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EDITORIAL

It would seem that the first edition of the Trainers Journal has been appreciatively received as a support to community relations training and development initiatives and a forum for discussion of current practice. Many thanks for the supportive feedback and please sustain the contact, letters to the editor and suggestions for focused articles are most welcome. Final dates for receipt of copy for the next edition will be 30 April.

Edwin Graham, author of our first article in this second edition, indicates possible success factors in participation with community relations group work. Edwin is the Community Relations Trainer with NICVA (Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action). While questioning the validity of the contact hypothesis, Edwin reports on the value of single identity work with groups as a prelude to mutual understanding and identifies participation, questioning and security as key considerations for effective group work.

NI Community Relations Council
6 Murray Street
Belfast BT1 6DN
Tel: (0232) 439953
Fax: (0232) 235208

Jim Quinn of Counteract plots the progress of the anti-intimidation project within the trade union movement reports on the intricate and sensitive work accomplished to date.

Dave Duggan and Clem McCartney report on their facilitation work in Slovenia and set timely markers to forewarn jobbing trainers of the pitfalls and dangers integral to working overseas. The author's provide a clear and critical commentary on important issues such as preparation, self-evaluation and the ethical credibility of mediation or political discussion training at home or abroad.

The final article gives insights to the philosophy and practice of the Understanding Conflict Trust. Derick Wilson and Duncan Morrow challenge rigid perceptions of conflict resolution skill and training, emphasising the need for trusting relationships as foundations for meaningful change. The work of Understanding Conflict has been pursued with vigour and energy in contexts ranging from youth, community and social work to training support for the Counteract anti-intimidation project.

The news of Frank Wright's untimely death has been received with heartfelt loss by all that knew him. A brief obituary is included in this edition.

○ Edwin Graham, Anti-sectarianism trainer, NICVA

The NICVA perspective - community relations training project

For almost two years I have been working with the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action as Community Relations Training Officer and I am still trying to establish an understanding of the term 'community relations'.

My use of the term is in its dictionary sense of relations within or between communities. I prefer not to use the term to describe a particular type of work as in 'community relations work'. I feel that such use of the term can be valuable as a type of short-hand but in the absence of a clear understanding of what it means I sometimes find it confusing.

My discussions with people about issues relating to community relations have been in many different contexts: sometimes as part of a training workshop, on other occasions more informal and less structured, sometimes in groups which have included Protestants and Catholics and at times in groups which have excluded one or other of the main religious traditions here.

My experience with groups which have excluded one of the main religious traditions has been that the participants of such groups have in many cases expressed a greater willingness to discuss issues relevant to community relations than they would if there were people present from "other side". But what is the value of such work?

Is it not possible that members of a group could have a wide-ranging discussion on community relations and at the end of it remain unchanged because there has been nobody present to challenge their views?

Can work which is intending to improve community relations ever be effective if it happens in a context which does not include both of the main cultural/religious groups? In this way I have come to question in a fundamental way what I am trying to achieve.

In the latest issue of the Community Relations Council's magazine (January 1993), Will Glendinning has an article which explores the relationship between community relations and community development. Will writes about people who criticise CRCs support of activities which are simply about increasing contact between the two main

traditions. He says "they point to festivals and social function and ask why those events have got support when there is so little funding for straight community development work in the areas of greatest deprivation. Yet work which tackles sectarian divisions, in whatever way, is just as important as that which tackles other divisions such as poverty."

This forces me to ask: 'By increasing contact between the rich and the poor, will the divisions arising from poverty be addressed?'

I am one who *has* asked whether activities which are simply aimed at increasing contact between the two main communities will necessarily tackle sectarianism. I have organised festivals to bring people together, trips for young Catholics and Protestants, inter-denominational services and integrated schools. But I feel that these activities *on their own* are not enough.

Later in the same article Will implies that there is additional work to be done: "Cross-community contact events are a starting point?" My question is 'Are there other starting points?' In a group which does not include one or other of the main traditions can work be done which will improve community relations? And how can we measure the success of such work?

I have attempted to identify success factors for this sort of work and I would suggest three possible factors. There are no doubt more and I would welcome additional suggestions. The three I have identified at this stage are PARTICIPATION, QUESTIONING and SECURITY.

Given that my work with groups is participative, one of the most important success factors for me is the level of participation in the group - is the group dominated by two or three individuals or does everybody feel a sense of being able to participate freely?

