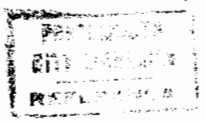


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REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON BOY ENTRANTS AND YOUNG SERVICEMEN

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*Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for Defence
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Report of the Committee on Boy Entrants and Young Servicemen

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The Lord BALNIEL, MP,
Minister of State for Defence

Dear Minister,

On 19th December 1969, your predecessor, the then Minister of Defence for Administration, announced a Committee to enquire into the terms of engagement and other conditions of service of boy entrants and young servicemen in the Armed Forces.

I now submit the following Report on behalf of the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

DONALDSON,

Chairman.

28th August 1970.

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I. Foreword and Main Recommendations

There is no one on our Committee who needs convincing of the vital need of this country for strong, efficient, stable and contented defence forces. Nor does any one of us doubt that, for many, the Armed Forces provide a fine and challenging career with opportunity for the fullest self-development, combined with service to their country. We do not argue these propositions but proceed on their assumption.

2. This country is almost alone in trying to man its defence forces by means of a voluntary system of recruiting. If it can be done, it is cheaper and more efficient than conscription, but even so there is a price which must be paid, and it seems to us that the nation is not adequately meeting the bill. The voluntary system is less wasteful than the compulsory—it does not have to try to train all-comers, but can pick the likely ones and reject the others. And it is more efficient because its volunteers will accept longer and more thorough training—regarding it as a prelude to a career—than the conscripts for whom it is simply an interruption of their chosen life. But a voluntary system, to retain those advantages, must be really voluntary. Within the limits of Service discipline, boy volunteers at any rate should be free to change their minds with due notice and after a fair trial or when a new situation arises. The weakness of the present system is that they cannot do so of right except during their first 6 months.

3. However it should be borne in mind that the current system bears hard on only a small minority of servicemen. Not only do the majority settle down well, but also the Service authorities already go a long way towards meeting the problems of those who wish to leave before the end of their engagements.

4. Although the problem is confined to a minority, nobody is happy with the situation. It puts the Services on the wrong foot and Ministers and politicians in an impossible position. Yet, at the present rate of recruiting, if boys could leave at will, even at one year's notice, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that the Services might find themselves so depleted as to become less than fully operational. So there is a real dilemma.

5. The system is seen at its least acceptable in the case of the young boy who joins at 15½ or 16, full of enthusiasm, unwilling to listen to the cautions which are honestly given to him by the recruiting officer, who signs on for 9 or 12 years from the age of 18. Then, if later he falls out of love with his chosen profession, or perhaps into love with a girl who wants to have him with her, he finds he cannot adjust to the new situation by giving reasonable notice and leaving, but is stuck with the result of his 16-year old enthusiasm. There is nothing truly voluntary about such a situation. It is

compulsion applied arbitrarily and selectively to those who have made the decision before the law regards them as capable of entering into a responsible contract, and seems to us indefensible.

6. It can be overcome only by enrolling more recruits, and accepting a higher rate of wastage. This means money, money to train more recruits and money to make service more attractive so that there are more recruits to train.

7. With the increases in pay announced in April of this year, the Services can be transformed as a career for boys and young men. Unless there is a corresponding easing of the terms of engagement, this opportunity may be lost. Either way there are serious risks. We do not under-estimate the manning problems implied by our recommendations; but we are convinced that the long-term dangers of continuing with a restrictive policy are even greater. We think that a policy of no action presents greater dangers than the risks consequent upon our recommended changes.

8. The Services should be seen as a fine career which a boy is lucky to get into, not as a second best to industry. They should, as indeed in the most successful training centres they already do, select carefully and reject easily. They should raise rather than lower standards and concentrate more on the difficulties of getting in and less on the difficulties of getting out. As long as there is a feeling that, once in you can't get out, the image will suffer. We entirely accept the need for special obligations, but we are convinced that they must be eased.

9. We therefore recommend a major change in the recruitment of boys under 18, namely, that every boy apart from certain apprentices, at the age of 18, should have the option either to confirm his original engagement, or to convert it to one of 3 years only from 18. In this way no boy would be held against his will after 21. In the special case of apprentices receiving 2 years' training or more, we recommend that they should have a three-fold option, to confirm their original engagement, to reduce it to the completion of training plus 5 years' service, or to leave altogether at 18.

