

Managing to Govern

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THIS PAPER originated in an attempt to define what is, or should be, the role of the Assistant Governor; in such an attempt however, it would seem essential to make the point that every Assistant Governor has in his back pocket the Governor's keys; that he is in fact in a direct line of succession on promotion to the office of the Governor. Thus any attempt to define the role of the Assistant Governor can only be made in the light of an overall assessment of the role of the Governor. Obviously to this, as yet unsolved, equation must also be added the question of the function of the establishment which the Governor rules, as this primary goal of the institution can have perhaps certain implications on the function of the Governor. There are in fact variations in the basic goal of prison which will vary from establishment to establishment, as their functions differ.

To work toward a role definition it may be necessary that a more

direct statement of the aim of an establishment be given by the Prison Department: at present an establishment may have a wide primary aim, either of training or custody; and the individual personality, ideals and attitudes of any Governor, and of his staff, allow that this primary aim be interpreted in different ways during his period of control, and thus when a new Governor is posted, so he practices his own theories. This in itself can only militate against any establishment trying to work towards any structured programme of training; however, wherever an establishment has both a defined and acceptable aim, with a structure designed to cope with the problems thrown up, then progress towards an effective training programme seems to be made. This suggestion of an imposed policy may be seen as a curb on the individual; however, what is hereunder suggested, gives more than adequate scope to any Governor and his staff to

move forward in a constructive manner.

It is difficult to find any clear definition of the role of the Governor; Statutory Rules, Prison Rules 1964, Standing Orders, and the Prison Act 1952 each refer to particular duties and obligations imposed upon a Governor, but nowhere can an adequate definition be found, expressed in direct logical terms. Perhaps the nearest definition from an official—or semi-official—source of the role of the Governor is to be read in Appendix 2 of the Wynn-Parry Report, where it states that: “the Governor is responsible for everything that goes on in his establishment; i.e. security, leadership, co-ordination, development, co-operation with other bodies, and the responsibility for the proper use of public moneys and property.” This definition, if acceptable, places the Governor far more in a managerial role than as head of treatment programmes—as is perhaps envisaged by Hugh Klare in his book *Anatomy of Prison*, in an earlier chapter of which Klare has indicated clearly the existing problems of the Governor, from however the point of running a treatment programme only. It is, however, interesting to note that Klare has recently suggested the appointment of management consultants for Governors. Dr. Gordon Rose in his paper “Administrative Consequences of Penal Objec-

tives” (Sociological Review, Monograph 9) looks at the inherent difficulties of the role of the Governor. He suggests that the Governor is “at one and the same time director of punishment or treatment, prison manager, staff manager, trade union negotiator, personnel officer, publicity officer and father of his flock” and the implication is very much that of jack of all trades. He considers further what are to be the important functions of the Governor and states that “whatever happens to the Governor he is likely to remain primarily interested in whatever his version may be of treatment of offenders”.

Parallels are occasionally drawn between the structure and sometimes the function of a large, long-stay hospital, and those of a prison; Geoffrey Hutton in an article “Who Runs a Hospital” (*New Society*, 27-64) discusses the problems of hospital management, and it is in his concluding paragraph that the problem is stated, and theoretically answered. “What is needed is not an ideal system of management, but an arrangement which allows for flexibility and variety according to particular needs, an assessment of ideas of a conceptual framework which enables these needs to be considered and analysed.” Mr. Hutton had previously made the cogent point that “the illness is treated as a whole throughout the whole

organisation rather than in parts by different services". It is perhaps from this basis that any analysis and suggested "conceptual framework" for treatment should start.

In any consideration of institutional organization it is of value to look outside to see what lessons if any may be learned from industry; Lord Brown in his book *Exploration in Management* has made this direct statement, based on work done at Glacier Metal, that "effective organization is a function of the work to be done, and the resources and techniques available to do it. Thus changes in the method of production bring about changes in the number of work roles, in the distribution of work between roles and in their relationships to one another; failure to make explicit acknowledgment of this relationship between work and organization gives rise to non-valid assumptions, e.g. that optimum organization is a function of the personalities involved, that it is a matter connected with the personal style and arbitrary decisions of the chief executive, that there are choices between centralised and de-centralised types of organizations, etc. Our observations lead us to accept that optimum organization must be derived from an analysis of the work to be done, and the techniques and resources available."

