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President's report

May 2003

Peter Woodburn is head of the English National Programme of the Lycee International, Ferney-Voltaire.



The new version of the OIB

The academic year started with the new British OIB examining structure in place. Both British and French authorities had confirmed it. The fact that this new structure for administering the examination is up and running is of major significance for ASIBA. It is, after all, the most important factor in promoting the continued well-being and development of the examination. The creation of ASIBA and of the new administrative structure date, of course, from the same period, during which the British OIB community was attempting to secure the short and medium term future of the Cambridge OIB. The Schools Chair, Philip Shaw Latimer, started his first year in this role with a double responsibility, since he took on the role of vice president of ASIBA at last May's AGA in Paris. It seems important now to stress two facts. Firstly, those closely involved in ASIBA will no doubt continue to play central but separate roles in the administration of the examination. It is important to understand this concept of separate roles within separate structures. The second fact is that ASIBA's roles and functions are different from those of the new administrative structure, as the Association's activities this year have made clear.

Fund raising

During the course of this year a fundraising sub committee was formed, chaired by Philip Shaw-Latimer. The other members are David Gage and Magdalena Martin. Certain parents from outside the committee have offered expert help. So far, thought has been given to the operations that could legitimately be funded in this way; this in turn helps us to have a general idea of the amount of money we wish to raise. The BRED bank, has already offered a donation of 1500 euros, via an agreement with the British Section of St. Germain-en-Laye. At last year's AGA the consensus was that ASIBA should raise money to support the examination, but that it should not pay for any part of the examination itself. Accordingly,

the Association's funds have been spent this year on a project directly connected with supporting the examination. This was the day's training of new teacher-examiners for OIB Language and Literature, which took place at the CIEP (Sèvres) on March 25th. ASIBA was able to offer money to finance the travel and accommodation of those whose attendance could not be financed in any other way. The attendance of the moderator, Peter Doughty, was important and could no longer be paid for by Cambridge: this was funded by ASIBA. We also offered to pay for teachers needing to attend this training from the 'state' sections. In the event, only one such teacher was unable to find money from other sources. It seems clear that the next stage in ASIBA's contribution to quality control of the examination could well be to offer finance for a larger training operation for all teachers of a given subject. Here ASIBA's financial contribution could be much greater. This is a project to discuss at the AGA. Such an initiative can only be relevant, of course, if the need for such training is clear within the administrative structure that runs the exam, and if the Schools Chair convenes it. Another way of saying this is that such training will not be 'ASIBA training', but 'ASIBA-financed training'. This is as it should be, and it is important that the community sees it this way.

Finding and distributing funds

The Association's assets come, at present, from membership fees paid mainly by the private sections. I must say that a push to ensure the membership of state sections (or rather of the Lycées Internationaux in which state international sections operate) seems a low priority among ASIBA's objectives. Some may say that this widens the divide between private sections who are full ASIBA members and who pay full financial contributions and state sections, which are not members or not full members. To counter such ideas, it seems important to stress that the attendance of teachers from state sections at the recent training event was not in any way affected by their membership or non-membership of ASIBA.

Association money was, rather, a means of including teachers from state sections. We hope that, in future, when larger, more costly events will take place, they will be financed by funds from donors and not only by money redistributed from the private sections. The goal will still be to narrow, not to widen the gap between the different kinds of sections offering the OIB. This is particularly important since new sections offering the British OIB are mainly state-financed rather than private.

Is the OIB flourishing?

