

SUBORDINATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday 10 June 2003
(Morning)

Session 2

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SUBORDINATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

1st Meeting 2003, Session 2

OLDEST COMMITTEE MEMBER

*Mike Pringle (Edinburgh South) (LD)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Gordon Jackson (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)

*Dr Sylvia Jackson (Stirling) (Lab)

*Mr Stewart Maxwell (West of Scotland) (SNP)

*Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab)

*Mr Murray Tosh (West of Scotland) (Con)

*attended

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Alasdair Rankin

SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Steve Farrell

ASSISTANT CLERKS

Joanne Clinton

Alistair Fleming

LOCATION

Committee Room 1

Scottish Parliament

Subordinate Legislation Committee

Tuesday 10 June 2003

(Morning)

[THE OLDEST MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE *opened the meeting at 09:41*]

Mike Pringle (Oldest Member of the Committee): I welcome members of the public and the press to the meeting.

Interests

Mike Pringle: The first thing that members have to do is to declare interests. I do not have any interests to declare.

Dr Sylvia Jackson (Stirling) (Lab): I was employed by the University of Edinburgh until I secured my seat at the 1999 election. I am a member of the Transport and General Workers Union, the Educational Institute of Scotland, the British Educational Research Association, the Scottish Educational Research Association and the Association for Science Education. I am also a member of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds' committee for Scotland.

Mr Stewart Maxwell (West of Scotland) (SNP): I do not have anything to declare.

Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab): Given that in this session of Parliament we are to consider a bill on co-operatives and mutual enterprise, I should declare that I am a member of the Co-operative Party as well as a member of the Labour Party. I am also a member of the Transport and General Workers Union and a trustee of the Fife Historic Buildings Trust. For the moment, I am also a member of the European Committee of the Regions. That is a legacy of my days in local government. I do not know whether that will continue.

Mr Murray Tosh (West of Scotland) (Con): I have no interests to declare that are relevant to the remit of this committee.

Convener

Mike Pringle: The next item on the agenda is the election of a convener. The Parliament has agreed that members of the Labour party are eligible for nomination as convener of the committee. I therefore seek nominations.

Christine May: I nominate Sylvia Jackson.

Mike Pringle: There are no other nominations.

Sylvia Jackson was chosen as convener.

Mike Pringle: I congratulate Sylvia Jackson on her appointment as convener.

We have two things in common, Sylvia. You and I are keen on sport, so we could talk about that. I understand also that you were a chemistry teacher; my only experience of chemistry was trying to blow up the lab. Perhaps we will not blow up the committee.

Dr Jackson: Thank you.

Deputy Convener

09:45

The Convener (Dr Sylvia Jackson): The next item of business concerns nominations for a deputy convener. As I understand the situation, a Scottish Socialist Party member for the committee has been agreed, but we do not have a nominee for deputy convener. I suggest that we leave the item for the moment until the matter is resolved and a nomination is or is not made or some changes are made for the Parliament to agree. Is that agreed?

Members indicated agreement.

Legacy Paper

The Convener: The next item is a short discussion on the legacy paper. Before I open the discussion for members' comments, I will mention some of the things that are included in the paper. The first is moving towards the introduction of a statutory instruments bill, which will be a weighty topic. The second is the review of chapter 10 of the standing orders, which, I gather, will go to the Procedures Committee.

The paper also mentions possible regulatory reform. I think that there has been work on that already. It will involve going to other legislatures, such as those in Australia and Canada, to see what is happening there. We would build on that to examine our system and not only learn from other legislatures' experiences, but find the most appropriate system for a modern Parliament in Scotland.

I open the item up for comment. What are members' immediate views?

Christine May: The matters in the legacy paper and the amount of day-to-day business that is likely to come through the committee will potentially be a very large amount of work. Can we get some guidance from the clerks on the potential volume of work involved in the three things that you have mentioned, the priority that they would give to each and some guidance as to how we should proceed?

The Convener: The clerk is more than happy to do that. I will go a little further and ask the clerk to give us a paper—perhaps a very short one at the moment—outlining how we could dovetail the work in the legacy paper with our business. I do not know whether we want to do it over four years, but I ask for guidance on how we could make progress on all the different elements of the legacy paper and whether we will have to bid for extra resources at some point. I am aware that the legacy paper says that we would have difficulty doing the extra work without additional resources.

Mr Maxwell: Paragraphs 20 to 24 of the paper, which are about the new international conference on delegated legislation and regulatory reform, talk about the possibility of the third conference being held in the Scottish Parliament. I presume that that too would add to the committee's and the Parliament's work load and has resource implications, not the least of which are the financial implications. Do any members—particularly those who were members of the Parliament in the first session—have any views on whether that is a reasonable idea?

The Convener: My experience was on the Local Government Committee, and we did quite a few seminars and conferences. It is a process of

bidding for resources, which is fairly standard. I do not foresee a problem, apart from the resource implications. Does Alasdair Rankin have anything else to say?

Alasdair Rankin (Clerk): That needs to be considered. I know from previous conferences in the series that much of the cost is recovered through conference fee charges, for example. Organisers of similar conferences have also used professional conference organisers, which takes a lot of the burden off members and officials.

Mr Maxwell: On the basis that the resources are not a problem, should we bid for the third international conference on delegated legislation and regulatory reform?

The Convener: I suggest that, in the short paper that the clerk is going to develop, he gives us a time frame for when he thinks that that conference would most usefully come into our work, and then we will get into the bidding process. We are fairly agreed, I think, that if we get far enough down the road, we should do that.

Mr Maxwell: I am not against that.

Mr Tosh: I have a comment on the section in paragraphs 7 and 8 on the legal briefing and meeting in public. Paragraph 8 contains the nugget that members have agreed that we should not have the oral briefing in public because there is not much to be gained from that. I am not quite sure what that throwaway line means, but it prompts the thought that, rather than automatically follow the previous committee's practices, we should ask for the relevant guidance on public and private sessions to be put before the committee so that we can decide for ourselves on the basis of that guidance.

The Convener: Yes.

That brings us to the end of the agenda. If there are no further comments, I thank members. We will meet again next week.

Meeting closed at 09:50.

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