

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON CADET ENTRY INTO THE EXECUTIVE, ENGINEERING AND SUPPLY AND SECRETARIAT BRANCHES OF THE ROYAL NAVY

INTRODUCTION

The Committee appointed by the First Lord of the Admiralty in July, 1952, has rendered its report and recommendations; and the Report has been published as a white paper by H.M. Stationery Office.

The Committee was asked to review the scope of the present methods of officer recruitment in the Executive, Engineering and Supply and Secretariat Branches and to report whether in their view the scope of those entries could be widened sufficiently to provide adequate numbers, or whether some alternative method or methods of entry should be introduced. (The full terms of reference to the Committee are contained in the Preface to the published Report.)

The Members of the Committee were :—

The Hon. Ewen E. S. Montagu, C.B.E., Q.C., Judge Advocate of the Fleet (Chairman).

Mr. F. Barraclough, C.B.E., Chief Education Officer for the North Riding of Yorkshire.

Instructor Rear-Admiral W. A. Bishop, C.B., O.B.E., Director, Naval Education Service.

Mr. P. A. Browne, H.M.I., Chief Inspector for Secondary Schools, Ministry of Education.

Mr. J. S. Brunton, Assistant Secretary, Scottish Education Department.

Mr. A. P. Hockaday, Assistant Private Secretary to the First Lord of the Admiralty.

Mr. A. E. Nichols, C.B.E., M.C., J.P., Headmaster of Hele's School, Exeter.

Rear-Admiral C. F. W. Norris, C.B., D.S.O., lately Deputy Chief of Naval Personnel (Naval Training), Admiralty.

Mr. P. R. Odgers, M.B.E., Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Education.

Mr. B. C. Sendall, C.B.E., Assistant Secretary, Admiralty.

Mr. J. W. Stork, C.B.E., Headmaster of The Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth.

The Report with its recommendations is now under consideration by the Admiralty.

A summary of the contents of the Report is appended herewith.

SUMMARY

Chapter 1.—Cadet Entry As It Is Today

The Report is concerned with the present methods of officer recruitment and in particular with the role of the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth, in providing the Navy with the officers it requires. The Royal Naval College is a

naval establishment with a Captain in command, under whom there is a civilian headmaster responsible for the academic work of the College. For many years boys entered the College at 13, but in 1948 this Entry was discontinued and boys now enter at 16. Their parents are required to undertake that they will make the Royal Navy their career. In addition to the Entry at 16 into the Royal Naval College, there is the Special Entry at 18 of boys who have finished their secondary school careers. Special Entry cadets are given a one-term course of vocational training at Dartmouth, before joining up for the rest of their training with the cadets who entered at 16. These two main methods of entry each supply about half of the total requirement of cadets.

Neither Entry has succeeded in producing sufficient acceptable candidates : over the past five years 14·2 per cent. of all the vacancies for cadets have not been filled. In particular, they have not attracted sufficient boys of good quality from the maintained grammar schools, which have obtained a disappointingly small proportion of the cadetships awarded ; and the supply of candidates from many parts of the country from the industrial areas of England and from Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland has been comparatively small.

Chapter 2.—Critical Examination Of The Present System

The Committee consider that the most important of the general factors which have brought this situation about is the small size of the present 16 to 18 year old age group, but they point out that the large post-war birthrate will bring about a marked change in the next decade. The Report reviews the special difficulties inherent in the recruitment of boys at 16 and 18.

Eighteen, the Special Entry age, was regarded by most of the educational witnesses as the ideal age for entry, and the Committee recommend that this Entry should continue. But the number of boys available at 18 is small and the Committee consider that, even if the arrangements for the Entry are improved, the competition of the universities, industry and the professions will remain a strong factor militating against the recruitment at this age alone of sufficient boys to meet the Navy's total requirements.

Sixteen is the age at which many boys leave secondary schools, but of the boys leaving schools at this age who are not already committed to other careers, the Committee doubt whether more than a small proportion are suitable to be naval officers. The Navy must look mainly to the boys who would normally stay at school until they are 18. The recruitment of these boys at 16 suffers from three main disadvantages : it means breaking their education at a generally unsuitable age, it involves an unwelcome change of schools for boys who are doing well where they are, and it is at an age when the assessment of boys' potentialities is extremely difficult. On the other hand the Committee believe that these disadvantages can be mitigated to some extent if the arrangements for the Entry are improved, and they consider that some boys may be attracted at 16 who would not come at all at 18. They are impressed, too, by the value to many boys of two years at Dartmouth, even though there may be difficulties in making a course of this length entirely satisfactory. For these reasons they conclude that the Entry at 16 should continue, despite its disadvantages, as a necessary means of supplementing the Special Entry.

