CHAPTER 6

# INTER-SERVICE CO-OPERATION AND THE FUTURE

BRITISH SERVICE EDUCATION is marked by the cordial relationship which exists between the education branches of the three Services at all levels and the development of inter-Service co-operation fostered by the Ministry of Defence is one of the many encouraging signs for the future.

It will have been noticed that all three Services possess education branches which vary in role and composition, each operating under characteristic conditions which influence the educational policies of the Admiralty, War Office and Air Ministry respectively. There are certain main points of difference and similarity which are important.

The Navy is organised and administered mainly on a geographical basis, and all units must be self-contained. Its personnel generally are of comparatively high mental standard, and are required to undertake highly specialised duties. In peace-time they are mainly long service men and the national service element is small; there are no illiterates and there is a great deal of training ashore, mostly of a technical nature.

The Army—numerically the largest of the three Services—is also organised and administered mainly on a geographical basis at home and abroad. It is composed of technical and non-technical personnel, both regular and national service. Ultimately the regular and national service components will be equal in number, but at present the latter is the larger. Units are generally administratively self-contained—their variety in size and function is considerable and they are subject to constant movement and wide dispersion. The Army contains a large number of men of low educational standards; particularly in non-technical arms, mental standards and attainments tend to be lower than those in the Navy and Air Force.

The R.A.F. is organised and administered on a functional basis at home and on a geographical basis overseas. In peacetime it is normally composed predominantly of officers and other ranks serving on regular engagements. They are for the most part technical or trade specialists of a relatively high mental standard. The majority complete their regular service and return to civil life before, or soon after, reaching the age of thirty ; the vocational element has a prominent place in their educational requirements. The exigencies of the post-war situation with regard to personnel has compelled the employment of a large number of national service men, not to the same extent as in the Army, although to a greater extent than in the Navy. The frequent movement of individuals from unit to unit and from home to overseas is a factor which affects the provision of unit and formation education in the R.A.F., but does not affect education in the training establishments.

This background of essential similarity with wide individual variation affects the problem of inter-Service co-operation. There are many common problems, some of which will be discussed later ; there have been informal, but none the less effective, contacts and collaboration since very early days. The Central Advisory Council, which has already been mentioned, acted to some extent as an inter-Service co-ordinating body ; the three Services were represented on it by observer members.

The first deliberate organised co-operative effort, the formation in April 1944 of the Inter-Service Committee on Educational and Vocational Training for the immediate post-war period, was brought about by Sir Ronald Adam as Adjutant-General. Previously the Lord President's Committee had set up two inter-departmental committees. Of these, the McCorquodale Committee dealt with reconstruction employment and vocational training for personnel released from war service, and the Hankey Committee with post-war training for professions and occupations other than manual trades. The new inter-Service committee, commonly known as the E.V.T. Committee, was to work in conjunction with those just mentioned, but within the Services. The three Services were represented on it, together with the Ministry of Education, the

Ministry of Labour and National Service, and the Scottish Education Department. The terms of reference were:

(*a*) to make proposals, and, where appropriate, to arrange for action to be taken upon points submitted to them by the McCorquodale and Hankey Committees respectively;
(*b*) to take into consideration the requirements of the educational and vocational education schemes in the three Services, and to make proposals, or where appropriate to take the necessary action, to avoid unnecessary duplication of work; and
(*c*) to make proposals for the sharing of resources both at home and overseas.

The main work of this committee, which lasted from April 1944 until December 1945, was intrinsically important and the undoubted success of the three release period schemes justified its creation. There were, however, several important by-products of the committee's activities. One of these was the Inter-Service Advisory Panel on the Forces Educational Broadcasts which was instituted in conjunction with the British Broadcasting Corporation to co-ordinate arrangements for educational broadcasting to the Forces and to develop the work within and without the Services. Another was the Subject Committee on the Forces Preliminary Examination which, as its name indicates, acted with the Civil Service Commission in directing the development and recognition of this Examination. Other sub-committees were those to keep under review women's education in the Services and the content of material used as the basis of current affairs discussions.

