



HOME OFFICE

## REPORT

BY

SIR WALTER MONCKTON

K.C.M.G., K.C.V.O., M.C., K.C.,

on the circumstances which led to the boarding out of

DENNIS AND TERENCE O'NEILL

at Bank Farm, Minsterley

and the steps taken to supervise their welfare

*Presented by the Secretary of State for the Home Department to Parliament  
by Command of His Majesty  
May 1945*

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To The Right Hon. HERBERT MORRISON, M.P., His Majesty's Principal  
Secretary of State for the Home Department.

1. On the 28th March, 1945, you appointed me to inquire into and report  
upon the circumstances which led to the boarding out of Dennis and Terence  
O'Neill at Bank Farm, Minsterley, and the steps taken to supervise their  
welfare.

2. The following were the circumstances which led to the Inquiry. Dennis  
and Terence O'Neill were born respectively on the 2nd March, 1932, and the  
13th December, 1934, and were the children of Thomas John O'Neill, a  
labourer, of Newport, Monmouthshire, and Mabel Blonwyn O'Neill, his wife.  
On the 30th May, 1940, Dennis and Terence were committed by the Newport  
Juvenile Court to the care or protection of the Newport County Borough  
Council, as a "fit person" within the meaning of Sections 76 and 96 of the  
Children and Young Persons Act, 1933, hereinafter referred to as the 1933 Act.  
Dennis was boarded out at Bank Farm, Minsterley, Shropshire, on the 28th  
June, 1944. The foster-parents were Reginald Gough and Esther Gough, his  
wife. Terence joined Dennis at Bank Farm on the 5th July, 1944. Dennis  
died there on the 9th January, 1945. Terence was removed from Bank Farm  
to a place of safety on the 10th January, 1945.

3. An inquest was held on the boy Dennis. The coroner's jury returned  
a verdict that his death was due to acute cardiac failure following violence  
applied to the front of the chest and back while in a state of under-nourish-  
ment due to neglect and added a rider that there had been a serious lack of  
supervision by the local authority. Reginald and Esther Gough were charged  
with manslaughter. At Stafford Assizes on the 19th March, 1945, Reginald  
Gough was found guilty of manslaughter and was sentenced to six years' penal  
servitude. Esther Gough was found not guilty of manslaughter but guilty of  
neglect and was sentenced to six months' imprisonment. The matter attracted  
attention in Press and Parliament. Early in February, 1945, both the Newport  
County Borough Council and the Shropshire County Council asked you to  
cause a public Inquiry to be held into all the circumstances affecting the  
matter.

4. On undertaking the Inquiry I heard the submissions of all the parties  
who wished to address me and the evidence of the witnesses whom they  
desired to call on the 10th, 11th, 12th and 13th April, 1945, at the Civic Centre,  
Newport, Monmouthshire. At the request of Counsel for the Newport County  
Borough Council and the Shropshire County Council I subsequently visited  
Minsterley and inspected Bank Farm.

5. The authorities and persons, whose names are given on the opposite page,  
appeared or were represented at the Inquiry. Twenty-two witnesses were called  
before me, and I base the conclusions which follow upon their evidence and  
upon the relevant documents which were produced during the hearing.

#### THE NEWPORT AUTHORITY AND THE O'NEILL CHILDREN UP TO 20th DECEMBER, 1944

6. Mr. O'Neill had been convicted in December, 1923, of the offence of  
neglecting one of his children and sentenced to one month's imprisonment;  
the case against his wife had been dismissed with a caution. In November,  
1939, Mr. Richard Jones, an Inspector of the N.S.P.C.C., laid informations  
against both parents for similar offences under Section 1 of the 1933 Act, and  
at the same time obtained from a magistrate a warrant to remove the four  
children then at home. They were the two who are the subject of this