Chapter 3.—The Qualifying Examinations

The Report then reviews the present arrangements for the Special Entry and the Entry at 16. Candidates for both competitions take a qualifying written examination ; those who pass this examination are medically examined

in London and appear before the Admiralty Interview Board at Dartmouth. The vacancies are filled from amongst those candidates who have been passed by both the Medical Board and the Interview Board.

The present qualifying examinations are criticized because candidates have to step aside from their main school course to prepare for them. The Committee consider that the field of recruitment could be widened if this difficulty was removed, and they propose that in each Entry boys should be granted exemption from the written examination if they present a General Certificate of Education, or a Scottish Leaving Certificate or Northern Ireland Senior Certificate, with specified passes at appropriate levels. The order of academic merit would be obtained by placing those candidates who qualify educationally into four or five categories. To enable as many boys as possible to take advantage of these exemptions, the Committee recommend that the upper age limits for both Entries should be raised. They also recommend that for boys exempted from the written examination for the Special Entry it should not be compulsory to have a qualification in Physics.

Chapter 4.—Interview Practice And Procedure

The Report reviews at length the work of the Admiralty Interview Board. Over the past five years the Board has passed 48 per cent. of the educationally qualified candidates who have appeared before it. About two-thirds of the candidates from independent schools but only about 30 per cent. of the candidates from maintained grammar schools have been successful before the Board. The comparatively poor showing of boys from maintained grammar schools in the competitions as a whole has been the result mainly of their lack of success before the Admiralty Interview Board.

The difference in performance between boys from different types of school has led to the criticism that the Interview Board is biased. The Committee have reviewed this criticism very carefully. Their conclusion is that the Board has shown no conscious bias whatever against boys from any type of school or social class, although there may have been unwitting unfairness to a small number of boys who might well have been suitable but who were at a disadvantage educationally and socially. They observe that there are bound to be errors in any interview procedure and if any suitable boys have been lost to the Navy because of the defects in the Admiralty Interview Board procedure their number has been small.

The Committee are concerned, however, that the Interview Board should be as efficient as possible and that the general public should have confidence in the way it does its work. With these objects in mind they propose a number of changes in the interviewing arrangements. They recommend that the Board should be reduced in size. They make a series of recommendations aimed at ensuring continuity in its membership and at giving all members the fullest possible understanding both of the boys of all types who appear before it and of what the Navy needs in its officers. They recommend that it should sit in Scotland and in the North of England as well as at Dartmouth, and they make several recommendations for improving the practice and procedure which was being followed when they witnessed it in the summer and autumn of 1952. They advise that it should develop closer relations with headmasters. Finally, they express the hope that their account of the Board's work and their recommendations will help to dispel unjustified criticism of it and build up confidence.

Chapter 5.—Medical Standards

Only one change is recommended in the medical standards—a relaxation of the eyesight standard for candidates for the Engineering Branch.

Chapter 6.—The Final Basis Of Selection

The proposed changes in the qualifying examinations and in the interview arrangements involve a revision of the procedure for selecting the finally successful candidates to fill the numbers of vacancies available. The Report proposes that the categories of merit awarded on the results of the written examination and the interview should be brought together in the Admiralty in a selection procedure which gives each category equal weight. Where the choice lies between candidates whose combined categories are equal the written examination should be given greater weight.

Chapter 7.—The Direct Entry

Having reviewed the Special Entry and the Entry at 16 the Report considers the Direct Entry. This is a separate competition at Special Entry age for boys at the Nautical College, Pangbourne, and the Training Ships *Conway* and *Worcester*. The Entry has shown a distinct falling off in recent years, mainly as a consequence of the introduction of the Entry at 16. The Committee recommend that the Direct Entry should be discontinued and that if the Admiralty wishes to continue to make special arrangements for boys at the establishments concerned, this should be done as part of the Special Entry competition.

Chapter 8.—Choice Of Branches And The Supply Of Candidates For The Engineering Branch

Consideration is given to the special problem of the Engineering Branch which has been consistently unsuccessful in filling its vacancies in recent years. The Committee feel that this has happened largely because the Branch suffers in status in comparison with the Executive Branch while the public is ill-informed about its career prospects. The Report considers various means of widening the field of recruitment for this Branch. Its main recommendations, apart from improved publicity, are that an opportunity to compete for permanent commissions in the Navy should be provided for students at technical colleges who obtain Ordinary National Certificates or Higher National Certificates, and that greater attention should be paid to the entry of university graduates as Engineer Officers.