10. With regard to the system of Discharge by Purchase, we believe that the basis of payment on premature discharge should in principle be part repayment of the extra (committal) pay received in return for commitment to long engagements. Where, as in the case of juniors, no committal pay has been received, payment on discharge should be abolished altogether*.

11. The body of the Report discusses these questions fully, makes ancillary, consequential and additional recommendations, and shows the reasoning behind these major recommendations, which are unanimous.*

* Air Vice-Marshal Gill has a reservation concerning the abolition of payment on discharge in the case of certain apprentices. See his Note of Reservation on page 34.

II. Terms of Reference and Scope of Evidence

12. We were set up (see p. iii) with the following terms of reference : “ In the light of the raising of the school-leaving age, and the lowering of the age of majority,

- (a) to enquire whether there are any regulations, conditions and procedures affecting the entry and initial training of young men under 18 in Service establishments which are more restrictive than those imposed by law or tradition on civilians of a similar age, and the extent to which any such regulations or procedures properly derive from the necessity to train young men for employment in a disciplined fighting Service ;
- (b) to advise the Secretary of State for Defence regarding the nature and extent of any changes which might be introduced which would improve the terms and conditions of engagements without excessive cost, while safeguarding the manning and the military efficiency of the Forces.”

In this report we apply the phrase “ young men under 18 ” in the Services to all servicemen enlisted under the age of 17½ (whether for boy’s or man’s service), and term them “ Boys ”. We have excluded young men enlisting at or after 17½ because they have an option to withdraw at 6 months, which brings the date of their final decision to 18, and thus outside our terms of reference.

13. We wish to thank our Secretary, Mr. W. T. Horsley, and his assistant, Mr. S. S. Crew, for servicing the Committee tirelessly, providing basic papers with admirable promptness and accepting cheerfully much drafting and re-drafting. Also First Officer M. Sherriff for arranging our many visits with tact and precision.

14. We issued a notice to the press, television and radio and to Service magazines asking for representations from individuals or organisations concerned within the terms of our reference. We took verbal evidence from the National Council for Civil Liberties, together with representatives of the Parliamentary Civil Rights Group, and from the Central Board for Conscientious Objectors, the Central Youth Employment Executive and certain individuals. We have also sought advice from the Department of Employment and Productivity.

15. Members of the Committee visited Career Information Offices, training establishments, detention centres and operational units of all three Services, including establishments of the Women’s Services. (Details are in Appendix 1). In the course of these visits we were given every opportunity to interview any boys we chose, to invite the individual views of officers of all ranks, commissioned and non-commissioned, of civilians, of training officers, of welfare officers, of psychiatrists and psychologists, and to receive from them individual memoranda bearing on all aspects of our terms of reference.

16. The Ministry of Defence provided at the Committee's request papers setting out existing procedures governing recruitment, engagement, discharge, disciplinary and other conditions of service of the Armed Forces, together with a considerable amount of statistical and other data bearing on this problem, including detailed attitude surveys. We have examined witnesses of each of the three Services upon these matters.

17. We have looked at the conditions and terms of engagements for the Women's Services and for officers. Some account of our enquiries appear at Appendices 2 and 3 but they threw no particular light on our main problem. We have also made some comparison with arrangements in other countries, reported at Appendix 4. Once again, we found nothing strictly relevant to our main enquiry.

18. We believe that the representations submitted to us and the enquiries we have made have brought before us all the significant matters which bear on this complex and important problem.

III. Description

1. General

19. The following figures put the problem in perspective:

Recruitment of Male Other Ranks

	<i>Total recruited in 1969</i>	<i>Boys recruited in 1969</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
			Per cent.
RN/RM	5,100	3,400	67
Army	20,100	9,400	47
RAF	7,700	2,900	38
Total	32,900	15,700	48

20. Of a total other rank strength in the Forces of 309,500 on 1st April 1970, 132,500 had joined as Boys, amounting to 43 per cent of the total force.

21. Of the 15,700 Boys recruited in 1969, 2,560, about 16 per cent, did in fact leave the Services prematurely as of right within their first 6 months of service.

22. In the same year, 9,200 of all men serving were able to leave voluntarily before completing their engagements.

23. On the other hand a considerable proportion of servicemen prolong their engagements. For example in the RN/RM 33 per cent, in the Army 52 per cent and in the RAF 57 per cent currently continue after a 9 year engagement. For those having a choice to go at 12 years the figures are 56 per cent, 91 per cent* and 41 per cent† respectively.

