



Working Party on History of Chemistry

Minutes of the General Meeting in Gödöllő, Hungary, on Sunday 3 September 2006, 09.00-10.30.

Chairman: Ernst Homburg (EH)

Participants:

Members: Duncan T. Burns (Republic of Ireland); José Claro-Gomes (Portugal); Hendrik Deelstra (Belgium); Emre Dölen (Turkey); Ernst Homburg (Netherlands); W. Gerhard Pohl (Austria); Birute Raliene (Lithuania); Soňa Strbáňová (Czech Republic); Éva Vámos (Hungary).

Deputy members: José R. Bertomeu (Spain –RSEQ); Anna Simmons, representing Jack Betteridge (Great Britain).

Others: E. Fábíán (Museum Várpalota, Hungary); György Walleshausen (University of Szent István, Hungary); Livia Simon-Sarkadi (Division of Food Chemistry, Hungary).

Secretary (Minutes): Hendrik Deelstra

1. Opening, and Apologies for Absence

The chairman reads apologies for absence from Jack Betteridge, Halina Lichocka, Annette Lykknes, Carsten Reinhardt, Mudis Salkauskas, Borislav Toshev, Brigitte Van Tiggelen

2. Minutes of last General Meeting, Friday 9 September 2005, Estoril

The Minutes are approved unanimously.

3. News and reports

(a) The *Proceedings "Chemistry, Technology and Society". 5th International Conference on the History of Chemistry, 6-10 September 2005, Estoril & Lisbon, Portugal*, edited by Isabel Malaquias, with help of Ernst Homburg and Elvira Callapez, have been printed with a print run of 180 copies, and sent to all participants. Those who have seen the book say that these are "wonderful Proceedings".

(b) The Chairman gives a brief oral report on the symposium on 'Teaching Chemistry – Past, Present, and Future', as part of the 1st European Chemistry Congress, Budapest, 30 August 2006. There were about 50 participants, who heard four interesting presentations by W.H. Brock; B. Bensaude-Vincent; H. Chang; and E. Vámos.

(c) From 1-4 February 2007 a conference will be held on '19th Century Chemistry: Spaces and Collections', in the Museum of Science, at the University of Lisbon, organized by Ana Carneiro, and others. See: <http://19chem2007.mc.ul.pt/>.

(d) Soňa Strbáňová presents a status report on the editing of a book on the Emergence and Evolution of Chemical Societies in Europe, which will be published by the Royal Society of

Chemistry (RSC). Nine chapters – on the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Poland, Portugal and Russia – are finished. Chapters on Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands are in their final stages. *The ultimate deadline for these chapters is 1 October 2006.* Before the end of October 2006 the complete manuscript should go to the RSC. Unfortunately, the editors (Anita Kildebaek-Nielsen and Soňa Strbáňová) have been unable to find authors on Italy, Norway and Sweden.

Sponsorship has been obtained from the Chemical Heritage Foundation (USA), and from the chemical societies of the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and Portugal. Hopefully it will therefore be possible to reduce the price of the book, which now has been set by the RSC to £ 90 for non-members, and to £ 60 for members of chemical societies.

4. 6th International Conference on the History of Chemistry, 28 August - 1 September 2007, Leuven, Belgium

The Chairman of the Programme Committee, José R. Bertomeu, gives a short report on the status of the conference organization. There will be four key-note speakers: Bernadette Bensaude-Vincent, Ana Simões, Lawrence Principe, and Ernst Homburg. At present, there is room for 9 sessions in which about 40 papers can be presented, and for 2 poster sessions. The website – <http://www.6ichc.be/> – is already available, but more content should be added to it. *The First Circular of the conference will be ready by mid-September.*

Hendrik Deelstra, who is a member of the Local Committee (LC), deplores that the LC did not meet until now, and therefore he has no information on issues such as the sponsoring of the conference (EH: all communication was done by email, between Bertomeu, Van Tiggelen, Vanpaemel and Homburg). The Chairman replies that *he will take the initiative to organize a meeting of the LC in the short run* (EH: the probable date will be 6 October).

The question is raised whether, next to individual papers, also complete sessions can be proposed to the Scientific Committee. Gerhard Pohl is thinking of, for instance, a session on polymer chemistry. The response to this suggestion is positive.

5. Venue and organization of the 7th International Conference on the History of Chemistry

The Chairman explains that three possible venues of the 2009 conference have been brought to his attention:

-a- to integrate the 7ICHC into the XXIII International Congress of History of Science, that will be held in Budapest from 26 - 31 July 2009; either in the form of symposia and sessions, or in the form of a satellite conference;

-b- to have the 7ICHC in Vilnius, Lithuania, which will be a ‘cultural capital’ of Europe in 2009;

-c- to have the 7ICHC in Istanbul, Turkey.