The Committee believe that these and other recommendations should help to bring about a larger entry into the Engineering Branch, and that the Branch should also benefit to some extent from any improvement there may be in the cadet entries generally. But they consider that the only way in which a supply of really suitable officers for this Branch could be ensured would be by entering all cadets in a common entry and appointing them to Branches after a period of common training. They recommend that the Admiralty should adopt this arrangement, which would be comparable to that already in being in the Army.

Chapter 9.—The Navy And The Public

The Committee's recommendations for improving the arrangements for the existing entries are primarily intended to remove those factors which at present deter candidates from coming forward for the Navy and to ensure that no suitable boys who do enter the competitions are lost. But in addition to this they regard it as essential that there should be a marked improvement in the Admiralty's relations with the public. They consider that it is necessary to ensure that the conditions and prospects of officer service in the Royal Navy are much better known to the general public than they are at present ; it has in particular to be made absolutely clear that a career as an officer in the Navy

is in every way suitable for boys from grammar schools. They attach great importance to removing the suspicion that exists in some quarters that boys from grammar schools are not wanted as officers. The Committee advise the Admiralty to keep in close and constant touch with educational opinion and to set up a standing Liaison Committee for this purpose. They also recommend that responsibility within the Admiralty for supervising all day-to-day matters connected with the recruitment of officers, including relations with the public, should be concentrated in one department.

Chapter 10.—Supplementary Forms Of Officer Recruitment

The Report reviews the possibility of recruiting permanent officers for the Executive Branch from officers doing their National Service. The Committee consider that this could never be more than a supplementary method of recruitment, because of uncertainty about the future of National Service and because officers entered in this way cannot have the same thorough initial training as those who enter as cadets, or are promoted from the lower deck. They consider, however, that National Service is a potentially valuable source of recruitment and they recommend that the Admiralty should continue the arrangement adopted in 1952 of using the entry of officers from National Service to help make up deficiencies in other forms of entry into the Executive Branch.

Chapter 12.—Can Enough Suitable Officers Be Obtained ?

The Report considers the question whether adequate numbers could be obtained from the existing Entries, improved and supplemented in the ways the Committee recommend. One section of the Committee remain anxious about the numerical aspect of the problem and are not satisfied that adequate numbers of suitable officers can be obtained under the existing Entries. The other section are confident that a vigorous application of the Committee's recommendations should enable the Admiralty to obtain adequate numbers in the present decade from the existing Entries and they consider that the effect of the large post-war birthrate will transform the situation in the nineteen-sixties. All the Committee however, save one, are interested in the possibility of an additional method of entry at an earlier age as a means of ensuring that in future the Navy obtains a sufficient number of officers of the highest possible quality. The last two Chapters of the Report record the consideration given by these members to this possibility ; and the member who discards it gives his reasons in a Minority Report.

Chapter 13.—The Case For And Against A Cadet Entry At An Earlier Age

The great preponderance of the naval evidence was in favour of an earlier entry but the weight of the educational opinion was against it. Most naval witnesses—officers of the highest standing—advocated a return to the Entry at 13 for a proportion of Naval cadets. They considered that the ideal system of entry was one under which boys whose school days had been passed in the Service atmosphere of Dartmouth and boys who had had their secondary education at other schools mingled and reacted upon one another. These Service considerations were reinforced by the educational argument that a full course of secondary education at Dartmouth possessed great advantages over a course from 16 only.

The main arguments which the Committee heard against a return to the old Entry at 13 were that it was very difficult to select boys with fairness from all classes of the community at 13 and that it was wrong to ask boys as young as this to commit themselves to a career ; there was also the feeling that to reintroduce such an entry would be to put the clock back.

The signatories of the Report declare that they cannot recommend a reversion to the past practice of committing boys to a naval career at 13, but they are impressed by the weight and strength of naval and educational opinion in favour of a full length Dartmouth course for a proportion of naval officers. They believe that a full course of boarding education at the College could be of great value to boys whose previous experience might otherwise make it hard for them to adjust themselves to the life of a naval officer at sea. They emphasize that under the present system of entry, when the College has only a small number of older boys who change completely every two years, it is increasingly difficult to retain unimpaired the liberal education and character training which were given there in the past.

These considerations lead them to the view that, if the objections to the old form of entry at 13 could be removed, the introduction of a younger entry would be beneficial to all, including those entering at 16. With this in mind they put forward a New Scheme.

