

## VOLUME 2

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## **APPENDIX 1 - Trevor - parked cars to metal detectors**

### **First Interview - 1 March 1979**

At the time of our first interview he was working in the Department of Transport, in a division that dealt with local transport and roads. He had in fact been in the Service for exactly 7 months.

As a boy he had lived in a small village, and was one of only a few children in the school to pass the 11-plus and go on to a grammar school. This in fact lost him a lot of his village friends. By the time he was in the Lower 6th he had found a position of authority; he had always tended to like group and committee type activities. In the Department he was already a member of the 'AT Committee' - an organisation of ATs within the DOE and Department of Transport - and had joined groups like the Photographic Society and so on.

He went to Bristol University, one of the attractions of which was that it was non-campus. He also liked the area; his careers master was keen on it; and he counted himself definitely not the Oxbridge sort. He went there to read Economics and Politics, which is part of what was known as a quadrilateral degree course - one chose three out of the four topics Economics, Politics, Philosophy and Sociology in one's first year, and then concentrated

on two only for the rest of the time there. He had in fact studied Economics at A-level at school, and had always had some kind of interest in politics though he admitted that reading it at undergraduate level was a bit of a leap in the dark. The three special topics that he chose to do in his final year were Urban Economics, Marxist Economics, and British Politics Post-1945. These reflected his inclinations and interests. The Marxist view interested him because he realised that they were not being "taught economics", but were being taught Keynesian economics and monetarism. He saw at the time that the Civil Service worked very much on an admixture of the two, and it seemed to him that taking a look at the Marxist view would offer a different paradigm for looking at economics as a system. Being an active church-goer meant that he did not accept the Marxist prescription, though the analysis made sense. He only mentioned at one interview having studied Marxist Economics - the interviewer was so shocked that he decided to keep quiet about it from then on.

Although in no sense did he feel that he had joined the Civil Service because other people had wanted him to, he did acknowledge that his mother and father - retired cost accountant and sometime civil servant respectively - had both thought him cut out for it. He too felt that it was right for him. Obviously, he said, he wanted to do something in the area in which his abilities lay and one skill, as an example, was what he called "writing to a purpose", as opposed to creative writing. At university, an essay can be handled on a bad day simply by



drawing on text-books; on a good day you can put a lot of your own ideas into it. He had already found that work in the Department was a bit like this. One could write stock letters, or add a bit of one's own - one was not necessarily stuck with stock letters, nor driven into the ground trying constantly to be imaginative.

He had in fact hoped for the AT scheme right from the outset of his university career. As he progressed, though, his aspirations rose and by the end he was aiming at a House of Commons Clerkship. He was not successful. He made 15 job applications, amongst which was one to British Rail, whose CSSB-like selection procedure also finished up offering him a job. Most of the others were in various areas of transport too, although he did have some interest in market research. "But the Civil Service always loomed." As it happens he got through the QT by one mark, and the effect of this narrow squeak was to bring him to CSSB in a somewhat relaxed manner. CSSB was fun. He reckoned that he did well in the committee exercises - one can tell with that kind of thing. Public speaking was something that held no horrors for him, after years of reading lessons in church, taking part in pantomimes, and the like. Basically, if you don't mind making a fool of yourself it helps in such exercises as the CSSB Committee. The Written Appreciation he felt was extraordinarily accurate - "it's just what I'm doing now". And he also enjoyed the interviews. The Mutual Ranking he regarded however as a pernicious element in the procedure. The effect of warning candidates at the very outset of the two days that they were

going to be called 'upon to make a mutual ranking at the end meant that they went around constantly trying to impress each other and vying with each other, trying to ensure good rankings.

Having been offered a management traineeship by British Rail, which he would have taken had the Civil Service not offered him a job, it seemed just as well that the Civil Service did do so as "everyone tried hard to discourage me from going into BR" - including the girl who was now his fiancée.

### **The Organisation**

The division in which he was working was one of four, each headed by an Assistant Secretary, that together formed an Under Secretary 'command'. Two Principals and a Senior Executive Officer in turn worked to his division's Assistant Secretary; Trevor himself and a Higher Executive Officer worked to one of the Principals; and there were three executive and clerical support staff shared out amongst them all. He had had no handover when he joined, but was just posted straight in. He was finding that time passed quickly, and it was a bit of a surprise that he had now been in post for 7 months - he conjectured that there is one week about which one's time perceptions pivot; up to this point one thinks in terms of having been in "only x weeks"; after it it seems as though one has been there one's whole life.

Looking across to the other divisions, he was not entirely sure what Division 1 did, though he thought it was something to do

with special administration matters. Division 2 was technical, staffed by engineers and statisticians, who might work for example on the technical operation of a bus lane. Division 4 handled finance. And his own Division 3 seemed to be "something of a rag-bag", though it did appear to tie in with the others.

Matters in which he himself had some kind of involvement were:

1. Parking and restraint policy, principally with regard to private cars only, although there was some cross-reference to the divisions that dealt with lorries as occasion demanded. This area of work produced a lot of interesting correspondence; parking was a very lively issue. When he took up duty in August, the 1978 Transport Act had just become law, and included a section on licensing of Privately Operated Public Parks (POPPs).
2. The transport element of the new Inner Cities initiative - a very interesting area involving a considerable amount of co-operation with ICD, the Inner Cities Directorate of DOE.
3. Financing car parks.
4. Advanced passenger transport (electric cars and so on) - though he had had very little contact with this kind of work. It appeared to be quite interesting.
5. Spreading of peak transport.

6. The Working Party on Airport Sites. This was clearly a totally separate topic, and he was inclined to put its existence in the Section down to a spot of empire building on the part of his Under Secretary.

His HEO colleague handled energy conservation - which involved some kind of liaison with the advanced passenger transport element above - and parking on pavements.

The Section headed by the SEO handled the making of transport orders down at the local authority end, and a joint topic known as pedestrianisation and cycling. This might deal with, for example, ways in which local authorities could encourage the use of bicycles. The departmental line was to make it easier for cyclists; although it was recognised that 99% of car drivers had no intention of changing from their cars to bicycles, it was nevertheless important that the department look to the safety and efficiency and speed of running for cyclists as well as for car drivers.

The other Principal's section dealt with lorry control - anything whatsoever to do with lorries, like parking, width, height, weight restrictions, and so on.

One feature that permeated the Division was the Secretary-of-State's belief in 'organic change'. The view was that although local government might merit another re-organisation, doing it all again was just not on. The aim therefore was to push power

down to the grass-roots in an unobtrusive and 'organic' manner. For example, district councils were responsible for off-street parking, and county councils for on-street. Organic change would push the whole thing down to district council level.

In describing the work of his own Section as a "rag-bag", he intended to convey that there was a good deal of variety in it - something that he valued. Taking his involvement in parking restraint as an example of some of the work he had been doing, he explained that the trend was towards comprehensive traffic management systems. Studies had shown however that in the short term it was simplest to achieve traffic management by restraint of parking. But the difficulty with using parking as a means for traffic management was that local authorities only controlled 40% of the public parking in the country. An effective management of traffic by control of parking had to control the other 60% as well. The Labour Government wanted eventually to achieve this, but the whole of the Civil Service - seemingly with the sole exception of Trevor himself - seemed to be against full control. The 1978 Act had not faced up to licensing the private but non-residential sector "due to pressure on parliamentary time ..." - an interesting piece of manoeuvring showing that the whole issue was just too contentious. It would involve, for example, licensing of parking within firms' car parks - a concept which would even extend to licensing for parking in the car park of a pub, provided that one was talking about urban areas.

The background to the problem seemed to him highly egalitarian - road costs, costs to buildings along streets, traffic flow management costs, lead poisoning costs, and so on were all motoring costs borne by people other than the motorist direct. With Urban Economics as a special topic that he had studied at university, it was all very interesting. He never expected to work in a division where his academic interests were so directly engaged. And it was interesting that most of the people in the division seemed partly to eschew the use of the motorcar - they travelled to work by moped, bicycle or train rather than car.

As for his own personal involvement in the work, "if you wanted me to sum up my job I'd say it was drafting" - answering Ministerial and other correspondence. A research worker had recently sent in a design project on parking, involving the use of mobile parking meters. Trevor had drafted a reply, vetted by the Principal to go out over the Principal's signature. Typically they wrote back going into pros, cons and practicalities, and basically pointing out administrative difficulties. This was usually all too easy. In effect, for a variety of perfectly good reasons, the status quo usually won out. The standard type of letter was colloquially known as a "yes/and/but/so" letter - a pretty good rule learnt at an induction course early on. What the correspondent usually wanted to know were the practicalities attendant upon his design. For the portable parking meters, it was all too easy to put the standard problem to the correspondent - cash transfer between local authorities. Occasionally this sort of correspondence would go out over his own signature, but not

very much did. Although he was not directly seeking personal satisfaction, nor indeed approbation, he did nevertheless find the Civil Service principle of re-doing whatever he might draft in order that it might take into account the literary style of the person over whose signature it was going to go out all a bit depressing. He had so far had one case of dealing with a "loony", a member of the public ringing up about a problem. When he had explained the legality of the issue to the man, the latter had assumed that he was a solicitor. On subsequently discovering that this was not the case he wrote to the Secretary of State complaining that he had been dealing with an impostor. Understandably the letter to the Secretary of State came back and finished up in Trevor's own in-tray. He had in fact checked with the Legal Department and had "just done his best". It was his first experience of the difficulties that arise when members of the public got hold of his name.

## **The Week**

There were several substantial telephone calls. A lot of the time was spent as usual simply reading. There was a vast overwhelming bulk of paper to be read at the same time as getting on with one's work. He had now learnt to read the bits that matter, to skip, and to read quickly. On his very first day he had got the impression that he had to read everything that came his way; he later came to the conclusion that he had to read nothing that came his way. He then learnt that both these views were wrong. What one had to do was to pass the material

through as quickly as possible, and to do as much as possible. He learnt this after about 3-4 months, and wondered when the next revelation was going to come along. Instructed by his Principal to file some of the material and to deal with the rest, he typically divided it into two piles along those lines, and worked out a programme for dealing with the latter pile in accordance with the apparent urgency.

Though the week in question had been by no means atypical, it had had few of the meetings at which he had become accustomed to being the taker-of-the-note.

## **Second Interview - 28 March 1979**

It turned out that the idea of keeping a work-diary was less than original in Trevor's case. He had kept his own from the beginning of the job, and brought it along with him on this occasion to read a couple of passages.

The first two days in the Department understandably produced a range of feelings - from being all at sea to exhilaration; feeling lost and useless, but also starting to get the swing of it; wondering whether he would ever get the hang of any of it; and writing a review report which was not as well finished as he would have liked. His in-tray was full on his arrival very much as in the normal course of events; he had to get on with it, asking questions the while and feeling guilty about doing so. Something that still bothered him was whether he actually worked quickly enough - there were no standards to go by.



Meeting deadlines provided very little in the way of indication, because one never knew whether one would have actually been getting more work to do had one been working faster.

Keeping a diary forced him to think - he had kept track of his study-hours at university and started to do something similar in the department though this had now lapsed. He was a periodic diary writer, though this is almost incompatible with actually leading a full active life. But feeling that he had a rather poor memory, he had become a great carrier-around of notebooks, even though he seldom kept them up.

Turning to the present week, I asked him to classify the items in his work-diary freely, as seemed to make sense to him, and then to talk me through the categories. This was the result.

Submission to Secretary of State on fees and charges for parking;

Correspondence on a private invention;

Ministerial correspondence on road tax; and on

Parking regulations in London.

The common factor to these items was that they all involved significant drafting efforts; they all involved setting out from the beginning and getting a job done; they included ideas of his own,

which was more satisfying; they represented concentrated work and were more substantial; and there was also an element of importance, which helped.

Though the submission was bigger than the letters it differed by being more mechanical. Drawing on reports and correspondence from a sub-group working on the subject, and conferring some sort of logical order to it - with sideways glances at previous submissions to get an idea of the lay-out - he had to present the group recommendations to the Secretary of State and ask him to act in a particular way.

Normally such work gets chopped about by the Principal and the Assistant Secretary although on this occasion this did not happen. He had to present the Secretary of State with a choice of options set within the framework of their own recommendations - so he drew on the group history, its composition, presented the contents of a report, having first pointed out what problems the group had identified, and then went on to outline the recommendations. This meant saying something to the effect that in the present situation we think this that and the other, finishing off with the Secretary of State may like to consider and to let us know by such and such a date.

As to the invention, his Assistant Secretary had instructed him that what was needed was one short, sharp letter to the inventor. The Department had done so much before that it was time to call a halt on the issue. The draft was eventually to go out over the

Permanent Secretary's signature, something that Trevor had previously done once before. He had also met him and quite liked him which, he felt might be helpful - the Permanent Secretary had his own ideas, which allowed one to use a certain amount of imagination in drafting for him. So, on this occasion, he put aside all the previous objections to the proposal and outlined an alternative overall way of achieving the same aims that the inventor of the project was trying to achieve, and having given this outline brought the letter to a firm close. This was different from the standard practice which was to answer letters from such people point by point. If his superior officers did not like it, then the whole thing would be thrown out; there could be no corrections with such an approach.

The next general category was:

Checking PESC figures ('parliamentary estimates');

Researching into survey-control.

These two were not drafting, they were "research" in the sense that they involved finding things out; they were interesting, and productive, but did not produce finished work.

The PESC work meant looking through papers, drawing conclusions, and ringing somebody about it. As regards anything mathematical, his role here was really just a checking one. As for researching into survey control, this was not a large task - he saw a couple

of people, found some papers with a considerable amount of difficulty, and reported to his Principal. It nevertheless involved him in quite a lot of charging around for very little in the way of identifiable output. All the same, he likes to do his own donkey work - like collecting his own typing despite its being suggested to him that this was not appropriate behaviour.

Next:

Papers for a meeting on "commuted payments" and arranging the meeting;

Two draft letters on the same subject;

A draft letter to a research team on the running of their project.

This involved writing minutes within the Department and hence not quite so much checking of his work. Arranging meetings means booking rooms and ensuring people can come - although he does not have to do the bulk of this work himself. Drafting a letter for the research team is rather different from the previous correspondence mentioned in that it had a definite aim - "we want to say x, y and z" - and this was not quite the same as responding to other people's letters.

This all involved administrative stuff, ostensibly like drafting, but the letters about various meetings - still drafting, but somehow in

a different category - were less "important", even though one did have to make sure that the tea was going to be there for the meeting.

Then there were:

Two re-drafts of Ministerial correspondence on road tax;

Fitting a contribution from another division into an existing draft letter.

These both involved re-doing work and so shared the feeling of losing the initiative. Even when it is one's own work, after rejection and the demand to re-draft it feels different.

The road tax point here was that garage owners should pay less road tax than people who park their cars on the road, because of blocking up the roads. It was a difficult point to meet but administratively difficult too - what would one do with people who had garages and left their cars on the road? He drafted a letter in these terms, but it was not what the Assistant Secretary wanted to say.

The second time round he tried a different tack, suggesting that the parking problem was most prevalent in town centres rather than residential areas, and that therefore the garage issue was irrelevant. Sending it back to her he thought that this time it would pass, but found that it would not at 5 45 on a Friday

evening. However, the Assistant Secretary herself had no positive suggestions to make, but just took the letter away to work on. Having seen her eventual version he found it differed very little from what he himself had said. This was unusually frustrating. It was not often this bad, though in milder form that kind of call for re-drafting was constantly happening.

Finally, a miscellaneous category:

Visitors from Brazil.

He was called at short notice to keep a couple of visitors from Brazil occupied for a while while his Principal had to delay a programmed meeting with them. He was able to cobble something together about what he would like to say to them whilst someone else spoke - but in the event his Principal arrived just before he himself was called upon to say something. The point about this was that he really rather enjoyed the experience and was looking forward to talking to the visitors on something about which he actually knew a good deal.

### **Coping and Satisfaction**

Here we looked at two main questions: personal inputs and outputs. The first is divided into resources drawn on for doing the work and the difficulties encountered; the second is divided into satisfactions and dissatisfactions gained, and learning.

## Resources

As regards drawing on attitudes he did think of himself as using pre-conceived ideas gained from university, from the area in which he lived (a village) and from his reading - he tended to line these ideas up first and then use them as a framework for saying what the Department wanted to say. The attitudes informed him in what he did though he often kept it to himself. The abilities consisted of essay writing skills (qv writing to a purpose) and to a lesser extent what he gained from vacation jobs in the DHSS. He liked to think that he was good at thinking round a problem and reading issues in order to get at the main points. He was concerned about his memory - he would forget the mechanical details of living, but remembered ideas and processes of thought. He found it easier to think therefore in terms of points a, b, c, d - and even to use index cards for his own reading. He used no tricks like keeping notes at work. He was reasonably adept at putting his thoughts on paper. As regards the road tax letter - he had had to think hard of objections. He believed that he was probably adaptable in the sense that he was able to throw away one paradigm of thought and shift to an entirely different one. He thought that he might also be quite good at adjusting quickly in a wider sense. He was good at using sources. At home he read avidly and kept index cards on books he had read - the general topic which fascinated him he had come to call "moral and religious philosophy". Being something of a hoarder also came in at work.

## **Difficulties**

He found phrasing work acceptably for the particular audience rather difficult, but imagined this would come in time. He also found being concise in his writing difficult as he had previously enjoyed being wordy. He did not enjoy talking on the telephone - and again conciseness comes into this. Anticipating what other people will want was also difficult - it seemed that his own Principal was quite good at doing this with respect to their Assistant Secretary.

## **Satisfactions and Dissatisfactions**

What this all amounted to was that he got satisfaction from competence. When his own view had been put forward, even if the drafting had changed a bit this represented a competent piece of work. One satisfactory example was the submission work going through to the Secretary of State. He would also be satisfied with working more with people - here he was really rather isolated. More competence issues were working in his own time and allotting time as necessary to the work, as opposed to being not quite sure about whether he was working at the right speed and being taken off one piece of work to go on to another.

Although he was happy to do donkey work for his Principal he was not really very satisfied about it. It is very dissatisfying to sit with an Assistant Secretary while she went through something that he had written item by item and he had to defend himself point



by point. It was also very dissatisfying to have to tell other people what to do - within limits he rather liked to do things from beginning to end. He enjoyed generating new ideas and did not enjoy writing stock letters and taking the departmental line. Again, all in all it boiled down to competence.

## **Learning**

He was starting to learn to phrase concisely; starting to gain confidence; probably losing the kind of independence he gained at university and becoming more used to constraints; he was learning to mould his day and to mould his opinions though not necessarily to change them. When he had succeeded in learning to produce what other people wanted he would probably be counted successful and move on up the ladder. He was learning to read quickly and selectively and starting to learn to write in a similar fashion. He was learning something about car parking. He was learning something about departments and government attitudes and how to work in an organisation with a lot of other people around him - though not necessarily in the hierarchy in a standard fashion. The AT was really rather out on a branch.

## **Third Interview - 25 April 1979**

He was to move on - to the Civil Service College, in fact, about which there is more to come in the next two sections - and move on a little earlier than normal maybe. So he had been very busy, partly preparing for his successor, with the Assistant Secretary

using him as a messenger-boy. The interview was the one at which we adopted the relatively informal procedure for eliciting a focused grid spanning present and previous work and experience. We used 12 elements all told.

From a free structuring of the current week's work there emerged four elements:

Mechanical work with some initiative:

assessing a discussion paper on traffic restraint, liaising with Division 2, and writing a minute to his Principal and Assistant Secretary suggesting amendments and additions;

drafting a contribution on the Urban Programme for inclusion in the supplementary analysis chapter of the PESC Red Book and clearing it with the Finance Division;

checking through a paper on the third London Airport and suggesting alterations.

Mechanical work with no initiative:

checking the statutory position on the financing of off-street car parks;

preparing the draft circular on commuted payments for typing;

minute to Legal Division about proposed changes to the draft circular on commuted payments;

liaising with a research division and trying to obtain an advance copy of a project report, drafting a minute to back up his request;

preparing papers and submitting a short draft minute on the Local Transport Note on the Peak.

Original work with some initiative:

drafting a Programme Item form for research into parking controls and traffic management;

drafting a paper for a forthcoming meeting on the problems of foreign motorists;

drafting a minute to a technical division about the problems of cash transfer between local authorities in relation to the search for alternatives to the conventional parking meter;

re-casting this draft letter;

draft papers for a research project into the correlation between traffic constraint and energy consumption.

Miscellaneous:

attending a meeting on the feasibility of alternatives to the conventional parking meter;

writing his job description.

The next five categories or elements were drawn from the previous interview (the second) and were:

submission to Secretary of State on fees and charges for parking;

checking parliamentary estimate figures (PESC);

work associated with commuted payments;

re-drafting Ministerial correspondence on road tax;

and the Brazilian visitors.

The last three, drawn from his pre-CS life turned out to be:

living in a village;

reading economics and politics;

reading for his own interest.

In eliciting the focused construct system we took elements three at a time first from the current week's diary, then from the previous occasion, next from the background, and finally across all three time-points.

### **Construct 1**

Taking first the three current elements mechanical/initiative, mechanical only, and original/initiative, he found some difficulty in deciding whether to approach them by means of satisfactions or by analytical content. In the end he settled for a construct that expressed the difference between scope for expression of his personal attitudes in what he was doing, as opposed to the lack of such scope.

### **Construct 2**

Based on the three elements mechanical/initiative, original/initiative, and miscellaneous, the eventual construct proved to be to do with the existence of social contacts at work as opposed to working alone, being solitary. He commented that he was not a lover of team activities and rather enjoyed being on his own, so that the actual reading of economics and politics was for him a solitary experience - even in seminars he was working at developing his own attitudes. We noted a certain similarity with Construct 1, and he commented that other people restrict one's scope for initiative, though this was not necessarily a bad thing.

### **Construct 3**

Elements: mechanical only, original/initiative, miscellaneous - all from the latest diary. At first this seemed to be something to do with interest, but looking at it that way made it obviously linked in to the others. Maybe there was some aspect of analytical thinking? In the end he settled on objective as opposed to subjective, with respect to both the thinking that he put into the work and the process of doing it, and to the results and output. Looking across at the other elements he acknowledged that living in a village did indeed generate a subjective response in him.

### **Construct 4**

Here the elements came from the previous interview - the submission on fees and charges for parking, checking PESC figures, and work to do with a meeting on commuted payments. The first feeling here was something to do with free versus constrained, but this seemed to compare too readily with Construct 1. In order therefore to get away from this constant return to the fundamental "scope versus lack of scope" construct, we took a rather more surface look at the content of the work, and the construct numerical rather than non-numerical was elicited. He made the point that the numeracy we were talking about was numeracy of a very lowly order.

### **Construct 5**

More second interview elements, this time the meeting on commuted payments, re-drafting of Ministerial correspondence on

road tax, and the miscellaneous category 'visitors from Brazil' engendered a first feeling that this was to do with negotiating and compromise, but he appreciated that that would link it rather closely to Construct 2 - voluntary versus group. The eventual construct to emerge here concerned working under pressure as opposed to being relaxed. Any time you are checking figures you are under pressure; at meetings you can relax, especially if you are not writing the note of the meeting.

### **Construct 6**

Second interview categories covering the submission on fees and charges for parking, the commuted payments work and miscellaneous, produced the straightforward construct 'interesting rather than boring'.

### **Construct 7**

The elements here from the second interview were the submission on fees and charges, re-drafting Ministerial correspondence, and the miscellaneous classification. The feeling here was something to do with being fully occupied, which was not the same as being under pressure. When doing mechanical tasks you are not fully occupied; and at a meeting your mind can wander on occasion. The fullness of occupation here is to do with the constant level of occupation - one can be either heavily or lightly engaged. At a meeting, ringing people up, or looking at files, one is not fully employed - one can be using all one's faculties or one can leave

some of them to stray. Here he drew a comparison with his clerical work in the DHSS: once he had conquered the job he could switch off and dream his way through the day; in fact he recalls planning what he was going to think about during the course of the day as he walked to work. He was able to cultivate a daydream and pass days in a 'golden haze'. In the kind of work that he was doing now there were too many interruptions to allow this sort of dissociation. The worst sort of job would consist of a mixture of the two. The eventual construct was 'fully versus partly engaged'.

### **Construct 8**

Here we took the three elements from his background - living in a village, reading economics and politics, reading for his own interest. The first feeling was something to do with academic as opposed to social, but he found himself having to work hard in order to be able to use this construct on the other elements. In the end it appeared that the one end of the construct would have to do with academic intellectual work, thinking about things, thinking at an abstract level; the other end was more to do with social relaxation, and not thinking about things. The construct was tagged abstract/intellectual versus social relaxation.

### **Construct 9**

Three elements, one from each occasion: living in a village, the submission on fees and charges for parking, and the mechanical-



with-initiative element. The construct that emerged here was important versus not important, where the wording "important" is being used in a worldly sense, in the sense of having some sort of impact. In the Civil Service one sometimes marvels at the degree of importance of the work one is given to do, and other times views it as though it were an insult, its lack of importance was so great (like living in the village).

### **Construct 10**

Three more elements across the sections: reading economics and politics, re-drafting Ministerial correspondence on road tax, and the originality-with-initiative element from the latest diary. Here he found himself thinking about the significance of tasks in the sense of the bulk of the work that there was to do - so the construct emerges as something to do with the size of the task. Large tasks versus small tasks, where it came as something of a surprise to him to find that there were rather more of the latter than the former.

### **The Focused Grid**

Having focused the grid, we talked about what it appeared to show. Trevor agreed that it did seem to make sense to think of the elements originating-and-initiating, the submission to the Secretary of State, reading economics-and-politics, and reading in his own interest, as characterised by being subjective, containing abstract intellectual elements, and being interesting rather than

boring; to a slightly lesser extent he found that it also made sense to see himself as fully engaged in these (the lesser extent being that his own reading and interests do not fall in here) and important in a worldly sense, that they involved him in working under pressure. At the same time it was important to note that they also involved scope for the expression of personal attitudes in the work that he did. The constructs that he considered to be the most important do in fact in this focusing appear at the top of the grid, with elements at their positive end appearing in the top left-hand corner. There is another block which shows him partly engaged on work that is, in a worldly sense, unimportant, and on which he can operate in a relaxed manner - these applied to the miscellaneous work from the current diary (attending a meeting and writing his job description), to his own reading and interests, to the previous diary's work on commuted payments, and to living in a village.

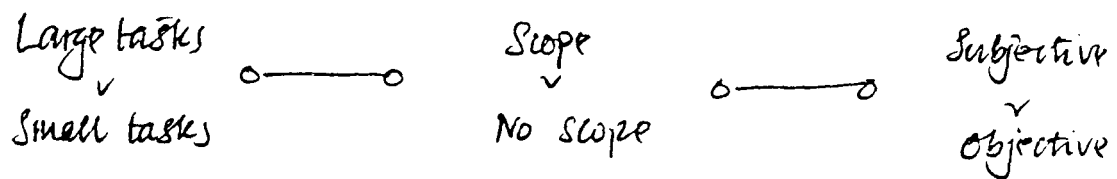
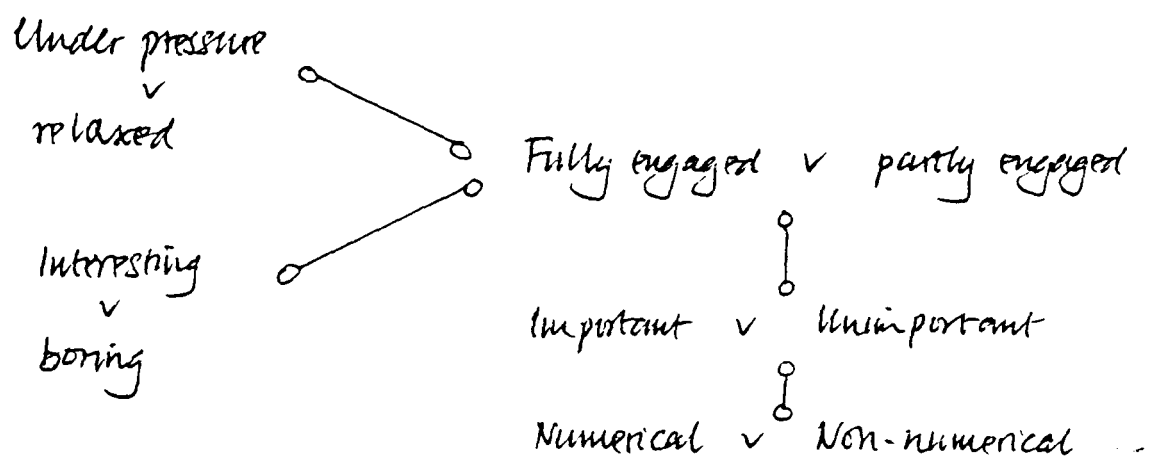
Subsequently, an analysis of the way constructs match from this grid shows there is a certain degree of relationship between these various elicited dimensions. Being fully engaged as opposed to partly engaged is related to being under pressure as opposed to being relaxed, to interesting rather than boring work, and to the important as opposed to the unimportant; this last, in its turn, is related to the construct "numerical versus non-numerical". Then the construct that deals with the availability of scope to express his own attitudes as opposed to the lack of such scope is related to large tasks as opposed to small tasks, and to the subjective versus objective. The dimension dealing with social contacts at

Fig 2.1

Trevar

	1	Original	Submission	Reading Econ/Por.	Reading & interests	Misc. II	Commuted payments	Village/background	Misc. I	Mechanical/initiative	PESC Lyons	Ministrial corr.	Mechanical/no initiative	0
Subjective		1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	Objective
Abstract, intellectual		1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	Social, relaxation
Interesting		1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	Boring
Large tasks		1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	Small tasks
Non-numerical		1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	Numerical
Fully engaged		1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	Partly engaged
Important		1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	Unimportant
Under pressure		1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	Relaxed
No scope		0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	Scope for expression
Social contacts at work		0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	Sitting alone, solitary

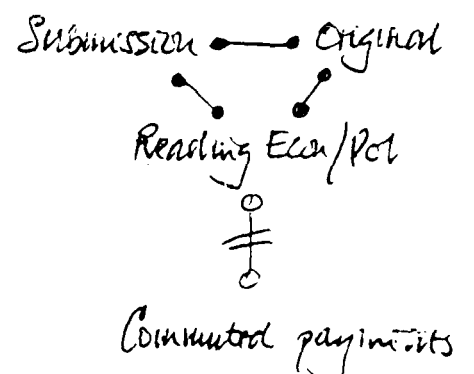
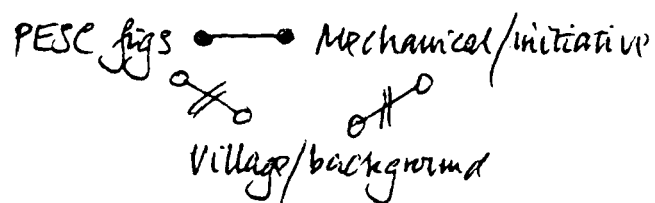
## Constructs



Abstract, intellectual  
 Social, relaxation

Social contacts at work  
 Sitting alone, solitary

## Elements



work as opposed to working in a solitary fashion, and that which deals with the abstract intellectual as opposed to social relaxation, are both unrelated in a statistical sense to the rest of the system. (On a methodological note before leaving this section, I should perhaps point out that references to a construct being very much like another as it emerged do not imply similarity in their verbal labelling - we monitored construct-matching as the grid took shape, so that a high degree of match was spotted on the way and rectified by asking him to think again. Once again, the focused grid is shown in Figure 2.1.

#### **Fourth Interview - 7 June 1979**

By now he was at the Civil Service College, on the first of two 10-week courses for ATs. He had just completed the module on statistics, which had not proved difficult as he had no particular problems with figures. They had just embarked on economics, which he had elected to do rather than an economics project despite his university training - it had seemed sensible to see how the Civil Service went about it, even though in the event he had already found himself embarrassed after only one day.

He had kept a work-diary for the preceding week, and we set about analysing it in just the same way as if he had been back in his division, structuring it - as I described in the previous chapter on John - in terms of his perceptions of wider organisational aims ('theory'), his working activities ('practice'), and his feelings about it all (in a personal sense, 'product'). As before, I actually

present them in the other logical order - activities, perceived aims, and then feelings.

In terms of work-activities, then, the structure of a week at the College looks like this:

1. Individual work rather than group work:

the statistics test;

the statistics project.

This was work characterised by nothing new being fed in, but rather by having to draw on one's own resources - fashioning the information available.

2. Committee exercises, group analysis:

discussion of a project on education for the under-fives;

tutorial with exercise on Demand;

lecture and exercises on Sampling;

exercise on Projection.

3. Receiving new information:

lecture on computers in government;

talk by OPCS on Survey Methods and Techniques;

population forecasting and projection - time series;

summing-up on forecasting;

reading up on scope and methods in economics, lecture on Demand, reading on Demand.

This group involves one in fashioning and adapting one's present ideas to new information - "adapting to the new".

The overall structure to this, he felt, was that of groups 1 and 3 feeding into group 2 and an end-product arising out of that. This was like anything that one did in the Civil Service. Looking at the three groups on a compare-and-contrast basis suggested these sorts of underlying dimension:

what one already has available as opposed to what one does not;

new information demanding an adaptation to that present knowledge;

moulding a view - individual or group;

being able to work through the logic of what one is doing as opposed to having little shocks administered to that by other people's differing logics;

receiving new information and questioning it actively - taking a line and expressing one's doubts;

individual work was characterised as centring on an 'agglomeration' or conscious bringing together of material, whereas the delivery of new information seemed to be in discrete topics.

The structure of organisational aims had the following elements to it:

1. Analytical:

- test on statistics;

- tutorial with exercise on Demand;

- lecture and exercises on Sampling.

These items had a certain amount of relevance to his Civil Service work - they were like the job in that they involved one in looking carefully at material, thinking one's way through it, and working one's way to some sort of solution.

2. Background:

- lecture on computers in government;

- talk by OPCS on Survey Methods and Techniques.

This was particularly structural background - the sort of thing one needs to know in any job is something about the contacts and network existing behind it, together with a knowledge of the links that go on behind the subject. Where do data come from, from whom, and where do they go?



3. Drafting and collation:

in the statistics module, the project on education for under-fives had to be written up (and subsequently discussed).

4. Forecasting:

population forecasting and projection - time series;  
exercise on population projection;  
summing-up on forecasting.

This was a very important part of the one job that he had already done, and probably would be of others - particularly in any policy division.

5. Items totally incidental to his work:

reading up on the scope and methods of economics;  
lecture on Demand;  
reading on Demand;  
(discussion on, and review of the statistics sequence;  
introductory briefing on the economics sequence.)

There was a strong element of logical relationship or entailment emerging from comparing these with each other - for instance, some sort of entailment was prevalent as in "forecasting is dependent upon background". There was also:

what one brings to it as opposed to what others bring to you  
- being on one's own as opposed to drawing material from  
others;

pulling things apart, analysing and re-arranging, as opposed to  
putting or drawing them together;

quickness of feedback - quicker in the drawing together than  
in the analysing out;

the firm and concrete versus probability, speculation,  
projection, guesswork - certainty versus uncertainty even if  
both involve subjectivity.

Looking across from activities to perceived aims and on to  
feelings, we find a fairly high degree of differentiation - little  
sense in which items were being grouped similarly under all three  
main headings, that is to say. But analysis showed that the  
organisational background aspect was very much a case of  
receiving new information, as indeed was some of that that he  
characterised as 'incidental' - mainly the work on Demand. This  
latter he found interesting though not particularly useful.

Individual work - part of it analysis and part drafting and  
collation - had been useful but uninteresting. But the forecasting  
aims - much of which involved receiving new information - had  
been both interesting and useful.

These two concepts, indeed, informed his analysis of feelings about the week's work. 'Feelings' may not be quite the right word - the following are more evaluations, value-judgements maybe, than feelings:

1. Interesting and useful:

lectures on computers in government;  
population forecasting and projection - time series;  
exercise on population projection;  
summing-up on forecasting.

2. Not interesting, though useful:

the statistics test;  
the statistics project;  
talk by OPCS on survey methods and techniques;  
lecture and exercises on sampling;  
reading on scope and methods in economics.

3. Interesting, though not useful:

the reading, lecture, and tutorial on Demand.

4. Not interesting, not useful:

discussion of the statistics project - this was just a "non-event".

He had gone to the College full of optimism, despite other people's views on the uselessness of College AT-courses, but after a week, he had found himself faltering. After two weeks he found that he was acting and sounding just like anybody else.

In part the ATs' own attitude was at fault - "but they put our backs up". He noted that attendance had started to fall off. And there was a view, which he now shared, that they were there for 10 weeks and might as well make the most of it.

The College staff seemed constantly to be reacting to the views of different AT groups, with the result that changes from course to course were much too abrupt. The whole package needed looking at over a rather longer time scale, the ephemeral items weeded out, and some serious attention paid to things which were constant concerns.

Some of the work that he had done so far had in fact been useful - in the statistics module there was a day on decision analysis which he had found very interesting indeed. Nevertheless, maybe an "appreciation of statistics" was rather more useful and necessary than a complete "statistics" course.

Economics and statistics courses taken at the College should not be potted degree courses. ATs, after all, were generalists. There had been a topic dealt with in one day that would have stood an undergraduate course in good stead for about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  terms.

Nevertheless, in general he was enjoying the experience - it was stimulating to talk to other ATs from widely differing jobs and from widely scattered places (there are ATs from both Northern Ireland and Scotland) and the discussion periods were usually very much better than the chalk-and-talk lecturing. It did seem to make sense to draw on all their differing experiences.

### **Fifth Interview - 18 July 1979**

This took place during the last-but-one week of the 10-week College course, and as producing a diary had been a little difficult he had added the Course programme in, to work from as well.

Starting again with work-activities, he arrived at -

1. Sitting being talked at -

an entire day spent in protracted lecture on the preparation and progress for a parliamentary bill;

introduction to devolution - short briefing;

talk on the work of a departmental lawyer;

lecturer on devolution;

talk on the Labour Party;

2. Work in a large group -

presentation on devolution to the group as a whole, and discussion.

3. Tutorial sessions - small group work -

presentation of a talk on "professionalism in the Civil Service" to a tutorial group;

tutorial sessions on devolution in which the large group presentation was prepared.

4. Individual work -

reading and private work for option essay, his option being "Reform of the House of Lords".

Examining these groupings for comment threads as before, we found some fairly obvious things like just how different sitting being talked at was from doing individual work, and how, even though 'large group' work is less presenter-dependent than sitting being talked at, the quality of the talker or leader had been all-important. In fact, though, he had most to say about the 'small group' work. It seemed to him to be the most valuable experience that the courses offered. Nowhere else would there be that gathering of ATs. Normally, even when small groups were at

work in departments, the AT was bottom of the league and had no responsibility for carrying on the business - he was just there to pump in ideas and to be a bright young man. To be in a group where you have as much right as anyone else to carry on the discussion without worrying whether you are saying enough or too much was a very valuable experience. He instanced occasions back in the department when, for example, his Assistant Secretary had a meeting with someone from outside and he, Trevor, found himself concerned about whether he was pinching points that the Assistant Secretary was going to make. When attending such meetings you were really there to watch, to learn, and to pick up points for later use - you would become very unpopular if you took over. Here at the College, though, the small group work was very valuable - one would look at what one should be doing in group work back in the department. It was also noticeable that groups got their leaders, had people who did the work, and had others who just sat and really behaved rather like ATs back in the department. In small group work contributions to the discussion got some sort of come-back - it was more flexible. Further, one tended to get round issues really rather widely, whereas one of the features of a discussion in a large group was that points of detail got focussed on. For example, on that occasion quite a lot of talk centred on federalism - which had been his fault for introducing it. Large groups formed little eddies around particular issues, when controversial points were brought up. In a small group, on the other hand, you could get over the small controversies rather more quickly. He had seen the same thing happen at work. In large groups discussion

gravitated towards more detail, which seemed contradictory but was not. Probably there was a certain element of display in contributions to large groups.

Contrasts between group and individual work centred on what he called "plugging one's line" in a large group, and working it out when alone.

As to his view of wider aims, he found making a classification difficult, but it came out as "rather general, concentrating more on form than on content". It look thus -

1 - Working out the initial input from a proposal -

the individual work for the options essay features here.

