

SYNOD NEWS

THE GENERAL SYNOD OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

BRIAN HANSON

Registrar and Legal Services Director

The July Group of Sessions was the last in the quinquennium and therefore there was an atmosphere of needing to complete work before the elections. The Synod majored on the Clergy Discipline Measure (see 5 Ecc LJ 382) and devoted extra time to the revision stage in order that it might be finished in July. Significant amendments passed by the Synod included:

- (a) no proceedings to be taken in respect of lawful political opinions;
- (b) the removal of deposition from the Measure; and
- (c) increasing the number of members of the tribunal from three to five.

After final drafting, the Steering Committee moved final approval of the Measure of the November Sessions and the motion was carried in all three Houses (Bishops Ayes 38; Noes 0; Clergy Ayes 197; Noes 23; Laity Ayes 200; Noes 21). The Measure is now with the Legislative Committee before it is sent on to the Ecclesiastical Committee of Parliament.

In July the Churchwardens Measure was again considered following another adverse report from the Ecclesiastical Committee. The clauses dealing with the suspension of a churchwarden were removed by the Synod and the Measure was finally approved and sent back to the Ecclesiastical Committee. At the time of writing the Measure has progressed no further and therefore there is now no likelihood of the new provisions coming into force in 2001.

Other business passed in July was the promulgation of Amending Canon No 25 which gives the Bishop of Dover *ex officio* membership of the Upper House of Convocation and of the General Synod, and the Ecclesiastical Offices (Age Limit) (Channel Islands) Order applying the Ecclesiastical Offices (Age Limit) Measure 1975 to the Channel Islands. The usual fees orders were also passed.

In November the new Synod dealt with the Revision Stage of the Synodical Government (Amendment) Measure (see 5 Ecc LJ 383 and 483) which had been postponed from February because of lack of time. Final drafting and final approval will take place in July 2001, the Presidents having decided that there will be no sessions held in February.

Apart from the final approval of the Clergy Discipline Measure referred to above, the only other item of legislative business was the passing of the Parsonages Measure (Amendment) Rules 2000 which are needed to bring the rules into line with the provisions contained in the Church of England (Miscellaneous Provisions) Measure 2000 (see 5 Ecc LJ 382).

Note. this is the last report from General Synod that will appear in Brian Hanson's name as he retires as Registrar and Legal Services Director at Easter 2001. We are