There are several measures of this. One is the rising number of candidates for the Cambridge OIB. Another is the number of new international sections offering this examination. After the opening of the OIB section in La Baule came news of interest on the part of the British Section of the Lycée International de Colomiers and of the Lycée Français de Bruxelles. It is not yet clear what role ASIBA could play in facilitating the entry of such schools into the OIB circuit. First contacts for mentoring of new schools and sections during the start-up period tend to be, quite naturally, with the Lycée International de St Germain-en-Laye. An English language teacher from Brussels did indeed visit that school on a fact-finding mission in March. On a broader front, the extension of the OIB to other international sections offering new languages, and the development of these into sections actually preparing candidates for the examination, continues. This is a good sign in terms of diversity (one of the strengths of the OIB) and candidate numbers, but does not lead to simplification of the overall structure. Diversity costs money. It is clear that as the number of schools offering the Cambridge OIB grows, ASIBA will have to try to be one step ahead in predicting new costs and in finding ways of covering them. This is easier said than done. It is clear that we will have to continue to press for an annual revision of the subsidy paid to Cambridge by the Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale in the light of rising numbers of candidates. The most important question will

Résultats des sections internationales à l'option internationale du baccalauréat 2001.

SECTION	Présentés en 2001	Reçus en 2001	Reçus en 2000	Reçus en 1999	Reçus en 1998
allemande	83	81	78	64	60
américaine	195	194	157	117	115
anglaise	245	241	219	166	96
danoise	2	2	6	1	2
espagnole	175	168	164	140	99
italienne	68	65	67	53	45
néerlandaise	11	11	10	17	16
portugaise	37	37	13	24	14
suédoise	13	13	12	7	8
Total	829	812	726	589	455

remain: 'How much moderation in how many centres can we get with the subsidy paid by the Ministry?'

Contacts with the partners

Since this is the first year of the new examinations structure, contacts between Cambridge and the MEN have been cordial and fruitful. ASIBA continues to look towards the mid-term. The Association renewed contact with the British Council in Paris, in the person of David Kirwan, its Deputy Director, who agreed to make an official approach to both the DRIC and the DESCO. These two bureaux arranged a meeting with our two designated representatives, Glenys Kennedy and Philip Shaw-Latimer in late February. The report written after this very cordial meeting is included in this newsletter. Discussion mainly centred on the logistical and financial issues connected with the running of the OIB and this year's new procedures. There was also agreement that the OIB website at the CIEP address should be linked to the DRIC and the DESCO sites; and agreement, too, that the twentieth anniversary of the first OIB examinations (due in 2005) should be fittingly celebrated, perhaps through a colloquium. Our partners within the American OIB sections have contacted us informally to ask if they might become members of ASIBA. This would fit with certain of our aims but would necessitate a radical modification of others. No official contact by a representative of the American sections has yet been made, but this issue must still be discussed, and a decision of principle made at the AGA.

Information and communication

ASIBA has agreed to spend a modest amount of money (to be paid directly to Cambridge) on the creation of an official OIB website. This will be developed by professional services within the Cambridge board, and hosted, we hope, on the CIEP server. This could become a tool of great importance for teachers and moderators as well as for members of the public with strong interest in the examination and the schools offering it. Sue Randall has said that she wishes the schools to define what they would like to be on the site. Here, once again, a rigorous division of responsibilities is important to keep in mind. ASIBA will pay the bill for developing and maintaining the site: the schools themselves, consulted by the Schools Chair, will define and update what should be on it. ASIBA's emerging role in this as in other projects will only be understood if the community involved in the examination is well informed about it. Please use this newsletter to promote such understanding.

Peter Woodburn, *president*.

From Sue Randall

Sue Randall has taken over responsibility for the new OIB arrangements, whereby the Cambridge board has a far more limited role in the running of the examination.



I am currently a member of the senior management team in Cambridge ESOL which is the division of the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES), that has responsibility for the global assessment of English for Speakers of Other Languages, or, as we were previously called EFL – English as a Foreign Language. My position is that of Director of Business Planning and Marketing, in which capacity I am manager of a group of 30 staff who deal with the Marketing Communications, Conference and Teacher Seminar Programme, Business Information, Financial Management and Business Planning. It is a very interesting and busy area of Cambridge ESOL, which has candidates in more than 130 countries and over a million candidates annually across the range of Cambridge ESOL examinations. I also have country responsibility for policy in Switzerland, Germany and France, which is how I came to be involved with the OIB, although it should be stressed that this is not strictly part of our business. We also have a team of Development Managers in our key markets who are responsible for the co-ordination of our centres and for developing the business. In France, Anthony Harvey, the Development Manager has an office in CIEP in Sevres.