In June 1948 the Ministry of Defence, in the natural development of its functions, set up an Educational Service Co-ordinating Committee. This committee, on which both the official and educational sides of the three Services departments are represented, now deals with all policy matters on education which are not exclusively the concern of an individual department. In February 1946, on the abolition of the E.V.T. Committee, the three Service Directors of Education continued to meet together regularly for the interchange of views on educational problems. This committee has since become a sub-committee of the main committee of the Ministry of Defence mentioned above, and continues to deal executively with

matters of a routine nature or those remitted to it by the main committee.

The system for formal co-operation described above is working extremely well and has already resulted in closer co-operation in the many fields which offer themselves, and which will be described briefly later in this chapter. Its success is largely due to the tact, wisdom and skilful chairmanship of Mr. A. J. Newling. As might be expected, the work of the Co-ordinating Committee has so far been largely exploratory, but sufficient has emerged from its deliberations to make it certain that the main common problems of the future will receive proper consideration at a high level. The work of the main co-ordinating committee is now carried a stage further by the setting up of similar bodies in the more important overseas areas where the three Services are found together.

Two very important examples of inter-Service co-operation are the plans made for the resettlement in civilian life of the regular member of the Forces, and the arrangements accepted in connection with the education of Service children.

The ultimate aim of resettlement is to ensure that all regular officers and men obtain, at the termination of their engagements, employment in keeping with their experience, qualifications and general ability. The problem is more acute in the case of the officer because his duties to-day are more complex and onerous than they were in the past. The shortage of mature N.C.O.s allows for only a limited delegation of authority, and there must needs be a greater sense of urgency in the training of recruits whose term of service is only eighteen months. These facts often prevent the officer from making adequate preparation for a professional qualification during the time he is on the active list, and outside the professions the number of posts suitable for the ex-officer is small. The age at which they are discharged is a factor which affects the future employment of both the commissioned and non-commissioned ranks. It is understandable that some employers hesitate to engage men who have spent as much as fifteen or twenty years in the Armed Forces and whose contact with industry and business is necessarily slight, but there are welcome signs of a greater readiness on the part of a few of the

larger undertakings to offer employment to the ex-serviceman. Retirement ages in the Services are low compared with those of civilian life. The officer aged forty-five or the N.C.O. of forty has by no means reached the end of his working days. They have experience and qualities which can make a contribution to the labour force of the country, and at a time when manpower difficulties are severe it would seem almost contrary to the well-being of our national economy to fail to utilise them. There is also little doubt that the success of any recruiting campaign is intimately connected with the establishment of a satisfactory resettlement service, for men will be more inclined to join the Services if they can be assured of an alternative career when their engagement terminates. Optimism based on specious promises is not sufficient. This problem is not a new one, of course. Before 1939 and during the release period the Defence Ministries and the Ministry of Labour co-operated in evolving schemes to assist the ex-serviceman, but their plans were not universally successful, nor were they popular with the Trades Unions. The position is now much better owing to the exertions of the Interdepartmental Committee under the chairmanship of Sir Harold Wiles. The terms of reference of this Committee were :

> " To examine the problems arising on the resettlement in employment of officers and men coming out of the Forces and to make recommendations."

It did not set out to solve the problems inherent in a mass demobilisation following a major war, for the peak period of releases had already occurred before the committee had completed its preliminary investigations. Sir Harold Wiles did, however, direct the attention of his colleagues to the regular forces and based his recommendations on the fairly accurate estimates of annual discharges which the Defence Ministries were able to provide.

The Report was made available to the public in October 1948 and contained the following recommendations :

> " There should be a vocational scheme on the industrial level for ex-regular officers or men leaving the Forces, with maintenance provided during training.

" There should be a scheme for assisting professional and university education of young officers and men leaving the Forces after short service with maintenance.

" There should be a business training scheme primarily for officers retiring over the age of forty-two, with maintenance at a level appropriate to their age and status.