Chapter 14.—A New Scheme

They consider that of the two possible ages for an earlier entry—11 or 13—the age of 13 is the only practicable one. The Scheme envisages an entry at this age of about one quarter of the total requirement of cadets ; another quarter would enter through the present Entry at 16 and half would continue to enter through the Special Entry. Neither of the Entries at 13 or 16 would involve any firm commitment to the Navy on the part of the boys, and the Admiralty, for their part, would be under no obligation to accept them for the Navy eventually. There would be a common age of commitment to the Navy at about 18 for all naval cadets, whether entering from the Royal Naval College or from outside through the Special Entry, and all would have to reach the same academic standard at this age. The members consider that acceptance of this principle—which they regard as an essential condition of an early intake to Dartmouth—would involve the following consequences.

The Royal Naval College would have to conform more closely to the pattern of an ordinary secondary school so that when a boy left at 18, whether for the Navy or for civilian life, he would have the normal qualifications which a secondary school is expected to provide. Although tuition would be free for all, it would no longer be necessary to provide free maintenance for all boys at the College regardless of their parents' income, as is done at present, but the poorer parents should not be left any worse off than under the scale now in force for repayment of uniform and various personal expenses. Boys passing out of the College and going forward into the Navy would join the Special Entry cadets for the one-term course of vocational training which the latter are already given. Thus the Royal Naval College itself would no longer be a naval establishment. Together with the other establishments at Dartmouth, the College would be under the general superintendence of a Rear-Admiral, who would also be the President of the Admiralty Interview Board, but it would be in the direct day-to-day charge of the Headmaster.

Measures are proposed to meet the objection that a fair selection from boys of all types cannot be made at the age of 13. The essence of this objection is that normally the grammar school boy of 13 is in only his second year at his school, and the level he has reached in most academic subjects is usually less advanced than that of the preparatory school boy, who has often been working at them for four or five years. At the same time he has generally had little opportunity to develop his potentialities to any extent, while the preparatory school boy at the same age is at an apex of his school career. Inevitably the scales must be weighted heavily in favour of the preparatory school boy. The

Report therefore proposes that selection should be by means of a written examination specially adapted to the needs of grammar school boys and an interview before a small Board. The members consider, however, that this in itself would be insufficient to ensure that potentially able grammar school boys were given a fair chance, and they propose in addition that a quota of about 60 per cent. of the places at this age should be reserved for boys from grant-aided schools.

They claim for this New Scheme that it is an entirely fresh departure, radically different from the old Entry at 13 and free from the objections which have been raised against the old Entry. However, they recognize that any scheme involving an entry at an earlier age may be associated in the public mind with the old and discontinued Entry and with the controversy which surrounded it, and may for that reason not be immediately acceptable to the country at large. They recommend, therefore, that the New Scheme should be put to the test of public opinion and should be discussed with the different educational interests. If, contrary to their hopes, the considered reaction of informed opinion is adverse they think it might do the Navy more harm than good to adopt the Scheme. But they believe that, given the confidence of the public, their New Scheme would soon become a valuable and an accepted feature of the educational system of the country of which the Navy and the nation could properly be proud.

Minority Report By Mr. F. Barraclough, C.B.E.

He is convinced that, if the Admiralty arrangements and selection procedure for the existing entries are improved, an adequate supply of suitable officers can be obtained without recourse to an Entry at 13. He believes that needs can be met during the next five years, and that afterwards the field of suitable candidates for the existing entries will be enlarged so considerably (because of the post-war birthrate) as to make it possible to consider the introduction of a system of cadet entry at 18 only, which was regarded by some naval witnesses and almost all educational witnesses as the ideal age. Meanwhile he considers that it would be better and more acceptable to public opinion generally to maintain the existing system of entries.

He considers that the new scheme of entry described in Chapter 14 is neither necessary nor desirable, and suggests that it does not provide an additional entry in the sense of producing additional officers, but merely envisages the addition of a half-entry at 13 and the subtraction of a half-entry at 16. In his view the Majority Report does not establish that the new scheme would, in fact, produce additional officers for the Navy. He points out that even if an entry at 13 were re-established it would not provide any officers before 1959 or 1960.

He agrees with the recommendations made by the rest of the Committee in Chapters 3 to 10, emphasizes that in his view the competition arrangements have not in the past been kept under regular and competent review and considers that the proposed Liaison Committee (Chapter 9 above) should also advise the Admiralty on matters concerning examinations and selection procedure.

As regards the Admiralty Interview Board, Mr. Barraclough considers that a higher proportion of maintained grammar school boys should have been passed for entry into Dartmouth, but is convinced, nevertheless, that there has been a gross and unwarrantable distortion of the facts by some sections of the Press. He is satisfied that many boys from maintained grammar schools have entered for the examination and have succeeded at the written test without having any approximation to the potential personal qualities of a future naval officer.
