

THE ORIGINS OF ASCE: THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF THE CUBAN ECONOMY.

In going over the Notes on ASCE's history as a result of the recent revision and updating of the Association's website (www.ascecuba.org) I realized that there was a substantial gap in that history with respect to how ASCE came into being. Part of the reason is that there was no official Secretary at that time, let alone one with the talents of ASCE's long time Secretary (Joaquin Pujol). Hence, there were no systematic records. In February of 2009, however, I found a number of ASCE documents in my home office, including some from that early period 'before recorded history'. I decided to write a brief essay to supplement the Notes on ASCE's history with my recollections of this early period helped by these newly found documents.

ASCE: THE BIRTH OF AN IDEA

Between January of 1990 and June 1990 a group of Cuban-American economists in the Washington DC area started meeting informally to discuss what could be done in regards to Cuba in light of developments in Eastern Europe and glasnost and perestroika in the Soviet Union. There were five consistent participants at these meetings. Consistency, however, does not necessarily imply presence at every meeting that took place to discuss these subjects. In addition, there may have been others who occasionally participated in some of these meetings. Nonetheless the only other participant I remember with certainty is Jorge Perez-Lopez, who came only once, according to my recollection, and who refused to attend any more because these types of meetings in his view were not productive (to put it kindly). Indeed, his view was correct as a description

of any one meeting since we kept going around talking about what we could do without agreeing on topics, how to proceed or anything else.

Part of the reason was that the ideas or topics thrown about in our somewhat rambling early sessions ranged widely. For instance, develop a systematic record of what was going on in Eastern Europe, prepare plans or proposals for various needs of the Cuban economy, provide forums for informing the world of what was going on in Cuba in the economic sphere, promote knowledge of Cuba's economy including historical knowledge, and provide forums for economic policy discussions among professionals. In addition the connections to support for human rights and to political aspects of regime change also entered the discussion at various times. There were strong differences of opinion at the time as to the value added of economists' contributions to the latter subjects in their role as economists.

The five consistent participants at these early meetings were: Jorge Sanguinety, Plinio Montalvan, Armando Lago, Ernesto Hernandez- Cata and Roger Betancourt. Of course, during this period each of these individuals discussed these ideas with others (relatives, friends, co-workers and acquaintances) in various settings. These meetings took place at Armando Lago's house, at Jorge Sanguinety's house, and at Ernesto Hernandez-Cata's house. It was at Ernesto's house that I put forth the idea of a professional association that could be affiliated with the American Economic Association (AEA). According to my memory, no meetings took place at Plinio's house or at my house before the Summer of 1990.

In the early going Armando was a persistent instigator of having meetings. At some point after Perez-Lopez bailed out and impatient with the lack of progress, Armando and

Plinio came up with the suggestion of a broad agenda for the economic reconstruction of Cuba to be written by all five of us. They even came up with a rough outline and suggested we should split up the tasks. We discussed this idea and, in contrast to other times, Armando and/or Plinio suggested that the next meeting would be on the details of who would do what, after we all had time to think about the project. It was time to decide and, upon reflection, this particular idea was very unappealing to me for a variety of professional reasons. At the next meeting it was clear that I was going to have to follow Perez-Lopez and stop participating if the idea became a reality.

It was at that point that the idea of a professional association affiliated with the AEA occurred to me. An Indian colleague, Ashok Bhargava who was one year behind me at Wisconsin, had been active in the Association of Indian Economic Studies and we had casually discussed his participation in it at some AEA meetings. What attracted me about a similar one for Cuban Studies was that it allowed everyone to emphasize what interested them or they thought important, especially what could be relevant from the then current circumstances in Eastern Europe. Furthermore, it did so without forcing anyone to accept ideas or views that they disagreed with for whatever reason. It also allowed those who wanted to collaborate on a particular agenda to do so if they wished.