24. These figures do not suggest that the Forces consist substantially of men held against their will. But that there is some discontent is made clear by the cases dealt with regularly by the Service Departments, by those raised by MPs, by those brought to our notice by the NCCL and by the 223 letters received by the Committee of which only 18 were in favour of the present arrangements.

25. While we have not examined the alleged hard cases in great detail we are satisfied that in a system where boys (as well as adults) commit themselves for long periods there will be cases where they come to wish they had not done so and are unable to obtain release within the present system. It is on this aspect that we concentrate.

2. Comparison with Civilian Life

26. Our terms of reference required us to compare the obligations entered into by Boys joining the Services with equivalent obligations in civil life. We have found no civilian parallel; a civil apprenticeship, for example,

* The high Army figure represents the hard core of personnel who have decided to make the Services their career: Army engagements are shorter than in the other two Services, and 12 years is the soldier's third or fourth option point, whereas it is the sailor's and airman's first or second.

† The RAF operate a quota system. More would prolong if allowed.

carries no return of service and the penalty of civil damages against an apprentice who breaks his contract is seldom invoked. Thus the young serviceman is unique.

3. Manpower

27. Under conscription the main intake was at 18. Its abolition left the Services increasingly dependent on the recruitment of school-leavers. There is no reluctance on the Services' part to recruit older men, but the choice of a career is usually made at or soon after leaving school. Thus the age-group from which a voluntary force is mostly recruited is 15-19.

28. The numbers by age of Boys enlisted in each Service in 1969 are shown in percentages:

<i>Age on entry</i>	<i>RN/RM</i> Per cent.	<i>Army</i> Per cent.	<i>RAF</i> Per cent.
15	48	48	15
16	38	21	43
17-17½	14	31	42
	—	—	—
	100	100	100
	—	—	—

4. The Existing System of Engagements and Training

29. The percentages of Boys engaging in each Service for periods of different lengths are:

	<i>RN/RM</i> Per cent.	<i>Army</i> Per cent.	<i>RAF</i> Per cent.
3 years	—	8	2
5 years	—	—	17
6 years	—	59	6
9 years	92	33	49
12 years	8	—	26
	—	—	—
	100	100	100
	—	—	—

30. In terms of training, the broad categories of Boys entering each Service are (per cent):

	<i>RN/RM</i> Per cent.	<i>Army</i> Per cent.	<i>RAF</i> Per cent.
Apprentices and others with 2 or more years' initial training	8	39	52
Others	92	61	48
	—	—	—
	100	100	100
	—	—	—

31. The length and form of engagements (details are at Annex 1) have grown up to reflect each Service's needs, but the primary considerations are in essence the same for all Services. Boys are recruited to serve to the

age of 18 and thereafter for fixed terms of up to 12 years' regular service. In general and subject to manning considerations the longer the training given, the longer the service required in return.

5. Demographic and Social Factors

32. The Services have a steady long term requirement for something in excess of 40,000 other ranks every year. In 1969 they recruited 32,900. Moreover the size of the 15-19 age group from which volunteer forces are in the main recruited has until recently been on the decline because of low birth-rates in the early '50s, while at the same time the proportion within the group continuing in full-time education is rising steadily and will increase still further with the raising of the school-leaving age. For example the number of young men available for employment in the 15-19 age group which was 1,470,000 in 1963 and is 1,100,000 this year is expected to fall to 960,000 in 1974. Moreover the proportion of boys leaving school with less than 5 GCE "O" levels (the field from which most other ranks come) is expected to fall from 69 per cent in 1969 and the early 70s to 49 per cent in 1980. The Services are also facing stiffer competition as a result of the Industrial Training Act, which is bringing about an improvement in the quality of industrial training thus reducing the attractiveness of the Services' schemes of apprenticeship.

33. The net result in terms of the population from which boys can be recruited (i.e. the 17 and under pool) is a drop from 505,000 in 1969 to a forecast of 359,000 in 1975. Not all of these could be expected to meet the Services' medical and educational standards (see paragraphs 78-9). Although there are a number of unpredictable factors in recruiting and forecasts often mislead, these facts do suggest very strongly that there will be a substantial fall in the number of Boys joining up.