I have over 30 years' experience in the field of English as a Foreign Language, at teacher and management level and have worked in the UK, France and Germany. I worked for 12 years in a management capacity for the British Council in Algiers and then obtained an MBA before joining Cambridge ESOL in January 1993, where I initially worked on the setting up of the Team Leader System for ESOL Speaking Tests.

The Team Leader System is the quality control system that has been established to ensure that all Speaking Tests are taken according to ESOL's professional requirements, wherever they are sat in the world. In France, for example, we have a Senior Team Leader, David Horner, who is based in the British Institute in Paris, a group of Team Leaders across France and a large number of Oral Examiners who carry out the Speaking Tests, who are all recruited, inducted, trained, co-ordinated annually for the exams they are examining, and monitored at regular intervals by the Team Leaders. In France we have over 50 centres where Cambridge ESOL examinations can be taken.

As regards the examination system in France, I am obviously the most familiar with the parts of the system in which Cambridge ESOL examinations are taken. We have candidates for various examinations in some secondary schools, including "Sections Internationales" and in some Higher Education institutions in France. Recently we have become involved in joint regional projects in Reims and Brittany where Cambridge ESOL examinations, together with other ALTE (Association of Language Testers in Europe) examinations are being offered to pupils with some subsidy coming from the local authority. Our examinations are of course always offered in the education sector on a voluntary basis, since they have to be charged for. There is now some movement within Europe to offer international certification in language learning into the state education sector and Cambridge ESOL examinations have formed a part of a project introduced by the Italian government into a large number of schools, (Progetto 2000). They are also integrated into the school leaving examination in some schools in some cantons in Switzerland in the vocational sector and are being used in two regions in Germany on a pilot basis in some schools at B1 level. One of the most important aspects of Cambridge ESOL examinations, besides the quality, is the fact that they are linked to the Common European Framework, where ESOL has worked with the Council of Europe, as a key member of ALTE.

As part of the need for citizens of Europe to be competent in more than one language, I see that the OIB is a valuable examination. There is still a considerable difference between the French secondary school system and the English one, since pupils in French schools acquire a far broader education through the demands of the Bac. than those in English schools.. Although the British government recently introduced a new system into English Sixth forms of AS and A2 level examinations, with the aim of broadening the curriculum at this level, in line with other countries such as France, in practice this has not really been the case. There are some schools which are now investigating whether a broader curriculum would be better provided by the International Baccalaureate, although these are very few.

While language learning in the English school system is currently suffering from a lack of language teachers, the current discussion on pupils starting language learning at primary schools level is welcome. It is essential that pupils in England do not become complacent about the need for learning at least one other language as part of their overall education.

Susan Randall

The OIB and UCLES, 1984 - 2002

Dena Cowdy had a long association with the OIB within the Research and Evaluation Division of UCLES, Cambridge. She first worked on this project with Dr John Foulkes and then took over sole responsibility. This finished in September 2002. The schools invited her to Paris to mark her retirement from OIB at the end of last academic year.

As most of you know, the idea of offering specially designed "international options" as part of the Baccalauréat dates back to 1981. The French government responded to a growing demand among parents for more widespread bilingual education and also recognised a need to make additional provision for foreign nationals studying in France. In 1984, the French Ministry of Education contacted its British counterpart (called, at that time, the Department of Education and Science - DES) requesting its participation. Because the setting and marking of exams in the UK is done not by a ministry of education, but by the various Examining Boards, the DES wrote to all the UK boards for help.

