The General Meeting of the Russian Academy of Sciences

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I would like to speak about the efficient selection of candidates to the Academy's roster in order to improve the RAS human potential. It turns out that the rights of both voters and contenders are violated during the elections to the Academy. First, about the voters, i.e., about you, and me, and the members of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Since we vote at the Academy's General Meeting, we have the right to get acquainted with all materials about all nominees. Here we find ourselves in a situation from an old Soviet joke: "Do I have the right?" "Yes, you do." "May I?" "No, you may not." According to the statistics of the RAS Personnel Department, the number of contenders for the titles of a corresponding member and an academician at each election fluctuates from 1500 to 2500 people. If all documents exist in one copy, how can more than 1000 members of the Academy get acquainted with them? Even if we lined up for them round the clock, we would not be able to get them. Therefore, we often hear voices at the RAS General Meetings that we should trust the branches and sections. However, there is an old Russian saying: "Trust but verify!" Is it really possible to verify? Yes, it is. You do not have to be a big specialist in information processes to understand that not only serial but parallel information processing is possible. In other words, all documents must be accessed simultaneously, and, for this, they should be posted on the Internet. Then we would have not only the right but also the opportunity to get acquainted with all documents of all candidates who want to be elected to the Russian Academy of Sciences.

Generally speaking, we can enter a contender's name into the Internet and learn a lot about him or her. Unfortunately, this business is not very well established in Russia, and, if you just type in one's last

name, you will get insufficient information about the candidate's works and very poor biographical data. Therefore, on the threshold of the coming election, it is, probably, advisable to develop forms for document representation and easy display on the Internet. This would improve the RAS image. Then Academy members would be able to get information about those who wish to be elected to the RAS. At the same time, we would implement the principle of Peter the Great, who said, "... so that everyone's stupidity could be seen." Perhaps less worthy candidates will not dare apply for membership in the Academy, because not everyone would like to have his or her weaknesses exhibited before the public eye.

The situation is more complex with the contenders. They must be sure that their candidatures are voted and counted correctly and objectively. Every democratic election system has an independent monitoring of the voting and counting procedures. At the section level, there is a great conflict of interests, and monitoring is necessary to ensure the rights of contenders. There is no such conflict at the RAS General Meeting. Here we have no doubts that both voting and counting are conducted objectively. Most likely, it is worth using different monitoring options. Elections in sections can be monitored, for example, by the Charter Commission. It should also take on the functions of an ethics commission. Then we will implement the "trust but verify" principle.

Thus, to improve the efficiency of selection of candidates for RAS membership, we should lay open on the Internet all the necessary materials about candidates and monitor independently the course of elections.