At the next meeting, when Armando and Plinio started to discuss further details of their broad agenda I suggested the idea of a professional association. Ernesto and Jorge were enthusiastic about the professional association idea and supported it immediately. Plinio and Armando also came to support it fairly quickly after its introduction at the meeting. Either at this meeting or the subsequent one Ernesto suggested that, as the only full-time academic in the group, I should be President. Consequently, the task of doing

the legwork on the implementation of the professional association idea was assigned to me.

ASCE: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE IDEA.

I contacted my Indian friend and got a copy of the constitution of the Association of Indian Economic Studies.¹ It became clear to me that at least two substantive changes in the constitution of the Indian association needed to be made. First, it was desirable to make it difficult if not impossible for Presidents and Board members to claim electoral mandates for life. Thus, I added a few words limiting the term of members of the Executive Board to one consecutive additional term. Second, due to the much smaller size of the pool of persons from which to draw, it was desirable to have some members that could provide continuity and the substantial amount of work required for success over the long-term without electoral mandates. I explicitly identified a Secretary and a Treasurer that were not elected by members of the association directly but appointed by the Executive Board every two years upon its election.

Given the right choices of persons, these officers could perform the institutional memory function without claiming additional rights and privileges from electoral mandates. Since they would have to bear the brunt of the work, I wrote into the constitution, following a similar provision in the Indian one for ‘co-opted’ members of the Executive Committee, that they had full voting rights during their period of service. There were also changes in form or language. For instance, the Indian constitution was

¹ Cleaning my office at home in February of 2009 a marked up copy of the Constitution of the Association of Indian Economic Studies that I used to draft the one for ASCE appeared among other papers from that period. Since it shows the main changes incorporated into ASCE’s original constitution, I added this marked-up copy to the end of this essay.

adapted to the political correctness of the 1970's and used the word Chairperson throughout the document. I changed it to President.

I don't recall the exact date of the meeting at Ernesto's house where we agreed on the professional association idea but it probably took place sometime in the Spring of 1990. Not too long after this meeting we met to discuss a draft of this modified constitution. It was met with approval and it led to a frenzy of subsequent activity to bring the association into reality.

Having agreed on the idea and the constitution, we had to agree on how to set-up the first board. I had agreed to Ernesto's suggestion of being the first President. It was clear to everyone that Armando was ideally suited to be Treasurer by 'temperament' and he immediately either accepted the suggestion or volunteered for the job. Since Ernesto had been keeping his colleagues at the Fund informed of our discussions, I suggested Joaquin Pujol as Secretary and this suggestion was quickly accepted. Ernesto, Jorge Sanguinety and Plinio Montalvan agreed to participate as Board members and Ernesto noted that Lorenzo Perez was willing to participate as a Board member.

We wanted to have other academicians on the Board and to have a presence in Miami. At some point it was decided that we should contact Jorge Salazar, who taught at FIU and was known to all of us since he had lived in Washington DC, and Luis Locay, who taught at the University of Miami and was familiar to me from attendance at AEA meetings. As we know they both agreed to participate.

We also wanted a bridge to older Cuban American professionals. All persons mentioned above had received professional graduate training in the US, but there was an older generation of professionals not necessarily trained here that we did not want to

exclude. Since the constitution called for the President to become ex-officio after his term and we did not have an outgoing President somebody suggested Felipe Pazos in that capacity. I followed this suggestion enthusiastically and Felipe graciously agreed. This effort not only bridged that gap between two generations of Cuban economists but it also projected a commitment to excellence that helped ensure ASCE's eventual success².

Very early in the process we also agreed that we wanted to honor Carlos Diaz- Alejandro in some fashion. He was a very distinguished Cuban-American economist, Ernesto's teacher at Yale and a friend to many of us. His untimely death in the mid 1980's was deeply regretted by everyone.

Armando got busy quickly on the more practical issues. For example finding out what it took to get incorporated, asking what to charge members and recruiting paying members. In this process he found out that we needed to have by-laws not just a constitution to get incorporated in Maryland. Hence we set out to write by-laws following to some extent the ones for the AEA from 1980, while incorporating the essential features of the modified constitution into the relevant sections of the by-laws. We were incorporated in early August of 1990, which is where the History Notes on ASCE's website start in detail.

