

AD HOC COMMITTEE MEETING

CHAIRMAN: Er, ladies and gentlemen, (bangs on table) I call this meeting to order. As you know, this meeting has been requested by Roger. He feels the subject is important and can be decided on quickly. As this is an ad hoc committee there are no minutes to be read, and I think we can accept those present as constituting a quorum. I ...

MAUREEN: Er, excuse me, Mr. Chairman a point of order. I feel that we cannot simply accept those present as a quorum.

CHAIRMAN: I wish to point out that the constitution allows five to be the minimum number for a quorum. Does that answer your objection?

MAUREEN: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN. To return to what I was saying before - this is an ad hoc committee. That is to say, it has been called for one purpose only, and for this reason may I have the meeting's approval for not taking minutes? Except, of course, to record any decision taken.

MAUREEN: Er, on a point of order again, Mr. Chairman. Surely every meeting must have minutes - otherwise any decision taken may not be valid.

MAHESH: Er, Mr. Chairman, minutes really aren't necessary for a decision to be valid. And after all, as you stated, the decision to be arrived at will be recorded, and therefore legal.

MAUREEN: In view of what Mahesh has said, Mr. Chairman, I withdraw my reservations.

CHAIRMAN: Any other comments or objections? None? Thank you. Roger, you have the floor to introduce the subject.

ROGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, briefly, I feel we should re-define the coffee drinking areas in the course centre ...

MAHESH: Oh, Mr. Chairman ...

ROGER: Mahesh, can I finish?

MAHESH: Mr. Chairman I really don't feel there is anything to discuss. This is a waste of our time.

ROGER: I disagree, Mr. Chairman, and I'd like to remind Mahesh that I still have the floor. I know this point has been raised often enough before, but unfortunately the decisions taken have just not been put into practice.

MAHESH: On a point of information, Mr. Chairman, notices about where you are permitted to drink coffee have been put up in ...

CHAIRMAN: Can we have some order, please? Two differing points of view have been expressed. Under the circumstances, I rule that a discussion with a view to arriving at a consensus is in order. Roger, could you make your position a little clearer?

ROGER: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Firstly, to answer Mahesh's point of information: notices about where you can drink coffee may have been put up, but that does not mean that they have been obeyed. This is just my point - we all know that people still drink coffee in the classrooms and even in the video room. Quite apart from the mess that is made and the possible damage to equipment, this shows a great lack of consideration towards those of us who like clean and tidy common areas, and not to be faced with half-filled, sticky cups of cold coffee everywhere we turn. There are piles of them, all over the course centre. Many of these dirty cups have been there for weeks! And I don't think there can be any excuse for it when several relaxation areas have been made available, and there is a large cafeteria area in the building next door. I feel we have a moral duty to crack down on untidiness in the course centre – so that we can all enjoy a cleaner, fresher working environment.

LEN: Mr. Chairman, may I say something? I like my cup of coffee, Mr. Chairman, but I can't help agreeing with Roger. It's uncomfortable, to say the least, to come into a room where some of the previous occupants have been drinking coffee and left a pile of half empty cups sitting in the corner. In fact, one or two of the participants have told me privately that they think this untidiness brings down the tone of the course centre.

MAUREEN: Mr. Chairman, Len has made a very good point there, but there are two sides to this question. I'm a tea drinker myself, but I wish to say that I understand the feeling of coffee drinkers. I know a number of people who can't work properly unless they have a cup of coffee close at hand. You can compare drinking coffee, for instance, to chewing gum ...

ROGER: Yes, but chewing gum doesn't leave piles of half empty cups all over the place, does it?

MAUREEN: (raising her voice) Oh, Mr. Chairman, Roger, I would hardly say that drinking coffee was so offensive to other people.

ROGER: On the contrary ...

CHAIRMAN: O.K., O.K. We must have some order. Roger, you were out of order. Maureen, could you continue with what you were saying earlier, please.

MAUREEN: Well, Mr. Chairman, all I wanted to say was that coffee drinkers have needs just as much as everyone else. Indeed, we are in the majority!

MAHESH: Hear, hear!

MAUREEN: Perhaps we could arrive at a compromise?

CHAIRMAN: Yes, the meeting seems equally divided between the needs of some people who like to take their coffee with them wherever they go, and the

needs of those people who want to have a cleaner, fresher working environment. If I understand Roger's point correctly, he feels that rules about where you are allowed to drink your coffee should be obeyed once they are made, while Maureen's point is that some people need to have their coffee with them at all times - if they are to work to their best ability. Perhaps clearly defined areas showing where you can and where you can't take your coffee cup should be the answer? Could we have a proposal then, please?

ROGER: Mr. Chairman, I feel that members are not prepared to come to agreement on this issue. I therefore feel that a more extreme motion may be in order. I therefore propose that there should be no coffee drinking at all in the course centre.

MAHESH: Oh, Mr. Chairman, this is hardly in the spirit of compromise.

CHAIRMAN: Mahesh, you're out of order. Any seconder to Roger's proposal?

LEN: I second it, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN: Can we vote on that proposal, then?

MAHESH: Mr. Chairman, I propose an amendment to the draft proposal: firstly, that there shall be no coffee drinking in classrooms. Secondly, that coffee drinking be limited to the cafeteria and teachers' offices. And finally, that teachers give a longer coffee break within the teaching block.

CHAIRMAN: Secunder to the amendment?

MAUREEN: I second it.

CHAIRMAN: So there's a draft proposal banning coffee drinking in the Centre. There's also an amendment to the draft proposal, which would define a coffee drinking routine. Shall we put the amendment to a vote by a

show of hands? Those in favour? Two. Those against? Two as well. As Chairman, I wish to use my casting vote - against the amendment.

MAHESH: Oh, Mr. Chairman, you realise that, in doing so, you've endorsed a very restrictive proposal?

CHAIRMAN: Yes, Mahesh, I realise that. Can we proceed to the draft proposal? Those in favour? Two. Those against? One. Abstentions? One. Yes, Mahesh?

MAHESH: I merely wish to explain my vote. I abstained as a protest against the use of your casting vote, Mr. Chairman, in supporting a blatantly unfair motion.

CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mahesh. Is there any other business? O.K., I declare this meeting closed. Thank you.