Nancy confronted Ron with a possible violation of the academic Honor Code. An inquiry was convened to address the problem.

The inquiry began with the Chairman reading the relevant portions of the Code dealing with inquiry procedure, consensus, and confidentiality. The confronting party, Nancy, then recounted that after a discussion group of Professor Hegel's Intro Philosophy class, she noticed that certain portions of Ron's Aristotle paper resembled those that she had seen in the Monarch Notes. Nancy brought this matter to Ron's attention, but he didn't think that he had plagiarized. Further discussion between Nancy and Ron led them to decide that Nancy should bring the matter to the Honor Council; the Council thought an inquiry was necessary. This confrontation was difficult for Nancy because she and Ron are very close friends.

Ron explained that he had borrowed these Notes from a friend on a Monday afternoon for a maximum of 20 minutes. The next day he wrote his paper using only his copy of Aristotle's Politics and his class notes. On Wednesday he typed the paper and Thursday he handed it in. Ron emphasized that at no time did he refer back to the Monarch Notes after borrowing them on Monday afternoon.

Each member of the jury received a copy of the entire paper and the relevant pages of the Monarch Notes. They sat for about 30 minutes reading through both documents, and were able to find many similarities in word use, word order, sentence order, and organization of ideas. The jury identified two paragraphs in particular which contained material extremely similar to that found in the Notes. Many jury members pointed out several identical phrases to Ron, and he maintained consistently that he did not intentionally plagiarize these words, sentence fragments, and ideas, and that they were quite common to people studying Aristotle.

In the factual portion of the inquiry, the following point was also mentioned. Although the professor did not favor the use of Monarch Notes, apparently many people in the class used them. In fact, Ron was among several students in his dorm who used the same copy of them.

Once the factual portion of the inquiry ended, the jury members reviewed the evidence and decided that a violation had occurred. A problem remained, however, in that the jury had doubts as to whether or not the plagiarism was intentional. There were many phrases and sentences that were nearly exact replicas and it seemed as though Ron might have made a conscious effort to reproduce what he had read in the Monarch Notes. Some jurors were of the opinion that he might have had the Monarch Notes in front of him when he wrote the paper. Others thought that perhaps he had spent more than 20 minutes with the Notes, even memorized them, and was loath to tell the jury.

Ron maintained throughout the circumstantial portion of the inquiry that he did not memorize the Monarch Notes, nor did he hold them for more than 20 minutes. He was still convinced that the ideas that he had in his paper were his own. The jurors felt very frustrated at this point. Although they tried many approaches to elicit more of what happened, they found that none of them were effective. Finally it was suggested that the jurors get in touch with Patti, the person who had loaned the notes to Ron. This way they could see whether Ron's contention about having the notes for 20 minutes was accurate. This decision was agreed upon by everyone, including Ron.

As it turned out, Patti had loaned these notes to so many people that she couldn't really remember when she gave them to Ron and when she took them back. The jury tried to prompt Patti into giving a more accurate response, but because it happened four weeks earlier she could not be precise. Patti
said that Ron could have had the Notes for up to 2 hours, but she also said that it could have been 20 minutes. This information did nothing to change the jury's opinion; their doubts were neither mitigated nor increased.

On the third day of the inquiry, after having discussed possible resolutions with Ron the day before, the jurors met and decided that they were going to ask him directly whether he was lying to them. They felt that if he were still withholding information from them, this would give him one last opportunity to say so. And if he said that he was not lying, they would have to conclude that his act had been unconscious. When he returned to the SC room, a random jury member summoned the courage to ask him the question, "Did you lie to us?" And his response was unequivocal: "I'm not lying."

After more than ten hours of total deliberation, the jurors concluded beyond a reasonable doubt that Ron's action was unconscious. His sincerity and consistency also helped to convince a number of jury members. He was cooperative throughout and his story did not change. The jury then worked toward a resolution, keeping in mind that his act was unconscious, his sincerity was consistent, and his status as a freshman was worthy of consideration. They arrived at the following resolution, based upon suggestions that he made to them.