6. Raising the School-Leaving Age

34. Raising the school-leaving age in 1972 will have a dramatic effect in the first year and a continuing effect thereafter, though it is difficult to be precise. The Navy will lose altogether its Junior "U" entry, the 15 to 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ age group, and will have to make good from older recruits. After an initial steep drop, the Army's intake of Juniors and Apprentices will level off at about half the present figure of 6,500 annually. On the other hand, the RAF who at present recruit fewer 15 year olds than the other two Services, may not be so seriously affected.

7. The Legal Position

35. The Infants Relief Act of 1874 has been mentioned in the context of Boy recruiting. In Parliament and elsewhere it has been argued that engagement of a Boy to join the Services is an action within the scope of section 1 of the Act, which makes void certain contracts by a minor. This is a misunderstanding, which we explain in Annex 2.

36. Irrespective of the legal position, there is a strong body of opinion that a minor who is protected against binding himself to certain undertakings in civil life should equally be protected against binding himself to long engagements in the Forces.

8. Existing Methods of leaving the Forces

The Sixth Month Option

37. Boys enlisting under the age of 18 have the right to leave the Forces on payment of £20 within the first 6 months* of service or until the age of 18 years 3 months, whichever is the earlier. (A similar system applies to adult recruits, but their option period is 3 months only). In the Army and the RAF, a Boy may claim his discharge at any time within the first 6 months; in the Navy he can exercise his choice only in the last two weeks of the first three months or the last two weeks of the second three months.

38. We found Boys quite free to exercise their options, and in no doubt about their rights to leave. While a number take this opportunity to get out, there is also a significant number whom the Services reject at this stage as unsuitable. The initial period is regarded as one of assessment and evaluation, and in doubtful cases parents are invariably consulted and on occasion urged to visit the establishment for round-table discussion on the Boys' future.

39. Of an intake of 3,400 Boys into the RN and RM in 1969, 900 (26%) elected to leave within the 6 month option; of 9,400 into the Army, 1,300 (14%) elected to leave; of 2,900 into the RAF 360 (13%) elected to leave.

40. The Services for their part rejected as unsuitable 60 (2%) of the Naval intake, 370 (4%) of the Army intake and 25 (1%) of the RAF intake during the same period.

Subsequent Discharge of "Unhappy and Unsuitable" Boys

41. Apart from the procedure by which Boys can leave at their own initiative within the first 6 months and the Services can reject Boys who do not make the grade, there are arrangements in all three Services by which Boys who, in the Navy's term, are "unhappy and unsuitable" can go after the 6 month option. There is no statutory right, but there are administrative arrangements under which these Boys can be considered for discharge. Cases may come to notice as a result of the Boy's own initiative or that of the CO and the staff of his unit, who have the responsibility of identifying cases of unsuitability or discontent.

Compassionate Discharge

42. The basic principle governing discharge on compassionate grounds is that the man is needed at home and his family cannot manage without him. The circumstances which are recognised as amounting to compassionate grounds and so justifying immediate release, irrespective of the manning position or the Service interest, are clearly laid down, and examples are given in Annex 3. A man is normally required to pay the full purchase price for discharge, but this may be reduced or waived if he or his family cannot afford it.

Conscientious Objection

43. There is provision also for men or Boys who become Conscientious Objectors in the course of their service to buy themselves out, irrespective of Service needs. It used in effect to be the rule that a man must prove

* This option period was increased from 3 to 6 months in 1968 following the recommendation of the Latey Committee (v. Para. 50).

his sincerity by refusing to obey an order and consequently serving a period of detention, but this has not been the case since February 1968. Trouble is taken, however, to make sure that the objector is genuinely conscientious and not using the method as a quick way out. If the application is refused, the objector may apply for a hearing by an independent tribunal. If he is successful, he is normally required to pay for terminating his engagement, but the price may be reduced or waived.

Discharge by Purchase

44. Provisions exist for servicemen to buy themselves out without having to state any reason for doing so, but they are subject to the manning needs of the Service concerned. The rules apply to Boys and to adults. The procedure is that the applicant must ask permission to buy himself out, and the permission can be granted, delayed or withheld at the discretion of the Ministry of Defence. It might be delayed or even not granted, for example, if the individual's particular trade were undermanned, or if he had just received an expensive course of training or, in some cases, if he were immediately due for an overseas posting. The payment charged varies with the length of the engagement and the time served and remaining to be served. For Boys it lies between £20 and £150 and for adults between £150 and £250 maximum, reducing as the engagement proceeds. Details are at Annex 4. After the raising of the school-leaving age, the maximum for Boys would rarely exceed £80. In the Army applications are not normally considered till 3 or in some cases 4 years of the engagement have been served; in the RAF applications are considered as soon as received, but release is not granted till 3 years of the productive service have been completed; in the RN applications are not considered till 5 years of a 9 year engagement or 6½ years of a 12 year engagement have been served. If approved, release in the Army is in general after one month of applying and frequently earlier; in the other two Services it is in general after 3 to 12 months. In the worst case it is seldom longer than 18 months.

