

4th February, 1963.

NI/GP/63/5

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH IN NUCLEAR SCIENCE

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Rutherford Laboratory Restaurant

by J. M. Valentine

1. A Restaurant Committee was set up in the Rutherford Laboratory in September, 1961 to investigate the alternative methods of providing a catering service of the scope and quality required by the Laboratory. Details of the committee's findings are contained in appendix I.
2. The conclusion reached by the committee, and accepted by the Director of the Rutherford Laboratory, was that the most advantageous method was management of the restaurant by a commercial catering company. After detailed consideration of the market the company selected was Staff Caterers Ltd.
3. A preliminary discussion with Staff Caterers Ltd. has shown that a contract placed with them would have the following financial implications:
 - (i) A management fee of £31 10s. Od. per week would be charged by Staff Caterers Ltd. It is proposed that this cost should be borne by the Institute on the grounds that management costs would be paid by the Institute if the restaurant were managed directly or through A.E.R.E.
 - (ii) The restaurant building with its contents and also the heating, lighting, power, cleaning etc. of the building will be provided by the Institute.
 - (iii) The cost of the meals will be fixed to cover the cost of the food plus the wages of the catering staff. Any excess cost on a meal due to its being served outside normal working hours will be borne by the Institute. During the initial running in period the restaurant may temporarily operate at a loss. With these exceptions it will be the responsibility of the Director of the Rutherford Laboratory to ensure that, over a reasonably long period, a loss is not incurred. Any profit will revert to the Institute. After the initial running in period it is intended to negotiate a profit-sharing clause with Staff Caterers Ltd. as an incentive towards economical catering.
4. The General Purposes Committee are asked to approve the placing of a contract with Staff Caterers Ltd. along the lines noted in (3) above.

RUTHERFORD LABORATORY RESTAURANT

1. A Restaurant Committee was set up in September, 1961, to investigate the alternative methods of providing a catering service of the scope and quality required by the Laboratory, using the premises already under construction as the Staff Restaurant.

2. The full committee met four times and a sub-committee made numerous visits to industrial canteens, staff restaurants and the head offices of various catering firms.

3. The following establishments were visited by the secretary of the committee to get a general picture of standards of catering and to seek advice on the merits of various methods:-

A.E.A., Risley
A.E.A., Springfield
A.E.A., Aldermaston
A.E.A., Winfrith
A.E.A., Harwell
Medical Research Council, Mill Hill
British Nylon Spinners, Pontypool
A.E.R.E. Social Club Canteen, Harwell

4. The secretary of the committee also visited the following authorities for consultation:-

Ministry of Aviation Catering Adviser - Mr. Murray
Industrial Welfare Council Catering Adviser - Miss Fincham
Messrs. Benham Limited - Kitchen designers and manufacturers
Messrs. Stotts, Oldham - Kitchen designers and manufacturers

5. The final report of the committee contained the following conclusions,

"The committee has based its study of management and control on the assumption that the restaurant will be required to provide the following services:

- (a) the provision of at least 600 main meals during the lunch-time service, with waitress service for 60 covers in two sittings; five days per week. The extra cost of waitress service will be borne by those using it, and not subsidised by the cafeteria service.
- (b) the sale of light snacks and cold buffet from a separate, central service counter.
- (c) the provision of some 50 evening meals between 6 p.m. and 7 p.m. daily. It is assumed that some direct subsidy would be available for the provision of this uneconomical service.
- (d) the possible provision of a tea and coffee trolley service and the control of the tea and coffee machines in the Laboratory (at a later date).
- (e) the control and operation of a shop within the restaurant to provide a service amenity for the staff of the Laboratory and M.R.C.
- (f) the provision of about 50 lunchtime meals at closed weekends and about 100 during working weekends, without waitress service, but of the same standard as normal service except for a smaller choice of menu.

- (g) the food provided at each meal is to be of a high standard both in preparation and service, with a reasonably wide choice of menu, and is to be supplied at prices comparable to those paid by staff at present using the Harwell canteens.