First, they recommended to Professor Hegel that Ron receive a 0.7 (failing grade) on the paper, since he represented someone else's work as his own. Jury members firmly believed that Ron's unacceptable work was in no way equivalent to other students' passing work. Second, to prove to the jury that he had learned how to write and footnote a paper, Ron would rewrite the paper and submit it to a random freshman jury member, an Honor Council member, and Professor Hegel. In this rewritten version, Ron would use the proper citations and footnotes, and adequately distinguish between his own ideas and those in the Monarch Notes. If he did not prove to these three people that he could satisfactorily rewrite this paper after repeated attempts to do so, they would recommend that he fail Intro Philosophy.

Third, he would write a letter to the community which is attached to this abstract (Addendum A). This letter addresses the following points: the experience of being confronted by a friend (which he talked about during the inquiry and the jury thought was important); what he learned about using sources properly; what he learned about the Code and how his attitude toward it has changed; and the importance of being conscious of where one gets one's information and citing such information with proper footnotes. [Addendum B, also attached, is a letter written by the confronting party to the community.]

Addendum A

I was confronted by a friend about a paper I had written, who claimed that there were similarities between my paper and the Monarch Notes. I had no recollection of using the information in the Monarch Notes in my paper. I had read the Monarch Notes before writing my paper, not realizing that it affected my writing. I had outlined my thoughts earlier in my mind, and then read the Notes. The wording in the Notes was very general and simple; those were the first words that came to my mind when I sat down to write. I did not realize this until my friend pointed it out.

This was not a matter that could be resolved by my friend and me or my professor and me—it was a community problem because it violated the trust of the community. This was a subject that needed to be discussed by Honor Council, and it was they who would handle the case to rebuild the trust in the
community. If friends do not confront one another, it will only weaken the Honor Code and what it stands for.

After reading my paper and the Monarch Notes over, I realized I should have been more conscious about my reading of the other essay. I should have taken notes on it or had it there in front of me to be able to distinguish between my ideas and those in the Notes. Reading any type of literature can affect one's writing, and when in doubt—an idea should be footnoted.

Addendum B

Perhaps the most controversial part of the Honor Code is the infamous "policeman clause." It certainly is the most difficult part to keep. I know. I was the person who confronted Ron in this abstract. My decision to do so was by no means automatic. I gave it a lot of thought—painful thought. To tell the truth, I wasn't going to take the matter any further than our first talk, thinking that Ron and his professor would handle the problem. Then I realized that taking it out of the community's hands would be wrong. The Honor Code belongs to the students, not to the administration or the faculty. If we are to receive its benefits, we must also accept its responsibilities.

Confronting Ron was one of the hardest things I've ever done in my life. Would he think I was just a "fink" for confronting a friend? Was I being too hyper about the Code? I guess one of the deciding factors for me was the last plenary. A student had spoken "con"—against the Code. He told us to look at our friends sitting next to us, and honestly ask ourselves whether we could really "turn them in." He implied that we would not be able to, and that the Honor Code was a hypocrisy. The Honor Code is an incredible hypocrisy if we do not at least try to live up to its standards. Friends must confront friends, for the very integrity that one bases a friendship on is the same one being strived for in the Code. If you're going to know about someone violating the Code, it might just be a friend, someone you spend time with.

Of course confronting someone, especially a friend, is not easy. But the Honor Code is not an easy thing to stick to. Hopefully, if anything like this ever happens to you, your friend will be as understanding about it as Ron was. I ask that you, above all, think about the situation I was in. Think about the Code. Think about what you would do. Discuss it with your friends.

Questions for community discussion:

Was it proper for the jury to ask the owner of the Notes who else had borrowed them and for how long? How far can a jury go in gathering evidence before it is overstepping its bounds? How much do you think a confronted party's status as a freshman should influence a jury's decision? Should Monarch Notes be banned from all Haverford courses as some would like?