45. Although rates of pay for Boys have risen almost four-fold since 1948, there has been no increase in the scale of payments for their discharge by purchase. For adults, the system must be seen against the background of committal pay received in return for undertaking long rather than short engagements. For example while a 3 year engagement carries no committal pay, a 5 or 6 year engagement carries an extra 4s. a day (£73 a year) and a 9 year engagement carries an extra 10s. a day (£182 a year). The rates of pay have more than doubled since the rates for purchase for adults were fixed in 1957.

Special circumstances

46. There are a few special circumstances which allow a man to leave irrespective of Service needs, namely, to stand for Parliament, to take Holy Orders, or, in certain cases, to join parents who have emigrated.

Discharge by the Services

47. The Services have the right to discharge any man at any time for any reason, from indiscipline to redundancy, when they no longer require his services. (See Annex 4.)

9. The Case for Change

Criticisms of the Present Situation

48. Over the past four years several organisations and groups have expressed criticisms of the present situation. Major critics have been the National Council for Civil Liberties, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, and the Peace Pledge Union. There have been letters and articles in the Press, statements and interviews on television, pamphlets, letters to MPs, and so on. The prime mover has been the National Council for Civil Liberties which has brought together in its memoranda, for which the Committee are most grateful, a collection of the representations which have been made from time to time by them and by other organisations.

49. We list here the substance of the suggestions from all sources which are relevant to our terms of reference. They are in effect that :

- (a) There should be no enlistment of boys under the age of 18.
- (b) Recruits should have the right to discharge within 3 months after their eighteenth birthday.
- (c) Long term engagements under the age of 18 should be abolished (or the lengths reduced).
- (d) Engagements should date from the age at enlistment and not from the age of 18.
- (e) Application for discharge should be considered with reference to the merits of each individual case ; a more flexible and humane alternative to the present system is required.
- (f) An independent tribunal should consider all applications for discharge.
- (g) Young servicemen should be entitled to protection under the Infants Relief Act 1874.
- (h) New recruits, their parents, Youth Employment Officers and other career advisers should be made fully aware of the terms of service and the restrictions on discharge. The consequence of enlistment should be explained verbally and in writing to parents and prospective recruits.
- (i) The Government should appoint a military ombudsman.
- (j) Incompatibility with Service life should be regarded as potential grounds for obtaining discharge.
- (k) Where there is suspicion of mental disturbance a serviceman should be entitled to an independent psychiatric examination.
- (l) There should be a less punitive approach to the problem of desertion including the provision of an amnesty for hardship cases.
- (m) The recruitment of young apprentices should not be necessary ; the work should be done by civilians employed by the Ministry of Defence or put out to industry.

The Latey Committee

50. The report in July 1967 of the Latey Committee on the Age of Majority (Cmnd. 3342) included three recommendations for changes in the system of engaging servicemen under 18:

- (1) The initial period during which the man might exercise his option to leave the Forces should be extended from 3 months to 6 months.
- (2) A serviceman should be given an opportunity at the age of 18 to reconsider whether he wishes to proceed with his engagement or not.
- (3) The approval of the parent or guardian should be required before the enlistment of anyone below the age of 18.

51. On 5th February 1968 the then Minister of Defence for Administration Mr. Gerry Reynolds announced in the House of Commons (Hansard Vol. 758 Cols. 43-49) the outcome of his examination of these recommendations. He accepted the first and third but regretted that he could not accept the second on the grounds that "the Forces would be unable to replace their losses and that the ability of the Government to carry out their responsibilities for defence would be seriously impaired". He also drew attention to the fact that "the terms of service of boy entrants were outside the writ of the Latey Committee and that it made recommendations without having any evidence of the effect on manning grounds which there would be on the Services". The Ministry had offered a witness but he had not been required.