Participation is also a factor in relation to the extent to which individuals feel they can influence the direction of discussions- do participants feel there is a fixed (maybe hidden) agenda or is the agenda responsive to issues identified by the group. Do participants feel that there is pressure on them to go in a particular direction (perhaps

towards contact) or do they feel they can participate freely with minimum constraints?

The third level of participation relates more directly to the relationship between the group and facilitator - do participants feel that as well as being able to influence the content of discussions they can influence the way these discussions are facilitated? Do participants feel they have sufficient opportunity to give feedback to the facilitator and that such feedback will be taken into consideration for future sessions with the group?

The second principal success factor I have identified is questioning. Do group discussions develop in a questioning manner or do they develop in a series of confrontational dogmatic statements? Linked to this factor is the willingness of participants to hear other participants and to learn from them.

The third key success factor I have identified is security in the group - do participants feel sufficiently secure in the group? Not comfortable or complacent but sufficiently at ease to be challenged without becoming defensive.

In addition to these success factors which can indicate successful group work there are the outcomes which one would wish to see as a result of a successful session. Such outcomes might be at an individual or group level. For example there might be a change in the way individuals behave in relation to others outside the group; there might be a change in the way individuals feel about others; the group or part of it could plan activities as a result of the discussions.

If participation, questioning and security are appropriate success factors what methods are appropriate to achieve them? Reference has already been made to a participative approach to this sort of work with groups. But what about the context for such work? Are we any closer to identifying whether such work can happen successfully in groups which do not have members of both main traditions?

Using the above success factors as criteria for evaluation there is every indication that such work can be successful in groups from separate traditions and at some stages it can be more successful and appropriate than bringing Protestants and Catholics together.

I see a number of distinct advantages of an approach which involves one community addressing issues relating to community relations, it gives the opportunity to centralise community relations - it brings discussions on community relations issues right into the midst of a community and encourages a group within that community to explore issues of difference and to develop in a way which takes account of such issues which are central to the life of any community.

It points up the relevance of community relations issues to all types of work - so it is no longer community relations versus other approaches but it is developing other approaches in a way which improves relationships within and between communities.

I am aware that I have raised many questions and not suggested many answers. However I feel that if we can ask the right questions in an honest and open manner we will soon find some answers.

Looking for Work?

As you may have read in the first edition of *Journal*, I have been organising community relations workshops throughout Northern Ireland in conjunction with the CRO Network.

We are always interested in new formats and approaches, so if you have a programme which would fit into a one-day workshop, please get in touch with relevant details of content, availability etc. -

Colin Neilands, WEA, 1 Fitzwilliam Street, Belfast BT9 6AW, telephone: 0232 329718.

Issues of Identity

The WEA, over the next 12 months, is aiming to produce an education pack which will focus on issues of identity, a central theme in both community relations and cultural traditions work. The pack will be as flexible as possible, to allow its use in different forums (but with a particular emphasis on addressing evening provision), and also in either mixed or single tradition situations. If you would be interested in contributing, either by joining the working group, or by suggesting materials or approaches, please contact

Colin Neilands, WEA, 1 Fitzwilliam Street, Belfast BT9 6AW, telephone: 0232 329718.

○ Jim Quinn, Development Officer, Counteract

Trying to deal with sectarianism and intimidation in the workplace

Counteract was established as a result of concern expressed by the Peace, Work and Progress Campaign of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU). This concern was specifically related to the issue of intimidation and religious harassment which resulted in many workers being forced out of work, and certain individuals in local communities being isolated and attacked in their homes. Intimidation, it was felt, was one of the most blatant and unacceptable forms of sectarianism as experienced in Northern Ireland.

Since its inception, training and its development have represented a major part of Counteract's work. Our training is broken into two types. The first which has largely been facilitated by Frank Wright and Derick Wilson of the Understanding Conflict Project involves bringing Union Representatives from different industrial, geographical and religious backgrounds together to discuss the surrounding sectarianism.

These seminars allow representatives to discuss issues which would not normally be discussed within the workplace, at union meetings or even union conferences *ie. Protestant and Catholic views of Fair Employment Legislation, Protestant Workers attitudes to things like the Hunger Strikes or Catholic Workers attitudes to Orange Order parades.*

Although many trade unionists were wary of this type of discussion to begin with, those who participated found it a liberating experience and issues which had been suppressed for many years were discussed openly and calmly in a trusting and secure atmosphere.

