
A.C.P.C.

THE NATIONAL SCENE

Looking Back on 1985 - by Dennis Challenger:

Members of the Council will recall that the Federal Government decided against continuing in 1984-85 the financial grant that it had previously made to the Council. The withdrawal of Commonwealth funding meant that the Council was faced with dispensing with the services of its former Executive Director, Mr. J. Purcell. Mr. Purcell's association with the Council came to an end late in 1984.

Early 1985 saw the Council suffering two further setbacks. For varying reasons, our National President, His Honour Judge Roy Grubb, and our Senior Vice-President, The Honourable Mr. Justice Muirhead, resigned their offices.

Not surprisingly, it took the National Executive a little time to recover from these body blows. Following the passage of numerous letters to and fro, the survivors of the National Executive met in Sydney on 11th August, 1985 to decide what should best be done for the Council. It was a good meeting with the active branches in Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia and Queensland being represented.

The meeting concluded with the firm agreement that the Council should continue as a national body since it provided a unique forum for persons engaged, or simply interested, in the criminal justice area to meet and learn from each other, independent of partisan or political interference or complication. It was immediately recognized that any organization needs an enthusiastic corps of workers in order to operate successfully, and the question was, from where would such workers come?

In the event, the South Australian Branch made a generous offer not only to provide substantial support to get the Council up and running again, but also to host the 1987 biennial conference. Their suggestion was to hold the conference in Adelaide conjointly with conferences of the International Prisoners' Aid Association and the World Society of Victimology. From an administrative point of view there are great savings in organizational costs in having contemporaneous conferences. And holding three similarly oriented conferences at the same time makes each of them more attractive.

The meeting then determined that, in order to simplify the administration of the Council in the absence of a full-time officer, the constitution should be "streamlined". His Honour Judge Brebner of South Australia agreed to take charge of this operation. Soon after the meeting he provided a draft constitution which was circulated to members with notice of a Biennial General Meeting of the Council to be held in Melbourne on 9th December, 1985. These documents were circulated to members with the co-operation of the State Branches.

The Biennial General Meeting gave careful consideration to the draft that had been prepared. Some revisions were suggested and agreed upon and at the end of the meeting the new constitution was adopted. A complete copy of the constitution is set out later in this issue so that all members will be familiar with the current rules of the Council.

The real effect of the new constitution is that interested persons and organizations will join their respective State Branches and, as a consequence, become members of the Australian organization. Membership records, subscriptions and correspondence will all be handled by the State Branches. Each Branch will elect a representative to the National Executive of the Council and those representatives will, in turn, appoint the office bearers of the Council.

Whilst it is not written into the constitution, it is intended for the present that the National President, Secretary and Treasurer will come from the State in which the next biennial conference is to be held, and the advantages of this for planning and fund-raising are obvious. It is also intended that, if possible, the fourth office bearer, the Vice-President, will come from the State in which the biennial conference after the next will be held. This concept has the great benefit of continuity of executive expertise.

The National Executive will have the power under the new constitution to levy branches up to one-half of their membership subscriptions in order to provide funding at the national level. The size of the levy will obviously be set according to the National Executive's needs. At present, the National Executive holds about \$1,000 in its own right and in the first instance this will help cover maintenance of records relating to members in states where no local branch currently exists. Plainly an important job for the new Executive is to get those branches resurrected.

This then was the state of play at the end of 1985. The State Branches were asked to appoint their representatives to the new National Executive as a matter of urgency so that the office bearers could be elected early in 1986. All augured well for the Council to re-establish itself at the national level as a significant contributor in the many faceted problem of the fight against crime.

Editor's Footnote:

Mr. Dennis Challenger was the second Vice-President at the time of the events to which his article refers. At that time he was a member of the staff in the Department of Criminology at The University of Melbourne. He took the leading part in organizing and then in chairing the meetings referred to. He has since transferred to the Australian Institute of Criminology in Canberra and the Council has great hopes that he will accept the responsibility of re-establishing the A.C.T. Branch.