



President's Report 2010

Stephen Whittington

Summary

2010 has been another good year for the Wellington Speaking Union. Intercollegiate debating, the primary role of the Wellington Speaking Union, has been a success. We had 155 teams enter from around the greater Wellington region enter across the intercollegiate grades, a slight increase on last year (148).

We also held the Victoria Shield for adult debaters, although we unfortunately did not hold the Parliamentary Shield. Adult debating, excluding the consistently-strong representation from Victoria University of Wellington Debating Society, continues to struggle.

Overall the Union is financially strong, although there was an operating deficit for 2010. In part this was caused to unexpected expenditure for the Wellington Regional Debating Competition and Wellington Regional Debating teams. Fortunately the Union has sufficient reserves to deal with unanticipated expenditure.

The more rigorous approach to the formal and legal requirements of an incorporated society and a registered charity has continued. The 2009 accounts were approved at the workshop held for adjudicators at the beginning of the year. The provisional accounts for this AGM will be presented to one of the workshops next year for formal approval.

The Union's website was not as frequently updated as much as previously had occurred. Next year it will probably be necessary to pass access to the website on to each grade convenor, so that more frequent updates can be provided. A Facebook page for the Union has been made, although there are currently few followers.

Intercollegiate Debating

Intercollegiate debating has had an exceptional year. The full report provides further detail, but it is worth noting the following:

- Overall entries were up by seven. This year we allowed schools to enter up to five teams in Junior Certificate (up from three), although only one school took this opportunity.

- Changes were made providing for octo-finals at the Junior Certificate level, after the number of rounds in all grades except Senior Certificate had been increased to five in the previous year.
- Quality of adjudicators at the Senior Certificate level continues to be a concern, and new ideas to address this may be necessary.
- The support of University Adjudicators continues to be strong at the Senior Premier A and B level. Some even returned the small token of appreciation (\$10 a debate) to the Union as a donation.
- A greater emphasis was placed on providing appropriate venues for the grand-finals of the grade, often including snacks after the debate.
- Entries were completed electronically, using Google Forms. This substantially lessened the workload at the beginning of the year. In addition, results were reported electronically. Overall this worked, although I was personally responsible for the delay in processing results in Junior Premier.

School-level Oratory

The Stockley Cup and Dunsheath Plate were held during October, and the quality continued to be of a high standard. Duncan McLachlan (Wellington College) won the Stockley Cup and Daniel Gendall (Wellington College) won the Dunsheath Plate.

Adult Debating

Parliamentary Shield

Parliamentary Shield did not run this year, after having been run in the three previous years. Last year a weekend format was adopted, which was more successful. Unfortunately a failure to organise and confirm the competition early on meant that it became impossible to fit it in with the busy University debating schedule.

One solution may be to run the competition at a set period prior to a University tournament, such as Australasians. This would provide an impetus for more teams to enter.

Victoria Shield

The Victoria Shield was held on a Wednesday evening in September at the Kelburn Campus of Victoria University. Twelve teams entered, including three comprised of secondary school students. The winners of the knock-out competition were Clodagh O'Connor-McKenna and Paul Smith, who defeated Peter McCaffrey and Ihaia Tichbourne.

Prize money of \$100 for the winning team was provided, which likely increased the number and quality of the entrants. Next year it may be appropriate to hold this competition before the Easter Tournament, in order to attract a greater number of entries. It is intended to restore the Management Cup to replace the Victoria Shield.

Other competitions

The McDonald Oratory competition and other former WSU competitions did not run in 2010. The revival of these competitions is something to explore for 2010 and beyond. One idea is to run the Stoneham Cup competition as a teachers-only grade. If there was interest in

this idea then we could look into it how the tournament would best be structured to encourage teachers' involvement.

Finances

The Union is overall in a healthy position. Significant savings exist in a savings account, earning interest. The adult account continues to run at a loss, as it generally has in recent years (last year being an exception). It is perhaps time to fold the adult account (the "main account") into the intercollegiate account and merely account separately for the two distinct activities.

Further details are provided for in the Treasurer's Report. I would like to thank Christopher Bishop for his work as the Treasurer of the Union.

Administration

The Union continues to be run consistently with its recent Constitution. Future administration changes are unlikely – we now have a functioning website, a logo, and are properly registered as a charity and an incorporated society. Tax issues may need to be looked at after the change to Kiwibank.

The move enabled us to electronically transfer money when two Executive Members authorised such payments. This significantly reduced the hassle associated with the finance side of the Union. Unfortunately, it has also led to taxation on interest income.

The Future

The Union continues to underperform in the provision of opportunities for adult debating in Wellington. This may be caused in part because of a lack of demand. I believe that aligning the adult competitions with University tournaments would encourage more entries, and that many previous University debaters would likely enter in order to provide good practice to the current Victoria debaters. Prize money would likely increase entries.

Most of the survey responses indicated overall approval with the current activities of the Union. Most suggestions were for there to be more debating in 2011. Given this, it is likely that we will move to five rounds for Senior Certificate. Consideration should also be given to a "Junior Regionals" held along the same line as Wellington Regionals. Another possibility is for a school-level British Parliamentary style debating competition, although this would likely have a heavily restricted entry.

At times communication this year from myself was poor – for example, during the Stockley Cup and the Impromptu Cup. A better effort must be made next year to ensure that all schools are able to enter these events if they would like to.

Stephen Whittington

President, Wellington Speaking Union 2010