CHAPTER VII
THE DIVISION OF CORRECTIONS AND REALITY HOUSE

In 1971 (about the same time that Reality House became an independent private corporation) the 76th General Assembly of the Missouri State Legislature enacted Senate Bill No. 78 as a result of growing public pressure for reform in Criminal Justice agencies. The bill authorized the Director of the Department of Corrections to contract with non-profit organizations for the housing and supervision of inmates outside of correctional institutions for a period of six months before their release.

The bill envisages that:

"(a) The contracting parties shall agree to implement a pre-release program for each inmate assigned to a halfway house. The program shall be prepared in cooperation with the division of classification and assignment and shall take into consideration the needs and abilities of the individual.

"(b) Provision shall be made for inspection of the facilities used under the contract on a regular basis by a full time employee of the Department of Corrections to assure adherence of adequate health and conduct standards.

"(c) Payment for housing and supervision shall be made at the end of each month on a per diem basis for each inmate housed during the month. Per diem shall not exceed the average daily per capita cost for maintenance of all persons committed to the
Department of Corrections during the fiscal year preceding the fiscal year in which payment is to be made.

"(d) Inmates assigned to halfway houses shall be encouraged to seek outside employment and may be required to pay for meals, lodging and transportation out of earnings.

"(e) Inmates assigned to halfway houses shall be governed by the same laws and institutional regulations as apply to all persons committed to the Department of Corrections and they may be returned to an institution of the Department of Corrections for infraction of rules, breach of trust or failure to comply with a pre-release program."

Upon the passage of this bill, the Department of Corrections contacted the halfway houses in the state and expressed its need and desire to purchase services for its clients. Reality House was one among those contacted. Reality House informed the department of its position that work releases are of their low priority as the program is set up to serve first time young offenders as an alternative to incarceration. However, Reality House indicated that they would be willing to consider referrals from the department on the merits of individual cases. It was also pointed out that the department should pay the average per diem cost for the services rendered and that the referred clients should have at least six months left to complete their sentences. Six months is the average time that it takes a resident to complete the program.

Accordingly, the department and Reality House entered into a contract for the calendar year 1973. Reality House agreed to
provide housing and treatment facilities to the work-releasees in return for per diem payments at the rate of $6.44 per person per day.

The program was very cautious and selective in recruiting work releasees during the first year. It only earned $773.50 for the whole year. However, other circumstances intervened which forced the program officials to admit more work releasees than they had originally planned. First, due to a poor relationship at this time between Reality House and the Board of Probation and Parole, the Board was referring very few clients to Reality House. During a six-month period between September 1973 and February 1974, the Board referred only seven clients. As a result, for several months the program was operating with fewer residents than was desirable. This situation created problems in the areas of program utilization and local share match monies. By virtue of their control over strategic resources of Reality House, the Board of Probation and Parole could force a change in Reality House paradigm.

In order to overcome these problems, the program officials turned to other referral sources. The staff met with various officials of the Missouri Department of Corrections and attended a team classification meeting at the Intermediate Reformatory to develop referrals from these sources. Also, plans had been initiated to develop a contract with the Federal Bureau of Prisons. The staff felt that although the original philosophy of the program was to only serve first-time young offenders mainly from the local communities, an additional 6-8 admissions from the above sources were necessary to relieve the program of problems of matching money and maximum utilization. Thus, a change in the paradigm commitment of Reality House program has introduced a pattern of contradiction between the program and the support nexus.
As a result of this policy the flow of referrals from the department of corrections to Reality House increased considerably. Also, the contract between the two agencies was being revised year after year because of the inflation and increasing costs, and the per diem rates were increased to $7.44 in 1974 and to $8.44 in 1975.* Consequently, the program earned $4029 in 1974 and $3665 in 1975 for the services rendered to work releasees.

Although the relationship between Reality House and the Department of Corrections was smooth and cooperative during this period, it came to a halt in the third quarter of 1975 as a result of certain extraneous factors interfering with this relationship. These factors were:

(1) Representatives of the Department of Corrections were providing different interpretations of the Senate Bill No. 78. One such representative holding a middle management position (acting director of community services) visited Reality House on a mission to assure the staff that "although the department is adapting more restrictive policies regarding the halfway houses' management of work release cases due to concerns about the manner in which certain programs are operating, these restrictions were in no way directed at Reality House and that any concerns Reality House may have about the restrictions could be worked out with them on an informal basis" (Sept. 24, 1974). In some instances, corrections representatives could prevail over the directors and

*Increments in per diem rates did not present any budgetary problems to the division of corrections as these rates are approved and sanctioned by legislative appropriations each year for the general population in the prisons. What the Division gets to maintain its inmates is paid to the halfway houses in turn.
enter into contracts on terms that were conflicting from agency to agency. As time passed, the word was passed around among the halfway houses that the department of corrections was not dealing with them honestly and uniformly. These "crooked dealings," "double messages" or "divide and rule methods" resulted in the halfway houses in the state getting together to form an association to fight for a uniform policy from the corrections.