52. Subsequently, he said on 16th December 1968, (Hansard Vol. 775 Col. 903) "morally I would not defend the system but . . . in terms of meeting our defence needs, I can see no alternative to it".

53. It is perhaps worth noting that there had been no suggestion that a boy should not be asked to sign a long engagement with the Services until he had attained his majority, as long as the age of majority remained at 21. It is only since it was reduced to 18 that this particular age has been linked in the public mind with man-service. In the Services recruits have for many years been enlisted as adults at 17½; the Army enlists "young soldiers" and the RAF "young adults" at 17 on adult engagements, and the Royal Marines enlist "adults" at 17.

Individual Cases

54. The NCCL sent to the Committee a list of some 75 servicemen who had been in contact with them since 1st January 1968. At our request for more recent cases, the NCCL sent details of a further 13 from some 70 which they said they were dealing with at this time. The NCCL say that they are "unable to judge how typical these cases are in relation to all the unhappy boy Servicemen there may be". They further told us they have handled 250 cases since 1966.

55. Of the 88 cases sent to the Committee by the NCCL the distribution by Service is as follows:

<i>RN</i>	<i>RM</i>	<i>Army</i>	<i>RAF</i>	<i>Total</i>
57	3	17	11	88

11 of these unfortunately cannot be identified. Of the 60 cases concerning the RN and RM, 53 can be identified and of these 28 have in fact already been discharged and a further 4 will be discharged within 6 months. Of the RAF cases, 8 have been discharged and a further two will leave this year; the other one cannot be identified. Of the 17 Army cases, 7 have already left, and one will leave at the end of the year; 3 cannot be identified. The average age of these cases is a shade over 21 years. By no means all began as Boys.

56. The reasons given to the NCCL by their correspondents for wishing to leave the Services include family and financial troubles, separation from wives (particularly in the Navy), desire for a complete change of career, but predominantly that they cannot stand the life.

57. An analysis of the representations received by the Committee (see para. 14), and extracts from them, are at Annex 5.

“The Tip of the Iceberg?”

58. It is sometimes contended that such cases represent only a small part of a wide-spread discontent in the Services especially among servicemen recruited as Boys and in fact represent the “tip of an iceberg”. The facts are that only a small proportion of men who wish to leave the Services write to their MPs or get in touch with the NCCL. So far as overall numbers are concerned, the proportion of men who are seriously dissatisfied with Service life seems to be small in comparison with the 309,500 currently serving of whom 132,500 began as Boys. We have tried to identify this problem with greater accuracy but the only figures we can quote are the total numbers wishing to purchase their discharge (excluding recruits under their 3 or 6 month option—see para. 37) which are as indicated in the following table:

	<i>Numbers purchasing discharge (1969)</i>	<i>Numbers on waiting list* (1969)</i>
RN/RM	847	582
Army	5,224	51
RAF	944	389

59. It must however be borne in mind that in the case of the Navy a man is only able to apply to purchase his discharge when he has served 5 or 6½ years according to his engagement and there is evidence to show that a number of men who may well wish to avail themselves of this facility at an earlier stage of their career are not able to do so and must serve on much longer than would be necessary in the other two Services.

* The waiting lists in the three Services are not strictly comparable (see Annex 4). The Army does not operate waiting lists except for members of trades restricted for manning reasons. There were twelve of these at the end of 1969.

VII. Conclusions

129. The problems we were required to examine will be reduced in extent when the school-leaving age is raised and would disappear if recruitment of Boys was abandoned.

130. However, so long as Britain relies on voluntary recruitment to man the Services we accept that they must continue to recruit Boys.

131. We have reviewed in detail the regulations, conditions and procedures affecting the entry and training of Boys. We find that there are considerable differences between these and the circumstances of civilians of similar age, but that these differences are by and large essential if Boys are to be trained for employment in disciplined fighting Services.

132. We found in particular that the Services provide a form of education and training available equally to the less privileged, which is not provided elsewhere and which is of the highest value to the individuals and the country. (Paras. 68-70.)

133. The principles on which the system of compassionate discharge is operated are reasonable and in our opinion need not be altered but we believe that there may be room for improvement in their application, perhaps by the adoption of a permanent tribunal in each Service. (Paras. 95-8.)