The committee has considered the following four methods of management:-

- (i) by an arrangement with A.E.R.E.
- (ii) by staff directly employed by the Institute.
- (iii) by a staff restaurant committee who would appoint a manager.
- (iv) by contract with a firm of caterers.

In considering the possibilities, members of the committee have heard the views of the executive staff who operate the Staff Canteen at M.R.C., Mill Hill (by a Staff Restaurant Committee); the report of the sub-committee who have paid many visits to Industrial and Staff Restaurants over a large part of the country; the opinions of Mr. Halstead formed by his interviews with the Directors or Contract Managers of the catering firms; and have studied the proposals made by these firms through Mr. Spinks.

Method 1

Mr. Halstead and the Chairman met Mr. Ferguson of A.E.R.E. to discuss this possibility and reported back to the committee. From the Laboratory's point of view there is very little to distinguish this method from Method 4. It was considered that with this method the Laboratory would have much less control over the affairs of the restaurant than with an outside catering firm and no obvious advantages.

Method 2

Though this method would give us best control over services, menus and method, the Institute would have to find staff and provide for replacements during sickness and holidays. We should be in competition with A.E.R.E. for staff. Extra work would fall on executive staff of the Laboratory in connection with the placing of contracts, the restaurant's cash and accounts, engagement and control of staff, and other matters of day to day management. Also the Laboratory has not at present got the complement necessary to run the restaurant in this way and it is unlikely that we should be able to present to the Governing Board a sufficiently strong case to secure the additional posts. A further disadvantage is that our own staff lack the necessary experience.

Method 3

This is in many ways an attractive method, but it suffers from most of the disadvantages of direct management. We would have no reserve staff.

The day to day routine of management would fall upon the Laboratory's executive staff, and the work of the committee would be as a committee of management rather than an advisory committee. It would inevitably take up a considerable amount of time for the Institute's professional and executive staff, and the representatives of Trade Unions and Staff Side who would serve on it. It was also considered unrealistic to ask such a committee to be responsible for the operation of the uneconomical services such as the evening and weekend meals.

Method 4

It has been found that many catering companies are prepared and willing to take over the management of the restaurant. For the further guidance of the committee, the secretary made investigations within the trade. Directors of a wide variety of catering firms visited the Laboratory to make detailed investigations. Proposals of methods of management and terms of contract were received from eight companies. These proposals are tendered with this report. A sub-committee of the restaurant committee paid extensive visits to units operated by these firms for a first hand appraisal of the standards of the firms, and the service they offered. The Headquarters Control Centres of some of these firms were also visited. The advantage of this method is that it relieves the National Institute completely of any direct responsibility in management concerned with engaging and controlling staff, ordering and payment of foodstuffs, clerical and accounting work.

It is worth remarking that although the committee were originally prejudiced against this method of running the restaurant after the visits by the sub-committee it was obvious that some of the catering firms were very competent and could provide an excellent service.

The committee unanimously recommend, therefore, that the restaurant should be operated by Method 4."

6. The secretary of the committee, on the advice of Miss Fincham, obtained from the Catering Blue Book and Diary, 1962, the names of those catering firms who are members of the Industrial and Staff Canteen Division of the Caterers Association of Great Britain, and who operate in the area or are prepared to accept commissions in any part of the country. The full list of these is as follows:-