² For a more extensive discussion of Felipe's role in ASCE's birth and its connection to the first Carlos Diaz- Alejandro lecture see my essay in honor of Felipe Pazos, "Felipe Pazos, Institutions and a Retrospective View of 'Problemas Economicos de Cuba en el Periodo de Transicion'" in Volume XI of ASCE's Papers and Proceedings, 2001.

THE ASSOCIATION OF INDIAN ECONOMICS STUDIES

THE CONSTITUTION

PREAMBLE

The present association has grown out of a meeting of economists, involved and interested in Indian Economics Studies, held at Albany, New York on October 25, 1974.

ARTICLE I: NAME

The name of the association shall be The Association of Indian Economics Studies, hereafter referred to as AIES.

ARTICLE II: OBJECTIVES

1. The objectives of AIES are:

- (a) To promote interest in the study of Indian economics in its broadest sense.
- (b) To encourage enquiry into, and analysis of, the problems and issues of the Indian economy.
- (c) To facilitate communication and discussion among scholars working towards the above two objectives.

2. To achieve these objectives, AIES may:

- (a) Organize meetings, conferences, seminars, symposia, etc.
- (b) Undertake and promote research on Indian economics.
- (c) Encourage and assist the teaching and designing of courses on Indian economics.
- (d) Cooperate with, and support, institutions and organizations that have aims and activities similar to those of AIES.
- (e) Organize and administer any other activities that may promote and support the above and similar objectives, such as dissemination of information about the Indian economy.

ARTICLE III: MEMBERSHIP

Membership is open to all scholars, teachers, students and institutions professionally concerned with Indian economic studies and interested in studying and understanding Indian economics and furthering the objectives of AIES as outlined in Article II. Membership shall consist of:

1. Voting Members

(a) Full Members: All persons who are professionally concerned with Indian economics studies are eligible for full membership upon payment of dues. A Full Member shall enjoy all rights accorded under this Constitution.

(b) Family Members: Family membership may be accorded to any married couple who qualify as Full Members upon payment of dues. Both spouses shall enjoy all the rights of Full Membership except that they shall jointly receive only one single set of publications to which a Full Member is entitled.

(c) Student Members: Bonafide students shall be eligible to become Student Members upon payment of special reduced rate of membership dues. A Student Member shall have the same rights as those of a Full Member.

(d) Life Members: All persons who are professionally concerned with Indian economics studies are eligible to become Life Members on payment of twenty times the annual dues. Life Members shall have the same rights as those of Full Members.

2. Non Voting Members

(a) Institutional Members: Educational institutions, libraries, etc. may become upon payment of prescribed dues Institutional Members of AIES. Each Institutional Member shall be eligible to send one representative to the General Body who shall have the right to speak but not the right to vote or to become a candidate for office.

(b) Associate Members: Persons not professionally concerned with Indian economics studies may be admitted to Associate Membership* upon payment of a special rate of membership dues. They shall not be entitled to vote or to be elected to any office.

3. Membership Rights

A Full Member is entitled to:

(a) Attend all meetings of AIES subject to registration charges.

(b) Vote at elections and other voting activities of AIES.

(c) Become a candidate for office of AIES.

(d) Present papers at the various forums of AIES subject to registration charges.

(e) Publish papers in the publications of AIES subject to financial charges and peer review.**

4. Membership In Good Standing

Membership is held in good standing provided a member retains one's constitutional eligibility and provided the dues are paid regularly. A member may withdraw from the membership by a written notice to the Chairperson of the Executive Committee.

ARTICLE IV: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

1. Composition

(a) The Executive Committee shall consist of a chairperson, six members, and an ex-officio member.

(b) No member of the Executive Committee shall hold more than one office.

(c) The Executive Committee shall be empowered to co-opt two additional members. Their term will expire with the term of the Co-opting Executive Committee.