Subsequently, the British Minister of Education directly approached the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) to request that it take on the task of helping to develop syllabuses and provide examiners. It appears that UCLES was chosen because of its extensive experience in A-level examining – the standard of the proposed International Option – and because of its long history (since 1857) of developing both international and "home" examinations. (The word "local" in UCLES' name refers to the provision of exams to candidates in their own locality.)

In 1984 UCLES agreed to take on the British Option jointly with the Oxford and Cambridge Schools Examination Board. It appears, however, that participation of the Oxford and Cambridge Board ceased sometime after the first examination in June 1985. Dr. John Foulkes acted for UCLES, which then assumed sole responsibility for the program. There were fewer than a dozen candidates in 1985, examined at Saint-Germain and Valbonne, and only two moderators were employed – Dr. Alan Baker for History-Geography and Dr. Angus Ross for Language/Literature. A number of teachers still active in the OIB were involved almost from the start, including Nicholas Bunch, Adelia Hackenheimer, Glenys Kennedy, Ann Moriarty, and Philip Shaw-Latimer.

By 1990 the number of candidates had increased to 67 from seven schools – Ferney-Voltaire, Fontainebleau, Grenoble, Lyon, Saint-Germain, Sevres and Strasbourg. Two moderators were now needed for each subject. During the 1990's the number of candidates rose steadily, reaching 180 by



University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES)

1999. The pattern of the written papers was well established, conduct of the oral examinations became standard, and a series of Handbooks attempted to encourage common approaches to teaching and examination administration.

John Foulkes left UCLES in autumn 1995 and I assumed responsibility for managing the OIB within UCLES, assisted by secretary Louise Foster. She in turn left a couple of years later when the Research and Evaluation division, of which I am part, was reorganised.

Moderators over the years have included Alan Baker, Peter Bryan, Graham Clarke, Peter Doughty, Michael Heffernan, Michael Jones, Roderic Knight, Geoff Parker, Angus Ross, Peter Searby, Douglas Sedge, and Clifford Smith (apologies if I have missed anyone). All have, I believe, very much enjoyed their experiences, notwithstanding occasional crises: Clifford Smith being confronted by an angry parent; Michael Jones heroically substituting for Geoff Parker at the last moment; Peter Searby hiding scripts under his pillow to prevent their being removed prematurely.

In looking back over the files, I discovered that some controversies have a long history: whether candidates can answer History-Geography questions in French (all the way back to 1986); how voting at meetings should be handled; how many oral HG topics there should be. And, over the years, both teachers and moderators have sometimes changed minds about how things should be done. In general, however, the three-way partnership of teachers, moderators and Cambridge has worked excellently. From my point of view, most of the enjoyment of this job has been getting to know moderators and teachers, often primarily on the telephone. I am constantly impressed by the widespread and deep concern about candidates and the dedication involved of both teachers and moderators in trying to ensure that they perform as well as they possibly can.

Like a number of examination boards, UCLES went through a "bad patch" in 1998-99 and ended up in the red. This event led to a strengthening of financial controls and a review of all of UCLES' activities. Unfortunately, one activity that did not generate income was the OIB, which was costing UCLES about £25,000 a year. The Chief Executive decided that this

loss could not continue and that UCLES' supporting role would cease with the examinations in summer 2002. Strenuous efforts were made to find other sources of funding or another UK authority to take over the program; especially active on this front were Peter Woodburn and Philip Shaw-Latimer. At a meeting with French Ministry of Education officials in May 2000, however, the French proposed that they take over a substantial amount of the administration. It was agreed that UCLES would provide an label – a seal of approval following inspection during each examination season by Cambridge-appointed inspectors.

