

SYNOD NEWS—RECENT LEGISLATION

THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE CHURCH IN WALES

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Undoubtedly, the most important item of business on the agenda of the September 1996 meeting of the Governing Body of the Church in Wales was the Committee Stage, Report and Vote on the Bill to Enable Women to be Ordained as Priests. The *Governing Body* duly went into Committee to consider the report of the Select Committee, presented by its Chairman, the Bishop of St. David's, who explained that only four amendments had been proposed. Of these, one had subsequently been withdrawn, two had been considered out of order as pertaining to matters of principle (only amendments relating to matters of detail may be considered at the Committee Stage) and the fourth was not recommended. The Select Committee however was mindful of the fact that certain of these amendments were concerned with issues relating to the protection of, or respect for, those who were not in conscience able to accept the priesting of women. Accordingly, the Select Committee itself proposed an amendment to the recitals of the Bill by introducing a new recital underlining the commitment of the Bench of Bishops, as witnessed by the pastoral guidelines already published, to take collegial action to secure a continuing place in the life of the Church in Wales for people of differing conscientious convictions on the issue. This amendment was approved. It was then argued by the proponents of one of the amendments which had been rejected as being out of order that it was in fact in order, and the Chairman of the Committee ruled that, as it was arguable that the issue raised was one of detail rather than principle and that it would not be unreasonable to so regard it—although it had not been unreasonable either for the Select Committee to rule it out of order—the argument on the merits of this amendment should be heard. This amendment proposed that conscientious objectors to the ordination of women as priests should be protected by having a number of assistant bishops consecrated to have oversight of clergy and parishes with objections on grounds of conscience, the number of such assistant bishops to be equal to the number by which the number of diocesan bishops who ordained women as priests exceeded three. This amendment was rejected after a vote.

The Committee Stage was thus completed and after a thorough debate at the Report Stage of the bill, the bill was voted upon with the following results in each order:

	<i>For</i>	<i>Against</i>
Bishops	6	—
Clergy	85	40
Laity	136	47

The bill therefore obtained a two-thirds majority in each of the three orders and was duly promulgated as a Canon of the Church in Wales. Thus ends what has been a long and painful struggle for those on both sides of the argument.

The Governing Body also approved Regulations to govern the making of awards to alleviate hardship among clerics who may resign from the ordained min-

istry of the Church in Wales as a consequence of the canon's promulgation. These Regulations are broadly similar to those which were brought into effect to alleviate hardship among those who resigned by reason of the failure of the earlier bill in 1994. Their detail is therefore adequately described *mutatis mutandis* in (1994) 3 *Ecclesiastical Law Journal* 250–251.

The Governing Body also debated the principles of a Bill to Establish a Permanent Archiepiscopal See. This bill had as its purpose the establishment of the diocese of Llandaff as Wales' permanent metropolitan see. Currently, the Archbishop continues as bishop of the diocese of which he was the diocesan prior to his election to the primacy. The bill proposed that, for the future, the archbishop should move to Llandaff, becoming diocesan bishop of that diocese as well as Archbishop of Wales. To ease the burden of his bearing responsibility for both offices, the bill provided that he should always have an assistant, to be called the Assistant Bishop of Llandaff, who would be chosen, unlike other assistants, by means of an electoral college, in the same manner as diocesans. The bill also provided for transitional arrangements upon a vacancy occurring in the see of Llandaff or in the archbishopric when both offices were not vacant. The bill was however so overwhelmingly defeated that a formal count was unnecessary, the first occasion upon which such a massive defeat has been inflicted upon a bill at its second reading in your correspondent's experience.

The Governing Body also approved the amendments to the Constitution arising from the last meeting of the Governing Body allowing chairmen of the divisions of the Board of Mission to be *ex officio* members, the Constitution of Diocesan Churches and Pastoral Committees and the changes to the chapters relating to electoral colleges, allowing bishops-elect forty-two rather than twenty-one days to accept or reject their election and substituting the Archbishop of Canterbury with the Bench of Bishops as the appropriate authority to supply a bishop to a vacant see in the event of the electoral college failing to meet or failing to reach a conclusion within three days of meeting. Should the Synod of Bishops however refuse to confirm the fitness of the Bishop-Elect, the election now passes back to the electoral college.

Several minor amendments to the Constitution were also agreed in principle subject to the Drafting Sub-Committee producing the appropriate amendments at the next Governing Body meeting. In future, Rural Deans will be paid an allowance on top of their incumbent's stipend rather than a separate stipend by virtue of their office, and National Insurance contributions for all clergy will be chargeable against the Maintenance of Ministry grant to each diocese. Unbeneficed clerics co-opted to the Governing Body, of whom there are always fifteen in number, will be allowed to retain membership while they continue to serve in Wales and not just in the diocese within which they were serving, and the duty of insuring church buildings and taking out employer's liability and third-party cover is to pass from the parishes to the Representative Body, while the latter can reclaim the costs in part from the dioceses who will doubtless recoup from the parishes—although there is still likely to be a substantial saving under the group policy that results. The Governing Body also agreed that changes should be made to the membership provisions of the Governing Body, the Representative Body and the Electoral College so as to preclude provincial and diocesan staff, whether clerical or lay, from being members. It was also agreed that the Constitution should be amended so as to allow more than one church to be the parish church when benefices are united.