2. The Chairperson *President*

(a) The ~~Chairperson~~ shall convene and preside over all business meetings of the Executive Committee and the General Body.

(b) The ~~Chairperson~~ shall be the official spokesperson of the Executive Committee, the General Body and of AIES.

(c) The ~~Chairperson~~ shall submit to the General Body a written report on the policies, problems and prospects of AIES every two years.

(d) The ~~Chairperson~~ shall coordinate all the activities of AIES.

(e) The ~~Chairperson~~ shall be elected by the General Body.

* In the discussions it was agreed that persons from low income countries such as India be admitted to this class of membership.

** At the meeting on August 10, 1979, the consensus was that the spirit of the peer review is to improve the quality of the paper and not to deny a member the right to publish.

3. The Treasurer

(a) The Treasurer shall be responsible for all funds raised by ~~AIES~~ ^{ASCE} including membership dues; donations and subventions received; proceeds from the sale of publications; fees for special services and events, etc. The Treasurer shall conduct the financial transactions including the handling of accounts, receipts, payments, and bank accounts.

(b) The Treasurer shall present to the General Body a biannual report on the financial status of ~~AIES, ASCE,~~

(c) The Treasurer shall be ~~elected~~ ^{Appointed} by the Executive Committee, ~~from among its members.~~

4. The Past ^{President} Chairperson ^{Member}
 The immediate past chairperson of the Executive Committee shall be an ex-officio member of the Executive Committee with full voting rights.

5. The Members

Members of the Executive Committee shall be elected by the General Body.

6. ~~Co-opted Members~~

~~Co-opted members shall have full voting rights.~~

7. Nominations

(a) The Executive Committee shall set up a Nomination Committee to propose a slate of candidates for the Executive Committee. Nomination Committee members shall not be candidates for the elections which the Nomination Committee organizes.

(b) The Nomination Committee shall receive written nominations from voting members. Each nomination shall be dully proposed and seconded by a voting member and have consent of the person nominated.

(c) The Nomination Committee shall prepare a list of duly nominated ~~and seconded~~ candidates, adding new names if necessary, and shall submit it to the voting members.

(d) Elections shall be by mail ballot to be completed before ~~the~~ annual conference.

8. Terms of Office

(a) The term of office of all elected members of the Executive Committee shall be two years; they shall be eligible for re-election ^{for one consecutive consecutive term.}

(b) Resignation from the Executive Committee shall be considered and accepted by the Executive Committee.

(c) Elected members of the Executive Committee may be removed through a vote of no confidence approved either at the meeting of the General Body or through a mail ballot of the General Body.

(cii) Motions of no confidence shall be initiated by at least five full members and shall be forwarded to the Executive Committee. Upon the receipt of such a motion the ~~Chairperson~~ ^{President} shall, within a month after the receipt, either call a meeting of the General Body or send out a mail ballot on the subject. In order for the no confidence motion to pass, it shall either be approved by a two-third majority of the members present and voting at the General Body meeting, or by a simple majority in a mail ballot within four weeks after the dispatch of ballots.

9. Vacancies

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(a) If the Chairperson is absent due to incapacity, resignation, removal or death, the members of the Executive Committee shall elect one of the members to be an acting Chairperson for the remainder of the term.

(b) Other vacancies on the Executive Committee arising before the expiration of the regular term of office shall be filled by the Executive Committee with due regard to the letter and spirit of the Constitution.

10. Functions

Subject to general directives and specific limitations imposed by the General Body and the Constitution, the Executive Committee shall make policies, decide upon programs, and administer all the activities of AIES. The authority of the Executive Committee shall include the following power:

(a) To execute on behalf of AIES all legal matters including ~~the~~ annual audit on or before ~~December 31~~ ^{12/31}, when each fiscal year shall end.

(b) To approve ~~biannual~~ ^{annual} budget and ~~to lend or borrow on behalf of AIES.~~

(c) To appoint committees and sub-committees with specific assignments as far as possible. ~~The~~ Chairperson of such committees shall be a member of the Executive Committee.

