

# Panel Discussion

PANEL DISCUSSIONVOLUNTEERS v. PAID STAFFPRESERVING AND PROMOTING HARMONY  
AND PRODUCTIVITY

Panel Members: Rev. M.H. Kerr (THS), Panel Chairman.  
Messrs. G.B. Claydon (Tramway Museum Society, U.K.)  
I. Mison (MOTAT)  
D.R. Muir (Ferrymead Trust)  
M.C. Sanders (THS)  
M. Skinner (AETM).

Discussion commenced with each panel member giving an outline of his background and experience in the area under discussion.

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Mr. M.C. Sanders: Stated that he was an electrical technician with industrial supervisory experience. He was employed by the Ferrymead Trust and undertook tasks which are formulated on recommendations from THS. He supervised eight students for two months during the Christmas holidays and now has four regular workers including two tradesmen. He considers that time taken to supervise other persons working is less personally rewarding than time spent working himself, although more work is done in this way (i.e. one year's work performed in about one month). He has been a THS member for ten years.

Mr. G.B. Claydon: Advised that he was the honorary secretary of the Tramway Museum Society of the United Kingdom and that he also filled the position of Vice-Chairman. He was not paid for these positions, although his expenses were reimbursed. He stated that in Great Britain, the controlling body of a museum organisation such as his must be entirely voluntary.

Mr. M. Skinner: Advised that he had been a member of the Australian Electric Transport Museum at St. Kilda, Adelaide, for ten years and had acted as General Manager for the past two years. He co-ordinates the tasks to be done at the Museum, controls finance and generally provides the "oil for the machine". He is not paid for this role and undertakes the necessary administrative work in the evening and the supervision at the weekends. It is his responsibility to ensure that budgets are not exceeded.

Mr. I. Mison:

Advised that he had been a member of MOTAT for fourteen years and honorary secretary of the Tramway Division for the past four years. Through the various work schemes of the Labour Department, MOTAT has had approximately 230 workers. He commented that it appeared that about 80% of these workers were not, in fact, unemployed, but unemployable. Despite this, MOTAT has been able to use the services of three gangs of workers: (1) a rail building crew; (2) a track formation crew; (3) an overhead crew.

Mr. Mison at present spends three days of each week on the site. He commented that, although there has been some success with this scheme, the turnover rate of workers is high.

Mr. D.R. Muir:

Advised that he had been construction manager for the Ferrymead Trust for three years and, approximately 18 months ago, had taken over the position of Trust Manager in addition and that thus he wore "about five hats". He was paid by the Ferrymead Trust. His job was constructing, organising and promoting the Museum project for the Trust. His project had approximately 80 workers employed under various Labour Department schemes. His experience was that provided the job would hold the interest of the workers, jobs could be found for approximately 80% of the people referred by the Labour Department.

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Following the above introductions by Panel Members, the following discussion took place:

Rev. M.H. Kerr:

Considered that there are three different categories of paid workers at Museum projects in addition to what he termed "pure volunteer":

- (1) The worker paid under a Government Relief Work Scheme - usually unskilled.
- (2) The skilled persons brought in for a particular function - usually skilled tradesmen.
- (3) The managerial and administrative staff.

Mr. Kerr posed the following question: "Can a Museum survive without paid staff?"

Mr. D.R. Muir:

Yes, but only just. It would stagnate without seven day a week staff as opportunities would be missed for such things as the collecting of exhibits.

- Mr. M. Skinner: Don Muir's observation is correct in a way. However, sympathetic employers do allow Museum members to re-arrange their working hours to permit essential Museum business to be conducted during business hours.
- Mr. G.B. Claydon: Progress slows down if people are not on the site all the time, and some activities, such as the following, require persons present during the week:
- (1) Supervision of contracts.
  - (2) Delivery of goods.
  - (3) Security.
  - (4) Continuity.
  - (5) School visits.
- Museums will progress without paid staff. They will bump along somehow if they can manage using shift workers and school teachers.
- Mr. M. McAulay: Asked "Is Crich a seasonal museum?"
- Mr. G.B. Claydon: Yes, it is only open from Easter to October for the public. However, work continues all year, although the closed period allows time for maintenance work to be carried out.
- Mr. M.C. Sanders: A weekend Tramway Museum could run with volunteers only - a composite Museum could not.
- Rev. M.H. Kerr: Posed a further question to the panel: "Should the day to day manager be paid or volunteer in a weekend only Museum or is this not important?"
- Mr. I. Mison: Can't really comment as MOTAT is a 364 day per year Museum. MOTAT has a Director responsible for the day to day running and a Management Committee, elected by members, is responsible for long-term planning.
- Mr. M. Skinner: If there are paid employees at the Museum, it is essential that there be competent supervision. It is preferable to have a Museum member with supervisory experience to avoid such problems as placing rails in mass concrete the wrong way round.
- Mr. D.R. Muir: It would be disastrous to have no paid administrative staff. Friction would arise over the priority of jobs to be done. Ferrymead has an ideal set-up where an Executive Committee plans the priorities and sets a budget. With reference to paid management, during development a paid builder would be the most suitable person but once the Museum is established, a paid administrative person may prove more suitable.

Mr. G.B. Claydon: There are three levels of paid staff:

- (1) Labourers.
- (2) Intermediate.
- (3) Managerial.

Members who become unemployed are taken on at the intermediate level. These members then become the administrative and supervisory staff when unemployed relief workers arrive on the site. No managerial staff are available from the unemployment scheme in the United Kingdom, and therefore direction comes from the Board to both paid staff and volunteers at the intermediate level. This works well.

Mr. M.C. Sanders: Stated that he was unashamedly a supporter of THS and only supervised paid workers on THS work.

