A Quarterly Journal for Community Relations Trainers and Practitioners

JOURNAL

Issue No.14 Winter 1996/97

Published by the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

The storm after the storm

Community Relations after Drumcree: Where do we go from here?

Included in this issue:

Parades and Protest
by Neil Jarman & Dominic Bryan

Swimming against the tide
by Barney Devine

Protestant women on the move
by Diane Greer

The Racialisation of Irishness
by Robbie McVeigh

The changing role of the CRO
by Colin Knox

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Comments, letters and articles are welcome, as are suggestions for features you would like to see.

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The deadline for articles for the next issue is **17th January 1997**

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The views expressed are those of the contributors and should not necessarily be attributed to the Community Relations Council.

TRAINING DATES

Skills Directory

The Community Relations Council is currently compiling a directory of consultants, trainers, facilitators and evaluators. Letters and questionnaires have already been sent out to interested parties. If you wish to be added to the directory but have not yet received a letter please contact Tracey McTernaghan at CRC as soon as possible (Tel:01232-439953).

New Resource pack: Speak Your Peace

The pack includes the video: *Off the Walls* Channel 4 Schools series. (£19.99) and the programme guide *Exploring Controversial Issues* which contains activities and photocopiable worksheets (£4.95).
Groups can also get support from the *Speak Your Piece* team based at the University of Ulster, Coleraine.
Both the video and programme notes are available from Speak Your Piece Project, School of Education, University of Ulster, Coleraine, BT52 1SA Tel: 01265-324975 or fax: 01265-324918 or email: syp@ulst.ac.uk

Youth Action North West

Conflict Resolution and Mediation Skills Course (Stage 1)
Thursdays between 3pm and 9pm
from 9th January to 13th March 1997.
The course is aimed at youth and community workers, teachers, probation officers, education welfare officers, social workers and anyone who works with people.
Costs: £100 per person.
For further details contact : Michael Doherty, Tel: 01504-262028

Kilcranny House, Coleraine

CR Training for Uniformed Youth Organisations
Saturday, 15th February 1997, 10am
to Sunday, 16th February 1997, 3pm.
An introduction to community relations issues for anyone working with Boy Scouts, Guides, Boys & Girls Brigades, etc.
Cost: £30 or concession rate of £20

Rights of Individuals, Rights of Communities
Tuesday, 4th March 1997, 7.30pm
A seminar looking at people's rights. Members of the Committee on the Administration of Justice will be present to share knowledge.

Religion and Politics
Tuesday, 11th March 1997, 7.30pm
A seminar focusing on the relationship between religion and politics in Northern Ireland.

Exploring Non-violence
Friday, 7th March 1997,8pm to
Sunday, 9th March 1997, 2pm
First steps in learning about non-violence and non-violent action.
For further details on all of Kilcranny House courses contact: 01265-321816

Protestant women on the move

Diane Greer

Repairing the bridges torn down in the flood of sectarianism we witnessed this summer of '96 will take tremendous courage and goodwill on the part of everyone. We may need to pay as much attention to the idea of 'responsibilities' as we do to the concept of 'rights'. The events of the summer have highlighted many things; among them we have witnessed how one community's 'rights' have been directly at odds with another groups. So where do we go from here? Do we stand in the relative safety of our own community, gaze into open wounds inflicted by 'the other side'; do we dig even deeper trenches for ourselves - and shut out the light, or do we acknowledge that it has been difficult for all of us, reflect on and accept the consequences of our action - collectively? Do we really need for some to shoulder the blame? How many of us will take up the challenge of repairing the damage?

The chore of re-establishing some semblance of healthy community relations in Northern Ireland can seem overwhelming. Certainly this is true if one buys into the idea that community relations is at an all time low; that the two main traditions here are as polarized as they have ever been; that the political leadership we have chosen to represent us spend more time agreeing rules and procedures while avoiding getting down to substantive negotiations; and if one questions why the I.R.A. do not call a ceasefire while at the same time worries about the Loyalists maintaining theirs.

Two men having difficulty coming to grips with each other. Can women be more successful?

What of relationships within communities? Several years ago a group of Protestant women came together to discuss issues of identity and culture. It has taken this time to discover and appreciate the diversity in opinion that makes up this group - from women who would regard themselves strongly as British Protestant, through women who identify as Scots Irish, to those who distinguish themselves as Irish Protestants.

Much talking and listening took place, sometimes frustrating and painful, in order to come to some understanding and indeed a certain level of acceptance - one woman to another.

The group is made up of women from different socio-economic groups and boasts a rich age spread. Many issues have been confronted through the work of this group and many of them confidential to the participants. However, I can reflect on my own experience which was extremely painful at times, particularly around the issue of whether I could legitimately identify as Protestant while professing (or was it confessing?) at the same time to being Irish. Another matter which causes me great concern is the attitude of others from my community who question my loyalty to Protestant culture, simply because I engage with others from 'the other side'; the most unpalatable would seem to be individuals who are perceived or known to be Republicans. In the course of my daily work I liaise with many people in many different ways, whether in relation to young people, women's health issues or particular pieces of work related to issues of politics.

Establishing good community relations has been important for me and many others - to talk to and work with others from different political and religious groups in order to gain some insight and understanding of the complexities which separate us. Establishing these relationships can be (and often is) enriching - not frightening, and certainly does not dilute my own culture and identity in any way. To say it does not influence my thoughts and practice would be untrue - however, I believe it helps me to maintain an open mind and encourages me even further along the road in search for understanding and common ground.

When the first of the most recent ceasefires came it gave many of us even more courage and a renewed energy to contribute in a positive way to community relations work. I know I, with many others, took further risks in

establishing relationships which may have been perceived as quite controversial beforehand. When the IRA campaign resumed in February of this year it left many of us scratching our heads and wringing our hands as to what to do now. Such were the relationships established in good faith with a shared vision of the future - at least in social and economic terms, with a view to addressing the more contentious issues at some stage. We looked to Government and our elected representatives to show leadership - to mode good practice for us. In my opinion this has not happened - the effective work on the ground has, sadly, not been reflected at higher levels.
The 'hot' summer '96 will not be easily forgotten as we dwell in the vacuum where a 'right' is a 'wrong' for another. Much healing and reflecting needs to take place - I search my own soul in relation to the contribution or non-contribution I made, I question my responsibilities now, and having a commitment to equality, parity of esteem and justice for all I know the road I will travel - the only one I know.

To sail out from your own shore does not mean you fall off the edge of the world - you can return to share the experience, you can share seeds of hope, maybe even look forward to a bountiful harvest - with enough for everyone. A tall order I know... maybe its a tall ship... I'm on board, are you game.
Bon voyage! ✎

Robbie McVeigh

The Racialisation of Irishness

Racism and anti-racism in Ireland

When I first started looking at the phenomenon of racism in Ireland several years ago at Queen's, the comment I heard most often was, 'there isn't any problem with racism in Northern Ireland because there aren't any Black people'. This response often came from people within the University where there is quite clearly a minority ethnic population. The implication was that this wasn't a 'real' Black community because it involved students rather than permanent migrants. I remember having one conversation in particular. I got exactly the reaction I mentioned - 'there are no Black people in Ireland'. Five minutes later we went out to get a taxi and there was a Black person waiting for a taxi. I assumed that this person was a visitor to the area, but thought that this nevertheless proved a point. 'There' I said, 'you do see Black people in Ireland'. 'Oh', he said, 'that's X, she lives in number 25 - she baby-sits for us sometimes'. That is an anecdotal illustration of the way in which a common sense ideological construction - the proposition that there are no minority ethnic people in Ireland - can reproduce fairly comfortably alongside 'facts' which clearly contradict the proposition.

So the real question about Irish racism is not *whether* but *why*. This deceptively simple starting point raises a whole series of related questions - where does this racism come from; why does it persist; how do we begin to challenge it? This is the substance of my pamphlet *The Racialization of Irishness* - to examine the specific aspects of Irishness which encourage racialization with a view to challenging racism here.

Denying Irish racism

It bears emphasis that the proposition that there is no racism in Ireland because there are no Black people here is unsound for *two* basic reasons. It is wrong simply because there *are* Black and minority ethnic people in Ireland. There are substantial numbers of minority ethnic people - people of South Asian and Chinese origin as well as Travellers and Jews. But it is also unsound for another more subtle and important reason. It is not a requirement of racism that there be Black or minority ethnic people in a given society for racism to exist. For example, there can be racist jokes in an environment in which there are no Black people. The idea that there needs to be Black people before there is racism is an extremely dangerous notion, because it inevitably suggests that the presence of Black people in a given society *causes* racism.

It *is* the case that the presence of Black and minority ethnic people in a given society means that racism will become manifest in particular ways. Racism in Ireland would be *different* if there were genuinely, 'no Black and minority ethnic people here'. But that is by-the-by: there are Black and minority ethnic people in Ireland, north and south, and they do experience systematic racism. So it is not the absence of racism but the relative absence of discussion of racism which makes Ireland different from most European countries. This sense of difference is sometimes what people mean when they say that racism isn't a problem in Ireland - they really mean that racism here is *different* from racism in Britain or the USA or South Africa. This, of course, is palpably true. They may also be suggesting that

racism isn't a problem here because it *isn't a problem for white people*.