For me it was a very moving experience to see two union representatives, one catholic and one protestant, who had worked together for over fifteen years and been afraid to ask about each others traditions, religion and culture for fear of causing offence, begin to learn about each other and their communities fears and aspirations.

More importantly perhaps is the fact that these discussions have begun a process of the trade union movement moving away from the non-sectarian position which said, **“Politics and Religion stop at the factory gate and the office**

door” and working towards an anti-sectarian position which allows the discussion of often difficult and potentially divisive issues.

Our training work however does not confine itself only to discussion of these issues. Because our representatives are very much in the front line when trying to combat sectarian harassment and intimidation in the workplace we have developed a skills based training module for union representatives. It normally involves a one day commitment from representatives. Sessions begin with the usual introductions and a brief talk on the background to Counteract and our structures and training approach to undermining harassment and intimidation.

Because the biggest problem we have found is getting people to recognise sectarian harassment or intimidation, participants are broken into groups and asked to list actions which they would define as harassment or intimidation. The groups then report back to the overall group and discuss their definitions. Discussion will then often centre not just on their definitions but why certain categories of people suffer harassment/ intimidation *ie. Women, Ethnic minorities.* Most groups will come to the conclusion that people are harassed because they are different and this often widens the debate to one about the whole concept of Equality of Opportunity.

When this discussion has been exhausted we then look at the legal obligation on both employers and trades unions to undermine intimidation/sectarian harassment and the support this can give to representatives.

In the second half of our day we look at a real life case study which a union representative has had to deal with. A typical case study would involve the following scenario;

Nothlands Ltd are a multi-national tyre company based in the North West of Northern Ireland. They employ 150 workers, 95% of the workforce are Catholics and 5% Protestant.

Throughout the troubles there have been very few problems in the workforce and management and the union have a very good relationship. The Tyre Workers Union organise

all the workers in the company and has a full-time convener and five shop stewards.

Scenario

On Friday morning John the union convener is approached by a Protestant worker called Jack who is employed in the Finishing Department. Jack is in a very distressed state and explains to John that all the Catholic workers in the Company have been saying to him 'I hear your leaving on Friday'. Jack was not planning to leave but feels that the Catholic workers are trying to force him out of the company. He has been employed for fifteen years in the company.

We again break participants into groups and ask them to discuss the case study and consider the following questions:

- * **What should the union do for Jack?**
- * **Should the union involve management in the case?**
- * **What lessons are to be learnt from this case by both unions and management?**

The groups report back after a thorough discussion and consider what practical measures would have been needed to deal with this case and also what lessons need to be learnt for dealing with cases in the future.

Before the groups evaluate their experience of the day, a very strong emphasis is placed on the fact that we do not want individuals tackling cases alone and putting themselves at risk. Instead we argue that cases should be dealt with collectively by both management and unions and both should have clearly defined structures and strategies developed for dealing with cases. This type of training while it does create debate and raise awareness is primarily aimed at providing representatives with the skills to handle cases. It also serves to create a debate within unions and management about the need to develop strategies rather than leaving the resolution of cases to chance.

While training to date has been provided primarily for union representatives it is also suitable for supervisors and managers whether in the private or public sector or indeed the community and voluntary sector. Indeed in the latest development of our work we plan to undertake joint management/union training with a major employer.

Diary Dates

CR Trainers Network Meetings in 1993

Friday 21 May	10.00 am - 4.00 pm	Belfast Castle
Friday 24 September	10.00 am - 4.00 pm	Dukes Hotel, Belfast
Monday 29 November	12.30 pm - 4.00 pm	Ulster People's College

CR Training for Trainers at the Ulster People's College

Prejudice Awareness/Reduction

Tuesday 6 April	9.30 am - 4.30 pm
Wednesday 7 April	9.30 am - 4.30 pm

Anti-sectarianism - Awareness, Policy and Practice

Thursday 6 May	9.30 am - 4.30 pm
Friday 7 May	9.30 am - 4.30 pm

Facilitating Political Discussion

Thursday 3 June,	9.30 am - 4.30 pm
Friday 4 June,	9.30 am - 4.30 pm

○ Dave Duggan, Clem McCartney

Odd jobs abroad: Internationalising the local experience

Perhaps it was our respective experiences of working in Asia and Africa that prepared us for the healthy scepticism about the notion that “all good things come from the West”. And as white northern European males we both have had instances overseas where some local person has asked us what the hell we thought we were doing in their country.