(2) Reality House joined the Missouri Association for Community Residential Treatment Centers to fight for a legitimate place in the criminal justice system along with the Corrections and other state agencies. Despite the favourable terms it received from Corrections, Reality House had decided to band together with other halfway houses to straighten out the frequently reinterpreted versions of the Senate Bill No. 78 by Corrections officials at the middle management level. One of the interpretations the Department of Corrections came up with was that "if the work-releasees residing in halfway houses are gainfully employed, half of their per diem cost should be collected from them and the other half from the department" (letter from the Division of Corrections, April 7, 1974). Reality House, as an active member of the association, did not agree with this interpretation and consequently stopped accepting referrals from the Department of Corrections.

The relationship between the Division of Corrections and Reality House needs to be explained at two levels. At one level are the interactions and interrelationships, their conditions and sentiments concerning the delivery of services to the work releasees.
At another level are the interactions and the related sentiments concerning the acquisition of economic resources and political legitimacy.

The relationship between the two agencies at the first level is short-lived but smooth and cooperative. It is interrupted by forces external to it which are political and economic in nature. In the present section we will consider the nature and characteristics of the interactions between the two agencies at the level of service delivery. The interactions between the two agencies at the level of political economy will be dealt with elsewhere (see political environment).

Before we describe the nature of the relationship between the two agencies and the sentiments, values and attitudes underlying such relationships, it is important to recognize the internal dynamics of organizational life in the Division of Corrections itself. For purposes of this study, three levels of hierarchy within the Division have been identified and studied.

At the top is the Division's head who was brought to the Division in the early 1970s, the hey days of favorable public opinion for penal reforms and innovative programs. At the time of his appointment he was specifically asked to bring about reforms in the Missouri Penal System by introducing new and innovative methods of corrections, particularly community-based treatment centers. In a short speech, the Division's head made his policy clear to the directors of halfway houses when they met at his residence to discuss the controversial Senate Bill No. 78 with the Division's officials (meeting on November 25, 1974). He said that he "believes in the
concept...will do whatever he can in support of community-based residential treatment centers." He appeared before the Senate Subcommittee hearings on Senate Bill No. 594 to testify that "halfway facilities are an excellent resource for the Division's inmates to reside in on their way back into the open community" and that "they are doing an excellent job" and therefore it is necessary "to pass the Bill No. 594" (Senate hearings on Nov. 9, 1975). Some of the MAC RTC officials talked with the Division's head on other occasions and confirmed that he supports the halfway house movement including the private halfway houses. In general, they are satisfied with his attitude and cooperation.

At the middle management level are some officials who have been in charge of pre-release programs, community services centers and work release referrals to the halfway houses. Most of them started their careers in the Division when these programs were introduced by the Division. These officials said that they "like" and "are committed to" what they are doing. Some of these officials directly deal with the halfway houses in the state by interpreting the rules, laws and related matters and also by developing contracts with them for services to work releasees.

A significant majority of these officials denounce the prison system. "Corrections is isolated from and afraid of the academic community" says one of them. Another admonishes that "corrections is not prepared to admit their mistakes." Still another comments that "persons entering prison become dependent on prison life. They learn illogical thinking, a way of mental short circuit. By putting humans in prison, we are driving them away from reality."
The individual in them is destroyed. Prisons are a bad investment. Whatever we might do in prisons by way of introducing new programs, it is not the right kind of atmosphere to bring about changes in people." However, one official has altogether a different image of corrections: "Old notions about prisons do not hold good any longer. Prisons are changing. Corrections is undergoing change in management style—we have introduced new programs. We are able to give the offender a positive identity."

Regarding their thinking about the need for halfway houses and community-based treatment centers, all the officials have agreed that there is a definite place for such programs in the criminal justice system. They have realized that some of their clients need more help than others for community adjustment. Halfway houses provide the needed help by "training the inmates psychologically, socially, and vocationally for society...They help the inmates to regain their independence and make them feel that they have power over their destinies...They are a very useful resource for us—we need more of them spread throughout the state."

