**Dress Code: Staff Meeting**

by Arthur Saxon

Pauline Anderson looked around the assembled members of staff and smiled.

“Thank you all for coming,” she said. “Term starts next week and I would like you to be aware in advance of the new dress code so that it doesn’t take you by surprise.

Hattie Barker, one of the biology teachers, pursed her lips. “Well I hope we’re going back to longer skirts,” she said. “The uniform was, in my opinion, ridiculous last year.”

“Actually,” said Pauline, “skirts will be shorter this term.”

A number of the other staff members gasped, and some groaned. “Shorter?”

demanded Brian Gilmore. “What justification can you possibly have for making them even shorter?”

“Uniformity,” said Pauline simply. “You saw the school photo last term - the range of skirt lengths was enormous and looked untidy. The Board has agreed that from now on, all hemlines should be a maximum of one inch below the buttocks. That applies to everyday skirts, games skirts, and gym skirts.”

“But that’s ridiculous!” protested James Candleford. “What about poor Alvin? Think of his heart!”

Pauline turned to Alvin Partridge. “Alvin, how do you feel about it?”

Alvin shrugged. “Maybe,” he said, “with so much flesh on display, I’ll become blasé about it.”

“That’s the spirit,” said Pauline. She began passing out copies of the new dress code. “Have a look at this and familiarise yourselves with it. We may be relaxing the code, but I’d like us please to enforce it a little more firmly than we did last year. Too many of the girls think they can get away with anything.”

There was a moment’s silence as the staff absorbed the new rules.

“You’re letting girls go to other schools with their knickers showing?”

inquired Theresa Beatty.

Pauline nodded. “With the maximum skirt length being so short,” she said, “it’s scarcely avoidable.” Then she cleared her throat. “There was another matter raised at the Board meeting,” she announced, “which is the real reason I brought you all here. The Students Committee raised the very good point that female staff members are currently allowed to wear skirts or trousers, and there is a certain resentment felt among the students with regard to this freedom of dress. I therefore propose that we initiate an informal dress code for the female staff.”

Gasps went up around the room. “You’re going to ask us to wear a uniform?”

demanded Pamela Coutes. “You can’t be serious!”

“We’ll take a vote on it,” said Pauline. “But I hope that you will all think about this and not just react in a knee-jerk fashion. I am not proposing that you should all wear the same colour blouses or the same colour skirts or anything like that. This is a school, not a fast-food store. But I think that some general guidelines, that we can all agree upon, would be a good idea. I think it will help to foster more of a kinship between staff and pupils, which can only be a good thing - I know that relations can be strained at times.”

“It could work,” admitted Alan Sarkar. “I reckon it’s worth a try.”

“Easy for you to say,” retorted Pamela. “You won’t be affected!”

“Well perhaps we could vote now,” said Pauline. “You’ve all been very supportive of my leadership over the past few years - I hope you’ll stand by me now. All those in favour of some kind of dress code for female staff, please raise your hands.”

A few hands went up, but Pauline’s heart sank as she realised it was not enough. She conducted a quick count - nine of the thirteen men and four of the nineteen women had raised their hands. Then hope dawned anew as two more women raised their hands, followed soon afterwards by Noel Lambert, the Art teacher. She now had exactly half the staff on her side. All she needed was one more vote...

And then it came. Theresa Beatty sighed and raised her hand. “I suppose I don’t mind,” she said.

“Excellent,” said Pauline. “Those against the idea?”

Seven women and two men raised their hands.

“Abstentions?” asked Pauline.

Six more hands were raised.

“Then I declare the motion carried,” said Pauline. “Let’s talk about guidelines now. In view of the fact that we are now requiring the girls to wear extremely short skirts, I suggest that we include a maximum skirt length for the female staff. Not one as extreme as for the girls,” she added hastily, “but we can vote on how long that maximum should be.”

“Will we be voting on a minimum length as well?” asked Sarah Dunlop, the youngest teacher at just twenty-two years of age.

“I don’t see why there should be a minimum,” said Pauline. “There’s no minimum length for the girls, and why should the staff dress code be more restrictive than the one for the students?”

Sarah nodded, and smiled.

“Let’s take some suggestions,” said Pauline, taking out a pen. “Then we’ll take a vote.”

“May I suggest mid-thigh?” ventured David Rigby.

Pauline was about to write this down, but then said, “that’s a little hard to quantify. Can we stick to a number of inches?”

“Oh, okay,” said David. “How about six inches above the knee, then?”

Pamela snorted, but Pauline ignored her and wrote down the suggestion.

Then she said to Pamela, “Pam, your opinion is as important to me as anyone’s. Could I take a suggestion from you?”