8. The decision to commit the children to the Newport County Borough Council as the local authority and a fit person to have their care and protection was in accordance with the policy recommended by the Departmental Committee on the Treatment of Young Offenders in 1927 and given statutory effect in the 1933 Act. The 1927 Committee observed at page 64 of their Report: "The care of a relative or friend may be better for a child than an institution unless the child's character is such as to require special training or supervision. The limited extent to which the important principle of individual care has been adopted seems to us to indicate a need for developing more fully the principle of guardianship. . . . Where a child or young person who appears before the Juvenile Court has no parents or worthless parents and does not require training in an institution, some procedure is needed whereby guardianship can be transferred to some responsible authority whose duty it will be to find a new home for him and watch over his future welfare. We think the local education authority might well fulfil this function." Accordingly they recommended that "where a child or young person under 17 is brought before a Juvenile Court and the Court is satisfied that he ought not to be left in the control of his parents but that he does not require institutional care or training, it should be open to the Court to transfer the guardianship of the child or young person to the local education authority." In accordance with this recommendation the 1933 Act provided that a local authority should be deemed to be a "fit person" for the purpose of the committal of children (Section 76) and that the local authority in this connection should be the local authority for elementary education (Section 96). It further expressly empowered local authorities to board out children (Section 84), and provided

9. When authority is thus committed to a suitable foster parent, the Council as Education Officer of this Department, a boarding out of clerical staff mented by training in the children were duties formerly years between 5 children between the 9 years and of them Newport and the county authorities were out by the Mr. Birt, the visits in the authorities to understand, are taken to whose care of their responsibility.

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that the Home Secretary might make rules as to the manner in which committed children should be dealt with. These rules were duly made and are the Children and Young Persons (Boarding Out) Rules, 1933 (S.R. & O. 1933, No. 787) and are hereinafter referred to as "the Rules."\*

9. When the order had been made, it became the duty of the Newport authority under Rule 4 of the Rules to make arrangements for the children thus committed to their care to be boarded out as soon as possible with a suitable foster parent. The functions of the Newport (County Borough) Council as local authority for elementary education are discharged by the Education Committee acting through the Education Department. The head of this Department is the Director of Education, Dr. D. W. Oates. His assistant, a Mr. Edmonds, has had long experience with the Authority and in boarding out cases. In peace-time the Director had an administrative and clerical staff of 22, but by 1944 this had been reduced to 8 who were supplemented by 14 or 15 women employed on a temporary basis and without training in the work. Administrative duties in connection with boarded out children were assigned to one of the clerks, a Miss E. M. Edwards. These duties formed only a small part of the work of the department, for in the years between the 1933 Act and the committal of the O'Neill children only 5 children had been committed to the care of the Newport authority and in the 9 years from 1936 to 1944 inclusive only 20 children were so committed and of them only 13 were boarded out. It was the invariable practice of the Newport authority to board out children committed to their care, outside the county borough. Some children committed to the care of other local authorities were boarded out in Newport and visits of inspection were carried out by the Newport authority for the other local authorities concerned; Mr. Birt, the Newport Senior School Attendance Officer, ordinarily made these visits in the case of boys. Arrangements of this kind made by local authorities to help one another are contemplated in Rule 16 and are, I understand, common. They are not open to objection, so long as proper steps are taken to ensure adequate supervision and so long as the authority to whose care or protection the children have been committed, remain conscious of their responsibility.

10. The task of selecting foster parents is left by the Rules to the local authority concerned, subject to certain restrictions of which Rule 5 contains the most relevant for the present purpose. It provides that not more than two foster-children shall be boarded out in the same home at the same time unless all the foster-children are brothers or sisters or brothers and sisters.

11. Between the 30th May, 1940, and the 28th June, 1944, when Dennis was boarded out at Bank Farm, the three boys were boarded out with other foster parents:

(i) From September, 1940, to 5th January, 1941, with Mrs. Surrell at Credenhill, Herefordshire, and

(ii) From 6th January, 1941, to 28th June, 1944, with Mrs. Connop at Yarpole, near Leominster, Herefordshire.

No suggestion was made to me that there was any ground to criticise the selection of these two foster-parents or the care or supervision of the children while with them. But it is not without interest to point out briefly the steps taken and the arrangements made as they were in some respects in marked contrast with the procedure adopted later in the case of Bank Farm.