2 - Checking, embellishing, working out the scope of proposals in terms of the real world, getting opinions, changing them if necessary, consulting -

presentation of a talk on professionalism; tutorial sessions on devolution and presentation to the group as a whole.

3 - Presentation

the protracted lecture on parliamentary bill; introduction to devolution; short briefing; talk on the



work of a departmental lawyer; lecturer on devolution;  
talks on the Labour and Conservative Parties.

How a department went about its work seemed to be roughly a system involving all three of these elements. Somebody decided that it would be a good idea to legislate on X - eg licensing and repair bills. Somebody then had to sit down and examine the existing legislation in detail and put up a proposal. There was then a process of consultation in which the original proposal got smoothed and started to gain acceptance within the hierarchy. This was like groups 1 and 2 above. The next step was to gain acceptance outside the hierarchy, which involved presentation to the Minister or to the public. This was group 3. Reactions here might then change the proposal - one reaction is enough from the Minister, several thousands might be needed from the public.

All in all, it had been really rather an interesting week - he had got into the habit of tending not to expect too much. With respect to the way he had felt about it the diary items were grouped as follows:

1. Withdrawal/sleep -

protracted lecture on parliamentary bill;

talk on the work of a departmental lawyer;

2. Nil reaction -

the introduction to devolution - short briefing.

3. Interested -

presentation of a talk on professionalism;

lecture, tutorial session, and presentation to large group  
on the topic of devolution;

talks on the Labour and Conservative Parties.

4. A group of items that had about them a feeling of "it  
all depends on what one makes of it"; he did not  
believe in being bored, and if given something dull  
could always produce something interesting out of it by  
immersing himself in writing or maybe by reading  
selectively -

the individual work on the option essay comes under  
this heading.

In so far as he was able to discern any constant threads running  
through this, they concerned

information reception - which for TB involved high attention;

whether or not the work demanded a response or input from  
oneself;

things that should have been interesting, like those in the first group, but were not - as opposed to those where one did not necessarily expect it to be;

and the effect that either presenter or format had on interest and attention - though the award of a bottle of sherry to the writer of the best brief had fallen into disuse, the competitive edge amongst ATs lingered.

Looking at the structures overall, it seems as though anything to do with working out the initial input from a proposal - which would involve individual work - all depended very much on what one made of it oneself. The checking, embellishing and so on that took place in both large and small groups proved interesting. But the presentation-type work, involving sitting and writing, could produce feelings varying from withdrawal through a nil reaction to interest.

It had been a very interesting week, but oddly not as interesting as studying the same sorts of topic at university. He just did not know why. Perhaps it was to do with there being no examinations. Other people had said, and he felt it to a certain extent, that they had found themselves stultified by what they had to do at the College - the effect was that they sat back and let it all wash over them, whereas they might very well have engaged themselves energetically when at University. Was it something to do with having been at work for a year? It had all turned out to be less interesting than at university, despite the "obvious" links

with work, which amazed him. In the clerical work that he did during vacations at the DHSS, there was a clerical tutorial package and an organised system of training people within the environment of the job, and he found that he used to treasure the one hour's study a week he got. But here, so often he got an advance sheet of the day's work, thought to himself "Ah, this looks fascinating", and then in the event it turned out not to be. Everyone's dream at university would be to follow his or her own interest and to get paid for it, and yet it did not work out.

#### **Sixth Interview - 18 September 1979**

Now the first spell at the College was over - looking back at the interview-notes had brought back to mind vividly feelings about the place - and he was in a new job.

He was in the remnants of a Bill team. All save the original HEO had gone their way, and now it was down to implementation of the enacted legislation. The Act concerned, passed hurriedly he thought some five months earlier - before the election - was the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act. In three parts, it consolidated earlier unwieldy legislation and added some new. Between them Parts I and II covered such matters as the use of metal detectors - a hobby-horse of his - and applications for change of use on the 21,000-odd scheduled sites throughout Great Britain. This was largely the HEO's province. Part II, quiescent at the time, was his own area, and dealt with provisions for the Secretary of State to designate land areas as being of

archaeological importance and to put a stay on plans to flood, tip on, or otherwise disturb the site while archaeological records, at the very least, were completed. In the eyes of Conservative members, land-owners in large part, it was "a nasty little socialistic measure".

The unit within which he now worked, headed by an Assistant Secretary, had two short management lines running through it - the HEO through an SEO working on parts I and III direct to the Assistant Secretary, and himself working similarly through a Principal on Part II. He was not too happy about the apparent lack of work though - and suffered a little from the Assistant Secretary chiding him and the HEO about little getting to him when they had both been putting material up the line. "Apathy in the middle?" he wondered.

By comparison his previous job had seemed strict. All his drafts were altered, sometimes just for the sake of it it seemed. Now all went up unchanged. Encouraged by a recent memo on the Act that had been introduced, he had sat down and written a publicity leaflet. It was a very strange feeling to think that a letter you had written would go out unchanged, and it was a distinct contrast to his previous job.

However, as not so much an amateur archaeologist as someone who had a particular interest in the subject - not quite amounting to a hobby - it was a fascinating place to be, with files kept on each and every monument in the country to browse through and a free pass to each.

Turning now to the specifics of the week's work, we find that in terms of our own activities he could categorise it as follows:

1. Generating (constructive) -

preparing an information leaflet on the new Act;

letter on metal detectors;

writing a new paper on scheduling procedure;

letter on Treasure Trove.

2. Checking/Revising (critical) -

preparation and revision of papers in the draft implementation package;

checking a revised batch of scheduling forms and making a few comments.

3. Reading/Self-informing (neither constructive nor critical)

-

reading to catch up.

4. Discussing -

protracted meeting with AS;

informal discussion on Treasure Trove.

Strands underlying these categories, in his perception, included such features as -

practical matters like whether there was extant material or nothing yet in existence, and whether there would then be a finished article;

the relative rigidity and lack of scope involved in taking and checking a piece of work as opposed to, metaphorically, taking and checking an opinion in discussion;

related to this, group-work is opposed to individual;

and related in turn to this, aspects centring on the self - whether or not something was largely one's own work even if only to a formula; whether one produced something demanding and satisfying; whether solutions came from oneself or from others;

and there was a feature which had to do with being critical or not, questioning and developing a policy-line, looking at some item and raising questions about it, reaching conclusions;

there was also absorbing information.

As to how this work could be categorised in terms of his view of the organisation's aims, then we had the following:

1. Information to the outside world -

preparing an information leaflet on the new Act;

letter on metal detectors;

letter on Treasure Trove;

reply to points raised in a letter from Council for Archaeology.

2. Implementation -

writing a new paper on scheduling procedure;

preparation and revision of papers in a draft implementation package;

checking a revised batch of scheduling forms and making a few comments.

3. Revision (organisation looking at itself, into the future) -

informal discussion on Treasure Trove.



4. Informing staff (information within the organisation) -

protracted meeting with AS;

reading to catch up.

At a more detailed level again, there emerged -

a simple external/internal dimension, with related issues like being descriptive and assuming nothing, as opposed to being selective and assuming a lot; being general and discursive as opposed to detailed and involved in a two-way flow;

there was arguing the organisation's own case, propounding views, ensuring its continued existence;

and at the same time there was change - the process of the organisation changing itself;

there was the automatic, given a political decision, as opposed to the non-automatic where the organisation might question itself;

and there were issues of logical relationship - this in the interdependence between information and implementation, and in the implications behind passing information to others when that passing on can eventually reflect back and demand change in the organisation.

Nevertheless, as to the way the work affected him, he had been getting bored; there was not enough to do; previously he had been given things to do and now found himself casting around for them. He had generated a lot of paper; some of it had to produce results in the end.

1. Satisfaction -

preparing an information leaflet on the new Act;

informal discussion on Treasure Trove;

starting (but not finishing) a reply to points raised in a letter from a Council for Archaeology.

There was an element of conceit in producing a finished paper over his own name. This happened very little in the last job - but he was a bit uneasy about it. The information leaflet was a case of doing it all himself, producing a completely tied-up paper and submitting it as his own work - reasonably original but based on past practice. The item on Treasure Trove was more a case of original thinking - "that's a problem - how do we solve it?" The letter from a Council for Archaeology involved him in research and learning. There were therefore three aspects here: conceit; the originality; and research/learning. Each of these was fairly significant in this job when there was anything to do at all.

2. Interesting but less satisfying in the rewarding sense (because it involved revising someone else's work or writing to strict formulae) -

writing a new paper on scheduling procedures;

preparation and revision of papers in the draft implementation package;

checking a revised batch of scheduling forms and making a few comments.

He was a bit worried about the line-management situation. Material in this second group was what came to him 'across that line' from the HEO. As for his seniors, there appeared to be on occasion an element of shock that he had been doing anything at all - "goodness you have been busy!" As it was his second job it was rather important that it should be a busy one, and he was concerned that it was not turning out to be. But it was interesting, and he did believe that a job was what you made it. All the same he was a bit unsure and this was something of a problem for him.

He seemed to be suffering from the junior-boy complex with all the disadvantages and few of the advantages, given the HEO's familiarity with the Act.

3. Neither satisfying nor interesting - taxing and busy -

protracted meeting with the AS.

Here the HEO made most of the running; and this was the occasion when they found out that the AS had not seen a package of papers that had been sent up to him from them via the SEO.

4. Fun without being taxing (in an active sense)

writing a letter on metal detectors;

letter on Treasure Trove.

Writing these gave him an opportunity to sit and think. He did not have to resort to stock formulae. In his previous job he had soon learned that the stock formula was the only thing that got through to those above him. With metal detectors he was able to give reasonably free rein to his feelings. Personal greed was quite clearly the only motive of those using metal detectors, as their magazine made quite clear, and in the process of going about their business they could absolutely wreck archaeological sites.

5. Fun without being taxing (passive) -

reading background papers to catch up.

Reading these was not very rewarding or satisfying and time dragged. With the other things that he got to do, time often

went quite quickly, unless his in-tray was empty. When this was the case even an interesting item could be spun out to fill in the time.

Overall, the implementation work, which mainly involved him in checking and revising, could be interesting without necessarily being satisfying. Information to outsiders had to be generated in the main, some of which proved satisfying and even what he called active fun. Informing staff themselves and planning revisions to the organisation involved reading and discussing and had elements of feeling busy, satisfaction, and fun.

#### **Seventh Interview - 15 November 1979**

He was under-worked. There was little in the in-tray. He had partly filled in gaps by working on the preparation of Bill papers for binding - something that the Bill team itself should have done. He had complained, to little effect, about lack of work to his Principal, and he had complained to personnel management. But matters were such there that he would have been half-way through his posting before a chance of moving had arrived. So he had to stick it out. His forthcoming staff report was going to be difficult to write - reorganising files could be quite enjoyable, but it counted for little in the all-important second-year report (with its 'streaming' recommendation). How lucky he was that the HEO shared out his own work.

In terms of what he actually did, the week broke down as follows:

1. Clerical activity -

preparation of Bill papers and index for binding, sorting and ordering them;

sorting and filing implementation papers.

This sorting and weeding arose because he came from what he thought of as a well-organised place. The current post seemed to be rather less so. It was just petty things like files having become too big and not having been sub-divided. He decided to do something about it but it was slow progress.

At least with the Bill papers he had both drawn up the outlines and done the job. Maybe he would get somewhere by taking some initiatives.

Neither his new AS nor his Principal had ever called for files on the Act. The work they did was padded out on an informal information basis. In his last job, if he produced a file and the latest papers were not on it, his US would complain. It seemed to him that if they did not work on files the whole edifice would crumble.

2. Generating - drafting -

preparation of a discussion paper for a meeting on the hearings and inquiries;

drafting two minutes about the local authority aspects  
and subsequently revising the draft;

writing a letter on metal detectors;

drafting a letter to HMT about Mildenhall.

This was a case of bring one's own views to the subject and using  
one's initiative, within the structure of what was called for.

3. Reading, self-informing -

researching into the Act's provisions on hearings and  
inquiries;

reading to catch up.

This was a case of looking into things and getting a clear idea  
about what was to be done. It consisted in a sense of working on  
the filing-cabinet in one's head. It often took a lot of time.

4. Discussing -

arranging meeting on hearings and inquiries;

attending a meeting on procedures for scheduled  
monument consent applications.

Here one's own ideas met those of other people. Suddenly the lawyers, without warning, had said that the section on hearings and inquiries would simply not do, which had left them somewhat shocked. It was the first time that they had come up against a barrier.

The main strands, running through these activities seemed to be -

working mechanically, with the mind at least in part on other things; as opposed to using initiative and getting involved in research and thinking;

stimuli coming from outside - as opposed to from nowhere;

the complementarity of reading, informing oneself and generating material;

instant defensive reaction as contrasted with just keeping on going.

Going on to his view of where the organisation was aiming at, we have the following picture -

1. Recording -

sorting out and ordering Bill papers prior to their being bound;



final preparation of Bill papers - arranging the volumes  
etc;

drafting an index to the papers;

sorting, weeding, and filing of implementation papers,  
opening a new file, cross referencing etc.

Bill papers comprised everything that anyone had ever said about the Act and it all had to be recorded, ordered, categorised, and roughly indexed.

Here one has a case of the organisation providing a record for itself of the thoughts that went behind the written text of the Act - there was an element of defence against later questions of the "Why did you not do this, that or the other?" kind; there was the organisation informing itself in the sense of keeping a record of how a particular section of the Act was meant to apply, and thus being an element of self-regulation, and there was also an element of tradition - 12 volumes each of which was 3 inches thick, and not very accessible to anybody - kept since 1912 it had to be there, and it was somewhere where it made sense for every item of paper to be kept.

## 2. Informing internally -

reading - most of it simply to catch up (informing internally was therefore "informing me").

### 3. Implementation -

completion of a draft Ministerial submission on the implementation of the Act;

research into the Act's provisions on hearings and inquiries - its precedents and manpower implications;

preparation of a discussion paper for a meeting on hearings and inquiries which set out the conclusions reached in the item above;

arranging a meeting on hearings and inquiries and circulating a paper that he had prepared for it;

drafting two minutes about the local authority aspects of the Act's implementation;

revision of a paper on the local authority aspects of the Act's implementation and despatching the paper with covering minute to his AS for comments;

meeting with lawyers to discuss procedures for scheduled monument consent applications under the new Act - taking minutes.

Although this is not strictly policy-making work, he was sometimes surprised at the extent of policy output in any particular week.

Strictly, though, the Bill had been drafted, they had the new Act and this implementation work was a continuation of plans, aiming to make the legislation easily implementable within the legislative system. It was the ripples from the original pulse of legislation working on outwards.

4. Administration (carrying on the normal business of the Department, keeping things ticking over) -

writing a letter about restrictions on the use of metal detectors;

drafting a minute to HMT about the result of the Department's prosecution in the Mildenhall case.

Answering letters was the background noise or hum going on all the time in the Department. The other issue concerned the Mildenhall Treasure Trove case when metal detectors damaged a scheduled monument but where Treasure Trove was awarded to the people involved. In other words, they got off - given a rather odd interpretation of scheduling by the judge in the case. Trevor did not like to see a couple of thieves get away with a massive amount of money from the State. It was an example, though, of keeping the work of the Department going.

The further dimensions seem to fall into, broadly, descriptive features on the one hand and logical relationships on the other.

The recording work was mechanical, did little for the present other than tidy up, and indeed had all its benefits in the future;

'internal informing' - his reading up - was entirely the opposite;

there were also features that kept the organisation on its present tracks, and there was an inward as opposed to outward looking involved;

'informing' was not obviously productive in organisation terms, as opposed to the administrative work which, though it was reactive, had an end-product to show;

recording and implementation were logically inter-related, he felt - implementation produced a recording need, and keeping records informed future implementation;

similarly, implementation of legislation necessarily precedes the kinds of administrative activity in which he had been involved, which latter can reflect back on implementation.

As to how the work had seemed to him, we used the slightly different construct 'outcomes/results' rather than 'feelings'.

1. The mechanical stuff -

preparation and sorting of Bill papers for binding; drafting an index of papers; sorting out implementation papers into proper files.

The work here - measured in terms of yards and feet - really was sterile. The organisation acquired more paper for its records, but he himself got bored. There was a sufficiently non-mechanical element to stop his mind floating off elsewhere, and time consequently dragged. He found some solace in knowing that nobody was ever going to look at these background papers - they would be inaccessible even though it was stored away and technically speaking available. The solace came from knowing that if he did make an error of judgement it would never matter because nobody would ever find it.

## 2. The most interesting stuff -

completion of a draft Ministerial submission on implementation of the Act; preparation of discussion paper for a meeting on hearings and inquiries; drafting a minute to HMT about the results of the Department's prosecution in the Mildenhall case.

Interest arose from a mixture of the leeway available in drafting a discussion paper, and the conceit mentioned before in having done something with one's own name on it - coupled, of course, with the satisfaction of actually having done something at all.

### 3. Productive -

drafting two minutes about the local authority aspects of the implementation of the Act; writing a letter about metal detectors; revision of paper on the local authority aspects of the Act's implementation.

He enjoyed writing letters on metal detectors, but it was rather getting to the stage where he had his own stock letter for dealing with these. The other items were not as interesting or as original as things that come under the previous heading, so for him the outcome was less useful - but it might help him to develop his critical faculties.

### 4. Interaction -

arranging a meeting on hearings and inquiries and circulating a paper; meeting with lawyers to discuss procedures for scheduled monument consent applications.

This was very productive for him. He felt a little starved of input from other people in this job. The HEO and he thought very much alike. Otherwise, there was a feeling of working in a box, and not learning very much of what was going on outside. But being at the meeting, he was actually conscious of learning things. So it was partly a case of whether or not you were conscious that you were gaining knowledge from the job.

## 5. Introspective -

research into the Act's provisions on hearings and inquiries;

reading to catch up.

This was a matter of variable interest, with elements that had something of individual choice and initiative about them, but with no particular output nor much in the way of input from outside apart from that contained in the paper that one was reading.

The total picture for this week, such as it was, showed him engaged in clerical activity to meet the division's aims of recording its work, and which simply had a mechanical outcome as far as he was concerned. Implementation of the new Act involved him in generating material himself and discussing with others, work which for him was the most interesting, with an appreciated interaction aspect. Administration work, also involving generating material himself, had both its productive and its interesting aspects. Throughout there was an introspective strand, where he kept himself and his bit of the organisation up-to-date by reading.

## **Eighth Interview - 14 December 1979**

### Activities

1. collating and initiating

This concerned the drafting of the two things that he had been doing on Part II. He had run out of work a bit, and when you have done the policy part you have to work out the draft letters and regulations and procedures for any new Act. Normally you would not do this until the policy stuff was OK, but here he was going ahead as there was not much else to do apart from amending what he had done already in the light of comments as they came in.

## 2. Amending

This was simply a case of amending papers on Part II - in effect, at the same time as he was doing the drafting.

## 3. Informing

This concerned covering minutes to go with the other submissions - trying to justify the line he was taking to his AS. This was in a sense a case of persuasion towards acceptance and would take the form of "the timetable is ... so please comment by ...."

## 4. Recording

sorting, filing and reading papers.

Stressing the collating aspect of the first set, he drew a distinction between this and the second. On the one hand he



likened collating a "barrage of material from different quarters" to fitting a sort of personal regression line to a set of data-points and seeing how good a fit he could get. On the other, the line, as it were, was given.

Again, there was that perception of complementarity as for instance between the issuing of a paper and its explanatory covering note.

Under 'organisational aims, he discerned the following structure:

1. Development of the organisation's procedures -

drafting and revising in the light of comment, a paper on Part II of the Act, together with regulations and procedures and a covering minute.

Once policy is formed, the subsidiary activity on development and procedures is one that is very much more important for the organisation itself. Since anyone can develop policy, you have to fit it into the way the organisation works. No policy can be developed that the organisation is incapable of digesting. So what the organisation was doing here was fitting developed policy into its existing schemes, - an accommodation to new policy. Parts I and III were getting on well, so they now needed to look at Part II (designating areas of archaeological importance), and this was a section on which everybody had differing views. These were being batted about within the Department, with Trevor himself in some

respects more guilty on the batting about front than the rest. Eventually they held a meeting to try and coalesce their views on guidelines, though the Inspectorate was absent from it. They nevertheless developed something broad on which it was felt people could agree, and he himself agreed to write up a comprehensive story on the agreed guidelines.

To give an example, one had the choice of designating areas within cities very widely, or setting designation procedures aside and developing a code of practice for developers to work to. There were in effect two camps - one which would go for the informal way of doing things, and the other for straight implementation of the Act.

He had imagined that he had about a week and a half in which to do this work, but a meeting at the Tower of London that the Secretary-of-State was supposed to be attending meant that he was asked to get it done in about two days. In the event, the Secretary-of-State did not turn up, and the meeting went ahead without him. It also went ahead without Trevor himself, who had not been invited - he would have enjoyed a meeting in the Tower.

In this Part II work then it was a case of trading-off between different parts of the Department and making adjustments as necessary - in other words, accommodation.

2. Internal exchange of ideas -

Completing a minute giving the Department's response to the Inspectorate's comments on the Parts I and III package, and revising the implementation master-copy in the light of those comments.

This we agreed was more a case of assimilating material to one than accommodating to it.

3. Keeping the organisation's activities on course - ongoing monitoring -

amending a memorandum to include details of a new Order and suggesting a new system for future handbook;

drafting an amendment to a memorandum on compulsory purchase.

The item here was one of the most complicated little things that he had had to do so far. It centred on the need for the provision of special parliamentary procedures for compulsory purchase. This came about from a changed situation now that there was no longer a Secretary of State for Transport, with that official now a Minister. The Act therefore had to be modified in order to make allowances for this, in order that the original aims of the Department when the Act was drafted could continue to be met. He tagged it a case of ongoing adjustment.

#### 4. Recording -

Sorting, filing, reading papers - in the gaps.

Although he noted that the strands running through his perceptions of these various organisational aims were difficult to discern when so much of the work was self-generated and carried out on his own - indeed the work items grouped almost identically under Activity and Aims - that which did emerge looked like this:

a high degree of inter-relationship, particularly between development of procedures and the internal exchange of ideas, but with on-going monitoring also involved;

on the one hand accommodation to an agreed line and on the other assimilation of external material;

there was framing new guidelines as opposed to revising old ones; with the former resulting from an external policy directive and the other as reaction to some peripheral political event having an effect on this part of the organisation;

there was the similarity between revising a set body of guidelines first under internal exchange of ideas and also in ongoing monitoring, but the two aims differed in their orientation - the one looked outwards, the other in;

and finally there was the straightforward aim of the organisation keeping a record of what it had been doing.

As to personal outcomes, these we took as a block. He had got quite a lot out of working on Part II because there was so much to learn. Having a free hand in the process of gaining agreement was exhilarating. Starting from scratch was also illuminating, though he did not get as much done as he would have liked in the rushed two days allowed.

But he had not got so much out of the amendments work - though it was an important skill it was quickly and easily learned. As a skill, commenting occupies a dimension running from "paragraph 3 is too harsh and should be worded to take more heed of the local authorities' views", out to "in line x substitute 'but' for 'and'". You do nevertheless usually finish up with something agreed - and as for accepting and incorporating other people's comments, a take-up of about five-eighths to three-quarters, particularly if you wish to reject one of their most important points, usually fills the bill.

But he had still heard nothing from personnel management.

### **Ninth Interview - 8 February 1980**

It was a somewhat dispirited man who turned up for this session. A phone call that very morning had had the effect of seeming to undo 3 or 4 months' work. It hinged on the informal as opposed to the formal elements of the legislation.

They had spent a lot of time coping with the fact that because an enquiry had to be offered to anyone who wished to do something to an ancient monument, any further action that the Department took - sending an inspector along to have a chat, say - could be held to be prejudicial to the enquiry. This in essence presupposed that all application process stages should be treated as formal. But a senior departmental lawyer had now modified the earlier advice, and was suggesting that there were both formal and informal stages to any process. So all the work that they had done to try and work out various ways of handling the prejudice problem - posited on formality - now became superfluous. He was thus more than happy to come and talk to me as he had nothing else to do.

Up to this point, the activity on which he had been engaged in the week - which I did not get him to try and structure formally on this occasion - had characteristics of the following sort.

1. A chain of meetings -

This was a central feature to the week. There was a meeting with the Inspectorate at which it was agreed that the Schedule of Ancient Monuments and Sites badly needed up-dating - a meeting where both parties finished up gaining something. There was a negotiation-type meeting with the legal specialists, to which Trevor and colleagues had gone "with stances at the ready", but where compromise did appear to have been achieved. And then there was a

meeting with his own Assistant Secretary to discuss his note of the legal meeting, and where for once he did in fact kick against the amendments that the AS had made. He observed that it was possible to make wider use of a meeting note than simply providing a verbatim account - like adding a comment on the problems attendant upon a particular agreed statement when you the note-taker happened to disagree.

## 2. Correspondence -

These were letters, the background note to the answer to a PQ, and a critique of a specialised information leaflet about the Act - not something that would normally come down to the man at the bottom of the heap.

And then there was -

## 3. His Algorithm -

For finding their way through the legislation (though it now looked to be redundant). He likened it to an egg-sorting machine. A series of yes/no questions shuttled one through an increasingly branched decision-tree into various decision-boxes. Of these there were four - yes, a conditional yes, no and 'hearing'. The setting for this, though, was the formalistic legal stance; administration ought to be more about having an inspector go and chat with the applicant and suggest putting a bend in the footpath to avoid contravening

the legislation. Still, the algorithm concentrated the mind wonderfully - or at least, designing it had done.

Turning as usual to his perception of the organisation's aims as reflected in his week's work, we find -

#### 1. Implementation of the Act

This was a sort of general heading for the whole week. But although it was quite clearly the Department's aim - or at least his division's aim - to get it implemented, he had to say that he was less sure that it was necessarily the political leadership's too. It seemed to him highly probable that, under another heading, the Secretary of State might say it was the wrong time to implement it.

#### 2. Subsidiary aims -

Informing within the Department, publicising, policy-formulation in the sense of developing organisational procedures, recording, and 'self-informing' - be this last at individual or unit level.

Self-informing - his term - involves knowing what is said in Parliament by keeping abreast of Hansard. It involves knowing what is being said in relevant journals and by whom it is being said. It involves knowing what is in the newspapers so that, for example, one recognises that a particular PQ comes from an



activist rather than that somebody's grannie suggested he should ask a question. It involves knowing about other people's hefty bits of work and what these contain.

Administration is not just looking with tunnel-vision at the in-tray and moving papers across into the out-tray. For example, having spotted that a Gloucestershire hotel was offering treasure-hunting weekends, metal-detectors supplied, and the joys of hunting in Roman Britain extolled, he had sent off a very stern and serious letter to them warning of the horrible things that could befall them and how it was absolutely not on for people to go treasure-hunting in Roman Britain.

Finally, outcomes.

1. Organisational outcomes -

All a bit of a waste of time, unless the legal advice happens to revert to its original 'formal procedures' posture. Rather than achieving implementation in March-April, it now looked more like June, July or even August. [Author's note - I never did get to learn how this came out.] He supposed that in a sense it was all a bit of a storm in a tea-cup. But nevertheless reading the journals showed that there were actually people out there who really did care about all this.

Turning to more personal outcomes, we go on with -

2. Interesting -

The algorithm-construction was really rather fascinating. It was the first time since reading economics and politics at university that he had been called upon to use analytical tools, though he was careful not to let the algorithmic approach shoulder aside more subjective judgement.

### 3. Little personal value -

Nothing much came out of any of the correspondence, and in fact the HEO seemed to be taking over some of the metal-detector letter writing himself.

### 4. Valuable -

The meetings in fact all proved very valuable, if slightly frustrating. As note-taker it is all too easy to lose the drift of the argument. A well-directed meeting should have a flow to it. But being a note-taker he found valuable in that it forced him to do three things at once - try to write it all down; try to keep the thread in focus; and actually try to contribute. If you can manage to keep the thread in focus, he had found, then when someone starts off on something irrelevant you can put your pen down and wait till he's finished. Otherwise, you take it all down verbatim and have to make your own judgements of relevance later. For this he had coined another tag - the element of administrative divination.

## Tenth And Last Interview - 25 March 1980

We turned first to a rather general survey of this his last week in the exercise, before spending some time on an overview.

### 1. Meetings

He had found himself at meetings both inside and outside the department during the week. There was first an important event in Norwich at which he and the HEO were to attend a session of the local archaeological unit, and explain the workings of the new Act to local authority representatives, officials from the local National Farmers Union and so on. Here was the Department, as far as he could see, informing in the best sense. He also got quite a lot out of it - pleasant countryside and a welcome opportunity to speak as an official in public. There was also a Bill Committee meeting on a local authority 'country bill' for a south-eastern county, which amongst many other things was the first piece of local authority legislation to try limiting the use of metal-detectors. He was greatly impressed by the way in which the meeting was conducted - "brilliant", he called the Chairman. It was valuable to see someone working smoothly and well, and also to see something of the legislation process. And there was also an internal meeting - departmental self-informing, in Trevor's phrase - where they considered the implications of having 12,000 monuments under the new Act. With no more staff to handle them,

what if 20,000 letters arrived? Again he found value in this - people sitting down and talking to each other instead of sending minutes in ever-decreasing spirals.

## 2. Parliamentary Questions

Three arrived 15 minutes before the HEO and he were due to leave and catch a train to the Norwich meeting. It was essential that they attend the meeting - but a PQ is the most important day-to-day thing that one has to do. People further on up the line had absolutely no command of the files, so the conflict was solved by the production of a "rather tatty answer"; the Principal and Assistant Secretary knew quite enough about the basic goings on to be able to pick up the odd points that the HEO and TB had got wrong in their hurry.

## 3. Drafting and re-drafting

The lawyers had sent back draft regulations unaltered except for topping and tailing - too good to be true. So they sent them off; whereupon the lawyers came back to say that they were not good enough. Re-drafted in the light of this, off they went again. He gained something from having to work in and with legal jargon, but still felt that the lawyers should have been doing it. Loosely allied to this work was his decision to look at other areas where regulations of varying levels of formality on hearings and enquiries existed.

His intention was at least to leave a note for a successor in the kinds of problem that he had described at our previous interview. Organisationally, this concerned continuity. From the personal outcome point of view, he had learned a lot about enquiries.

#### 4. Filing

The Bill files were still hanging around - all 12 feet of them and getting more dog-eared. And there was also reading and filing papers - no career-development outcome in that, though the work was presumably of organisational value. But the organisation was not there to sponsor his background reading.

### **The Whole Period**

Starting off by considering the resources upon which he was now able to draw - and hence, of course, what he saw himself as having been learning - he thought that he now had a much more highly developed conception of what the Civil Service was like. There were mechanical and conceptual elements - not unlike the 'activities' and 'aims' aspects that I had been asking him to consider across the months. On the mechanical level he now knew that it was not done to send drafts to lawyers. The conceptual level seemed to have become at least two-dimensional in this second post, even though he thought it a poor job. In the first it had been flat and unidimensional. Maybe the next would

add a third dimension. What exactly the conceptual model's dimensions were were there for teasing out from the interview notes, but the obvious ones concerned what he called the organisation's self-destructiveness, its hierarchical nature, and the way it builds upon itself.

Reflecting briefly on the construction, as he saw it, of one's model of the Civil Service, he felt sure that the process was one of developing and modifying as one progressed - not discarding and starting anew even when there were clear discontinuities as from the change from a strict job out of which he gained a lot to a slack one in which he was getting little. But building one's own model seemed to him a "blatantly obvious" thing to do - starting from maybe even the mechanical structure of telephone links, messenger system, street-plan, and working towards something more abstract.

Working with words and drafting was crucial. He had learned a lot by the end of his first job even though he could of course write perfectly well before he came in. In this second job he may have unlearned a bit - or learned something about freedom in drafting just a little too early on. Drafting, though, was the nitty-gritty and polar opposite to the other extreme of an abstract personal model of the Civil Service.

The second job had taught him about working with others, though. And there was an element of what he called 'intuition' - planning ahead, on which he did not get a very good first report, but for which this second job offered plenty of scope.

This merged into an ability to question, something that was probably over-developed for Service use when one has just emerged from university and which probably needs breaking down a bit before being rebuilt on Civil Service terms.

There was also the ability to structure, to see things in terms of points - something that he had always had, but which was still developing.

And then there was creative thinking - sometimes thought of as somehow 'sissy', but essential all the same. But this too needed breaking down in the new entrant before it could be built up again. The danger with this line of thinking was that he found himself justifying the hierarchy again - what if ATs were to go around thinking creatively?

Turning then to the satisfactions and dissatisfactions he found himself in the main having to think of them together in a sort of double-column entry way.

The job was challenging, but at the same time fairly easy - though not too much so. As a trainee he was aware of living in a temporary world and of envying clerical officers for having a solid permanent position. He wanted very much to feel competent at his work.

He found dissatisfaction in such a large amorphous organisation, amorphous even if it did have identifiable structure. Roman

legions were highly structured too, but looked like a big pink block in the field.

Yet he was also dissatisfied in one sense working in a very tiny area, though there was an accompanying satisfaction in getting such an area almost completely at one's command.

Variety produces satisfaction - but at the same time it has one moving about too fast to develop job-competence. Lack of opportunity for creative thinking is a dissatisfaction and had even stimulated him to a high level of off-duty activity in the photographic society - such a level in fact that he half hankered after a job in the photographic class. Allied to this is the lack of opportunity for personal expression - as the satisfaction gained out of the occasions when he could actually include a personal view on something illustrates.

Underlying the dissatisfactions was concern about what seemed to him unsatisfactory career-management at the centre. He may have claimed to be unambitious - but failure to get into the fast-stream would have him seriously thinking about resigning. As he saw it, he had set aside the prospect of having an immediate mature job, as an Executive Officer say, in order to live in the temporary world of the AT and have the longer term prospect of a really challenging job. If that failed to materialise - and having an opportunity to demonstrate one's claim to it was important - then he would get out. He felt strongly that inadequacies of career-management had in fact denied him the kind of opportunity



to show his capacities to the full - and this was most unsatisfactory. In essence, the formal organisational structure, he had learned, had far less effect on people than the way in which they were treated. And that melancholy, if profound, observation concluded our year's business.

## **APPENDIX 2 - Toby - planning from corporate to corporation**

### **First Interview - 26 February 1979**

At the Essex grammar school turned comprehensive that he had attended it seemed to be the done thing for people to go straight to university. But when he arrived at Magdalene College, Cambridge, to pursue a long-held plan to read history, he found that most of his new peers had taken a year off in between. He wished he had too; gaining a bit of worldly experience would have been a good thing. He had not been particularly well prepared for the transition to a more independent and robust life. By Christmas in the third year another transition was looming - Finals and the search for a job. Not being too good a life-planner, he had taken what seemed the fairly obvious route. The Civil Service had seemed a good place for an historian to work, and it looked to him as though possible contenders amongst the large oil companies and in much of industry had a bias towards scientists anyway. But he had also looked towards other public service organisations and to transport.

Judging from the numbers taking the Qualifying Test, the Civil Service was popular at Cambridge - though he, amongst others, had no very clear idea of what the work would be like. Nobody ever seemed to go to see the Liaison Officer when he arrived at the university, and the extended selection procedure really gave no very clear idea of the kind of contribution one could make to a

department's work. At the outset he had given little thought to structural issues like the size of prospective departments, career prospects, and the like - one tended not to, he thought. Interest was his main criterion, in a discrete job on racial policy in the Home Office, say. The only clear idea that he did have on departmental choice, when asked about it, was that as a member of Friends of the Earth (even with an admittedly lapsed subscription) he would be better off not going to the Department of the Environment, in case principles and the demands of the job should clash.

But here he was in the DoE after all - or, more accurately, in the Department of Transport. He had taken up duty in September 1978 in an area that dealt with railways. The Directorate concerned, with an Under Secretary at its head, was neatly hierarchised into three Assistant Secretary sections and then into Principal branches. He was working with a Principal in one of the three branches in one AS line, with executive grade staff spanning all three of the branches at 'support' level. His own small branch dealt with investment and corporate planning, with the application of nationalised industry policy to British Rail, and to a lesser extent with energy policy implications (including mainline electrification issues). One of the other branches was responsible for freight business and the BR subsidiaries like hotels and ferries. The third had responsibility for manpower, productivity, engineering, exports and parliamentary co-ordination.

The first job in which he was involved was work on the current 5-year Corporate Review - an annual look-ahead exercise on BR working - and had him doing a certain amount of information analysis, a little drafting and taking notes of meetings, but mostly distributing information to economists and other specialists and to the two other main sections. Early on too - like taking a meeting-note on his very first afternoon - he had found himself involved in the tail end of work on producing performance indicators in line with the requirements of the 1973 White Paper on nationalised industries. This required the BR Board to include a statement about the previous year's Corporate Review in each year's published Report and Accounts - the form of which statement Toby's branch was to give some guidance on - and for the government to respond. The Board was also to report on performance, which was why a working party on performance indicators had been set up, whose business in his early days - without help - he had found difficulty in grasping.

When the current Review had been submitted to the Secretary of State, attention focussed on another annual exercise with a 5-year span - the Investment Programme. Work on this, with his branch taking the lead, would develop towards a tripartite set of negotiations with the Board and the Treasury, and he had already had some drafting to do on the department's response to the Board's proposals.

## One Week's Work

Although it was a quieter week than usual in the sense that nothing that he had had to do had taken very long, there were two reasonably representative issues. The first concerned a campaigning paper sent to all MPs by a lobbying body "for the Defence of the Motor Vehicle". The central planning unit was to provide MPs with advice to help them with their replies, and this unit had sent its draft to his branch for a view. It needed some amendment, the initial drafting of which fell to him. The campaign body's statistics were reliable enough, he felt, so he had concentrated on the broad policy issue which - in the eyes of the then Labour government's Secretary of State - centred on the provision of competitive facilities within a market economy setting. (Mild surprise at the Senior Minister's stance evinced at the time, became resolved later when the now erstwhile senior minister became a founder-member of the SDP.) As Toby had barely a day to do the work, his Assistant Secretary had no time to read it and, with his immediate boss's blessing, he took it direct to the policy unit.

The other issue, an international one, centred on resource transfers between countries of the EEC. The aim, as far as he could see, was to find ways of "absorbing" community funds on railway infrastructure in order to counterbalance over-contributions to the Common Agricultural Policy. Earlier work by the branch, in which he had already been involved, had been sent back as "too realistic". He was thus required to go for something more

grandiose, which seemed odd to him when one was usually looking for ways to spend less rather than more, and doing so in something other than what seemed to him a fantasy world as well. Going back through files to dig out past proposals did enable him in the end to put up the bid from £50 million to £300 million, but he still found it "difficult to penetrate into the recesses of international transport's collective thinking".

So, here he was, knowing at the outset very little about how the Civil Service worked, nor about how railways or transport policy worked, and still less about the financial constraints, thrown straight, with no easing, into a job with a distinct element of variety to it in any one week's work.

## **Second Interview - 25 March 1979**

First we divided up the week's work fairly freely into classifications that made sense to him, and then later looked at more subjective aspects.

### **Corporate Review**

This was the first clearly classifiable grouping, with the work centring on preparations for a meeting that was to take place later on that day. Getting figures in time was problematic, and it was left to him to chase them up from the BR Board, circulate them and get reactions - with his Principal concentrating on passenger traffic and he himself looking after parcels. Although they had a direct contact on the Board, in the shape of an

Assistant Secretary seconded from the Department, to whom to feed departmental views direct, the whole thing could have been better handled had he started earlier.

#### Parliamentary Question

The PQ, inviting the Secretary of State to set up a railway cost-efficiency study with international comparisons, had arrived on Friday evening and took up the Monday and Tuesday mornings. There was the business of trying to predict supplementaries - two earlier PQs had centred on international comparisons and might thus give a lead, but (with his Principal changing his mind half-way down that track) as the MP was from commuter-land it might be worthwhile to produce something with a performance-indicators flavour. All of it seemed a bit unreal to Toby with the No Confidence Vote on the Callaghan administration tabled for the same day. The answer would be printed in Hansard come what may, but all the background work would go to waste.