Put cynically this confirms that the uprisings in Black areas of Britain or the USA mark the point at which the consequences of racism impact directly on the lives of most white people. Racism is 'not a problem' when minority ethnic people are being discriminated against or harassed or even murdered but it is a problem when anger about living in a racist society spills over into confrontation with that society. This has not happened in Ireland, north or south, but it is a function of the size of the minority ethnic communities rather than the level of racism here.

The Racialization of Irishness

I suggest that there are a number of different dimensions to Irishness, north and south, which encourage the 'racialization of Irishness'. Roughly these can be dichotomized in terms of *historical legacy* and *contemporary location*. The attention to historical legacy recognises the specific location of Ireland in terms of the wider colonial expansion which first gave rise to racism. In particular, obviously, was the relationship of Ireland to British imperialism and its attendant racism. You have to look no further than some of the streets in Belfast which have most characterized *sectarian* conflict - Bombay Street, Kashmir Road, Soudan Street and so on - to see the intimacy of this connection. The peoples of Bombay and Belfast were bound together by their supposed role within the great chain of being that was the British Empire.

The Irish diaspora also took place in this context and established Irish blocs in each of settler colonial formations created by British colonialism - in north America, Australasia and South Africa. This created Irish settler blocs which in turn created interfaces between Irish people and other colonised and indigenous people - Native Americans and African Americans in the USA, Chinese and Aboriginal Australians in Australia and so on.

The contemporary location of Ireland, north and south, draws on the legacy but also sees different and newer reasons for racialization. For example, Irishness may be still influenced by Britishness but it also learns from other European and North American sources. The position of Ireland, north and south, inside the 'Fortress Europe' being built by the European Union to exclude the peoples of the Majority World (the so-called 'Third World'). This gives us a new structural relationship with other colonized peoples and potential 'immigrants' which is immediately racialized. Likewise the empowerment of Irish emigrant blocs in countries of settlement like the USA and Australia makes them capable of new racisms which are impossible in Ireland itself.

Anti-Irish racism and anti-racist practice

The other side of the connection between Irishness and racism, however, is the long-standing phenomenon of anti-Irish racism. This has been particularly deep-seated in Britain but it also effected Irish emigrants in the USA and Australia. This experience of racism - recently given 'official' recognition in a series of discrimination cases in the British courts - places Irish people in a different relationship to racism from most European peoples. The history of Irish victims and survivors of racism has to be recognized alongside the very necessary project of challenging racism from Irish people.

Paddy with John Bull and Uncle Sam as seen by *Puck* magazine in 1880

The pamphlet goes on to offer some thoughts on how best to develop anti-racism in Ireland. It suggests that there are clear objectives in terms of strengthening anti-racism in Ireland. Firstly, opposing anti-Irish racism (which most Irish people support) has to be connected to opposing racism in general (which most Irish people remain equivocal on). Secondly, anti-racism has to be grounded in the agendas of minority ethnic Irish people. If anti-racism in Ireland is not responsive to the specific demands of the people who are disadvantaged by racism, it will either achieve nothing or actually do damage. Thirdly, anti-racism must be supported by strong and effective legislation. While legislation is never a panacea, it makes it clear that racism is no longer sanctioned by the state. Fourthly, the anti-racist alliance which sees the Traveller

Support Movement work alongside other ethnic groups must be both valued and strengthened. Fifthly, it is not enough to simply create a space for 'ethnic politics'. Challenging racism means centring anti-racism in every other liberation struggle - anti-imperialist, socialist, feminist, Lesbian and Gay, trades union and so on.

Conclusion

Ireland is empowered by its whiteness and empowered by its Europeaness - especially its membership of the European Union - and empowered by the advancement of Irish blocs in other countries like the USA. Each of these processes actively encourages a specific racialization of Irish consciousness. But Ireland has also been disempowered - by its colonial history, by its location on the periphery of Europe, by its emigration, by its dependency. These experiences have seen Irish people racialized and disempowered by anti-Irish racism. They also give Irish people an immediate personal reason for challenging racism in its multifarious forms. In this sense Ireland is quintessentially 'between two worlds' - both perpetrator and survivor of racism, thoroughly racist and yet determinedly anti-racist. Discussion of racism and Irishness throws light on other racialized situations because of its particular structural location.

The crucial point of this is that, as colonized peoples we only know other colonized peoples through the filter of hegemonic imperialist representations of the world. What African people know about Native Americans, what Irish people know about Asians, what Native Australians know about Inuit: each of these is irreversibly stamped with the imprimatur of European colonialism and white racism. While we can speculate about what these peoples might have made of each other if they had met outside the colonial filter, we also recognize that this process continues to structure each encounter. We have to spend much more time in coming to know each other as well as coming to terms with the legacy of colonialism and racism.

The positive aspect of this process is that it has not produced 'mongrelization' as racists would have it. Rather than some negative *deracination*, different ethnic interfaces have produced some of the most interesting and creative manifestations of intercultural exchange. As we approach the 21st century our very identity is a consequence of a whole series of ethnic encounters consequent upon the process of colonialism. For example bhangra or rock or rap or indeed 'traditional' Irish music involve a multitude of different influences - African, American, Australasian, Asian and European - that pre-empts any notion of them being ethnically 'pure'.

These encounters are equally important in terms of the creative possibilities of Irishness. The centrifugal forces created by British colonialism in Ireland threw Irish people to the four winds. Slavery, transportation, starvation, refugee status and emigration forced Irish people into ethnic encounters around the world. Each of these encounters was racialized and created Irish racism. But it also encouraged a creative dialectic between Irishness and other cultural identities; between Irish liberation struggles and those of other peoples. These interfaces mean that - in terms of Irishness perhaps more than any other identity - the notion of 'racial purity' appears both ridiculous and oppressive. Those ethnic encounters which racists fear most - immigration, miscegenation, swamping, *deracination* - have produced some of the most powerful and beautiful expressions of common humanity from people of Irish background. Irishness has interfaced with other ethnicities to create new vibrant emancipatory politics and cultures. This is true from the 'Australian' democrat Peter Lalor to the 'Indian' anti-imperialist Margaret Cousins; it is true from the new cultural forms explored by the 'American' Eileen Ivers to the retro 'Britpop' ballads of Noel Gallagher.

Each of these individuals is Irish and yet distinctively marked by the colonial and emigrant process. Irishness has been profoundly enriched by every one of the encounters of the Diaspora. Just so Irishness has been profoundly enriched by similar encounters within Ireland itself. People who are Traveller and Irish, or Jewish and Irish, or Black and Irish, add significantly in a positive way to the sum of Irishness. Within the broader mosaic of ethnic encounters from the Irish Diaspora, there is clearly a space for minority ethnic Irish people. It is a good thing that it is no longer possible to equate Irishness with whiteness, or Irishness with Catholicism or Irishness with being sedentary. Put simply, Ireland is *already* a multi-religious, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural society. Moreover, this is something to be celebrated rather than denied and cherished rather than feared. ✎

The Racialisation of Irishness: Racism and Anti-racism in Ireland by Robbie McVeigh is published by the Centre for Research and Documentation, 89b Glen Road, Belfast, Tel 01232-626678 and is available (£3) from the Community Relations Information Centre, 31 Castle Lane, Belfast Tel: 01232-311881

Fergus Cumiskey

Youth perpectives on politics

Some reflections from an adult activist

This paper primarily draws from my work life, particularly the past ten years, training activists in political dialogue facilitation and anti-sectarian work. I have used the script to reflect upon the my own learning, my anti-sectarian practice and to connect with the themes and implications raised by Democratic Dialogue's youth and politics research.

Themes & Connections - Fear Vs. Aspiration

My interest was drawn to the most striking findings of the youth and politics research data. Although it indicates a very high youth interest in politics in NI (+70%) less than 3% of young people are members of a political party and only 12% are affiliated to a campaigning group. My experience, of leading dozens of workshops on overtly political themes, with adult workers suggests that most participants have no connection with bona fide party politics.

A facet of my work, addresses the provision of theoretical material to grapple with sectarianism. My work also incorporates an assessment of the personal impact of sectarian discrimination, consequent misinformation, competing ideologies and implicit fears of violence. These ever present themes ensure deep reserves of painful often unexpressed experiences. During anti sectarian awareness training workshops, the experience of terror, shame, silence and withdrawal are common. Conversely, the experience of rage, anger and blame are regularly evoked by anti-sectarian work. Fears evoked by the mere discussion of sectarianism in the workplace are often reacted to by efforts to control and limit opportunities for contact and dialogue. What better trigger could there be to unleash the vengeance and rage of generations evoked by these issues, than political discussion? I have discovered, in teaching the skills necessary for working with such emotive issues, that most participants to discussion harbour deep seated fears, almost uniform in their prevalence. These include the fear of being misunderstood and mistakenly labelled; or in risking vulnerability by revealing personal opinions on the history of the state and its influence; or by the expression of individual long-term constitutional aspirations.