At forty-nine years old, Pamela was the oldest and most conservative of the female staff members, but she knew she had very nice legs for her age, and so it was only with a moment’s hesitation that she replied, “I’m not averse to wearing an above-the-knee skirt. But I think that’s all the stipulation I’d be happy with - above the knee. That should be the maximum length.”

“Okay,” said Pauline, and wrote this down. “Who else has suggestions?”

“How about an inch below the buttocks?” suggested Sarah. “That would put us on an even footing with the girls.”

There were more gasps around the table, and Pamela glared at Sarah. But Pauline wrote down the suggestion anyway. “Thank you, Sarah,” she said.

“Anyone else?”

More suggestions were taken, and when she had seven, Pauline decided it was time to vote. She looked down her list. “Who’s for Pamela’s suggestion of ‘above the knee’?”

Three hands were raised, including Pamela’s.

“Who’s for two inches above the knee?” asked Pauline. Four hands went up.

“Three inches above the knee?” This got five votes.

“Six inches above the knee?” asked Pauline. Six hands were raised. Doing a quick mental calculation, Pauline decided this was probably going to be the winning length.

“Five inches below the buttocks?” she inquired. This option got four votes.

“Three inches below the buttocks?” Three hands were raised.

Pauline’s heart leapt, and she said, “One inch below the buttocks?”

She frowned, then, as six hands went up. “Somebody hasn’t voted,” she said.

Geraldine Prowse now spoke up for the first time. “I still haven’t decided,” she said. “Tell me Pauline - will you be subject to this code as well?”

Pauline nodded. “I will,” she said.

“In that case,” said Geraldine, “I’ll go for the last one, just because I’d be really interested to see if you can maintain credibility with such a short skirt.”

“Fair enough,” said Pauline. In that case, we seem to have a winner - Sarah’s choice of one inch below the buttocks.”

Astonishment rippled through the room. “You can’t expect me to wear a skirt that short,” insisted Pamela. “I won’t do it!”

“It was a democratic vote,” said Pauline. “We all agreed on this method of decision-making four years ago.”

Pamela knew this was true, and she sighed. “Very well,” she said.

“Excellent!” said Pauline, pleased. “Now, since we’re all going to be wearing microskirts, I think tights are out of the question. It’s bare legs or stockings from now on, I’m afraid.”

There were groans from some of the women, but Pauline pressed on. “I’d like to do some publicity photos for the web site,” she said. “Next Monday, if that’s okay. I’d appreciate it if all the women could turn up in regulation skirts.”

“Um, where are we supposed to get hold of skirts that short?” asked Theresa.

“You’ll have to shorten them yourselves,” said Pauline. “Or else get one of the matrons to do it - they’ve said they’ll be happy to do that. Now, I think it would be a good idea for this photo to advertise the fact that we’re supporting the new dress code guidelines for the girls, and I’m aware that many of the girls wear super-short skirts that reveal the knickers. I’m therefore looking for a volunteer to wear a skirt that reveals the knickers - Sarah, would you be prepared to do that?”

“Sure,” said Sarah. “How short do you want it?”

“How short are you prepared to wear it?” asked Pauline with a wry smile.

“I see,” said Sarah, smiling back.

“If anyone else is prepared to wear a knickers-revealing skirt,” said Pauline, “next Monday would be a perfect time to do it.”

“Can we wear thongs with them?” asked Anita Morgan, another young teacher.

“I’m not going to restrict your choice of underwear,” said Pauline. “You can wear what you like. Now, about the rest of the dress code. Can we all stick to blouses, please - no cardigans or jumpers. Is that acceptable?”

There was a murmur of assent.

“And for sports,” continued Pauline, “perhaps the games mistresses and gym teachers could refrain from wearing tracksuits...”

“Does that include me?” asked Ted Ramsay, who taught gym.

“No - it just applies to the ladies,” explained Pauline.

“Do we have to wear skirts?” asked Theresa.

“Yes please - no shorts,” said Pauline. “And make sure they’re as short as your everyday skirts - i.e. no more than one inch below the buttocks.

Angie and Sabrina, I would encourage you to wear the gym knickers for your gym classes, but you’re welcome to wear skirts instead if you like.”

“Can we wear knickers instead of gym knickers, like the girls can?” asked Sabrina, a twenty-seven-year-old who had voted for the shortest hemline.

“Of course,” said Pauline. “Perhaps you could bring your gym outfits with you on Monday and we’ll get a few photos of you in the gymnasium.”

“Sure,” said Sabrina, and Angie nodded a little doubtfully.

“Well, I think that’s it,” said Pauline. “Thanks for your attention - I’ll see you on Monday.”

THE END