#### Road Versus Rail

A specific instance (extending the M40, in fact) was the spur to a great deal of to-ing and fro-ing on the more general question of the effect of road developments on rail finances. The BR Board had made, and had then revised, an assessment of the impact that the development of the M40 would have on their financial position. The department's thinking, led to an extent by their economists, was that road development did not affect the railways' financial position. His role was mainly that of go-between and chaser-up of comment, though the final agreement

was for him to write up for his Assistant Secretary, with the expectation that the latter could note it and pass it on up to the Director as resolved. In fact this and another issue - a strategic studies brief wanted for an imminent meeting - had emphasised to him the powerful effect that the Under Secretary could have on the Directorate's work.

#### 'Statutory Undertakers'

Would the Board want to take up the proposal in a Department of Industry Bill for the Post Office to act as a 'ticket agency' for nationalised industries, and what would the BR subsidiaries' position be? The lawyers at the Board and at the Department disagreed with each other over the answer. From his own reading of the legislation the matter was far from clear-cut - and it was still at a confidential stage of drafting anyway.

#### Miscellaneous

Drafting for his Assistant Secretary on issues concerning the EEC's Transport Infrastructure Committee - and on the EEC's concern about slow progress - had him drafting for the BR Board as well in order to keep them all tied in with each other on European rail organisation. He also had a little more to do on 'absorbing' Community money, mentioned in the first interview.

And the task of filling in a questionnaire for an international body about transport policy, the position of the railways, statistics on rail use compared with roads, pollution comparisons, and so on had fallen, not very urgently, to him.



## **Coping and Satisfaction**

This was the point at which we started to focus on what he felt that he brought to the job and what he was getting out of it.

## **Resources**

Mostly, the week had only called for simple administrative skills like having papers photocopied and circulated, and a little management of clerical staff. But he had also to call on negotiating skills to get something out of people when he wanted. His tactics were to "trap them and then apologise". He would burst in on them and ask for a quick reaction, just concentrating on the main points. Generally it worked, though it worked less well with specialists like the statisticians who, for example, had been unwilling to commit themselves that readily in the PQ. Otherwise, not much in the way of taxing intellectual work had been called for apart from trying to unravel the legal definitions of statutory undertakers.

## **Difficulties**

One of the problems in a co-ordinating branch was getting the emphasis right when one was putting different people's reactions together, particularly when the deadline was tight. You had to get it right and be absolutely certain that you knew what the person talking to you wanted to say, even if the pursuit of this certainty made you seem a bit simple. You had to think of

implications that they had not, and anticipate questions that the next people in the chain might ask.

There were of course the practical difficulties of juggling deadlines and getting material that you needed out of other people. Getting comments from Assistant Secretaries was harder than getting them from Principals - they had less time, were more alert to be sure that you had got it right, and you had to press home the importance of your own point. Basically, even when apparently just dashing around being a messenger there was a lot of information-processing involved.

### **Satisfactions**

A PQ is a very unsatisfying thing. It usually involved churning over old material and trying to be evasive (or so it seemed to him). There was some satisfaction from doing the statutory undertakers work himself, but mostly he was just channelling information and had not produced anything that he could actually put his finger on.

### **Learning**

But, more profitably, he had learned from the Corporate Review work that it paid to chase things up sooner rather than later. He had also learned that he could in fact pin people down when getting reactions from them. And he had discovered responsibility in the statutory undertakers work, which had gone forward over

his own name without being re-processed further up the line and which might actually have an effect on the world outside. This indeed was different from university life, where it would not matter to anyone else if one got something wrong in one's essay for the week.

### **Third Interview - 23 April 1979**

This was in fact Easter week, and so only covered four days. The work-diary elements were grouped subjectively in much the same way as for the previous interview except that he found himself doing the classification more on the nature of the work involved than on the subject matter.

#### **Analysis and briefing:**

examining papers on EEC regulation concerning the financial balance of railway business in order to provide his Principal (by lunchtime) with material for a reply to the other branch involved;

briefing his Assistant Secretary for two forthcoming meetings - one brief centring on a reading of the BR Property Board plan, the other on EEC Transport Infrastructure committee papers.

This work consisted mainly of looking at documents and producing briefs for someone higher up the line.

### Advice:

to a Principal in another branch on valuation of BR planned infrastructure projects;

talking to BR Board investment specialists about additional information being asked for by the Treasury for investment planning;

and considering whether BR property developments fell within the investment ceiling.

This was more a case of doing work on one's own to provide advice asked for by people elsewhere at about his own level rather than up the line.

### Organisational:

drafting letters for his Assistant Secretary on visit plans, and doing some related telephoning;

plus circulating copies of BR Property Board's business review.

Standard work expected of an AT.

## Miscellaneous:

checking facts in the draft brief for an incoming government  
(the 1979 General Election being in the offing);

clearing a backlog of papers.

For the construct elicitation procedure we used these four groups,  
the five from the previous interview, and two university-life  
elements - 'reading history' and 'being a Friend of the Earth'.

This is what resulted:

### Construct 1

Giving opinions (which, of course, necessitates in some instances  
actually holding an opinion rather than just generating it - the  
FOE element say) as opposed to the mechanics of doing what  
someone else tells one to.

### Construct 2

Work with a more intellectual content, actually having to think  
about something, as opposed to work that involved no thought.  
The 'organisational' element involved no more thought than  
thinking how to put something tactfully. But analysis and briefing  
called for reading papers and filling in background, thinking about  
one's writing, and checking work.

### **Construct 3**

Doing work that comes directly from above in the chain of command on the one hand, and being consulted as an 'expert' in the particular field on the other. By 'expert' he meant someone who knew what was going on with respect to the subject matter. The 'road versus rail' element (centring on the M40 - previous interview) had aspects of both, but he was the one who kept a divisional eye on the issue and was in that sense the expert. Constructs 1 and 3 are very closely related, though not identical.

### **Construct 4**

Work done in consultation with other people - work done entirely by himself.

### **Construct 5**

Shaping future work as opposed to looking retrospectively at a problem. The Corporate Review clearly came at the one end and, as it happened, the 'M40' road versus rail issue very much at the other, it being a case of looking back at work that had already been done and just finishing it off.

### **Construct 6**

\*

Having an effect outside the Department as opposed to not. By 'effect' here he meant what the Department did that influenced

policy-development elsewhere - the Corporate Review, statutory undertakers. Answering a PQ would not have much of an effect on what went on policy-wise outside. (The two university-based elements failed to find a place on this construct.)

### **Construct 7**

Work of a continuing nature on the one hand, and one-off matters on the other. The statutory undertakers issue was a completely new problem for which he had had no background knowledge on which to draw, and where divisional involvement was fairly tenuous. On the other hand the road/rail 'M40' issue had been around since before he had joined them. The university-based element 'reading history' had a continuous aspect to it in the sense that he still kept up an active interest.

### **Construct 8**

Becoming familiar with a body of facts and being able to discuss them and offer guidance, as opposed to simply offering up a question or issue to departmental policy and acting as a kind of drafting machine. Dealing with a PQ meant that one was given a question, one knew what departmental policy was, and one took that policy and applied it to answering the question - "cobbling things together". History, and giving advice, were not like that.

## **Construct 9**

Constrained by policy and practicality - having no responsibility for the implementation of decisions.

## **Construct 10**

Being aware of problems as opposed to not knowing as much as is necessary to arrive at an opinion. The statutory undertakers work featured very much at the latter end because it was a highly legal matter, and when he gave his advice on it he was keenly aware of not having much of a basis in fact for doing so.

Re-arranging constructs and their constituent elements to look for regularities showed first that the distinction between doing work arising from the chain of command and being consulted as the 'expert' was rather like the distinction between the mechanics of being told what to do by someone else and giving opinions, between being a drafting machine and becoming familiar with facts on which to guide and discuss, and between being aware of problems and not knowing as much as necessary. This last bore its own resemblance to being constrained by policy and practicality as opposed to having no decision-making responsibility.

Looking across the whole system, we find that reading history, giving advice, the work on the M40, analysis and briefing, the legal definition of statutory undertakers, and to a lesser extent the miscellaneous group from the second interview, all tend to be viewed as work within the constraints of policy and practicality,



as more intellectual and actively involving thinking about something, as involving the giving of opinions, and as demanding a familiarity with a body of facts on the basis of which to discuss and offer guidance.

Answering PQs, organisational work, and the miscellaneous group from the third interview were viewed jointly as involving the mechanics of doing what someone else told one to, acting as a drafting machine, being one-off jobs, and all being something that had no effect outside the Department policy-wise.

There is then a small group consisting of the miscellaneous work from the second interview, the Corporate Review, and being a Friend of the Earth, which were viewed as continuing work, having some effect outside (with the exception of the FOE item), involving an awareness of problems rather than not knowing enough about them (again, except FOE), and having something to do with shaping future work.

Reading history, giving advice, the M40, analysis and briefing, the legal definition of statutory undertakers, and to an extent the miscellaneous work, all tended to share some element of shaping the future, being done in consultation with others, and at the same time working within the direct chain of command.

It looks as though the two superordinate constructs here are to do with intellectual content of the work, and his position in the organisation. The grid is set out in Figure 2.2 .

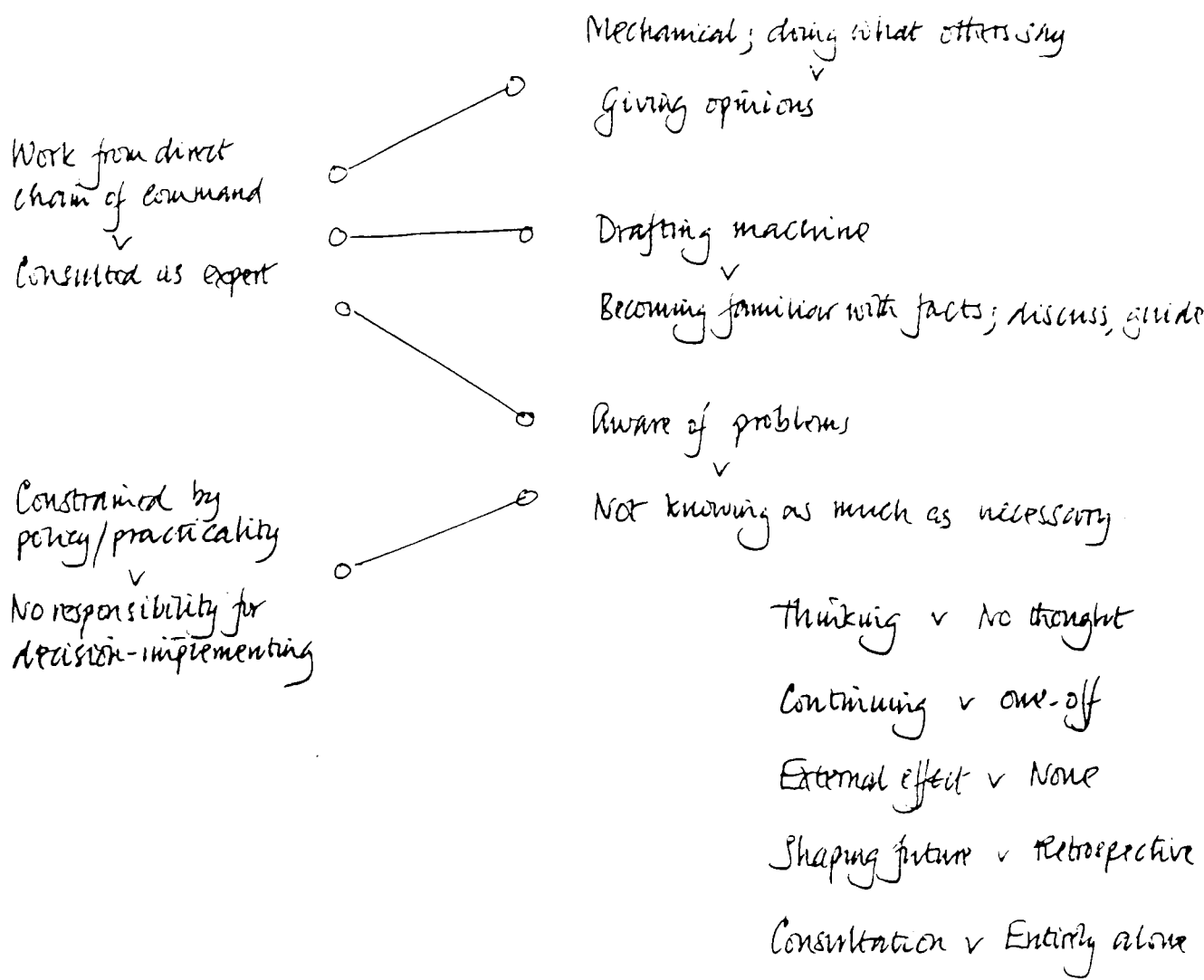
Fig 2.2

Toby

	Reading History	Advice	Rund v. Rail (M40)	Analysis/briefing	Stat. undertakers	Misc. I	Corporate Review	Friends of the Earth	PQs	Organisational	Misc. II	
1												10
Constrained by policy/practicality	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	No responsibility for decision implementing
Thinking	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	No thought involved
Giving opinions	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	Mechanical; doing what others say
Becoming familiar with facts; discuss, guide	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	Drafting machine
Continuing	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	One-off
Having external effect	-	0	1	1	1	1	1	-	0	0	0	No external effect
Aware of problems	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	Not knowing as much as necessary
Shaping future work	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	Retrospective view
Consultation	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	Entirely alone
Work from direct chain of command	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	[0]	1	1	1	Consulted as expert

Fig 2.2 (cont)

Constructs

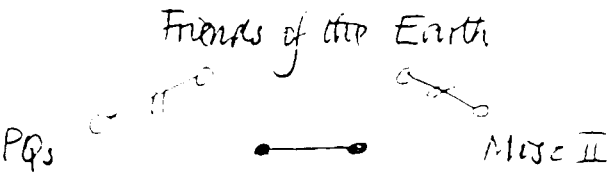


Elements

Largely independent; low levels of similarity/dissimilarity for :-

Prading History — Road v Rail

Corporate Review — Misc I



## **Fourth Interview - 21 May 1979**

As with his fellows, this was the point at which we went on into a regular free structuring of work diaries in terms of activity, organisational aims and outcomes.

Starting with the activities, the categorisation process on this occasion produced this sort of simple structure:

### **1. Organisational**

Ensuring papers for a forthcoming meeting had gone to the Treasury, and that they had also been prepared for his Under Secretary; circulating various other papers relating to monthly progress meetings and the investment programme.

### **2. Chasing People**

Mostly the BR Board - on the investment programme, on Great Northern Electrification, and on a forthcoming seminar.

### **3. Drafting**

For others - a 'treat officially' reply, a letter to BR's Chief Investment Officer, a covering minute from his Assistant Secretary to his Under Secretary on issues arising from a meeting.

#### 4. Note-taking

Centring on an 'Issues' meeting with the BR Board, and a preparatory briefing meeting.

#### 5. Consultation

Checking financing statement, and discussing the 'treat officially' reply.

#### 6. Reading and analysing

'Issues' paper from the current Rail Review, and advice to his Principal on performance aims and indicators.

When he was asked to compare and contrast across the whole set of six categories a number of strands appeared.

One seems to concern working for other people's ends as opposed to producing something more original. The kinds of comment indicating work of the one kind were such as:

being in a direct chain of command, with clear requirements; having little room to shape events; output having to satisfy someone else's aims so that although one must think about the approach and ensure that all points are noted, one is reacting to views or information and only has liberty to shape the tone, not the actual outcome.

On the other hand there was a certain amount of:

shaping or producing one's own thoughts, forming one's own opinion, working out a line, doing work that relatively at least was more creative and less constrained.

Then there was a strand that was concerned with how demanding the work was - direct reference, for example, to intellectual or mental effort, and to aiming at being selective or comprehensive in one's coverage of a piece of work, depending on the circumstances.

The third main theme (though nothing is implied by the ordering here) concerned working with others, having contact with other people, at varying degrees of distance or proximity.

Going on next to consider the structure of the week's work in terms of his perceptions of organisational aims, the categories that emerged looked like this:

1. Investment

Getting relevant information from the BR Board, checking financing statements with the appropriate division, preparing meeting papers and circulating elements of the investment programme.

## 2. Corporate Review (1979)

Work centring on the 'Issues' paper from the Rail Review for that year - notes at a meeting etc.

## 3. Seminar

Talking to the Board about plans for a seminar.

## 4. Follow-up to a White Paper

Performance aims and indicators (advice to his Principal) and chasing on electrification.

## 5. Investment Appraisal Rates

Draft reply to Chief Investment Officer at the Board, after specialist consultation.

## 6. Public Information

Draft, after discussion, reply to a 'treat officially' letter.

## 7. Monthly Progress Meeting

Circulate papers.

The strands emerging from further examination seemed to be:

working to agreed procedures within existing Government policy - on BR or on nationalised industries in general - and both planning or updating plans within that policy, together with some monitoring of performance against existing plans; on the other hand looking determinedly forward, but to varying time-scales with the seminar on White Paper proposals being the furthest forward-looking and hence the most philosophical;

there was also a departmental-initiative versus other-initiative element, with for example more perceived pressure on follow-up work on the White Paper than on appraisal rates because Parliamentary Questions on the latter seemed unlikely.

Looking for links across activities, aims and outcomes, it seems as though the work on the investment programme was largely what he called organisational, just about all of which left him with feelings of irritation and of time being consumed - though he had after all rather enjoyed the 'chasing people' element of this organisational activity-category. All the note-taking activity was directed towards the corporate review, and left largely neutral feelings.

In more detail, the feelings or personal outcomes categories turned out to be only three - negative, positive and neutral.



## 1. Annoying and time-consuming

Basically, circulating papers and making sure that they had been properly distributed. All this was annoying because it took time, and he was not helped by having to do a lot of it at the last minute after somebody else's failure to complete his share of the work. He thinks that the more senior people should in fact be able to do this kind of thing themselves. It should not be beyond them to pick up their own folder of papers. And the proliferation of paper is wasteful.

## 2. Enjoyable

The items in this category were well scattered through both the activities and the organisational aims categories. They were enjoyable for a variety of reasons. Taking a note of a meeting is quite relaxing. Drafting a 'treat officially' letter was enjoyable because it gave him an opportunity to be forthright, as did the preceding discussion with the railways division concerned. Advice on performance indicators and aims was enjoyable because of the opportunity it gave him to ride his own hobby horse - that insufficient attention was paid to the aims in comparison with the indicators, given the Treasury's view on the subject. Information from BRB on the proportion of investment programme authorised and committed had its enjoyable aspects because it had to be done quickly, and because it turned out quite well. He

rather enjoyed having to dash around. And work on the Issues paper was enjoyable because it was interesting material.

### 3. Neutral feelings

This, as mentioned above, was occasioned by note-taking associated with the Corporate Review and checking, chasing and drafting covering notes generally. Activities like these produced neutral feelings mainly because they were the sort of work he expected to have to do. They neither annoyed nor satisfied. Writing a note, checking a finance statement - he did not know what it was about them that made him feel neutral. They were not particularly vexing in the sense of trying to get work out of other people, nor particularly demanding. Therefore, understandably, there was little sense of achievement.

## **Fifth Interview - 25 June 1979**

This first interview after the 1979 change of government covered a busy week that he subdivided into categories along the following lines:

### 1. Chasing people

People writing papers on financial targets, people commenting on papers for the Corporate Planning Seminar

and others commenting on the BR Board's industrial appraisal methods paper.

2. Drafting contributions to Ministerial correspondence (known as PSO, or Private Secretary's Office cases)

Including a short draft on a transport policy case concerning the effect of cash limit cuts.

3. Work on briefing for the Minister

Drafting a section on Passenger Transport Executives for briefing on the 1979 Rail Review, preparing a table on forecast financial results - from a first shot to an improved version, through consultation with the accountants and his own bosses.

4. Taking notes at meetings

On a revised version of the 1979 Rail Review with the planning officer concerned and of a working party on financial targets.

5. Arranging meetings

On the Great Northern Electrification.

6. Preparing and circulating papers for a seminar on Corporate Planning.

7. Consulting - within the Department and with the BR Board - on for instance, the Board's response to a departmental letter on transport bottle-necks (product of an EEC Committee) and with the Board on Rail Review changes suggested within the Department.

There is in essence one main dimension underlying his perception of this work-activity, and that is working on his own as opposed to working with others.

Work on his own is itself broken down into aspects like:

taking on or transforming existing material, working to a laid down brief, as opposed to generating, initiating, creating, presenting a line, shaping a reply; organising one's own time.

With others, there was:

the nature of the contact - within this Department or with another - and the level at which it occurs; work being shaped by or being on behalf of other people; eliciting comment as opposed to responding; negotiating, discussing, thinking.

Then there were two categories extra to these - organising, which calls for quick and efficient arranging; and level of skill.

As to categorising the diary again but in terms of his perception of the organisation's aims, then the following emerged:

1. The Rail Review (1979);
2. Follow-up to the White Paper on nationalised industries;
3. Departmental involvement in corporate planning;
4. Explaining departmental policy; and
5. The Department and the EEC.

Dimensions along which he perceived the relationships between such categories covered aspects such as:

working at ministerial as opposed to official level;

one-off rather than continuing;

looking ahead or working on existing policy, or having a future effect as opposed to the mere refinement of present activity;

specific versus abstract;

knowing what they have to do as opposed to deciding how best to contribute;

important, less important;

leading somewhere, to rule changes - explaining existing rules and policy, or defending policy by means of the well-oiled Department machine;  
gaining better control over the system versus gaining money;  
independent, non-independent;  
and more.

The underlying sense is one of varying locus of responsibility - from outside to inside - and of pro-activity or re-activity as aims in themselves.

All in all, the Rail Review area of departmental aim involved him in Ministerial briefing and proved particularly satisfying. The White Paper follow-up had him busy chasing people, which was annoying - though part of this White Paper work was moderately satisfying, even if tedious. Taking meeting notes was enjoyable but not demanding. And the explanation of departmental policy involved in the 'PSO', or Minister's case had him drafting and was satisfying.

The feelings or outcomes pattern taken a little further looked like this:

1. Annoying and unsatisfying

The chasing work; preparation of papers; preparing a new version of Financial Results table for Minister's briefing, taking account of AS and US comments.

This did not involve a great deal of skill on his part, took up a lot of time, and as far as the chasing up aspects are concerned, tended to get other people nettled; and with the seminar preparation work he was acting not even as a drafting machine, and annoying the typing pool to boot because of the short notice involved; the final version of the Financial Results table for a briefing was just a question of re-arranging things. One of the reasons that this was in fact unsatisfying was that on the seminar work he himself would not be there and so was not involved. Additionally, chasing people on financial targets was annoying because the Principal had originally detailed it to the wrong people - this meant short deadlines for those people to whom it was later correctly addressed.

## 2. Satisfying

Considering BRB's response on transport bottle-necks; the two PSO cases; discussion on changes in 1979 Rail Review with BRB; the initial stages of work on the Financial Results table and consultation with resident Accountant on it.

The items that fell in this second group did so, firstly, because most of the cases involved production of a piece of work that was recognisably his own, which included the first version of the Financial Results table. Secondly, there was a lot more thinking and skill going into the work, and in doing it opportunities to discuss and talk with people rather than just reminding them politely that some deadline or other has passed. Then, drafting

was in fact quite satisfying - trying to work out the form that something should be in and then creating it. The actual working consultation was also quite satisfying, even though it involved talking on the telephone - this was something he did not like doing and did not think himself good at, but on that particular day it all went well. There was also some element of satisfaction in working to and meeting a tight deadline - a feeling of relief and of a job well done. And then there was satisfaction also because he was learning skills and shaping the material - for example consulting on changes to the Rail Review made him conscious of trying to develop communication-link skills and at the same time steering people away from trivial points. There was even satisfaction to be gained at meetings from seeing skills in action which one did not actually have to use at the time oneself.

### 3. Enjoyable but not particularly demanding

Meeting with Chief Planning Officer re revised 1979 Rail Review; meeting of joint BRB/DTP Working Party on Financial Targets.

In this category, he quite enjoyed being at meetings and taking the notes. It was interesting to see how people performed - for example how his own AS actually handled a meeting. Toby likened it to a spectator sport. It was quite relaxing just sitting in the room and writing what people were saying and was rather like taking lecture notes. The major relaxation centred on there being no demands to contribute to argument. It would have been



interesting to know if it was more satisfying actually to have to say something. He was also learning more about the job at meetings than when chasing people up for example, and there was satisfaction to be gained from achieving some basic skills, even if one was not achieving much in the way of subject matter.

4. Moderately satisfying, but a bit tedious when you are actually doing it -

Arranging meeting on Great Northern electrification; chasing up comments on BRB paper on Investment Appraisal Methods for Commercial Businesses Awaiting Strategies.

This involved organisational work, which he tended to find less satisfying than any other kind; but this was organisational work with a difference. For example, on the BRB paper on Investment Appraisal he had originally prepared a draft reply to a letter from the Board, which had a delay put on it while waiting for a paper from the Board, and he then had had to chase up to see if their reply could be amended - therefore, although he was still chasing, he was more personally involved in the work and in the outcome. Arranging meetings can be a tedious organisational thing, but again with this particular occasion he was more closely involved in the work having been secretary to the Joint Working Party. It was also less annoying to arrange a meeting because people were vaguely willing to attend and did not get nettled.

## Sixth Interview - 30 July 1979

In contrast to the previous occasion, this had been a fairly quiet week. Turning first to activity categories we have:

### 1. Drafting

Background notes on investment projects and Anglia electrification; pieces for the report on transport 'bottle-necks'; letter to planners on risk analysis; minute on investment ceiling.

### 2. Taking notes at meetings

Meeting of the Directorate, and one with Freightliner on financial targets.

### 3. Devilling

For the 'bottle-necks' and other work.

### 4. Obtaining information from other people

From the BR Board works people on the Anglia electrification, from Freightliner on investment projects in the 'bottle-necks' context, from Sealink project planners on other investment projects, from European rail traffic manager on train ferry investments and checking on status of

the Corporate review for an Assistant Secretary in the finance division.

5. Reading background papers.

Some of the strands of thought that emerged when he surveyed these headings on a compare-and-contrast basis were these:

recording - listening and noting down, rather than selecting, "sorting out other people's thoughts";

information-processing in a manner directed by other people and their requirements - getting information, giving order to facts, presenting information with someone else in mind, but nevertheless taking the opportunity to shape the material, which involves an additional thought process as you think about who you are drafting for - working out the line of argument, what you are to achieve and for whom, and then tailoring what you have accordingly;

work with no immediate benefit - not affecting matters directly, but furnishing an awareness of what is going on in government and, at a lower level, enabling you to sound intelligent when talking to your senior officers and thus "to mark up Brownie points";

work that is determined by others - more formalised, and needing approval, as with a draft meeting-note;

co-operative activities - involving communication skills, explaining things to others and priming them so as to get information and to exert control over what emerges;

work that is directed by oneself - obtaining information that you need for your own ends, using information that you have gathered and consider relevant, working by yourself, on your own responsibility, knowing what you want and having independence in deciding what to retain or reject.

The organisational aims as he saw them on this occasion came out like this:

1. The Report on 'bottle-necks'.
2. Setting financial targets for Freightliner.
3. Improving the Corporate Review.
4. "Keeping the Treasury happy".
5. Improving financial expertise.
6. Reviewing necessary work.
7. Miscellaneous.

The strands produced by reflecting on these aims came out along the following lines:

the Department trying to influence other organisations, dealing with other organisations, and in many respects having no actual powers to insist but having to work by persuasion;

trying to find means of gaining a more effective understanding of the financial performance, and the workings in general, of businesses for which it was responsible and trying to exert greater control over them;

on the one hand, with respect to aims of broad scope such as trying to shape and influence both UK and EEC policy - and the associated funding - working through Ministers, whilst on matters of implementing its own existing policy working more at official level;

initiating as opposed to responding - as in working on the bottle-necks issue on the one hand and maintaining good working relationships with the Treasury on the other;

external dealings as opposed to internal management;

direct control, over the setting of financial targets for Freightliners for instance, as opposed to the rather more arcane issue of improving the actual ways in which financial control can be exerted, as in the work on the Corporate Review;

then there is getting others to improve their systems - the Corporate Review again - contrasted with improving the Department's own;

which latter itself breaks down into concentration on techniques and analysis - improving financial expertise - as opposed to the broader management and administrative matters discussed under 'reviewing necessary work' at the Directorate meeting.

There is a fairly clear indication here of his perceiving policy issues as being broader in scope and concerned with impact at national and international level, whilst management has to do with operating either on one's own Department or on business for which the Department holds a responsibility and doing so within laid down policy.

Overall, the work on the transport bottle-necks report, which had involved him in both drafting and obtaining information from others, had been satisfying and to an extent interesting, even though some of the satisfaction was of a delayed nature and followed on from earlier annoyance - annoyance at having to ring people to get information out of them for instance. The small amount of devilling necessary had been tedious.

Work on improving the Corporate review, on Treasury relations, and on improving the department's financial expertise - again, both drafting and 'obtaining information' - left neutral feelings. Reviewing their own work and setting financial targets had however, been interesting, though as his role was limited to note-taking he was less independent here.

His feelings about the week's work in a little more detail, came out as follows:

1. Annoying but satisfying once done

Mainly, the report to the EEC Commission on bottle-necks, based on background information from British Rail. The annoying part was that BRB could have been more co-operative in the first place, he felt. When ringing businesses out of the blue it was difficult to convey one's sense of urgency; they were inclined to fob one off with not particularly useful data; there was the problem of making the senior person to whom you were talking appreciate that it was to him that you wished to talk rather than to somebody lower down - especially when they knew that you yourself were not very high up in your own organisation; and in addition it was the silly season for holidays, with many deputies around who did not know much. However, the work was satisfying because he had not been very good in the past at this sort of thing, and it had gone rather better this time. He managed to achieve better communications with the people he was ringing and had actually got stuff out of them. In short, he was using the telephone more effectively.

2. Interesting and satisfying

Writing up the information he had now acquired. It was interesting because he was working alone and could sit and

think about the best way to present his information and what should form part of the background note. It was satisfying in that having spent all that time getting the information he was able to put it together and actually see it in front of him.

3. Tedious but not very demanding

In connection with the same report, a lot of the background information that they thought they already had - for instance, the number of people using a particular service - was not to hand and he had had to go through the files to try and find it. It was not very difficult, but it took time.

4. Interesting, but less independence in doing it

Meetings of the Directorate were something new in his AT experience, and these arose out of a tea party with the US, at which the ATs had been complaining that they knew nothing about what was going on. This was one of the remedies. It was quite interesting to be able to observe the Under Secretary's style, which was, he said, "a bit like watching a boy pulling legs off a spider". He was an aggressive sort who would float a topic for discussion and then wait for one of the Assistant Secretaries to take it up - at which point he would appear to take delight in demolishing the other's argument. What Toby had to produce was a formalised sort of note along the lines of 'such and such was discussed', 'X will do Y'.



The Freightliner meeting was similar - he was not able to participate at all, and there were constraints on the format of this note too. He had never been quite sure whether or not intervention was expected from a meeting secretary. The Freightliner meeting had been interesting because it dealt with tangible issues - business discussion over such items as, for instance, replacement of cranes. Previously most of the work he had been doing was "divorced from the realities of the world".

#### 5. Neutral feelings

Routine. Reading the background papers backlog would come about when he had to because they were spilling over his in-tray. Checking the latest corporate review position was quite straight-forward. A minute on investment ceilings helping another AT in a different division was also straight-forward. Drafting a letter to the Chief Planning Officer involved simply asking for a date to discuss risk analysis. A presentation by the Chief Accounting Officer - to 20-25 people - was reasonably interesting and a nice way to finish up a Friday. And so on.

#### **Seventh Interview - 2 October 1979**

He had now moved on to a new job. Practical difficulties had interfered with the stint at the Civil Service College planned for this point, so the job-change was made instead. He would pick up

at the College the next time round. Before going on to talk about the new post, he reflected back over the one that he had just left.

One important change that he had identified in himself over the preceding months had been a tendency to start judging experience in terms of work within the Department, as opposed to cross-referencing to his university days. Problem-solving was starting to gain its own intrinsic satisfaction, rather than depending upon comparison with intellectual activity at university.

He felt that he had also started to become more aware of the skills that he needed, and now found himself analysing work in terms of a virtual check-list of necessary skills. Not least amongst these had turned out to be communication. As the previous job had progressed he had realised increasingly the importance of being able to explain to people just what it was that he was trying to do and why it was important. Communicating skills seemed to him to be particularly important in the co-ordinating kind of job that that one had been.

One way in which he had started to become more aware like this was by making conscious comparisons with other people's performance, comparing their varying success and the abilities that they demonstrated with his own. By now, though, he was more able to use internal referents for analysing and making judgements about his performance - a process that he felt had been helped noticeably by the interviews that we had been having. External

referents were still important too, but these now centred more on observable success in carrying out tasks and getting on with the job.

Another identifiable change had to do with his feeling very much the outsider at first. Later on, the process of government had seemed to become more important - performing a task began to become satisfying because of a sense of identity with the organisation in which he was working, as opposed to simply doing it because it was there. A change like this seemed to start coming about - not just for him, he was implying - some two to three months in, when one was starting to get to know more of what the Civil Service was about, how it related to the rest of the country and to the political processes. Value-judgements can start to be made, and for Toby they had - so far - turned out on the positive 'good' side.

The first of two sorts of criteria against which those value-judgements were formed centred on the work-environment and had to do with how important one felt in the organisation. He had probably started to become aware of this effect earlier than with the second criterion. Against the first, judgement had centred on an increasing awareness of the sort of people with whom one wanted to work, on getting a stream of interesting work and on being in the somewhat favoured position of AT.

The second criterion, whose effects became detectable later than with the first, was somehow more nebulous - and maybe not even

very important. It concerned whether or not he felt that the organisation had aims with which he could identify. Working in a job regarding which the expectations were that one would come at least within sight of the very highest levels meant that one had to form a view as to whether the Service was working in a way that one felt was proper to government. Was its influence good? Was it too secretive? Was it responsive to outside change? Or was it too shielded and detached? What he had found encouraging in the Service, in fact - at that time, anyway - was the degree of sensitive awareness of the outside world and commitment, dedication to serving the common good - without being too pretentious, concern to serve the country. Of course, he had seen the internal politics and bitchiness at work, but had not picked up any sense of undue pettiness.

### **The New Job**

His new post was in the Department of the Environment proper. It was a little unusual in that although functionally it was a regional office, geographically it was sited at headquarters with direct access to the Minister. His branch was one of a number that together went to make up a directorate responsible for planning in Greater London. It was essentially an executive rather than policy branch and its work centred - with others - on 'inner-city partnerships'. This issue itself had arisen from a policy initiative that had led to central and local government working together on strategies and tactics for re-vitalising inner-city areas, with DoE in the lead and with other central departments like DHSS taking part as well.

He and an EO worked jointly to the Branch Principal on matters concerning partnership work in two specific boroughs. On these issues the next up from this Principal was an Assistant Chief Planner - Assistant Secretary equivalent. A broadly equivalent short line worked to the same Principal on other matters including general planning. Toby himself also had another 'reporting line' in that he was designated secretary to an interdepartmental group on Greater London Inner City Partnerships, working in this capacity straight to the Director - by-passing his regular management line, in other words.

The first two days of this diary-week he spent in handing over to the AT who had succeeded him back in his old Department of Transport job, enjoying playing the elder statesman part of showing the new man where things were, and finding it difficult to cope sufficiently well with the end-of-term feeling that had come over him to be able to do the one piece of work that did belong to him.

Then in his new job, he arrived to find the Principal away on leave, and no work marked down to him. He was able to pick up enough to appreciate that inner-city policy under a new administration was about to start changing and that the time-honoured practice of reading yourself in by means of background papers was therefore going to be harder to manage. He had also grasped that the two boroughs were not exactly happy with the scheme. He was also at this early stage a little concerned about the management-lines above him. It had transpired that his

Principal - a sometime officer in Her Majesty's Forces who had entered the Civil Service directly as a Principal - was a somewhat remote figure with a tendency to communicate by means of written notes. Above him in turn, the Assistant Chief Planner would presumably - he was not sure, and intended to find out - act as 'counter-signing officer'. He wondered about how the two of them were going to manage writing a convincing staff report on him come the end of the particularly important second year. Added to that was the worry that there might not in fact prove to be a full AT job there anyway.

On the positive side, it certainly looked on paper like the kind of job that he should have properly gone to next. Here he would be involved in the implementation, rather than the formulation, of policy. It was a valuable area of work for a trainee too in the opportunity that it provided for learning about the local government system and how it interacted with central government. The job seemed closer to the real world, and that real world - with its reputed 900 voluntary groups in their area - would produce a stream of PQs, Private Secretary's Office cases and Ministerial correspondence in which the previous job had been somewhat deficient. He had in fact already had his first contact with a member of the public and was anticipating learning something about how the public react to a Government Department - and vice versa.

## **Eight Interview - 12 November 1979**

When he grouped the activities in which he had been engaged for the week, they came out as follows:

### **1. Giving advice**

To one of the boroughs on re-submitting time-expired projects for grant in the following year; and again on the technicalities of what they could still do under an existing grant for a small-scale project called Operation Clean-up.

### **2. Getting information and devilling**

All of it from elsewhere in the Department, for the Assistant Chief Planner - on the latest position regarding the Area Health Authority's proposal to take up unused resources, on Inner London archaeology for a submission to the Minister, on a local race relations council.

### **3. Analysis**

Of papers prepared by other people. For instance, the other borough's revised Inner area programme and whether it met guidelines - for a ministerial submission; again, correspondence between councils and the Minister - to produce a meeting-agenda; and producing advice to his Principal on sharing out financial reserves for the following year under the Urban Programme.

#### 4. Drafting

A submission to the Minister on one inner area revised programme; a letter of approval to two applications for grant; and a paper on expenditure by the Thames Water Authority in their area. As he put it - "drafting is drafting is drafting".

Communication of course was a common thread, with the use of intellectual judgement as opposed to exercising conciseness and accuracy. The main distinction seems to be between finding things out for other people with all the constraints that that entails - the line might already be decided, one is only responding, providing information on request - as opposed to being free to put forward one's own ideas, using judgement, having discretion to act. There was also an awareness of the need for some structure - preparing the groundwork, then analysing fully, then putting ideas up to other people.

Grouping according to organisational aims produced the following sub-headings:

##### 1. Administering the current year's grants

Within existing policy and guidelines, helping and advising the partnership boroughs with the business of keeping the year's programme moving.



## 2. Getting the programme right

Encouraging the boroughs to come forward with a well-balanced programme in terms of getting the local economy right - regenerating it and improving the environment; the instance here concerned one of the boroughs still not having got its current year's programme accepted.

3. Checking the political neutrality of grant-aid recipients - grants to voluntary bodies should not be used to advance the ambitions of any particular political group, and he had the impression that, as he put it, "Ministers had got a bit of a bee in their bonnets about Trotskyist law centres and the like".

4. Future of the 'partnership' as it affected their boroughs - applying the ideas of a review of Inner City policy that had been carried out in the summer and autumn. The boroughs were in fact concerned about the change in central government's stance, seeing it moving away from partnership proper and into an approval/disapproval role.

5. Report-back to Officers' Steering Group - to prepare a paper on public expenditure in the two boroughs, with what he saw as in a sense the defensive aim of holding off the boroughs, given the new low-involvement central government attitude and the boroughs' criticism that previous guarantees on maintaining key areas spending had not been met.

The two, or maybe three, strands that he saw in these departmental aims were:

Administering a programme or policy in terms of existing guidelines, at official level, in a sometimes reactive and even defensive manner - the department might either try to implement policy and help its 'customers' or try not to and virtually obstruct them;

putting a policy programme together at the more Ministerial level, changing guidelines, using initiative in accordance with party-political belief;

and ensuring that public funds are properly used.

Putting it all together, the picture is a fairly straightforward one where the work on advice-giving concerned the immediate business of running an existing programme and had the satisfaction of involvement about it. So too did the digging for information on the political neutrality of grant-aid recipients, for example. The analytical work centred on longer-term policy, where his own impact was less obvious. Drafting - more or less meat and drink - still carried with it the satisfaction of finishing a job, even if he felt that he had little more to gain from the activity itself now.

The 'outcomes' in fact - in a personal sense - he found he could characterise in three distinct ways.