Adults frequently cite their fear that working relationships may be irretrievably soured by the rancour, which uninhibited political discussion in the work place, may raise. Of course, there is always a risk element in any learning experience. The tendency to get stuck in the 'what ifs?', 'the why should we's?' hook many learners when initiating a political dialogue workshop. Parallel to such fears are the excitement and optimistic desire for greater skill, understanding and consequent freedom to change which may accrue. I know few other issues which evoke such well grounded anxieties, based on previous painful experiences than the ever present dangers of sectarian intimidation, violence and the destructive power of the 'chill factor', (a term used to describe how victims of intimidation experience being ostracised through sectarianism in the work place).

Young people in their responses to Democratic Dialogue's questionnaire, and in focus group participation which augmented the research, echo many of these concerns. The data indicates young people's concerns about the risks they face in breaking rank within their own community by daring to speak out, on political issues. Young people express fear of neighbourhood paramilitary misunderstanding, disagreement, consequent risks of isolation, cold shouldering, and threats or violence. Some mentioned their anger with and fear of the police and dissatisfaction with the absence of access to politicians.

If 70% of young people have an interest in politics, the service agents to this population are obviously delivering well below demand levels. Why? Caution, manifested in our well renowned politeness and banter behaviours, are designed to maintain the taboos on discussion of the politics of sectarianism. Sectarianism and our responses to it are historically structured into the culture of institutional life in Northern Ireland. It is therefore no surprise that print and broadcast media, education and youth work institutions are peculiarly devoid of any substantive targeted programme to address youth politicisation. A handful of courageous teachers and youth workers and the occasional risk by independent T.V. such as Channel Four's recent 'Speak your Piece' effort, have kept this work alive. Democratic Dialogue's findings imply a demand for urgent redress from these underdeveloped sectors.

Politics and Community Relations Work

Fear is a perpetuator of isolation, depression and a sense of disenfranchisement, as prevalent, in my experience, among adults as young people. The resulting experience of inertia, inactivity and frustration is a spring board for

many adults who work with young people, into what has been euphemistically termed as 'Focused Community Relations Work'. The limitation of such a title for the work I do, just like 'Cultural Traditions Work' and 'Education for Mutual Understanding' lies in their palliative woolliness - open to an abundance of interpretations and often dismissed as the absence of political analysis. Despite well grounded suspicions of government sponsored hand washing and social engineering agendas in which Community Relations Work is immersed, examples of excellent critical analysis, focused experiential learning and practice do exist.

There is some evidence that dialogue on the most contentious issues, involving those at the sharp end of the experience of sectarianised political conflict, has a permanent place within Community Relations Work. Community Relations Work includes an exploration of the relationships between the people of Ireland and Britain and how they can be articulated within the framework of a restructured political order.

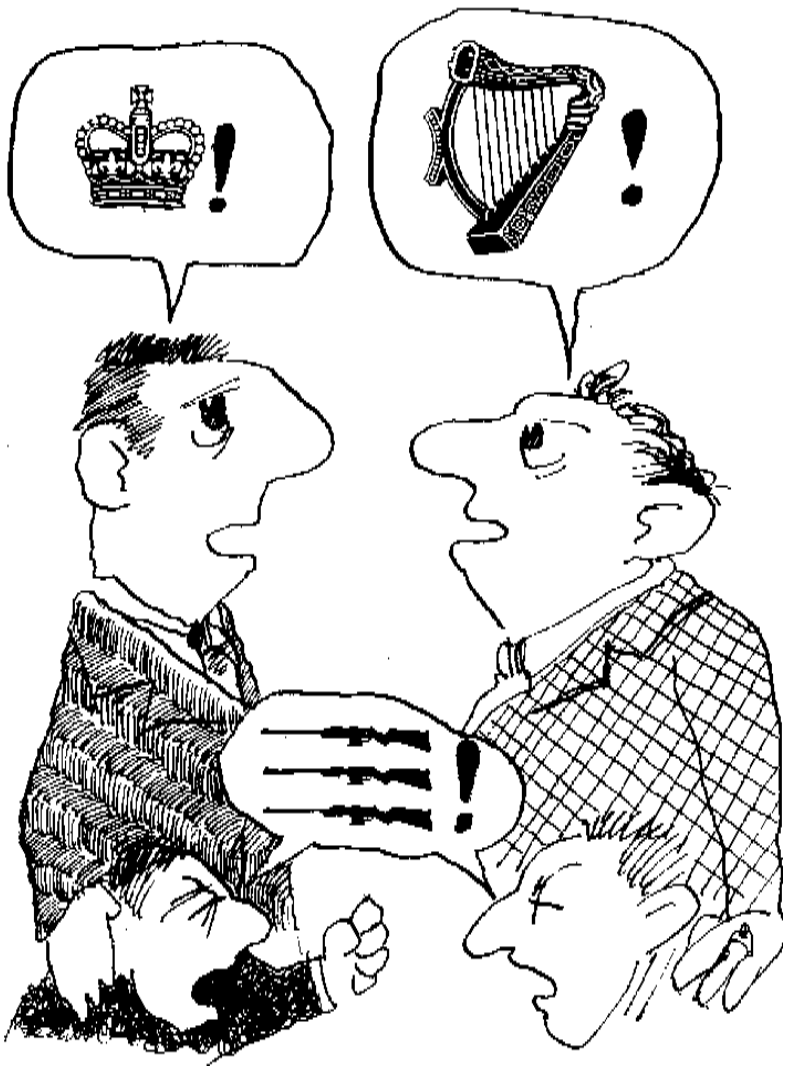
Dialogue and the Marching Season

In the midst of our most difficult and emotive summer for many years the courage to demand dialogue came from communities which have traditionally been at greatest risk of sectarian violence. The significance emerging for me from these events resides in the courage, local support and conviction of community organisations, despite the enormous risks to personal safety implied by their militancy.

The implications of the summer of '96 may suggest that it is now tentatively worth the risk (despite the murder of Michael McGoldrick and the betrayal of the people of Garvaghy Road) for some activists to step out and clearly state their political preferences, with solidarity, at the most localised level, in demanding dialogue on contentious sectarian parade routes. These events have proven shocking to many in positions of power. Much has been done to demonise local community militancy as a republican conspiracy - part of the 'unarmed strategy' of the Provos. Where ever the community leadership came from, it beats the gun and bomb, and has proven to be effective in achieving negotiated results in the aftermath of Drumcree.

Current Policy Gaps

My original thrall for dialogue facilitation came from working on Cross Border/Cross Community exchange programmes with young people and their leaders, parents and teachers while developing Co-operation North's Youth and Education programme in the late 1980's. I saw young adults begin to open up and take risks of disclosure and conflict with each other, surviving the work, to emerge more self confident and aware of their own socio-political origins and current frameworks, while developing an appreciation of the dynamics which predispose their peers to diametrically opposite political perspectives. The key ingredient was to create a climate safe enough for this experiential learning to take place.



The difficulty remains - how and when will it be safe enough for teachers and youth workers to lead critical political discussion in the classroom or youth club?

How to resource the work strategically?

Major policy initiatives have failed. The recent University of Ulster study on Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU '96) shed light upon a frightened and reluctant teaching profession still reeling from a decade of down-grading by an erratic and blaming government administration. EMU is the Cinderella issue in education, despite significant funding and rhetoric claiming commitment to change. There has been little qualitative training or support to teachers, with a resulting dearth of good practice or policy.

The Youth Contact programme, now devolved from the Dept. Of Education to the Education and Library boards has fared just as badly. An internal research initiative sponsored by the Youth Council (1995) revealed a tiny percentage of youth organisations had engaged in contentious discussion work. More telling, is the fact that only a fraction of youth workers have participated in any kind of professional development option focused on politics, political education or political discussion. These results come in the wake of almost a decade of European and Westminster funded Community Relations initiatives.

Without qualitative action research, development and implementation strategies, this work will remain the preserve of hard pressed enthusiasts working in isolation, while ineffectual in creating a strategic support for social change.

N.I. media pundits have been no less effected by the urge to self preservation and censorship than the youth and education sector. If Democratic Dialogue have it right, and 70% of young people are interested in politics surely the BBC, UTV and independent radio stations must begin to address this market? A more entrepreneurial and creative approach from N.I. broadcast media controllers could contribute quality focused opportunities for young peoples participation in the political process.

Towards a Coherent Strategy

An operational and strategic plan to address the work including all the major education and broadcast stake holders is the fundamental first step to greater youth participation in politics. The questions remain: how to shift the work of political education - politicised discussion and dynamic dialogue - from the marginal interest of the enlightened liberal or committed radical to the centre stage of youth and education policy, practice and resourcing bodies? How to publicly profile and critique the work while maintaining safety and encouraging enthusiastic youth interest and participation?

A start might be a regular prime time slot to young producers, writers, and journalists working in consort to actively pursue youth participation in and control of broadcast discussion fora. A young people's equivalent to the excellent Channel Four *After Dark* series would be an interesting prototype. Scope for experiment should be unlimited in format and style. Any change from the predictable and lamentably stale and superficial game show style discussions often presented by UTV's *Counterpoint* and BBC's *Spotlight* programmes would be welcome.

Young people working with young people with the support of well seasoned practitioners, while developing their own 'product' could be very attractive to younger audiences.

Any policy initiative must be regarded as 'safe enough' by teachers, youth workers and broadcasters. Those at the top of the decision making hierarchies in Education and the Media have their work to do. They must lead by example, and risk placing open discussion of political issues, as an educational priority. They must practically energise the youth and education sector by instigating a comprehensive strategy, incorporating funding, expert facilitation, support and training, focused within experimental action research and practice initiatives.