134. We consider that it would be in the interests of the Services if the basis of payment on premature discharge were in principle to be part repayment of the extra (committal) pay received in return for commitment to long engagements; that where no committal pay has been received there should be no payment; that payment for discharge in the case of Boys should accordingly be abolished*; that the period of service demanded by the Navy before discharge by purchase is allowed is excessively long; and that it is wrong in all cases to exact payment for discharge in compassionate circumstances, or in cases of Conscientious Objection. (Paras. 100-7.)

135. It does not seem to be in the real interests of the Services to maintain a system that involves repeated offences and terms of detention for men determined to "work their ticket". Adoption of our recommendations should go a long way to remove this problem, but there will still be hard cases. We think that present procedure should be closely looked at again. (Paras. 108-111.)

136. On the assumption that recruitment of Boys continues with the present system of engagements of up to 12 years from 18, the best way of meeting the criticism of the present system is to give them the opportunity as they reach that age (now the age of majority) to alter the commitment they had made on entry. (Paras. 123-7.)

* But see Air Vice-Marshal Gill's Note of Reservation on page 34.

137. The change least damaging from a manning point of view to achieve this end is to allow Boy entrants to review their commitment at 18 and to choose between confirming it and reducing it to an engagement of 3 years. (Para. 123.)

138. For reasons given above this arrangement would be unsuitable for those on apprenticeships lasting 2 or more years. These should have at 18 the choice of confirming their original engagement, *or* of serving the remaining period of training, including improver training, plus a minimum of 5 years, *or* of leaving forthwith. (Paras. 124-5.)

139. Examination of the manning problem by the Ministry of Defence indicates that the measures we suggest might give rise to an increase of 5 per cent in present steady long-term requirements for the years after 1972 but more significantly an increase of 15 per cent in the numbers of Boys which the Services aim to recruit in those years. This would be difficult in the face of a reducing pool. (Paras. 126-7 and 33.)

140. We are however inclined to think that the situation might not be as difficult as these figures imply because of the improved image and changed attitude of the Services resulting from our recommendations. On the basis of present figures and on the assumption that the additional recruits would be forthcoming, the Ministry of Defence assess the annual cost to the Defence Budget in money terms as being of the order of £6.1 million and the capital cost to be of the order of £3 million. (Paras. 67 and 126.)

141. These financial costs are significant in isolation, though small in relation to a total Defence Budget of over £2,000 million, particularly as they relate to the basic source of defence: men. The more serious problem is that of finding the extra recruits. We believe however that these are problems that must be faced and that what we have suggested is the least that needs to be done.

142. Some phasing of our proposals may be necessary, but we believe that without a commitment to make such changes early, it will become increasingly difficult to maintain even the present levels of recruiting, at least for the Navy and the Army on a voluntary basis.

143. The whole future of a volunteer force turns upon its success in recruitment: and success in recruitment depends on the human factors with which we have been concerned. If our recommendations are accepted, it would be natural to expect at least a marginal increase in "wastage" both during training and subsequently. We record our view that what is technically "wastage" to the Forces ought to be considered in the context of the nation's most valuable natural resource, its reservoir of trained manpower, and of the costly civilian programme of Further Education designed to increase that reservoir. At whatever point a young man is permitted to change the Service way of life for the civilian way of life, he carries with him an enhanced value.

VIII. Recommendations

144. *We recommend that :*

- (1) *those who enlist as Boys, with the exception of long term apprentices, should have the option at 18 either to confirm their original engagement or to reduce it to one of three years, thereby enabling them to leave at 21 (para. 123) ;*
- (2) *long term apprentices (i.e. those with 2 years' or more training) should have the option at 18 of confirming their original engagements, or of reducing it to a period of training plus 5 years' service, or of leaving forthwith, without payment* (paras. 124-5) ;*
- (3) *the Ministry of Defence should reduce the period of service demanded by the Navy before applications for discharge by purchase are considered from 5 or 6½ years into line with the other two Services (para. 106) ;*
- (4) *the Ministry of Defence should :*
 - (a) *abolish payment on discharge for Boys (paras. 101-2) ;*
 - (b) *consider relating the payment on discharge for adults directly to the amount of committal pay received (paras. 104-5) ;*
 - (c) *abolish in all cases the payment for discharge in compassionate circumstances and on grounds of Conscientious Objection (para. 107) ;*
 - (d) *review the whole range of enlistment documents with a view to simplifying and clarifying them within the limits of legal requirements (para. 85) ;*
 - (e) *arrange for enlistment documents for Boy entrants to make absolutely clear to the Boy the date of and his age at the end of the engagement (para. 128) ;*
 - (f) *consider the possibility of earlier discharge of men who commit repeated offences and are sentenced to repeated periods of detention (para. 111) ;*
 - (g) *develop the opportunities for all servicemen of training during service as well as immediately before discharge to fit them for a second career (para. 75) ;*
 - (h) *since much of Boys' training is in reality part of the education that the State is committed to provide, and since our other recommendations are likely to result in an increased turnover of Boys, consider proposing that appropriate allowance be made for this in establishing the size of the Defence Budget (para. 69).*
- (5) *while some phasing of the implementation of our recommendations may be necessary, the Government should announce at an early date a commitment to implement them as soon as practicable.*