12. It is not by any means easy in all cases to find a suitable foster-home. In the present instance the Newport authority advertised in July, 1940, in the

\* See Appendix.



"Brecon and Radnor Express" and in the "Hereford Times" inviting applications from responsible persons resident outside the county borough of Newport for appointment as foster-parents. Eleven replies were received including one from Mrs. Surrell. She was the only Roman Catholic who answered the advertisement and, having regard to Rule 14, the Newport Authority naturally followed the matter up and sent her application forms. On the 12th August Dr. Oates, for the Newport authority, wrote to the Director of Education at Hereford requesting (among other things) a report on Mrs. Surrell as a foster-parent and enclosing a Newport report form. Mrs. Surrell was accordingly visited and the report was completed on the 19th August. The report was satisfactory and Mrs. Surrell was selected as foster-mother.

13. On the 13th September, 1940, Mrs. Surrell signed an undertaking in respect of each of the boys in the form given in the Schedule to the Rules. On the 19th September the boys were examined by a medical officer who gave his certificate under Rule 10 in respect of Dennis and Freddie. Terence was found to have impetigo and could not be boarded out till a few weeks later, when he joined his brothers in Mrs. Surrell's care. The other two were escorted by one of the Newport School Attendance Officers on the 20th September from the institution in which they had been lodged to their new home. Mrs. Surrell gave a written acknowledgment that she had received the children, in accordance with Rule 12. On the 23rd September Dr. Oates wrote to the Director of Education at Hereford asking him to arrange for quarterly reports to be sent to him and pointing out that the first report was required by the Boarding-Out Rules to be obtained within a month of boarding-out. The Hereford Director of Education agreed to arrange a visit and to submit a report as to the welfare of the boys within one month and later on at intervals of every three months. The first report, made on a form provided by the Newport authority, was dated the 23rd October and was satisfactory.

14. At the end of 1940 the children had to be moved because Mrs. Surrell fell ill. Dr. Oates thereupon wrote to Mrs. Connop, of Yarpole, near Leominster, Herefordshire. She had been one of the eleven applicants in the previous July. She had filled in an application form and had been favourably reported on by the Herefordshire authority in September. She accepted Dr. Oates' proposal that she should take the three children, and they were escorted to her home by one of the School Attendance Officers on the 6th January, 1941. On the 4th February, Dr. Oates wrote asking the Herefordshire authority for a report on the home circumstances. On the 28th March, 1941, the Herefordshire authority replied saying that the School Attendance Officer had visited the children and reported that home conditions were very good and the school report most satisfactory. Dennis, Terence and Freddie stayed with Mrs. Connop for 3½ years.

15. On the 28th April, 1944, the Herefordshire education authority advised the Newport authority to remove the boys from Mrs. Connop in circumstances into which it is not necessary to enter except to say (i) that there was no suggestion that Mrs. Connop was other than a devoted and careful foster parent, and (ii) that I am satisfied that it was natural and proper for the Newport authority to accept the advice and arrange for the removal of the children accordingly.

16. In May, 1944, arrangements were made under which a Mrs. Pickering, of Pentervin, near Minsterley, Shropshire, offered to take the three boys. It is of interest to note that before sending the boys the Newport Director of Education asked the Shropshire local authority for a report on the suitability of the home and the foster parents, and obtained a favourable

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report in reply. At the last moment, however, Mrs. Pickering made up her mind to take in another child, a little girl, and accordingly decided that she could not have the three O'Neill children as well; (in any event she could not have been persuaded to do so without a breach of Rule 5). On the 25th June, she wrote to the Newport authority informing them of her decision. The letter was not received at Newport till the 27th June. Meantime, all arrangements had been made for a Mr. Easterby, a School Attendance Officer of the Newport authority, to escort the three children to Mrs. Pickering on the 28th June.