Political discussion facilitators in youth work, education, youth training, trade unionism, broadcast journalism etc require access to dynamic networking, personal and professional development opportunities and highly skilled support and supervision. Such support is a prerequisite to deal effectively with the inevitable personal and professional dilemmas which ensue from the work.

This outline strategy although simple in structure is bound to provoke resistance. The impact of sectarianism at both macro and micro levels in N. Ireland are all pervasive and ever present. This should not be an excuse for procrastination but a spur to urgent progressive action.

At a moment in history when throughout Europe adult rights and responsibilities towards young people are so sharply in focus, it is timely that Democratic Dialogue bring this challenging data into the policy domain and press for action. ✎

Fergus Cumiskey *is a freelance training consultant*

This is an edited version of an article which appears in a forth-coming publication from Democractic Dialogue on Youth and Politics (For more details contact Democratic Dialogue Tel: 01232-232230.)

The changing role of the C.R. Officer

Colin Knox

In 1989 the Central Community Relations Unit (CCRU) invited district councils to participate in the community relations programme aimed at developing cross-community contact, promoting greater mutual understanding and increasing respect for different cultural traditions. Seven years on, a number of extraneous changes have occurred which have impacted upon the nature of the work undertaken by community relations officers:

(a) The Republican and Loyalist ceasefires of August and October 1994, the collapse of the IRA ceasefire (Feb. 1996) and the civil disturbances associated with Drumcree in July 1996, have created a political milieu within which their role as community relations officers has become more germane and no less demanding.

(b) Concomitant moves by a number of councils to 'share responsibility' provide a context where accommodation at the political level may be reflected in a more positive response to the task of improving community relations (Knox, 1996).

(c) The expanding role for councils in the promotion of economic development can provide a mechanism through which both communities work together for a common purpose and, in so doing, build mutual confidence and trust (Johnston, 1995).

(d) The Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation, approved by the European Commission in July 1995, sees local councils, in partnership with community/voluntary organisations and representatives of the private sector, harnessing the energies of local groups in pursuit of common goals. The programme aim is to help consolidate the cessation of the conflict by providing local economic and social factors with the resources to translate developments into a lasting peace and to facilitate on-going progress towards reconciliation (European Commission, 1995).

How have these change affected the way in which community relations officers undertake their current role and what opportunities present themselves for the future? To address these questions, we draw on qualitative data gathered through semi-structured interviews with eight community relations officers, two council chief executives, two economic development officers and a development officer from the Community Relations Council. The qualitative data were supplemented by self-completion questionnaires which were sent to the remaining community relations officers not included in the interview schedule (Knox & Hughes, 1996).

The changing role of the communty relations officer

The role of the community relations officer in local authorities has emerged through a process of trial and error, *ad hocery*, opportunism and incrementalism. This is hardly surprising, given the broadly-based objectives set for the district council programme and the very different starting points experienced by newly appointed officers. Some councils had long-established community development departments and a network of community groups others had nothing. An initial emphasis on organising cross-community contact programmes developed into more focused cultural traditions and mutual understanding work. The emerging role for officers has been to act as enablers rather than project organisers and providers. Groups, once established and confident in their own endeavours, are expected to generate more projects and assume their ownership.

Currently, the key components of the community relations officer's job vary in terms of balance and prioritisation, but were described from this research (in no particular order) as follows:

(a) Organising events

A wide range of arts, cultural and sports events are organised alongside community relations training for single identity and cross-community groups. Despite some reservations about the community relations benefits of the former (e.g. superficial contact, problem of follow-up, few opportunities for developmental work) and the large time investment required of officers, there are some notable successes with this kind of activity. Two examples from community relations officers illustrate the point:

> *There are a number of main events throughout the year which require a lot of administration. The Festival of Women, a Lady Mayhew initiative, is a good example. Despite a self-selected organising committee comprising people who sit on every committee in the town and do little work, I, along with council colleagues, took on the task of running the event. It was a mammoth job but turned out to be the best community relations initiative we've ever done, simply because the association with Lady Mayhew encouraged Protestants to get involved. I now have an entree into Protestant women and church groups which I didn't have before.*
>
> Interview with Community Relations Officer

Another example illustrates the success which can emerge from high profile events:

> *A major event in our calendar year is the St. Patrick's Day parade and the associated week-long festival. With lots of sensitive organisation and management of the event, we have increased the support and participation of Protestants. We had our Unionist chairman lead the parade in which several Protestant bands and groups played, including the police band. We encouraged Catholics to re-examine their role on sensitive issues: flag-flying, playing nationalist tunes and the location of organised events. It has developed into what we would see as our flagship community relations event and exploded the myth that St. Patrick's Day is an exclusively nationalist event. Protestant groups now feel able to participate. Catholic groups have addressed issues which have the potential to alienate Protestants.*
>
> Interview with Community Relations Officer

Some officers felt that organising high profile events with less discernible community relations benefits (Mayor's Show, Christmas festival), a few of which were long-standing council events predating their appointments, was necessary to maintain their work in the public limelight.

(b) Grant-aid and budget management

Limited financial assistance is provided through community relations officers, for projects which met the programme's criteria, some community development work or seeding grants to new cross-community groups. The amount of discretion delegated to individual

ONE FULLY TRAINED C.R.O.....

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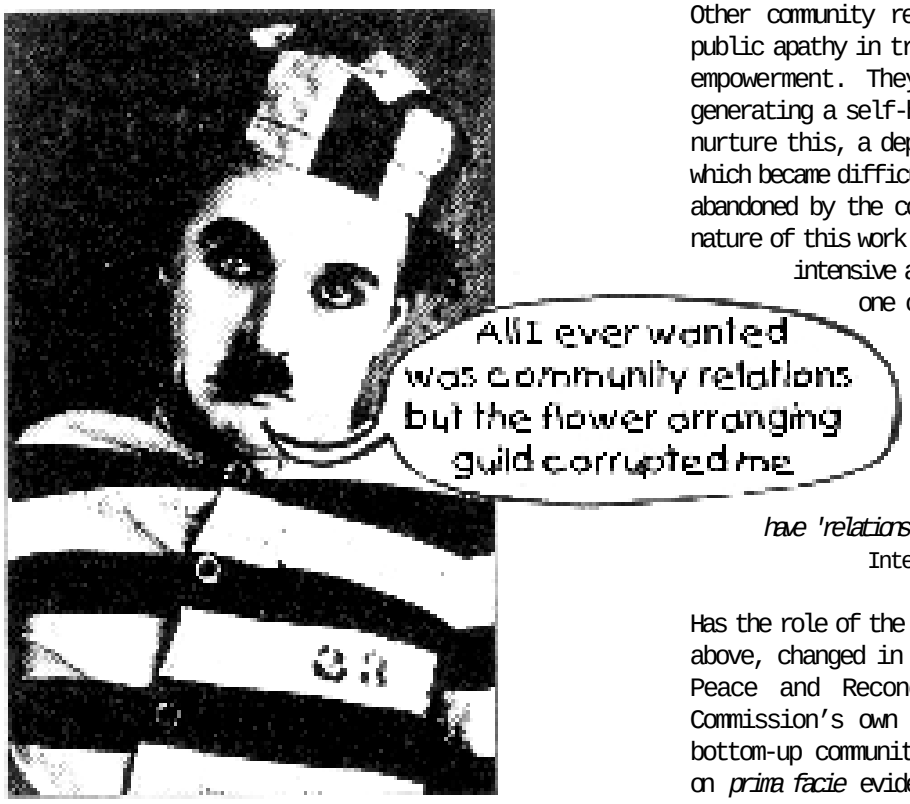
community relations officers varied widely in dealing with grant-aid and the management of the community relations' budget allocation from CCRU to the council. Whilst community relations officers take responsibility for administrative returns both to CCRU and the council, ownership or control of the budget is, in some cases, vested in senior or chief officers. Where this happens, charges of substitute funding, or councils using community relations money for other purposes, were rife.

(c) Information and promotion

Community relations officers provide a variety of groups with information on sources of funding and a host of other issues (housing, roads, youth services, drugs agencies), many of which are not the responsibility of the council, but statutory or voluntary agencies. They often act as an information resource for small community groups, particularly in the absence of a community services presence in the Council area.

As one officer suggested:

> *I am involved in a lot of promotion work, not least because my council needs positive public relations. Out in the community, the council does not have a good record in community relations and maybe I was the first officer who was in contact with these groups. I became the point of contact even if they wanted to complain about their wheelie bins.*
>
> Interview with Community Relations Officer



Officers also try to promote community relations as a function both within the council, to ensure it is not marginalised as a transient, low-status service and externally, by networking on an inter-agency basis. There is, therefore, an on-going role in creating community awareness of the function and raising its profile in the policy network.