1. Fairways Caterers, 5 Aspinall Road, Brookley, S.E.4.
2. John Gardner, Caterers Ltd., Bridge House, S.E.1.
3. H. Griffiths (Caterers) Ltd., 75-77 Lower Sloane Street, S.W.1.
4. Hammond (Caterers) Ltd., 86-86a Cambridge Road, N.W.6.
5. Industrial Catering Ltd., 199 Knightsbridge, S.W.7.
6. D. C. Jenkins & Co. Ltd., Bridge House, S.E.1.
7. Management Catering (London) Ltd., 107 Arthur Road, S.W.19.
8. Midland Counties Industrial Catering Ltd., 1197 Bristol Road South, Birmingham, 31.
9. Peter Merchant Ltd., 5 Tilney Street, W.1.
10. Premier Caterers Ltd., 71 Uxbridge Road, Ealing, W.5.
11. St. Pancras Catering Co. Ltd., 159 The Avenue, Sunbury on Thames.
12. Staff Caterers Ltd., 5 St. Andrews House, 32-34 Holborn Viaduct, E.C.1.
13. Taylors (Knightsbridge) Ltd., 51 Beauchamp Place, S.W.3.
14. R. & S. Catering Ltd., 143-145 St. Stephens House, Victoria Embankment, S.W.1.

In addition the following local firms were approached:-

15. Bees Catering Service Ltd., Oxford.
16. Banquets of Oxford Ltd., 2 Ship Street, Oxford.
17. A. R. Thomas, 34 Coverley Road, Headington.
18. Edward Barnett & Co. Ltd., Leeds, who initiated an enquiry.

7. Initially all approaches were made by the secretary by telephone. This resulted in the elimination of the following as being not interested in the type of catering or the area involved:- Nos. 1, 3, 4, 6, 11, 15, 16, 17. After some preliminary correspondence the following were eliminated for the reasons shown:-

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| No. 10 Premier Caterers Ltd. | - Quoted management fee only at £100 per month - no further investigation after initial visit. |
| No. 14 R. & S. Catering Ltd. | - After consideration this firm was not prepared to undertake management. |
| No. 13 Taylors (Knightsbridge) Ltd. | - Declined to quote in deference to associate firm - Industrial Catering Ltd. |

8. This leaves seven firms. They are as follows:-

- No. 2 John Gardner Ltd.
- No. 5 Industrial Catering Ltd.
- No. 7 Management Catering Ltd.
- No. 8 Midland Counties Industrial Catering Ltd.
- No. 9 Peter Merchant Ltd.
- No. 12 Staff Caterers Ltd.
- No. 18 Edward Barnett & Co. Ltd.

9. All the above firms were interviewed on site and units run by them were visited by a sub-committee whose views are recorded in another section of the final report of the restaurant committee

"It was the unanimous opinion of the sub-committee that "Staff Caterers Limited" were quite outstanding. They were very impressed by the calibre of the staff employed. All Managers had been trained initially in the kitchen and most Chefs had a background of high quality hotel catering. The relations between Staff Caterers Limited and the contracting firms also seemed to be most cordial and the firms indicated that they were very satisfied with the standards maintained. It was difficult to compare the quality of food with that at A.E.R.E. since all the restaurants visited were subsidized but the standard was indeed very high. The kitchens were all extremely clean and well maintained.

The two firms who approached closest to the standard set by Staff Caterers Limited were Midland Counties Catering Company Limited and Edward Barnett Limited.

The proposal made by Staff Caterers Limited may be summarised as follows:-

They would charge a Management fee which on the basis of

(a) 800 lunches daily for 5 days per week at an average of 3/-d. each,

(b) 50 evening meals for 5 days per week at 2/-d. each,

and (c) other sales valued at £75 per week

would amount to £31.10. 0d. per week.

For this, the Company would provide a full service and there would be no additional charges on the Laboratory except for gas, light, maintenance of the building and the cleaning of the restaurant.

If the above recommendation of the committee is accepted then it would recommend further:-

- (a) that the Management fee should be paid by the Laboratory.
- (b) that losses on essential meal services (evening meals and shifts) be borne by the Laboratory,
- (c) that during the initial "running in" period any losses should be borne out of Laboratory funds. There would be a close and frequent check on the financial state of the restaurant through the balance sheets provided by the catering firm."

10. The recommendations of the committee have been accepted by the Director of the Rutherford Laboratory.

J. M. Valentine

12th December, 1962.