17. Mrs. Pickering's letter, arriving when it did, put the Newport authority into a difficulty. Dr. Oates, after discussion with his Deputy, Mr. Edmonds, decided that Mr. Easterby should take the three children to Mrs. Pickering, as originally planned, in the hope that she could be persuaded to take them all.

18. In her letter of the 25th June, Mrs. Pickering had mentioned Bank Farm, Minsterley, as a possible alternative home for the boys. If Mrs. Pickering would not take the children or all of them, Mr. Easterby was to use his own judgment about finding a home. He took with him copies of the application form and the report form and the undertaking scheduled to the Rules, in case he should find a suitable home for the children other than Mrs. Pickering's.

19. When Mr. Easterby reached Mrs. Pickering's home with the three boys on the 28th June, the small girl (a child boarded-out by the Shropshire authority) had arrived 2½ hours earlier and, though Mrs. Pickering was ready to take the two younger boys as well, she could not take Dennis, the eldest. Incidentally this involved a breach of Rule 5, though Mr. Easterby probably did not realise it. She mentioned to Mr. Easterby two farms, Bank Farm, to which she had referred in her letter, and Ivy House Farm, as places where the farmers might take in Dennis, but she did not recommend or express any opinion about Mr. Gough, the farmer at Bank Farm, or his wife. Mr. Easterby left Terence and Freddie with Mrs. Pickering and took Dennis first to Ivy House Farm, where they could not take him, and then to Bank Farm.

20. Bank Farm is a mixed farm, mainly pasture, of some 70 acres. Apart from some help from prisoners of war, the extent of which I do not know, and from casual assistance from one man, the Goughs did the work of the farm themselves. (I ought, however, to say that no evidence came to my notice of any exploitation of the boys in the work of the farm.) At the farm Mr. Easterby spent an hour or an hour and a quarter with the Goughs. They were willing to take Dennis. Mr. Easterby read out to them the contents of the three forms he had brought with him, and Mr. Gough signed the statutory undertaking. Mr. Easterby formed a favourable opinion of both of them, and thought that he had found in Bank Farm a good home for the boy. He learned from Mrs. Gough that she had been a nurse in private houses and found her clean and tidy. On his return to Newport he made a report in which he expressed the view that the advantage would be on the boy's side.

21. The careful selection of foster parents is the first essential in boarding-out children for whom a local authority is responsible. There was undoubtedly difficulty in June, 1944, in finding suitable homes for children. The V.I attacks on London in that month increased the number of people to be accommodated in such areas as Shropshire. Moreover, the staffs of both the Newport and Shropshire authorities were seriously depleted and



burdened with much extra work in connection with the war effort and the new Education Act. Nevertheless, it is necessary to point out:—

(a) That Mr. Easterby had no experience in selecting or visiting homes for boarded-out children, was not familiar with the Boarding-Out Rules, and would not have been thought suitable by his superior officer for such a task. Nor had he any instructions from his superiors as to the nature of the inquiries which he ought to make. He had only once before acted as an escort in a boarding-out case, though he had acted as escort to approved schools.

(b) That he made no inquiries from anybody about the suitability of Mr. and Mrs. Gough as prospective foster-parents. Mr. Gough had been convicted in 1931 at Wem, in Shropshire, of assault and had been fined £1; but he was only 17½ at the time, and it was 13 years before the material time. In the summer of 1942, soon after his marriage and his moving into Bank Farm, his wife had left him. She applied to the Wem Justices for a separation order on the grounds of persistent cruelty, and the matter was referred to the Probation Officer. Subsequently, Mrs. Gough decided to return to her husband. These specific matters which came to the attention of magistrates in the county might not necessarily be regarded as sufficient to disqualify Mr. Gough as a foster-parent. Nevertheless, I am not prepared to assume that the Vicar and police, for example, would necessarily have given encouraging opinions.

(c) That Mr. Easterby saw only the living room at Bank Farm and neither saw, nor asked to see, where Dennis would sleep; though it is right to say that, had he asked, he would presumably have been shown, not the room which Dennis and Terence ultimately occupied, but a better room which was then available for them and first used by them.