(d) Facilitating and enabling groups

Recognising the resource limitations available to them,[1] many community relations officers have now moved towards the practice of facilitating community groups to address community development or specific community relations issues. This is the first step towards enabling or empowering community groups to take ownership of projects which affect their areas. The progression may be initial contact projects in a single identity setting, through cross-community participation, to focused community relations work. One officer described the process of empowerment thus:

> *My aim is to generate personal commitment to the work by getting as many people involved in the in-depth focused work because I feel this is the only kind of work that's going to sustain a community relations policy in the area over the next 20 years. They must experience the feel-good factor. The contact schemes are great when there is funding and the worker there to organise them, but there's no enthusiasm to continue doing that when there's no money and no person to do it for you. The only place where you are going to get that drive coming from people is where they have experienced each other at that very personal level and strive for it themselves. My aim is to empower local people to see that this is their community and concern.*
>
> Interview with Community Relations Officer

Other community relations officers reported a certain public apathy in trying to apply this model of community empowerment. They experienced some difficulty in generating a self-help approach. When they attempted to nurture this, a dependency bond was quickly established which became difficult to break without the groups feeling abandoned by the council and its officer. Moreover, the nature of this work is difficult to circumscribe, manpower intensive and tangible results slow to realise. As one community relations officer put it:

> *My work is a bit unfocused at times and I end up chasing my tail. Anything that comes into this council with 'community' on it ends up on my desk - it doesn't have to have 'relations' after it.*
>
> Interview with Community Relations Officer

Has the role of the community relations officer, described above, changed in the light of the European Community Peace and Reconciliation Initiative? Given the Commission's own description of the programme as a bottom-up community-oriented initiative, there would, on *prima facie* evidence, appear to be a considerable role for community relations officers in local authorities. Is this the case in practice? We now describe the initial experiences of those involved.

The EC Peace & Reconciliation Initiative - A New Opportunity?

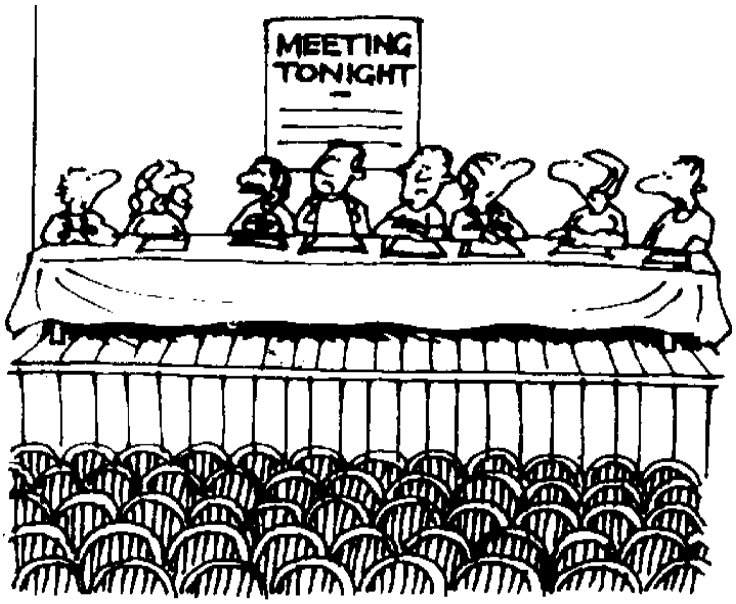
The single most important opportunity to present itself to community relations officers is the Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties 1995-99, launched in July 1995. Initial three year funding is for 416m ECU(£351m) and the programme aims to reinforce progress towards peace and stability and promote reconciliation. This will be achieved by increasing economic development and employment, promoting urban and rural regeneration, developing cross-border cooperation and extending social inclusion.

Innovative aspects of the programme involve more than half the monies being channelled through intermediary bodies outside of government, and district partnerships comprising local councillors, community/voluntary representatives and business and trade union interests from each council area. Social inclusion, considered the most important component of the programme (24% of the NI package), is targeted at bringing back into society and the economy, all marginalised and vulnerable groups, thereby promoting reconci1iation.

What opportunities are presented by the EC programme?

Community relations officers can:

(a) mobilise and assist community groups to avail of a wide range of opportunities across several measures



"SOMEONE DID SEND OUT INVITATIONS, DIDN'T THEY?"

outlined in the sub-programmes but especially:

- developing grass-roots capacities and promoting the inclusion of women (sub-programme 4, Social Inclusion - measure 1);
- promoting pathways to reconciliation (sub-programme 4, Social Inclusion - measure 5).

(b) support and advise the district partnerships, charged with formulating an action plan for approval by the Northern Ireland Partnership Board.

What have been the experiences of community relations officers thus far?

The Peace and Reconciliation Programme offers community relations officers a major opportunity to imbue an initiative, driven by economic and social objectives, with sound principles of community relations. They have already experienced in the course of their work so far, the futility, in some cases, of presenting their agenda in isolation to groups which baulk in a defensive way at exhortations to improve community relations.

Early signs of the influence exerted by the community relations officers in the Initiative are not, however, encouraging. At political and official levels within councils, the Peace and Reconciliation Programme is perceived primarily as an opportunity to enhance their expanding economic development role. Moreover, the formation of partnerships, a mechanism used to deliver other EC economic initiatives, has added credence to the economic orientation of the Peace and Reconciliation Programme and served only to sideline the involvement of community relations officers at council level. This, in itself, highlights a failure to acknowledge the linkage between economic development and community relations as functional activities of local authorities, a situation compounded by a departmental rather than corporate council culture.

All is not lost, however. An opportunity still exists for community relations officers to assert themselves by demonstrating the value of their expertise in accessing, mobilising and supporting the efforts of community groups. Their influence can be exerted at two levels; in an advocacy role for groups submitting bids to the district partnerships or directly to any relevant sub-programme; and the provision of expert advice, based upon their detailed knowledge of community groups, in drawing up the partnership plan. The latter role has been somewhat usurped by the appointment of officials to service partnerships. Internal pressure by community relations officers justifying their inclusion in the political network must, however,be accompanied by external pressure from CCRU and CRC applied to the major peace and reconciliation stakeholders (district councils, district partnerships, Nl partnership board, NICVA, LEDU, IDB, DED) stressing the centrality of community relations principles in attaining the economic and social goals which underpin the EC initiative specifically, but apply generally in advancing these goals. Sidelining community relations in favour of perhaps more fashionable economic development objectives fails to recognise the inextricable link between the two functions.

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[1] Assuming a total staff complement of 32 community relations officers for 26 councils, each officer has an average population of 50,993 within his/her remit.
Assuming also a 25% matching contribution from councils to the CCRU allocation, a total £2,121,653.00 is available for community relations or £1.30 per capita (Knox & Hughes,1996).

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Neil Jarman &
Dominic Bryan

Parades and Protest

There are over 3000 parades in Northern Ireland annually, the vast majority of which are held by 'loyalist' groups and institutions. Although most of these parades are not directly disputed, the sheer number and frequency of parades does cause resentment amongst sections of both the Catholic and Protestant communities. More significantly, those parades that are disputed have serious consequences for community relations within Northern Ireland.

Why are there such a large number of parades and why does the number appear to be increasing?

1. Parades and demonstrations, which have been common throughout western Europe, have remained particularly important in Northern Ireland due to ongoing ethnic differences which are highlighted in a lack of agreement over the nature of the state. Particular types of parades are understood as part of a community's 'tradition' distinguishing it from the other community.

2. The historical position of the Orange Institution in the north of Ireland, and within Northern Ireland since 1921, has provided the environment in which loyalist parades could flourish whereas nationalist and republican parades have been restricted to particular areas. In other words, the 'tradition' of parading has been largely based on an inequality of power.

3. The number of loyalist parades may have risen because of the divisions within Unionism and the insecurities brought about by 'the Troubles'. Splits within unionism has left the Orange Institution, which is still directly tied to the Ulster Unionist Party, as less representative of diverse unionist politics. This has led to an increase in the number of local parades many of which are held by other groups, particularly marching bands. Whilst parading remains an important part of unionist political culture, it is no longer the expression of unity that it previously might have been. In a state in which the Orange Institution is politically less powerful, loyalist parades have become more diverse and more localised.

4. Increased political confidence within the nationalist community has led both to an increase in the number of parades, particularly by republican groups. Given the prolonged IRA campaign many of these parades are seen as threatening within the Protestant community.

5. Parades continue to be used by politicians and political groups for their short-term political ends.

What effect have these changes had upon parading in Northern Ireland?

1. Years of sectarian violence and tension within Northern Ireland has reduced the acceptability of loyalist parades to many in the nationalist community and probably an increasing, although less vocal, proportion of the Protestant community. The parades have become 'less respectable'.

2. The increase in the number of blood and thunder bands and the more disparate nature of unionist politics has reduced the authority that senior Orangemen appear to have over the events they are organizing. The Orange Institution no longer represents, and therefore has less authority over, the majority of those involved in parades.

3. The sheer number of parades, particularly in predominantly Protestant towns, appears to have increased the alienation that the Catholic community feel toward the civic centres of those towns.

4. Residents groups in some nationalist areas have become more confident in expressing opposition to loyalist parades, particularly after the IRA and loyalist paramilitaries ceasefires.

