

More letters

Sat. Feb. 26, 9:00 p.m. - 2 a.m.
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Prof explains clay controversy

Paul Woodall's letter in the February 10th Excalibur questions the legitimacy of proxy votes at the General Meeting of the Ceramics Club held on February 5th. Paul must have been absent from the meeting room when this question was resolved.

Proxy votes are, of course, generally somewhat contentious. It is preferable that members of an organisation attend general meetings so that they may personally vote on any issue that is discussed. On the other hand it is virtually impossible to arrange a meeting at a time and place that is convenient for all members. Even people who are very interested in the issues to be considered at a meeting may not be able to attend.

The people who are inclined to attend meetings are the people who want to see changes enacted. Contented members of the organisation prefer to express satisfaction with the running of the organisation by the convenient mechanism of giving their proxies to one of the executive officers.

The 20 proxy votes which I held at the Ceramics Club meeting on February 5th were only used on one issue: to support the motion to

allow proxy votes at general meetings of the Club - an interestingly recursive situation. A majority of the members actually present voted against the use of proxy votes.

A long discussion ensued during which five members, including Paul, left the meeting. In the discussion that followed their departure Joe Rich made the very pertinent point that proxy votes should be used with discretion by the proxy holder to vote on any issue in the way that he thought the proxy donors would have voted on the issue.

Members who attend a meeting naturally tend to frown on proxy votes; "why should people who can't be bothered to come to the meeting have a vote when I gave up my Saturday afternoon to be here." On the other hand the members who gave me their proxies obviously support the principle of using proxy votes because they actually used this mechanism themselves. Thus the 20 proxy votes were cast in favour of the use of proxies to carry the motion by a democratic vote of 26 to 10.

Paul's description of the 20 proxy votes as an unjust, undemocratic,

manoeuvre by the executive officers of the Club belies the truth of the matter. The proxy forms together with the notice of the meeting were mailed to all members of the Club on December 20th 1976. The members had 6 weeks to object to the use of proxy votes, but no member did in fact object. In fact Ray Ellenwood, one of the 4 people who left the meeting with Paul, was given a private proxy by another Club member who thought that she might not be able to attend (Julie Stockton). Thus the dissident members of the Club did not object to proxy votes per se, but only in the specific context of the February 5th meeting when they saw that their political objective of taking over control of the Club was being thwarted.

Of about 50 active members currently in the Club 16 attended the meeting and 20 votes by proxy. 36 out of 50 members taking an interest in the business of the meeting is a good turnout (72 per cent).

Paul's statement that the 20 proxy votes gave me "sole authority to dictate club policy" is a gross distortion of the truth. He returned to the meeting after an absence of about 20 minutes, and he is aware that further discussion of the clauses of the Club's new constitution continued for 2½ hours after the departure of the dissident four. The discussion was both lively and constructive with several members contributing ideas that were incorporated into the new constitution.

Of the 10 members remaining at the meeting after 4½ hours of debate, eight voted in favour of the new constitution and two voted against. The 20 proxy votes were not needed.

Geoffrey Hunter,
 Faculty Advisor to the Ceramics Club.

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