(d) That, though he took references from the Goughs, the references were never taken up by the Newport authority.

(e) That the arrangement to board out the children at Bank Farm in Shropshire was not made through the Shropshire authority or indeed with their knowledge.

22. Mr. Easterby left Dennis at Bank Farm on the 28th June. Terence joined him there on the 5th July. Mrs. Pickering found she could not manage both the O'Neill boys and indeed it would have been contrary to the Rules for Mrs. Pickering to have two O'Neills (Terence and Freddie) in addition to the little girl. Moreover, it was natural that Dennis and Terence should be kept together. On the 13th July a form of undertaking was sent to Mrs. Gough by post in respect of Terence, which she signed and returned. On the 18th July she wrote to the Newport authority saying, "We have got very fond of the boys, they have settled down and are two real good boys."

23. So far as the Newport authority knew, no step had been taken, apart from Mr. Easterby's visit, to inquire into the suitability of Bank Farm or the Goughs. In particular, no inquiry was made of the Shropshire authority. On the 24th July, 1944, Dr. Oates wrote to the Director of Education for Shropshire asking the latter authority to undertake the supervision of the O'Neill children at Bank Farm and Pentervin. A report was asked for on the homes at the Shropshire authority's "earliest convenience" and on the children every three months. The letter was not answered, nor was a reminder written until the 24th November, 1944, when the Newport authority wrote again repeating their request. On the 5th December, 1944, the Shropshire authority replied declining to undertake the supervision because of a difference in the rates of allowance to foster parents paid by the two

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authorities. The Newport authority was paying the maximum rate and the rate paid by Shropshire was somewhat lower. In the meantime after sending their letter of the 24th November the Newport authority received a letter dated the 25th November from Mrs. Connop in the course of which she described meeting Mrs. Pickering in Shrewsbury when Mrs. Pickering told her that "the people Dennis and Terry were with were very funny people" and that she did not like them. Mrs. Connop had written a number of lengthy letters to the Newport authority on other matters which that authority might not unreasonably have regarded as conveying a mass of rather undigested criticism. But there was no doubt of her interest in the children and her letter was at the least not reassuring. However that may be, on the 20th December, Miss Edwards was sent by the Newport authority to discuss the difficulty which had arisen about the rates of allowance and to visit the children.

24. It follows, therefore, that for a period of nearly six months between 28th June, when Mr. Easterby took Dennis to Bank Farm, and the 20th December, when Miss Edwards paid her visit (to which I return in paragraph 38 below), the Newport authority, apart from two requests to the Shropshire authority, the one left unanswered and the other declined, took no steps to ensure the supervision of the children or a visit to them at Bank Farm. Some of the responsible officers at Newport assumed that the Shropshire authority was supervising; some did not make that assumption. No one made sure by telephone, visit or further letter.

25. The inactivity of the Newport authority was explained to me as being at least in part due to a series of accidents and misfortunes. It was a misfortune for Newport that the Shropshire authority (as will be explained in paragraph 34) by a mistake in filing documents, never answered the letter of the 24th July. Miss Edwards, the clerk in the Newport education authority's office, who would have been the appropriate person to deal with the matter, was absent on leave from the 11th to the 23rd September, and then was away from work from the 27th September to the 15th November because of an operation for appendicitis. A clerk named Williams, who looked after her work in her absence, was not familiar with boarding-out procedure.

26. There was a system in the Education Department by which clerks were reminded of regularly recurring duties by means of "duty cards" marked to be brought forward at appropriate dates. There was a duty card headed "Boarding Out Reports received during last quarter." It was marked to be brought forward on 20th April, 20th July, 20th October and 6th December, 1944. It did not refer only to the O'Neills. Their name appeared among others on the back of the card but there was nothing to connect them with any particular entry on the front. This card came up to Mr. Williams on the 20th October. He took it to refer to some formal matter which Miss Edwards could deal with on her return and he marked the card as postponed to the 30th October. On the 30th October he postponed it again to the 13th November and then again to the 17th November. By this last date Miss Edwards was back at work and the reminding letter to the Director of Education at Shrewsbury was written on the 24th November, 1944.