These proposals have subsequently been modified and elaborated to form the arrangements that will apply from the examinations in 2003. Cambridge will play a reduced role in the administration of the OIB, and will appoint two inspectors, one for each subject. They will handle moderation of the written papers and will visit at least one examination centre each year to observe and report on standards, security, and the like. Dr. Douglas Sedge and Dr. Alan Baker have been asked to serve as inspectors in 2003. The "Cambridge end" will be handled by Sue Randall of the English as a Foreign Language division, based in Cambridge, and by Anthony Harvey, also from EFL, based in the CIEP building in Sevres.

I could not conclude this article without expressing my heartfelt thanks to Philip Shaw-Latimer, without whose unflappability, resigned humour, and tireless administration the OIB could not have operated. He has been a realistic representative and faithful champion of schools' interests and opinions, even when they were not always the same as his own, and has dealt with a variety of officialdom, both French and British, with awesome skill.

Dena Cowdy

Reflections on that Late Reform in France

Philip Shaw Latimer is head of the British Section, St Germain en Laye. He was elected Schools Chair by the group of schools offering the British OIB in late 2001, and started exercising that role in September 2002.



The birth certificate bears the historic date 11th May, 1981. More accurately, perhaps, it was the moment of legal conception. Raymond Barre, the outgoing centre-right Prime Minister, was the father and the Socialists then took three years to foster it

into real existence. One can already deduce from these simple facts that the OIB was a project which cut across French political boundaries and embodied a perceived need to put 'international education' funded by the Education Nationale on a proper legal basis. The idea was to take an existing model – the Baccalauréat des Lycées Internationaux negotiated years before with the German and Dutch authorities and run jointly with them – and to extend it to the other linguistic/national communities with whom the French wished to work then, or with whom they might wish to work in the future.

When a student opts for the OIB, he does not opt in the normal sense of presenting a single subject which might earn him bonus points and thus improve his overall score; he opts into a full-scale curriculum with its own rules and subject-weightings (coefficients). To use a business analogy, the OIB is an educational version of a joint-stock company, where two different national systems have each a significant stake in the curriculum, although the French always hold a majority of shares. The originality and value of the OIB is, therefore, that it offers a sort of double authenticity: the status and quality-guarantees associated with the French Baccalureate and the teaching and assessment in two subjects which are sufficiently undiluted to bear comparison with practice abroad. The freedom given to the various foreign partners is particularly striking in the field of Language/Literature – a freedom which allows we British (for example) to get as close as we can to national practice and expectations in the form of A Level. The situation is more complicated in the case of History/Geography, where the teaching of the syllabus is shared by French and foreign staff. Although the French authorities have done their best over the years to respond to the priorities and desiderata of a confusing number of foreign partners, it is their job to defend the principle of clearly identified common ground; or, to put it another way, the French Inspection Générale has to show as much goodwill and flexibility as it can but, in the final assessment, cannot lose the whiphand.

At the Lycee International in St. Germain, sometimes described as the 'laboratory' of the OIB in its mid- to late-Eighties launch phase, the bold project (as it undoubtedly was) aroused the enthusiasm which goes with pioneering reforms responding to a real need in a multinational community. It also brought the satisfaction which goes with recognition – for the OIB provided the formal framework and certification for a bilingual curriculum which already existed. There was, however, one snag for the 'Anglo-Saxons' in the school. In the Seventies, St. Germain had been one of the founding schools for a different form of international education – the IB (International Baccalaureate). This also shared out the curriculum between subjects taught in French and two subjects (English National Level and History) taught in English. It soon became clear that St. Germain could not prepare students for both the newly born OIB and the IB: the strain on resources would have been too great and, in any case,

the school was pre-destined to be the flagship for France's answer to an IB increasingly perceived as subject to Anglo-American dominance. So, to our regret (and to the regret of an interesting number of French colleagues) the IB had to go as the OIB came in (in 1985). Staff-room debate at the time concerned itself with what we had gained and what we had lost by this change. We lost membership of a community of schools stretching right across the world and we have had no part in one of the great educational success-stories of recent years (quite a few leading British schools have adopted, or are in process of adopting, the IB and its stock is very high indeed back home). On the other hand, we can flatter ourselves that we are standard-bearers for a rare form of educational co-operation and one of the very few examinations which validates biculturalism.