5. The parades have, more than ever, come to define the communal boundaries in Northern Ireland.

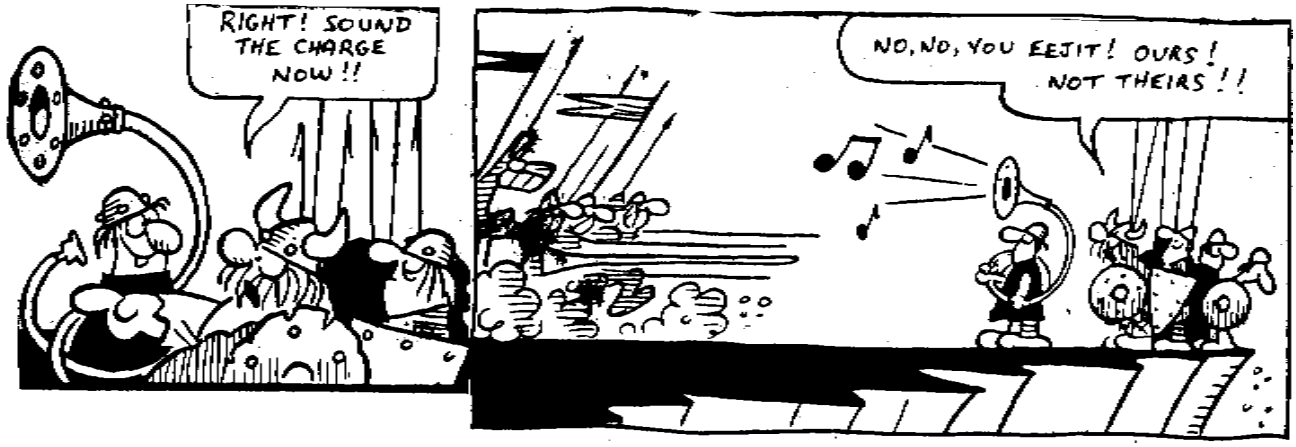
6. The parading issue has proved detrimental to the relationship between the RUC and both Catholic and Protestant communities despite efforts by the police to improve their position as a police force for all the communities. Since they most often try to maintain the status quo they are perceived by the nationalist, and with some justification, as sustaining the imbalances that exist in public political expression which date back to the Stormont era. On the other hand, if they attempt to reduce or reroute parades, as they have done in some areas, they are inevitably accused of attacking the 'tradition' and the 'rights' of the Protestant community.

Approaches to resolution

This report discusses a number of options that have been raised as a means of resolving the problem of disputed parades. Some of these could be acted on in the short term; others would need longer term planning and implementation. These are not recommendations but proposals for discussion.

1. Negotiation and Mediation

At present, disputes over the right to parade are either resolved by the police making decisions according to the Public Order(NI) Order 1987, and physically enforcing that decision if necessary, or through intermediaries mediating an agreement or some common accommodation between interested parties. Whilst both methods might produce short term answers in particular instances, they are unlikely to prove effective in improving the general environment in which public political expression in Northern Ireland takes place. Consequently, the problem of the right to parade remains as a blight upon community relations.



Four points appear to be clear:

i. In principle everyone should have the right to parade as an expression of his or her cultural identity.

ii. The right to parade must be balanced by the rights of residents of areas through which proposed parades might pass.

iii. Those organizing parades need to be held accountable and responsible for the totality of what takes place.

iv. Some method needs to be found within which arbitration and adjudication of disputes can take place. A number of proposals for improving the situation might be considered.

2. A Parading Commission

A commission could be set up in the short term which might develop a set of principles under which political expression in Northern Ireland could take place. In particular, accommodation might be found between the rights of communities not to disturbed by parades and the rights of others to hold parades. These principles should be developed around ideas of all the disputed parades and make recommendations which would treat all parade disputes as a single issue. The Commission would work to a specific brief and be asked to make recommendations within a short period of time. Its role would be advisory.

3. Use of the law

Consideration should be given to whether all sections of the Public Order (NI) Order 1987 are being fully utilised, or to whether further legislations is required to improve the control of parades and demonstrations.

4. Responsible Parading

Consideration should be given to the introduction of measures by those organizing and those policing parades which enforce upon participants a greater responsibility for the events.

i. *General Behaviour* - The organisers of parades could take greater responsibility, and be seen to be taking greater responsibility, for what takes place in the events they organize.

There are a whole series of areas which might be considered:

- Better publicity of when and where parades are taking place
- Better liaison with local community groups.
- Better control of sectarian music and chanting.
- Improved controls on the displays of sectarian symbols.
- The possibility that flags might be furled or music stopped in particular areas.
- The avoidance of Catholics churches on parade routes.
- Restricting access to parts of a route to the parade only.

ii. *Stewarding and Marshalling* - The role of parade stewards should be considered. What exactly should be their role? Should they liaise with community representatives? Are they clearly visible and distinct from the parade? Do they have adequate training?

iii. *Community Liaison* - Greater efforts might be made by parade organizers to liaise with representatives of the communities through which the parade will pass.

iv. *Voluntary re-routing* - Organisers might take into consideration local sensitivities towards parades and consider a moratorium on events in an area over a specified time period.

v. *Externally Imposed Constraints* - Consideration might be given to an advisory body or commission that could oversee public political expression in Northern Ireland (see below).

vi. *Financial Constraints* - Users of public spaces such as motorists, building contractors and race organisers have to cover themselves for financial liability. Consideration might be given to organisers of parades being required either to put down a financial bond or take out liability insurance against damage or violent behaviour during a parade.

5. A Parading Tribunal

A tribunal to consider parades could take a number or combination of forms:

i. A mediator or 'watchdog'.
ii. An arbitrator on particular disputes.
iii. A series of locally formed committees empowered to make judgements on specific local disputes.

6. Parade 'Planning' Permission

A commission to which all applications to parade should be made months in advance and which would adjudicate on contested applications. This would require significant revision to public order legislation.

A system set up to consider parading disputes has a number of advantages :

i. It would reduce the role of the police in 'arbitrating' parade disputes.

ii. It would introduce some consistency to the decisions made over different parades.

iii. It would be able to make judgements on a wider set of criteria than simply public order.

iv. It would allow the public imposition of 'conditions' in particular instances.

v. It would make the decision-making process more public and more accountable.

vi. It would allow both communities to use the force of argument and not force of numbers.

vii. It could guarantee both the rights of those that wish to parade and the rights of residents.

However, there are a number of problems with such a proposal:

- It would be difficult to find a structure within which the tribunal could work which would be seen as legitimate by all those within the parading disputes.
- It would, in all probability, require major revision to current public order legislation.
- It would significantly increase the bureaucracy surrounding applications to demonstrate, although the cost of this could easily be offset if it served to reduce the required policing of events.

Most parades are peaceful and cause little or no offence. In the majority of cases the behaviour and discipline is perfectly acceptable. But methods need to be found to resolve the problems that do exist so that parades no longer damage community relations. The long term aim should not be to prevent parades from taking place but rather to encourage a political environment where civil rights are respected and political expression can take place without threatening or inconveniencing the lives of others.

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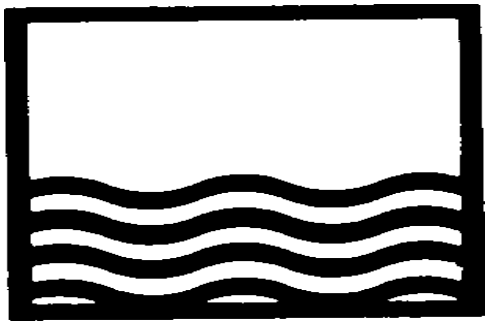
This piece forms the executive summary of *Parades and Protest: A Discussion of Parading in Northern Ireland* by Neil Jarman & Dominic Bryan (£10) published by the Centre for the Study of Conflict and is also available from the CR Information Centre, 31 Castle Lane, Belfast Tel: 01232-311881.

Dave Duggan

From the banks of the Foyle to the shores of Lake Tanganyika:

Notes from an International Peace-building Training

It was 'home thoughts from abroad' for me whenever I stood outside Hotel Albatross in Bujumbura, capital of Burundi, looking across Lake Tanganyika. There stood the mountains of Zaire, wreathed in clouds, and changing colour in a cinemascopic display of colour and light. Lough Foyle, wonderful as it is, was never like this.



Nor had I ever run conflict resolution trainings in a disco bar of a small hotel before. We were the only people using it. There were no guests staying so the workshops convened by the ad-hoc Burundian Forum of Youth Organisations provided much needed business. We ate in the outside bar and in the evening men would come to 'prendre un verre' (take a glass) of beer on the way home. Otherwise we had it to ourselves.

There was me, a member of International Voluntary Service (Northern Ireland) running the training; there was Kris Berwouts, a staff member of the Belgian branch of the same organisation, Service Civil International, who got the money for the event from Belgian government and NGO sources; there was Dismas Hicintuka, Terence Mbonabuca and Nepomucene Hasabintwari who were the local organisers, representing the ad-hoc forum of youth organisations. And through the week there were 35 other Burundians from all over the country who came to participate in short trainings on conflict resolution theory and practice. These were some of the bravest people I have ever met.

Take the man who travelled from Ngozi. A quiet and thoughtful young man, he made the journey in the back of a lorry because there was no public transport coming from that town to the capital. He had approached the driver of the lorry which was transporting a wrecked car, paid him to let him hide in the wreck and made the journey safely. He wasn't sure how he was going to get home.

