

Firing Splits Brockton Self-Help

BROCKTON — The firing of Brother Lewis Morrow, CSC, who worked for nearly three months as food director of Self-Help, was argued at length last night during a meeting of the board of directors.

Brother Morrow's ability as a chef and administrator was not questioned in the dismissal within the 90-day probationary period. The main allegations made were that he was "not part of the team."

Deep Division

The deep division within the 51 members of the board on the justice and legality of the firing is causing the foundation of the organization to crack.

Charges of mismanagement of funds and violations of federal guidelines by the administration of the program were made during the meeting by directors who support Brother Morrow.

Brother Morrow although present during the meeting did not speak in his behalf. His attorney, Paul Hayes of Quincy, said the matter will not be taken to court until all administrative processes have been exhausted — including the attempt to fire the executive director or change the hiring policy bylaws.

Robert Curl, one of the directors who supported Brother Morrow, said the federal Office of Child Development, OCD, had

issued a report several months ago that "clearly states there is a mismanagement of funds."

"I suggest this report be brought to the attention of the board if it hasn't been," Mr. Curl said.

He said copies of the report which has never been made public are available from OCD.

Frank Backoff of Rockland, one of the directors, said he felt the investigation had brought out more important issues than the merely "how people got along together."

Kenneth Blanchard, a member of the factfinding committee, said that while the executive director was within his rights in dismissing Brother Morrow it also "found discrepancies within the agency" and this was the reason for the recommendation to establish a permanent investigating committee.

At the close of the meeting held in a room much too small for the crowd at Self-Help headquarters, the job status of Brother Morrow was still not decided.

Bylaw Amendments

Several directors said they plan to begin taking action either to amend the organization's bylaws to change the present system of hiring and firing or to remove Lawrence E. Zuk as executive director.

Motions made on the floor of the meeting to do both of those things were ruled out of order by Paul S. Zonderman, board president.

A three-member committee appointed by Mr. Zonderman reported to the full board that Mr. Zuk was within his authority "when he terminated Lewis Morrow's employment."

The committee report which was accepted as read also included two recommendations to handle the barrage of countercharges brought into the open by Brother Morrow's firing.

It recommended the president "advise the public" to submit to him in writing any facts they believe should be investigated concerning the operation of the

agency. Such complaints would be kept confidential according to the accepted recommendation.

It also recommended a permanent board be created to investigate every signed letter to the president dealing with these complaints.

"There was no information discovered by or presented to the committee which would lead them to believe that any criminal mismanagement of funds was taking place within the agency," the five-page report states.

"On the other hand, it appeared that there is a vast area for improvement within the agency. This board should energetically take a more active interest in monitoring agency problems to insure compliance with the funding grants.

"The board should exercise its supervisory control over the executive director and establish permanent procedures whereby the board is given notice of certain key administrative decisions which affect the credibility of the agency."

Mrs. Carol Thompson of Brockton, board member, pointed out several times during the meeting that the federally-written Head Start manual provides for the Head Start policy committee reviewing any hiring or firing of its personnel.

Procedure

The policy committee may either approve or disapprove the action of the executive director. If the action is not approved there is a procedure for bringing the issue before the board of directors.

Brother Morrow was paid from the Head Start budget although his duties included preparing lunches for the 100 children at the Child Development Center, a daycare center, as well as for the 320 Head Start children.

His employment was not brought up before the committee, according to Mrs. Thompson.

Vernon Sport of Abington, board member, said the bylaws of the organization have precedence. Mrs. Thompson maintains the federal manual has precedence.

Mrs. Joan Blackwell, a member of the factfinding committee, said the committee had heard testimony of the Rev. William Graun, CSC, Brother Morrow's supervisor while working at the Holy Cross Seminary in Easton, indicating Brother Morrow had experienced personality clashes with others at the seminary.

The Rev. William Hoan, CSC, said "There are always differences of opinion among religious as there are in any family."

Mrs. Judith Falardeaux of Brockton, whose son attends the day care center, presented a petition in support of the administration containing signatures of 71 mothers. There are 75 mothers with children at the center.

The petition read by Mrs. Falardeaux made clear the mothers do not want the program disbanded or interrupted in any way by the controversy.