

THE ANGLO-BOLIVIAN SOCIETY CHAIRMAN'S REPORT, 2005

I record with pleasure that our programme of events this year can scarcely have been matched in quality and range - unless by last year's! We have had some wonderful speakers, all of whom as usual have performed without a fee. We began with a splendid reflective address by our Honorary President, the Bolivian Ambassador, on the challenges facing his country; combined then with the Anglo-Spanish Society to hear a magisterial talk on the Jesuits and Early Music in Bolivia; caught up through Mike Laird with the Blashford-Snell exploration of the Rio Grande; lived the tremendous journey through the Andes on horseback of John Labouchere; were held rapt by John Crabtree's scholarly commentaries on 'Patterns of Protest' in Bolivia; were anthropologically enlightened by Henry Stobart at the British Museum 'Carnaval' exhibit; had our preconceptions of Che Guevara recalibrated by Richard Gott; and ended - just ahead of December's Presidential election - by visiting the Palace of Westminster to hear Lord Lea and his colleagues make their formal IPU debriefing on their Parliamentary visit to Bolivia in August.

So we have had a good year and rich fare; but attendance by members has been at best patchy. Those who come frequently comment on how much they enjoy our events; and yet, more often than not, we have too few members in attendance to offset the costs of the venue. Canning House's charges, despite the discounts available to the Society as an Associate Member, invariably exceed our direct income from an event. So I really must take this opportunity to implore you as members to make a commitment to come and support as often as you possibly can on the mere eight or nine days of the year when we hold an event.

Your Council is very mindful of the need to strengthen the membership. All of us can be involved in this. The launching this autumn of a regular Newsletter and opening of a website (www.angloboliviansociety.org.uk) are both designed to increase interest. We are working to refresh the database and to catch up on unpaid subscriptions. We also crave some corporate backing for our efforts to put Bolivia on the map. If any of those present think they can help in this regard, the Society will be deeply grateful.

We continue to hold a good reserve of funds as the Treasurer has indicated. But we cannot keep nibbling away at this reserve. The key to long-term sustainability has to lie in improved levels of membership and attendance.

I report to you at the conclusion of my third year as Chairman and, under the Society's constitution, I must now stand down. I am grateful to all who have worked with me on the Executive Council and, not least to Richard White for having shouldered in this particular year the twin responsibilities of Secretary and Treasurer, and to John Montes for being my valiant Vice-Chairman. The elected members of the new Council that emerge from today's meeting will gather shortly to choose the Society's Officers for the year ahead. I wish them well in all their endeavours.

Philip A McLean
17 January 2006