Mr. G. Taylor (THS): Asked Mr. Claydon the following question: "Are the unemployed people the majority of your work force?"

Mr. G.B. Claydon: Yes, four people are paid full time to supervise about fifty unemployed.

Mr. G. Taylor: What can be done when the unemployment scheme ceases to ensure that projects are finished?

Mr. G.B. Claydon: Is there a package scheme operating in New Zealand or is it open-ended?

Mr. D.R. Muir: No, it is open-ended on a three month basis.

Mr. G.B. Claydon: In Britain there is a package system, and workers are retained until the package is finished.

Mr. M. Skinner: The same conditions apply in Australia.

Dr. J.C. Radcliffe: Agreed with the tiered system suggested by Mr. Claydon. However, he stated overall control must be by voluntary members - and in Australia this is required by law - and to avoid conflict between volunteers and paid staff, it is essential that interchange of information take place frequently.

Mr. P. Hyde (BTMS): Asked the following question: "What are the relative work outputs of paid unemployed as compared with the volunteers, both in quantity and in quality?"

Mr. I. Mison: MOTAT was caught on the hop by this scheme and the tramway workers have only recently started. However, they have done much preparatory work.

Mr. P. Hyde: Is the quality and quantity as good as volunteers?

- Mr. I. Mison: The quality is satisfactory but it takes a long time.
- Mr. M.C. Sanders: Volunteers are variable but although they work shorter hours, they are prepared to improvise and to make do. Paid workers are on the site for their full 8 hour period. In spite of this, however, a minor problem will hold up the work.
- Mr. D.R. Muir: There are good workers among the unemployed and these people are frustrated and slowed down by the lack of equipment, materials and finance. Restoration work is not the field of the unemployed worker who doesn't have the required variety of skills. Given the opportunity, the unemployed workers will work quickly.
- Mr. G.B. Claydon: In Britain, the employing organisation may nominate the skills which it requires. It is not an abrogation of responsibility to have paid staff to restore trams. Trams are needed to make the Museum work and therefore the chance to prepare running trams for service should be taken.
- Dr. J.C. Radcliffe: Stated that restoration in Adelaide was being done by unemployed workers on a relief scheme and that it would be interesting to see the results of this work. The work is being done by people with related skills, supervised by staff with the necessary skills but with no particular love for the vehicles.
- Dr. Radcliffe issued the warning that political fickleness could remove the source of labour under such schemes leaving Museums in an embarrassing situation.
- Mr. I. Mison: Suggested that it is worth trying to plan work so that the harder work is done by unemployed persons, leaving the easier work for volunteers to complete, should the unemployment relief scheme collapse.
- Mr. M. Skinner: Commented that restoration is an emotional topic - volunteers do not want their favourite tram "molested" by unemployed workers.
- Rev. M.H. Kerr: Posed the question: "How can you create harmony in this situation?"

The following comments ensued in answer to this question:

- Miss E. Butland:  
(MOTAT) Stated that she was very happy that paid staff were working on her favourite tram.

- Mr. G.B. Claydon: Commented that if the work were done properly, by tradesmen, there should be no conflict.
- Mr. I. Mison: Commented that if there is a duplication of vehicles there should be no reason why paid workers could not restore a "hack" vehicle.
- Mr. D.R. Muir: Stated that he was happy to allocate unemployed workers to paid members to supervise. This scheme depends on the Labour Department's administrator. Early workers were unskilled but late last year the Labour Department was required to justify its expenditure on the Ferrymead project and Ferrymead was made into a Work Rehabilitation Scheme. The Labour Department's administrator "played it right down the middle", threatening to "dump" the whole scheme. The result is that Ferrymead is now permitted to employ tradesmen and professional persons and to pay the going rates to them.
- Rev. M.H. Kerr: Commented that an important point to be noted is that, as the New Zealand situation deteriorates, more and more skilled workers will become available.
- Mr. G.B. Claydon: Suggested trying to avoid conflict by having two trams to be worked on together with two sets of tools. He suggested that fulltime staff could be selected from volunteers and would bring their knowledge and enthusiasm to the project.
- Mr. D.D. Hinman:  
(THS) Observed that friendly competition between volunteers and paid staff could speed up the restoration work.
- Dr. J.C. Radcliffe: Commented that volunteers will undertake work that no one else wants to do if they are paid for this work on a part time basis. He cited, as an example, AETM rail which, after relaying, required packing.
- Mr. D.D. Hinman: Posed the following question: "Will they, at a later date, pack track if they are not paid?"
- Mr. M. Skinner: Answered that volunteers did the job more thoroughly than paid staff, and no supervision was required. If the unemployed relief scheme finishes, volunteers could be used to complete jobs.
- Dr. J.C. Radcliffe: Commented that this question required careful consideration. Members may do their own thing and say that the Museum can pay to have done whatever they do not want to do, particularly unpleasant jobs.
- Mr. F. Gear:  
(Canterbury Branch  
New Zealand Railway  
and Locomotive  
Society Inc.) Asked if any Museum had made use of labour available from the Justice Department under the Periodic Detention Scheme.

Mr. I. Mison:

Considered that this labour provided good value since, if they do not behave themselves, they are transferred to more unpleasant jobs.

Mr. G.B. Claydon:

Crich had been approached by the Home Office to take labour under such a scheme and had refused this offer as no indemnity for damage caused was forthcoming.

Mr. I. Mison:

Explained that periodic detention labour in New Zealand did not include criminals and therefore posed no major problem.

Mr. D.R. Muir:

Advised that he considered these people good value as the supervision is provided with the group. He commented further that the museum using such a group must have everything ready and that the group can be used only on specific jobs as arranged with the supervisor.

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