" The Ministry of Labour should be responsible for administering these schemes.

" The Inter-Service Committee set up to gain trade union recognition of Service Trades should continue in being until its task was completed.

" That women leaving the regular Forces should be equally eligible to participate in resettlement training schemes."

This report was welcomed by the three Services as a major contribution to the solution of the problem of ensuring a satisfactory future for the discharged officer and man, and since the autumn of 1948 the efforts of the interested parties have been directed to the establishment of the various schemes. The Ministry of Labour has been as generous as possible in allotting places to ex-servicemen for vocational training, and posts in the Executive, Clerical and Industrial grades of the Civil Service are reserved for ex-members of the Forces. Specially recommended officers are also permitted to compete in the open examinations of the Administrative grade. The British Broadcasting Corporation and the nationalised industries have also been approached, and the former body now gives preference to ex-servicemen in filling certain vacancies occurring in the unskilled occupations.

Most encouraging of all has been the response of the Trades Unions. Very conscious of the evils which could accrue as a consequence of any relaxation of the terms of entry into any one of the unions, they have, nevertheless, found it possible to recognise a very large number of Service trades, and the acceptance of many more is under consideration.

The Defence Ministries on their side have collaborated, not merely as members of interdepartmental bodies, but singly through their own branches. Since the beginning of 1948 the Director of Army Education has controlled the resettlement arrangements made for soldiers. He is now responsible for the

collection and dissemination of information on all matters affecting the selection of suitable employment and the availability of it in various parts of the United Kingdom. General resettlement questions on emigration or industrial developments, for instance, are matters on which the Army now receives information. The Army education authorities also consult the Ministry of Labour and other Ministries in connection with those Acts of Parliament affecting the welfare of the soldier on his return to civilian employment.

The assumption of these duties by the Director of Army Education was a wise decision, for it means that one branch of the Staff is now responsible both for the planning of a soldier's general education and for guiding him in the selection of a future career. There is an obvious link between individual education and resettlement in civilian life, and it is intended that regular soldiers should be encouraged to plan their studies in a way which will enhance their prospects after discharge. The Army Resettlement and Advice Service is one of the most important commitments of the Royal Army Educational Corps at home and abroad. Its task is to advise all ranks of the facilities offered by the Ministry of Labour. This is accomplished by means of regular interviews with soldiers approaching the end of their colour service. Through their close liaison with officials of the Ministry, R.A.E.C. officers are able to investigate the prospects of a soldier's obtaining satisfactory employment in a particular trade or occupation, and in cases of special difficulty they can arrange for the man to be interviewed by an expert at the Ministry's Regional offices. Abroad, the Resettlement and Advice Service functions as far as possible in the same way, but inquiries demanding the attention of the Ministry of Labour are passed to the Director of Army Education, and the appropriate R.A.E.C. officers in the areas where employment or courses are desired treat them in accordance with the regulations applicable to the United Kingdom.

This service is still in its infancy, as is the entire resettlement scheme for all the Forces; but there are signs that it will not only remain a permanent feature of Army education, but will also become increasingly important as the regular Army grows to its full size.

## BRITISH SERVICES EDUCATION

The Education Branches of both the Navy and Air Force have assumed responsibilities similar to those of the Director of Army Education. The facilities offered by the Ministry of Labour apply equally to all members of the Services, all of whom can obtain advice from their respective education officers. In resettlement, as in many other aspects of Service work, there is constant co-operation and co-ordination between the Admiralty, War Office and Air Ministry, some examples of which we find in the issue of a joint Resettlement Bulletin and the common use of lecturers and education centres in overseas theatres.

The problem of the education of Service children resolves itself into two parts—their education overseas, and their transfer to a suitable school at home on the return of the parents from a foreign station. As previously stated, the Local Education Authorities have now taken over garrison schools at home and, in any case, the majority of Service children in this country usually attended normal civilian schools even before the 1944 Education Act. This arrangement does not seriously concern the Navy, and the Army is reasonably satisfied because naval and military stations are in, or near, urban centres of population where the number and variety of schools is sufficient to ensure an adequate education for the children. It is in the Royal Air Force that some anxiety is felt.