The 'national sections', those small units of foreign teachers operating on different bits of French soil, are, naturally, strongly attached to the OIB. After all, it gives us our livelihood and provides us with a very serious *raison d'être*. But the attachment – one could say, the affection – goes beyond mere material considerations. We, the teachers, have helped to raise and to rear this unusual (and frequently difficult) child. Examinations *venu d'ailleurs* – GCSE, A Level and the like – do not normally arouse such close family feelings; and a major reason for this, of course, is the small scale on which the OIB operates and the strong connections it engenders with impressive-sounding authorities – Cambridge, the DRIC, the Inspection Générale – which the partnership has transformed from their usual impersonal selves to supportive human faces. All this duly said and acknowledged, let us try for a cool, if not entirely objective, assessment of the the OIB's first twenty years.

There is no doubt that the high coefficients conferred on the two foreign-language subjects in 1981, and modified but essentially preserved since then, make the OIB a truly bilingual diploma and send out the clear message that the French are not window-dressing but want authentic foreign participation. The OIB is a successful exercise in intelligent standardisation, since it brings all the foreign partners under the same umbrella: there is thus a sense of unified endeavour in the system and especially in St. Germain, where 9 national sections are already preparing the OIB and the Japanese are poised to join the club. As far as our own 'Cambridge' sections are concerned, the OIB helps to protect us all from the danger of isolation which comes from geographical spread: there is a great deal of interchange between practising teachers which has in turn fed into sensible and constant syllabus renewal. OIB students are generally high achievers. They not only succeed in coping with a course which is more demanding in terms of time, intellectual commitment and versatility than is normally the case; a statistically impressive number earn distinctions (mentions). The key question from anxious parents in the early days – Will it be accepted by British universities?

– is now redundant (the answer is ‘yes’ and hundreds of former students are now there to prove it), although another question – Do universities prefer it to the normal Bac? – is much less easily dealt with. Our friends in the Lycée Charles de Gaulle in London do not prepare the OIB but an impressive number of their students get into British universities with the French Bac. The slowness of many French institutions to give specific recognition to the OIB (and, in extreme cases, to question whether it is a real Bac at all) remains unfortunately notorious.

And what, indeed, of the French? Are they pleased with their offspring? Well, it depends who you talk to. The boldness of the OIB initiative still stirs the blood and swells the pride in high places, certainly; few would deny that we have here a successful symbol of the French government’s willingness to open out the system and let in fresh foreign air; the OIB is a credential of open-mindedness and forward thinking. But then there are the complaints. The numbers of students doing it, we are told, continue to be disappointing and it makes disproportionate demands on time and resources for the relatively few people involved. This criticism is traceable to the over-optimistic view at the OIB’s beginnings that national sections would spring up all over France and also to the opinion that the foreign sections have made their syllabuses too difficult, thereby reining in recruitment to OIB courses; we, on the other hand, argue that the authenticity which is the soul of the OIB imposes high standards. The decision of the Lang ministry to launch and develop European sections in 1992 was a different attempt (and a more realistic one) to involve the wider French school public in higher-level language learning. It is significant that many features of the OIB were incorporated in the European section model – a sort of middle-market OIB, in fact. Continuing frustration with the OIB’s slow growth, and with its upmarket, elitist image, seems to have fuelled the ill-fated and abortive attempt (in 1997) to relegate it to an ‘option’ in the normal sense. This was a retrograde proposal which would have drained the OIB of its originality and appeal; fortunately, after a powerful outcry of protest, the authorities gave proof of their high-order listening skills and decided to leave the OIB alone.