* See Air Vice-Marshal Gill's Note of Reservation on page 34.

IX. Note of Reservation by Air Vice-Marshall Gill

Whilst I fully support the other measures proposed by my colleagues I regret that I dissent in one respect from their view that no charge should be levied on boys who exercise an option to leave their Service during the training period. My view is not based on narrow, financial grounds but on what I believe will be the practical implications of removing the charges.

The option to leave the Service at age 18 will apply to about 1,700 of RAF yearly intakes of 2,900 apprentices. Our prediction of additional recruits needed in this group would be 27% or 470 boys annually. This was calculated assuming no payment for discharge and the result is uncomfortably high. I am, therefore, concerned to ensure that this wastage is limited as far as possible and that those who leave do so after responsible thought.

I therefore consider that a charge should be made against long term apprentices who exercise the proposed option to leave at the age of 18. Those who stay beyond the initial six months should do so with the genuine, well-thought-out intention of completing their training and entering productive service. If no payment whatever is required of those who opt to leave at the age of 18, I believe that the decision to stay beyond the initial six months will be the more lightly taken; and it will be easier for some to stay with no intention of giving any productive service but solely to obtain as much as possible of the very good training so as to leave with a marketable skill in civil life at the age of 18. We should also pay regard to the effect of those leaving on the instructional staff at the Services' training establishments. Where boys do not seriously intend to complete the course, experience shows that this rapidly affects the instructors, the bulk of whom are not professional teachers but are dedicated to the needs and future of their own Service. A decline in their enthusiasm and performance can have effects throughout the establishment concerned.

The sum to be charged at age 18 would vary according to the length of time the boy had been under training, but I should not expect it to exceed £100. It could be less. Such a charge would bring home to the boys that they must think responsibly before continuing beyond the initial six months' point, and again at the moment of decision at age 18. I do not believe that it would be regarded as prohibitive by those who had genuinely changed their minds or whose circumstances had changed. Provision could be made for it to be reduced or waived in deserving cases.

L. W. G. GILL.

THE ENGAGEMENT OF BOYS

The following table sets out the categories of Boys in the Services and the engagements currently available to them:

Service	Category of Entrant		Length of Training		Length of Initial Regular Engagement from age 18
			Part 1	Part 2	
Royal Navy	Junior 'U' (Age 15-15½)		36 weeks	2-19 weeks according to specialization	9 years
	Junior 'O' (Age 15½-17½)		6 weeks	2-32 weeks according to specialization	9 years
	Apprentices		1 year	4 years including 1 year at sea or at a Naval Air Station	12 years
Army	Young Soldiers (Age 17-17½)		3-4 months		3 years, 6 years or 9 years
	Juniors	Junior Infantry	1-2 years		6 years or 9 years
		Junior Tradesman	1½-2 years		6 years or 9 years
		Junior Leader	1½-2½ years according to Corps and age on entry		6 years or 9 years
	Apprentices	Junior Bandsman	1-2 years		9 years
		Apprentice	2-3 years		9 years
Royal Air Force	Young Airmen (Age 17-17½)		Recruit Training	Trade Training	3 years*
			6 weeks	0-14 weeks according to trade	
			6 weeks	2-26 weeks according to trade	
	Apprentices	Mechanic	1 year		6 years
		Craft List II and Administrative	1 year		9 years or 12 years
		Craft List I	2 years		9 years or 12 years
		Technician	3 years at Apprentice School plus 2 years' Improver Training†		9 years or 12 years

* Available for less attractive, low training cost trades only.

† Dental Technicians receive 3 years Apprentice training only.