Airfields are generally located in rural areas some distance from the towns, and unless the families of airmen are accommodated in quarters on the stations they have to live in neighbouring villages within travelling distance. These families tend to become communities within a community, owing to their different background and interests. Air Force personnel are predominantly townsfolk ; rightly or wrongly, the parents are apt to consider the facilities offered by a small village rather limited, not least in the matter of education. They contend that the type of school to which they wish to send their children is, more often than not, a fair distance away and public transport is inadequate. There is undoubtedly some substance in these contentions ; the subject is being closely studied by the Ministry of Education, the three Services and the Ministry of Defence. There is no simple solution.

## INTER-SERVICE CO-OPERATION AND THE FUTURE

Overseas, children of Service personnel attend one or other of the Service schools in which the teachers are either Queen's Army Schoolmistresses, teachers seconded from Local Education Authorities in the United Kingdom, or teachers engaged locally. The work done in these schools is intimately connected with the situation at home, for there are always pupils who return to the British Isles after they have reached the age of eleven years, and it then becomes necessary to place them in some form of secondary school. The new methods of selection for this form of education are based no longer on a written scholarship examination but on a series of tests and teachers' ratings. To ensure that children in this category receive full consideration, the Service Authorities provide the Local Authorities with all relevant details of the abilities of pupils who have attended a school overseas and are about to return to the United Kingdom.

The whole subject of the education of Services children overseas has been fully explored by an inter-departmental committee on which were represented all interested Departments of State, including the Treasury. Its report has been approved, and its general effect will be to bring the educational facilities for these children into line with those envisaged for children in the United Kingdom under the Education Act, 1944. There is no reason why development of these facilities should not parallel similar developments at home.

The relatively small number of the children of secondary school age in any one area makes it difficult to provide efficient secondary education except by extravagant staffing arrangements, which the Services cannot afford even if they could obtain the teachers. A possible solution is to bring into the scheme the children of other United Kingdom nationals to swell the numbers. This suggestion has other merits which are obvious.

Resettlement and the education of Service children are two good examples of inter-Service co-operation in the educational field. There are many others, but space permits only passing reference to a few of them.

The facilities for " individual " or " further " education at Services centres at home and abroad are made available,

where practicable, to personnel of all three Services. This provision, on a joint basis, offers a useful field of development for the future. The excellent Forces Correspondence Course Scheme located at the Institute of Army Education, Eltham Palace, is already staffed and controlled on an inter-Service basis, and offers unlimited scope for expansion both on the academic and vocational side, and on the purely military side. Inter-Service co-operation with the British Broadcasting Corporation continues to be cordial, and further advances may confidently be expected in the Forces Educational Broadcasts, which have won such high praise in pioneering the difficult terrain of adult education.

The future of education in the Services will depend upon many factors, among which are organisation, weapon development, progress in civilian education, and—not least—finance. It is certain that there will be some contraction as financial retrenchment becomes necessary, but it seems equally certain that education is now well on its way to finding its proper place in Service life. Much will depend upon the creation of satisfactory prospects of careers for the education staffs, in order that the right type of man may continue to be attracted to the Services for this work.

As to the form it will take, there can be little doubt that existing policies are on sound lines. The Services will continue to provide such instruction as is necessary to make the Service man efficient. If he is illiterate he must learn to read and write. Some twenty-five per cent of the national service intake are semi-literate ; they read and write with difficulty and reluctance. Among the remainder are to be found all degrees of proficiency, from semi-literacy to full mastery of language. Military efficiency does not require literary elegance, but it does require that the man should be able to read, comprehend instructions, and write an intelligible message as simply and readily as he carries out his technical role, whatever that may be. One of the objects of the general education provided by the Services must always be to achieve and

maintain this standard. A similar level of competence is required in arithmetic, and the man should have at least such knowledge of history and geography as will give life and meaning to the traditions of his service. Some knowledge of the fundamentals of science are clearly required in armed forces designed to defend a modern industrial civilisation and one of the major tasks will be to continue to provide the fundamental knowledge required for the Service technical training.

