

LOS ANGELES INSTITUTE FOR PSYCHOANALYSIS
LOS ANGELES PSYCHOANALYTIC SOCIETY
Report of the Joint Committee
on Mutual Problems of
the Society and Institute

March 18, 1965

This is an expanded version of a report to the Joint Committee, which has directed that it be presented to the members of the Society and Institute.

Our directive was to explore mutual problems of the Society and Institute and particularly problems of organization and to make recommendations regarding these. This obviously involves broad and complicated issues, involving specific and general problems of organization, responsibility, authority, and administration. In discussion, we have necessarily ventured into many areas of difficulty, of atmosphere, personalities and groups, conflicts of interest, anxieties, technical difficulties, inefficiency, poor communication, and so on. We have studied various sources of information and criticism; e.g., the reports of the Committee for the Study of Psychoanalytic Practice; Committee on Institutes; Committee on Organization and Planning; Dr. Friedman's reorganization proposal; Dr. Goodman's report; memoranda from a few interested members--for which much thanks--informal comments from members; Constitutions and By-Laws of the Boston, Southern California, San Francisco, and Baltimore Societies and Institutes; articles in the Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association and the International Journal of Psychoanalysis, etc.

We have met monthly since our appointment, with excellent attendance and interest by the members of the Committee. This has been demanding, yet we recognize the need for more intensive efforts and will be meeting more frequently in study sub-groups as well. The first few sessions were exploratory, for this group, too, needed to learn to work together, clarify positions and reach a consensus of attitude and approach, which has occurred to a remarkable degree. In order to get started and form into a working group, no effort was made at first to invite outside participation; but subsequently we have repeatedly invited comments and suggestions as well as attendance by interested members as contributors and/or observers, with little or no response as yet, we regret to say. Members of the Committee have tried to relay appropriate information from other committees to us.

Some criticisms have been leveled at this Committee--how widely held we do not know. There have been comments to the effect that it is a private cabal, used for personal purposes, a whitewash, ineffectual, a group of hatchetmen to placate the membership, etc. There is nothing to substantiate such criticism, and we must assume it results from misunderstanding, poor communication, projection, or whatever. We recognize that the same conditions that are operative in the situation we are all concerned about may likewise be operative in this circumstance. We recognize too the need to go to the membership with more detailed presentations, repeated invitations to participation, open minutes available for review, preliminary concrete proposals and study items for your evaluation.

Organization has been our task, but we have clearly seen that the difficulties are only in part purely organizational but rather largely personal and heirarchical. By personal we mean not only involving specific individuals but relating to feelings and impulses common to us all which dominate and color the atmosphere. We feel strongly that we need time to feel our way and dispassionately study and evaluate before making meaningful recommendations. There is a conflict between this and the sense of urgency about

immediate problems, but we consider it inappropriate for us to propose stopgap, expedient measures, although some have been considered as a means of testing and establishing the atmosphere and opportunity for change. We feel we must insist upon a reasonable period prior to action proposals; yet, we must likewise be aware of the forces about us, the demands for action, and the threat to our function and existence if we do not act in a politically sophisticated as well as deliberate fashion. We have seen during the life of this Committee and its unofficial predecessor how we have aroused certain expectations, certain pressures, and certain disappointments. Despite these we have steered a fairly purposeful and persistent course. We are deeply concerned that if we fail, there may not be other opportunities for effective action. We may then only have the hope of riding out the storm and that time and the progression of events and personalities might lead to improvement. Perhaps so, but it behooves us as a mature and rational group to at least attempt more active measures in our own behalf. The Committee enlists your continued support toward this goal.

It has been the view of some that, other than technical changes, organizational revisions would accomplish little; it was the atmosphere which needed change, however that was to be effected. But organizational changes can be effective if they themselves foster an aura of change and improvement, if they reduce some of the heirarchical sources of conflict, if they force a reassessment by individuals of their roles, if they reflect the wish of the membership and help define the areas of conflict. Such changes should not be merely expedient to deal with some passing phase or particular office or individual. But the nature of these difficulties we suffer indicate they might be diminished by a different organizational structure.

Let us be more specific: it is necessary that we settle the question of a single or dual organization, but this is presently not itself a cause or answer so far as we can see. Each has advantages and disadvantages and probably the critical issues can be dealt with within either arrangement if properly set up. Nevertheless we must come to a conclusion on this in order to have some framework to fashion the rest. So far the Committee inclines more to a single organization with some features of Dr. Friedman's or the Boston plans.