First, there was the opportunity to show his knowledge in two ways, one more personally satisfying, the other in a sense more personally important. The advice work involved technicalities, and had him acting for the first time as direct point of contact and acting on his own initiative - all of which provided opportunities for improving his 'communication skills' and for building up confidence in dealing with people outside the department. The devilling work, with his Principal standing back from the partnership, was largely for the Assistant Chief Planner and had the dual benefit for him of being something for which he could take some responsibility and providing an "objective outcome" in the sense of showing the senior officer "what a bright young thing one is".

Then there was work on the periphery - reading a paper, forming an opinion, and putting up an idea. This of course concerned the policy-work on the partnership future. It had its satisfying aspects in the sense of trying to influence the course of events. There was a sense of responsibility too. But the feeling of involvement was absent. And he considered himself not too bad at sitting all alone and putting up ideas, so he would have gained little in the way of personal development from it. It was confidence in face-to-face settings that he felt himself to lack.

The third aspect concerned the sense of concrete achievement in drafting - something that one had produced as one's own work rather than just talk on the telephone.

## **Ninth Interview - 20 December 1979**

The week's activity-groupings:

### **1. Getting information from others**

Mainly involving telephone calls both inside and outside the department, for example on a proposal to transfer money from somewhere where it was 'spare' to somewhere else (the Area Health Authority) where it was needed. There was also a list of conservation projects to be compiled for the Assistant Chief Planner.

### **2. Analysis and drafting**

Confronted with various bits of information, he had to look at them, form a view, and either draft for someone else to send forward or draft a brief for the ACP. There were two pieces of 'real drafting' - one a submission to the Minister seeking approval for a change in the Area Health Authority's programme for the following year, the other a draft reply to a "Private Secretary's Office" (PSO) case. All the information was there in front of you and no reference to others was needed.

### 3. Considering applications

For increased cost of an approved project and two small grants. All was straightforward case-work involving looking at the applications in the light of policy guidelines.

4. Arrange a meeting of the Inner Cities Directorate Group - basic secretariat work, fixing dates, booking rooms, getting an agenda sent out and so on.

5. Attending a presentation on two commissioned academic studies, one of local authority employment initiatives and the other industrial building in inner city areas.

Strands in these activities are simple on this occasion - studying information and drawing a conclusion from it; working within clear approved guidelines; and working within the dictates of other people's needs.

In terms of organisational aims, the work divided itself up as follows:

#### 1. Administering the current programme (1979-80)

Largely official-level work, that normally involved processing grant-applications. There were also changes to programmes, like the ILEA changing its mind about the standing of continuing commitments from previous phases. There was

also the difficult matter of resource-transfers to ease the effects of spending cut-backs.

## 2. Implementation of policy changes

Putting the partnership's inner area programme together for the following year. The boroughs had been finding this difficult, as they now had to produce expenditure plans that accorded with the new government's wishes. With no clear guidelines as yet they were asking how they were supposed to do it, and the answer - at this stage anyway - seemed to have to be to "look at the Secretary of State's policy statement and prepare internally developed guidelines". The part of one of their boroughs in the new programme was to be significant and the Assistant Chief Planner had had to be briefed for a meeting, not with the paid officials, but with elected members of the Labour-controlled council - a meeting that was clearly going to be highly political. Being defensive and clarifying what Ministers had said seemed to him to be the only way to cope with the fact that previous plans would have been prepared under the preceding Administration.

## 3. Information gathering

The aim of the kind of commissioned research mentioned above was to take a specific problem, analyse it, ask whether existing policy would solve it, and decide what to do

if not. One advantage was that this provided "concrete examples on which to hang one's thinking". Another departmental information-gathering aim was served by the Directorate meeting that he had had to arrange. It would have been a forum for keeping in touch with other government departments.

#### 4. Maintaining good relations

The "PSO" case - writing a mollifying letter to an aggrieved Councillor.

5. Internal advice to other divisions on small grant-applications An instance, in fact, of the directorate standing up for their boroughs against another branch of government, something that was more difficult than outside agencies usually appreciated - like in his previous job, where BR failed to understand the extent to which "the Treasury had to be kept at bay".

The dimensions here, as he saw them, were first a virtually classical administrative/executive distinction as applied to working out the following year's programme, with its policy-changes and its not so well spelled out objectives, and on the other hand the running of the current one; secondly, there was maintaining good relations - at least in part by coping speedily with technical difficulties and thus, by means of the good impression created, smoothing the way for solving problems at Ministerial and Councillor level.

Outcomes on this occasion we took more generally. First, he had learned some general lessons - never to assume that because someone had said that somebody else was doing something that that was in fact the case, and also never to assume that people to whom work had been delegated would accord it the same priority that one did oneself. Processing grant-applications had also provided insight into the way in which local authorities worked, their efficiency and so on.

Then there was a more specific confidence-building, based mainly on the degree of responsibility allowed him by his Principal. The latter's lack of involvement with partnership work meant that Toby had to think through a whole piece of work and keep a grasp of it, together with understanding the demands of its timetable. With grant-applications too, by virtue of his knowing what advice the Principal would accept, he processed them in effect on his own responsibility - something very different from the previous job.

Interest was allied to this. Not all casework was interesting, but where one could exercise a degree of judgement or work out a technical problem then it tended to be. And there was a certain personal satisfaction in approving an application - "that's my factory".

Briefing and submissions had been interesting too - putting up one's own ideas for future programmes, for example. Even the PSO case had been on this occasion, with government policy not



yet fully worked out and thus with more scope for thinking about what to do and what reply to make. This was the opposite to the Ministerial submission; virtually to a set form it was most uninteresting.

However, there had been little of the satisfaction associated with identifiable pieces of work, even though people should have noticed that he was competent and efficient in his handling of the less identifiable stuff. Somewhat cynically, there was little benefit in working to the Director on the committee; the secretariat work was no more than CO level. But it was nevertheless curiously important, given the interest that this Under Secretary showed in ATs.

The main 'personal outcome' dimensions then are learning general lessons, gaining confidence from responsibility, being - or not being - interested and satisfied.

#### **Tenth Interview - 14 February 1980**

The activities grouped themselves in the following way:

1. Examining material and offering advice

For instance, looking at applications from local authorities and advising his Principal on whether or not to approve them.

## 2. Drafting letters

Two for the Minister's private secretary, one for the Minister - the first two straightforward, the third less so in that an invitation to the Regional Health Authority to consider joining the partnership clearly had to avoid implying that previous contributions had been inadequate.

## 3. Secretarial

Discussing the future of the interdepartmental group.

## 4. Clerical

Checking dates of meetings, circulating - even photocopying - a letter from on of their boroughs for comment; preparing an address list for a flood emergency unit.

## 5. Meetings

A briefing meeting at which he was a member and thus had to think of intelligent questions to ask - with their Under Secretary present, ATs have to appear interested and on the ball.

The organisation's aims, as he perceived them, again broke down broadly into the executive work of administering a current programme as opposed to the more policy-oriented business of designing a prospective one.

1. Administering the 1979/80 partnership programme

Meant on this occasion considering an application from one borough to add a couple of extra projects to their current programme and thus considering whether this would fit in with partnership guidelines; and deciding whether a GLC bid to increase the budget of a small project (from £6000 to £8000), for a community worker employed on an Islington estate in the borough could be justified. This he characterised as "classic casework".

2. Government policy and the partnership

One issue from each borough. The first centred on a request to discuss the effects of expenditure cuts on inner city race relations with the Home Secretary. The borough's more appropriate course would have been to raise the issue with partnership officials, for it then to flow on up. As it stood, the Department had to demonstrate its concern, but Ministers did not want to contemplate local authority deputations constantly turning up on every aspect of expenditure-cuts. The departmental response on this occasion was, in fact, to wait and bring it to a partnership meeting in due course.

Then the Minister had asked for a detailed explanation of worries about proposed capital expenditure controls interfering with the pursuit of profitable joint schemes with

the private sector - a government-inspired idea - for the development of derelict land.

Aims here in the widest sense were to show that not only was central government taking account of what local authorities had to say, but that the partnership idea did have tangible benefits - selling the partnership in other words.

### 3. Facilitating the exchange of information

This centred on the partnership interdepartmental group, facilitating information-exchange within central government - in theory. With Ministers "agonising over the objectives" of inner cities policy, initiatives had not been getting far and there had been little to discuss. The group ought in practice to have been useful; even within DOE itself, as far as he could see, there was not a lot of exchange of information between people dealing with different partnerships, and the people could often be handling matters differently in different areas.

### 4. Following year's programme (1980/81)

At this point, simply looking for meeting-dates and considering the extension of membership (to the RHA, mentioned above).

## 5. Flood Emergency Unit

To be set up as an information channel between Ministers and the GLC, "swinging into action" in the event of a flood - ironic that the Thames Barrier would be complete within a couple of years and only now were the plans for such a unit coming to fruition.

## 6. Examining policy

In one's own area as it related to the new Administration's initiatives regarding the involvement of not only the private sector but the voluntary sector in partnership business.

As regards outcomes - partly personal and partly organisational - the most enjoyable activity that week had been examining material and offering advice. The business of considering applications may not have provided much room for manoeuvre, but there were technical problems to be sorted out, and understanding what could or should be done. He was also getting to quite enjoy being the point of contact with the outside and, within the limits of his responsibility, providing those outside with the departmental line; "you build up a range of contacts and begin to trust each other, getting on fairly friendly terms and perhaps asking things that you couldn't otherwise".

Work of this sort also tended to have quite a wide effect on the partnership. Swift and flexible attention to casework led to good

working relations at his and at other official levels. Doubtless something similar was true at the political level, though the issues there would be less mundane maybe.

The examining and advising work also gave him an opportunity to show his Principal that he could work on his own initiative, something that was not a feature of his previous job. He did wonder, though, whether his somewhat remote Principal would notice.

The career issues were after all important to him. The interdepartmental group's secretariat work was another element in this. Entirely in career terms, it was quite important for him to make a good impression on his Under Secretary here. With the group's agenda fading, this was rather difficult; maybe he himself should be looking for some way of recapturing the other departments' enthusiasm. But there was always the danger of creating a non-existent role for the group, a mere contrivance - and he rather felt that it was important for his Under Secretary too to show up well with other government departments.

A related point had to do with this particular Under Secretary's keen interest in the progress of his ATs, to the extent that he was frequently asking if he, Toby, had enough work - and not quite believing the answer because, it seemed, other partnerships did not seem to generate quite the amount of retrospective grant applications and extra projects that his particular one did. They were thus lightly loaded relative to his own branch. Indeed, the

US had recently commented on there having been nothing going on in the partnership since October - maybe not at his level, felt TJ, but there had been plenty going on lower down.

### **Eleventh and Last Interview - 27 March 1980**

Quite a lot of the week's work, from his point of view, had concentrated on the Department trying to achieve agreement on the following year's Inner Urban Area Plan for the partnership boroughs. The 'year' concerned, on annualised government accounting, was the financial year starting 1 April. Getting politicians, local authority representatives, and officials together for meetings had been proving difficult.

Departmental aims on this score seemed to him to have two aspects. At the Ministerial and policy level, the aim was to agree a programme that fitted in with their view of what it should in fact look like. Down at his level, though, the aim was to get something agreed by the turn of the financial year.

Normally, they would have hoped to have got an agreed plan ready by February, so that tenders as necessary could start to go out and many of the projects could get under way on 1 April. It now looked very much more like May or June before they would be starting. That would lead to an underspend over the year, which would feed forward into the next. However, the government had usually criticised local authorities for underspending and then asking for more; the next year's criticism was obviously going to be met with the defence - "late start".

The closure in the previous two months of two significant industries in the boroughs had brought about 2000 redundancies. This highlighted another more fundamental split pair of aims. On the one hand the continuing departmental aim was to convince the local authorities of the value of the partnership and also to realise it. On the other, Ministers had an economic policy in mind that could at best be presented as such closures being "bad in the short term but good in the long". It seemed to be a clear case of two bits of government policy that did not sit too readily side by side, with the civil servant contriving answers in the middle.

As for the flood emergency work, the amount of time that it was taking up in comparison with the likelihood of anything's happening seemed remarkable - they were engaged in a race with the tidal barrier. In terms of his own personal outcomes from activity in this week, the first thing that came to mind was how very much more interesting the Private Secretary's Office cases were here than they had been in the previous job. The earlier ones had involved little more than simple paraphrases of a Government White Paper. No longer though was it simply a case of picking sentences out from the White Paper and stringing them together. Now the writing had to be done very carefully and there was scope for tailoring the reply.

At the other extreme were aggravating clerical duties - on this occasion trying to chase 1000 copies of a new inner area urban programme document through the reprographic system.



Also aggravating was a bit of classical devilling, occasioned by the request - from his Principal - to go right through the Planning Handbook looking for examples of ways in which planning time-limits would be affected by a major flood. The comprehensive search - cover-to-cover - that he had been asked to conduct had not seemed to him the best way to go about it - sampling would have been better, and so would asking the people who had written the book to do it themselves - but he felt himself in no position to disagree.

He also found himself getting advice on projects in the urban programme and in expenditure controls - not particularly interesting in itself, but once again providing him with the satisfaction of consciously getting better at asking people for advice over the telephone and indeed knowing how to approach that sort of task.

## **Overview**

Then came the part where we looked back over the previous year, and tried to form some sort of overview. We took it in terms of his view, at this point, of the personal resources upon which he needed to draw in order to be able to do his work; closely related, the ways in which he identified himself as having been learning over the year; and then the feelings of satisfaction and dissatisfaction as they stood at this time.

First, the personal resources that he now identified as necessary to do the work:

1. Intellectual skills - thinking

There was not a lot of creative thinking in the sense of having to come forward with ideas about how things should be done. Basically you were presented with a problem, you had certain resources to deal with it - knowledge of government policy, knowledge of how the Department worked, knowledge of how the Department related to the local authorities - and the actual thinking process consisted of reconciling the problem with the constraints that existed. In some areas one had an opportunity to put forward ideas - like, given the problems with the Urban Area Programme, should they do some of it outside of committee?

Then there was the sort of thinking involved in expressing ideas clearly.

And there was some of the more mechanical thinking when approving applications - did it conform with available resources, and so on?

2. Drawing on knowledge of the way in which the Department worked. Had he been presented with a PSO case on redundancies and industrial closures in the first month of being an AT he would have been lost as to how to set about

it, but now he knew something about the way in which Ministers reply to these things and had something of a fund of experience on which to draw.

There was also knowledge of the subject area - the partnership boroughs, Inner City problems, and so on.

### 3. Ability to communicate

This involved being clear in your own mind what you were talking about and being able to express that clearly to someone else who may not have the same background knowledge that you have - without overdoing it. A 10 minute introduction on the telephone to a particular problem is usually unnecessary - two minutes of background followed by a simple question may be all that the other person needs. There was also the art of conveying the importance of one's request - not to get the other rushing around if there was a week to do the job, but when it was urgent getting the urgency across.

### 4. Working with others

There were different aspects to this. First, there was that indefinable skill where you got others actually wanting to do things for you. Of course, the organisational structure carried with it expectations about getting letters and telephone calls from people asking this and that, but there

was an extra ingredient of some sort as well. Then there was self-confidence, and how one presented oneself to others - someone stammering or nervous on the end of the phone was clearly going to be less effective than someone who sounded self-assured. There was too something that he called "not annoying people". Some people can be perfectly pleasant, but without doing anything positively to annoy nevertheless succeed in doing so. Allied to this in a sense was his own realisation that flexibility in approach was important. The crusty old Principal of 50 who disliked ATs and the bright young recent promotee to Principal required different approaches and one needed sensitive antennae to work out how best to do it. To stand any chance of developing this sensitivity, he felt, one needed to realise that it was in fact an important skill.

Secondly, there was the question of what he thought he had learned over the year. There were three main areas, each of which featured - unsurprisingly - on the 'personal resources' list.

#### 1. Communication

He sometimes felt that he was not as articulate as he could be, and was conscious of having been trying to develop this skill.

## 2. Confidence

Building up confidence, partly by trying to do things that he knew he was not particularly good at, or did not like. If one was reticent at meetings, one got over it by starting to talk at them. The job itself put one through hoops; certain things were expected of an AT. "You are not expected to be diffident; you are expected to come forward with your own views and argue them; you are not expected to be too quiet at meetings; you are expected to show initiative; you should not wait for other people to tell you what you should be doing; there should even be a certain amount of flair in the things you do. Probably the prime expectation is that you get things right. For example, if you are doing a PSO or a background note to a PQ, your Principal expects to be able to trust what you have done."

## 3. Management of people

Limited so far. But he had learned that there was definitely something to be learned and had observed the differing effects of different individuals on their staffs.

As for the satisfactions, then there was:

1. The privileged AT position - people took a lot of time over you; you were moved about with the result that even though the basic work stayed constant, the subject matter

changed; and you were not only in the more interesting parts of the Department, but you got the better quality work as well.

2. The AT 'mafia' - building up a range of contacts was also an advantage.

3. The Civil Service seemed, at the time, to be "quite an enjoyable place to work in", people were friendly and intelligent.

4. Also, at that time, he thought that the pay for an AT was good.

5. Moreover, looking back, it had turned out to be the sort of work in which he was happy to be involved and he was glad he had joined.

Finally, though, there were the dissatisfactions:

1. Being one of the "able children" meant that there was a fair amount of pressure - partly of a kind of competitive sort, not openly, but with "everyone sizing each other up"; and partly in the actual work. And being an AT could make it a little difficult to get on with people who were not, a feature summed up for him by observing that the union responsible for negotiating ATs' pay had at the same time a standing policy for abolishing them altogether.

2. The actual work also had its aggravating aspects. At university you worked hard and long, but it did not take it out of you so much. You went to the library, read a book, sat down and thought. Being at work involved the aggravation of not being in control. Someone said he would ring back but failed to, you set aside a couple of hours to do something and a priority PQ turns up, and so on - you could never plan your day because you never knew what was going to happen next.

3. Working for others - could be a problem, and needed adjustment. More generally, one did not have the kind of freedom that one had had at university - "you can't just take the afternoon off", not without dipping into the meagre leave allowance, anyway.

### **APPENDIX 3 - Iryna - Housing, ~~and~~ Local Government**

#### **First Interview - 2 March 1979**

She had spent her three undergraduate years at the University of London's Royal Holloway College in Egham, studying English and doing a good deal more besides. Active in the students union, she had helped out a lot at social functions like concerts, discotheques and working in the bar, and had mixed in with work on councils, union committees, policy work and so on. She had been Chairman of her hall of residence and thus on the residents' committee; she had undertaken a (boring) stint on the academic admissions committee, and had even attended the meeting of a safety committee addressing itself to the control of radioactive materials held in the college laboratories.

The Civil Service had been something of an accident. She had thought at one time about organisations like the British Council, preferring the idea of working for a public concern - working for everybody rather than just for shareholders and profits was the general motivation. When it came down to it, she had only made two firm applications in her final year and had fully expected to find herself leaving with no job lined up at all. To that end, in fact, she had started to make arrangements with an old school friend to do more or less anything for a year or two in order to save enough for a round-the-world trip by Landrover - but the old schoolfriend had then got pregnant.



She had never heard of the Administration Trainee scheme until the college careers advisor had mentioned it, and had then in the same breath said - "Perhaps not - they only take the most intelligent". Spurred on, she applied for this and for a job as a researcher with an independent television company. The latter had come to nothing, so only the Civil Service was left. Actually wanting to join the Civil Service came a little later, with the CSSB experience in fact. If the analogous exercises really were representative, she had thought, then maybe it was the job for her after all. The Final Selection Board had however been an ordeal. Choice of a department was likely to be restricted, she thought - rightly - because of her background: Ukrainian father and close ties with the Ukrainian community. So MOD and the Diplomatic Service were out, as were the Treasury and Inland Revenue because of the numerical hopelessness that she claimed. That had left, with MAFF also rejected, overseas development, education and science or environment - and the Department of the Environment was now where she had indeed fetched up.

First impressions included discovering that committee-work, conducted as it was in her new department, could be less interesting than expected - she had in fact quite liked committees at one point. And she also discovered that "working for everybody" was all very well and good, but as far as her own Principal was concerned, ending a letter with "I am sorry that I cannot be more helpful" was not impersonal enough, and would get crossed out.

## **Her Position and Work**

She was at this time in one of 12 housing divisions in DOE. Hierarchised from a Deputy Secretary down through four - or depending just what she could see included, five - Under Secretaries, each division was headed by an Assistant Secretary. Her own had four Principals, three ATs, "several HEOs", and various support staff. It was unusual, she thought, in that its dealings were totally with the private rented sector. Her Principal, in whose room she was herself located, had a wide range of responsibilities, and she - not typically for ATs as far as she knew - worked on one small part of this. On it, there was no Assistant Secretary involvement; they referred directly to the appropriate Under Secretary. It went under what she called the "grand title" of the Mansion Block study.

This focussed on the problem of long lease-holders in blocks of flats, Victorian for the most part - hence the slightly joky title, intended to be in a sense generic - though they had found problems in new purpose-built blocks as well.

To start with she was very much under-worked. The study had so many different aspects in which she could have been involved, but her Principal was at that time too immersed in other major work to be able to give her much if any guidance. She herself knew very little, as a newcomer, about what there was to be done and in the customary fashion spent her time reading through files to find out what had been happening. A couple of papers for her

Principal, written ostensibly to pull file-material together in relevant and more manageable form, had probably only been concocted as something for her to do.

Then a few weeks after starting work there, she did start to become involved in the design of a questionnaire 'survey' of residents' associations aimed at finding out from their point-of-view what the problems were with respect to this kind of accommodation. Previous findings seemed to have been more at household than at block level, apart from one attempt a little earlier to survey those involved in the management of such premises. That had not come to very much and it appeared to have been her AT-predecessor who had suggested the present idea. Once properly involved, she had found herself in the early stages drafting, re-drafting, getting questions together, trying to ensure that they were simple and easy to understand, fitting answer-boxes to questions, and in general liaising with the layout people. She had had no previous experience at all of questionnaire design, and there had appeared to be endless consultation with specialists like statisticians, as well as with representatives of the eventual respondents. Conducting a full survey, however, was not within her division's capability, and a specialist unit acted as overseer to larger projects. The Mansion Block job was therefore being run more as a 'pilot', covering only some 50 associations, and going for something more of a case-history type of response. Ministers felt at that time that some sort of legislation for protecting tenants' rights was necessary, and the hope was that this enquiry would highlight the problem areas.

Questionnaires were in fact starting to return, and she thought that some identifiable pattern was showing signs of emerging, though analysis was to be conducted entirely by herself and a Clerical Officer on the basis of large tables that she had drawn up, and without recourse to computer facilities. Work in fact was beginning to improve, with her Principal now better able to afford time for this - a paper on the study that she had just written actually looked likely to be used. However - when she had read the full account of our first interview, her reaction was that it had looked from it as though there had been very much more work than had in fact been the case. We agreed that this was probably due to its being easier to talk about what work there had in fact been than about the gaps in between it.

### **Second Interview - 18 April 1979**

A free classification of the week's work produced the following four general sub-headings:

1. the questionnaire
2. attending and taking notes at a meeting
3. two letters
4. weekly reading of the Estates Gazette.

First, the questionnaire. So far, they had received back 45 of their 53 questionnaires. The design of the questionnaire was such as to cover both fact and opinion - type of landlord, type of managing agent, size of service charge, and so on, on the one hand, and questions dealing with satisfaction concerning the way in which the block was managed and whether residents would want to buy it collectively if they had the right to on the other. Her work at first consisted of checking back with the respondents wherever there was an answer that did not look quite right in some respect, or where there was an omission that looked accidental, say - cleaning up the data, in other words.

The material that they were collecting was by no means all amenable to simple statistical treatment. A blank page for further comment had stimulated some respondents into adding detailed memoranda about conditions - one example being the provision of accounts from previous years showing how the managing agent had been, in the parlance of the day, "ripping them off". Apart from such issues, though, statistical data-collection had consisted partly of making entries in cells on a large matrix of all possible answers to the factual questions against the questionnaire numbers. Additionally, they had prepared tables and graphs in which to enter data on pairs of variables all set up beforehand - age of the block by number of residents, and so on. The aim here would have been to try and obtain a picture of what had happened to various types of block over time. As to the graphs, these gave for instance a representation of ground-rent against rateable value to see what proportion of cases might be

leading into Rent Act Constraints (as when the ground rent exceeded two-thirds of the rateable value), with the finding so far that the current relationship appeared to be being observed. There was therefore no urgent problem on this front.

She had then summarised progress for her Principal, presenting him with her view of the outcome to date, and with an overview of what, in her view, did and did not merit pursuing further. This so far was the factual material - opinions would come next.

As to the meeting, this found her substituting for her Principal at the last moment at a meeting of representatives of private residents associations. The Principal had been prevented from going by virtue of his being involved in last-minute efforts to rush through a piece of legislation related to leasehold reform before the dissolution. He had instructed her not to say anything, but to keep track and note progress.

### **Coping And Satisfaction**

As the other two activity-items did not merit any particular attention, we turned to a more reflective mode.

### **Resources**

Upon what personal resources did she draw? There was the patience to keep going with the questionnaire and to return time and again "without blowing up". There was being meticulous, a

quality that she felt she possessed when necessary. There was clarity of thought, and coherence in thinking, particularly with respect to making inferences from information and presenting them to someone else intelligibly. A sense of objectivity also featured.

Academic work - writing papers comparing Dickens and Tolstoy came to mind - had called upon some of these. Her present work differed from this though in its being more circumscribed, well-defined. Although there were one or two grey areas - tenants being mixed in with long lease-holders, for instance - she and her Principal mainly knew and understood the limits within which they were working.

### **Difficulties**

Routine matters like attending meetings, taking notes at them, writing letters, and so on, presented no problems for her. The main problem so far in doing the analytical work had been her unfamiliarity and lack of practice with number-work. It had been a long time since she had last compiled a graph, and, in fact, she had not been very interested in 'numbers' at school. Now, though, a calculator had proved to make the actual mechanics an awful lot less difficult, and she was finding her interest growing in the way in which she could make use of information couched in numerical form.

## **Satisfactions And Dissatisfactions**

There was something satisfying in writing a piece that was clear and coherent, that she had judged correctly with respect to its being acceptable in terms of departmental style and thus likely to be accepted by her Principal - for her, the final arbiter - without much alteration.

There was satisfaction too in starting to overcome her relative weakness in the numerical area, and again in coming to be an effective judge of what would be right and worth doing, and what not.

Then there was the satisfaction of doing something useful in what had been a busy week. The pressure in fact had improved the quality of her other work - having only 10 minutes in which to find time to reply along standard lines to a letter from a member of the public sharpened up the effort in comparison with what she had produced when spinning it out to fill in time.

Dissatisfactions centred mainly on the prospect of this busy spell not lasting long. Future work-load would probably depend on the complexion of the new administration. Only under a Conservative government would the interest in the area be sustained, she felt, and she did in fact believe that there was a lot of information needed on these topics - she would like to be in on the gathering of it. But if more work were not forthcoming, she would be asking for a move.



## **Learning**

Basically - to cope with previous difficult areas; in other words, numeracy. The very activity of constructing her own tables and graphs had had the effect of illuminating such devices and seemed likely to help her in future attempts to understand other people's.

### **Third Interview - 11 May 1979**

The week's diary resolved itself into four groupings.

1. Routine tidying-up -

of neglected filing, and after finishing a paper. This was work that found her alone; as she put it "just me and my mess".

2. Drafting papers with a numerical background -

doing a note on the average costs of major work per leaseholder, and - much more substantial - first draft compilation of everything that she had been doing over the previous few weeks on the questionnaire study. This was also a solitary business.

### 3. Drafting papers with no numerical background -

once again on her own, working for someone else. A paper assessing how much had been got out of the study, what to do with it, what to do next; a short note on defects in the drafting of a section of the 1974 Housing Act; and so on.

### 4. Meetings and discussions -

Two on proposed amendments to the relevant Housing Act section, and a 2-hour discussion, with her Principal whilst he was writing a paper on this - the feeling that she had was of being involved with others but at the same time uninvolved.

This was the occasion on which we worked on eliciting a simple construct-system, using these groups as four of the array of elements together with the four from the previous interview - work on the questionnaire, meeting/notes, two letters, and background reading. We also took three from her background - reading English at university, student union affairs, and involvement in the Ukrainian community. The grid appears in Figure 2.3.

## **The Construct System**

### **Construct 1**

- drafting papers with no numerical background found itself paired with meetings and discussions and differing from writing papers that did have a numerical background. On the one hand there was hammering out facts, putting them into a logical argument, and reaching conclusions - some sort of conclusive decision reached on the basis of the logical structure. On the other, only a presentation of facts was involved. We eventually called this "Definite conclusion or decision arising out of logical argument versus no inevitable conclusion or decision arising from the logic".

### **Construct 2**

- papers with a numerical background and papers with no numerical background paired off against routine tidying. The pair required more thought and had more structure. Although the singleton required a certain amount of thought it was mostly mechanical and within pre-defined limitations. We called it "Imposing structure on the work versus working within given constraints". The questionnaire work, for example, had involved working within constraints that she had herself largely designed.

### **Construct 3**

- papers with a numerical background and meetings/discussions paired against routine tidying. There was a process of taking something in and then working from that - working with something you had got to think out - one had to have understood it and thought it out before one could do anything with it. This also involved having to think, so that there was a personal contribution from personally reached conclusions. The singleton had nothing of oneself in it. "No personal contribution versus personal contribution" - the amount of herself in it.

### **Construct 4**

- pressure-group meeting and note was likened to the two "Treat Officially" letters and opposed to everything concerning the questionnaire. The difference centred on the amount of mental effort needed. The pair required some thought although they were not taxing - answering a letter according to a standard line, or just reporting factually on a meeting - there was no incredible amount of hard work or hard thought involved. The singleton, however, needed a different approach - it was more important, not routine, it needed more effort to make it exact. The difference was the amount of effort required. "Requires little thought versus requires hard thought."

### **Construct 5**

- the two "Treat Officially" letters and regular reading formed the pair, the pressure-group meeting/note formed the singleton. This was basically how interesting she had found the work, and it followed on from Construct 4 in a sense. The pair were neither interesting nor stimulating, whereas the meeting had been. It was possible, of course, for meetings to be deadly, but the discussion interesting. Work on the questionnaire finished up at the unstimulating end too - the processing work and so on was not stimulating; it was when it came to doing something with the material that interest set in. "Not interesting or stimulating versus interesting and stimulating."

### **Construct 6**

- student affairs at university and involvement with the Ukrainian community were set against reading English at UL. The difference here was between being involved with something that required positive action as opposed to something that was really more thinking than actually getting up and doing something. By action, she meant physical action rather than mental. "Activity versus thought."

### **Construct 7**

- everything concerning the questionnaire and routine tidying were paired off against reading English at UL. Working on the

pair required strict attention to detail; if you got a detail wrong it was all wrong. Reading English involved a rather more broad sweep. "Attention to detail important versus broad sweep important."

### **Construct 8**

- the pressure-group meeting/note paired with papers that had a numerical background, as opposed to student affairs at university. In the latter, it was one's own 'personality' that counted. What you were in yourself made a difference to the outcome. With student affairs if you were shy or hesitant you were not going to accomplish anything - you needed to be able to impose your personality and ideas - personal clashes made all the difference. "Personality immaterial versus personality counts."

### **Construct 9**

- involvement in the Ukrainian community and writing two "Treat Officially" letters, as opposed to papers with no numerical background. The former involved one with people rather than with ideas and things; it also made you feel that you were doing something useful to help someone else. "Involved usefully with people versus not involved with people - more ideas and things."

## **Construct 10**

- studying English at university and meetings/discussions, as opposed to reading regularly. The pair involved an exchange of ideas that in some way advanced one's own understanding - you learned something. "Learning versus no learning."

### **Interpretation**

There was no time in the interview for any formal focusing apart from a gathering together of the constructs. Note that Construct 3 as presented here was reversed from the way it was elicited. Constructs 7 and 10 went together quite closely - implying that work with attention to detail was more likely to produce learning than work in which the broad sweep was important. The only item for which this was not the case was reading English at university. She was a bit surprised at this. The only other point was that whilst, on the face of it, it may look a little odd to consider routine tidying of one's desk as having a learning outcome, nevertheless on reflection it did make a certain amount of sense - it was to do with learning how to do one's work in a practical and active sense.

Subsequent analysis, in which the grid was focused, showed that, in addition to the matching of Constructs 7 and 10 referred to above, there was a further group of four constructs that were all very similar in their application - numbers 3, 4, 5 and 8. This produced a small constellation centring on personal contributions

to the work. Where there was no personal contribution, then little thought was required, the experience was neither interesting nor stimulating, and she felt that "personality" was immaterial. Where there was a personal contribution required, then she identified the experience as requiring hard thought, as being both interesting and stimulating, and as being something for which "personality" counted.

As for the individual elements, the only way in which student affairs at university differed from the meetings and discussions in the third interview, was that the student affairs required more activity, and the meetings and discussions more thought. In every other respect these two items were construed similarly. Her involvement in student affairs and in the Ukrainian community was also seen in very much the same light - but the former involved learning and attention to detail, whereas the latter produced no learning and required more of a broad sweep. Reading English at university and writing non-numerical papers at work were also seen in very much the same sort of way. Similarly the questionnaire work from the second interview was very much like the work she had done on the two letters in that interview.

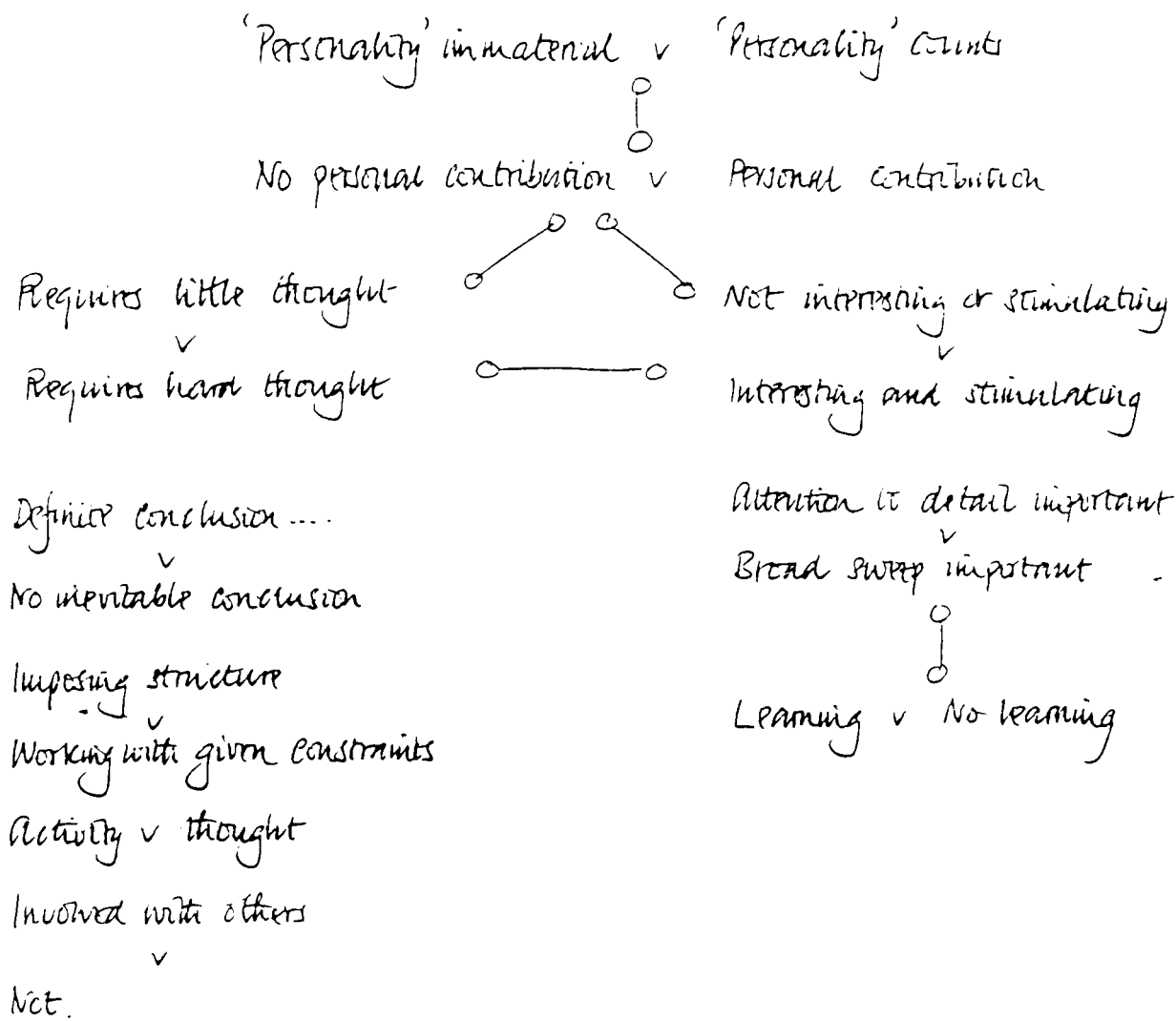
The focusing produced a number of interesting blocks. The meetings and discussions from the third interview, involvement in student affairs, and involvement in the Ukrainian community were all alike in that they involved working within given constraints, they were instances where "personality" counted, there was a personal contribution involved, they required hard thought, they



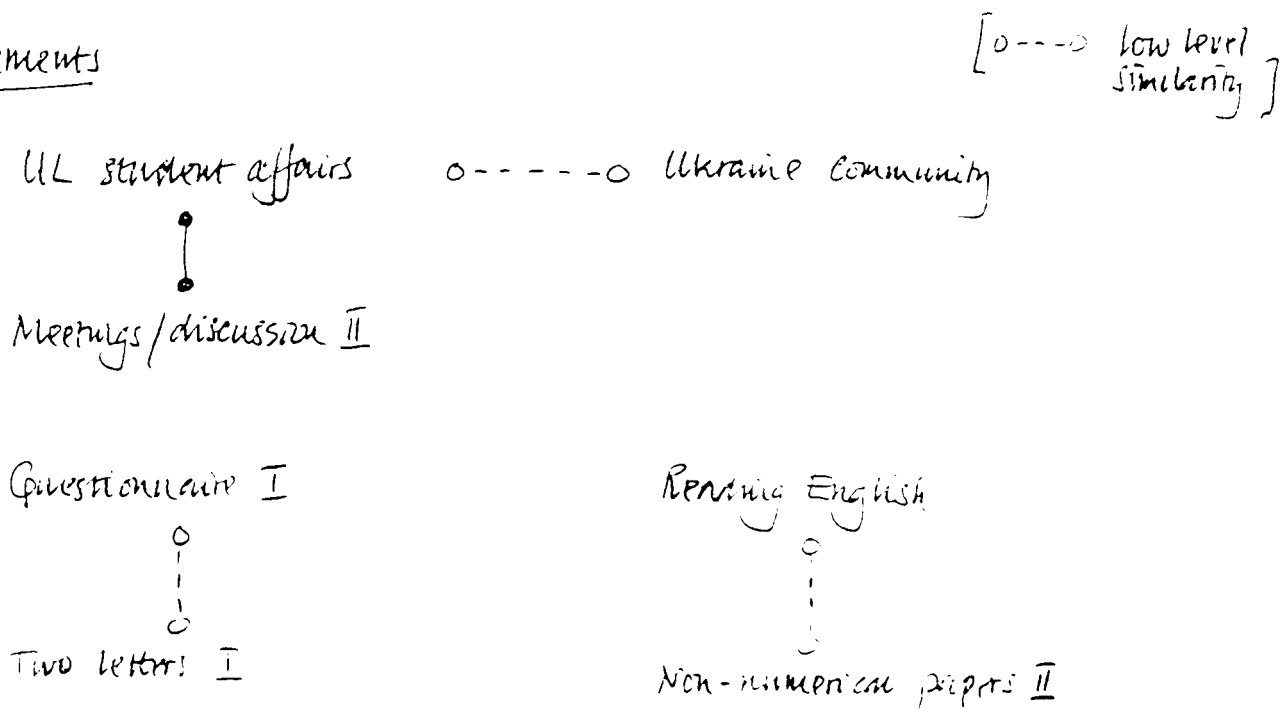
Fig 2.3

	Iryna											
	<div> <div>1</div> <div> Meeting/Discussion II  LL student affairs  Ukrainian community  Numerical papers II  Reading English  Non-numerical papers II  Questionnaire I  Two letters I  Reading I  Routine tidy II  Meeting/Note I </div> <div>0</div> </div>											
Imposing structure	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	Working with given constraints
'Personality' immaterial	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	'Personality' counts
No personal contribution	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	Personal contribution
Requires little thought	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	Requires hard thought
Not interesting or stimulating	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	Interesting and stimulating
Activity	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	Thought
Involved with others, usefully	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	Not involved with others, more ideas & things
Definite conclusion or decision arising out of logical argument	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	No inevitable conclusion
Learning	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	No learning
Attention to detail important	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	Not a sweep operation

Constructs



Elements



were interesting and stimulating, they were occasions in which she was involved with people usefully, and a definite conclusion or decision tended to arise out the logical argument. Writing papers at work, whether numerical or non-numerical, and reading English at university were also like the previous three elements in that they involved personal contributions, required hard thought, and were interesting and stimulating. These latter three elements though were more thought than activity, and were not involved with people - more with ideas and things. The two letters that she was involved with as reported in the second interview, the reading from that interview, the meeting and note from that interview, and the routine tidying from the third interview were all alike in that personality was immaterial, there was no personal contribution, they required little thought and, apart from the meeting and note from the second interview, they were neither interesting nor stimulating.