In Slovenia last October we ran a conflict resolution training seminar with Bosnian refugees and jointly faced the question “how come you are here telling us how to solve our problems when after twenty years you haven’t solved your own?” This question should be top of the list of pre-departure planning sheets for all prospective travelling trainers.

Facing questions like this has the benefit of requiring you to put your work into context; into a rack of contexts in fact: historical, social, political, ideological and cultural among them. And in so doing BANG! goes the false notion of the neutral facilitator/trainer.

Failure to contextualise conflict resolution work in the face of such questions is the biggest single pitfall facing interventions by workers from Northern Ireland who, together with individuals from other countries in the West, have been and will be winging their ways eastwards to the nations emerging from the geo-political shakedowns going on there.

And what is the outcome of these interventions? Richard E Rubinstein, writing from an American perspective extendible to the West in general, asks “Do these manifold teaching, training, advising and proselytising activities actually equip native peoples to solve their own problems and determine their own destinies? Or are they part of an essentially imperialist enterprise that intends to limit the available problem-solving options to those that suit the interest of outside elites and their local collaborators?”¹

The keynotes in the work we did in Slovenia, were that choices must be extended for people; that participation by all was essential; that nonviolence was an option; that using feelings offered access to stronger political possibilities. Thus we framed our work in relation to Rubinstein’s questions above.

But what about the gap between our experience here and what we were getting into? Slovenia, the second independent state to emerge from Yugoslavia in 1990, “an essentially homogeneous ethnic territory with nation state aspirations,”² now shelters refugees from Bosnia - Hercegovina. The bulk of the 70,000 refugees³ are in large camps around Ljubljana, the capital city, and are mainly Bosnian Muslims, the ethnic group that formed 8.9% of the population of Yugoslavia in 1991.³

Governmental and non-governmental agencies in Slovenia are actively responding to the issues raised by the presence of this refugee population.

MOST is a non-governmental voluntary organisation just emerging from the state system of youth and culture departments and it is also a branch of Service Civil International, thereby linked to the branch here, International Voluntary Service (IVS).

**Facing questions
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MOST was familiar with work done by IVS and they proposed a seminar where Bosnian refugees and two invited trainers with experience of conflict resolution training and political discussion facilitation here would work together primarily enabling the transfer of expertise and experience from here to there.

So we were flown in, stayed in a hotel for two nights at either end of the visit, ran the residential at a centre on the coast, met government officials and opposition politicians at a public meeting at which we spoke, enjoyed the thrill of being in an “exotic” place and flew away again. The Bosnian refugees went back to the camps and our Slovene

hosts went back to the concerns of a small NGO and the continuing national revolution.

It's easy to make it sound like a junket; an example of two well-resourced outsiders enjoying an "airport lounge" lifestyle with its superficiality, transience and hidden costs. We were conscious of this at all times and identify this feature of such interventions as a major concern. Workers in this field run the risk of being seduced by the notion of "parachuting in and parachuting out" unless they challenge this very notion and maintain a critical eye on their own activity.

Even with a low cost and indigenously convened programme such as we participated in, there are immense problems. The human and military circumstances of the conflict underway raise questions about the value and relevance of conflict resolution training. This truth is very forcefully described by Declan McLaughlin, another IVS member, in a report of his trip to Sri Lanka. He cites the two main learning points to emerge from workshops he participated in there as:

1 "The basic difficulty of involving individuals in conflict resolution work while these individuals are engaged in the basic struggle for survival".

2 "The problem of advocating non-violent policies in a violent environment."⁴

These quotes take the concerns of this article neatly back to the opening questions and the sensitivity of the visiting facilitator/trainer to the "hidden agendas" behind the interventions. Does our work merely maintain the "status quo"?

A "simple" question of the language used provides an illustration. It struck us that to require the training to proceed in English, as planned, would cause difficulties as well as being a cultural imposition, so we arranged that "activities were allowed to proceed in Bosnian and Slovene with feedback and translation only where necessary"⁵

This stratagem itself made for its own difficulties and we are left wondering if we could have done something else.