During the second of three short trainings I ran, gunfire rang out nearby. Not ten minutes before hand we had reached a very tense moment in the work when a Hutu man had been describing his understanding of the situation in the country as a failure of politics which should lead to political change. Just previous to that a Tutsi woman had spoke of the need for people to obey the law and to cease insurrection. In the gloomy light of the disco bar I felt very much at home.

The trainings in April 1996 were part of IVS/SCI's on-going work of internationalising its peace-building activities. The aim of the programme was to support indigenous activities in peace-building in Burundi by strategically resourcing a number of youth and community workers who are creating a network of skilled individuals who can contribute to peace-building in their country. It followed directly from a study tour of Northern Ireland organised by IVS/SCl undertaken by five youth and community workers from Burundi in Autumn 1995. I ran three days introductory training in conflict resolution theory and practice and the Burundians decided that a similar programme would be useful for members of their organisations.

I had been to Africa before. I lived in The Gambia for two years in the late Seventies and I worked there again on a consultancy for WaterAid in the late Eighties. I had never been to the Great Lakes Region of East Central Africa, yet my head was full of it from Safari stories in books and films, histories of colonialism by the French, the Germans, the Belgians and the British and, most recently the reporting of the traumatic events in Rwanda in 1994. For Burundi the shadow of those events loom large; genocidal attacks, the crassness of the international response, the pressure on countries with large numbers of refugees and displaced persons. In Bujumbura now you see displaced pastoralists and their cattle. The city is filling up as people, mainly Tutsi, come in from the countryside. The city is tense waiting for attacks from the Hutu militias,backed by members of the majority group in the population. And there is limited room for moderation. The role of the Tutsi dominated national army is a big problem. They have allegedly been involved in massacres and in support of militant Tutsi groups attacking Hutu villages.

Our programme was to have included a training in Gitega, a city in the centre of the country, but the security situation worsened just before we arrived. Lieutenant Colonel Fyiritano, commandant of the 3rd battalion of Commandos at Gitega, was killed, apparently by Tutsi extremists, because he wouldn't allow killing of the Hutu civilians. I found myself thinking about this man as we landed at the airport to be met by the local organisers. What can you do when a conflict situation is escalating? What can local people do, and what use are inputs from another society in conflict?

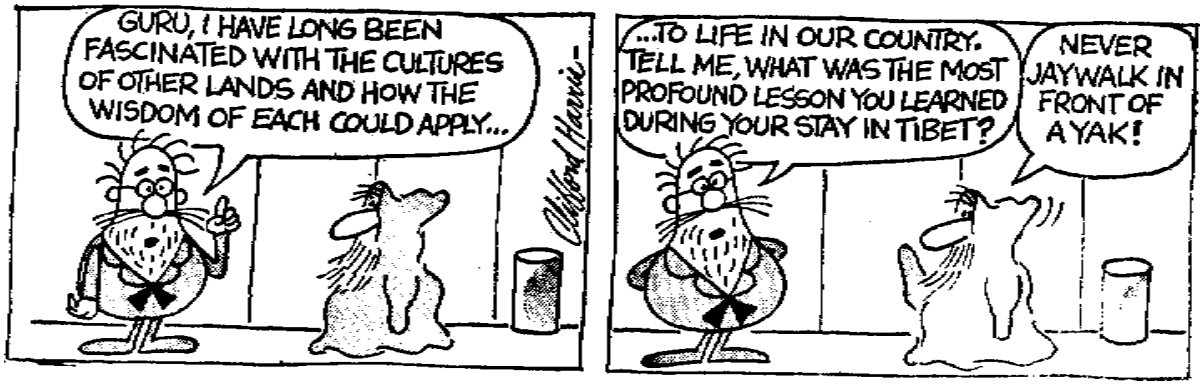
It became apparent immediately that solidarity is the first effect of such a visit.The local people felt strengthened and affirmed in their work because they had succeeded in bringing off this complex event under difficult conditions. There seems to be something about the nature of violent conflict that produces efforts by groups of people to diminish it, transform it and prepare for its aftermath. This also seems to be happening most commonly among lower middle class people with roots in the working class. Clerks, primary school teachers, civil servants, students, artisans and activists in small voluntary organisations come to the fore in this work.

And even as the graph of the conflict rises in intensity so also are the efforts to respond non-violently to that conflict undertaken. The trainings in Burundi were grounded in the local realities. Conflict was seen as inherent and even necessary in a society. Violence, both direct and structural, was identified as the problem. The challenge of timing was met with the focused pragmatism of working in the present. There is no 'best' time. There is only now.

So the Steering Group of Terence, Dismas, Nepomucene, Kris and myself ran three trainings for thirty-five peope from all over the country, who now plan to draw up their own manual from the materials used and who have outlined modest programmes for the development of their activities, including passing on the work.

The theory and practice of conflict resolution is an essential ingredient in the development of a peaceful and just world. For SCI, training in these methods and ideas is a practical method in assisting the growth of tolerance and non-violence, and a support to groups in the world seeking to develop a civil society.

The pedagogical basis of the training was a reliance on the experience of the local people and their desire to construct a more peaceful society. Theoretical knowledge was presented for them to evaluate and criticise with a view to judging how useful it was in their situation. A critically-engaged stance was adopted so that the training could have real meaning and become part of indigenous practice. In this way, the event also resonated with work in N. Ireland as the reflections of participants at the trainig fed back to the source of the work. Practical lessons from the situation in N. Ireland were presented allowing participans to make comparisons and gain insights. A focus on practical methods ensured that participants left the



training equipped not only with greater confidence in themselves and the possibility of peace in their society, but also ready to engage in practical programmes.

Among the material covered was: conflict theory and a onflict curve; methods of resolving conflicts; relationships between justice, power and violence; relationships between peace making, peace keeping and peace building;elements of a conflict in general and in Burundi in particular; a hierarchy of response to conflict situations with particular attention paid to the facilitation of political discussions and discussions of controversial issues; art and movement as methods for promoting discussion, allowing focus on emotional aspects of the conflict; desires, possibilities and necessities in visioning futures in Burundi.

In this highly organised and well-focused programme the outcome ws greater confidence and capability among a network of Burundian peace activists and a firmer international connection with similar work in N. Ireland. Also, as a strategic outcome of the work, the adhoc forum of youth organisations was strengthened in it's moves towards formalisation. And Terence, one of the people who came on the study tour, became a co-leader of the training with me as the week went on, securing the training locally.

It was an amazing experience. it was marvellous to be away from the Eurocentrism of my life here, dominated by an Anglo-American culture that increasingly threatens the well-being of the planet. It was chastening to witness the efforts of people to work out questions of difference in a society with severe poverty. And it was admirable to be with people who are complex and humane and who want to make their society a better place.

In the 'quartier' ofBuyenzi just outside the city centre, local artisanal workshops flourish. You can get everything from a wheel for your bike,to a crankshaft for a van, to a coffin. I was told that the mixed community in that area have managed to stay together because the people are dependent on their small home workshops and so tend to remain where they are. In the 'quartier ' of Ngangara, I saw a concert of the famous drums of Burundi, with dancing and poetry recitations in an open space beside a community centre. A large mixed group enjoyed the show in the sun. In one of our training sessions after an intense session of listening and sharing with Hutu and Tutsi people present, one participant said "Nous avons une maladie. Nous sommes malade". (We have a sickness. We are sick.) These heart-rending words echoed strongly with me and I was able to share with that group that that is sometimes said about people in Northern Ireland. But we are not sick. None of us are sick. Or crazy. We have problems of justice and politics. We have problems of psychology and sectarianism. We have problems of identity and economics. And we can work them out.

Either on the shores of Lake Tanganyika, with the mountains of Zaire wreathed in clouds and the hill villages and towns of Burundi rolling into the distance. Or on the shores of Lough Foyle, and in the small towns and cities of this beautiful place. ✎

This piece was written before the summer of 1996

BOOK REVIEW

Two lands on one soil - Ulster politics before Home Rule

by Frank Wright (Gill & MacMillan, 1996 £35)

Reviewed by David Officer

Historians write about the past - this may be a banal truism but it ought to prompt us to ask when does the past end and the present begin? The best historical works are necessarily focused on what has gone before but do not easily surrender to an antiquarian fascination with the past as such. Rather, they can illuminate the continuities and discontinuities between the present as we experience it and the pre-existing conditions out of which we bring our own world into being.

It will probably be some time before a historian judges that the events of this summer can be rendered as an appropriate moment for disclosure. In the meantime, two dominant responses, sometimes combined, have characterised attempts to make the summer of 1996 intelligible. In the first the reaction has been one of despair, recognising our abject inability to create new conditions promised by a peace process which might have pronounced a fundamental rupture between the past of sectarian warfare and a future in which the mobilisation of sectarian power blocs would become increasingly difficult. According to the second response, which betrays an intrinsically conservative predisposition in the world, we are fundamentally interlocked in a series of relationships which are ultimately beyond rational control, naturally given predispositions which are ahistoric - fated to recur through time.

The first response confronts the present, in the aftermath of the summer as frustrated hope; the second response has the advantage of not being implicated in the frustrated hope but grounded in immutable qualities beyond reform, yet alone erasure.