#### **Fourth Interview - 13 July 1979**

Activities for the week she grouped as follows:

1. Writing with respect to legislation

a first draft of instructions to Parliamentary Counsel; a note on objections by the Lord Chancellor's Department to proposed amendments to a section of the Housing Act 1974.

## 2. Other written work

'Treat Officially' and PSO letters; preparation of a paper on the problems of long tenancies and low rents; a paper on service charges and management issues; and a paper on repair provisions of the Housing Acts and disrepair in Mansion Blocks.

## 3. Discussion on legislation

with her Principal on the instructions to Counsel.

## 4. Filing.

Reflecting on these:

there was the intellectually stimulating task that you do not do every day, and which might either involve you in having sufficient time to think things through or else have you with your mind in overdrive - as when discussing the fruits of the more studied work with your Principal;

writing within clearly defined limits - even if stimulating - meant little recourse having to be made to devilling in background papers, and the devilling in background papers for other people's precedents occurred more with repetitive work than with that which one was doing for the first time;

there was the level of detail involved, particularly in the legislative work;

there was communicating with someone else as opposed to working on one's own;

and there was the chore element, which needed a level of organisational ability not very much different from that needed in the more stimulating matters.

In terms of her perceptions of the organisation's aims, the diary-elements then grouped up like this:

1. Legislation and preparation of legislation
2. Background progress papers
3. Routine office work

She perceived general inter-relationships between these three broad categories of divisional or departmental aim.

Routine was important to background papers in that one needed to know where to find things ('filing'); but background papers may also provide the basis on which to handle routine enquiries. At that point an internal-external dimension is added, with background papers typically being prepared for internal use whilst routine enquiries produce external

answers. Another dependency is involved in the need to get the routine desk-work out of the way before starting on drafting legislation - the one, of course, demands little thought or effort, the other a great deal. And background papers - tending to the broad and general - lead up to, and throw up ideas for, the very much more detailed and specific work on legislation; exchanging and eliciting comment from other parts of the organisation at the background paper stage also prepares the ground with respect to just who and what will be involved in the legislation drafting stage.

This kind of structure, however, turned out to be rather general. It failed to apply to the week's work in any specific way - her involvement in the background papers did not have the degree of link in to the legislative work on this occasion. In fact, the structure of activity, aims and outcomes was very simple. The legislation work had involved her in writing and in discussion, and had been interesting. The rest - background progress papers and other office work including filing - had "bored me to death".

The interesting work, then, had been preparing draft Instructions to Counsel and the note to the Lord Chancellor's Department - both pieces of new work that she had not done before and pieces that more importantly had involved doing something for a reason. It was all going to lead to something and she herself had to do it right. It was the first important thing in which she had been directly involved. The legislation that would emerge would be

important both for lease-holders and for lawyers and others involved in lease-holder/landlord relations. In trying to help bring some order to the area her device had been to think her way into the role of a rogue landlord and ask herself how she would go about getting round a particular bit of legislation. She had also had to think about objections that might have emerged from other people like the day-to-day managers, and how to answer them or make the legislation milder.

But as for the rest of the work, the feeling engendered by doing background papers was that she was being kept busy. The problem of long tenancies on low rents had been addressed by at least three people in the Division already to no effect.

Even the Mansion Block survey, which she had enjoyed at the time because she had been involved and had also thought that the thing needed doing, had turned out to be something of a "make-work". Finished, copies of the report were already sitting gathering dust.

It seemed to her that there was little drive to get down to real problems and solve them. There was no impetus for the Mansion Block study to be finished - it was just something that was there. The lack of any perceived dynamic here - all the way from Ministerial level down - was producing in her a feeling of worthlessness and a "really, I am totally redundant". Even the legislative work could have been carried out 18 months previously; there had been no soul-searching decisions needed; everyone had known it needed doing.

Over the previous few weeks differences of a mild sort had arisen between her and her Principal because of this. She had in fact asked the personnel division for a move. Explaining to the Assistant Secretary that the problem was not liking her work, he had offered her small bits of 'research' - and, presumably, the more interesting material had come her way as a result. But overall it was not in her view an AT's job - certainly not a first-year one.

The trouble was that the Mansion Blocks problem did in fact need to be solved. The whole thing could have been very stimulating. The problems were fascinating - not just the collective purchase solution that even ministers in the new Conservative Administration probably also saw as the only one possible - but the whole social-economic problems of housing in inner cities. It never seemed to get anywhere, though, and there were limits to what an AT could initiate. So now she was beginning to feel that she remained there for no good reason, and her disillusionment here was leading her into becoming disillusioned with the Civil Service in general. She was going to stick around and see what happened - the pay was fair enough now - though she was worried that the next posting when it came would not be any better. Time-pressure was, it seemed to her, particularly great on women, with the normal cultural expectations of getting married and raising a family. Worse though, she felt that she had been learning very little about basic Departmental procedures in this first job, because of working to all intents in a vacuum.



There was in fact one point about her Principal that made her feel just a little uneasy. He had been a professional musician who had moved into music administration at a prestigious London establishment, found he liked it, and had successfully applied to enter the Civil Service Administration Group direct at Principal-level on the grounds of it. "Not having come up through the ranks, he did not really know what it was like to be an AT."

### **Fifth Interview - 15 August 1979**

Reading back through the notes of the previous interview - only a condensed version of which is set out here, of course - she expressed amused surprise at the coherence with which she found them reading. At the time it had seemed that she was not making that much sense. She was reassured that they were totally undoctored and as near a verbatim account as I could achieve.

As regards the present occasion, though, she had rung earlier in the day to ask whether it was worth coming; she had had virtually nothing to do over the previous two weeks. But she quickly accepted that, as an employment experience, this was rather an important one - though it made our open interview-structure of work activity, organisational aim, and outcomes or feelings aroused difficult to apply, and she talked in more general terms.

First, there were the details of working life over the previous two weeks. Both her Principal and her Assistant Secretary were away

on holiday. She had been left simply to answer the occasional telephone call, sort the mail, and above all to do nothing off her own initiative. She was only to deal with routine matters that could be based on previous cases; anything non-routine had to be approved. She waited and hoped for something more directly for herself, like anything concerning the Mansion Block study or the legislative material of which she had spoken at the previous interview. But nothing came, and she was virtually filling her time doing the Telegraph crossword and reading the Crossman Diaries. The first two or three days had not been quite so bad - she had 2½ hour lunch breaks, took time off to look at the shops, and more importantly caught up with filing and with tidying her desk.

But then depression started setting in; and feelings of inadequacy; and guilt. And these were not simply brought on by the enforced idleness. She compared the prospectus - expensive recruitment followed by careful development - with her own experience, and concluded that not only had she had no responsibility to take on by herself, but had lost any ability to do so anyway. Then there was the model set by her Principal. Taking the opportunity to tidy her desk had her picturing him disapproving - he had his regular points in the year for such formalities. There were other comparisons too. Two ATs across the corridor were snowed under all this while. They had both been in three years, knew the ropes, knew how to deal with things. They would have had no hesitation in 'phoning an Under Secretary if need be, whereas she had been 'slapped on the wrist' for ringing up another Principal. But

snowed under though they might have been, she could not help out because she knew nothing of their work. So they sat there working their 10-hour day, while she came in at 10 and left at 5.

The mounting concern was of time slipping by. There had to be a ladder of sorts leading up to the '3-year AT' with whom she was comparing her own inadequacies, but she had hardly started on it after nearly a whole year. Feeling that she had been kept back from using any initiative - "I will have to wait for my Principal" - she had now reached the point where she dithered if he was not there.

How, I wondered, did that compare with the real her - was she in fact a dithery lady? An emphatic no. She had never been in this sort of situation before - the ditheriness had developed in the job and was due to not knowing the ropes.

So we looked briefly at other situations when she had felt in control. At Holloway there had been plenty of people around to show her the ropes in the students union, she was clear about what was going on after only a couple of months, was making decisions in the context of national policy by the end of a year - not as far-reaching as in the Civil Service, maybe, but policy for all that - and was everywhere encouraged to take initiatives by colleagues and staff.

The second example was a current one, and centred on the Ukrainian community in which she had first taken on responsibility

for a girls choir that had suddenly become bereft of its previous leader. There was a galling aspect to this - so much to do in the way of choir-work, and there she was sitting in her office doing nothing. Of course, with the choir she had had to start from a position of some ignorance as to how best to proceed, but various organisational proposals that she had put forward had been welcomed - like appointing a general administrator - and the previously slightly run-down nature of the enterprise was slowly being corrected. They could all sing and had very good voices, but were somewhat unused to disciplined practice. In a sense, she felt that she was still, in the terminology that we had adopted, dithering a bit - mainly because she did not want to antagonise them. Even though they had all had a big heart-to-heart at the outset, she still felt that she had to prove herself before she could 'become a dictator'. The issue again was 'knowing the ropes', but here she was free to develop this faculty.

As for her position at work, she had decided to hold on and wait for the posting that would be due at the end of her first year. Normally this would have been to the College for a full-time course, but the one for which she had been lined up had been cancelled and she felt she needed experience of 'proper work' first anyway before going on any course. Relationship with her central career-management division seemed remote - both physically (the other side of the river), and in the sense of their being out of touch. The mild differences to which she had referred in our fourth interview seemed only to have led to her Assistant Secretary assuring her career-manager that there was indeed a job

there for her - and the career-manager then coming back to her and telling her to ring him if things did not in fact get better. They had not - but she did not get on the telephone either, for fear of getting into the same loop all over again. There was also the lurking fear that if she did in fact finally convince the central career-management that her post had not been a proper AT-job, then despite the intimations from her Principal of his having given her a good report, the year would be wiped off and she would have to start again from scratch. The local folklore told of an AT who had spent a year posted to Hong Kong and who had returned to find that the year had been deemed not to 'count'.

So there we had a touch of paranoia to add to the depression, guilt, and feelings of inadequacy - all expressions not of any clinical condition, of course, but simply of a growing sense of desperation that time was passing by without her being able to put it to effective use - a sombre note on which to finish that interview.

#### **Sixth Interview - 4 October 1979**

This though started off more cheerfully. She had been on holiday (and had found that she hated flying), and was now just two days into a new job in a division of DOE that dealt with local government. Looking back first at the previous occasion's notes she again commented with a certain amount of surprise on the coherence with which the account seemed to come over, when she

thought that she had been being something much less than totally coherent. But we moved on to her new job and first to as reasonable a description as she could achieve of the general organisational context, followed by a little more detail on the week's work.

The branch in which she now found herself consisted of a Principal, an HEO, and herself, all in the one room. Their job was that of administrative back-up to a 'neighbour' branch ('C', that is, to her own branch's 'D') that represented the division's research function - the 'division' being headed at one hierarchical level up by an Assistant Secretary. The work of Branch C appeared to consist of operations research (OR) into local authority management systems, computerisation, information systems, and so on.

From what she could now see, there seemed to be some sort of a research function permeating the whole department, cutting through all areas of policy, and all directorates - though it had never seemed to reach her previous post in any way. There was in effect a research pyramid with something probably called the 'Policy Research Committee' (guessing from the initials) at the top.

Her branch maintained contacts with local government to find out what needed doing, though the OR element would be winding down over the next couple of years. This was in response to a new policy directive that would have local authorities take on direct

responsibility for such work and contract it out. The administrative back-up was going to have to see the period out, though, and anyway they were taking on different tasks, even if only on a piecemeal basis from other, overloaded, branches.

Early impressions were that everything was rather fluid. The Principal was away in Paris for a few days, and the HEO was valiantly trying to find things for her to do. The previous AT had worked very much more to a Principal elsewhere - an example of somewhat blurred edges to the division's structure. In fact, it seemed that the fluidity and blurring had gone a bit too far - with allegations of a previous senior official having left a "trail of havoc". Reorganisation and a clarification of communication-lines were in the offing. From what she had seen, there was a fairly easy-going, informal and relaxed attitude in the division as a whole, but in terms of work it might not remain quite that informal. She had, however, picked up a sense that the problem was not all 'at the top'; her predecessor had overstepped the mark a bit in the way in which he had allocated himself; she had found it disconcerting that he could tell her virtually nothing about what went on in her new office; and colleagues were clearly hoping that even if she did carve out her own bits of work it would be within the bounds of the branch that she did so.

Looking back at her previous job she was still surprised at her ex-Principal's having written her a good report. It was pleasing, of course, but how could he, she wondered, when she had not had enough good work to do for him to make a judgement? Or was it

that her own ideas of 'good work' were at variance from his and other people's? Maybe he wanted to ensure that he got another AT. For all that, it was clearly much better in the new place in terms of atmosphere. The range of work was varied. There was a finance element. People talked to each other rather than making appointments to meet in 10 minutes' time. In fact she had already been allotted her own exciting "part of the cabbage patch" - a study into the wider effects of microchips on local government computerisation. It looked as though she was going to have a good deal more responsibility; nobody would be looking over her shoulder all the time; and she might even be able to take a few decisions on minor matters. And her Principal was in fact due for a move. Although she had had to have it pointed out to her, this could only be to her advantage in career terms - if she could find out how it all worked in time, she and her HEO colleague would then be able to explain it all to the newcomer, a newcomer who would eventually be writing a report on her and who would of course have been impressed by the display of knowledge and ability that had met him on his arrival.

### **The Week's Diary**

The first four days were in fact taken up with leaving the old job. First, she had had a little list of things to do from her old Principal - mainly hunting out bits of information and summarising them for him. The one major piece had been a defensive paper written against the possibility of the legislative work in which



they had been involved being pushed further than they would have wanted it to go.

The second task had been to teach her replacement about the job. This had had a salutary effect on Iryna herself, quite apart from being fun. Strangely, in the process of telling the newcomer about office procedure, she had found that she herself knew more than she had realised. As she explained how to number documents for a Ministerial letter, for instance, everything started falling into place.

She also begun to realise how the job had changed over the year - as, of course, she had herself. At the outset it had been "a nebulous, sticky mess"; she had thought it still was; but somehow it had started to crystallise and outlines had become more definite. Preparing legislation helped to focus things. So did writing a 'defensive paper'. Likewise, writing a long paper as she had had to on the Mansion Block study - discussing issues at length one at a time - had sharpened things a lot. That was in a sense objective. Within herself, she was less new and did after all know more about how things worked; she was more used to the organisation, the way it did things, what being an AT involved. She had spent much of the time in this post feeling very new and inexperienced, and the way she looked at the job had come to be coloured by the way that she had felt about it. But trying to give her successor an objective account, with the prejudices removed, had had the effect of starting to make her feel a part of the organisation about which she was talking - almost to the

point of beginning to feel a sneaking fondness for the post that she was about to leave.

Reflecting on this effect, she found herself thinking in terms of a continuum of sorts. She had until then been looking upwards and comparing herself, unfavourably, with the experience of ATs further up the line. Suddenly she found herself realising something of the experience that she herself had gained simply by talking to somebody who had none. It made her feel a lot happier - the posting had after all not been a dead loss. This realisation, in turn, had done a lot for her confidence. Up to then she had been in a sense dreading going into the new job and finding that it would show up all the things that she did not know about organisational procedure, but should have. But now, confidence was returning.

All the same, even if she had in fact learned something about where to get paper-clips, what sort of papers one uses for what, how to file documents, and so on, it had still been a rotten job.

The first day of the new one found her drinking tea all morning, champagne all lunch-time, and a lot of coffee in the afternoon. Lunch-time was a farewell party for a research officer who had taken the trouble to find out a bit about her and had greeted her with an apology for having nothing Ukrainian to drink but would champagne do?

She had of course been given files to read, but as her new Principal left for Paris he had suggested she catch up on any shopping that she needed - a clear implication that on his return things would start to get busy.

### **Seventh Interview - 7 November 1979**

Working activities in the new job when we came to review a week's work just over a month did not divide up very comfortably. She could only think of it in terms of two very broad groupings.

1. No contact with other people - work written by herself on the basis of existing information:

a "Red Jacket", or ministerial letter, and a note on a review of the Ordnance Survey

The work here had mainly involved reading through background material that was all on the files, perhaps going a little beyond, and then writing up intelligibly and logically.

2. Varied interaction with others - telephoning, writing, and asking people for information and so on:

speech notes and briefing, draft letter for her Principal, research progress meeting and the like.

There was checking back here too, but where there were wider implications more people were involved. You may be responsible yourself for the style and the end-product, whatever it is, but you have to range around to make sure you get your facts right. The speech-notes were for the Minister, so she had had to ring his office to find out what he wanted. There was a briefing for the Secretary-of-State for a 10-minute talk that he was going to give to a Conservative District Leaders Conference - a series of snappy headings wanted. This was short notice, so she did the basic spade-work and then sat down with her Principal to cobble something together. Normally she would have had time to do him a draft "to mutilate" - though he was what she called "a very constructive mutilator" who only changed things that were wrong or clumsy.

Both main groups involved fact-finding and writing something in the end that had to hang together. But the second differed in its degree of involvement with more people and more facts - it called for a wider perceptual horizon. She thought that she could now see that far - to the horizon, that is.

In terms of organisational aims, there were three groupings.

1. In a category of its own, the Minister's reply to an MP complaining of waste.

There was a fairly standard reply - that the Minister was indeed concerned about waste, but that this particular case was a local government one and nothing to do with him.

## 2. Research policy:

the Ordnance Survey review, research programme progress meeting.

There had been a review of Ordnance Survey, and she had had the fairly routine task of checking the report to see how implementation of its recommendations was progressing. The research programme meeting had similar aims - a routine progress review.

## 3. Briefing on local government activities.

It was this that had taken up most of her time. The work centred on the impact of the function cuts exercise, with briefings all being about ways of achieving cuts without reducing services - 'value for money'.

The strands that she perceived within and across the three groups were:

routine departmental work; advising people on how to do something; internal functions as opposed to external; impact - a speech by a Minister, or Secretary-of-State, did not, when it came down to it have much impact for change in the real world, whereas research did; further, research tended towards the concrete and impartial with no more than practical resource constraints, whereas a speech briefing had of necessity a political bias.

Turning then to outcomes and effectiveness - from a personal or an organisational point-of-view, as seemed to make most sense - she first identified as a major personal outcome a marked increase in confidence, confidence to use some initiative. She could now even telephone the Minister's office without a second thought, not even a "hey, look at me 'phoning the Minister's office" - although admittedly the first time she had had to she waited until she had the room to herself, apprehensive of being overheard saying the wrong thing.

This was clearly very important to her, and she was able to identify about five or six different influences at work. They are worth listing.

- a. The way in which the division worked - it was taken as a matter of course that if you wanted something from the Minister you telephone his private secretary.
- b. Going out to meet others - HEOs or Principals - without feeling constrained as she had done before by her previous management's view of hierarchy and its importance.
- c. Feeling part of the system - getting her own work and so having a sense of place; fitting into this place made it that much easier to go out from it and meet and work with others.

d. Fitting into the wider organisation as an AT, doing what an AT should do - learning more over the previous few weeks about getting a job and getting on with it than ever she had in the whole of the previous post.

e. Work with immediate outcomes - like briefing for a speech - as opposed to a 3-year study in which no-one was really interested.

f. Concrete tasks with deadlines - thus working harder and more concentratedly; no "write me a paper - it will do in a couple of months", but "I'm going to a meeting tomorrow, give me a brief, please".

The possibility that short, concentrated, concrete tasks like this could turn out to be rather piecemeal was avoided, she maintained, by their all sharing a central theme - value for money.

The other major personal outcome was a sense of her work having improved, largely because of what she called the more relaxed atmosphere. Her tasks were not held to be particularly special, but were seen by colleagues as just part of the job. The time and quality pressures were still there, but the 'social pressure' was off.

Reflecting on the more organisational aspects, she was critical of the briefing that she had been asked to do for the

Secretary-of-State. It had been an overtly party-political speech; he had his own political people who ought to have been briefing him on things like that; it should not have been a civil servant's job. But her senior officers would never have dreamed of telling him that.

The Minister's speech was different. He had been talking about management consultancy inputs to improve local government efficiency, and to management specialists at that - so the brief had been quite challenging to draft. No matter how woolly the speech itself, the brief had to be good enough to cover questions from the floor.

Reflecting too on her own views about the general overall aim, she found that she was becoming converted to efficiency and management consultancy as ways of meeting expenditure-cuts. She had in fact always been slightly sceptical of the leftist view that cuts in public spending would lead to the collapse of civilisation as we knew it - but even if she had disagreed violently with the departmental line, she would still have had to turn the work out slanted the way in which it was called for.

A final reflection at this point - it had been a very, very enjoyable few weeks.



## **Eighth Interview - 10 December 1979**

Work-activity for this session she grouped as follows:

1. Activities that involve responding to something, not something that they have initiated - 'reactive'.

The word 'they' was the give-away - she was not talking so much about herself as about herself as a bit of the division. The reactive type of work consisted basically of someone asking for something, or asking for comments, and you dealing with it. It meant that you had to know what response to make in the light of existing policy or practicality. It was all work with a definite purpose (on this occasion, anyway), and with an identifiable finish to it. The note that she had drafted on SSRC research proposals for her AS was being used by him at a meeting that day, and her draft might well contribute to the end result.

2. Initiating - proactive - this was drafting a note to other divisions circulating information about a speech by the Minister.

Here she had everything to hand - in this case notes made by the AS at a seminar that he had attended, and that he had thought would be of interest to the others.

3. A reactive/proactive mix - a reaction to something that in itself was going to initiate some other action.

An example here resulted from a review of Ordnance Survey. The actual report was in no sense work carried out by her division, but the response that they gave to it might lead to action on the part of the Ordnance Survey people.

All three groups seemed to fit together, she found. She had to know the same sort of things. One had to know what was going on, what Ministerial policy was, what practical constraints there were, like finance and so on. One had to be able to set out what one was doing so that it was logical, intelligible, and met the point. That applied to a simple response to a phone-call as much as to arguing for an extra £100,000 to be spent by the local government management services advising committee.

Grouping the week's work in terms of organisational aims produced one large general category and two very much smaller ones.

1. Continuing work related to the Division's main purpose  
- co-ordinating local government administration.

This was a case of simply carrying out the work allotted to this particular part of the Department by whoever sat on high. Her branch, for example, had to look after one defined section of departmental research and the management services advisory committee and its finances. There were additional bits and pieces - playing honest broker by chairing a meeting involving the Manpower Services Commission for example.

2. Routine work, but out-of-the-ordinary.

The instance here concerned a note on a particular piece of legislation that fell in their area. It was not routine in the regular sense, but when they had to do a Clause, doing it became part of the organisational routine.

3. Information:

a query on a European Joint Group, and chasing up new contacts.

Central to her division, this was not just dissemination but involved acting as a repository of information about all sorts of things, things that perhaps had no direct bearing on the work that they actually did.

Asked once again to tease out anything in the way of interesting strands by comparing and contrasting across groups of elements from her diary, her reaction was to wonder whether doing this was not becoming a little artificial to the interview-setting. She was beginning to think of all her work activities and their outcomes as part of one general, undifferentiated process. The aims, for example, all seemed to fit together - as did the activity-groupings. As a division there were very few items of work that they could do on their own - the branch was locked in and involved with the rest of the organisational structure.

In fact, looking across from the activity-groups to the aims, it looks as though the general continuing work was maintained by

activities on her part (and others') that might be reactive, proactive, or the one leading to the other, without much differentiation; though the 'information' aim was met by more solidly reactive work.

Going on to reflect on the effectiveness issues, she concluded that it had been a fairly fragmented sort of a week, without any coherent strand running through it. It was the sort of week that she had never experienced before, with lots of little things to do - some of them needing doing 10 minutes previously. It had thus had a hectic feel to it. Coming in on Monday morning and finding a pile of four or five of these little things to do in her in-tray had induced momentary panic as she wondered where to start. The pile made each individual item seem more significant than it really was. She felt she should have learned to handle this kind of thing in her previous post - how to switch in a 'concrete' fashion, not butterfly-flitting, from one thing to another.

She found herself coping better as the week progressed. The pattern had settled into its being the sort of week without any major work on the cards, so they would be dealing not just with the regular inflow but with matters left over from having been put aside for speech-writing during the previous week. She had learned something from the way that most people - with the exception of her Principal, who did tend to flap a bit she thought - just took things in their stride. For herself, she seemed to have settled somewhere between taking urgency as a matter of course, and flapping about it.

She did not mind genuine urgency, but did object a little to the sort that was the product of 'dithering' by her boss.

Another, more specific, learning experience had been finding out about the mechanics of getting money and about such institutions as the Public Expenditure Survey Committee - PESC.

Finally, she had been continuing the process of adjusting to her Principal - "learning to keep her cool with him", as she put it. She described him as a very open individual, very approachable, and given to bringing a particularly personal slant to office life. This was taking her some time to adjust to. Because of his openness, for example, she found herself getting frustrated with him when, as occasionally happened, he got the balance of the work wrong and then 'went into a flap'. This had her kicking things on the way home. It contrasted with her previous boss, where the absence of any real personal contact meant that she could dismiss all thought of him from her mind when she left the office. She was finding the new working relationship a little difficult. Being friendly was important; but keeping a certain distance was too. She felt that she knew more about her Principal's personal problems than she did those of her best friends. On the one hand she was relaxed enough with him to berate him for making a mess of the typewriter correcting fluid - something that she would not have dreamed of with her previous boss - but on the other she found herself not wanting to make him feel bad by drawing attention to the urgent piece of work that he had got her to do that was still at the bottom of his in-tray. For all that, though, she still liked working to him.

## **Ninth Interview - 5 February 1980**

Although she came prepared with a week's diary, we decided on this occasion to talk through it in a more free-flowing way, rather than effecting the customary detailed structuring. It is worth noting that the promised new Principal had now arrived, of which more shortly.

There had been two main pieces of work for her branch in the course of the week, with her own activity centred upon them. The first had been a meeting of a joint central and local government group that concerned itself with European issues; the second concerned briefing her AS for a Training Board meeting.

A lot of her week's activity, in fact, had been donkey-work, especially with respect to the meeting. This involved organising the seating so as not to offend anybody - and then finding that, contrary to her own intention, her AS decreed that the local government faction should sit facing the window of the long thin Conference-room in which they were meeting, and the central government officials with their backs to it - it was customary, apparently. So too was women serving the tea - in this instance the expectation falling upon Iryna and the one other woman, her new Principal. In essence, the meeting-support work was clerical - but they had no clerical officer, so it fell to her.

The briefing work involved reading papers, telephoning other departments to find out what would be the burning issues at the

local government training board, and writing up in a clear, structured fashion a brief that pointed out to her AS which items would need to be discussed and which could be nodded through.

All very standard stuff it was for her now - though it would not have been a year back.

Turning more directly to the organisational aims as she saw them, and taking the meeting of the joint European issues group as an instance, she specified one main aim as acting "as a focal point for the local authorities, contact with whom was channelled through the five local authority associations". There was also something of a proxy role in dealing with other government departments on the local authorities' behalf.

The administrative details were far from simple. On European issues, for example, there were orderly procedures to be observed in the drafting and re-drafting of proposals before these came up for consultation. Large local authorities, like the GLC, would have their own research services that would apprise them of issues long before they had reached the proper consultation stage - with the result that it could look as though central government was dragging its feet, or even ignoring the local authority.

Here then were two aspects of her division's role:

- a. providing information to local authorities and
- b. acting for them in consultation with other departments.

Another aim centred on their general caretaker role for the management advisory service. It seemed to her that this was less effective than it ought to have been - probably not least because of what she saw as the department 'simply pouring money in' without too many questions asked, because of the felt need for a central advisory service. And yet there were instances of this service not providing what was hoped for of it, as when one local authority had sought just the kind of bias-free advice about office automation and the installation of word-processors that they could not get from the suppliers of such technologies. There ought to have been a better organised publicity system, she felt, so that authorities would not be in the dark about problems of this sort.

Although the briefing in which she had been involved for her AS's meeting with the training board had occupied a significant part of her week, she was not sure that they had any real role on the boards. Her AS had been back within 40 minutes, as it happened.

Finally, again associated with the main aim, there was the tidying up of strands. Should one of their ministers open a conference on managing technology in the '80s? It did not look like their sort of job at first sight - but the local authority management services body was organising it, and so her division sensibly operated as the gatherers together of all the various departmental and other strands.

Then - outcomes. Overall, this week and the previous three or four had been fairly satisfactory from a personal point of view in



that, first, she was doing something that needed doing and, second, she was getting better at it. There seemed to be three particular points.

First, there was the brief that she had done for the local government training board meeting. Although she had suffered from a sense of time wasted when her AS arrived back so quickly, there had nevertheless been considerable satisfaction in having written a brief that had gone straight up untouched by her Principal - especially when the latter had been talking about drafting style and so on.

Then there was the ministerial angle, and the invitation to open the conference. The point about this was the potential for more work that she could see. The odd thing was that if they were to go ahead, she would be the one to get first shot at drafting the speech, which, as far as she could see, was likely to be the first major government statement on micro-technology. What would be odd was its coming from the DOE - but there would be advantage here in that if anything went wrong, the defence that it had only been a DOE spokesman at a local government forum was there for the grasping. What had struck her, though, was the sense of 'implications' even in what looked like a discrete piece of work with its own beginning and end.

The main talking-point for her on this occasion, though, was her coming across some intense sex-stereotyping with regard to her new boss - the boss whom she was supposed to be going to

impress with her ready working knowledge of the organisation when she arrived. She - Iryna - had in fact boned up on one or two areas on which she had realised that she was a bit hazy, "so as not to look like a lemon if the new Principal asked about them", but had not gone out of her way simply to impress. The new Principal was in fact very good - efficient, sensitive, and quick. But what was new for Iryna was what she called the 'horror stories' associated with having a woman for a boss.

The stereotypes centred on the bitchy female, the neurotic, the seducer, the patronising female, the one who took whole days off to go to the hairdresser, the repressed career woman, the games mistress, and so on. It was all new to her. Most of it came from men, and even from people who had never had a woman boss. It alarmed her to find it in the Civil Service - not least because there was the prospect of the same stereotyping eventually being applied to herself, though she thought that she would not care too much.

One of the reasons for her surprise, she supposed, was having missed out on women's liberation; it had all been done for her by the time she herself wanted to go to university and to think about a career. However, from what friends conveyed to her, the stereotyping was of a far worse order in the private sector.

The effect of all this had been to open her eyes, with the result that she was now noting a lot more. It had not struck her before - and she offered the necessary caveats about objectivity and, in

essence, 'perceptual set' - but there were stereotyped sex-roles in her Ukrainian community too. It was all right for the single woman to be politically active, but as soon as she married she was expected to drop back and start making the coffee. The married women even slipped readily into the coffee-making mode apparently without demur. She was beginning to think that maybe there was still a lot to be done after all.

### **Tenth And Last Interview - 15 April 1980**

As was the pattern with final interviews, we spent a little time looking over her week's work, and then turned to a more general overview.

It was the quiet week before Easter; implicit in her working activities was the overall organisational aim of tidying up loose ends. There were in essence four parts. The first consisted of meetings with a new Under Secretary to fill him in on the background to the job of providing administrative support to their bit of the DOE research effort.

Next, there was writing a paper on the history of the department's involvement with the local authorities' management services advisory outfit. It involved her in going back through the files to try and pin down something that seemed to have been around for a long time - "where the whole thing had gone wrong". The search seemed to show that there had never been any clear-out policy, but that the Department "had just thrown money at

them and told them to get on with it". The initial level of financial control seemed to have fallen away, and even the 'stropmy letters' from the Treasury had petered out. She herself could not help but assume maladministration - and was even down to suspecting 'fiddles'. Basically, the more complex the problem became, the more - it seemed to her - the Department left the management services unit to their own devices. Although in a sense all this was tidying up loose ends, it was of course going to have to lead on to new work.

Then there was a real loose end in drafting an interim up-dating paper on the joint group's European business. All she had really had to do was stick together other people's contributions to form a background paper. Even so, it was somehow satisfying to see that going into its envelopes for distribution - with Iryna herself doing the clerical work of collating, stapling, sticking down envelopes, addressing them, and so on.

And last, there was involvement in sending out for comment on a number of proposals for work under the auspices of the SSRC (as it then was). This was connected with her AS's role as an SSRC assessor; they were formulating research proposals on relations between central and local government. All she had had to do was to send off proposals to likely-looking people culled from the Civil Service year-book, with a request for comment, and then to collate replies. It might have been more bearable, somehow, if the proposals had not all been so academically oriented, with 'conceptual framework' the favourite phrase, and an ascendancy of theory over practice there for all to see - and criticise.

One major outcome from the week's work - achieving a clear conscience before going off on a week's leave.

## **Overview**

She now thought of herself as a civil servant, not as an ex-student who happened to work for the Civil Service. She had now had some experience of the practicalities of the work, rather than some 'theoretical' view of what work should be like (using 'theoretical' here in the colloquial sense of 'divorced from reality'). She had expected the work to be varied, interesting, sometimes high-powered, sometimes high-pressured. She had not, though, expected it to be boring and trivial, as some of it had turned out, and she had certainly not expected it to take her quite so long to feel herself a part of things. Now, finally, she was experiencing that feeling of 'fitting in'. It had something to do with outcomes being dependent on what she actually did, rather than on what she was. If a job was done well, it was because she had 'researched' it well, not because of any dynamic part of her personality.

There was still the feeling of being a subordinate, at the bottom of the heap, to be coped with. It still irritated her faintly, but although she did not feel herself fitting comfortably into this particular part of the setting, it had in a sense been valuable in that in coming to terms with the fact that she could not just blow up over something that she felt, say, to be a waste of time - like the recent SSRC work - she had become a less abrasive

person. She seemed to be achieving a balance between accepting and deferring to the better judgement of more highly placed people than herself and nevertheless making her point heard when there was something with which she really did fundamentally disagree.

The more 'diplomatic' approach was even extending to private life, she had found. In fact, she did not present as someone who would rant and rave, I suggested; one was not to believe it. She came from a family that shouted and threw pots and pans. There were plenty of subjects in which she still got heated - racial discrimination, the Moscow Olympics (due to start in a couple of months' time), Afghanistan, incompetence in those around her, sloppiness in others. But she was learning that there was a time and a place for getting heated; and had probably started to calm down a bit in her last year at university, having brought herself up short on one occasion when she had reduced another girl to tears over a job delivered late. At work still, she could readily get worked up about the management services outfit, but had long since realised that as she would be in a new job 6 months hence, all the waving of arms in the world would make no difference to what happened to it. And waving one's arms at the photocopying woman just meant that one's next job went straight to the bottom of the pile. So now she did her ranting - for a few minutes at a time only - at home in front of her boyfriend, rather than in the office with her colleagues.

Knocking the rough edges off like this was a good thing, she believed - it was not reducing her effectiveness. She was learning to get her own way more "by charm and persuasion", and possibly by knowing a bit more about the organisation. She could always resort to keeping a careful record of the irritating and trivial jobs on the work-sheets that had been invented in response to the Secretary-of-State's desire to know more about how his civil servants employed themselves. Indeed, she already had. And when she recorded faithfully the inordinate amount of time spent stapling papers and licking envelopes the AS had been so taken aback that he had tried to get her to change it.

Looking back for development in the personal resources that she brought to bear on her work, she found herself concluding that little had changed, apart from those resources with which she had come in originally having been sharpened up by practice, and apart too from the development of a sense of "this will be good for my career" - knowing that the better the work she turned in, the better the promotion chances.

In other words, as she gained momentum - right from the point way back when the Careers Officer had said that she would not measure up to the job - she had been developing ambition.

## **APPENDIX 4 - Edward - Commerce and industry - home and away**

### **First Interview - 28 February 1979**

He had, as he put it, been 'persuaded' to go for a degree at Oxbridge, and doing that had been the beginning of the process that led to him being here now. An air of distancing himself a little from any stereotype view of the Oxbridge student came across as he described modern language studies, in an ever so slightly disparaging way, as a 'sandwich course'. This was a reflection on the third year that he had spent working as the only full-time English language teacher in what was supposed to be an assistant's job in Italy. The gap between sixth form and St Catherine's, Cambridge, he had filled in working for a "well-known British company" (his phrase) where he had been given the job of "designing a warehouse" (his own words again). At the same time he had studied for an Italian O-level in preparation for Cambridge.

The first university year found him unhappily in digs. This was less than satisfactory because the college was rather close-knit. It had meant his tending to limit his contacts to other modern languages students. The second year saw him living in. Back for a final year after his Italian spell - which had in fact included two months working in an hotel - he had decided not to concentrate solely on studies. Rather than simply swotting, he had felt the need to take the opportunity to educate himself more broadly.



One aspect of this was activity in the university's Labour Party group. Another distraction of a sort had been the Civil Service's Appointments-in-Administration competition. He had sat the January qualifying test (1978), with the Diplomatic Service uppermost in mind at the outset. It had seemed a good idea from the point of view of a languages student. A further consideration had been a feeling that he might have found private industry a little difficult to work in for personal political reasons. Nevertheless, he had in fact also applied for jobs in export management, on the basis that such an activity earned with it for him some vague feeling of its being useful. The languages would also have helped. Some dozen or so different applications had resulted in half-a-dozen interviews and not much else. Meanwhile the Civil Service application progressed, on the basis of what he called a kind of steeplechase, trying to see how many fences he could clear. During this process he had indicated a willingness to have a go at commercial trade and communication work. In the end, with two offers of final interviews from his other applications and a firm offer of a home Civil Service job, he had chosen the latter.

So here he was in that part of the Department of Trade that had responsibility for commercial relations and exports. A hierarchised Deputy Secretary command, there were five Under Secretary divisions, and - in his own case - three Assistant Secretary branches making up the division. His branch in turn had two Principals, executive and clerical grade staff, and himself. He had started in early October, some four or five months previously.

By now he seemed to have attained a fairly detailed understanding of the structure, aims and objectives of the organisation. As he explained it, the division dealt with government-to-government trade relations, clarifying the business setting and "generally smoothing the path" for businessmen by providing them with a framework within which they could work - the whole being carried out in conjunction with embassies. Membership of the European Community had in fact reduced the government-to-government role rather, and they now operated very much more within a community structure. In practice, they acted as contact-point for other government departments who had trade matters to discuss, and at the same time as contact-point for businessmen who would come either direct or via a regional office.

His division dealt with Africa, the Middle East, and Afghanistan. He himself had originally been set to work with the Principal whose specific responsibility lay with Syria, the Lebanon, Israel and Afghanistan, but a recent staff-change had seen this Principal move on and a newly recruited direct entrant Principal (a 'DEP') take his place. Having two novices in the same place made little sense, so he had been moved across into the other Principal chain, where they dealt with North Africa, and Sudan, and Egypt. There were in fact a number of difficult issues in the division's general area - Iran and Iraq, for example ("at the moment", he had said back in early 1979), and international energy relations with OPEC countries, among others.