In recent years there has been an increase of informed discussion within and without the Prison Service, about the need to examine and define more directly

and rationally the objectives of any penal establishment, and the most effective means of achieving these stated objectives. Over the past years new establishments have been opened to cope with the growing prison population, new techniques have been introduced to train those committed to the care of the Prison Department, and a variety of new grades of staff to cope with these new techniques; while at first glance, and perhaps in theory, this increasing flow of changes could have had the long term effect of increasing the effectiveness of training methods. It must be clearly acknowledged that, for reasons which must be explored, and where necessary exploded, these methods of treatment have not achieved the expected results.

It would appear that while these techniques have been added to the armoury of the prison staff, the structure of the penal establishment has not been adapted and modified to cope with the pressures and needs of the increasing training demands. The Royal Navy has in the past quickly realised that in order to maintain an efficient superstructure, it is necessary to chip off — and not increase — the old layers of pusser's grey before adding a new coat, or else the ship will have a marked tendency to be either sluggish in control, or even to capsize. This analogy can often be applied to the management structure of many penal establishments. It appears

fundamental that the staff structure of the penal establishment must be critically examined, so that there is opportunity to determine that no part of the programme may be allowed to become an added layer of encumbrance to an already overloaded organisation, without previous critical appraisal. The Prison Service is already—albeit making haste slowly in true Civil Service tradition—becoming aware of this need for such re-examination and reorganization, where structure, function and role are now being considered, the consequences of which may well lead to a redefinition of these factors.

The formal staff structure of any penal establishment and in particular of the local prison as it is at present, has often been—and by implication, critically—described as para-military. The historical reasons for this have been criticised, yet far too frequently has this structure not been adequately and rationally considered, so that it has now become almost a sacrosanct institution which has created its own institutionalising mystique. This structure is now found wanting, and the time is indeed ripe—perhaps over-ripe—for change: it was hoped that the Royal Commission on the Penal System might produce radical recommendations; service bodies have most certainly made radical suggestions; the service itself is becoming more and more aware of the need to look

again at the concepts of training prisoners and at its own techniques in management and in organisation; the Prison Officers' Association is now showing a keen and vital concern in the changing role of the Prison Officer; the Government is producing White Papers of significance and the Advisory Council for the Treatment of Offenders is producing a variety of reports dealing with many differing aspects of penal training and treatment and indeed on some of these recommendations action has already been taken. There is indeed a climate abroad which is healthy and highly indicative of a need for change and of a willingness to cope with change.

It would, therefore, seem opportune to suggest here that in the formal structure of any penal institution there is room for a total reappraisal of staff roles and functions within the framework of whatever is conceived as the function of that establishment. Obviously the key man in this must be the Governor with the support and leadership of the Prison Department. As has been stated in evidence to the Royal Commission on the Penal System, the essential function of the Governor is that of general manager of, and co-ordinator within, the establishment. It is paramount that on the Governor rests the final responsibility for the effective running of his establishment, and only a precursory glance at Standing Orders and Statutory Rules

support this contention; there will be no suggestion in this paper that the Governor should be expected to divest himself of this responsibility. It is, however, felt that within the existing framework the roles of the Governor and of his staff need to be flexibly redefined so that he, the Governor may more effectively use his ability, talents and experience, and those of his staff. The Governor has vested in him under Prison Rule 98 and Borstal Rule 79 power of delegation which he may use with the direction of the Secretary of State. It is interesting to note at this time that other establishments aiming at a long term treatment programme are either re-examining or indeed exploring new and radical avenues; one need only mention the Belmont and Claybury hospitals, or read the various professional and relevant journals to become very much aware of the critical analysis and practical and documented experiments which are being carried out now. Indeed, Dr. Martin's account of the work at Claybury could so easily be translated into prison terms. Within the work of the Prison Department, whilst there are variously new techniques being introduced into some training establishments as at Grendon, Blundeston, Huntercombe and Wellingborough, no critical and documented analysis has been carried out into the stresses which these changes are giving to the staff structure and the overall organisation of the establishments.

