

## Postcard from Rheindahlen European Area Autumn Conference

Well, if we wanted to stir things up with the six resolutions we had submitted for this Conference, we must consider it to be a success. In all the Conferences I have attended I have never known so much discussion by the delegates or, if to be believed, by the various branch committees prior to the conference. Arriving late on the Thursday night it left the majority of Friday available to hopefully canvass last minute support for our resolutions. Well, that was the theory anyway!!

During the day, a chance conversation with the Area Director, a major problem reared its head with a difference of opinion of the meaning of the words “full breakdown” in Resolution 2.

Our understanding & interpretation was “Complete in every particular: a full account”. Not so, says the Area Council, “full breakdown” means as full as any other area in the Association gives. They were only prepared to reveal the number of votes for each candidate and not a breakdown by branch of votes. The Area Council deliberated long and hard on this subject and left it to our branch whether we were prepared to accept their meaning, or we could withdraw it and return in six months with our wording, if not they would find another branch to second the resolution.

Funny that, since it was our resolution to begin with!!

An offer to revert to the original format of us proposing it was rejected, but after long discussions with the Area President & one of the Life Vice Presidents on the legality within RAFA rules, it was decided to proceed with another branch seconding the resolution with the Benalmádena Branch requesting clarification on the interpretation of the expression “full breakdown”. This would then mean the delegates would decide on which version of the resolution would be voted on. Partially harmony had been achieved. Détente does work at times!!

Complicated hey? By the end of Friday evening my head was spinning & it wasn't down to the number of Asbach n cokes drunk trying to keep my throat from drying up!! Midnight saw me rewriting, in duplicate, the speech to be made on that resolution. Six hours later, before breakfast, saw me going over the papers to check my spelling etc from the night before!!!

The Conference started as usual at 10am sharp, with the standard Conference business & reports being dealt with. We broke for coffee around 11am knowing that the long haul on the resolutions was to follow. Upon reconvening we launched into **Resolution 1** which was the old potato about postal votes. Despite the European Area being the only Area not to use the postal vote system it was decided by a narrow vote of 10 to 8 not to fall into line with the other Areas. **1 – 0 to the Area.** A slight feeling of foreboding crept over me.

**Resolution 2.** As soon as it was announced that there was to be a change in the seconder of this resolution the challenges start which were firmly put down by Dr Bryan Pattison the expert from Central Council on rules and regulations. Our request on the meaning of the word “full” was defeated, so please amend your dictionaries as full no longer means that!!

Despite this setback the delegates voted in favor of the resolution which actually meant we had slightly won as beforehand only the winners were announced with no votes being shown. Plus we have to remember ALL these resolutions were ours to begin with!! **1-1, a draw at the moment.**

**Resolution 3.** This was another resolution “adopted” by the Area Council for which we had canvassed long and hard on. Lo & behold the delegates followed party lines and voted it through. **1 – 2 to Benalmádena.**

**Resolution 4.** This was always going to be difficult one to win as a rapid solution to superglue has yet to be invented & it was almost a case of voting oneself off the committee, if one ever got on there that is!! Needless to say, once again only the brave bucked the trend of what was a case of voting against the Area Council, and the resolution was defeated. **2 – 2, drawing again.**

**Resolution 5.** Well this one did throw up a bit of a googlie, since it was based on e-mails received from Area Council members in which some stated that there was a “Gentleman's agreement” on this and others stating that there was no such agreement. All Benalmádena Branch wanted to do was to clarify the position and have no agreement written or otherwise. Surprisingly enough after the Area Council had stated that the resolution was highly subjective & that “**There is no agreed progression of positions on the Area Council, written or otherwise. It is ‘the best person for the job’.** Therefore, the Area

**Council cannot recommend the acceptance of this resolution.”** On the day of the vote the Area Council decided to withdraw any objection to the resolution & surprise, surprise the sheep agreed.

## **2 - 3 Benalmadena**

**The sixth & final resolution** was to do with welfare, where after a general discussion it was decided that European Area Welfare Paper that had passed by the Area Council at its meeting the night before covered the points in the resolution and that it would be prudent for the paper to be forwarded to Central Council with copies to each of the Area's Branches rather than to have it possibly held back by agreeing to this resolution. The delegates agreed and the resolution was soundly beaten. So we wait seeing the final Welfare paper with baited breath. **Full Time Score 3 – 3 A DRAW**

Following the resolutions bids for the hosting of the 2011 Autumn Conference were made by the Swiss, Maltese and Cyprus branches. The Maltese bid was withdrawn after delegates voiced concern over possible public relation problems about holding the conference on a cruise ship. A decision would be made on the venue in May.

The 2010 Conference is being held in Gibraltar and details on this are available from the Branch Delegate or Hon. Branch Secretary. Booking for this must be done by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010. Well folks that brings to an end the report on what was indeed an interesting conference. If the delegates had shown to be a little bit more positive the score might have turned out different but at least no own goals!!

A copy of the resolutions is shown below.

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### **Benalmádena Branch 1357 Resolutions for the Autumn 2009 Conference**

**Res 1** ‘This Conference resolves that future contested elections to the Area Council shall be by postal ballot, and that the Area Regulations be amended appropriately. Provided that Branches represented at the Annual Conference may deposit their votes with the Area Director on arrival **if their postal vote has not already been received**’

Proposed by: Benalmádena Seconded by: Rheindahlen

**Res 2** This Conference resolves that **a full breakdown of the election results** to the Area Council will be announced by the Area Director during the Area Annual Conference’.

Proposed by: Area Council Seconded by: Benalmádena (eventually by Malta)

**Res 3** ‘ This Conference resolves that, with effect from the Area's 2011 elections, provision be made for two ‘Elected Members’ on the Area Council which may be contested by Life, Ordinary or full Associate Members who normally reside within the Area and are members of the Committee of a Branch in the Area, the tenure of office being two years. Provided that not more than one full Associate may be an Elected Member on condition that he polls sufficient votes to be amongst the successful candidates. Provided that, exceptionally, elections may take place in 2010 for a one-year mandate’.

Proposed by: Area Council Seconded by: Benalmadena

**Res 4** ‘ This Conference resolves that, unless there are no new candidates nominated, no individual may serve on the Area Council for more than six consecutive years and that two years must elapse before being re-nominated’.

Proposed by: Benalmadena Seconded by: Rheindahlen

**Res 5** ‘This Conference resolves that there shall be no pre-conditions, written or otherwise, as to which European Area Council office shall be occupied first or in what order positions are held’.

Proposed by: Benalmadena Seconded by: Rheindahlen

Additional Welfare Resolution in advance of any decision resulting from the European Area Welfare Paper.

**Res 6** ‘This Conference resolves that pending formal decisions resulting from the European Area Welfare Paper, an urgent study should be undertaken into the provision, content and accreditation of the Training of HWO's at all levels, with special consideration being given to individual Country Laws and Provisions. The study should examine all current training courses conducted by RAFA and similar Welfare Groups.”

Proposed by: Benalmadena

Seconded by: Rheindahlen