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## EVERYONE A WINNER?

After much soul-searching and grappling with grammar, last week the Council of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society came up with a form of words for the third Object of the revised draft Charter designed to satisfy the overwhelming majority of members. The deliberations started informally on Monday, 1 December when the Council considered members' comments on the revised draft Charter (*Pfj*, 18 October).

A majority of Council members (including those representing the Save Our Society group) seemed in favour of the following third object: "To safeguard, maintain the honour, and promote the effectiveness of the profession of pharmacy and the interests of pharmacists in the exercise of their profession." Overnight, however, this was revealed to be grammatically incorrect and unlikely to be acceptable to the Privy Council so the Officers produced a further form of words. But these were no more acceptable. It was not an auspicious start to the Council meeting, which was attended by all members and was, arguably, the most important meeting for years because a decision was to be taken whether or not to accept the new Charter (p819).

Clive Jackson then produced a neater version: "To safeguard, maintain the honour, and promote the effectiveness of the profession of pharmacy and to support the professional interests of pharmacists." This answers the criticisms that have been laid at the feet of the modernisers: that the sense of the third Object from the 1953 Charter must be preserved, that the members of the Society (ie, pharmacists) and their interests should be spelt out in the Objects. The Jackson form of words also satisfied those who have objected to the phrase "interests of pharmacists" as it seemed to them to be more of a reference to the historical sectoral interests of some community pharmacists rather than to be embracing all pharmacists.

The Jackson words were put to the vote and accepted — except by those members supporting the SOS view. Why? The Jackson form of words could arguably be seen as something of a victory for the SOS group. When the first draft of the new Charter was published in March, the interests of the members were completely excluded from the Objects (*Pfj*, 22 March). Even after the consultation and the special general meeting in June, the revised draft Charter left out the members (ie, pharmacists) from the Objects and rolled them up in the phrase "profession of pharmacy".

In an ideal world, the Council would have had much more time to develop the new Charter, as it did before the 1953 Charter was granted (see p810). But the post-war political climate was different: governing bodies were left much more to their own devices. The SOS group, which is dismayed by the process by which the Charter has been produced, is now expected to counter-petition the Privy Council. At one level this move fails to acknowledge the group's successes as outlined above.

The question of approval by the membership still hangs in the balance. The Privy Council will shortly start a six-week consultation period on the Charter, so there is still a chance to put some mechanism in place to seek broad acceptance of the final draft. It could preserve the unity of the profession and allow pharmacists to start looking forward together.