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**Minutes of the Annual General Body Meeting of COMMON CAUSE held at Common Cause House, New Delhi on March 14, 2009.**

Mr. Vikram Lal, President, chaired the meeting. He called the meeting to order at 11.00 A.M. As the quorum was not complete till 11.15 A.M., the meeting was adjourned for fifteen minutes. The AGM was reconvened at 11.30 A.M. Only eleven members attended the meeting.

The Chairman welcomed the members and introduced the members of the Governing Council to them. Thereafter, he requested the Director, Mr. Kamal Kant Jaswal, to proceed with the items on the agenda.

**Consideration of the Annual Report and adoption of the Annual Accounts**

The Director recapitulated the salient features of the Annual Report of the Society for the year 2007-08 and briefly apprised the members of the current status of the cases mentioned therein. The members expressed their satisfaction over the information presented. Mr. N. Ahuja proposed that the Annual Report and Audited Accounts of the Society be adopted. Mr. V. K. Taneja seconded the motion, which was adopted unanimously.

**Appointment of Auditors for the year 2007-2008**

The Director informed the members that the work of the Auditors continued to be quite satisfactory. Thereupon Mr. N. Ahuja proposed that they be reappointed for the year 2008-09. The proposal was seconded by Mr. V. K. Taneja and adopted unanimously..

**Activities and Programmes**

The Director stated that the Society has continued to make use of the instrument of Public Interest Litigation (PIL) to seek redress for the common problems of the public. At present, the Society is pursuing ten writ petitions and an intervention application in the Supreme Court and three writ petitions and an intervention application in the High Court of Delhi.  The courts, however, are showing a certain disinclination to entertain even genuine PILs for fear of being accused of judicial overreach and of straying into executive and legislative domains. Having regard to the changed circumstances, the Society has reinvented its strategy and is increasingly focusing on policy advocacy, networking with like-minded organizations and building alliances with the media to promote the public interest. This reorientation has also necessitated the strengthening of the research capabilities of the organization by building a core team comprising an advisor and a full time research executive, supported by two part time research assistants. It is also proposed to set up a documentation centre-cum-library in the basement of Common Cause House.

The Director informed the members that the pace of implementation of the directions of the Supreme Court on police reforms has not picked up in spite of the appointment of a Monitoring Committee headed by Justice K. T. Thomas. The matter is being actively pursued in concert with Mr. Prakash Singh and the Common Wealth Human Rights Initiative. Efforts are being made to highlight the obstructive tactics adopted by the Union and State Governments through a media campaign. The Society is also trying to build a political consensus on police reforms and has addressed an appeal in this regard to all recognized political parties at the national and state levels. A letter has been addressed to the Home Minister to expedite the enactment of the Model Police Act formulated by the Soil Sorabjee Committee.

As for judicial reforms, the writ petition filed in the Supreme Court jointly with Janhit Manch and other like-minded entities has not yet elicited any response from the Union government. In the mean time, preparatory work on a draft of the directions to be sought from the Supreme Court is under way. Information is also being obtained from the High Courts on pendency of cases in the district and subordinate courts in order to analyse the nature of the problem and formulate specific recommendations for addressing it. An appeal has been addressed to all recognised political parties to commit themselves to a time-bound programme of judicial reforms and to include a paragraph in this regard in their election manifestos.

The Director informed the members that the Society has actively been pursuing its initiatives for combating corruption and bringing about greater transparency and accountability in public affairs. The Society has also been interacting with the Ministry of Environment to facilitate the formulation of a rational policy for addressing the environmental hazard posed by plastic carry bags and packaging materials.

The Director apprised the members of the proactive steps taken for the welfare of construction workers under the aegis of the civil society coalition, ‘Citizens for Commonwealth Games - Workers, Women & Children’.

Reviewing the progress of the endeavours of the Society in the identified thrust areas, the Director stated that the Public Health Foundation of India has agreed to take up the issues relating to nutrition and occupational health of the workers in the National Employment Rural Guarantee Scheme. Efforts have also been made to induce State governments to create an institutional framework for social audit, which is a novel feature of the Scheme. The Government of Uttar Pradesh has responded positively to the proposal to launch a pilot project in a few districts to organize regular social audit of the Scheme works on the pattern of Andhra Pradesh.

The Director also gave an account of the preparatory work being done to pursue the issue of implementation of the recommendations of the Second Administrative Reforms Commission.

.  After the Director’s presentation, the President invited the comments and suggestions of the members on the activities and programmes of the Society.  The following points were made by the members.

**DR. B. P. Mathur :**

Endorsing the emphasis being placed on administrative reforms, Dr. Mathur suggested that the Society should take the initiative for proposing new codes of conduct for civil servants and ministers in keeping with the imperatives of a modern, progressive democracy. These codes could be given a statutory backing, as in the United Kingdom. He also suggested that the Society should organize seminars at regular intervals to stimulate in-depth discussion on key issues of governance and other matters of public interest.

**Mr. N. Ahuja :**

Mr. Ahuja underlined the importance of executing a will and having it registered.  Referring to his article on the subject in the Society’s journal of the quarter January-March, 2009, he stated that unlike the Delhi Development Authority, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi and the Land Development Office continue to insist on a ‘No Objection Certificate’ from all the heirs of a testator before effecting the mutation of any immoveable property on the basis of a registered will. This entails enormous difficulties for the beneficiaries of the will. The Director agreed to facilitate Mr Ahuja’s meetings with the Secretary, Union Ministry of Urban Development, and the Commissioner of Municipal Corporation of Delhi, so that he could draw their attention to the problem.

**Dr. Gitanjali Dey :.**

Dr. Dey fully supported Mr. Ahuja and stated that she had personally experienced the difficulties highlighted by him.

**Mr. H. L. Kalsi :**

Mr. Kalsi deplored the indulgence being shown by the Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission (DERC) to the distribution companies (DISCOM) in the enhancement of electricity tariff. He demanded that copies of the petitions submitted by the DISCOMs in this regard should be made available to the consumers free of cost.  Mr Kalsi drew attention to another irregularity on the part of the DISCOMs. They are supplying free electricity worth crores of rupees to their offices and to the residences of their employees. The DERC should ascertain this figure and take it into account while working out the income of the DISCOMS. Moreover, the DISCOMs are showing all their legal expenses as operational expenses, even where the cases filed by them against the consumers are decided against the DISCOMs. Thus, the consumers are made to pay avoidable legal expenses through the electricity tariff.  Mr Kalsi stated that he has been agitating these issues before the DERC, but it would be better if they could be taken up from the platform of COMMON CAUSE. He also handed over a copy of his letter to the DERC and requested that it may be forwarded to the addressee by the Society

**Mr. Mahendar Singh:**

Mr. Singh lauded the contribution of Mr. H. D. Shourie to the cause of Euthanasia and  suggested that COMMON CAUSE should pursue the Founder Director’s unfinished agenda till the individual right to die with dignity is upheld.

**Elections :**

The President informed the members that in accordance with the Rules of the Society, the two oldest members, namely Maj. Gen. J. P. Gupta (Retd.) and Mr. Prakash Singh, IPS (Retd.), were due to retire on the day of the general meeting and that both of them had offered themselves for re-election. Mr. N. Ahuja proposed that Maj. Gen. Gupta be re-elected. The proposal was seconded by Dr. B. P. Mathur. Thereafter, Mr. N. Ahuja proposed that Mr. Prakash Singh be re-elected. This proposal was also seconded by Dr. B. P. Mathur. Both the proposals were unanimously approved by the House.

The meeting was concluded with a vote of thanks to the Chair

**(Vikram Lal)**

Chairman