An attempt to restrict Service education too rigidly to purely military needs would defeat its own ends, just as in civil life a purely vocational education, designed to produce appropriate numbers of clerks, artisans, labourers and others, would fail even in this limited objective. This happens because men are not only clerks, shopkeepers, soldiers, sailors, airmen, or whatever it may be, but individual human beings as well. A human being who lacks a lively interest in the world around him is stunted in development and uncertain of himself, and this uncertainty damages his efficiency in his work. This consideration applies particularly to the service man. He is often separated from his home, and may find the consequent need to write letters either an additional burden or an opportunity to give pleasure to himself or his family. He is sent abroad and may either feel cut off from familiar sights or seize the opportunity to absorb new experiences. His life will be either a series of deprivations or a series of opportunities, in so far as he has or has not a lively and receptive mind. In either event, his attitude will profoundly affect his morale and efficiency.

It should be noticed that the quality that matters in this context is not intelligence—a natural gift, not to be altered by education—but alertness and curiosity, which can be stimulated by a good teacher even in those whose talents are limited, and even by means of a modest curriculum. Where it is given in the Services compulsory general education seeks neither to produce scholars rather than military men, nor to pump in large quantities of knowledge; a modest quantity of certain basic subjects is used as an instrument for developing someone who will be at the same time an alive human being and an efficient soldier,

sailor, or airman. It might be thought that the civilian educational system could do this before ever the soldier enters the Army. In fact it does not, and considerable advance in education will have to occur if even this modest level is to be universally attained. Further, lessons learnt at school are, for most people, not riveted in the mind until their relation to real life is perceived: hence the need, in all walks of life, for continuance of education in adult life. For the reasons given above, this need is particularly pressing in the Services.

From some men, who are suitable for advancement, the Services will require a higher standard than that so far described. There will also be some whose capacities and attainments are distinctly above the average. It is to the Services' direct interest to provide the former group with the necessary facilities for study, while the latter may reasonably ask that some provision should be made for their special educational needs, as for other forms of welfare.

The instruments for these purposes are the provision of books, room for study in leisure time, materials for hobbies, liaison with civilian educational work, correspondence courses, and courses at Services educational establishments. The extent of these facilities is affected by the location of a unit and the nature of its work.

This section of Services education is voluntary and is intended for those who are determined to pursue their studies either for advancement or (in the case of national service men) with an eye to their civilian careers. It may be remarked that the well-educated national service man sometimes assumes that the Service has a duty to provide him with whatever help he needs in his studies. In fact, the Services can only do this within the limits of their own more pressing commitments; while he himself has a duty to give help, as opportunity offers, in the working of Services education, and will benefit from so doing.

It is now fully accepted that a serviceman should be aware of his rights and duties as a citizen. A Service which has no understanding of, or sympathy with, the community as a whole is politically dangerous and peculiarly ill-fitted to train national service men. For these reasons citizenship is included in the curriculum: there are also the weekly current affairs

discussions conducted, as a rule, by regimental officers. It would be difficult and unwise to lay down precise rules for the conduct of these discussions. The officer, knowing his men, must judge how best he can get response from them. Whatever his methods, his aim should be that at the end of a current affairs period they are somewhat better informed, more tolerant, more capable of understanding and weighing an argument than they were at the beginning.

It would be ill-advised to claim that the Services have found all the answers to the problem of adult education, but in two hundred years of practical experience many useful methods of instruction have emerged and have been adapted for use in industry, commerce, and civilian adult educational establishments.

At this time in our history, when the whole of Western civilisation and its philosophy faces what may be its greatest crisis, it may well be that the attitude of mind and moral fibre fostered by Services education will prove a vital factor for good in the history of the world.