From the start, he had been involved in what he called "a pet topic to give to ATs" - the Euro-Arab Dialogue. Not being specific to any one country or area was held to make it reasonably accessible to the newcomer - thirty-one countries were involved all told. He described it as "an on-going dialogue between the Community and the Arab League in its various manifestations" - economic, financial, scientific. His and his Principal's job was to feed their Assistant Secretary as necessary with drafts and replies to questions arising out of issues like, for example, industrialisation. On other aspects, the division might be asked for a view and Edward had found himself developing correspondence on financial co-operation, even though he rather believed that the division - still less himself - was not best placed to give such views; functions of this sort seemed to him to fall more naturally to the relevant section of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

An additional reason for his being detailed to work on the area, apart from its general accessibility to the newcomer AT, was that most telegrams were in French and he was an obvious customer for the job. It was a pretty complex task, and "close to the ultimate in committee structure". There was consultation within Whitehall, consultation within the European Community, and negotiation with the Arab League. He had in fact recently attended a Brussels meeting with his Assistant Secretary, and had had the job of taking a note of it. The political dimension added further to the complexity.

Another aspect of his own involvement centred on liaison with other divisions on the details of meeting-times, what should be said, what conclusions reached. All in all, though, he tended to view the large amount of time and effort spent on the Dialogue, relative to the rewards forthcoming, with a certain reserve.

Then he had been involved with the relevant Area Advisory Group (AAG), one of a number of broadly area-specific bodies working within guidelines laid down - as he understood it - by the British Overseas Trade Board. Their job was "to act as liaison in every conceivable direction" - companies, chambers of commerce, the countries involved, and so on. The division would typically prime the AAG with what it wanted doing - investigate a particular market and encourage development, say - and would then maintain an overall responsibility including audit.

There had also been a scatter of self-contained little jobs - like a company asking about opportunities for its products in Tunisia, whereupon he would write with handouts, say, on conditions of contract. He had likewise had some involvement in work on the Aid and Trade Contingency Provision, a provision for making loans to countries so that they might then pay a particular UK firm to undertake a project.

### **One Week**

- writing a minute on the AAG's programme on the basis that it would be as well to have it written down;

- a session with someone who was interested in doing business in Libya and Tunisia, a session which, with no-one else available to handle it, had resulted in "the blind leading the blind", though he had been able to help a bit;
- preparing a brief for the Under Secretary for his next AAG meeting, which had involved consulting four Principals in neighbouring divisions, checking that what they had had to say was up-to-date, collating the contributions and getting them typed;
- three self-contained items put his way by his Principal - financing projects by the Community; looking at credit-guarantee terms for the Sudan; housing-sector opportunities in Tunisia;
- and, of course, continuing to read himself into this three-weeks new job.

## **Second Interview - 19 April 1979**

Reflections on the first interview came first. One thing was that he had learned that nothing was in fact ever 'self-contained'. Another was a certain amount of concern at the way in which the Euro/Arab dialogue work had occupied more of our time than he felt that it had merited - it did after all tend merely to come and go. Catching him virtually at the point where he had been turning from one area of involvement to another had made it a

little difficult to discern themes, though he found himself wanting to contrast the more 'thinking' policy-type work that the Arab boycott of Israel produced at his first desk with the rather more 'doing' type work that the more directly commercial demands of his present job entailed. Overall, in fact, it seemed to him that the whole area was very practically oriented, when classically it was conceived of as being involved in policy.

On a practical note of his own, he had found the first interview note - once he had corrected one or two misconceptions in it - to have been of a certain amount of help in working out just what it was that he was supposed to be doing.

He then turned to the most recent week's work, to group its elements in the free format that we typically adopted early on. Some three or four reasonably substantial categories emerged, and a few less so.

1. Briefing on the Area Advisory Group - writing, dictating, finishing, copying, distributing.

The divisional Under Secretary customarily attended meetings of this group as a group-member and as representative of the department. This AAG had its own acronym - 'COMET', the committee on Middle East Trade - and was made up of about 70% businessmen, the rest being divided up about equally between representatives of banks and government. The government representation itself was shared out between his own department,

the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and the smaller Export Credit Guarantees Department. His job in preparing the Under Secretary's monthly briefings started with the agenda, what had transpired at the previous meeting, and what was happening in the Middle East at the time, and then in the light of all this trying to work out what was likely to arise. Given that, he then had to gather, collate, and have typed up relevant information from the four Middle East desks, check it with his Principal and get it to the Under Secretary's Office. Although in terms of content it was routine enough, it was less so in the time-pressure sense; indeed, on this occasion although he had shown the results of his Principal there had been no time to change anything.

2. Tunisia - learning about the Country and 'doing research'.

The Department of Trade had the expertise on trade and economy and would typically produce background material when, say, the FCO needed to put up a paper on a particular country. In this case it was Tunisia and the drafting fell to Edward. It involved delving into the files, reading up on the state-of-play of various major projects in the country, and putting it altogether in a neat, fact-filled form. Although he had used previous briefs to see how the job should be done, and had also drawn on some of the material in them, his was in fact what he called a somewhat dramatic re-casting of earlier versions, re-arranged, re-headed, and with up-to-date figures. A World Bank Report had also provided input, somewhat skeletal, for working out features like the GNP.

The other piece of work - the 'research' - had arisen from the need to provide his Assistant Secretary with a background note on the country in the light of a forthcoming meeting with the Ambassador. Asked to "assume a fair amount of ignorance" - a small country like Tunisia seldom warranted work at AS level - he had set to and produced a four-page document based on previous briefs, and on abstractions and amalgamations from other material including an article on the country's Five-year Plan that he had come across in a French magazine circulated within the division. The resultant self-contained report on Tunisia, its politics, economy, and geography had been sufficiently well accepted by the Division to look like becoming almost a definitive document.

### 3. Preparation for proposed visits by the Secretary-of-State to Egypt and Morocco

The country desk concerned would be responsible for handling the briefing on such an occasion, and the Principal involved would put out the necessary call. It had involved asking for material from various sources, like -

the FCO on politics, including any points to be raised or avoided;

Department of Industry on projects in hand;

colleagues in their own department responsible for international trade between the EEC and the countries concerned;



Export Credits Guarantee Department;

Overseas Development Ministry;

and so on.

A separate background note was needed for his Assistant Secretary, who would be meeting Egyptian officials on more brass-tacks kinds of issue. Yet another brief in the form of a fact-sheet for accompanying businessmen was needed - a job that he himself took on for Egypt.

But then there had been the lost Vote of Confidence, and it had all fallen through. On the Morocco side a missed deadline had delayed the start of all this administrative background work, so that fortuitously there was little to be undone. For the Egypt trip though, Edward himself had had to telephone around and apologise - following up with a written minute - and assure people that what they had already contributed would be used at a later date. In fact, suspecting that something of this sort might have been going to happen, they had not been in top gear - but the whole exercise had nevertheless involved him in a lot of work.

4. The less substantial items had consisted of looking into a company that had been invited to lunch with his Assistant Secretary, an enquiry about the registration of firms in Libya, handling general telephone enquiries at the HEO's desk for half-a-day due to staff shortages - and tidying his own desk.

## **Coping And Satisfaction**

We next went on to consider the four questions concerning resources on which he had drawn in coping with the week's work, difficulties with which he had met, the satisfactions and dissatisfactions arising from doing the job, and what he had so far learned from it.

### **The Resources**

The AT was typically expected to be capable of taking disparate material and putting it into some form of order, and the week's work had epitomised this. For all the various briefs, documents, background notes, and research papers, it had been necessary to search through files, yearbooks, papers, reports and so on and to put together factual material. He seemed to be able to deal with this, and felt that the ability he was now showing came from watching others do it at work, listening to people talking about doing it, and then from trying to imitate them. Only a certain amount seemed to be drawn from his university days. The two principal differences between this sort of work and university-required papers seemed to centre simply on the readership and the length of the document produced.

Then there was a general awareness of how things interact at a conceptual level rather than at the level of hard facts - how, say, economic and political factors were related to each other in a particular country.

There was also the ability to get on with other people.

### **Difficulties**

Acquiring knowledge - working under general ignorance as to the specific countries and topics being dealt with. One had to acquire the ability to work consistently to a systematic method, based on factual knowledge. He would typically consult his Principal on the method in the sense of where he was expected to start and what the thing was supposed to look like in the end; he would talk to others in the section about how to carry the job out. A few weeks after joining the Department the Assistant Secretary had given him a Minister's case to draft a reply for, and he had then got back a highly annotated document showing that he had not really been capable of understanding what to do. There were other examples that were not quite so obvious. The word that he found himself using here was the 'epistemology' of the Division.

### **Satisfactions And Dissatisfaction**

It was satisfying to get the COMET briefing completed in a race against time. As for the rest of the work there was not a great deal of job satisfaction to be got out of writing a first draft when one knew that it was going to be considerably altered by one's superior officers. There were occasions when the re-drafting process was nothing less than Byzantine. There were other occasions when from the point of view of policy, one individual's view was going to be just too narrow. Re-drafting was in

occupational hazard, but understandable given that his Assistant Secretary was so much better at writing English than he considered himself to be, and justified also by the fact that he did not have enough specific knowledge about the work of the Division. Then he sometimes had the sort of doubts that he believed all civil servants did about the utility of the job that he was doing. Whether or not he could assuage these doubts by looking at the work that he was involved in remained to be seen. There was another satisfaction - he found that he was able to get on well with the other people in the Division.

### **Learnings**

He had learnt how to do work in a limited time. Given the series of deadlines to which he was working this week, he had found that it helped consciously to programme his work and to aim at getting particular bits finished by particular times of the day. Although drafting was the major feature, there was nevertheless an incredible variety of small things to be done. The morning spent doing the bread-and-butter work of the HEO was informative. He had also gained some insight into the effect of Government on his work, and was finding out something about the relationships of the Minister to the rest of the people in the organisation.

### **Third Interview - 17 May 1979**

A free categorisation of the week's work produced the following groupings:

1. UK-Egypt Joint Commission -

work on preliminary stages of briefing, a preliminary co-ordinating meeting within the branch, decisions on who sees whom, who attends what, and so on

2. Meetings on Egypt -

two working-party meetings, attending, writing notes

3. Various correspondence -

telegram and letters

4. Area Advisory Group -

briefing work for a COMET meeting

5. UK-Tunisia trade -

statistics analysis

6. Euro-Arab Dialogue -

steering-group meeting at FCO, and filing.

In preparation for the construct-elicitation procedure that was typically adopted for third interviews, he selected the following items as 'elements'-

From the first interview:

reading languages at Cambridge;

being chairman of the Cambridge Organisation of Labour Students (COLS);

the year spent in Italy.

From the second:

COMET briefing;

Tunisia - research on;

Secretary of State's projected visit to Egypt, and invitation to Morocco;

research into a company invited for lunch.

From the third (that is, this one):

UK-Egypt Joint Commission;

Meetings on Egypt;

COMET briefing;

UK-Tunisia trade-statistics analysis;

Euro-Arab dialogue.

The constructs emerged as set out below. It is worth noting that he took the session seriously - though not without a certain lightness of touch - and quickly came to operate at not only the content level, but at a somewhat higher level at the same time, commenting on and 'monitoring' the elicitation. As with his fellows, the matrix is shown as a figure - Figure 2.4.

### **Construct 1**

The UK-Egypt JC was paired with COMET briefing from this third interview, the pair differing from meetings on Egypt. The pair consists more of calling for briefing material as opposed to actually attending meetings. It centred on paper exercises as opposed to meeting other people. Reading modern languages turned out, oddly, to be more to do with meeting other people than with paper work; and Chairman of COLS was really rather mixed but turned out overall to be 'meeting people'.

## **Construct 2**

COMET briefing from this interview is paired with the UK-Tunisia stats analysis, and differs from the Euro-Arab dialogue. The former is routine and monthly, and involves no original work. The dialogue work this week was non-routine, having reached an important stage in UK thinking. Again the meetings on Egypt were at the time non-routine. (At this point he noted that he was already finding the outcome mildly surprising.)

## **Construct 3**

The first pairing was of the UK-Egypt JC and this week's COMET briefing against the Euro-Arab dialogue. It turned out to be rather low in terms of range of convenience though. He was thinking about divisional as opposed to UK-wide work. Pondering on this, he realised that this objective difference was not reflected in the effect on his own work. The eventual pair was therefore UK-Egypt JC and dialogue, against COMET briefing. It is to do with wide-ranging enquiries as opposed to working close to home. The eventual labels were 'wide range of contacts involved' versus 'restricted range of contacts involved'. (The construct was subsequently reversed.)

## **Construct 4**

COMET briefing from the second interview is paired with Tunisia research, and differs from work for the Secretary of State's projected visit. The kinds of adjective he found himself offering were briefing as opposed to non-briefing, correspondence as opposed to non-correspondence, providing information as opposed to



not, compilation of information as opposed to decision-making. The difference is between writing a report, and writing a reply to a letter. In the end we agreed that he was probably talking in terms of 'reactive versus proactive'.

### **Construct 5**

Tunisia research was paired with work concerning the invitation to lunch, and differed from work on the Secretary of State's projected visit. Basically, he said, this is similar to construct 4 but it is more definite in that the pair are very much research work in nature whereas the single was more explicit. The first word that came to mind was "investigative", but he felt some inadequacy in this. It is to do with investigating, compilation, and working towards a finished product. In the end we settled on 'investigative/research' versus 'not investigative/research'.

### **Construct 6**

Reading modern languages was paired with the year in Italy, differing from being Chairman of COLS. The first reaction was 'educative' versus 'non-educative'. This would be no good though because he quickly realised that all the rest of the elements would come out at the "educative" end. Likewise 'political' versus 'non-political' was of very little help, because again a lopsided distribution would result - all the rest would be "non-political". By this he meant that his involvement in Government work was non-political. So the pairing was changed to reading modern languages at Cambridge on its own, versus being Chairman of COLS and spending a year in Italy. The construct was unprogrammed, self-

directed learning, as opposed to "programmed" learning - being taught. The self-direction applies to the pair. (The construct was subsequently reversed.)

### **Construct 7**

COMET briefing from the second interview is paired with UK-Egypt JC, and the two differ from reading modern languages. (This was the first construct taken across all three interviews.) The construct emerged as "time-restricted" versus "non-time restricted". Work on the Secretary of State's visit came out as having no time pressure due to the peculiar circumstances. Again, the meetings on Egypt were in his mind not restricted by time. He felt that this might not be a very useful construct. In a sense he was talking more about being under pressure. However, he was also talking about his mental attitude to work, and a feeling of having time to do it in.

### **Construct 8**

Tunisia research paired with meetings on Egypt, and differed from being Chairman of COLS. The pair are more responsive, the single item is more to do with exercising initiative. The reading of modern languages comes out at the responsive end here, and compares with "being taught". Work on the Secretary of State's visit was thought of as initiative, due to the peculiar circumstances. And work on the Euro-Arab dialogue is more responsive than initiative, though this referred principally to the week about which we were talking.

## **Construct 9**

Work on the Secretary of State's projected visit is paired with the COMET briefing from the present interview, the single item being the year spent in Italy. The construct that emerged was a feeling of working non-independently for the pair, as opposed to a feeling of working independently for the single item. Again the peculiar circumstances of the preparation for the Secretary of State's visit accounted for this being at the non-independent end. In a sense, he felt, he was being self-indulgent here - the independent aspect referred to the benefit that he obtained from the work rather than to any benefit for the organisation.

## **Construct 10**

Being Chairman of COLS is paired with research behind the invitation to lunch, and the two differ from the meetings on Egypt. In a sense these are to do with being one-off as opposed to ongoing. In the end we called it long-term versus self-contained, but noted that in a sense there is an aspect of goal direction in the self-containedness (the word "technology" occurred). He noted two levels of goal direction. COMET briefings, for example, he thought of as self-contained because his objective was to send a representative to the meeting fully briefed. What the further aim of the representative's actually being there was, was another matter.

Subsequent analysis, producing a focused grid, showed a somewhat complex structure. Nevertheless, behind this complexity, there was constant reference to feelings of restriction, routine, of working

non-independently, of being programmed, as opposed to feelings of freedom, independence, lack of routine, lack of restriction in time, and self-direction in learning. The two constructs reactive/proactive and responsive/initiative go together as one would expect.

As for the elements, the meetings on Egypt and the Euro-Arab dialogue were construed very similarly, and somewhat similarly also to the way in which he thought of the year's experience in Italy - research into the company invited to lunch was also a bit like this. The two separate COMET briefings were identical in construction, and together were rather like the UK-Egypt JC for him. The two pieces of work on Tunisia were also rather alike.

Taken overall, the year spent in Italy, the meetings on Egypt, and the Euro-Arab dialogue were all alike in that they involved meeting others, there was a feeling of working independently, they were non-routine, there was a wide range of contacts involved, they were not time-restricted, they were unprogrammed and produced self-directed learning, they were - with the exception of the year in Italy - long term rather than self-contained; but at the same time they were seen as reactive and responsive rather than proactive and initiating. A feeling of working non-independently and construing the work in terms of paper exercises rather than meeting others, applied to both the COMET briefings, to the UK-Egypt JC and preparatory work for the Secretary of State's visit to Egypt, to research into Tunisia, to analysis of UK-Tunisia stats, to the research into a company invited to lunch.

Time restrictions, programmed learning, and being self-contained bits of work applied to the two COMET briefings and to the work on the UK-Egypt JC. However, a feeling of no time restriction and being involved in self-directed learning applied to just about all the other elements - except that Tunisia research and reading modern languages at university were more a case of being taught than of being involved in self-directed learning. The Chairmanship of COLS and preparation for the Secretary of State's visit were like each other in that there was a wide range of contacts involved, they were both proactive pieces of work, they involved initiative, they were not investigative or research orientated, there was no time restriction, and any learning that came out of it was self-directed. Reactive, response, investigative, and research work were the constructions place on the Tunisia research, the analysis of UK-Tunisia stats, research into the company invited to lunch, reading modern languages - except that this was seen as proactive rather than reactive - the year spent in Italy, and to the meetings on the Euro-Arab dialogue and Egypt - except that these two were not investigative or research-orientated.

His subsequent reaction on reading over the note of this session, with its underlying 'locus-of-control' theme, was that he could have told me all that without recourse to the formal elicitation procedure. That of course belies first the early observation (Construct 2) that now it was coming out was "mildly surprising", and second that it was he who told it me all anyway - all that the elicitation had done was to help him put it in some sort of order.

Fig 2.4

Edward

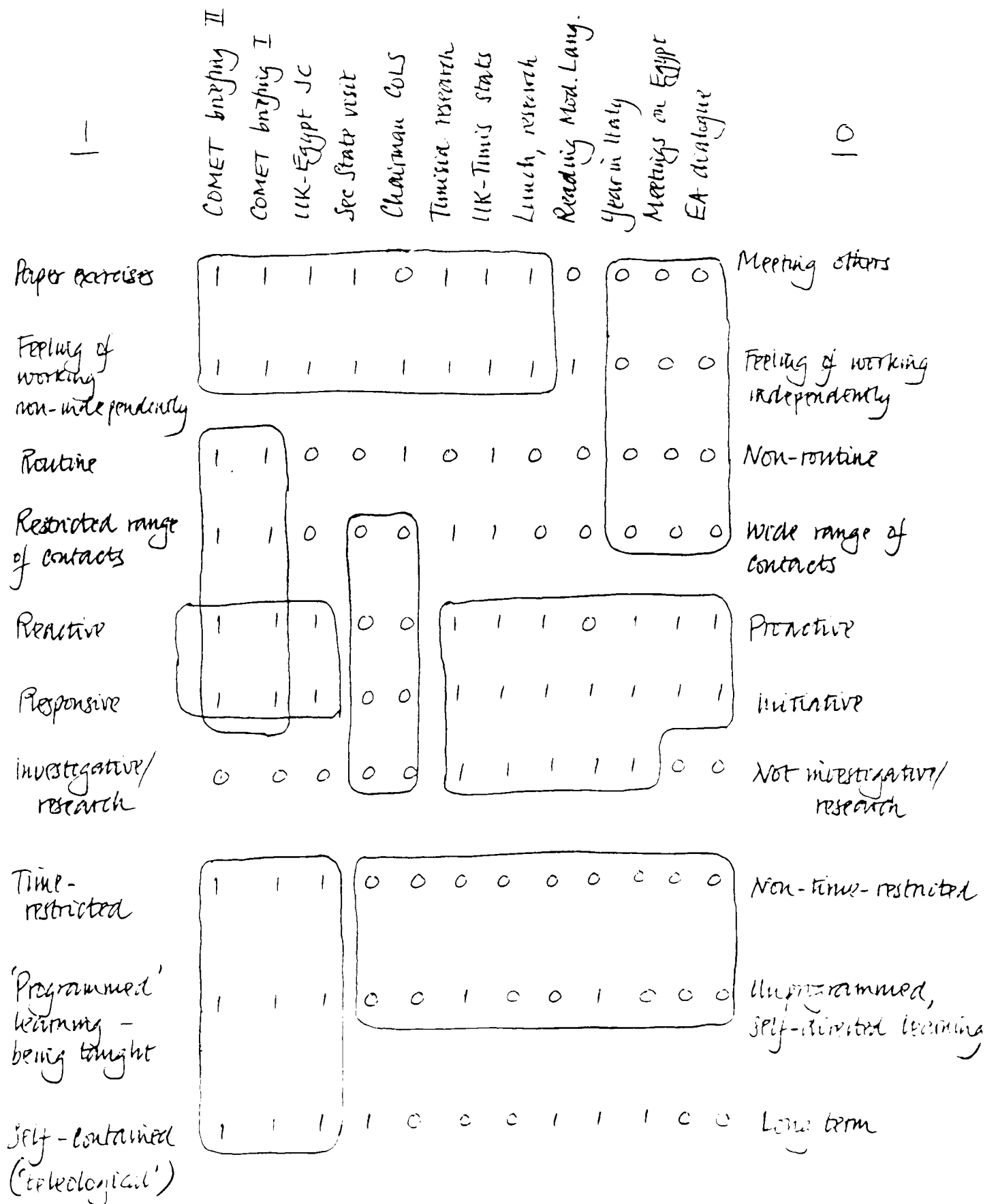
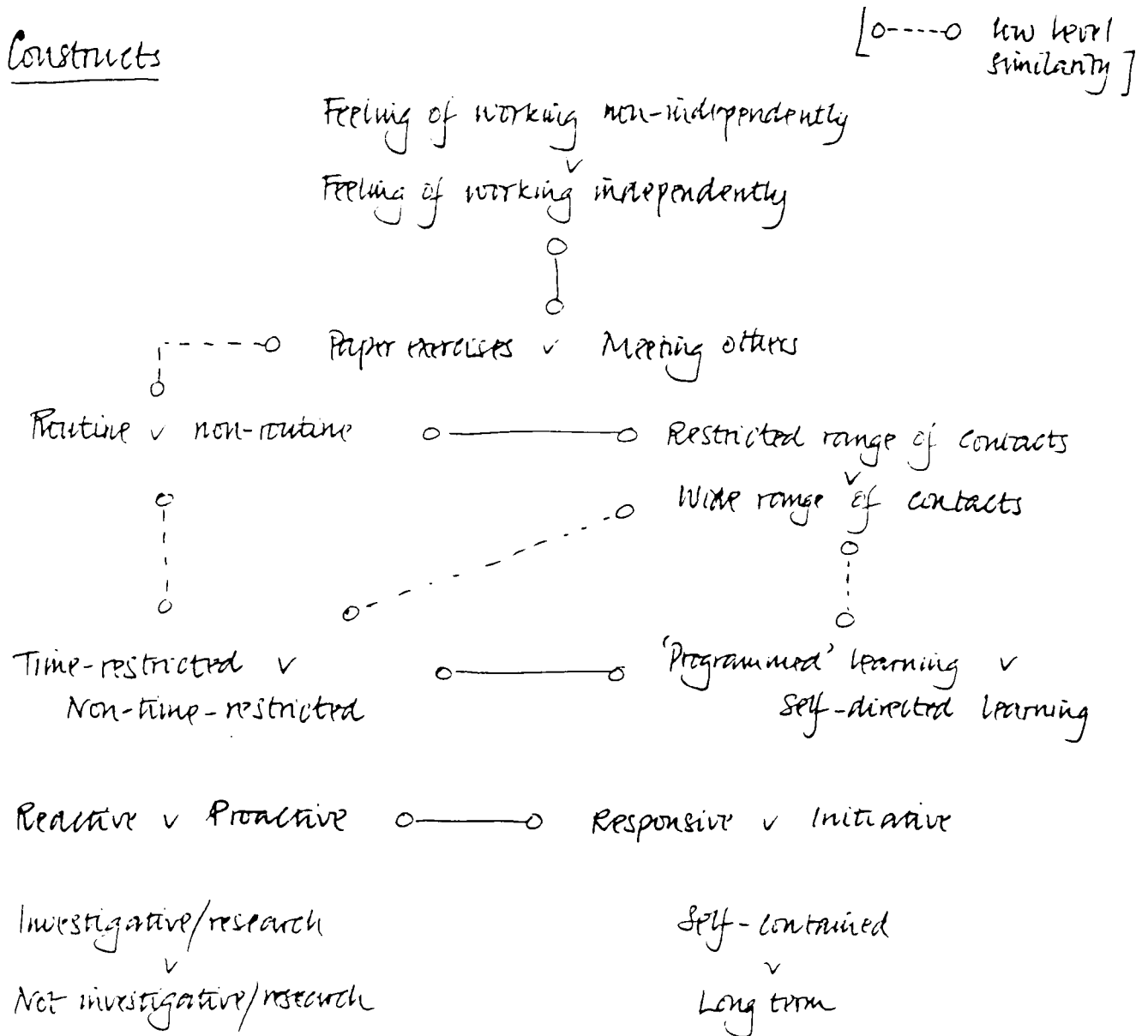
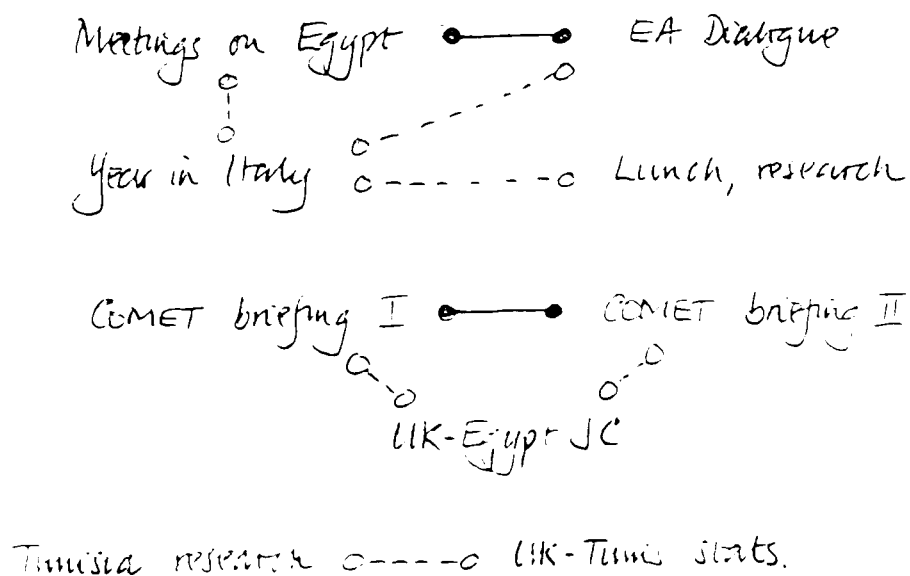


Fig 2.4 (cont)

## Constructs



## Elements



#### **Fourth Interview - 28 June 1979**

His activities for the week feel into three broad groupings.

1. Work that he felt was done on his own initiative -

from catching up with the contents of his in-tray and reading up on the Euro-Arab dialogue file, through writing a letter to Cairo and arranging meetings with a businessman to telephoning the Commonwealth Development Corporation and finding himself involved in a couple of lengthy telephone conversations (through having picked up someone else's 'phone) - one on state trading organisations in Libya and the other on work permits for Egypt.

2. Work that was given to him, directly or indirectly, by his Principal -

telephoning crane and mechanical-handling firms, writing to Casablanca, some briefing work, looking after the Principal's 'phone while he was away on holiday, some material on Egyptian iron and steel, contacts with the FCO on Egyptian potatoes, and so on.

3. Team-work -

being a cog in the machine - this included all work on the Joint Commission.



Strands running through the way in which he felt that he perceived these kinds of activity were -

giving advice, informing, helping, researching, providing data - all features of work on the major content areas that went to make up both that which he felt himself to have initiated and that for which he had been detailed;

that in itself was another feature - choosing or deciding to undertake a piece of work as opposed to being detailed to do it;

there was trying to work out his own approach on the one hand, and trying to emulate his Principal's way of working on the other;

at the same time there is the possibility of reference back to people more knowledgeable than himself (the HEO, with respect to the telephone enquiries);

there was working by himself as opposed to working with others - and allied to this latter an impression of closer supervision than normal, whilst he made a point of watching, marking, and learning;

there is duration as a distinctive factor - off-the-cuff, on-the-spot answers and comments as opposed to a three-week build-up;

and the JC work, compared with the individually initiated items in the first group, was in fact tiring.

Turning then to the way in which he saw organisational aims reflected in the work, we had another three categorisations.

1. Giving advice to companies or to non-Civil Service bodies -

the lengthy telephone calls, businessman meeting, speaking to the crane firms, and to the CDC, and so on.

2. Promoting UK trade relations with other countries -

as with the UK/Egypt Joint Commission, a reception for the Area Advisory Group, work on a trading protocol with Egypt.

- and 3. Internal organisation -

little of the in-tray catching-up exercise led to action; there was reading the EAD file, briefing work, copying material around to others, and so on.

One major strand, of course, concerned dealing with people, in one way or another, outside the Civil Service, as opposed to having purely internal dealings. Other strands -

government adhering to a policy-line - like giving advice without revealing classified information;

adherence to the point of defensiveness with other governments when money might be at stake;

there is the business of promoting UK business overseas - though this had a rather vague, abstract feeling to it;

there was a home-based context on the one hand and dealing exclusively with foreign governments on the other;

limited as opposed to wide-ranging political implications, with the latter obviously in play when it is with other governments that one is dealing;

time again played a part of his perceptions - less time-restriction as opposed to strict deadlines;

there was a discipline-versus-informality dimension, with outside contacts featuring at the latter end;

personal contacts as opposed to paper-theoretic work (this an 'activity' rather than an aim);

and then there was the aim of 'giving Ministers a quiet time' (tongue-in-cheek) - if organisational arrangements go wrong there are repercussions, and so there would be if the

Joint Commission went wrong - "the routine organisation of the department is an inert defence-mechanism, involving self-protection against chaos by the copying of documents, circulation of lists, and so on".

Overall, the organisational aim of giving advice to companies and to non-Civil Service bodies had involved him this week in work mainly on his own initiative. The result was a feeling of competence and achievement tinged with a certain nervousness when he found himself in a departmental spokesman's role.

Promoting UK trade relations had been a departmental aim that had found him engaged almost entirely in team-work - the cog in the machine. It had been new, interesting, and important, and had involved him in some social events - luncheons mainly - and meeting people, which had been enjoyable.

The organisational maintenance work had either been on his own initiative or passed on by his Principal. In the former case, the sensation had been one of competence and achievement; in the latter, of not particularly enjoyable necessity.

### **Fifth Interview - 26 July 1979**

At first sight, he found the week's activities falling readily into the same three groupings that the previous occasion's work had produced. But further reflection showed there to be what he called "a very nice binary in terms of what I actually did".

1. Paper exercises -

consisting of submissions to other people, such as - completing the draft briefing for a Ministerial meeting with the Area Advisory Group (as chance would have it, this week's work had again coincided with the regular 'COMET' briefing), minuting his Assistant Secretary on Libya, doing a letter to Leyland Vehicles, checking on the Egyptian economic position with particular respect to the balance of payments, writing up the note of the meeting with their Deputy Secretary that had itself come under -

2. Initiative, practical work, getting out of the office -

apart from the Dep Sec's meeting, there had been arranging an appointment with a Tunisian official, and finalising details of a visit from a Commission VIP, attending an import/export exhibition to look at the Tunisia stand and write a note for his A/S about it, hunting down papers concerning some business relating to a merchant bank, and reading an EEC councillor's report on Morocco - an 80-page document in French (no problem for EP).

The paper exercises had involved him in being chained to his desk, writing and dictating. The other included a lot of telephone work and, where at least part of the 'initiative' aspect came in, finding himself setting up the Tunisian officials visit simply because he had happened to be nearest to the particular telephone at the

time. Most of the work - in no matter which grouping - had had at least an element of team-work involved in it, apart from reading the Morocco report. This latter, and reading up on Tunisia, had both been items over which he had taken an initiative - to find out where the EEC stood, even though technically a sister-division had the EEC responsibility. As for the Tunisian official's visit, there was the prospect of his being drafted in as an interpreter if the official proved not to be an English-speaker.

Time again offers itself as a noticeable strand - he observed that all the items in the first group by their nature took longer than those in the second, the COMET briefing preparation typically being measured in days. This particular item was of somewhat more significance than usual, due to the intention of the new Minister of State to attend for the first time - not the actual meeting, but a reception afterwards. This had meant a double dose of drafting - the usual dossier for the Under Secretary, and background briefing for the Minister. It had shown the Byzantine drafting system to which he had referred previously in one of its more extreme forms. It had been known early in July that the Minister was going to be attending. The AS had put round a minute listing the briefing requirements for the month, which turned out to be unusually onerous. This had gone to the HEO, who was particularly hard-pressed. Edward had therefore taken some of it off him, the Principal being away on leave. When his Principal returned from leave he had taken up his draft, and after a pause of two or three days, got it out in a modified form late on the Friday evening. Edward was doing the COMET briefing

anyway; these particular circumstances therefore involved him in doing the Minister's brief too. Unfortunately it was difficult to reconcile the detail of the demands put down from the AS with the note from the Minister's Private Office on how he, the Minister, liked his briefing done. In the end the AS took the Principal's version on the following Monday, and re-did it completely in the chosen style by close of play on that day. It would have helped if the AS had just asked for material, and then written the brief himself - even though Edward acknowledged that he was also busy. Writing the Ministerial brief in draft was a useful exercise, but it was something he could have done without, as all of them had been under pressure.

The organisational aims represented by the week's work then came out as follows -

1. Commercial relations -

for example, the Tunisian official's visit, the exhibition and attendant note, the Morocco report.

2. Export promotion -

indirect groundwork rather than work at the 'sharp end' - here it is the Area Advisory Group briefing that typifies this sort of aim.

3. Export promotion - direct assistance to companies -

and here a payments problem in Algeria, the letter to Leyland, the business with the merchant bank.

The kind of underlying patterns that he perceived here concerned very much the nature of the contacts -

direct government-to-government on the one hand, and work with advisory groups, overseas posts, companies, on the other;

allied to this was the level within the department at which such contacts would typically be made - the regular 'indirect', groundwork sort of promotion contacts would be at a fairly high and constant level - Under Secretary, say - whereas the direct contacts with companies could range anywhere from clerical level to the very top, it seemed to him;

the main point was that the commercial relations work was relatively trivial compared with the export promotion activity, direct or indirect.

However, at the time when we were talking, export promotion was due to be examined under the broad heading of the new administration's 'function cuts'. There were, it seemed to him,



certain areas where there was overlap with other sections and branches, the most obvious being where divisions where he was working, which were designed to be 'country experts', found themselves turned into general contact points for specific companies dealing with the Countries concerned. Anyway, the Assistant Secretary had embarked on a so-called 'options exercise' - what would he need to do to achieve expenditure cuts at 5% first, and 10%, 15%, 20% later?

Then, taking, EP's own activities, his view of the organisational aims, and something of how he had experienced the week all together, it appeared that the commercial relations work fell mostly into the out-and-about initiative group, his involvement in the indirect export promotion work was mostly in the form of paper exercises, and the more direct, specific contacts in the export promotion area had him about equally divided between paper-work and the more initiative-oriented activity.

The bulk of the paper-work - and hence the indirect, ground-work aspects of promotion aims - he knew how to do by now with varying degrees of success, though he had been a little apprehensive about the Ministerial briefing part of it. The more practical, initiative sort of work - commercial relations and the direct contacts - had him split three ways between feelings of exasperation, interest, and a sense of novelty.

In a little more detail, the feelings side of the week's work he divided up as follows -

## 1. Exasperation -

centred mainly on trying to locate the papers concerning the merchant bank's problem - with certain questions touching on both Egypt and Israel as well as have an underlying wider Middle East flavour to them, any one of four different sections might have the relevant papers, and he had not found out which did.

## 2. Things he knew how to do -

routine jobs, rather than tedious ones, with the COMET briefing having enough different about it from the previous time not to be tedious itself.

## 3. Nervousness and pressure -

mainly the ministerial brief, with the uncertainty element not entirely unconnected with messages coming down from above about how the Minister liked his briefing done.

## 4. Interesting -

simply, he enjoyed opportunities to practice his French, somewhat diminished since the Euro-Arab dialogue had run down. And gaining the background information for the section had been time well spent.

## 5. Novelty -

arranging the Tunisian official's visit; payments problems in Algeria - simply things that he did not normally find himself doing or coming across.

## 6. Novelty combined with interest -

first, the exhibition; but second, travel to an esoteric place like the Deputy Secretary's office. It was supposed to be a meeting with all five Under Secretaries; in the event there were only two, together with one industrial adviser, and Edward himself not only taking the note but representing his division. This was unusual - and it was the first time that he had ever had to put pen to paper with the certain knowledge that it was going to be seen by the Deputy Secretary at the latter's own request. Novel and interesting indeed.

## **Sixth Interview - 11 October 1979**

He arrived without a work-diary, having only just returned from a 10-day visit to some of the countries for which his desk was responsible. At first he was uncertain about the value of talking about what seemed to him to be a most unrepresentative piece of work for an AT. Unrepresentative or not, though, it had been a real experience for him, and as such needed integrating into his idea of working life. He observed here that that was fair enough, and reflected if anything on that which was not unrepresentative

AT experience - his Principal had already said that he did not want a brand new AT again, as he always had real work to delegate.

Of the two preceding months, August had been virtually dead, and September - apart from things having been enlivened by the occupation of our Embassy in Libya by students - had been spent preparing for the trip.

The trip's aims were -

- visit the Algerian Trade Fair;

- check the commercial section of the UK Embassy in Tunis;

- test the general atmosphere in Libya, and see what prospects there were of improving the poor record that Libyans had with respect to paying for work done.

From his and his Principal's own immediate aims there was the provision for both of a broader view; there was looking at embassy nuts-and-bolts and meeting the people to whom one spent so much time writing; and there was also an informal interpreter role to be played by Edward for the non-French-speaking Principal.

## The Experience

The overall problem of which they became aware concerned the inadequacy of information received at this end, something of which the section had now been made particularly aware. That said, the report that he was going to have to draft would need to be circumspect as regards anything that might look like unwarranted criticism. Its aim would be to assess the general feel of the country concerned, how the embassy there saw it, and how that embassy coped with its perceptions.

Apart from this overall conclusion concerning inadequate information, each of the three countries produced its own specific impressions.

### Algeria -

different! very centralised, with politics, economics, and industry all visibly inter-dependent;

as what may partly have been a result of this, the Embassy - small for a country who traded with us at the level that they did - seemed in practice almost isolated, certainly distanced, from the Algerians;

at the Trade Fair, UK exhibitors commonly commented that Algeria was a very difficult country and that making consistent contact was almost impossible - places remained unfilled in the British pavilion at the permanent site;

the UK mixed-economy resulted in an approach typified as "smoothing the path for the exporters" via the Embassy - this contrasted on the one hand with what he assumed was the old-boy network used by the French, and the direct government-to-government contacts of the Eastern bloc with "the dreaded Soviet Trade Delegation";

however, everything that the visitors saw reinforced the view that Algeria was an excellent market with whom the UK should have been doing a lot of business.

Tunisia -

a happier country, with a somewhat grandfatherly president given to making daily party-political broadcasts - sometimes very formal, sometimes in his shirtsleeves - and characterised by Edward as differing markedly from the Algerians in that Tunisians obey traffic signals whilst in Algeria nobody stops;

society seemed to have very capable people 'at the top', and a sound 'technician' class in the middle; difficulties there were again in making and maintaining business contacts and it seemed to him that our Embassy was placed very little better than in Algeria;

however, the Tunisians were keen on attracting foreign investment and increasing trade - witness the import-export

exhibition referred to at the previous interview and the visit of the 'very impressive' Tunisian official;

but - the market was much smaller than the Algerian one.

