

ES:MB

16th December, 1976

ATTACHMENT
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Memorandum to: Mr. Lloyd Owen,
Superintendent.

As I mentioned to you yesterday, in light of our conversation of the 14th December, I am currently in the process of preparing a report outlining the steps which I think are necessary for us to take in order to achieve the goals and objectives which we both agreed are desirable for Winlaton :-

- (1) Effective programmes which rehabilitate delinquent females.
- (2) Reduction of the necessity for (group and individual) lock-up.
- (3) Efforts to "lower" the boiling point of the whole Institution, i.e. reduce the frequency of major crises; reduce damage due to fire, breakage, vandalism; eliminate sexual assault; lower absconding figures; and improve the physical safety of staff and their morale.

I should have this report ready by January 31st, 1977. In it I will detail both the objectives and the best specific methods which I feel should be employed to achieve these objectives. I refer both to treatment and to management goals.

In the meantime, however, I want to advise you that I think the situation with the youth in Coonyah Section is not yet in control and could get worse. I see no reason on this date not to anticipate further violence - and property and life endangering activities on the part of the young women who are locked up there. My lengthy conversation with you on the 14th has shed further light on the fact that there is a fundamental disagreement between us in regard to the cause and the cure of the situation in Coonyah. At the risk of oversimplification, I might state this disagreement as follows: whereas you have told me repeatedly you lack confidence in several staff (Mrs. F. Baxter, Mrs. J. Williams and Mrs. R. Hazelhoff), and hence in the girls as led by these staff, to make fundamental decisions affecting their own lives, and whereas I think you believe that it is staff incompetence which has caused the situation in Coonyah, I am of the opposite opinion. I believe, as I have said to you frequently in person, that it is your lack of confidence in the staff, and in the ability of the girls to make appropriate decisions when led by the staff, which is at the basis of the Coonyah problems. I.e., the staffs' decision making process very often experiences interference from you as higher management - at times with you ignoring the "chain of command" and thereby undermining the staff who are in authority. I believe that this is the real force at work in the often intolerable situation in the Coonyah Section. I think this is a fundamental point of disagreement between us which must be resolved.

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In support of my point of view I submit that you are currently operating on the theory that the staff mentioned above are incompetent and not deserving of your confidence; meanwhile, the situation in Coonyah gets worse and worse. In other words, I believe your position as articulated on the 14th could be stated :-

- only if those people under me have more competence can the Institution (Coonyah particularly) improve.

Whereas my position is the following in support of shared authority :-

- only if the Superintendent has more confidence in his staff can the Institution (Coonyah in particular) improve.

It is my suggestion that you begin to resolve this matter by you and I meeting with Mrs. Baxter at your invitation to discuss this issue of competence and confidence with her and that as soon as Mrs. Williams returns from leave you invite Mrs. Baxter and I to meet with you and Mrs. Williams to discuss the same two points with Mrs. Williams. I think the same approach should be used with Mrs. Hazelhoff.


Dr. Eileen Slack