A paper presented by a prison governor to the Howard League Summer School in 1963 talked of the need of improved communications, to the end of making optimum use of the total resources of the organisation, where staff participation should be at a maximum, with each member making his own effective contribution. In a later paper on Leadership, the same Governor spoke of this quality, that it should be a set of functions not vested in one man, but one which should be carried out by the staff as a whole. It would, however, seem that these points are not given in fact adequate—or indeed any—attention and it is perhaps owing to this factor that so much dissatisfaction is often expressed in various devious ways by staff of all grades and functions.

That blockages and faults appear in the existing structure is undeniable, and it may be rightly argued that attempts should be made to clear these before proceeding further—perhaps arbitrarily—to sweep aside that which is today and erect a totally new structure. Over the years departments within the ambit of the institution have “grewed like Topsy” and have in a truly Parkinsonian fashion accumulated power, and created their own often secret and very private lines of communication which completely sidestep the Governor; these departments are seen by their members as the end, and not means to any end, and accordingly any attempts by an outsider to trespass

on these preserves are seen in the same light as did any Victorian landowner, and a counter attack is both stultifying and stupid. The Works Department, the Clerical Department, the Farms and Gardens Department, the Welfare Department, Education, Sport, Medicine . . . all these are perhaps self-perpetuating departments which are not fully integrated into the overall work of an establishment, and much time, energy and patience is wasted in attempting to live with, let alone work with, them. The difficulty of resolving these by patience and understanding is one of time, and perhaps too much time has already been wasted. This is perhaps growing into a war of power bodies; cold wars, or at the least peaceful co-existence are not aids to training, only barriers which reinforce entrenchment, conservatism and dishonesty. The struggle which now exists between the Administration Officers and the Governors is perhaps a classic illustration of the situation which is developing, to the detriment of the primary object of any penal establishment—"to encourage and assist convicted prisoners to lead a good and useful life". What is now suggested then is that, even within the existing staff structure, an attempt be made through planned and stated channels to examine both the structure and organisation and then work toward a "conceptual framework" which can allow the establishment to

move forward. As has already been stated, the Governor is the man at present responsible to the department for the effective work of that place; obviously the emphasis may move between "active deterrence" and "active treatment" (as Dr. Rose suggests); but within these terms of reference the Governor and his staff operate. It seems desirable, therefore, that initially the policy of an establishment is defined by the Department in clear yet general terms, thus allowing scope for the establishment to work out details.

Within this general statement of policy, there is one primary area of concern, training of prisoners, which in its turn is closely related to and dependent for its effectiveness on the three areas of staff training, communication and administration, and research and evaluation. It would appear that within the orbit of these four areas or task forces each and every aspect of the work of the establishment is contained, and these areas are without doubt the concern of the Governor. Now no Governor can be expected to be fully aware of the minutiae of the daily work of his establishment, and it seems a total waste of his time and energy, and of his ability, if he cannot be permitted to hold and use the "boundary role" which is now accepted as the most effective place for the manager or chief executive. At present the Governor holds a central position, as at the hub of the spokes of a cart wheel, where

he is encompassed by his establishment; however, it seems self-evident that if the establishment is to grow and move, the Governor must be the master and not the mastered. The Governor needs to be removed from the centre, so that with a more objective view he can from the periphery see the main long term issues, and accordingly with a positive use of his staff resources work towards a positive objective. He can clearly only operate effectively with adequate knowledge and briefing, so that he is fully aware of the implications of any policy decision, so that he can from the fringe explore with rational information the problems of his responsibility. It would, therefore, seem cogent to suggest that the Governor needs to be advised and that his advisers need to be well informed of all areas involved in decision making; obviously it now seems logical to suggest that his advisers be those who one day will sit in his seat, his Assistant Governors, the Governors of the future. This perhaps radical suggestion seems to reject the role of the Deputy Governor; but it is considered that this man become very much the shadow Governor, empowered to carry out the required functions of the Governor and thus allowing the Governor maximum freedom.