At least for the moment. The OIB remains something of an administrative nightmare, requiring patience, ingenuity and – let’s admit it – a certain degree of fudge. We have survived two crises in recent years (one on each side of the Channel) and it would be foolish to think that the OIB will continue for ever in its present form. Further battles may lie ahead and ASIBA (which we were right to create) is there as a further means of bringing us together, as a forum for discussion and as an additional channel of communication with the authorities. It is up to us, in our schools and sections, to go on demonstrating that the OIB’s benefits far outweigh its inconveniences and to show that the acquired experience of the OIB schools can help the system as a whole in the ambitious reform of foreign-language learning in France. We must lead by example and be

ready to contribute when the French Ministry looks again – as it will, and soon – at the future of the OIB.

Philip Shaw-Latimer

Meeting 4th March 2003

Ministere de l’Education Nationale Rue Danton, Paris

M. Patrick DENNI	DRIC
M. Nicolas MARQUES	DRIC
Mme Patricia JANISSIN	DESCO Bureau des Relations Internationales
Mme Simone BORGNE	DESCO Bureau des Lycées
Philip SHAW-LATIMER	ASIBA
Glenys KENNEDY	ASIBA

Philip SHAW-LATIMER thanked the representatives of the French authorities for organising the meeting and stressed the warmth and importance of the links between the DRIC and the OIB schools in France.

1 ASIBA

Philip reminded the meeting of the reasons for the creation of the organisation, giving a brief outline of the difficulties encountered when Cambridge announced that it would be withdrawing from its front-line position in managing the OIB. He stressed the diversity of the Association, bringing together, as it does, both State-run and privately-funded sections and schools throughout France.

He explained that for the 2003 examination session, there will be some 286 candidates from 12 International Sections, including the new member of the group from la Baule. The examination is expanding, only 251 candidates having been entered in 2002. It was pointed out that interest in the OIB has been expressed by Colomiers and that the Lycée de Bruxelles will be visiting St Germain at the end of March with a view to learning more about the exam. Nicolas MARQUES noted that RENNES has also expressed an interest in entering candidates for the examination.

M. DENNI asked why Cambridge had decided to withdraw much of its support and it was explained that the reasons were essentially financial

2 FINANCIAL ISSUES FACING THE OIB

The representatives of the French authorities were reminded that the only financial resources available to ASIBA come from membership fees (standard fee 85 € x 2 per school). It was stressed that money available will be used

for projects open to ALL sections such as the training day organised for new teacher/examiners in March 2003. The meeting was informed that such money is never used to fund the examination itself.

What are the financial issues facing the OIB and why would ASIBA funding be needed ?

- Philip explained the system which operated prior to 2003, with 4 Cambridge Inspectors operating in France for approx 15 days and the resulting costs of fees, transport and accommodation.

From 2003, given the withdrawal of Cambridge funding, there will be only 2 Cambridge Inspectors, each present for approx. 3 days. Some centres will not be visited by the Inspectors.

Cambridge requires an annual revision of the funding provided by the French authorities. M. MARQUES wondered whether Cambridge had interests other than purely financial in retaining links with the OIB. Philip pointed out that, after the retirement of Dena COWDY, a new structure had to be found for the management of the exam and that the solution had been to use the structure of the EFL organisation. He stressed the good relations which Cambridge enjoys with the CIEP.

The new organisation of the OIB places a heavy burden of work on the schools involved and much administrative responsibility is undertaken on a purely voluntary basis.

The question was raised of an increased involvement by the Inspection Générale. It had been agreed that the Inspection could step in to help fill some of the gaps caused by the relative withdrawal of Cambridge participation. It had been stated that the Inspecteurs Pédagogiques Régionaux could be involved. The French representatives present repeated the apparent interest of the authorities in pursuing this idea, although M. MARQUES felt that French involvement tends to be global, rather than specific.

- Philip thanked M. MARQUES for his help in ensuring that in 2002, examiners had been remunerated.