For us, community relations work in Ireland rests on an assumption that "new social contracts will replace the shattered understandings and worn out creeds of the past".¹ Choices and the power to discuss and make them, offer the best route to these new social contracts. In the sweep of historical time where we locate our work in the violence/non-violence dichotomy really matters.

Sensitivity and humility in the face of the power relations between ourselves as westerners and the rest of the world are crucial. Reliance on the wisdom, judgement and ability of the people hosting you is essential.

The changing face of Europe, the emerging New World Order (reports are coming in of Cruise missile attacks on Baghdad as I write this) and the use of religious and nationalist fundamentalisms as vehicles for political and social change a representing facilitators/trainers from Ireland with new and frightening challenges. If we do leave these shores to engage in this work the manner in which we do so will itself be a measure of the quality and relevance of our work at home.

- (1) *"Dispute Resolution on the Eastern Frontier: some questions for modern missionaries"* Richard E Rubinstein **Negotiation Journal** July 1992
- (2) *"The Fall of Yugoslavia"* Misha Glenny Penguin 1992
- (3) *"Refugees from Bosnia, Serbia, Croatia"* **Teachers Information Pack** The Refugee Council 1992
- (4) *"Conflict Resolution: Sri Lanka/Northern Ireland"* Declan McLaughlin **IVS Annual Report** 1991-1992
- (5) *"Seminar Report: Slovenia 1992"* Dave Duggan, Clem McCartney (copy available from IVS on request)

○ Duncan Morrow, Derick Wilson, Frank Wilson

“All change please!”

From old certainties to new possibilities.

Numerous models of intervention in conflict emphasise the third party or external nature of the mediator. Usually, there is also an insistence on non-direction or non-judgement. This has led critics on the left to object that conflict resolution models are abstract games which take no real account of real historical inequalities and injustices. In this view intervention without engagement is, at best, useless or, at worst, it is ‘blaming the victims’. On the other side, conservative critics complain that mediators place too much emphasis on understanding criminals and not enough on condemning crime. A common complaint from this side is that the mediators treat violence by governments and by terrorists as equal thereby naively legitimising criminality.

Attempts at resolving conflict are most successful when the people in dispute wish to end their conflict. Alternatively, where there is still a binding structure of law or custom, a common structure of authority and value, the parties to a dispute can ultimately acknowledge the right of certain people to arbitrate. Classically, this is the function of the law and the authorities which administer the law.

Northern Ireland, however, has long had no shared ‘common sense’. Indeed our attitudes towards the institutions of the state often define the political tradition to which we belong.

We have come to take for granted the existence of two mutually hostile political blocks, tied together by history and geography. In such a ‘contested’ society, every cross community meeting easily becomes a contest which can draw on and re-enact the tensions of previous history. There are few, if any, institutions which have proved universally authoritative. The fears and difficulties of the past are reproduced in the present. As a result, we often prefer to remain apart or to meet politely, avoiding anything that touches on the dominant societal contest. Although avoidance certainly enables much of life to continue, at least in the short term, the contest remains unchanged. Strong emotion and historical feelings can easily disturb the fragile peace. Experiences of real meeting together in a contested society are few.

As such, although there might appear to be numerous opportunities for third-party mediation, there are at least two clear objections. Firstly there is a strong objection to the notion of neutral outsiders, usually portrayed as naive dogooders, who should stop sticking their noses into things they do not understand. Secondly, there is an equal cynicism

about the ‘neutrality’ of internal mediators and the possibility of their existence.

The realities of Northern Irish life have often seemed to give greater solace to the critics of mediation than its supporters. The central problem remains the relationship of the mediator to those being mediated. Distrust between the parties is so great as to erode all possibility of the existence of a third party. Each group apparently demands a side-taking, a fundamental belonging to one side or the other. “S/he who is not with us is against us”.

Changes in this context cannot be imposed. Furthermore, it is impossible that those working in the community relations area present themselves as the all knowing forces of good. Change, and the freedom to change, must involve all of us.

Many models of conflict resolution rely on a linear, or Cartesian, view of the world. Peace-making is a ‘skill’, to be learnt like woodwork or knitting or Ancient Greek. Likewise, ‘peace’ is a matter of rational understanding, of rational control, of learning. It is our contention that this view of human beings is fundamentally flawed. For us, conflict is not primarily an intellectual question. Indeed, time after time people talk about their feelings ‘coming from their guts’, about anger, fear and hatred which flare up unexpectedly in response to a given situation or person.