#### THE SHROPSHIRE AUTHORITY AND BANK FARM UP TO 20th DECEMBER, 1944

27. Meantime, the Shropshire Authority had in fact been in touch with Bank Farm, though this was unknown to Newport. It is necessary here to explain that the organisation of the Shropshire local education authority for elementary education differs somewhat from that of its Newport counterpart.



The welfare of children has since the 1933 Act been committed to the department of the Secretary for Education, latterly a Mr. Martin Wilson. But the children are in fact supervised by the Public Assistance Department, because they have the necessary machinery and experience and a large number of Poor Law children to supervise in any event. At the material time they were dealing with 92 Shropshire children boarded out under the Poor Law Act and 13 boarded out under the Children and Young Persons Act. If children from outside authorities are boarded out in Shropshire, application is made in the first instance to the Education Secretary and is passed on to the Public Assistance Department. When once the Public Assistance Department agree to take over supervision, then all correspondence normally takes place between the Public Assistance Department and the other authority. There is in Mr. Martin Wilson's words "a very complete delegation" of the boarding out work of the Education Department to the Public Assistance Department. Mr. J. H. Hargreaves was the Public Assistance Officer for the county of Shropshire and as such was responsible for the administration of the Public Assistance Department. In some districts boarding out is administered directly from Shrewsbury; in others boarding out committees have been constituted pursuant to Rule 16. There are ten areas with a boarding-out committee and Bank Farm is within the area of the Clun Boarding-out Committee. The visiting there is done by voluntary visitors who are all on the Committee. The Secretary of the Clun Boarding-out Committee is a Mr. Vaughan Pryce, a solicitor, who is also Clerk to the Guardians' Committee. When foster-homes are wanted, they are usually found either through local members of the Boarding-out Committee or by Mrs. C. Browne, who is Shropshire's paid boarding-out visitor. The Clun area was described as practically autonomous and I was told that they did not ordinarily forward to the Public Assistance Department or any other authority the reports they received from their visitors nor did the Shropshire authority ordinarily forward reports to other local authorities for whom they were supervising.

28. On the 22nd May, 1944, five weeks before the O'Neills were taken to Minsterley, Mrs. Gough had written to the Matron of the Market Drayton Public Assistance Institution saying that she would like to take two children; she said that she had heard that there were some young children to put out to homes. The Matron passed the letter to Mr. Hargreaves, the Public Assistance Officer. He wrote to Mrs. Gough on the 26th May saying that there were children available for boarding-out, and enclosed an application form which Mrs. Gough filled up and returned the next day. In consequence Mrs. Browne, the Shropshire paid boarding-out visitor already mentioned, paid a visit to Bank Farm on the 1st June to see whether it would be a suitable foster-home. This was, of course, still some weeks before there was any question of the O'Neill children or any children sent by the Newport authority, going there. She inspected the living room and the bedroom which the children were to occupy. She found the bed and bedding adequate and the house and Mrs. Gough clean and satisfactory. She noted a shortage of furniture, but Mrs. Gough told her that she was getting some more. Mrs. Browne does not come from the part of Shropshire where Bank Farm is, but from the Oswestry district in the north of the county. She was not well acquainted with Minsterley. She did not know the Goughs and made no inquiries about them. On the same day, the 1st June, 1944, she made a favourable report in writing on Bank Farm. She was a lady of experience in her work, but Mr. Davies, the Administrative Assistant in charge of boarding-out in the Shropshire Public Assistance Department, agreed that her opinion ought to have been supplemented by inquiries from other sources.