Libya -

discouraging stories abounded - they had been cleared through the airport by Embassy staff in 10 minutes, whilst other passengers had taken two hours;

the overall impression, however, had been of a country that was keen to trade, had plenty of goodwill towards the UK, but lacked effective organisation;

although there were men educated at Yale, Harvard, even Oxford, in the political and business community, the 'solid middle' that they had noted in Tunisia was lacking - below the top in Libya was an "abyss of mediocrity", and when the top men were away there did not seem to be anybody below who even knew how to sign a cheque;

to this impression of its being not so much malice as simple poor organisation that lay behind the unsigned cheques and unissued certificates of tax paid was added something further - an impression of a country where policy changes of a major sort could come about in a matter of a couple of months or so as what would seem to be the direct result of a public reference to an issue of policy by Colonel Gaddafi;

nevertheless, even though the 'proper conduct of business' was to be pursued in Arabic, with all paperwork in that tongue, the practical fact was that face-to-face business contacts were likely to be in English, and provided that the businessman wanting to trade there could manage to set up and maintain personal contacts it ought not to be too difficult.

### **Personal Reflections**

The trip had really come too late to be of any practical value to Edward himself. He was due to be posted out of the branch shortly. Nevertheless, from a general point of view it had been educative to see how the inter-relationships between the various countries, the Embassies, and his own branch all worked in practice. It might have been of more use six months previously though.

Benefits from the trip -

meeting diplomats in their posts - actually seeing UK-based staff and find out about their reactions to the local scene, to London, and to the embassy's position in the country concerned was instructive;

noting the differences - the embassy where all commercial staff were Arabists, the other where the one man concerned happened to be a Slavonic student (with not much in the way of French either);



putting faces to names;

comparing the importance put on particular issues by the UK posts with the view back in his own branch;

more generally, from his own point of view it was doubtless of value to have learned a little about the relations between the commercial and political sides in an Embassy;

on this occasion, given that it was his first ever business-trip abroad, his own aims and consequent gains were probably limited very much by the job and thus mapped pretty closely on to the organisational ones - though for all that, he did manage a week's holiday in France on the way back.

Resources on which he had drawn -

his French, of course;

all that he had learned to date in the branch - from individual topics on which he had gained specific knowledge, to general ideas about how government worked, how embassies fitted in, and the Whitehall set-up;

what he had learned at university as regards meeting people, fitting into a team, how not to say things that should not be said;

and there were not only the geographic cognitive maps that he carried in his head, but the political ones too.

Had it been fun?

Algeria - a lot of hours, with the Trade Fair being anything but a 9-5 job;

Tunisia - the opportunity to wander round the Suk, and then getting drowned in a thunderstorm;

Libya - somehow a more open feeling, probably engendered by the particularly outward-looking commercial section in the embassy there.

### **Seventh Interview - 16 November 1979**

This was just about the end of his stay in this division, and after just one more week he would be off to the College. The week in focus had had its interesting moments, on which he was in fact able to impose some structure.

The one important issue for the branch centered on the impending visit of a Minister from Morocco. The background was simple, the details less so. The Moroccans had invited our Minister-of-State to visit. He could not go, so had invited them to come here instead. They had accepted - and then 2½ days prior to their arrival, our Minister had become unavailable - "a debate in the House".

Divisional, branch, even personal aims and objectives then flowed hierarchically, and deterioratingly, on from this -

from a courtesy visit,

to working to prevent a break-down in commercial relations between the UK and Morocco,

subsumed in which was keeping one's own Ministers happy - the Secretary-of-State would not have been amused if as a result of a mix-up Morocco had started to regard our businessmen with disfavour,

on from there, as chaos seemed to mount, there became established the further aim of stopping people from becoming neurotic,

then came a further deterioration in the quality of organisational aim as an exercise in simple damage limitation took over,

and finally there was the increasingly desperate attempt to get a Trade Minister of some sort or other to meet the Moroccan party - it seemed to him that it did not matter who as long as somebody did.

The particular problems that accompanied, or lay at the root of, all this were - after the initial non-availability of the Minister-of-

State itself - finding a group of businessmen who would be prepared to attend a Ministerial dinner, and then getting the briefing done. The invitation proved difficult partly because Morocco was not a major trading partner of the UK's and partly because the Moroccan party was interested not just in being sold things, but in investment in Morocco itself. Although the Department was busily urging overseas investment, the recent lifting of financial restrictions had had little effect as yet. As to the briefing, his own responsibility on this occasion had been for a draft trade and economy brief. What had originally been a fairly relaxed deadline became tighter and tighter towards the end - partly because of that very perception of its having been an easy deadline to meet, partly because of his principal's being away on a crucial morning, and partly because of his own involvement in running in his successor. It was here that the damage-limiting element started to show through, as being able to say that one had completed a draft brief seemed to become in a sense more important than what was in it - the Assistant Secretary, so the feeling ran, would only re-draft it anyway. Similarly, being able to show that one had a handful of invitations to businessmen seemed to become more important than what actually might go on at the meetings.

As to other work-features, there was always the routine flow of what amounted to casework in a branch like this - the "smoothing the path for businessmen" aim.

He reflected also on the continuing background policy issues - typically the obverse to casework. There was little of a policy-making nature at his own desk, though he assumed that there might be at AS-level and above. The only effect of policy issues at the lower levels was to dictate what to give to businessmen in the way of government line. The particular background issues at the time were -

the Arab boycott of Israel;

Southern Africa, a problem that also impinged on Nigeria;

Iraq;

Iran;

the Libyan nationalisation of UK assets in the early 1970's and associated cancellation of defence contracts.

The Libyan issue was in fact one where commercial and political issues were closely related, though his view was that it was a problem for the FCO rather than for his own department.

The other strand running through work in the week in question concerned the running-in of his successor. This was going to differ from his own arrival in that first there was in fact going to be an effective hand-over period, whereas he had arrived to a post that had been empty for some time, and that there was also going

to be an experienced Principal for the new man to work to, rather than the new Direct Entrant who had originally been responsible for him.

The newcomer was also coming into his second job, so filing and such like would prove no problem. However, there were just three thoughts that had struck Edward:

- 'culture-shock' - the new man would find a new way of working compared with his previous job, and there would be culture-shock too in the real sense of having to deal with cultures that would be different for him;
- a corollary to handing-over to another was the sudden realisation of just how much about the division and his own work in it he had actually learned;
- and, compared with his previous post, the newcomer was going to find a very wide range of companies and organisations to deal with - from sweet manufacturers to civil engineering.

### **Personal Outcomes From The Week**

It had started with a sense of exhilaration. He would be meeting his successor, and was interested both in seeing how the latter would make out and in using him to make some judgement of his own as to what to expect from the College course on which he was due to go.

He had hoped for a peaceful week - but one effect had centred on the feelings involved in watching a deadline come rapidly upon one. In a sense there had been more initiative involved than normal, with the delegation to him of a certain amount of decision-making in the absence of other people. It was not often that anyone below Principal made a decision with any noticeable results, but this time there had been decisions called for and he had had to make them.

One interesting event had occurred. He had taken his successor along to introduce him at the monthly meeting for drinks of a private group of businessmen and others who met regularly to share and disseminate information on the Middle East. It was seldom particularly interesting, but, ironically, on this his last attendance it had proved most useful.

The end of the week had brought a feeling of relief at having got through, together with a perverse satisfaction in having left a lot of "nasty bits and pieces" for his successor to deal with on the Monday morning while he, Edward, took some leave. There was also satisfaction that, at his hands, his successor had picked up quite a lot and was at least "reconciled to his fate".

As for that fate, it was too soon for him to say what he had got out of the year's work - he had just been busy absorbing. Maybe this was a reflection of the work itself. Nobody really seemed quite sure, he felt, about how export promotion should be structured - it just seemed to have evolved.

## **Eighth Interview - 26 February 1980**

He came to this interview having just finished some eight weeks all told of college-training, and was now some four or five days only into a new post. We considered the training first - which came in two parts - and then he talked briefly about what he understood so far of the new job. The two distinct parts to the training were formed first of the standard Part I package for ATs at the Civil Service College, and second of an 'exchange' course on administration in France.

### **The College**

The organisation's aims, as far as he could see, were to take a bunch of historians, linguists and general specialists in the arts who had variously spent the previous 12 months muddling through, and then giving the central department an opportunity to tell them one or two things about their jobs. There were three sections - statistics, economics, and public administration. For the first two of these, the aim was probably more to acquaint people from what he called "other specialist fields" with the two specialisms. In this, the organisation's aims mirrored his own, which were to find out about statistics and economics, given that he knew very little about either.

The public administration part consisted mainly of civil servants more senior than they talking about their own roles, and was probably more interesting than the more specialised subjects



because everybody by now knew something about it. A high point had been a senior Labour ex-minister coming to talk to them. Interesting though this section had been in short-run terms, though, he felt it had been too patchy to serve many longer term aims.

For the statistics and economics sections the style of presentation consisted of a broad review aimed at showing how the specialist in these areas can help in administration. For the economics, it worked; he could now understand the broad under-pinnings of what he read in the financial pages. For the statistics, though, he gained little more than an idea of when a statistician might be "pulling a fast one" - something that he thought he already knew.

Indeed, he had trenchant criticisms of both these sequences. There was too much time spent in the statistics doing basic numerical operations, with only one day on how a professional would do them and present them to administration. And for the other, there was too much theory. In both, therefore, the balance differed from what he was looking for. He felt in fact that none of them had gained what they had expected, and most of what he had himself achieved had been a by-product of coffee-time discussion.

There was also the problem of the College's first foray into course-assessment, a procedure aimed at meeting the complaints of departments concerned about "not knowing what their ATs had been up to for 20% of the year". The assessment procedure was experimental, and it showed. The ATs' own criticism of an

assessment procedure based on punctuality, oral and written expression, and something called 'presentation' clearly links in with another more forceful observation from one of their number about the course's irrelevance to his work. For Edward this went too far, because the economics had given him some sort of grounding, and parts of the public administration were handy. But he could not help but think that people's motivation must have been affected by perceptions of irrelevance.

### **The Exchange**

This was the latest in a series between the Civil Service College and the French part-equivalent, the Ecole National d'Administration - ENA. They were first inspired at Heath/Pompidou meetings in the early '70s, and had as a principal aim the promotion of Anglo-French relations. At course-member level, this overall aim broke down into seeing how the other administration worked, seeing how the French perceived their EEC role, and seeing how government worked from top to bottom in France.

The approach was by means of a mix of visits to Paris and to a provincial centre - in this case Dijon - after a preparatory few days in London. The ENA system was explained - though he remained less than totally convinced about its supposed superiority to our own. Then they visited ministries to see how the French counterpart to our own private office worked, say. Meetings with officials discussed the common approaches and the differences. In

Dijon much the same programme was applied to local government and its workings.

For him, the organisational aims were completely met - partly, no doubt, because of the motivation aspect implicit in this having been a voluntary course. His personal aims were also met. First there was having a break from AT-work. Then there was looking at what was available to them from the point of view of his work-experience. Given the commercial relations and export nature of that experience so far, this had meant his paying careful attention to trying to see how French government is perceived in France, in Europe, in the world, and how it would want to be seen. An important finding seemed to be that the reputation for their being international rule-breakers was hardly merited - French administrators faced the same sorts of problem as ours and tried to find the same sorts of way round them. His third aim, also met, had been to have a fortnight's refresher course from the language point-of-view.

Nevertheless, he finished up finding it difficult to see quite how his degree background, the experience in his previous branch, and these various courses would affect his new job.

### **The New Job**

A preliminary visit to his new Assistant Secretary some weeks previously had elicited the information that there was plenty of work, that it was a good post for an AT, and that they worked as

a team. After only a few days he could see what was meant by the last of these, but was not yet in any position to make judgements about the other two.

The setting was one of four branches in a Department of Industry division devoted in essence to industrial planning. Two of these were responsible for National Enterprise Board policy, and were thus doing rather different things from what they would have been doing two or three years previously. The other two seemed to have broadly similar aims but different responsibilities. One of them - now with his colleague John posted to it - seemed to be dealing with industry's needs in terms of vocational training, the development of skills and specialisations, but concentrating on what emerged from the education system. His own - similarly based in part on the thrust of the recent Finniston Report on technological development - concentrated on the education system itself. In the absence of any other sort of national or local provision, they worked directly on teachers, schools, local education authorities, and the Department of Education and Science itself, in an attempt to exert some influence on the development of technological studies.

The branch itself was organised into three sections, each responsible for an age-range - roughly corresponding to primary, secondary and higher education levels. His own Principal, a woman newly transferred from the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys and with a social science background, was responsible for the youngest range. The section also had a management education

responsibility though, which seemed to him at this point faintly contradictory - opposite ends of the spectrum, as it were. The Principal also appeared to be going to take on special responsibility for issues concerning women in industry.

Thinking himself in, he had found it useful to conduct a compare-and-contrast exercise with his previous post.

The contrasts first -

no longer dealing with far-away places of which they know little, but with near-by places - of which they know little;

instead of dealing with trade associations and one kind of 'quango', they deal with polytechnics, teachers, LEAs, and other sorts of 'quango';

a sort of classic role had evolved in the commercial relations and exports area, and that division had been rather more experienced and confident about what it was doing (though previously, one should note, he had observed 'lack of structure' in his old division) - his new colleagues had not quite worked the role out for themselves yet;

the previous area was all set up, channels were laid down, one knew what to do - here they were working more proactively, with "lots of people out there waiting to hear from them", and they made it up as they went along;

here, though, there was money to spend, which brought its own complications.

The similarities -

with respect to contacts with industry, his previous experience should help (not that the observation as he pondered on the College experience above seemed to bear that out);

and they both had a gospel to preach - in the one case it might have been "you will speak French when you try to trade in Algeria, won't you?", and in the other it was "you will teach technology, won't you?".

Two new aspects had struck him as particularly noteworthy - one practical, one more philosophical. The first was simply the volume of paper - "frightening", he called it. His analysis of this was that it was a concomitant of any new Civil Service venture being set up. Trying to establish a whole range of activities had a more marked effect on the need for papers, seminars, conferences, than just making a new policy initiative, he felt, and it was probably a phase that would pass.

The more philosophical point concerned the concept of the "anti-enterprise culture". This had come from the Secretary-of-State's analysis of the wrongs of the economy, this particular aspect referring to what he had identified as a vogue for deflecting

young people into social studies instead of into productive profit-making areas. This informed the branch's activities at a general level, and made a certain amount of sense to Edward. But it nevertheless provided a source of mirth for John and himself - the classicist and the linguist. He could, if he tried, get some way towards justifying his own position - the linguist as specialist - but it was not so easy for his colleague.

For himself, maybe, the one valuable spin-off from language-studies - practicalities apart - might prove to be the structuralist aspects, not that he counted himself an expert in this. But it did offer the prospect of being a way of thinking that he could apply in other areas - a bit like the classicist's much-vaunted claim that studying the classics taught one to think. Maybe it was no coincidence that biology had been his best science subject at school.

However, the work that confronted him as a new member of the branch would have little immediately to do with influencing the educational system away from producing too many students of the humanities - that was a 20-to-30 years enterprise. Meanwhile, in his new Under Secretary's choice of phrase, they had to start acting on "the lever of change", through their co-ordinating role amongst an enormous number of institutions. It was easy to see how difficult it could be to define organisational aims.

## **Ninth and Last Interview - 1 April 1980**

Part of the time we spent on further early impressions of the new post, and part on a more general look-back. The week's work had in effect three major strands, each dealt with by a kind of intertwining of his own activities, what the organisation was aiming at, and what he felt about it.

1. Work that represented new initiatives for the branch -

an item concerning the overseas aspect of their work;

a paper on educational provisions for 16-19 year-olds;

and an item concerning the prospect of funding some co-operative work between one of the business schools and small firms.

Each of these was so new that he knew as much about them as anyone else.

The overseas connection - "a long story" - was basically about comparisons with other countries on the industry-education front. The EEC was getting interested. More immediately, at a recent meeting the department's scientific adviser had asked what was happening elsewhere in this area - a question to which Edward doubted whether any answer would be forthcoming in his own time in the Division.



When they look at education in this country they find themselves taking in everything imaginable - not just what is covered by technological training. Industrialists feel they should have a say in all aspects of schooling, and a recurrent theme with them was "worrying about the quality of school-leavers". It seemed amazing to him that the Civil Service had never evolved a method for central and wide-ranging control of the education system - something distinct, he added, from total centralisation.

## 2. Ongoing divisional work -

an 'orientation' meeting with a group of industrialists;

another aimed at dove-tailing the Department's activities with those of the Department of Education and Science;

and a classic piece of AT-work that had filtered down from the Secretary-of State's private office.

He had been thankful not to have been detailed as note-taker at the first meeting, which had been long and, with respect to any sense of order implicit in the rather vague agenda, disorderly. Trying to impose a sense of structure on the note would have been very difficult indeed.

At the dove-tailing meeting he had however been the note-taker - and it had been traumatic. Again, the agenda had conferred no sense of order on the meeting. Everybody was vague about what

they and other people were doing. The chairman had been insufficiently ruthless in keeping order. And, whereas he had been brought up to regard the note of a meeting as the basis for future action, this was going to have only a few small action-points in what was going to be a messy note of a messy meeting.

As for the private office case, the Secretary-of-State had sparked on something to do with a national body concerned with course-validation and awards for supervisory training, and he, Edward, had had to try and find out to what he had been objecting. He wished the private office would get things right sometimes.

3. Responding to calls within the Division for comment -

a note to his Principal on the Department's house magazine, which concentrates on industry and education and finds itself used as a source - the "last word" - by the serious press;

reading the said serious press - Times Educational and Higher Educational Supplements - on a regular basis for background and events information in the educational world.

Summing up his feelings overall - over the several weeks to date, not just this one - he came out with a rather stark "I don't like the job".

The basis to this seemed to be essentially in what he saw from his vantage-point as organisational chaos. This sense of chaos had, he felt, two main bases to it -

"the nature of the beast" - which did not lend itself readily to being cut up into the bits into which it was cut - a 16-19 age-group looked neat enough but had all sorts of aspects impinging on it;

and staffing which was unplanned - long-term experts whose experience virtually structured the work, one of whom seemed to have carted his own specialist knowledge around the Department wherever he went - it was all very well and good having a group of people who knew the work backwards, but by the very nature of things people would move on and there seemed no logic or plan to considerations of how or where their places would be taken.

In fact, one effect of the disproportionately staffed sections meant that larger ones attracted more work to themselves - this had been the first week so far when he had had to work hard. Two new graduate EOs had just joined and were finding it all a very happy experience so far. He wondered how they would react when they got posted to a real job.

## **Overview**

We talked in terms much the same as those we had used at the outset - resources upon which he could draw, learning, satisfactions and dissatisfactions.

## **Developed resources and learning**

1. "Caution" - looking back to his first interview-report, as he did every so often, he identified then a preparedness to say things without pondering. He was now very much more careful about what he said and when he said it. This, he felt, came about partly from having to put things down on paper - a classical aim of an AT's training. In a practical sense, the putting down of things on paper was much improved, and his written presentation was tighter than it had been at the outset when things that he wrote read "rather like letters to Womans Own". Caution - care - he was unsure of just which it was. It was certainly something to do with an awareness of presentation, thinking about the implications, of how to structure things, how to wrap them up. It seemed to be forced on one from without rather than being something that came from within oneself - there had been no blinding flash of light.

2. An increased knowledge of how the organisation worked - a confidence that he could understand the system, and an awareness of his own place in it. However, although he could understand the system, he had not yet developed any ability to use it for his own ends - certainly not in the caricature sense of the civil servant manipulating his political masters and other civil servants. He himself was not up to the business of playing one off against another, calling meetings at inopportune times, and so on - indeed, he counted himself too honest for that kind of thing. As a general observation, though, he suspected that it was probably a

manifestation of any hierarchical organisation, not just the Civil Service - a cross-reference to extra-mural work in the Labour Party and the art of using the organisation came in at this point.

3. Confidence in getting on with others - having met ambassadors and sundry other dignitaries at public occasions, he had no qualms there any more. But the same was true for daily life - having to be basically pleasant whilst still saying "no" to someone. Organisational and personal aims were of course congruent here. He felt in fact that although he had developed a good deal personally at university, for him the personal development had indeed been continuing - as it was intended to be - during his time so far in the Civil Service. It was characterised, at least in part, by being more able to convey what he thought in a convincing manner.

4. Working in an hierarchy - it seemed odd to think of this as a resource, but he was definitely happier working in a set of relationships where he knew what he was doing and what was expected of him - this contrasted to life beforehand at university, and in the immediate present with the messy organisation in which he found himself.

5. Learning of things political in the Civil Service context - the relationship between political power and how policy is carried out; how it is formulated; the differences 'home and away' when the Diplomatic Service angle is introduced.

6. Patience - most recently in the face of trying to write a realistic job-description for entry on the computer-based personnel records system for management. Accounting for 100% of his time was going to be a challenge, too, when he came to prepare a similar entry for his own staff report.

### **Dissatisfactions**

1. Personalities - a major source of concern this - just how much the functioning of the organisation depended upon the personality of the individuals in post. A government department ought to be able to organise itself in such a way as to overcome difficulties in the area in which it was working, and to tackle that area effectively - effectiveness rather than efficiency, was what he was talking about.

2. Bureaucracy - another old favourite - the slow functioning of things bureaucratic. This was where learning to be patient came in.

3. Personnel management - this in fact followed on naturally from the previous concern. His department was, it so happened, quite good in this regard and for ATs had probably got it right. But he observed that service-wide there was a large amateur aspect to personnel management, training, and career-development. For other grades than his own there seemed to be very little in the way of positive action and even for ATs it could be better. So much seemed to depend on the individuals for whom and with

whom one was working - the 'personalities' point again. For himself, the first four months - before this record itself started - had been a waste, with inadequately thought-through induction programmes and a sense that Departments, CSD and the College were unsure about their relationship. And a final salvo on personnel management he reserved for the way in which the two latest pay-rounds had been conducted - sparing neither party to the negotiations - and this independently of the fact that the recent award itself he counted amongst the plus-points.

### **Satisfactions**

1. Everything that had come under the developing personal resources and learning sub-heading counted as satisfaction.
2. Being an AT - but in addition to the personal development there was a distinct, and satisfying, sense that in the main the work in which he had been involved, and was presently involved, was, despite the criticisms, a. worthwhile, b. important, and c. likely to achieve something.

## **APPENDIX 5 - Fiona - Commercial Relations, and 'caveat emptor' revisited**

### **First Interview - 27 February 1979**

The decision to study International Relations at Sussex had had three determinants to it. First, she had not wanted simply to carry on with the subjects that she had been studying at school - a direct-grant girls school in Bedford.

Second, she was looking for a way of pursuing in some sort of combination her various interests in politics, languages, and history. And third, she found when she visited the place that she liked Sussex - and as visits to other universities had given her the impression that there was probably not a great deal to choose between them all in terms of academic outcomes, she had decided that she might as well enjoy herself as well.

In the event, International Relations had not been quite what she had expected - rather more theory than history, though there had been a certain amount of history input early on to provide material "on which to pin the theories". But she had enjoyed herself.



The Civil Service had come about almost accidentally. Sitting the Qualifying Test had seemed to her like a useful dry run for Finals when she had come across the application form during a final-year job search. Nobody else she knew who had taken it had passed, and she knew little about the AT scheme. However, she started to remedy this when she found she had in fact passed and was invited to CSSB. CSSB itself she enjoyed. One aspect of both this and the QT that she had regarded rather as a game was the battery of cognitive tests. Having apparently been part of some educational assessment sample in her early schooldays in Glasgow, she had taken 'intelligence tests' at regular intervals. And the live Committee Exercise had been familiar ground too, she felt, with a lot of student affairs activity - helping with running the Union bar, the co-operative, and so on. The unnatural aspect of the Final Selection Board - half-a-dozen people looking on while one other engaged you in talk - was really rather frightening though. In the end, her application for Diplomatic Service and AT - with her discipline as the obvious connection in the first of these - had resulted in rejection for the one and success on the other.

She was now in the Department of Trade, in the Deputy Secretary command that was responsible for commercial relations and exports - just as was Edward, of course (qv), though he was in a different branch. In the hierarchial structure down through Under Secretary divisions and Assistant Secretary branches to Principal-led sections, she found herself working to the Principal who was responsible for South America. This was one of three sections in that branch, the other two covering Central America and

Australasia respectively. Together with the Principal and herself, there were six executive-grade staff and three clerical making up the section. She shared a room, in traditional style, with the Principal, and had in fact been there for virtually six months by the time our interview-series got under way.

She understood that the division's work was supposed to be policy-oriented, with day-to-day export services handled elsewhere in the Department. In practice, though, it seemed that there was a considerable overlap between policy and executive work here.

Her own work she described as "a rag-bag of bits that others don't want to do" - though in fact sometimes it was that they did not want to do it, sometimes that they did not have the time, and sometimes that the Principal thought that doing it would be good for her. There were also occasional one-off jobs, and the Assistant Secretary might get her to co-ordinate a single job for his three Principals. But in essence there was no way in which she felt that she could say - "this is my job".

All the same there were two main jobs that fell traditionally to the AT - plus note-taking at meetings. These were what on the onehand were loosely headed "economic reviews", and on the other looking after the finances of the Area Advisory Group.

She had by this time produced five separate economic reviews - more properly called "Background Note and Economic Profile". In the form of a free handout each concentrated on one country in

the area and was updated regularly. They would typically be made available to new businesses going into that area, say. Although each was in final form a fairly short piece of work, with paragraphs to prepare on many different topics they could take a good deal of wading through files over the previous few years to produce.

The Area Advisory Group was a group of British businessmen with interests in the region who, in connection with the British Overseas Trade Board (BOTB), held receptions, gave talks, and so on. The AT's responsibility was basically to keep a check on expenditure. This ranged from looking over monthly computer print-out returns, through checking the accounts for any irregularities, to preparing an annual submission to Parliament and the BOTB for permission to pay the group. The accounts-checking did not, she explained, amount to auditing. There were outside auditors, and she would not have been equipped to go through the accounts in any detail anyway. What she did do though was to look out for items about which questions might be asked. As for the submission, this she had just drafted. "I wrote the submissions, they were looked at by others, signed by somebody completely different, and I don't know quite what happened to them then." (She then went on to explain in some detail just what the submission and approval process was - somewhat belying the apparent disclaimer.)

One of the main strands of the meetings at which she would typically take notes was businessmen discussing new projects with

her Principal, often to see if there was "soft money" - aid-money at 4% rather than  $7\frac{1}{2}\%$  - available to support the venture. There were always three angles - the Overseas Development Ministry with a developmental criterion, the Department of Trade on pump-priming, and the Department of Industry looking for benefits to UK industry. Her branch would act in a co-ordinating capacity, with the Export Credits Guarantee Department taking a keen interest too.

It seemed to her that few aid-payments were ever made, usually because the firm failed to win the contract. One case had concerned a contract for building railway bridges in one South American country where the competing tender from another had clearly been subsidised. The firm's request for similar help to try and win the contract had been sympathetically considered until the ODM had blocked it because of concern over the political situation in the client-country. She had herself attended the meeting between the firm concerned and Whitehall and had written up the case. The standard procedure was then for that note to go to a standing committee comprised of the government departments mentioned above and representatives from the Treasury and Bank of England.

### **One Week**

There had been an economic review on Peru to work on, but the main business of the week had centred on a particular UK firm trying to win an order for three aeroplanes. Support was coming

from HM Ambassador at the other end, who felt that there could be a much larger order in the offing. A case was being made for a portion of development aid.

Her involvement had consisted of taking a note at a multi-departmental meeting chaired by her Under Secretary. Telexes were then to be sent to HM Ambassador on the outcome, one from ECGD and one from her division. The latter was first drafted by her Assistant Secretary; she had distributed it to members of the meeting for comment and collected the comments; she had then re-drafted the original in the light of those comments and put it back up to her Assistant Secretary, who had in turn sent it on to the Under Secretary; the latter would have then added a bit more re-drafting before putting her signature to it. In the event, it did not get away before the strike-action of 23 February overtook it.

This she found could be irritating, especially when on the rounds few substantial changes were made to the original. On the other hand, when somebody changed a first draft to take account of their own personal style the irritation centred on wondering why they could not have done the whole thing themselves if style was so important. However, she felt that she had got used to the process and even welcomed it when she was not sure about the content.

## Reflection

When she returned for the second session, she reflected on the notes from the first and identified a number of themes. The overall tone had been coloured by her mood at the time. This itself had been affected by her Principal's refusing to talk to anyone who had taken part in the one-day strike. That meant her too, and she worked in the same room. His view was that government officials should never strike under any circumstances. There was thus, she felt, a strong vein of dissatisfaction running through the whole account.

Other themes -

no feeling of "this is my job" - confusion instead, and difficulty in coping;

"perhaps I'm not always taken very seriously" - partly unavoidable, because sharing a room with her Principal and answering his 'phone when he was not there meant that she was often taken for his secretary - this was worst when the assumption was implicit, because then she could not correct it. And it was often the case that when the caller eventually got the Principal, he, the Principal, would give her the job to do anyway;

confusion about where she fitted in and about parts of the Department further off from where she worked - an effect that lessened though.

## Second Interview - 27 March 1979

On this occasion there did seem to be one common strand to the entries in her week's work-diary, she felt. For once it consisted entirely of policy-work.

Looking over the items, she was able to categorise them freely into four groups.

1. "Academic exercises" - writing about the economic prospects of a country or group of countries -

a paper for the Overseas Economic Intelligence Committee (OEIC) of the Cabinet;

a profile on Argentina;

another on Peru.

Taking the OEIC papers as an example, what was needed by the Cabinet Office in order to prepare a paper of their own on the present state of something called the Andean Pact, was information from her Section on such matters as the previous state of UK trade with that Pact, why we had the particular pattern of trade that we did, any so on. The Pact itself involved Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela and Peru in integrating various of their industries in order to try and achieve economies of scale. The car industry happened to be the only one going at that time.

Her contribution was to write a paper on the history of the industrial programmes attempted, how far they had progressed, what was planned, the tariffs situation, and the timetable for tariff-alignment. She also had to produce statistics on UK trade with Pact countries, dig out figures for UK investment there, and look up details on trade between the member-countries. In part she had as sources an HMSO publication on overseas trade statistics that was kept well up-to-date, and an IMF publication that tabulated export/import values for trade between all the countries in the world ("Directions of Trade"). Otherwise, she had somehow to find the appropriate source in the Department's economics and statistics division - "a confusing beast" consisting of five (or was it six?) different branches amongst which she had to hunt diligently to track down the necessary information. As for the more historical aspects, divisional files were kept up to date with material from magazines, journals, and the relevant overseas posts. Where she had reached so far was having just posted off information to the Cabinet Office for a first reaction.

## 2. Aid issues -

a case under the Aid-Trade Contingency Provision;

Aid strategy for the next five years.

The case concerned the proposed sale of a cement-plant to Bolivia. Competition from elsewhere meant that the two firms concerned in what was a joint venture needed better terms if they



were going to land the contract. Various departments were involved, and by the time they came to be discussing it ODM had run out of money for the year, ECGD had withdrawn cover for Bolivia, and the project looked dead. Her own involvement had consisted of discussing the matter with officials in ODM, and with the relevant sponsoring division in the Department of Industry. She had also attended a meeting in the latter Department, as her own Department's representative, where the issue was being discussed with the two firms and their bankers. There was, as she said, "much to-ing and fro-ing".

Her involvement in the Aid Strategy work was essentially putting material together. The issues concerned trying to argue for an increase in the proportion of the UK aid budget that would be allocated to the UK. Although it was possible to argue that aid produced benefits for exports, this was not at that time acceptable to ODM, she thought; the case had rather to be aid-related.

### 3. Newly industrialising countries (NICs).

She was unsure about this as an issue. The FCO had produced a report dealing basically with the extent to which their manufacturing exports would affect our manufacturing industries. It covered two of the countries within her section's province - Brazil and Argentina. She had so far only read the report, and was waiting for instructions from her Assistant Secretary. She imagined it would involve them in putting something to the Area Advisory Group for their consideration.

#### 4. Reading -

simply keeping abreast by reading magazines, journals, reports on Latin America, and trade in general.

#### **Coping and Satisfaction**

As with her fellows, this was the point at which we looked at personal 'inputs and outputs' - the resources on which she found herself drawing, the difficulties; the satisfactions and dissatisfactions, and what she was learning.

#### **Resources**

A lot of the resources that she had been drawing on were academic ones. The work on the Andean Pact she attacked very much in the style of a university essay or dissertation. The necessary academic skills were those of logical ordering, fact and figure analysis, the drawing of conclusions from such analyses, how to go about looking for sources, how to formulate questions and discard irrelevancies. In forming judgements about relevance and irrelevance she was developing a standard format in her head for economic reviews, adding and subtracting material as necessary for each case. In some ways this was not much better than guess-work - economic reviews were written for businessmen, not academics. The only feedback she had was people asking further questions, though these were usually very industry-specific. As for 'knowledge-of-results' on the Andean Pact paper, she would wait

years. To an extent it contained her own views on the matter- at the same time she was using her own and other people's knowledge about other examples of such organisations.

ATCP cases involved a lot of discussion with lots of other people with different views - this required skill in getting on with others. She had discovered that if she listened for long enough to somebody talking on the telephone she would eventually get the answer she needed. It meant sorting out ahead of time what their views were likely to be.

### **Difficulties**

Sorting out which divisions of the Department did what, whom you needed to speak to on particular things, and in particular making sure that you did not leave out somebody who believed he should be consulted. Then there was determining just what level at which to go into another division. Although level-for-level was a standard approach it represented something of a problem for ATs who were never quite sure just what their level was supposed to be.

Another difficulty was Civil Service language, particularly writing style. It was rather difficult to pick this up unless one was immersed in correspondence, which she was not. She often found she had to make letters longer than she would have liked them to be. It seemed that the Civil Service tended not to be blunt and direct, and one had to learn phrases to protect meaning and render implicit what might otherwise be explicit.

The ATCP meeting was also difficult in that it represented the first time she was allowed out on her own.

### **Satisfactions and Dissatisfactions**

Going to that meeting on her own was satisfying because she was for once dealing with a case more or less off her own bat. Nevertheless it was depressing to find that in the end it all turned out to be a waste of time. So far the way in which her Andean Pact work had been accepted was reasonably satisfying - she was a little grudging about this, but it was so much like producing economic reviews, of which she had now done six or seven, that it ran the risk of becoming boring. Economic reviews were boring - the same thing over and over again with different figures.

### **Learning**

The meeting once again - on previous occasions she had been to meetings as note-writer which meant that you could not really get into what was being said and the way it was being said. This time she had to pay more attention. When dealing with businessmen there was a standard way of saying things, of not saying things and of half-saying things - in other words, ways of telling them something that you should not. It also involved her in contact with more people, which had the spin-off effect of helping her to learn a bit more about the structure of the whole Department. Learning about structure meant that confusion in the way she went about her work continued to lessen.

## Reflections

Again, when she came the next time, we spent a moment or two reflecting on the notes from this second interview. "I don't seem to enjoy it very much," she said. "Boring, dissatisfying, and so on keep cropping up. I'm not sure that that's a true reflection. In the end the cement-plant went through! ECGD did give cover, so the meetings proved worthwhile after all." She also expressed some surprise at the extent to which work was proceeding so very much like the way work at university had - she had expected there to be a more noticeable difference.

### Third Interview - 3 May 1979

The week's diary she analysed freely to produce groupings as follows.

1. Programme for a visit by the Argentine Minister of the Economy -

lots of 'phone calls and meetings;

liaison with industry and the Argentine Embassy;

liaison with the British Embassy in Argentina.

It seemed she had spent the greater part of the week on the telephone to various British firms asking them if they wanted to

meet the Minister or anyone accompanying him. Each time she thought that she had a programme settled the British Embassy seemed to come back saying that some aspect or other would not work - so back she went to the telephone. There were different sorts of arrangements to be made with different agencies depending on just what status the particular member of the visiting party had. Her own involvement started with attending a large multi-lateral meeting to find out how far arrangements had progressed. Apparently the original impetus for the visit had been a seminar arranged by the AAG earlier in the month.

## 2. Policy work -

Inter-departmental Study of Multi-lateral Aid (ISMA);

the Bolivian cement plant;

a seminar to be held in Brazil on selling British technology to the Brazilians.

The ODM would contribute funds to international institutions like the World Bank; eligible UK firms then made bids for contracts financed by the total funding; the relationship between what went in and what came back in contracts had to be monitored. She was writing a paper on one aspect of this. The Brazilian seminar meant familiarising herself quickly on what was needed, as she was involved in planning that part of the programme that had metallurgy as its subject-matter.

3. An "on-going situations" group - regular issues concerning the Area Advisory Group.

4. Briefing -

for the Deputy Secretary on selling cigarettes to Brazil - a matter on which the Brazilians were not keen

5. "Academic Exercises" -

the regular work on economic reviews.

### **The Construct System**

The items that we picked out for her to use as 'elements' in a construct-eliciting procedure were -

reading International Relations;

student affairs at Sussex;

from the second interview -

"academic exercises" - the Overseas Economic Intelligence Committee (OEIC) paper and so on;

aid issues;

newly industrialising countries (NICs);

reading to keep abreast of trade issues;

from the present interview -

the Argentine Minister's visit;

policy-work - ISMA and so on;

"on-going situations" - regular AAG work;

briefing - on selling cigarettes to Brazil;

economic reviews.

### **Construct 1**

Organisational/smooth running as opposed to innovative/change - the Minister's visit and regular AAG work defined the one pole, the ISMA policy-work the other. Reading Industrial Relations was a struggle to fit - but she eventually decided that it came at the 'innovation' end.

### **Construct 2**

Advisory function versus executive. Briefing of her Deputy Secretary on selling cigarettes, and writing economics reviews came at the one end, monitoring the AAG at the other - the university studies just would not fit on at all.

### **Construct 3**

Working within the organisation only versus working with outside contacts - writing economics reviews on the one hand, concerning herself with the Ministerial visit and doing the regular AAG work on the other.



#### **Construct 4**

The first feeling that she came up with was along the lines of the humdrum and routine as opposed to work that she enjoys. After working at it for a while we agreed that 'having no strong feelings' as opposed to 'actively enjoy' was a more accurate reflection. The construct itself is probably rather longer than this - having no strong feelings is likely to come somewhere between active enjoyment and active dislike. The array of elements, one supposes, do not take her out as far as the latter end. What defined the construct with which we were left was work in the AAG and the Deputy Secretary briefing fixing the 'no strong feelings' end, and the ISMA policy-work the 'active enjoyment'. In the end, this construct turned out to be identical to Construct 8.

#### **Construct 5**

Furthering other people's knowledge as opposed to furthering her own: the "academic exercise" for OEIC, as opposed to trying to come to grips with newly industrialising countries and reading to keep abreast.

#### **Construct 6**

A construct that came up at first as 'practical versus academic', but which on further reflection she pinned down to 'a waste of time' versus 'worth doing'. The OEIC paper and NICs come at the former end, the five-year aid strategy issues at the latter.

### **Construct 7**

Easy to do: difficult to do. Reading International Relations was easy; involvement in student affairs, and the aid-strategy issues were difficult.

### **Construct 8**

"Things I do not identify with" versus "things that I do" (the construct that turned out to be identical to having no strong feelings as opposed to actively enjoying). Reading to keep abreast fixed the first end, student affairs and policy-work on ISMA issues the second.

### **Construct 9**

Gaining no personally useful learning as opposed to learning something - not in the academic sense - that was in fact personally useful. Regular work on the AAG, and the newly industrialising countries report define the one end, student affairs the other.

### **Construct 10**

Ordering other people's opinions - putting forward one's own. Aid-strategy issues and briefing the Deputy Secretary on cigarette-selling to Brazil fix the first end, and reading International Relations at university fixes the other.

Constructs 8, 9 and 10, it will be appreciated, span the three time-points.

