

**COTWOLD COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL**

**WORKING NOTE NO. 2**

by

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1. On 1<sup>st</sup> May 1968 Mr. Richard Balbernie of the Cotswold Community, Mr Chris Holtom of Bristol University and I met to discuss some proposed training programme to prepare the staff of the Cotswold Community for the new roles they will take after re-organisation.
2. The discussion also covered other practical points arising from the Home Office decision to support the extended feasibility study as outlined in my letter to Mr. D. Morrell of the Home Office dated 5<sup>th</sup> March 1968.
3. Inevitably we also talked about the White Paper published the day before. We had all assimilated the general content but none of had as yet given it any detailed consideration. This note is to record the points made in the discussion.

### **Organisational Changes**

4. A first experimental house (Thames) has been established. A number of acting appointments have been made: Head of the "Group Living Unit" and a house warden, three group leaders, and a house mother for Thames house. In addition a member of C.S.V. is also working in the house. Our conclusion, as on the morning of the 1<sup>st</sup> May, and making all reservations about the halting acceptance of the new task and organisation by those who have been appointed to the new posts, was that the experiment is following a reasonable course.
5. Our reservations were mainly about uncertainties in the definition of roles, boundaries between the new commands, and in the skills of those required to carry out new activities or perhaps better, required to carry out old activities in new ways. It seems important, therefore, to determine priorities in the next phase of re-organisation so as to 'protect' the first experiment.
6. The obvious threats are that:
  - a) One or more boys in the new house will prove too disturbed or destructive to be contained within what is at present a fragile structure;
  - b) Those members of staff appointed to new roles in their need to 'test the limits' of the Principle's delegation of responsibility and authority to them will test them to

destruction. They can do this either by telling him everything and thus overloading him, or more likely (and there are already signs of this) by telling him nothing, and thus raising his anxiety about what is happening beyond the threshold of toleration:

c) They will find their new roles too difficult; or

d) They will be put under such pressure by those members of the staff not included in the experiment that they will be overwhelmed by a conflict of loyalties between the experiment and their colleagues.

7. The first threat, the too disturbed boys, is best dealt with by setting up, as soon as possible, what was called in the original proposals the “Special Therapeutic Unit”. The creation of the “Reception and Diagnostic Unit” through which any boy who is to be admitted to the house should pass before admission to Thames house would be a second line of defence.

8. We therefore propose that, in terms of organisational change, the setting up of the “Special Therapeutic” and the “Reception and Diagnostic” Units should take precedence over the starting of a second experimental house.

9. One ‘reasonable’ consequence of re-organisation and particularly of the uncertainties about the authority and responsibility attached to the new roles is that the role and the authority of the Principal will be severely tested. Not only is it likely that the new Head of the Group Living Unit, the House Warden and the Group Leaders will be uncertain of their own capacity for taking responsibility and exercising authority, but that the Principal should be very uncertain too. In a sense he has delegated his future to them. And while he awaits the outcome (and not only he, but the Home Office, the Foundation and the Managers as well) he may well have to tolerate being kept in ignorance of what is really happening.

10. The Special Therapeutic Unit will be Richard Balbernie’s direct concern and one moreover in which his own personal skills will be fully utilised. Its setting up, therefore, will not only provide a unit to which the very disturbed boys can be sent, but will also give the Principal a ‘legitimate’ working role in relation to the experimental house.

### **Staff Training**

11. Two kinds of training are planned: specific, to reinforce institutional changes; and general, for the benefit of staff. The distinction is between that kind of training that is required of staff taking new roles and the more general training for those members of the staff who may wish to acquire new skills for their own sake. For the present priority is to be given to the former.

12. The members of the staff involved in the new house are already having weekly meetings with Mr Holtom of Bristol University, to discuss their own internal

relationships and their relationships with the rest of the Community. When the need for these total staff meetings with Mr Holtom decreases, he will continue to have a consultant relationship with the Head of the Group Living Unit.

13. In addition, the Head of the Living Unit, the House Warden and the Matron are to attend 'small-group' training sessions in Bristol University, and after some experience of these will take part in 'large-group' and 'inter-group' events also in Bristol.

14. One 'small-group' event will be offered in Ashton Keynes to other members of the staff who wish to increase their own skills. The consultant to this group will be Mr Kingston of Bristol University.

15. Experimentally, only one such group will be offered now, limiting the numbers therefore to a maximum of ten. In time, if there are more than enough for one group either by reason or more members of the staff wanting to have a first experience or because those who have had a first experience wish to continue, then a second group will also be offered, probably with Miss Elizabeth Richardson, also of Bristol University, as consultant.

### **Follow-Up and Evaluation**

16. I take a very 'horticultural' view of the present state. Something has been started and looks, at the moment, as though it might grow and develop. However desirable it might be from the research point of view to put in a team to study the creation of the new house and its effects on the boys and on the community, such a study could but not interfere with the delicate process of growth. In other words, no action for research purposes alone is tolerable at present.

17. We have arranged that full notes shall be kept by Mr. Balbernie, Mr. Holtom and myself and that these will be used as a base line for descriptions of change.

### **Next Organisational Study**

18. One of the sections of the first Working Note dealt with the role of Local Managers and the relationships between them and the Home Office, the Foundation and the Principal. This part of the Working Note was based on little evidence. I discussed the question with Mr. Morrell, Mr. Howell, Mr. Lee-Brown and the Principal, but I did not meet any of the other managers nor attend any of their meetings. It seems important that the tentative recommendations of the report should be either confirmed or modified, and any resulting changes implemented. If this is not done soon it is likely that the managers themselves will feel uncertain of their responsibilities and authority and both Principal and Foundation uncertain of the respective authorities exercised from Head Office in London on the one hand and from the local management on the other.

19. We planned this study for July and August when I return from America. If any work has to be undertaken in the meantime Dr. Miller could be available.

**A.K. Rice**

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