29. As a result of Mrs. Browne's report, two children, named Mullinder, aged two and five years respectively, were boarded-out at Bank Farm on

the 12th July. Assistance in the O'Neill case for having found Newport authorities O'Neills. In more than three months two members: Bolton, Superintendent, Wilson, Master

30. Both Mr. and Mrs. Martin Wilson were an unfavourable opinion with what applied to the house, but Mr. Wilson left the children in place for the time being and others in which Mr. Wilson expressed dissatisfaction with the Public Assistance Department in such clear and worthy that they left the children in the suitability of the farm as was the Public Assistance Department told her that the woman was his children—he was Superintendent says that she was Mr. Bolton no Bank Farm in addition

31. Adverse accordingly spoke the office shortly with the house cannot understand made, much less necessary to do more Boarding-out Commission way. The case July, 1944. The asked the Shropshire passed to the Mr. Vaughan Pryce letter, Mr. Hargreaves Mrs. Gough had sanction of the the wife of a local voluntary visitor the 3rd August Bank Farm.



the 12th July, 1944. They had previously been at the Whitchurch Public Assistance Institution. The Shropshire authority did not then know that the O'Neill children were there, or they would not have sent the Mullinders; for having four children there involved a breach of Rule 5. Nor did the Newport authority know that the Mullinders were being added to the O'Neills. In fact the four children remained at Bank Farm together for more than three months. The Mullinder children were taken to Bank Farm by two members of the staff of the Shropshire local authority, Mr. Alfred Bolton, Superintendent of the Shrewsbury Children's Home, and Mr. John Wilson, Master of the Whitchurch Public Assistance Institution.

30. Both Mr. Bolton and Mr. Wilson, when they took the children, formed an unfavourable opinion of Mrs. Gough, whom they found dirty and untidy with what appeared to be sores on her legs. Mr. Bolton did not go into the house, but Mr. Wilson saw the living room and found it very dirty. They left the children there but did so reluctantly, for they did not think it a fit place for them. There was at the Inquiry considerable conflict between them and other officials of the Shropshire County Council as to the terms in which Mr. Bolton, on behalf of himself and Mr. Wilson, reported their dissatisfaction by telephone, and later in conversation to representatives of the Public Assistance Department. I do not think that Mr. Bolton conveyed it in such clear and vehement terms as he used at the Inquiry, and it is noteworthy that though Mr. Wilson wrote on the 13th July, 1944, reporting having left the children there, he did not in his letter make any comment on the suitability of the Farm or the Goughs. But I am satisfied that Mr. Bolton did make an unfavourable report, and it was not challenged that he described the farm as very bare, comfortless and isolated. Mrs. Rodgers, a clerk in the Public Assistance Department, to whom he first spoke, agreed that he told her that the living-room at Bank Farm was like a barrack room, that the woman was untidy, with sores on her legs, and that if they had been his children—i.e., as she understood, the children at the Home of which he was Superintendent—he would not have left them there. Mrs. Rodgers says that she passed on the gist of this conversation to Mr. Davies. Neither Mr. Bolton nor Mr. Wilson knew that the O'Neill children were at Bank Farm in addition to the Mullinder children.

31. Adverse comment from such a source could not be ignored. Mr. Davies accordingly spoke to Mrs. Browne about Bank Farm when she visited the office shortly afterwards. She expressed herself as definitely satisfied with the house, apart from its inaccessibility. For some reason, which I cannot understand, Mr. Davies did not tell her that a complaint had been made, much less the particulars of the complaint. He thought it unnecessary to do more, because the case was about to be handed over to the Clun Boarding-out Committee, whose visitor would be paying a visit in the ordinary way. The case was in fact handed over to the Clun Committee on the 25th July, 1944. The letter from the Newport authority of the 24th July (which asked the Shropshire authority to supervise and was never answered) was passed to the Shropshire Public Assistance Department and by them to Mr. Vaughan Pryce, the Secretary of the Clun Committee. In his covering letter, Mr. Hargreaves drew Mr. Vaughan Pryce's attention to the fact that Mrs. Gough had four children and two would have to be withdrawn or the sanction of the Home Secretary obtained under Rule 22. A Mrs. Evans, the wife of a local farmer who had lived in the district for 45 years, acted as a voluntary visitor for the Clun Committee of which she was a member. On the 3rd August Mr. Vaughan Pryce asked Mrs. Evans for a report on Bank Farm.