Conflict is therefore rooted in the totality of experience and in our relationships to one another. Ultimately conflict is not so much about the object in dispute as the relationship between the people in conflict. Change is therefore not a change in the ‘views’ or ‘prejudices’ of identified ‘problem’ people (the prejudiced ones), but a new experience of one another which contrasts with previous views and changes everybody in the relationship in unexpected ways.

Peace-making is at root not about problems and skills which are exercised on people, although these too may be important at certain times, but about who we are in relationships. Therefore it is always about all of us and not just ‘the prejudiced ones’. As such, change is not a question of rational persuasion but rather of meeting each other in such a different way as to undermine our previous certainties. There can be no question of coerced change. For us real change comes because we suddenly see and meet each other differently. As such, change can never be manipulated but is rather a matter of free acceptance (or not) by the person who changes.

Finding ways forward is therefore a question of making new relationships in which issues can be seen differently. Real change always means existential change in the lives, in the very being of the people in the conflict. In this context the possibilities of a third party are not those classically assigned to them. Third parties can sometimes contribute to the ending of conflict between the warring parties, but not because they are neutral professionals. Rather, they contribute their own experience, knowledge and being and thereby may bring both themselves and the parties into a series of new relationships with one another.

As such, the usefulness of a third party is not so much in their skills, though these may sometimes be useful, but in their own (existential) knowledge of change and the possibilities they have to allow others to see each other anew.

These third parties are not qualitatively different to the people in the conflict. A difference is that, at this time, they are totally available to all involved. They are not detached but neither do they side with one group. By being, in their own manner, with each of the people involved and not entering their rivalries, they allow others to see each other in a different way. Their existence guarantees the safety of the warring parties to one another, sufficiently for the parties to trust one another in a new way and so to begin to make steps which would otherwise be impossible.

Trust begins because someone trusts, not because it is 'built'. Real meeting can only happen where there is trust and safety. Crucially it cannot be artificially created or manufactured, even contracts by group members have no binding quality without trust, but must simply be given. The sustenance of the group then relies not on its superficial rules (although these may help focus mutual senses of obligation) but on its trustworthiness, which either is or is not.

Often the first step is provided through the trust of at least one member in the group or in a group leader and/or through trust established under some transcending umbrella such as ecumenical groups, trade unions, reconciliation groups, womens groups, childrens and cross community youth organisations to name but a few. Their very survival over the last 25 years is to some degree a symbol that the relationships within these organisations and groups have withstood the onslaught of political turmoil and murder. While it is certainly true that these relationships within these organisations have not stopped the on-going reality of political violence and turmoil, it is clear that without their existence there are no human foundations on which to build future personal and political relationships. In such real meeting, people at last experience a common sense with each other.

This experience of one another becomes an unforgettable reality in the lives of everybody, from which apparently enormous changes in 'issues' can flow.

Crucially however, the change is rooted in the relationships and not in the issues.

The work of "Understanding Conflict ... and finding ways out of it" is about seeking new relationships and structures within which the reality of trust can be experienced. Meeting together in this way is, for many people, a first-time experience. Fear is often a serious obstacle for people used to anticipating or guarding against violence.

At the invitation of others we always start from the questions and stories of group members, and using models of conflict in human relations developed over years from the work of Rene Girard, we seek to make sense of the conflicts and rivalries in which we are caught. Girard unmasks the importance of the scapegoat and scapegoating in disguising human violence and in hiding our own responsibilities for violence. He emphasises that none of us are, in essence, 'good' or 'bad', but that we easily become caught up in games of desire, rivalry and hypocrisy with one another which leads to violence.

It is very important, however, that we offer these models freely. The models are ultimately only useful in as far as they illuminate real circumstances.

Furthermore, each person in the group must always be free to dismiss any interpretation which arises. This freedom is, once more, only guaranteed in the reality of its presence in the group. It too depends on the real relationship of the groupleader and the member(s) of the group.

Recently we were invited to work together with trade unionists as part of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions/ 'Counteract' programme to reduce sectarianism and intimidation. "Intimidation and the Work-place" workshops were held with members of different trade unions. All the participants volunteered and their experiences of growing up in Northern Ireland reflected the full range of traditions and cultures here.