However, a majority of these officials are bitter about the way halfway houses are being operated by the private individuals. One of them has remarked that "I have experience throughout the state. I know that most of the people who started halfway houses are either religious fanatics or those going through ego trips or bums looking for free rides. There may be a few sincere social workers but good luck to them...In the late 1960s federal money was available in plenty for these kinds of programs, and all types of people jumped in to start these programs...The staff are only
interested in their jobs. If they are interested in helping the offender, let them do it voluntarily. If they are interested in helping offenders, let them take the hard core cases, offenders who really have adjustment problems—the guys they pick up do not need any help from anyone. I do not want these social workers to mess up with these guys. Eighty per cent of them are on the streets without being messed up by the social workers...These halfway houses guys are over-concerned with success. So they pick up the ones that do not need help anyway...Halfway houses formed an association to establish common standards. Shit. What they want is to grab money from the state...These guys do not want the state to touch them. They want to be independent. They say they do not want the state to control these programs. They are kidding themselves if they think they are not controlled by anyone. Maybe it is alright to these guys if the local police boy or Chamber of Commerce boys or the downtown boys ride on their asses. The whole halfway house system is a failure because of interference from these local elements. They do not want any criminal element to be imported into their communities and as a result the halfway houses come up with some unrealistic criteria of selection and the offender who needs services is not getting them."

Another important official who deals directly with halfway houses contends that "there is a feeling among us that halfway houses are not faithful and honest. They refuse to show their accounts and that is an admission of malpractice. Too many facts are concealed."
"Halfway houses are deceptive to one another as far as their dealings with the state are concerned. One halfway house tells the other that they are receiving $8.40 toward per diem cost, another tells that they are getting only $4.40. There are reasons for this difference. They refuse to see the reasons. There are differences in cost between the urban-based halfway houses and the rural-based halfway houses. Some receive federal grants and some do not. Those halfway houses receiving federal money are not entitled for our money because we receive this money from the federal government. Therefore the Division has to deal with each halfway house separately...

"Halfway houses collect $2.00 from their residents. They also want the state to pay. It is unfair...

"Some halfway houses are crooked. Their motivations are suspect and questionable. They kick out their residents. We are in an embarrassing situation under such circumstances. We cannot put these residents back in prison because they are not runaways or escapees...

"State never acts in bad faith. It does not have any personal vendetta against any one. Personalities are not the issue here, it is accountability. As state employees, we are to serve the public and their interests. If the public wants us to punish the offender, I will do it...

"When we started questioning their ways of operating the programs, they have banded together creating problems to us with the legislatures, with the appropriations committee and with the administrative wing of our agency. If they do not want to deal
with us on reasonable grounds (I may sound arrogant, but) hell with them." Thus, the middle-management people in the Division of Corrections are fully aware of the pressures and forces operating in the political economy of their network. They are therefore able to formulate their strategies from time to time to deal with such contingencies.

In the late '60s and early '70s, when federal monies were made available through the Missouri Committee on Criminal Justice and its regional councils, the state criminal justice agencies also applied for grants to start new and innovative programs in their respective agencies. The Missouri State Division of Corrections is one such agency that applied for federal grants to start (1) staff training programs (2) Community Service Centers, and (3) educational programs. These programs are intended to improve conditions of and opportunities for inmates by preparing them as responsive, responsible, productive and law-abiding citizens.

All the officials that I talked with at the middle management level think that the community services centers and pre-release program have been "a good success." The managers of these programs have been "fairly successful in pooling the community resources together to help the pre-releasee rehabilitate." The head of Community Services believes that "community services centers give the Division flexibility to deal with the inmates more adequately and effectively. The Division does not have to follow the 6 month rule and can keep the inmate as long as it is necessary." Another official points out that corrections has gained experience in successfully running the community service centers and therefore can take over the management of halfway houses. There is no scope for independent halfway houses." These officials are in favor
of "changing the state laws so that money is made available for corrections to start and manage halfway houses."

The reason the Division of Corrections is not yet able to enter the halfway houses business according to these officials, is "opposition from the legislature, BPP, private halfway houses, communities, and above all lack of money."

At the third level of official hierarchy are the pre-release program staff who actually work with pre-releasees and orient them to the life ahead in either halfway houses or in society as free individuals.