(d) To formulate or initiate changes in the by-laws under the Constitution.

(e) To conduct external relations of AIES in order to fulfill its goals in accordance with the provision of the Constitution.

(f) To organize academic conferences, seminars, etc. and to publish newsletters and books, etc.

(g) To undertake all other activities that may be necessary and proper for attainment of objectives of AIES.

11. Meetings

(a) The Executive Committee shall hold at least ~~two~~ ^{one} meetings a year.

(b) The Executive Committee may conduct its meetings and proceedings by mail or telephone and seek decisions by mail or telephone ballots.

(c) All decisions shall be made by a simple majority. The ~~Chairperson~~ ^{President} shall vote only in case of a tie.

(d) The ~~Chairperson~~ ^{President}, or another member working on his/her behalf, shall have the authority to convene the meetings of the Executive Committee. Notice of the meeting shall be sent out at least ~~two~~ ^{one} ~~week~~ ^{month} in advance.

(e) Subject to financial restraint, the ~~Chairperson~~ ^{President} shall convene a special meeting of the Executive Committee when a request for such a meeting is made by ~~three or more~~ ^{two-thirds of the} ~~members~~ ^{members} of the Executive Committee.

(f) The quorum for a meeting of the Executive Committee shall be four, with at least ~~three~~ ^{three} elected members present.

ARTICLE V: THE GENERAL BODY

1. Composition

Members in good standing constitute the General Body.

2. Functions

^{Sec} (a) The ultimate authority for conducting the functions of AIES shall be vested in the General Body.

(b) The General Body shall receive reports from the ~~Chairperson~~^{President}, the Treasurer, and the Executive Committee.

(c) The General Body may develop general policies and programs as well as directives to the Executive Committee.

(d) Upon recommendations of the Nomination Committee, the General Body shall elect the members of the Executive Committee, except the ex-officio member.

(e) The General Body may pass vote of no confidence against any or all members of the Executive Committee.

(f) The General Body shall have authority to approve amendments to the by-laws and to the Constitution recommended by the Executive Committee.

3. Meetings

(a) The General Body shall hold ~~an~~ annual meetings^{in conj with with AIA} at which business of AIES will be conducted. Special meetings may be called whenever necessary.

(b) Written notice of the meetings shall be sent to all the members at least one month in advance.

(c) The quorum for the ordinary meetings shall be one tenth or 10, ~~whichever is greater~~ of the full members. For meetings dealing with motions of no confidence or Constitutional amendment the quorum shall be one-fifth or 10, ~~whichever is greater~~, of the full membership.

(d) Decisions of the General Body may also be taken through mail ballot.

(e) Decisions of the General Body shall be reached through a simple majority except in cases of a no confidence motion (Article IV, 8 cii) and of a Constitutional amendment (Article VI, 2b.)

ARTICLE VI: AMENDMENTS

The Constitution can be amended through the following procedure:

1. Proposal

(a) Amendments may be initiated by any ~~ten~~^{ten} full members by submitting the proposal to the Executive Committee.

(b) The Executive Committee can propose amendments on its own or based on the proposals by members.

(c) Proposals for amendments received by the Executive Committee shall be considered by the Executive Committee and forwarded to the next General Body with the recommendations of the Executive Committee.

2. Ratification

(a) The General Body shall have the authority to ratify the amendments proposed by the Executive Committee or by members.

(b) The General Body shall ratify the amendments with a two-thirds majority of those present and voting, or with a majority of membership in case of the vote being taken by a mail ballot, the returns of which shall be finalized after two weeks of their dispatch.

(c) The rejected proposals may be resubmitted as under Section 1 of this article.

ARTICLE VII: PARLIAMENTARY RULES

Roberts Rules of Order (latest edition) shall be the authority in all questions of parliamentary law not covered by the by-laws.

Article VII: The fiscal year of AIES shall be as defined by each year.