Anna Simmons says that she and Peter Morris have discussed the option to organize the next ICHC in Britain, and they will be happy to make the RSC Historical Group and SHAC enthusiastic for this idea. So, a 4th possible venue is added to the list.

The Chairman invites all participants to put forward their views. No clear consensus emerges. To most participants it seems that, unless enough funds are raised, Britain will be too expensive. Vilnius and Istanbul are both considered to be very attractive places for a conference, not in the last place as a support to the local groups, but it will be difficult to attract American colleagues if this conference will be organized in the same year as the Budapest Congress.

The Chairman concludes that a possible solution could be to include the 7ICHC into the Budapest Congress, and to organize a separate conference (8ICHC) in 2010, in either Vilnius or Istanbul. The final decision should be taken by the General Meeting of the WP in Leuven,

in 2007. In order to make a good decision possible, *he invites Éva Vámos, Birutė Railienė and Emre Dölen to write down their proposals for a 7th ICHC in 2009, in Budapest, Vilnius and Istanbul respectively*. On the basis of those written documents the WP can then decide about the 2009 venue, and see whether or not a second activity in 2010 will be necessary.

6. Teaching History of Chemistry

To the inventory of the state of teaching the history of chemistry in Europe which has been distributed the short report on Austria should be added. The Chairman stipulates that only a minority of the member countries have responded, so that he should send a repeated request for more information. The general picture that emerges is that the state of the teaching of the history of chemistry is not very positive. Several previous courses have been abolished over the last decade, partly as a result of the Bologna process. José R. Bertomeu adds to this that he is engaged in making a similar inventory. It is concluded that the Chairman will send his report to Bertomeu, who will include those data in his final report, that will be distributed later in the academic year 2006/2007. So, *Bertomeu will be the contact person of the WP on this topic*.

Following reports will be send to José R. Bertomeu soon:

- *he will make a report for the Spanish Chemical Society himself, which will be included into the final report;*
- *Anna Simmons and Peter Morris will report on the situation in Britain;*
- *Éva Vámos will report on the situation in Hungary;*
- *and Emre Dölen will report on the Turkish situation.*

A final discussion on this topic is postponed until after the distribution of Bertomeu's final report.

7. Chemical Heritage

As too few reports have been received, a discussion of this topic is cancelled.

8. Membership of the Working Party

The Chairman states that the EuCheMS has about 50 member societies, of which about 30 are represented in the Working Party (EH: 27 in fact). Of these, about 15 participate actively in the WP. He deplores especially that large countries such as Russia, Germany, France and Italy are hardly involved in an active way. Several suggestions were made to enhance the level of activity of the WP:

- Duncan Burns suggests to add the *field of (historical) specialization* to the WP Membership-list (for instance "analytical chemistry", in his own case). This will make is easier for WP members to know who they should contact with specific questions.
- Soňa Strbáňová asks the Chairman to *send letters to all chemical societies* who are not yet represented in the WP. She adds that chemical societies should support their WP members financially, so that they can take part in European WP activities.
- Éva Vámos adds to this, that she is in favour of sending letters every two years to the Presidents of all chemical societies, in order to stress the importance of the history of chemistry. It also should be made clear that every chemical society should be represented by *two members* in the WP.
- Hendrik Deelstra emphasizes that the *professional historians of chemistry*, such as represented in the Scientific Committee of the ICHC conferences, should take the lead in putting the history of chemistry on the map inside the communities of historically interested chemists, resp. the chemical societies.

9. Composition of the Steering Committee, or Council, of the Working Party

The participants agree with the Chairman that the WP should have a Steering Committee. At present that Committee has only two members: Ernst Homburg (chairman) and Anita Kildebaek Nielsen (secretary). During the meeting Éva Vámos states that she is willing to act as a third member, and this offer is gratefully accepted. After the meeting the Chairman will ask one or more additional candidates to join the Committee. The Steering Committee should also discuss the question how the editing of a *Newsletter* can be organized.

10. Date of the Next General Meeting

The next General Meeting will be in Leuven, as part of the 6ICHC, 28 August - 1 September 2007. The precise date will be communicated soon. The meeting should last at least two hours, because one and a half hours is considered to be too short.

11. Any Other Business

No other business being proposed, the Meeting is closed at 10.30h.