Work releasees are those who have either been turned down by the Board of Probation and Parole or who have opted for work release. When an inmate has 6 months left on his sentence, his case is reviewed and approved by a team consisting of a parole officer, a case worker, a corrections counselor (who is usually a guard aiding the case worker and acting as a liaison between the administration and the inmate) and a job supervisor. The case is then referred to the work release officer for review and admission into the work release dorm. The work release officer works with him for four to five weeks, orienting him and developing a work release plan acceptable to both parties. He explains what is expected of the releasee when he lives in a halfway house--the rules, regulations, and the privileges of different halfway houses. The inmate is advised to think about these things and to opt for a halfway house of his choice. Generally, he chooses one in his own locality.

During the five-week period, the work release officer administers psychological and vocational tests to assess the needs of the inmate and assign him to an appropriate halfway house. In the
case of Reality House, the program director is contacted to find out whether he is interested in admitting a referral. If there is space, the program staff visits the work release dorm at Algoa or Renz Farm to interview the referral. They go through the case files and discuss the referral with the work release officer. If the referral is acceptable this is indicated at a later date.

Once the referral is admitted into the Reality House Program, the contact between the work release officer and Reality House comes to an end as far as this referral is concerned.

The coordinator of work release cases in various halfway houses assumes the responsibility of implementing the contract that the two agencies enter into at the beginning of each year. He coordinates the activities concerning referral placement in halfway houses, their supervision and discharge plans, and the dispersal of per diem costs.

Thus only three officials, the coordinator of halfway houses, assistant director of work release program and the work-release officer in the Division of Corrections have contacts with Reality House at the level of delivering services to the work releasees. Although such contacts were absent at the time of fieldwork for this study, staff of both the agencies were interviewed to ascertain their sentiments, values and attitudes toward each other.

The relationship between Reality House and the corrections is short lived, limited in scope, business-like and formal. But it is fairly "good," "cooperative," "congenial," and "professional." Once a referral is made to Reality House, communication between
work release program staff and Reality House stops. The only interaction they have is when the Reality House staff visits to interview the referral from the pre-release program. Information about the referral is shared at this point. While the work releasee is in residence at Reality House, interaction between the two agencies is confined to only two individuals—the director of Reality House and the coordinator of the work release program. The director sends monthly reports on the progress and per diem costs of the work releasees in the program. The coordinator makes arrangements for dispersal of the costs. In case of any violations on the part of the work releasee, the director reports the matter to the coordinator, usually with his recommendation for necessary action. Except in one instance, the coordinator has always cooperated with the program's recommendations. In this particular case, the director of Reality House recommended that he continue in the program for treatment (even though the work releasee had completed his sentence). The work releasee concerned was not willing to remain in the program and so he left. The Division of Corrections took no action. This incident has given rise to some doubts among the Reality House staff as to the intentions of the Division's officials in referring work releasees to the Reality House program. However, soon after this incident, for reasons other than this incident, Reality House stopped admitting work releasees into the program. Had the two agencies continued their relationship, incidents of this kind would probably have strained the relationship as it happened in the case of parolees with the Parole Board.
Domains: Traditionally corrections is charged with a custodial function. Closely related to this function are also diagnosis, classification and assignment of inmates to different categories of facilities—maximum security, medium security and minimum security facilities. The latter assignments are based on the nature and type of crime committed, the length of the sentence imposed, the age and sex of the offenders. As social science knowledge has advanced, additional functions such as education, vocational training, religious guidance and even psychotherapy are added to prepare the inmates for a law-abiding life in the community. Recently, corrections has also embarked upon community services centers which are close to reintegration ideology. Thus, the whole corrections spectrum—from incarceration to various therapeutic treatments including community rehabilitation—is included in the functions of the Division of Corrections. One or the other of these functions is emphasized depending upon who we are dealing with in the Department.

As has been delineated earlier, in addition to some of the functions mentioned above, Reality House performs a number of other functions. These include efforts to bring about changes not only in the attitudes and life style of the offenders but also in the community outlook toward exoffenders. However, in accordance with the recent decision taken by the Board of Directors of Reality House to serve only the first or second time offender, the domain of Reality House falls in an altogether different and unrelated category with no scope for interaction with the Division of Corrections. As has been mentioned earlier, we have confined our assertion of the sentiments, values and attitudes of the corrections officials
at the level of delivering services to the period when the two agencies were in interaction.

The three corrections officials interviewed in the present study unanimously endorsed the idea that Reality House has a "definite and useful place" in the criminal justice system. It acts as a "buffer" between the closed inmate society and the open society. It is "complementary" and an "extension" of corrections. It is obvious from these comments that Reality House is not viewed as different from other halfway houses. Though they approve of what Reality House is doing, they are critical of Reality House having banded together with other halfway houses.

