We must determine who and what we are
- With a constitutional convention "everything is on the table," it's wide open, the planning must be done carefully and thoroughly
- Some of the major concerns could be implemented simply without major constitutional change. The latter will require broad society input
- A constitutional convention could "paralyze" us
- A mission-based organization is dedicated to achieving goals, a fraternal-based organization is concerned more with group process. We should decide this before any constitutional convention
- Our focus is as a facilitator for other organizations devoted to the revelation
- Consider calling a constitutional convention within two years to reflect the needs of the readership

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(#10) Organizational Name

(Refer to the memo attached as Appendix C)

David Elders reviewed the evolution of the organization's name from "Fifth Epochal Fellowship" to "The Fellowship" with the associated descriptive phrase "for readers of The Urantia Book." Fifth Epochal Fellowship has become the organization's provisional legal name and "The Fellowship" the provisional operating name. Depending upon feedback the necessary amendment(s) would be drafted for consideration at the June, 1991 TDA and General Council meeting.

Comments:

- Societies must make their own decisions regarding their respective names
- "The Fellowship" seems to be a neutral, comfortable name although a descriptive phrase is needed to clarify who we are
- Consider incorporating the word "Fellowship" in all society names
- An interesting suggestion offered was, for example, Couchiching Fellowship of Urantia
- "Keep our name short"

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(#13) Strategic Planning

Comments and Questions:

- The New York Society felt that the strategic planning process was badly timed in view of current state of the organization(s). We need more input from the membership
- The strategic plan was not meant to be a final product, it is to be an open process (i.e., a "planning process," not just a "plan")
- The strategic planning looks like "trickle-down" theory with the top levels of the organization determining direction. It needs grassroots input
- The strategic plan needs to be simplified, some are overwhelmed by it
- How does such a large group come to "own" the strategic plan at the individual level? There should be society input from the earliest stages
- Getting grassroots input over the years has been difficult
- The strategic plan is needed before any constitutional convention. This is a good way to discover what we do with our group resources
- The strategic plan was perceived as being "approved for implementation", this was not the intent
- We are a little of both mission-based and fraternal-based in our organization. We can't let our "spirit" be smothered by our organization. Words on paper don't convey our dynamism
- Strategic planning is an attempt to inform, to provide for genuine involvement
- The strategic planning presentation needed more thought
- The strategic planning process was an attempt to respond to the urgent needs of the organization in the wake of the recent major changes. The strategic planning process provides a structure

- The process is evolutionary, the efforts to date are laudable, the "communication" not yet perfect

(#11) Book Availability

It was pointed out to the group that 19 distributors have de-listed The Urantia Book. The Foundation apparently has no procedure for retail store sales. The Rocky Mountain Spiritual Society (Denver) are undertaking a book consignment project. A recent survey of 485 bookstores revealed a 50% drop in book availability since a similar survey last October.

Comments:

- Many bookstores will only buy from distributors
- Is this an attempt to shut down book distribution by Asoka, Jesusonian, et al?
- A series of Fellowship bookmarks and a revised book insert brochure is being developed

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(#4) Separate Judicial Body

Comments:

- The Urantia Book says an independent judiciary is one of the divine ways of doing things
- Our current constitution and Robert's Rules of Order cover the need for judicial decision-making
- "This is a good idea," tie to an advisory board of elders
- In most organized religions the judicial branch did not separate from the organization body until much later in organizational development
- The Urantia Book references are for civil government only

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(#5) Representation for Members-at-Large (MALs)

Comments:

- Glenview Society has a provision in its constitution allowing for MALs to join. It was suggested that all societies create this provision then "adopt" MALs who wish to affiliate
- The current number of MALs is about 250
- Orvonton Society has members all over the country. A weighted mail-in balloting system is used for membership votes
- There are MALs on the General Council now
- We need a mechanism to allow for special group representation (e.g., Estonian readers)
- Some MALs don't want to get involved in the organizational processes

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(#6) Expense of Serving on Council

Comments:

- In lieu of on-site meetings teleconferencing could be utilized (approx. cost \$100-200/hr. per site)
- A program of regional matching funds could assist individuals with meeting expenses
- General Council representatives could be assisted by their societies and the Fellowship could assist Executive Committee members
- Try billeting to save hotel costs
- The cost is a barrier to good candidates who cannot afford the expense of attending meetings, "We need some poor representatives too"
- Direct representation on the Council could lead to society funding

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(#15) Publishing General Council Minutes

Comments:

- Consider the cost of copying and mailing reams of paper. Minutes could be available upon request
- Minutes should at least be sent to society presidents and secretaries

(#12) Establishing Contact with New Readers

Two representatives from the Area Coordinator meeting, which was taking place concurrently with this pre-TDA meeting, provided a brief report to the group. Their comments may be summarized as follows:

