Victor: I welcome all of you to this special meeting of the NIRP steering committee in which we will discuss how important Henk has been for our NIRP activities. This is a special meeting indeed, as you can hear the shooting outside in this hour of crisis for our people and in our hour of crisis for NIRP since the Dutch Minister has terminated this programme. A special word of welcome to Eli, who could not be with us last time and who has lost some weight since then.

Eli: This is none of your business! My weight is my own weight. I demand apologies!

Naomi: come on Eli, let’s stick to an atmosphere of good will and let us at least first welcome our guests.

Victor: A word of welcome to our Dutch colleagues who have been with us now for seven years. Please Bas, may I ask you, as co-chair, to say a few words as well.

Bas: dear friends, indeed it is a great pleasure for me to be among friends again even if we had our difficulties at times and we have met each other in the Dutch press recently as adversaries. I would like to start by reading a poem, which is in Dutch, to honour our collaboration.

In de tuin van de vrede
Bloeiën slechts fragiele planten
Op de keien van het verleden
Staan nog de krassen van het leed

I would like to ask Lolle, to give a translation

Lolle: Yes mister Chairman, with pleasure I will do so. I like political poetry and its philosophical meaning (he gives a translation)
Eli: What do you know about our past? What do you know about suffering? Why do you judge about right and wrong?
Ton: Gentlemen, let’s not start a political debate here, we are here to honour Henk and to judge his...
Lolle: Mr Chairman, I insist that we first discuss Eli’s false accusations and to clear the air. Judging Henk can only be done in an atmosphere of trust and I feel that this trust is not in this room and I have just heard Annelies say that she smells a sour smell here.
Annelies: I wasn’t sure where it came from.
Richard: Let’s stop this nonsense. Mr Chairman, why don’t you go to the main point on our agenda (Eli leaves the room to have an urgent telephone call)
Victor: Which is our judgement of Henk’s work. May I ask Mirjam, as Henk’s counterpart, to give us her ideas.
Mirjam: Henk has been so good! He was always there when you needed him. He was punctual, precise, a marvel of loyalty to his work, I can not praise him enough. The only problem of course is that he shouldn’t have written this letter to the Dutch press. Overall I would like to give him a major credit for the successes of NIRP. I propose to give him a special NIRP award for all his excellent work.
Victor: Loes: do you want to add something? You have been working with Henk for such a long time!
Loes: I fully agree with everything Mirjam says, and I like the idea to give Henk an award for all his dedication.
Richard: Yes the idea of an award is a very good idea. Maybe we can design a nice one in our kibbutz and maybe it is an idea that all of us can have such an award as we have all been working very hard, although some more than others.
Eli: I propose that our artists at the University of Tel Aviv will make the award. They have done beautiful work before.
Naomi: Maybe we should first vote about the idea of an award for Henk.
Victor: Good idea! I propose that we stick to our rules which state that the majority of votes is needed but at least one vote from either side.
Annelies: That is only necessary if it is a matter of strategic decision making! Ladies and gentlemen this is a trivial thing. We should vote with simple majority and add Loes and Mirjam as well!
Ton: How can you say the award is a trivial thing! As if Henk’s work has been trivial! It might be one of the most serious decisions we have ever reached!
Richard: Ton, I side with you that this is of utmost importance and that we should vote with at least one vote in favour from each side. But I expect you to vote for my proposal that we will give an award to each of us and that it will be produced in our kibbutz.
Naomi: Why is it important to vote after all? It seems we are all happy with the idea and we should stick to the agenda, which says we only deal with Henk today!
Victor: I propose that we first vote about the necessity of a vote or not and I would like to ask Bas to preside over this first voting round.
Bas: Sorry Victor, I was listening to Radio Nederland Wereldomroep, what do you propose?
Victor: I am not going to repeat that I asked you to preside over the first voting round.
Bas: Ok who is in favour?
Five are in favour, five against. I see there is at least one vote in favour from the Dutch side and four in favour from the Israeli side. So what do we do in such circumstances? It is a pity Henk is not here to find out what our rules say. I think I remember: in such circumstances the chairs decide. Victor you were in favour. I was against, as it was unclear to me what that voting was all about, so maybe Mirjam can you help me to reconsider my position?
Mirjam: it is a vote to decide if we are going to vote about the idea of an award for Henk.
Bas: Of course we should vote! I side with my Israeli colleague! So we now have six in favour and four against, and I don’t understand my Dutch colleagues and Naomi for not voting in favour of voting!
Annelies: Bas you make me very mad. I have already said many times I don’t like this. I am responsible for my own decision making!
Victor: Let’s continue our discussion about the award! I propose there should be a text saying: ‘for Henk from his NIRP colleagues with gratitude’
Richard: But we first have to decide who will make the award!
Ton: Why don’t we ask the Royal Tropical Institute to use the lay-out of the cover of the NIRP books, under the condition that they change those awful maps on the covers! We can ask them to print the text with gold on a velvet underground.
Mirjam: And the Dutch and Israeli flags on both sides
Lolle: Then I insist, Mister Chairman that we should add the Palestinian flag as well!
Eli: This is another of your insults. You know very well we have been trying very hard to develop the Israeli-Palestinian programme in NIRP but you continue claiming! I no longer want to discuss this with you. I am sick and tired of it (Eli leaves the room with doors banging)
Victor: let us postpone this meeting and first have tea to calm down and we resume in twenty minutes time.
After another three hours of heated arguments (in which Victor used half of that time) it was decided not to decide anything and postpone decision making to a later day. As a result there is no award for Henk.

Only in our hearts…

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