

Minutes of the meeting of the WBF Laws Committee
held on January 11th 2000 in Bermuda.

Present: Ton Kooijman Chairman
 The President Emeritus*
 Ralph Cohen co Vice-Chairman
 Chip Martel* co Vice-Chairman
 Grattan Endicott Secretary
 Virgil Anderson
 Cecil Cook
 Joan Gerard
 Dan Morse
 William Schoder
 John Wignall

By invitation: Richard Colker
 Jeffrey Polisner
 Linda Trent

(* for part of the meeting)

Apologies for absence were recorded from Carlos Cabanne and Santanu Ghose, the latter having sent a memorandum of his opinions on various subjects.

1. Mr. Schoder mentioned the discomfort occasioned him by the listing of the committee on the WBF web site, where he is designated with reference to Zone 2. He would wish to be shown as WBF Chief Tournament Director, with his name attached parenthetically, in order to reflect the impartiality of his office. The Secretary was asked to convey these feelings to the President. [See Schedule 1]

2. The Chairman offered his opinion that between one major reconstruction of the laws and the next the task of the committee is maintenance of the laws and making repairs where necessary. The President Emeritus said that if possible an item should be held over for the next new edition of the laws. Changes should be made only if necessary.

Mr. Schoder pointed to the need for interpretation of the law from time to time, but agreed that major changes could await a major revision.

2.

On the question of interpretation the Secretary said he had some difficulty because there are NCBOs that do not see the committee's interpretations as necessarily binding, his own NCBO being one. The President Emeritus felt that an undercurrent exists in relation to the authority of the committee. Mr. Wignall informed the committee that the late General Counsel had advised him that the committee is a sub-committee of the Executive Council and its decisions are subject to ratification by the Executive Council.

Mr. Cohen drew attention to the disparity between the by-law of the WBF which requires the committee to interpret the laws and the statutes of the ACBL which prescribe that this power shall be exercised within its area of jurisdiction by the ACBL. It was agreed that the matter is one to be addressed by the Executive Council and Messrs. Kooijman, Cohen, Endicott, Polisner and Wignall were deputed to prepare a written submission to the Executive Council. (See Schedule 2)

3. Mr. Schoder asked the committee to consider the effect of the WBF Code of Practice in relation to Law 25B when screens are in use. In his view the Code provides that where an inadvertent or a deliberate bid is changed before the tray has passed to the other side of the screen, the effect of the Code is to provide that the players who then receive the tray will not be told anything about the change and there will be no penalty by way of limitation of score. The Chairman expressed his strong disagreement with this interpretation.

Mr. Wignall confirmed that Mr. Schoder is applying the Code of Practice as its authors had intended. Mr. Martel, who joined the committee during this discussion, was inclined to the opinion of the Chairman. On a vote being taken five votes were cast in favour of Mr. Schoder's treatment of the question and three to the contrary.

4. The committee noted the invitation of the Code of Practice Group for the committee to add to Law 12C3 an option allowing regulating authorities to extend its powers to the Chief Director of a tournament. The committee was reluctant to make the change at this time, preferring to leave it until the next major revision. However, it was agreed that in the meantime the committee would raise no challenge to the manner in which the WBF had made the arrangement in the current championships, and given this approach in WBF events the committee does not see

reason to object when Zonal or national organizations give the Chief Director this power on an experimental basis.

5. The Secretary was invited to state what difficulty he had with the present definition of 'convention'. The Secretary pointed to the manner in which his own NCBO and the ACBL, and perhaps others, are regulating the use of non-conventional calls. For the purpose they forbid the use of any conventional bid in conjunction with certain natural actions that do not conform to given standards (e.g. "may not use any convention with an opening bid that does not meet the standards of the 'rule of 18' ", or 'may not use Stayman with an opening 1NT that may have fewer than 10 points'). He was also aware that in one section of its Systems Policy the WBF regulates the use of a call that is natural according to the definition in the laws. He is of the opinion, therefore, that the sensible thing for the committee to do is to redefine the power to regulate granted in Law 40D. As an interim measure he has suggested the adoption of a definition for 'convention' that will meet the needs of these bodies, and which will also clear up other matters in which the definition is problematic. The suggested definition (applying in the auction) is: "any special partnership understanding".

Mr. Martel and others agreed that the current definition is flawed but felt that the suggested definition may introduce other problems. It was concluded that more thought needs to be given to the subject. It may be a matter to be deferred until the next major revision.

6. Mr. Schoder had indicated a desire to see Law 25B removed from the laws. He asked the committee to consider the question. Mr. Martel said that in its current form Law 25B had been devised as a solution to a particular problem, but in the outcome "the cure is worse than the bite". He was of the opinion that the provision should only apply in cases where something silly has happened, as for instance passing a cue bid unintentionally and playing in a two-one fit. There was considered to be a difficulty in finding suitable words to express this in the laws.

The Chairman asked for a show of hands to express the balance on the subject amongst those present. The result was an opinion overwhelmingly in favour of not allowing a player to change a call deliberately made. The Secretary was requested to hold the item in his list of matters for further consideration when a major review of the laws is undertaken.

7. Paragraph 4 of the committee's minutes of 1st September 1998 was revisited. The Chairman did not think this actually said what the

committee had intended to say. He and the Secretary were asked to draft a fresh statement for the committee to consider. (See Schedule 3)

The meeting was then concluded. A further meeting was arranged for the following day.