As has already been mentioned, there are four main areas involved in penal administration; primarily the training and custody of prisoners and secondarily, but closely

inter-related, the training of all staff to fulfil what is to be their role, a requirement to supply full knowledge of factors which may be relevant and evaluable through local research, and thirdly the necessity to allow for the free flow of all vital information and of goods. It has already been suggested in this Paper that Assistant Governors should be departmental managers, reporting to and receiving decisions from the chief executive and working to his specifications as imposed on him by the department. This structure has many implications; the traditional role of the Assistant Governor is destroyed as either a borstal housemaster or prison wing Assistant Governor; this in its turn raises the question of training for such roles as will be discussed later. As one role is changed, so will others; the Administration Officer, Tutor Organiser, Industrial Manager, Farm Manager, all these roles will vary at local level, and it may be that a similar reorganisation at central level will be needed to match the pattern in the field. However, wherever this were to happen, it would inevitably, I suggest, lead to effective and objective leadership, towards improved staff morale and towards more effective training for prisoners, as always the primary objective of the prison administration.

The point has already been made that the structure is now designed to try to carry out the policy of the department; it is now requisite to

elaborate on this suggested modification to the existing situation. The Governor with his deputy holds the reins of responsibility, and the final authority for the primary aim, and can, in fact, use these reins more effectively, as he is better informed and less involved. The Assistant Governors would hold, as delegates of the Governor, authority to act within the limits defined, in an executive role, using staff as they think most effectively after due consideration of any relevant and available material. The Governor's policy would be made known, analysed as to departmental executive responsibility, and then action taken with the Governor's final sanction.

It is further suggested that there should be a regular weekly meeting of the establishment board (Governor, Deputy Governor and all Assistant Governors), so that all may be aware of the involvement of the parts of the whole and that any decisions requiring executive action from the Governor would then be made. But from this body lines of communication would be set up by the designated task force to make clear to all concerned either with a particular action, or in general the what, and why, and the wherefore of the executive action. By the time in fact executive action is taken, full consultation will have taken place through the feed back system already built in.

The place of specialists already within the structure need obviously

to be considered, and a clear statement of their role made; it seems that within the primary aim the specialists have a vital function, perhaps less as participators and more as "enablers". These functionaries have a particular skill which can be put at the disposal of the establishment, while at the present time many of their areas of responsibility clash or duplicate, or not infrequently are wholly incompatible with the primary aim. The clerical department is seen as one of efficient administration, clearly administering to the needs of the establishment, its staff and inmates; the Administration Officer holds a staff position and clearly not a line function. The same could be said of the Senior Works Officer, whose area of responsibility is now somewhat confused as he has at present some dealings with the industrial training of prisoners. The Tutor Organiser provides a service, dependent not on his whims, but on defined requirements decided by the trainers. All these and others of the specialist departments can only be effective if their work is seen as a part of the whole, and not—as is usually seen today—as a separate unit operating in isolation. They are resource agencies to be tapped, which should not be allowed to wag the dog. By this way—with an effective and directly defined use of departments—it is envisaged that a more efficient and purposeful movement towards the primary goal would be reached. Indeed the

secondary task forces mentioned above are only enablers. By this clear statement of patterns of communication, of areas of responsibility of executive action, rational progress can be made.

The Assistant Governors each with their own areas designated and defined would have scope to use their talents, talents too often disseminated by the issuing of table-tennis balls and aniseed drops, or by needless struggles with entrenched empires, so that they can slowly build up the insight into the problems of institutional management which will one day be their responsibility as Governors. For this greatly changed role, they will require training, and it would seem that the present emphasis both within and without the Service for basic training of some depth of social casework or group work techniques may be of little value. These men and women will obviously need to have a basic understanding of these techniques so that where applicable, they can introduce them or support their growth within the institutional structured programme. But far more should they be concerned with management principles and practice, institutional relationships, the psychological aspects of organisations, with the function of research and development. For these are the areas within which they should be operating as Governors; treatment techniques and instruction in these are the areas of specialists who should either be called in for a specific purpose, or who

would be employed within the structure of the establishment. Indeed without training even it now seems feasible to maintain that the suggestions made in this paper could without much difficulty be put into practice, and that a theory and practice of prison administration would slowly evolve, a practice where personality mattered less than ability, where instead of abstraction and fog, there is a clarity and definity of purpose, where the talents of each staff member are used and not abused.