The principal feature of the system is that there is a central construct concerning things with which she identifies and actively enjoys, as opposed to those with which she does not identify and about which she has no strong feelings. Identification and enjoyment tend to go along with the innovative and changing, with work that involves putting forward her own opinions, with furthering her own knowledge, with feeling that the work is worth doing, with learning something personally useful from the experience, and from finding it difficult to do. Conversely the things with which she does not identify and about which she claims to have no strong feelings tend also to be concerned with the organisational and smooth-running aspects of her work, with ordering other people's opinions, with furthering other people's knowledge, with the feeling that what she is doing is a waste of time, that there is no personally useful learning being obtained from it, and at the same time that it is easy to do. The advisory function as opposed to the executive and working only within the organisation as opposed to having contacts outside, are both ways of looking at her work which are independent of each other and of the other constructs.

As for the items of experience, she sees the work on a Cabinet paper for the Overseas Economic Intelligence Committee, and profiles on Argentina and Peru, as being very much like the work on economic reviews and with briefing the Deputy Secretary on

the Brazilian cigarette market; this latter is also rather like the continuing work that she has on the Area Advisory Group. The items in this small group are all very unlike the policy work that she has done - involving the ISMA and so on. Independently of these, her background reading and newly industrialising countries are both seen in very similar ways. The work done on the Argentine Minister's visit, on the aid-and-trade contingency provision, together with her university study and the student affairs that she was involved in at the University, are all seen independently of each other and of the other elements.

There are two major blocks in the focussed grid. The OEIC paper, economic reviews, briefing on the Brazilian cigarette market, the AAG work, and NICs, are all seen as basically a waste of time, involving the organisation's smooth running and having to do with ordering other people's opinions, as producing no personally useful learning, as being easy to do, and as being things with which she has no identification. On the other hand the work for the Argentine Minister's visit, reading International Relations at Sussex, the involvement in student affairs at Sussex, the aid-and-trade contingency provision work, and policy work in general, are mostly seen as things which are difficult to do (with the exception of the University work), as having involvement with contacts outside rather than working solely within the organisation (except for student affairs), and as being things with which she identifies. Her university work, student affairs, the aid-and-trade contingency provision, her general policy work are all to do mostly with furthering her own knowledge (except ATCP), as being worth

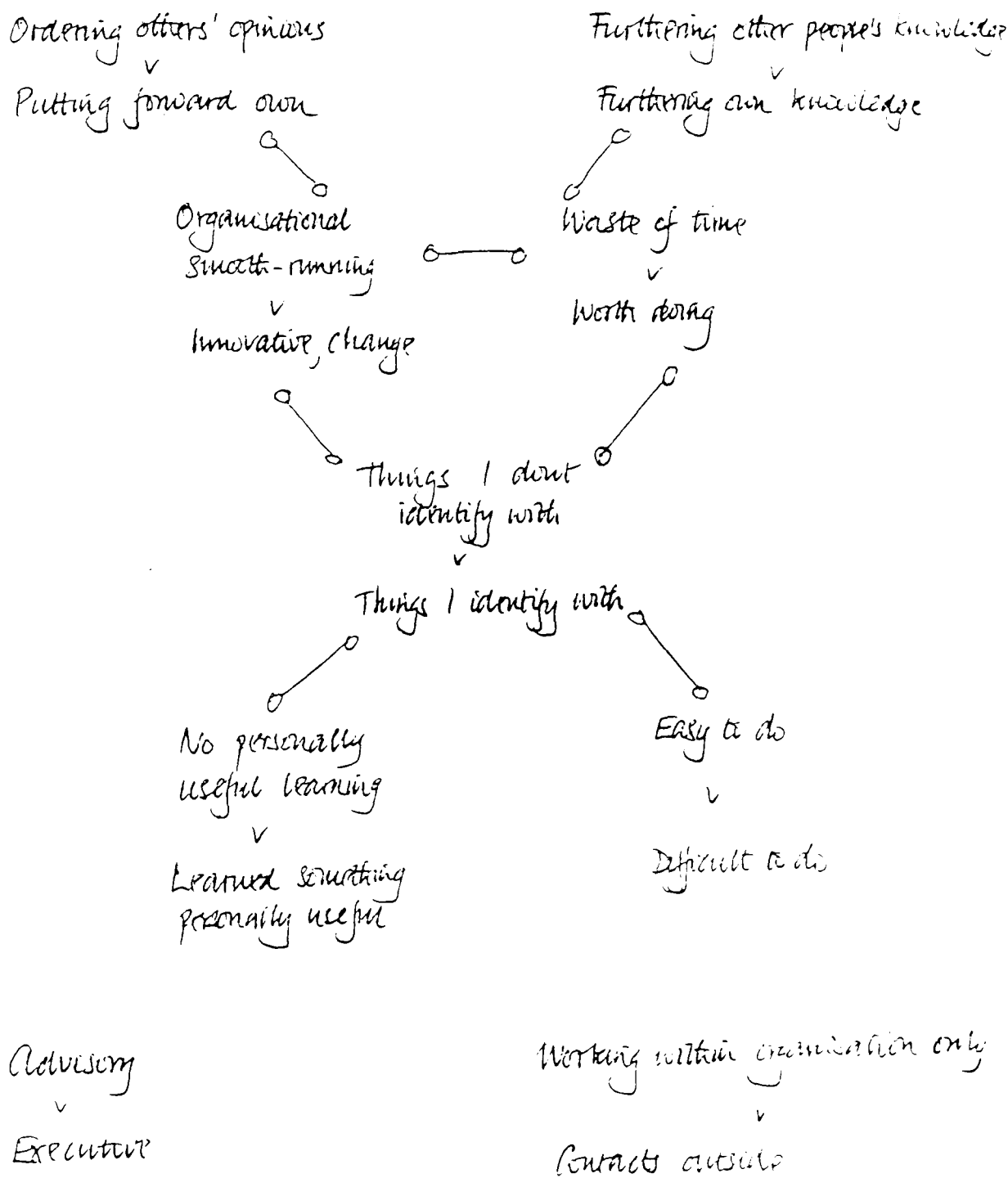
Fig 2.5

Fiona

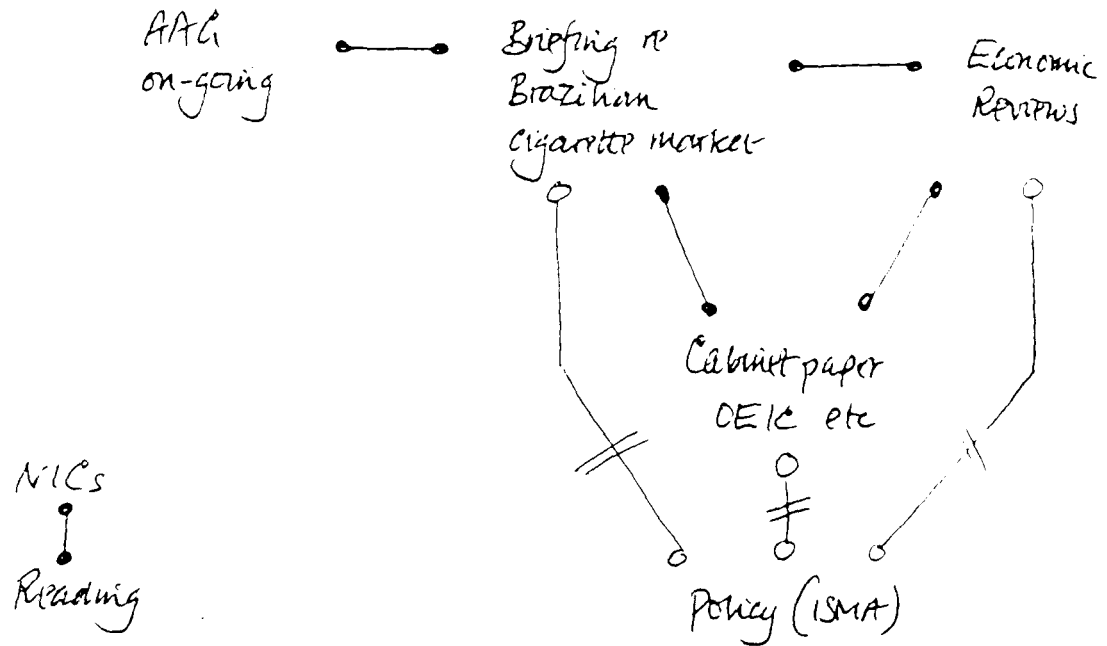
	OEIC plc	Econ. Rev.	Briefing (Brazilian cigs.)	AAG	NICs	Reading	Arg. Min. visit	Reading Int. Rel.	Student Affairs	Aid plc	Policy (ISMA)	
1												10
Advisory	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	-	0	0	0	Executive
Furthering other people's knowledge	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	Furthering own knowledge
Waste of time	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	Worth doing
Organisational smooth-running	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	Innovative, change
Ordering others' opinions	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	Putting forward own opinions
No personally useful learning	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	Learned something personally useful
Easy to do	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	Difficult to do
Things I don't identify with	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	Things I identify with
Working within organisation only	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	Contacts outside

Fig 2.5 (cont - 1)

Constructs



## Elements



Reading International Relations

Student affairs

Club etc

Argentine Minister's visit.

doing, as being innovative and change making (except student affairs), and as in some sense executive rather than advisory (though reading International Relations does not fit on this).

One observation that should be made, perhaps, is that although this structure may look straightforward, intelligible, persuasive enough, she had to work very hard to dig it out - eliciting was accompanied by very long pauses for thought and a good deal of concentration. Figure 2.5 shows the focused grid.

## **Reflections**

As before, we spoke briefly about this account the next time that she came. The construct-system did indeed make some sense. One particular feature that stood out was the relevance of her degree studies, and the way in which this came through in the clustering of university work with those aspects of her job in the Department where there was some sense being able to identify with the task, and where the work was difficult and worth doing. It rather looked as though for this job at any rate her degree had been something more than just a ticket to get in.

## **Fourth Interview - 14 June 1979**

Here we moved on to her grouping the work-diary's elements under each of three general sub-headings, again as with her fellows. There were the activities in which she herself was engaged, her perceptions of the organisational aims that were



served by them, and the category that we chose to call simply 'feelings'.

### **Work-activity**

1. Collecting and collating general information -  
Colombia economic profile, reading Latin American newsletters and the Financial times
2. Liaising with industry -  
ringing the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry regarding a mission to Brazil, ringing the FCO for biographies of Brazilian ministers and then editing them for use by a large UK industry, answering a call asking for details of the Andean Pact, and so on.
3. Liaising with other departments -  
mainly the FCO - as for example, concerning guest-list for an official lunch for the vising Argentinian Minister.
4. Digging out information to answer queries within the division -  
for example, on the procedure for industrialists' meetings during State Visits, and discussing papers for the petrochemicals day at the forthcoming Sao Paulo seminar.

A compare-and-contrast procedure for helping us to examine the way in which she perceived the work produced strands, or elements, like these -

all involved her in digging out information in some way, though there would be differences both in purpose and in for whom it was wanted;

finding information to answer questions, sometimes involving other departments;

usually leading on to telephoning an answer, or writing minutes and letters, sending telexes;

could be general or very specific, questions regarding organisation or department policy on the one hand, and about particular countries on the other;

giving advice of some sort;

initiating or not, anticipating likely questions as opposed to simply responding to questions raised;

analysis of what has happened as opposed to present or future events;

working in a vacuum instead of with personal contacts;

and where there was contact, the level - at her own or similar level, as opposed to at a higher one.

## **Organisation Aims**

She was not, she said, entirely sure that the organisation itself knew what its aims were - it was "a prime candidate for cutting". However, groups did emerge.

1. Collecting information and disseminating it to UK companies in order to make them aware of the existence of markets overseas and of opportunities for export - like, for example the work on the Colombia economic profile, or checking on information for the Area Advisory Group.

2. Visits - creating opportunities to put UK companies in front of other countries' ministers - work on the mission to Brazil on the one hand, and the visit of the Argentinian Minister on the other.

3. Providing official government backing for particular projects - other countries sometimes insist that UK companies are so backed.

4. Disseminating information about our companies direct to theirs - like ministerial visits except that we are in touch with their industrialists rather than with their governments - the particular item here was the forthcoming seminar in Sao Paulo.

Strands that she identified in amongst the detail included -

a dependency relationship, in a sense, between encouraging exports and fostering commercial relations, when the distinction might be between encouraging the export of a specific commodity or project by a particular firm, and more general commercial relations or government support to industry as a whole;

general issues might centre on the economy of a sector, as opposed to the specific issues at single project level;

there were direct, official government-to-government relations, as opposed to a background presence, or cachet, when the relationship was more directly with overseas industry - and issues to do with the government actually spending money or not;

identifying opportunities and taking advantage of them - approaching or waiting to be approached;

and there were practical issues like whether the division's involvement was with one or more UK companies, and whether other government departments or other organisations were also involved.

## Feelings

She had none, she claimed. Even offering a solid construct from the previous session to see if it would help - identifying with the work as opposed to not - did not help much. After a certain amount of brow-furrowing, though, she did draw out some distinctions.

1. Routine stuff for which she had no particularly strong feelings -

like the Colombia profile, AAG work, ringing for Brazilian biographies, and so on.

2. Things that she was annoyed about having to do -

collecting a list of visits from all three sections in half-an-hour was "a bit much to ask", and her annoyance was compounded by not having kept a copy of a previous list; copying an FCO telex to ECGD when the FCO people should have thought of doing so themselves.

3. Ambivalent feelings - a strain between resentment and interest. This consisted of all the things that resulted from answering her Principal's telephone, the resentment as ever centering on being taken for his secretary, and the interesting arising from actually getting to do the work -

such as the query on procedures during State Visits, and advising on the guest-list for the official lunch.

4. Interest -

the Sao Paulo seminar arrangements.

**Fifth Interview - 17 July 1979**

Activity-groupings -

1. Passing on information that was already available -

work on economic profiles;

writing a minute to the private secretary to the Minister-of-State for Trade on the latter's forthcoming visit to South America.

2. Sitting, listening, and doing very little about it -

discussion with a large sugar firm on their contribution to the forthcoming Brazilian seminar;

meeting with a technology consultant on the same seminar;

various other incidental meetings and contacts.

3. Advising -

on credit for Argentina, ECGD cover for Peru, and other items.

4. Attempting to take advice -

from the Department's solicitors and the FCO on a matter concerning Chile.

Some of the strands:-

information-flow, answering questions, passing information on;

passive as opposed to active - active research and writing up, as with that which involved her in passing on information, as opposed to stopping to listen as matters were discussed in her Principal's room so that she could absorb material to pass on at some later stage;

there was factual information - "such-and-such has happened" - as opposed to opinion;

there was the distinction between working with businessmen, passing on available facts, and going about her own business between a number of Departments, and pieces of Departments, in order to provide a co-ordinated piece of advice for the Minister;

there were also other dimensions that concerned straightforward matters like already having the necessary knowledge as opposed to picking peoples' brains.

Organisation aims -

1. Making information available to businessmen; making sure they have all the information they need in order to export their goods:

all the profiles, reading Latin American newsletters; meeting with Venezuelan Commercial Counsellors.

2. Various institutional ways of helping businessmen sell themselves and their goods to particular foreign countries:

discussion on line of credit for Argentina; discussing restoration of ECGD cover for Peru; discussion on ECGD ratings.

3. Projecting image of UK Government, (a) abroad (b) at home:

minute to the Minister's Private Secretary, and so on.

There was a concern to have information available that could be passed on to businessmen - mainly fairly factual. It was a question of handing out pamphlets, answering questions on the 'phone, and



very much leaving people to get on with what it was that they were thinking about doing.

The various institutional ways of helping them centred on particular schemes that had been developed: schemes which helped British companies export their goods - like the idea for holding seminars, and so on.

Projecting the image was where they were involved almost in a political exercise for the government of the day - as was using the government of the day to publicise the UK by sending Ministers abroad on visits. It involved drafting letters justifying things that had been done or not done with respect to letters from constituents and so on.

Neither was there any kind of change in ethos. Official policy always was that civil trade would go on regardless of views on the foreign government. In the case of Chile this was not strictly adhered to and certain aspects of civil trade had been stopped. These had now been reintroduced. The fact that there was no ECGD cover for Chile was largely political. The new Conservative Government appeared to adhere more strictly to a philosophy that civil trade should not be deterred by politics.

As for the proposed cuts in public expenditure, she did not know what they are going to do - she had no idea. So far they had the same number of staff, though she did not know if any vacancies that arose would be filled.

Taking the overall picture, it seems that when she had in some sense been involved in, or in touch with, the organisation's perceived aim of making information available to businessmen she had either been passing on information or sitting and listening. She had fairly neutral feelings about most of this, though her own personal interest had occasionally been aroused - as when she had attended a formal buffet lunch at an official address.

The general aim of helping businessmen sell abroad had been when she was either sitting listening and soaking it all in or else actually giving advice herself. On the one hand, the work might either have been neutral in the feelings aroused, whereas on the other she might have been either irritated or interested.

In fact, projecting the Government's image, whether at home or abroad, and which involved her partly in passing on available information and partly in taking advice, had produced feelings of irritation and anger.

Looking more closely at the feelings engendered by the work itself and the aims that she saw it trying to meet, we found that it grouped along the following lines:

1. Absolutely neutral -

as in working on profiles;

2. Personal interest -

planning the buffet lunch, meeting the technologist, discussing matters with the sugar firm, meeting the Venezuelan commercial counsellor;

3. Irritation verging on anger -

discussing restoration of ECGD cover to Peru, the business of minuting the PS to the Minister-of-State, and contacting solicitors and FCO about Chile.

Some of the feelings centred on herself and her involvement, some on uncontrollable events and effects outside her. The neutral feelings were to do with now familiar features of her working life, whereas personal interest might be aroused by the out-of-the-ordinary - like that lunch, which had taken place at the London headquarters of the Area Advisory Group. The main distinction between the first two sets was that the second - where her personal interest might be aroused - simply involved something different from normal.

The everyday work world could also bring irritation and anger - and could do so particularly when she ran up against a "bureaucratic brick wall". Such a contrivance, she was beginning to realise, had little to do with the abstract organisational structures, and very much more to do with the personalities involved. One particular issue concerned a Minister from another department not having informed her that he was visiting Latin America at the same time that her own Minister of State was. This had in

practice meant that she had had to redraft the minute for his private secretary. That had been irritating. What moved it nearer to anger - personality-based rather than dependent upon the organisational structure - was learning that the other minister involved did not believe in passing on information to others about his movements or plans unless he himself wanted to help.

### **Sixth Interview - 5 September 1979**

Work activity this week had been a little out of the ordinary in that, as she was shortly to be moving, she had spent part of the time explaining things to her successor.

The activity-groups looked as follows.

1. Gathering and arranging factual information -

a brief on the visit to Latin America by the Minister of State for Trade for a lunch that he was attending with the Committee on Invisible Exports;

writing a piece on the Interamerican Development Bank.

2. Policy statements -

drafting a speech for the Minister to deliver to the Anglo-Venezuelan Chamber of Commerce, and discussing the draft with her Principal;

drafting a reply to a request from Bolivia concerning textiles - which should by rights have gone to the commodity division concerned rather than to the 'country' desk;

getting comments on it from the experts and re-drafting accordingly.

3. Passing on information, orally rather than in writing -

explaining the job to her successor;

advising a businessman on finding a Bolivian insurance company.

4. Sitting back, listening, doing nothing in particular -

a meeting with a First Secretary from the Brazilian Embassy.

The central strand is in essence 'information' - gathering, arranging, passing it on, in written or oral form. The main distinction is between dealing with straight fact and dealing with - "inventing" was the word she used - policy. Drafting the speech for the Minister provided an interesting example of the latter.

It meant applying general statements of Conservative philosophy to what the Minister might say about Anglo-Venezuelan trade. This

was largely a question of guessing, given that she knew something about the Conservative attitude to private industry and Government intervention. Although one did tend to hear fairly frequent policy statements on subjects like health and social security, one did not hear a great deal about international trade; so she had to invent it, sending her own version to the Minister to see if he agreed with it. As for access to Conservative philosophy, this was a case of picking up crumbs from what the Minister and other Ministers had said, and going through their Manifesto with a fine-toothed comb. This helped one to make a semi-educated guess, for example on such things as the attitude to technology transfer. Extrapolating from what the Aid Minister had said, this was roughly that technology transfer was a good thing, and would be achieved through outward investment by companies in developing countries, which was "a jolly good substitute for spending money on overseas aid". It was better because it involved profits and private enterprise. Knowing that the Aid Minister had said that, she thought - and her Principal had seemed to agree - that it would be permissible to let Trade say it too; it ought to be the sort of thing that the Minister of State for Trade would want to say. The Department of Trade attitude tended to be that exports followed on from investment. This was not something that a Labour Government would have been saying of course.

Going on to her perception of the way in which organisational aims had been represented by the week's work, she produced the following groupings

1. Relationships between the Department and domestic industry -

like the work that she had done on briefing the Minister for his lunch-date, and on the Interamerican Development Bank.

2. Commercial relations with the countries with which they were concerned - establishing and maintaining smooth working relationships between the Department and government and industry in these countries and fostering a positive image of the UK in them -

like drafting the speech.

3. "Perpetuating the organisation" -

explaining the job to her successor.

The ultimate aim of the two main groups taken together was of course to help improve the level of UK exports.

As far as domestic industry was concerned, much of the work was reactive - passing on information about the countries with whom they were dealing in order to encourage industry to export there -

information on the Interamerican Development Bank:

on what sort of opportunities they might find in other countries;

whether it was worth trying at all - as, for example, with Brazil where legislation existed to block the import of anything similar to what they made themselves.

Looking outwards towards the countries, then the department's aim was to encourage good relations in the hope that they would be well-disposed to UK firms -

establishing contacts between officials;

being hospitable - as with the young official from the Brazilian Embassy;

adopting a sympathetic line over attempts by one of the area countries to reach a commodity agreement with the EEC;

fostering contacts at Ministerial level - by the visit, for example;

trying to convey a positive image in any speech that he might make, and so on.

Looking at the week's work from a wider perspective, and taking something of what she had felt about it into account, it was clear



that where it was a matter of working relations between the Department and domestic industry, then for the most part she had been involved in gathering and arranging factual information. There was an element also of relaying information orally. By and large, she found some personal satisfaction in this, or had at the most merely neutral feelings about it.

Where the issues concerned commercial relations with other countries then, apart from the one occasion where she had just sat and listened, it had involved her mostly in drafting policy statements of some sort or another. Again this was at worst neutral, at best personally satisfying.

The aspect that she had characterised as 'perpetuating the organisation' - passing on information orally to her successor - she had frankly found irritating.

Taking the feelings in just a little more detail, there had been the three groupings -

1. personal satisfaction
2. neutral
3. frankly irritating.

Satisfaction had arisen from the two pieces of work - one on the IDB (the Bank) for domestic industry, the other the speech in the

commercial relations context - where she had in each case seen the thing through from start to finish. Further, the idea of writing a piece on the IDB had initially been her own. And the speech - although, not maybe a great speech - had also been based mostly on her own ideas. This accorded with her boss's principle - "ATs are for ideas". In practice, it meant that they got speeches to write.

The 'neutral' group was "a rag-bag" - replying on the Bolivian textiles issue, briefing for the Minister's lunch, and so on. As for the latter, all that that sort of thing usually entailed was producing a kind of short-hand paragraph. You did not need to try and take the individual's personality into account, say; you could be writing a brief for a talking computer. He would impose his own individuality on it when he came to draw on it. Even for a speech, one would not expect the person making it to read one's draft word-for-word.

As for the frankly irritating part, this had consisted in the main of explaining to her successor what sort of paper to use under which circumstances, to whom you wrote a minute rather than a letter and vice-versa, how to find a file, and so on. She herself, with no overlap, had had to learn by trial-and-error. That was not the source of the irritation. This was much more a sense of irritation with herself for not being particularly good at explaining this kind of thing. Quite apart from the fact that she was happier explaining things in writing than orally, there was the added difficulty of trying to get back in her mind to the point where

she too had not understood in order to explain it to someone else. Explaining ideas, as in a brief, was another matter - easier by far than trying to explain how to fill in a form, or how the filing system worked.

### **Seventh interview - 29 February 1980**

Several months had elapsed since the sixth interview, during which she had been at the College and had now taken up duty in a new post. We aimed the interview first at the College experience, and then went on to talk about the new job and the way it compared with the old - along the general dimensions again of work-activity, organisational aims, and outcomes.

#### **First the College**

She felt that at the end of it she had learnt nothing at all. The aims, particularly with respect to the statistics and economics sequences, were to teach them enough statistics and economics to be able to use the Government Statistical and Economics Services constructively, not actually to do Statistics and Economics.

It turned out to be a potted A-level course. What it did in fact do was to teach them how to do statistics and economics, rather than getting somebody else to do the work and then teaching them how to make use of the results. As a result, it was a total failure. The economics was of a higher level than the statistics, but she had recognised both from her early days at university.

Public Administration was more a case of trying to teach them to do something. But it was far too late. The two days on how to write a brief gave them no more than they had learnt by working through it already for themselves. The sequence was very strong on brief-writing and contained one section which appeared to be a repeat CSSB exercise, although the College denied it. They were not actually taught anything more about writing briefs, but just, as at CSSB, had to sit down and get on with it. There was also an oral exercise that was a bit better, with a tutor pretending to be a Minister who was being briefed by the group.

The rest of the 8-week course was almost entirely lectures, all of which were too long. There was always too much to take in. In addition there were reams of badly written papers, and not enough time to read them or absorb anything; and there was very little opportunity to ask questions that arose from them.

It was horrifying to look around at about 40 people - or maybe only 30 would turn up - all people with degrees and used to studying, divided into those who were reading the newspaper, those who were reading novels, those who were doing crosswords, those who were asleep, and those who were heckling. She gathered that this was fairly typical and that their course had been in no manner unusual, except that there were rather more of them than was customary.

The most useful parts were the tutorials, but these were far too few. There were a few in the economics sequence where one had a small group with a tutor and the opportunity to ask questions.

The impression of the course and how it fitted into working life was that it should have done but didn't. There was a common feeling that all they were teaching was how to cope with boredom.

### **The New Job**

This was in an Under Secretary command dealing with consumer affairs. There were, as far as she knew so far, four or five Assistant Secretaries. Her own had three small Principal-led sections, in one of which she herself was located working direct to the Principal concerned. There was also an HEO and a clerical assistant. Although there was, as she put it, "no such thing at present", their remit was Product Liability.

We talked first about her understanding of what the division was for - the 'organisational aims'. In short, as she saw it, there was no aim - certainly no generally accepted government policy. Traditionally, manufacturers were not responsible for their products unless negligence could be proved. However - and she thought this probably stemmed from the 'thalidomide affair' - there was a more gathering momentum in Europe in general, and to some extent in the UK, to bring product liability into legal consideration. There had been something from the Council of Europe on this subject, and now there was - recently revised - a draft EEC directive. Her new section had recently consulted some several hundred or so interested parties about their view on the revised version - trade groups, consumer groups, people from all

sides of industry, and lawyers. They were now trying to sort out, analyse, and reach some conclusions about the advice that they had received from all these various quarters.

In the meantime, industry and the consumer groups were - as she put it - "slogging it out in the letters column of the Financial Times". Engineering representatives were lobbying MPs. With ever more sophisticated products 'caveat emptor' seemed to be ever more the stance. Even those grudgingly in favour of the EEC draft wanted to see it watered down.

There was also interdepartmental discussion, with not much support from other departments. Neither Industry nor Agriculture was happy, and DHSS wanted something rather different for drugs. It had proved to be too emotive an issue for there to be much prospect of the hoped-for agreement by correspondence.

Lobbying MPs produces letters to Ministers, and these finished up in her division. She spent a lot of her time on Ministers' cases. Her own workaday involvement - beyond, of course, these specific cases - was in getting all the replies to the consultation exercise together, acknowledging them, answering questions, and maybe pointing out places where the respondent had gone wrong. The practical approach to this demand involved reading the replies, sidelining sections against relevant directive articles, getting someone else to photocopy them, cut them up and stick them back together under the article sub-headings, so that she could then embark on summarising comment in an orderly manner. This

itself involved rather more than a simple count of for-and-against, but a tally of who it was who was 'for', who 'against', and a note on whether their argument made sense or misrepresented the issue.

For this latter sort of judgement she had the USA experience to compare. Although many of the 'anti' arguments cited the USA case, they usually had it wrong, it seemed. From her standpoint, the political background was generally so different that meaningful comparisons could not be made - there was no Welfare State, legal payments had to be considered, so too did the tradition of punitive damages, and jury-assessment instead of judge-assessment. There was in fact no coherent American liability law; it varied across the states and insurance premiums seemed to be calculated on 'worst cases', though even these were falling.

However, industry was not disposed to believe any of this. They, she felt, just did not want to be made liable - and that was very much the government's stance too.

Then - the impressions. It was chaotic, with a steady stream of consultation responses, some of them quite hefty papers and all of them having to be gone through with a fine-toothed comb to classify the comments. And all the while there were the minister's cases. But she was rather enjoying it, even though it was embarrassing - particularly so when this lack of policy stood against a background of favourable reports from two prestigious bodies, the Law Commission and a separate Royal Commission.

She had a clear idea as to what the problem was - ministers did not want it. "They know the reports are there; they know there is a groundswell of public opinion; they know they are going to have to do it in the end; but at the same time they know that it would impose an additional cost on the industry which they, the government, in the present economic climate clearly are not keen on doing".

She moved on to compare this new job with the previous one. The main dimension was 'general-versus-specific'. In the previous job one had had to know "everything there is to know" about that part of the world that was one's responsibility - economics, politics, what-have-you. Now she sat with the reports from the Law Commission and the Royal Commission, and with the EEC draft directive, and considered the exact significance of individual words. The other point was that previously she had worked on trade within a general framework of policy; now there was none and they were very much involved in trying to form it.

As far as personal resources go, she was spending a lot of time "sitting down thinking" - maybe even about the meaning of one sentence in the draft directive. "What might it be taken to mean? What was it meant to mean?" There was a good deal of sitting round the office discussing general ideas, and ringing up solicitors to see if one was right about a particular issue.

What she had got out of it so far was the interest in being involved in the law-making process, and she had come across a lot



of new aspects - parliamentary debates, parliamentary questions ('PQs'), minister's cases - all of which had been absent in the previous job.

As to her own view of the content of her new job, she felt that product liability legislation was "highly desirable". She was not too clear about what effect this might have had on her work - indeed she gave the question long and serious consideration - but when it came down to it, her view coincided with that of the Law Commission and that of the special Royal Commission set up to consider the subject. Though she was confident that she would never dismiss worthwhile arguments - from industrialists - with which she thus disagreed, she felt some entitlement to her own view when it was on the same side as two such prestigious sets of pronouncements on the issue.

#### **Eighth and last interview - 18 April 1980**

We took this interview in two parts, it being the last. First, we looked at the week's diary - almost exclusively drafting, as it turned out - and then we took a pace back to have an 'overview' look at the whole period, making some sort of allowance for the fact that she had not managed to turn up quite as regularly as had been hoped.

First, then, the week.

There amounted in all to about five significant items -

a draft position-paper on processed food-stuffs;

brief for the Permanent Secretary for a meeting with aerospace concerns;

'draft directive' work (on product liability, of course) with a prospective European meeting in mind;

a Minister's case;

another proposition-paper on "the definition of defective".

With processed food-stuffs, the problem was that the manufacturers, and the government department most closely concerned, were keen to be excluded from any product-liability considerations. Her own department was emphatically opposed to any such exclusion. The aim of her drafting was therefore to persuade other departments to support the view of her own.

The brief for her Permanent Secretary had to do with a meeting that he was due to have about aerospace concerns. The question basically concerned relative liability of manufacturer and carrier in what was called a 'high risk exposure' area - one crash would cost a great deal of money. The USA system at that time placed

liability on the manufacturer; our manufacturers were understandably concerned about the prospect. Whether or not that forms an accurate picture of the underlying concerns matters little. The important point here is that she found herself in pretty well uncharted territory, and found this stimulating. In drafting the brief she was to an extent making policy as she went along - telling the Permanent Secretary, in fact, that there was no chance of any exclusion for UK manufacturers. In many ways it was more interesting working without any clear policy. What you yourself decided, or the way that you resolved the issues, stood a chance of becoming policy - at official level, at least. It would still have to be accepted by Ministers.

'Making one's own policy' was of course an over-simplification. In this case there was background in the form of the draft directions and the two reports on product-liability to which she had previously referred. It was all very difficult, in fact, because any emerging decision had to be multi-departmental. She was working with the draft directives, therefore, within a context of other views - like, as in the case of the department concerned about processed food-stuffs, a heartfelt desire to be left out of it altogether. Within her own department, the Secretary-of-State did not much like the product-liability idea but had conceded that given the draft directive and the two reports they would probably have to concur. Moreover, as an example of the effect of personality within the organisation, there had been a very senior official whose recent move off into private industry had left the departmental view now much more kindly disposed towards the proposals.

The third issue again had the draft directive as its subject-matter. Here there was a particular Cabinet Committee that considered European questions, to which a paper had been submitted some time previously. She had found herself having to do a lot of ringing round to tell people that the meeting on the draft had been put off yet again, for various reasons. The basis was that after agreement of all interested parties had been reached at official level, it should go on up to Ministers. She could not see that happening this time, and a Cabinet decision was going to be needed to sort it all out.

The Minister's case was by now virtually a stock letter - again, on this draft directive - to which she added the occasional extra paragraph if the original correspondent had raised some new issue. The only interest for her now lay in trying to work out who it was who was organising the lobbying when 50 identical letters arrive from 50 different firms.

The final significant item was the position-paper on "the definition of defective". This had her taking the draft directive's definition, along with those which the two Commissions, had proposed and whatever was extractable from the pile of correspondence, and then summarising, analysing, and making some sort of recommendation - the sort of activity that sometimes she felt she was doing rather a lot of, and which resembled in some ways the 'appreciation' exercise that she had done at CSSB.

Looking back just over the week, she felt some sense of satisfaction in having actually produced a recommendation on processed foods together with a justifying or explanatory argument, and that this would eventually go through to Whitehall - though not necessarily with the same recommendations.

Although it might appear to some extent from aspects of this week's work that they were proceeding almost one item at a time, it was not like that that she saw it. They had set out the basic principles and only argued individual cases as these arose.

### **General overview**

She now feels a much better understanding of the organisation and how it worked. When she first arrived she was totally lost. Probably, as a result of this, she tended to use other people more than she used to. In both jobs there had been a lot of sitting down and writing papers. To begin with she was inclined to sit and draw on her own resources. Now she was more likely to ring up the lawyers and use their ideas as well as her own.

She still found that the business of writing lots of papers had her going about it in a very similar way to the way in which she would have gone about writing essays at university. She used the same techniques - gathering information in her head, rather than writing notes; considering how best to arrange it, again generally without writing notes, and then putting it down on paper - all with the object in mind of persuading someone else to her point of view.

Occasionally she found herself having to persuade somebody to a point of view that she did not hold herself. A case in point was the "state of the art" defence. This was the kind of defence that a manufacturer might deploy in saying that at the time a certain product was manufactured, nobody could have predicted a particular unfortunate outcome. Given the knowledge available at the time, they had not done anything for which they could be held liable. There was at present no state of the art defence in the draft directive. Ministers and industry both wanted it, officials did not. However, officials were forced to argue it with other Government Departments in Whitehall.

The way that she went about arguing something with which she herself was not in agreement was to use other people's arguments rather than generating her own - distancing herself from it. It was extremely difficult to produce good arguments for something that you did not believe in. But somebody somewhere will presumably have believed in it and should have produced good arguments for her to pinch. And this particular issue was not black and white anyway - it was all a vast grey area - so it was usually easy to see why somebody had taken an opposite view.

Then she had probably gained a lot more confidence from understanding how the organisation worked. She was now more forceful and more inclined to argue. She was beginning to find that the greatest frustration of working in the Civil Service tended to have nothing to do with the job - it was the personal clashes going on all over the place, far more than she had expected. When they occurred at higher levels they tended to make life rather difficult.

These expectations were not explicitly spelt out. It was more the kind of expectation that you realised you must have had when you found yourself surprised at what was going on around you. She had tended to expect people in the Civil Service to be much as people had been in other contexts. In other places she had not come across great clashes. Perhaps that was because she had never been in an organisation where there was a book to work by. Now of course she was more part of the machine than she might have been as an undergraduate.

The difficulty was not really in grasping the job, which obviously took time, but you had been to university and had been taught to learn and to get to grips with a job like this. It was the organisation, people, and in-fighting that was more difficult to cope with. The arrangement of the divisions in which she had worked so far tended to force people into contact with each other. Working in a large room with a lot of people, one could not help but be aware of other people's ideas and be involved in discussion. But this did not extend outside the division. And there was some wariness and hostility between related but separate sections. Where she was now it was much smaller. The wariness tended to start just above her. People did tend to be rather protective of their patch. They were hostile if they suspected encroachment on somebody else's patch. She might have been lucky herself in working for older principals who were not so worried about going further up the ladder themselves, but this wariness was evident in her present AS. He seemed to have a theory that if he did not keep a finger in every single pie,

somebody now going to drop him in the soup. That sort of attitude could be pretty frustrating for people working below - it produced a complete lack of delegation. When you knew that the Minister's case that you should be answering yourself was on an AS's desk being answered, it could be rather disconcerting.

Some of this was probably true of a lot of senior officials. As for the outsider's view with respect to Civil Service job-security, there was security in one sense, but personally there seemed to be a lot of insecurity.

In general terms, and moving on from this, it all seemed organisational. Most of the learning that she had done was about this, about this organisation - how far it interacted with other Government Departments and so on, what one was allowed to do and what not.

What she did notice very much, coming from the loose and rather unorganised university existence of the arts student working round the odd tutorial lecture - was that though the university organisation was in a sense hierarchical it never appeared to be so. The CS was a huge organisation with everyone clearly in their place. You sat at the centre of your own vast spider's web - each and every one of you.

This was in a sense a constraint, but just being an AT was a constraint. People looked on you with suspicion, which was not surprising. You were an EO equivalent and worked on the same



salary, by Deputy Secretaries made special efforts to meet ATs when they had probably not seen an EO for years.

So far she did not really know how she liked it. Being an AT was like being in limbo. Wherever you went you actually felt supernumerary. You were doing a job made up of bits poached from other people's jobs. And then being an AT could not last for long. Whatever happened you would be something other than an AT before very long. And the atmosphere of cuts in government expenditure did not help. Would the much vaunted fast-stream actually turn into a fast stream they all wondered?

## POSTSCRIPT

I considered it interesting and worthwhile - given the considerable amount of time that elapsed in putting this study together - to run a brief check on each of the six about 5 years on. Time had passed. Where had they got to?

### JOHN

- was promoted to the fast-stream Higher Executive Officer grade now known as HEOD ('D' for Development) after two years as an AT; four years later, in November 1984, he was successful at the second attempt at the further promotion to Principal.

### TREVOR

- took a little under three years to get to HEOD, and just over another three to Principal. Clearly, things did work out for him after all: he had had a variety of jobs, including working in the Private Office of his Permanent Secretary: he did not have to transfer into the photographer class.

### TOBY

- promoted to HEOD at the same time as Trevor, and then to Principal after a little less than a further three years. His job had ranged from the Minister's Office to a few months' secondment to a London Borough.

## **IRYNA**

- first promotion to HEO after three years and a bit, then into the fast-stream at HEOD about a year later - thus taking nearly four years to achieve the successful streaming decision about which she had been so worried. In the long run, though, the 'Mansion Block' job clearly did not have the neutralising effect of the mythical Hong Kong posting (see Appendix 3), as she was promoted to Principal just over two years later - at the end of 1984, just about the same time as John.

## **EDWARD**

- eventually made the fast stream in a little under four years; was eligible for promotion to Principal, but had not yet been invited to a board.

## **FIONA**

- fast-streamed HEOD at about the same time as Edward, she too was eligible for promotion to Principal, but had not yet been called.

All six, then, were successful sooner or later in achieving an HEOD, or fast stream, grading even though they had entered at the time when it was still expected that a majority of ATs would find a solid place in the main, executive grades.