On a number of occasions people reflected on the ways they were introduced to sectarianism in everyday life. Often we found that while people could not remember their parents or schools teaching them to hate they knew that such peace as there was locally had been uneasy. Often, people described their experiences of intimidation and fear since the beginning of the troubles in Northern Ireland and their story set off other reflections.

Many people spoke of fears they had about discussing anti-sectarian issues. Some feared that others would prejudice them or that they would have difficulties on the shop floor or in union circles. This was despite the fact that the unions have traditionally appealed to some transcending ideal about workers being brothers and sisters.

Many emphasised how few opportunities and experiences there are for open discussion about the sectarian experience in mixed company. For understandable reasons, many are reluctant to take risks. In this apartness and distance, people cannot enter into each other's struggles or their wishes for something new together. Instead the fears of 'the other' and the anticipation of what 'the other' thinks and feels dominates. Ultimately, we have no real knowledge of one another.

All of this highlights the importance of real bases from which to escape fear and intimidation. Such a basis might be found either in established trusting relationships in the work-place which limit the sense of isolation and helplessness, or in small scale local structures, such as trade union groups, which organise to defend attacked people or preferably prevent isolation in the first place. It is our experience from the practice shared in the seminars that where people have found that their own difficulties have been acknowledged and addressed properly, their own confidence and capacity to deal with further incidents increased enormously.

A number of important issues arose in our meetings.

We have to recognise the importance of clear structures, rules and agreements. Trade union structures can provide people in a local work-place with a calm space in which to make decisions about how to cope with threats. In the event of any intimidation, workers should know that management and unions will act swiftly to take protective or disciplinary action.

Clear agreements and preferably joint structures between management and unions spread the responsibility among the union membership and management. In such structures it is less likely that the intimidated person is isolated.

As part of this there is a need for procedures to deal with sectarian incidents and for these to be widely known. When a sectarian nerve is touched in a work-place we know that the fears are such that they can quickly spread and paralyse the workforce. Fears spread like a poison into all areas of the membership and sectarian loyalties can be appealed to over trade union membership. Knowing that such waves are possible, and almost a fact of life, unions need to organise procedures which stop the spread early. It is also essential that unions inform members about decisions, spreading trust and an understanding of the principles that guide them.

The duties and formal responsibilities of management in these issues should be clear. When there is fear around, it is essential that the agreed structures are worked by both unions and management, otherwise sectarian themes can again be manipulated.

For similar reasons, the law is important. In a stable society the law creates structure and clarifies responsibilities. In our

understanding the cultural function of the law is to cut any escalating urges towards retaliation and revenge by those around the injured person in a criminal act.

In a contested society the law can readily lose its ability to restrain and efficiently criminalise violent actions. Under the umbrella of trade unionism people brought up within different traditions here were able to explore the function of the law in stable and contested societies and how this affected their task in counteracting intimidation.

We need to understand the depth of the triggers in us towards sectarianism. In the absence of meeting with each other in an atmosphere of trust, people have no understanding of how they threaten 'the other'. The ways sectarian differences are in us as we live and grow up here was acknowledged. We saw how the trade union movement might be a transcending institution where other relationships stronger than sectarian divisions could be experienced and lived out.

Trade unionists acknowledging intimidation in the work-place are sharp examples of people seeing the importance of both personal relationships and institutional protection in finding ways out of conflict. All institutional and physical spaces of trust in this society are important. They enable us to speak freely without the anxious politeness which so easily generates sectarian misunderstandings. They can also enable us to understand how this society has found ways to work without addressing the divisions within it. Without such spaces, we are always liable to be represented towards people of the other community by the worst things any of 'our' people do to 'them'. When we are able to deal with this explicitly in our relationships this representation by others is changed.

We need to continue to share our experiences of being afraid. This is part of the support we give to each other to cope with our fear and complements the search for just and lasting relationships in society. There is a deep wish shared by many here that people do wish to live together, not apart. In acknowledging our own experiences in this community and seeking relationships and structures where we learn safety with those who are different, we can begin to leave our disputes behind us and perhaps even demonstrate other possibilities for the whole society.