The original thesis of this Paper was to suggest that Assistant Governors should change their traditional roles; it is now necessary to elaborate on these new functions. It has been envisaged that an Assistant Governor would be assigned to each of the four task forces, leaving Principal Officers to carry out the tasks now performed by Assistant Governors. Thus, both severally and collectively, they would examine in the first instance the structure and the functioning of the establishment. An examination must clearly first be made of the implications of the stated aim of the establishment, which will need specific definition; obviously arising from this will emerge the need to establish the shortcomings of the existent structure with suggested solutions in terms of staff training and communications, aided always by evaluation and research.

The inmate training task force will examine the training needs of

the establishment's population, considering the many training techniques available, will take stock of all available resources of staff ability, and look forward for future development. Once these areas are clearly stated, then the work of the three secondary task forces will take obvious shape, and will be able to proceed accordingly. It will be necessary to examine clearly the part—and the appropriate part—which each existing department should play. Thus it might well seem apparent that in fact the Works Department have no part to play in the training of prisoners, and accordingly their efforts could be totally committed to what they now see as their primary function, that of building maintenance, without any secondary concern about prisoners. A similar case may well be made for kitchen staff and so the tensions obviously possible in the existing power position in a prison kitchen would be obviated. However, a clear decision could be made on a rational reassessment of the part which extant departments do, and could with reintegration, play in the primary task. Once this appraisal is complete, the avenues for the secondary task forces are clearly defined and each could serve the other, using either their own task force resources, or those of the other three, or of other local or regionally based specialists. The work of the secondary task forces needs clarification, and as re-organization develops, so will

these functions become modified where relevant. The staff training task force will assess what needs exist and provide further training where necessary; in assessing needs it will clearly be aided by the evaluation task force and the communication task force will ensure that the blockages of both attitude and of organization are where possible cleared and throughout maintain an effective flow of information to all members of the staff team.

Gradually it is envisaged that as a result of this constant questioning and examination which must precede executive action, functions of departments already operating and roles of staff already in post, will come under the microscope; this is not to suggest, however, that one set of functions will arbitrarily replace the present, but there will be a sensation of growth on clearly established lines, which are comprehensible to, and supported by, and for all staff members. The Governor would thus have a constant team of advisers examining his responsibility, enabling him to govern more effectively; he would thus be far better placed to make the necessary executive action from a position of authority and not, as now so often, from one of expediency. He could thus make more effective use of his authority from the talents of his staff.

The stages of evolution need careful planning; each Governor has already his consultative committee which could be used in the

initial stages to explain and expound the broad principles involved; the local branch committee of the Prison Officers' Association could equally so play a vital part in this and should be involved from its inception. While general staff meetings may be cumbersome, they can serve an opportunity to disseminate information and at a later stage progress reports from task forces.

At this stage it is necessary that the composition of the task forces be defined and their membership stated within certain clear limits.

The inmate training task force: as the basic training unit will geographically be the house or wing with the Principal Officer in charge, it is self evident that members of this task force should include those Principal Officers with the Assistant Governor responsible for this force, and the Chief Officer whose experience and knowledge could then be tapped. This task force would have as resource agents the Tutor Organiser, the Works Officer, the Physical Education Officer or specialist (where one is carried), the Medical Officer, the Welfare Officer, and the Farm/Garden/Industrial Manager; these heads of staff departments would then act as enablers of the general training programme under the direction of this task force.

Staff training task force: with another Assistant Governor responsible, again with the Chief Officer,

this unit would operate, bearing in mind the defined needs of the staff, and using the available skills of staff members and of outside agencies, such as local technical colleges or indeed the Staff College.

Communication and administration task forces: with a third Assistant Governor would be the Chief Officer and the Administration Officer using either established bodies as the Prison Officers' Association and the Consultative Committee as well as the resources of the clerical department, to aid the flow of communication and to improve where needed the flow of goods.

Evaluation task force: with a fourth Assistant Governor responsible for this force would be the Chief Officer and a member of the local branch committee to undertake research projects and work study where required. They obviously would call on specialists to advise and assist in their work.

It is envisaged under this redefinition of staff roles in any of the larger establishments of the Prison Department, opportunities of a more professional and scientific approach to the weighty problem of prison management would be provided within a framework of concepts, which is flexible enough to allow maximum scope for all staff to use themselves effectively in a structure which allows for critical growth.