- The telephone program is working (i.e., answering machine with a Urantia Book-based message linked to an ad in a local paper)
- A toll-free 800 number
- Book Fair booths
- Speakers Forum (i.e., speakers bureau to speak to church groups, organizations, etc.)
- Local radio and TV talk shows
- "Adopt-a-bookstore" consignment program

Additional points raised by the group included:

- The use of a business card
- Purchase a stamp to print study group information in books
- Bookmarks and tear pads

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(#16) Maintaining a Global Viewpoint

Comments:

- It's a "motherhood" issue but we must remember that we are in the main coming from white, Christian backgrounds. We must be mindful of this and avoid creating any barriers
- We must break down national, racial and cultural barriers
- The purpose statement in the constitution should be amended to reflect "...the life and teachings of Jesus" rather than "...the teachings of Jesus Christ"
- An international network of pen pals would be helpful
- Make readers feel they're part of an international movement

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(#17) Cooperative Society Effort on Name and Marks

Comments:

- It seems each society is going through its own internal process on these issues
- There were "militant" letters last year but it's quieter now
- Let's stop "letters" (i.e., by the Fellowship); let's quarantine the Foundation

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It being 4:10 P.M. the group turned its attention to the wording of resolutions and the taking of votes.

The "meaning" of the votes to be taken was reviewed. It was understood that all resolutions would be sent to the General Council in a report to be made at its special meeting the next day (i.e., February 16, 1991). It was agreed (see Resolution (M)) that these resolutions simply express the sense of the group as of this date and are not to be considered binding.

[Note: Vote counts, totalling 14 are shown as (for, against, abstaining)]

a. On Agenda Item #1

That the General Council, in close cooperation with the societies, develop a simple and effective mechanism for regular (at least annual) society participation in the deliberations of the General Council. Existing ideas, including each society electing a General Councilor, as well as all other relevant ideas, should be evaluated in developing such a mechanism. Carried (8,5,1)

b. On Agenda Item #2

Be it resolved that an amendment be made to the constitution to provide for direct representation by each society on the General Council. Carried (9,4,1)

c. On Agenda Item #2

That terms of office for General Councilors be reduced to six years.
Carried (12,1,1)

(Note: No resolutions on Agenda Items #3 and #4.)

d. On Agenda Item #5

That with respect to members-at-large, the Judicial Committee study the matter of finding ways to bring MALs into the organizational process. Carried (14,0,0)

e. On Agenda Item #6

That the appropriate General Council committee look at the possibility of using teleconferencing as a way to reduce the cost of serving as a member of the General Council and the Executive Committee. Carried (9,2,3)

f. On Agenda Item #7

That copies of the minutes of meetings of the General Council, Executive Committee and Area Coordinators be circulated to the presidents and secretaries of societies. Carried (9,1,4)

g. On Agenda Item #8

That all organizational meetings of the Fellowship be open to observation by members and that each organizational group has the option of closing the meeting at its discretion. Carried (11,2,1)

h. On Agenda Item #7

That the General Council solicit input from societies before finalizing major decisions when possible and appropriate. Carried (11,1,2)

i. On Agenda Item #9

That a subcommittee be formed from among the 1991 delegates and alternates to begin the process of planning the format and procedure for the 1991 TDA in June. Carried (10,3,1)
(The following persons volunteered to serve on said subcommittee: Marvin Gawryn, Michael Challis, Lila Dogim, Betty Teresso. and Scott Forsythe.)

j. On Agenda Item #9

That the guidelines respecting the qualifications for nominees to the General Council be amended so that they are more comprehensive including skills, knowledge and experience. Carried (9,4,1)

k. On Agenda Item #10

That the name of our organization be changed to "The Fellowship" and that the constitution be amended accordingly. Carried (9,1,4)

(Note: No resolutions on Agenda Items #11, #12, or #13.)

l. On Agenda Item #14

Be it resolved that the General Council consider the following ideas concerning an annual delegate assembly:

That the Fellowship modify its Constitution to implement an Annual Delegate Assembly of society representatives.

That each society Delegate and Alternate serve for a three-year term culminating in the Triennial Delegate Assembly.

That the first Annual Delegate Assembly take place in 1992.

That the Annual Delegate Assembly consider resolutions to be submitted to the General Council.

That Delegates and Alternates to the Annual Delegate Assembly be invited to attend meetings of the General Council as observers.

And, that the General Council report back to the Assembly concerning the status of submitted resolutions. Carried (9,3,2)

(Note: See Resolution (f) concerning Agenda Item #15.)

(Note: No resolutions on Agenda Items #16, #17, or #18.)

m. On the Status of These Pre-TDA Resolutions

That whereas today's meeting is not a constitutionally mandated TDA and

Whereas this meeting does give us an opportunity to bring to our societies information and rationale regarding resolutions that may be introduced at the June 1991 TDA and

Whereas throughout our discussions today we have been extolling the virtues of society input

Now therefore be it resolved that the votes today are not binding but are rather are to give the sense of the group on this date. Carried (7,2,5)

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 P.M.

Harry McMullan, Moderator

Brent St. Denis, Recorder