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**Mr George Bunner  
Chairman  
AAA of England Limited  
Edbaston House  
3 Duchess Place  
Hagley Road  
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**9th February 2007**

Dear George,

**TELEPHONE CONVERSATION - WEDNESDAY 7TH FEBRUARY 2007**

Following our telephone discussion on Wednesday 7th February 2007 and your message sent via email on the 8th February, in view of the implications for the clubs and the AAA of England, I do consider this to be an open letter intended for wider distribution.

I called you to discuss the following two resolutions put forward by the clubs and which will be voted on at the AAA's AGM to be held on Saturday 17th March 2007:

- A) *It is resolved that the Membership of the AAA of England will include: "All Clubs and Bodies who were Members of the Association as at 31st December 2006, by virtue of their affiliation to a Regional Association."*
  
- B) *It is resolved that the minutes of all Management Board, and General Committee meetings, shall be posted onto the internet in draft form as soon as practicable after each meeting. The draft minutes will eventually be substituted for the finally agreed minutes. The internet web address where the minutes are lodged shall be freely available to the general public, and be without password protection.*

We started by discussing the resolution to post AAA's minutes of meetings onto the Worldwide Web. You said that you didn't like the "hyper secrecy" that had surrounded meetings over the last two years. I understood this to refer to the meetings relating to the implementation of the Foster Review. You didn't say who had imposed the "hyper secrecy", however I presumed this to be Jack Buckner on behalf of the Foster Project Board. It was not clear to me why you felt the need to submit to such secrecy, if you did not like it.

You expressed a personal view that you did not want to see the AAA's minutes published. You felt the publication might give rise to misunderstandings. I said it was better to have a debate caused by misunderstanding, rather than no debate caused by no knowledge.

As a democratic organisation, I think the publication of minutes would be an ideal way of informing clubs about the activities of the AAA's. At a time when you describe the main activity of the AAA's as "looking over the shoulder of England Athletics", it is a perfect window of opportunity for complete transparency.

As regards the resolution seeking to freeze the membership, I told you that this was intended as a stop gap measure to preserve the voting rights of those clubs who would lose membership by virtue of not being able to affiliate to their region. You rejected this explanation describing it as giving "membership for life".

You said "we are looking at whether all clubs who are affiliated to the recognised governing bodies should automatically be members of the AAA's". You said that this was being considered by the Secretary, Walter Nicholls, who is looking at the constitution together with the legal boys.

You also said that the AAA's had a working party of 5 people who were tasked with ensuring that any group that was "affiliated to the sport, would be affiliated to the AAA's".

At best, the use of the term "affiliated to the sport" is chaotic thinking, at worst it is a term which undermines the AAA's by implying that its affiliations should automatically support the undemocratic organisations, UK Athletics and England Athletics.

You fail to understand the difference between clubs joining together as an Association, and tourists who happen to express a passing interest in the sport. The AAA's supports its member clubs by encouraging all participants to join their local club. This is the best mechanism for growing the sport in a sustainable way.

In contrast, England Athletics has been created by Sport England to identify any athletic type activity, plant a flag of governance, then ensure it is signed up to the bureaucratic regulations which now overwhelm us all. They then decide how they can best tax this activity.

The beauty of the AAA's was that its structure supported the sport down to grass roots. In order to be a part of the AAA's, an individual must join a Club. The Club must join the County and the County must join the Territory. No ifs and buts.

I find it disheartening that you fail to grasp this fundamental connection of how the AAA's structure supports the Clubs. What's more disappointing is that you don't even appear to have considered the consequences of individuals no longer being required to join their local club. I know you will say that you want everyone to join a club, but by taking the AAA's membership from England Athletics, it makes it less necessary that they do.

During our conversation, I was interested to hear your comment that "there's been a policy over the last few years where people have done everything they can to smash the AAA's by stopping all our sources of income". You said you thought it had been "dreadful". I pointed out that you had been sitting at the top table during this process supporting these people. You said that you had been "fighting like hell" over these matters which you had mostly inherited.

It seems that your fighting has been more focused on keeping the AAA's legacy alive, than the Association itself. You appear to have misunderstood the wish of the clubs, which was to retain the AAA's as an active body. Your job as Chairman of the AAA's, together with your fellow Officers, was to keep the Association alive by creating activity, not to erect a statue in its memory.

You went on to say that if the new system "goes belly up" we should "call for a judicial review, because Foster was forced on us". At this stage of our conversation I was left fairly speechless, and again pointed out that you had been sitting alongside the Foster Project people. You again replied that you had been "fighting like hell in what was a rear guard action".

You said that you had the choice of walking away from the table, or walking to it. You said that you chose to join the table with UK Athletics and the Foster Project Board, and insisted that representatives from the North, the South and the Midlands be allowed to sit with you. I believe you were claiming this as your sole victory in the negotiations.

I asked if on reflection, you considered the act of sitting at the top table to have been a good decision?. Interestingly you said in your reply, "they took all of our supplies away and I think there was a deliberate move to try and bleed the AAA's dry, which has been very difficult. We have done all that we can to preserve our funds". You said that you had pointed out many times that the sport did not belong to FastTrack and UKA. You said that it appeared that they felt they owned the commercial value of the sport.

You again expressed the contradictory view that the AAA's should take its membership from England Athletics. I said that this would be blackmailing the clubs into joining England Athletics. You said in reference to England Athletics "they control the competition and they control the international things". You implied that England Athletics could exclude those athletes and clubs who were not members.

I emphasised that the resolutions were not preventing clubs from joining England Athletics. However, the constitution should not require that member clubs affiliate to England Athletics in order to retain their membership of the AAA's.

I am disappointed that you have chosen to work against the club's resolutions. Having heard you speak a number of times, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that your actions are often at odds with your words. In your own words you have been "fighting a rear guard action", but it does seem from day one, you have been pulling in the same disastrous direction as Sport England, UK Sport and UK Athletics.

The only member of the AAA's Management Board who acted in the interests of the Association was your Treasurer Mr Keith Atkins. Keith expressed his concerns about the top heavy nature of the new structure in his 2004 report, and ultimately resigned mid-term, during 2005 due to lack of support from yourself and the other members of the Management Board.

You were the most critical of Keith Atkins in 2005 for speaking openly, yet in 2007 you are saying pretty much the same things as Keith said 2 years ago. The only difference is that Keith's actions and words were consistent. It is my view that when the history of the AAA's is updated your picture should be hung upside-down in recognition of the harm you have done as Chairman of the Association.

I am sorry if you feel you have been judged harshly, but I think it is important to emphasise in the strongest terms how difficult it is to reconcile your words over the last three years with your actions.

Your sincerely

**C.Zacharides (Zac)**



**George Bunner MBE  
Chairman, AAA of England  
2004 to 2007**