It will probably be a long time before a historian feels either comfortable or competent enough to judge that a critical distance has opened up between the summer events and their present vantage point. In the meantime, it is worth plundering the work of an historian in order to give some depth to our recent experiences - Frank Wrights' *Two Lands On One Soil - Ulster Politics Before Home Rule* provides a rare opportunity to do this.

At one level, this is a notable book for being able to convey something of the public discourse which marked Ulster in the previous century : a book which pays careful attention to local variation and nuance. But what secures the importance of Wright's work is the analytic innovation

which he brings to bear on what could easily have remained of simply antiquarian interest.

According to his account, the struggle within - and later over - the status of north-eastern Ireland, is best understood as a struggle taking place on an 'ethnic frontier'. This is a place which finds its origins in a settler society but where the settler and native populations have become relatively balanced numerically, politically and in terms of economic opportunity. But also a situation within which the 'two national peoples' remain in conflict over the same land.

Not only does this account begin to reveal some of the conditions in which two ethnic blocs were reinforced but also discloses something of the ensuing relationship which, in many respects, continues to transpire between them in our own time.

The author also draws attention to the particular ways in which the British state not only failed to break this mutual reinforcing relationship of fear and distrust, but effectively underpinned it. Wright asserts that in advanced liberal democratic societies, the state exists above society formally, equidistant from individuals and groups. It also succeeds in monopolising the legitimate means of exerting force and dispenses justice in a legal, rational form. This relationship between state and civil society did not pertain in nineteenth century Ulster - with long term consequences. Mistrust and suspicion frequently became expressed in outbursts of violence which were not only directed at individuals, but crucially individuals as representatives of the two sectarian blocs. Given that the state was incapable of either achieving universal legitimacy and thus accepted as an agency through which formal equality before the law could be guaranteed it was unable to act to break this cycle of violence.

Since this spiral of reciprocal violence is not directed at individuals as such but the group of which they are assumed to be a part, this has a profound significance for the group as a whole, however distant they may be from the actual site of violence.

Under these conditions, what in other situations may have remained as only of personal significance becomes something of profound consequence for each individual who imagines him or herself as part of a whole community under attack. Not only does this induce a close identification with those who have directly suffered from violence, but all those who now experience a similar threat from future violence directly from the same source. Further, we may end up seeking an association with the very people who may be implicated in initiating the original act against others, since they offer a sense of protection from the violent acts which are reciprocated by the 'other'. In a situation of extreme social stress, not only do communities become polarized, but those militants who not only offer to protect the community as a whole but also engage in 'pre-emptive' strikes against the source of those communal woes, become increasingly prominent and acquire both open and tacit support which are not available in times of relative tranquillity.

This synoptic representation of an important element which characterises antagonistic and mutually reinforcing relationships of power and violence contained in Wright's book cannot do it justice. But it ought to suggest much of the utility of his insights in understanding something of our own world. Whilst he displays a touching naivete about the modern state's ability to abstract itself from social conflict (a profound error he shares with liberal - democratic theorists in general) much can be gained from this careful reflection on inter-communal relationships in nineteenth century Ulster. Those of us who have oscillated between hope and despair and every point in between - who hasn't over the past couple of years - might gain a better purchase on the social and political processes which partly govern inter-communal relations in Northern Ireland.

Whilst it would be plainly wrong to transpose the conditions which existed a century ago into our own period, there nevertheless remains numeral discernable continuities between that past and this present. Indeed, perhaps a large part of the pessimism born out of this summer's events are grounded in the recognition that the social and political processes which feed the spiral of inter--communal threat and violence have remained largely undisturbed. An unsettling conclusion given the hopes raised by a peace-process which promised to address precisely those conditions from which violence is likely to issue forth.

It would be a great pity if this book is ignored by those who do not have an interest in the past. A greater pity that the thirty-five pound price tag is likely to severely restrict its accessibility to an academic audience. ✎

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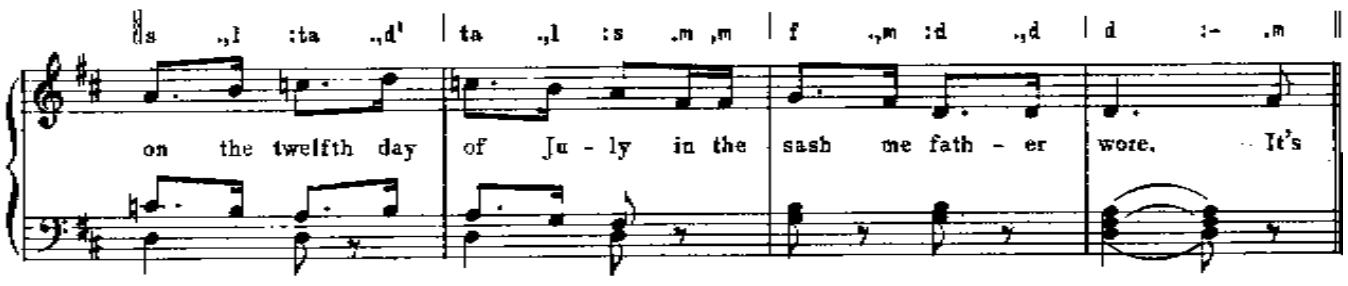

Swimming against the tide

by Barney Devine

To say that we had a 'bad summer' in Northern Ireland has already become clichéd - Drumcree and its aftermath, the frantic talks before the Apprentice Boy's march in Derry, the finding of one of the largest IRA bomb caches in England and, at the time of writing, the possible collapse of the Loyalist ceasefire has, in broad Community Relations terms, put us back by at least twenty five years. Some would say even further.

The sectarianism which emerged during the summer certainly eliminated any complacency or indeed any naivety I may have had about the effectiveness of the recent and current ceasefires and the peace talks. Nevertheless, I, like many others working in Community Relations, was stunned by the massive community retraction following Drumcree. Many practitioners felt disempowered by events as they unfolded throughout the summer. However, other more experienced practitioners remained less perturbed and maintained a longer term and more stoical view of what they saw as the unfolding of yet another inevitable chapter of sectarian politics on the long road to peace.

When I think of the effects of events during the summer, the image of a wall of death comes to mind. The centrifugal force caused by the rotating drum of sectarian politics and events threw people out from the centre and up against the perimeter wall. The strength of the force was so great that many people who thought they had a firm grasp on the centre were left shocked and reeling at the impact of being hurled against the wall. Many were aghast at how easily they were propelled (or pulled) out to the edges. The impact of events was so great that the willingness to resist this centrifugal force and hold on to the centre was not as strong as many would have liked. With hindsight this is hardly surprising after 25 years of communal conflict. An eighteen month ceasefire period when both Republicans and Loyalists had ceased hostilities (punishment beatings aside), was hardly long enough for people to build trust and defy the continuous effects of this sectarian centrifugal force, which dominates all our lives in Northern Ireland. One thing I learned is that I and many others working in the community relations field were overwhelmed by the impact that events over the summer had on people, and the speed with which many reverted to sectarian views. There was certainly a feeling among Community Relations practitioners that they, amongst others, would again have to pick up the pieces at a local level. Many felt resentment towards politicians and policy makers at the inadequacy of their responses, and that there was a need for more resources to deal with the hurt and the anger felt in all communities. In other words, any notion that Community Relations work can only be effective if executed through a bottom-up approach only was finally dispelled. Indeed, the impact of events even led some of us to question our own mandates to engage in this type of work.

If Community Relations is to have any long term and meaningful impact on our society, it has got to be primarily a top-down initiative and, like the Equal Opportunities and Fair Employment Commissions, must affect every facet of society in Northern Ireland. Without such effective and directive action from policy makers on Community Relations and anti-sectarian training aimed at all areas of employment, training, business and institutional life in Northern Ireland, we will continue to swim against the tide.

Such policies, should they be promulgated, will no doubt be difficult to promote in a divided society and will be resisted from many quarters. Like the Eqal Opportunties Commission and the Fair Employment Commission which have the legal powers to carry out their mandate, any commission charged with executing Community Relations policies such as anti-sectarian training, should be similarly empowered. No doubt resistance to a concept of universal training on anti-sectarianism aimed at all facets and levels of Northern Irish society will be great. There will be many detractors, and numerous issues will be thrown up to impede the progress of the concept such as the credibility of establishing anti-sectarian training in a society which cannot agree its own political foundations.

Resistance to change is not new. The setting up of Fair Employment law requiring employers to monitor employees religion was documented by a N.I.S.A. survey. It showed that opposition to Fair Employment legislation dropped amongst Catholics from 27% in 1989 to 7% in 1991, and that opposition from Protestants fell from 49% in 1989 to 34% in 1991. A reasonable extrapolation would be that any legislation brought in to cover anti-sectarian training could face initial opposition but within a short period of time become more acceptable to employers and employees.

The importance of this training is not to be under-estimated. Anti-sectarian training can only enhance and enliven the debates which are necessary to build the trust and confidence to construct less defensive approaches to the constitutional debate. It is becoming clear to those of us working in the field that until such time that a determined effort is made by policy makers to tackle this issue, we will continue to do good and effective work but only on a very local level, and in terms of numbers, in a very minimal way. If such measures are not undertaken we will continue to defy gravity and will forever be prone to the centrifugal forces released by each bout of street politics. After the 'bad summer' we can't wait for the Spring in order to generate new growth. Policy makers take note.