What is more crucial is how power and responsibility are assigned and institutionalized. Most of us are convinced that a very great deal of our difficulty derives from the conflict between a very small number of people--specifically and most importantly a number of members of the Education Committee. Others, of course, have their conflicts too; but they seem at this time more peripheral and subordinate and perhaps even fostered by the former. The Education Committee, rather than serving as a model and stabilizing influence to the rest of the members, appears riven with conflict which spreads beyond the limits of the Committee. Some efforts certainly have been made by the Education Committee to improve matters, the wider distribution of its minutes being one example. The nature of the conflicts are truly much less important than the fact of conflict and the manifold reactions this creates. A small fraction of the membership is threatening the very existence of the organizations vital to us all. To lay blame on individuals, to fall back upon "inadequate analysis" and so on is quite beside the point. Some talk of evil purposes, but it is much more a matter of narcissism run rampant, of anxiety, and perhaps even a measure of depression and paranoia, just as in so much of the world around us. Maybe these are fancy synonyms for evil; if so, they might at least have the advantage of encouraging a more dispassionate, clinical and therapeutic, rather than moralistic, point of view. Such an aura of hurt and angry feelings, attacks and complaints would be distressing enough among the embattled parents of a co-operative nursery school; in a group of professional colleagues joined in high and common purpose it is deadly. Our effort must be to remedy this so that we can pursue our work to larger purposes.

Some have agreed with this assessment but have said it is hopeless--wait until new training analysts are appointed and older ones retire, only then can the situation be remedied. This may well be worth considering, but in a broader sense it begs the question. In any case, the newer ones, supposedly now more dispassionate, may by that time have become fixed in their positions, have vested interests, and be in a fair way to repeat the problem. Rather, should we not deal with this situation and forestall future ones by more basic measures, by dispersing the sources of power and decreasing the vesting of interest, by reducing the seductions for narcissistic gain of a damaging sort, by establishing a situation where rigid alignments would be less possible or more subject to change and where individual confrontations might not harden into implacability. One suggestion along these lines is, of course, beyond the scope of our work; that is, changing the training procedure as for example in Kairy's proposals. But, for the above and general reasons of representation and support, might we not reorganize the structure and composition of the Education Committee? One possible suggestion is that the Education Committee, which will continue to administer the training school through the Dean, should consist of several training analysts elected by themselves, let us say five, and several faculty members elected by themselves (or by the membership), perhaps also five. These then would request an elected nominating committee to nominate for election, by the membership, such additional number as deemed necessary for the committee work of the Education Committee. Voting in the Education Committee would be by the ten members noted (or perhaps by the total number). This Education Committee would have all the functions of the present Education Committee except that appointment of training analysts would remain with the training analysts.

The specific details are not important at this moment. Such a design might broaden the base, decrease the possibility of polarization, etc. Of course, similar difficulties might arise; but such a plan, well-delineated, would lessen such possibility. No such plan, even if desired, can be instituted without the concurrence of the present Education Committee because of the present By-Laws. But if there should be wide-spread general support for any reasonable plan, the pressure for concurrence would be enormous; and, certainly, effective action would be bound to follow.

If the above recommendation regarding the Education Committee is considered unsuitable--and it is only a rough one--then additional or alternative ones may be considered; e.g., reducing the number of training analysts on the Education Committee, adding some other members, general election by the members of the Dean (and/or Director), or some other form of ratification procedure, etc.

While it is felt that this area is crucial, because of the conditions that have developed within the Education Committee and which have been permitted, if not encouraged, by its position within the organizations, the Joint Committee has also recognized and discussed many other problems and tentative proposals for their resolution. The administration of the Institute and/or Society must also be revised to reflect the influence of the faculty and membership, both of which have so greatly increased in number and responsibility. To suggest some of the items which have been given at least some consideration for your further reflection: rotation and limited period of service in the Education Committee; appointment, reappointment, and retirement of training analysts; extending the period of office of Society officers; office of President-Elect rather than Vice-President; place of present Institute Divisions within a reorganization plan (should some be moved under the Society? Or how placed within a single organization?); election versus appointment of Division heads, nominating committee, ethics committee; general election of representative to the Board on Professional Standards; specification of standing committees; ratification procedures if direct election not preferred; the responsibility and utilization of office personnel and facilities between the organizations and officers, a strong point in favor of a single organization and closer administrative control; financial arrangements

between the two organizations, likewise more efficient within a single organization although certain problems such as Public Health Service grants would need to be worked out. Our present troubled financial circumstances seem to reflect our general disorganization and the urgency for reform.

The Joint Committee would like to reiterate that its meetings, generally held the first Tuesday of the month, are open to interested observers and those who would like to contribute their views and suggestions. Please check the office as to time and place and to inform us of your intention to attend. The abbreviated minutes of the Committee will also be made available shortly in the office. We will present more detail to the members, with specific proposals, recommendations, and arguments, as soon as we are able. Where present problems which call for immediate action appear, the responsible committees and individuals should not necessarily postpone action pending our recommendations; these are still vital organizations which must function currently. We will try to get on with our work as expeditiously as possible. We need your support, co-operation, ideas, criticisms, and even complaints if we are to remain in communication and responsive to all the members' and the organizations' needs. And we beg of all to try to regard one another with a bit more tolerance and mutual acceptance. Let us assume that our colleagues may be less wise, not more evil than ourselves. A bit less anxiety about saving our toes and faces may yet save our heads and necks.

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