The DRIC authorises the CIEP to transfer 5400€ to Cambridge to cover Inspection costs. M. MARQUES asked what costs can be covered in this way. It was pointed out that Inspection fees, question-setting and transport costs can be covered, but that accommodation remains a problem. The question was raised of whether, with limited Inspector presence from 2003, the sum allocated might now suffice to cover accommodation costs, too.

- Discussion then centred on costs incurred when teacher examiners have to travel in France and the need which

will arise from the fact that Inspectors cannot now visit all centres for written examiners to be able to travel to discuss written results with the Cambridge Inspectors. The issue of «réunions d'harmonisation» and costs involved has been raised by the DRIC with the DESCO.

It was also pointed out that payment made to examiners does not equate to the real costs involved in examining, costs which frequently have to be met by the individual Sections.

3 Requirements of Cambridge

It is essential that Cambridge receives written confirmation of issues and agreements made with the French authorities. They have still not received an official report of the meeting held in January 2002 with M. LACROIX.

M. MARQUES agreed to have this report, which was written by Philip after the January meeting, co-signed and sent to Cambridge.

4 Explanation of roles of DRIC and DESCO

The DESCO was created in 1997 in order to regroup the French pedagogical services in charge of Primary Schools, Collèges and Lycées. This division is in charge of all pedagogical programmes and also oversees those of private schools in France. It is, in some ways, an educational «heavy-weight» responsible for some 10 million pupils. The DESCO, in its capacity as overseer of the Baccalauréat examinations in France and with the need to guarantee conformity with the French structure, is becoming more closely involved in decisions relating to the OIB.

The DRIC is concerned with bilateral and multilateral links with international partners and oversees the European and International Sections in France. Contrary to the DESCO, it plays no part in higher education. The DRIC is closely involved in all aspects of international relations, its representatives frequently accompanying ministers on visits abroad.

There are close links between the 2 services, both of which are involved in the organisation of the OIB. It was pointed out that in the case of «établissements français à l'étranger», the DESCO has pedagogical responsibility.

5 Possible areas of action

The Bureau des Relations Internationales is considering a «dépoussiérage» of the European Sections and, to a certain extent, this might well be extended to the International Sections.

Philip asked if there was still a Working Party devoted to possible reviewing and/or restructuring of the OIB. It was stated that certain questions are beginning to be rethought. It was said that certain aspects of the 1981 texts were no

longer appropriate and that some aspects of the whole OIB/International Sections situation should, perhaps, be re-evaluated. Furthermore, with the International Baccalaureate (IB) gaining so much weight, the authorities felt the need to «counterattack».

6 Proposals for changing history/geography programmes

Philip asked for comments on rumours of further changes to these programmes, including the possibility of different programmes for different sections of the Baccalauréat. It was stated that changes might be marginal and would not be imminent. The DESCO had, indeed, asked the Inspection Générale to review the H/Geo programmes. The representatives of the DESCO would ask the Bureau des Programmes for further details of proposed changes.

7 Promotion of the OIB

- Discussions then turned to the use of web sites to promote the examination. Cambridge has proposed its services to the CIEP. Both the DRIC and the DESCO would be very interested in being able to create a link from their own sites to the Cambridge OIB site. This

could also possibly apply to the Ministry site. It was felt that it would be very appropriate to have the site in both French and English.

- Plans to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the 1981 texts had, unfortunately, not been realised. 2005 sees the 20th anniversary of the first OIB examination session and all present agreed that this should be suitably celebrated, possibly with some sort of «colloque». This could, perhaps, be linked to celebrations marking the 100th anniversary of the work of English assistants in France. It was agreed that the international Sections would be very happy to collaborate with the French authorities in the organisation of such celebrations.

The meeting lasted for almost 2 hours and was conducted in a very warm and cooperative spirit. The French representatives were thanked for their generous allocation of time and for the open and constructive nature of the discussions.

M. MARQUES kindly proposed that he would produce a 'compte rendu' of this meeting and would send it to us for checking and approval.



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