Duncan Morrow (Dept. of Politics, University of Ulster)

Derick Wilson (Centre for the Study of Conflict, University of Ulster)

Frank Wright (Department of Peace and Co-operation Studies, University of Limerick*)

The authors work together on a project entitled "Understanding Conflict ... and Finding Ways Out of It"

* *Footnote: Frank Wright died on 10 February 1993. This paper is completed in his memory.*

Obituary: Frank Wright

When I first met Frank Wright, about a decade ago, he was painting the faces of my children and their friends during a summer festival in Corrymeela. Those few weeks, as had become his wont, he had left behind his uniquely talented intellectual pursuits to spend his time tending to the needs of the many children who flocked Ballycastle in pursuit of fun while their parents sought for themselves some spiritual nourishment. The children have never forgotten their time with him, and it was to that memory that we returned as we heard the news of his death last month after a long and sometimes painful illness.

By the time I met Frank, his intellectual reputation was well established. Although he had initially entered Oxford to study chemistry, he soon moved over to study what was to become his life long passion - Politics and Philosophy. After sweeping all study honours available, he eventually moved to a lectureship in Queen's in 1973, just twenty years ago.

We were well served by his coming. His studies in Protestant political ideology developed a focus on an area of vital importance which had hitherto escaped much attention. His interest in comparative analysis - i.e. setting Northern Ireland in the context of other areas in conflict culminated in what was to be his masterpiece 'Northern Ireland in Comparative Perspective'.

He would have been well entitled to rest on his intellectual laurels, which were considerable. But Frank was not content with this and throughout the 80's, his growing commitment to the practical development of work which could contribute to the resolution of the Northern Ireland conflict, developed in parallel with his growing belief in a spiritual framework. Thus began what became almost a decade of active conflict resolution work, nurtured by his membership of the Corrymeela community, and developed in particular with his colleagues in the 'Understanding Conflict' project.

When the Community Relations Council was set up in 1990 it quickly came to depend very much upon his group skills, and in particular, his capacity to facilitate workshops directed at helping people to understand and come to terms with each others history. The stories came flooding back to us about his gentle but challenging ways and his ability to take groups of people from any religious background or none and ensure their attentive listening to each other. People emerged from their days and weekends with him enlightened and encouraged, having survived the most difficult of confrontations about each other's political differences, and affirmed in their capacity to more positively deal with these differences.

He appeared to have a particular affinity with community groups, with trade union groups and with women's groups and

the trust placed in him by such groups became almost unreplicable, depending as it did so much upon the gentle manner of the man.

At the same time, his own capacity for self critique, and his own humility in the face of his obvious skills meant that those of us who knew him - or had the privilege to work with him - in the field of conflict resolution training, continued to be inspired by his willingness to listen, and to learn about how better to further the work to which he had such a commitment.

But it was not just for Northern Ireland that he felt so deeply. The outbreak of war in the former Yugoslavia distressed him particularly, as it was an area with whose conflicts he was familiar, and whose wars he had long anticipated.

At least a year before the violent break-up of Bosnia Hersegovinia I remember sitting with him in front of a map as he foretold exactly what was going to happen in the coming year, outlining the preventative work that needed to happen, but despairing that it would never take place, despite all of his best efforts of persuasion with those he could reach. Unfortunately his despair was all too accurate, and his concern for the region was an abiding one throughout the last few years of his life.

The news that he had been appointed to a Professorship in the Institute of Peace Studies in Limerick in early 1992 was received with no surprise but with great delight by all of his friends. Unfortunately, very soon after his appointment, his health began to fail, and the Spring of 1992 was long and hard. Both the initial operation for his brain tumour, and the subsequent chemotherapy he faced with courage and humour.

And through it all his concern for his work continued.

I remember on one occasion bringing to the hospital a volume of John Hewitt's poems which he wanted in order to prepare for an on-coming conference, and a series of Serbo-Croatian tapes, as he was determined to master the language so as to make better use of his work in the Balkan region.

But such work was not to be. Although he was well enough to take up his post in Limerick for some time, and he did learn enough Serbio-Croatian to be able to move somewhat independently in the region, by Christmas it was obvious that his health was not going to recover.

I was lucky enough to spend some time with him about a month before he died, at his parents home in Oxford. By that stage he was heavily drugged to relieve the pain and his short term memory was almost gone. But the essential Frank was still very much there, still making plans for workshops, still analysing the increasingly tragic patterns of the Balkan wars, and still hopeful above all for the work that could be done.

It is the memory above all of that hope memory above all that will remain with me.

Mari Fitzduff

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