The Reality House staff, on the other hand, complains that the department is "illequipped to get into the community treatment. They are interested in building or expanding their empire. They are least interested in the reintegration of the offender into the open community."

The officials of both the agencies clearly perceive a conflict of interest between two agencies vis a vis domain.

**Ideology:** Among corrections respondents, there is no clear conception of what their ideology is! When asked about their agency's ideology, one respondent answered that "all behavior is learned. We teach the offender here the law abiding behavior." Another respondent said that "as long as they do not restrict taking referrals, we do not care that much for ideology." When asked to explain what is meant by ideology, they matched their agency's ideology with "reintegration." They think that their pre-release programs and
community service centers are exemplification of this ideology. Their counterparts in Reality House, however, are in disagreement with this contention. They feel that the social organization of the penitentiary system simply does not allow for this kind of ideology to exist. The penitentiary system lacks the trained manpower and the community setting for this kind of ideology to be implemented. Corrections respondents said that they are not sure of what ideology Reality House follows. They do not care about it either!

Technology: With regard to the methods of treatment used in the two agencies, the corrections officials think they are the same. These "methods worked alright with our clients. There is no quarrel." Corrections officials do not seem to care what methods are used as long as their clients are accepted and treated successfully. The Reality House staff, on the other hand, does not agree that their methods are the same. They contend that corrections does not have the trained personnel to use these techniques. They do not think that the techniques are used properly. They claim that their program is unique as far as using of Reality Therapy, Transactional Analysis, and guided group interaction. They say that they have trained personnel in all of the above techniques.

Evaluation: The respondents in both the agencies at the service delivery level have said that some of their counterparts in the other agency are personal friends. Two of the corrections staff have mentioned that "Mr. X is a friend of mine. He worked with us." Another respondent in corrections has said that "Mr. Y and myself know each other very well. We attended workshops together. He
is a dedicated young man." The corrections staff has made comments like "the program is good. What they did with our clients was very satisfactory. We would like to refer more of our clients if they are willing to admit them." "We do not have any relationship with Reality House now. There was a dispute over per diem rates. They did not want to serve our clients at the rate of $4.40 per day."

On the part of the Reality House staff, while the director is very critical of corrections, the other two staff members said that they have received good cooperation from the halfway house coordinator. While they appreciate the personal abilities of the corrections staff they have worked with, they are critical of corrections' bureaucracy and the climate in prisons which are not conducive to therapeutic treatment.

**Summary Analysis**

The relationship between Reality House and the Division of Corrections can best be represented by two major stages: (1) initial stage, toward cooperative exchange, and (2) second stage, conflict and isolation. Initially, several developments set the stage for the emergence of a cooperative exchange between the two agencies—the growing public pressure for penal reform and an effective lobbying by criminal justice agencies for a legislative action, both resulting in the passage of Senate Bill No. 78 by the Missouri legislature on the one hand, and the tensions Reality House had with the Board of Probation and Parole causing problems in program operation and the acquisition of federal matching funds on the other. However, the cooperative relationship soon deteriorated into conflict and isolation.
as a result of certain shifting events both in and outside the network. In the network transactions, the activities of the middle management personnel in the Division of Corrections had created fear and suspicion among the officials of halfway houses which resulted in the creation of halfway houses association.

Reality House penetrated the Division of Corrections largely at the middle management and the work release staff levels. The director of Reality House mainly dealt with the middle management personnel of the Division of Corrections in charge of pre-release programs, community service centers, and the coordination with the halfway houses while the Reality House staff interacted predominantly with the pre-release program staff at the penitentiary and Renz Farm, Jefferson City. As with the Board of Probation and Parole, the mode of coordination between Reality House and the Division of Corrections is largely an artifact of the understandings and agreements reached at the middle management level. The interactive context at the level of service delivery involving the Reality House staff and the Division of Corrections pre-release program staff is largely defined and delimited by the actions of the administrative personnel in the two organizations. In general the shifting modes of coordination between Reality House and the Division of Corrections from 1971 to the later part of 1975 was largely the result of the shifting political and economic realities in the criminal justice environment. The efforts of the Division of Corrections to establish control of halfway houses and community treatment centers in Missouri revealed a basic contradiction in their interests and commitments and those of independent halfway houses. Also, the geographical boundaries
delimiting the services of Reality House to Region III and the referral selection process of Reality House have further accentuated the conflict and contradictions between the two agencies. The political strategies of the Division of Corrections' administration eventually led to conflict with MACRTC and to the withdrawal of Reality House as a contracting agency.