



INTERNATIONAL REVIEW OF PUBLIC POLICIES TOWARDS IMPROVING INTER-COMMUNITY RELATIONS

A paper prepared for the Review of Community Relations Policies

By

Clem McCartney

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1 The paper sets out to consider developments in policy and interventions related to improving community relations in other relevant jurisdictions. It has been prepared as a contribution to the Review of Community Relations Policy in Northern Ireland which was initiated by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister in late 2001.
 - 1.1 It concludes that throughout the world there is very limited experience in this field and only isolated examples of practice. It refers as much to the failure of Government to promote community relations activities as to the work that has been done, and suggests reasons why Governments find it difficult to act in this area. Northern Ireland does lead the way in the range of activity and the evaluation of the impact of this activity.
 - 1.2 By and large, Governments only seem to become directly involved in supporting and even taking a more proactive role when there is some pressure to do so.
 - 1.3 Government policies may actually hinder the improvement of community relations, either by giving priority to development policies which may disadvantage one or more ethnic communities, or by offering positive action in relation to one community which may lead to resentment in other communities.
 - 1.4 The approaches Governments adopt will be influenced by its preferred form of inter-community relations: homogenisation, separate development, co-existence or pluralism.
 - 1.5 If Government perceives a problem of racial or ethnic harmony it will often adopt approaches at a structural level rather than working on inter-personal and inter-group relations.
 - 1.6 Structural changes on their own may not be sufficient to ensure inter-community harmony and may in fact exacerbate community tensions.
 - 1.7 The improvement of inter-community relations cannot be achieved solely at the level of personal interaction and understanding, and attention must also be given to the structural matters which influence inter-community relations.
 - 1.8 Governments are limited in the degree to which they can implement attitudinal change.
 - 1.9 Many initiatives bring together people at the level of influential leaders and the elites but they do not increase the level of contact, communication and understanding at the level of the ordinary citizen.
 - 1.10 Government can in certain circumstances have an impact on inter-community relations by managing physical space and the spatial distribution of populations.
 - 1.11 Education is one area where the Government is in a position to impact throughout the population.
 - 1.12 Joint work on infrastructure is very visible and benefits a wide cross-section of

society and as such it is one area where specific action at one level can have an impact in the wider community.

- 1.13 Public bodies and government agencies may themselves contribute to inter-community conflict if their performance does not take account of cultural sensitivities.
- 1.14 The state can identify and initiate processes and mechanisms which review each community's understanding of itself and the other community.
- 1.15 The media is an important tool for communicating with the wider society and influencing attitudes to community relations.
- 1.16 The state may be hampered in its ability to intervene in situations of inter-community tension if it is unwilling to recognise the legitimacy of the representatives of one or more of the communities involved.
- 1.17 Some of the limitations in the role and actions of Government can be filled by non-governmental organizations, which often have the flexibility and commitment to pioneer new programmes in difficult circumstance.
- 1.18 Community Relations Councils can provide a mechanism which bridges the gap between the state and the ethnic communities which make up the state.

INTERNATIONAL REVIEW OF PUBLIC POLICIES TOWARDS IMPROVING INTER-COMMUNITY RELATIONS

CR REVIEW AND ITS TERMS OF REFERENCE

- 1.1 This paper is prepared as a contribution to the Review of Community Relations Policy in Northern Ireland which was commissioned by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister in late 2001. The Executive is committed to developing a cross-departmental strategy for the promotion of community relations and thereby reduce the causes of conflict between communities.
- 1.2 To inform the work of the Review, this paper has been commissioned to consider developments in policy and interventions related to improving community relations in other relevant jurisdictions. It is therefore not directly concerned with constitutional issues, the protection of human rights or issues of equity – what might be called structural responses. However, as is noted in the body of the paper, it is evident from experience in Northern Ireland and elsewhere that ideally progress needs to be made in each sector if they are to reinforce each other and achieve a fair and inclusive society which is at peace with itself and in which the level of conflict is significantly reduced.

APPROACH

- 2.1 In the time available it was recognised that it was not possible to be comprehensive. The main part of the paper takes the form of a scoping exercise which attempts to identify current trends. The study looks at a number of issues across a range of countries rather than a detailed review of a small number of countries. It refers as much to the failure of Government to promote community relations activities as to the work that has been done, and suggests reasons why Governments find it difficult to act in this area. It refers to examples of good practice wherever they may be found and future investigations could assess the spread of such initiatives and their effectiveness.
- 2.2 The reality is that throughout the world there is very limited experience in this field and only isolated examples of practice. Individual states have taken specific initiatives which are instructive but there are no states with a comprehensive strategy for dealing with community relations. Nor has there been much systematic evaluation of initiatives except perhaps in the field of education. Northern Ireland does lead the way in the range of activity and the evaluation of the impact of this activity. Many of the experiences from elsewhere are already familiar to a local audience and they are in fact much more developed in the local situation.
- 2.3 While there are very few countries which have a comprehensive approach an annex is included of short case studies of six countries: Great Britain, Ireland, Canada, South Africa, Lebanon and India. They have been chosen for the interesting problems they present and specific policies which have been applied, perhaps in one or two areas of public policy. They do not represent similar types of conflict to Northern Ireland.

OVERVIEW OF TRENDS AND APPROACHES

3. **There are very few examples of public policy taking an active role in managing inter-community relations**

- 3.1. Governments seldom take initiatives themselves in relation to issues of inter-community tension, and in many situations the most positive response of Government is a form of benign indifference to those who make efforts to ameliorate the conflict: they neither obstruct nor support attempts to improve inter-community relations but allow them to continue even if they could stop them happening. For example the Israeli Government has tended to allow Jews and Arabs to meet and has allowed schools to be involved in inter-community contact schemes, even though society has become more polarised, not least as a result of Government policy. With the recent escalation of the conflict, contact is more difficult and many people are not willing to take the risk of crossing between the two communities. But even in this context there have been a number of highly public occasions when civil society groups have insisted on passing through military lines in order to meet each other. Nevertheless there are other conflicts where the Government is sufficiently negative to interfere, and stop activities happening. There have been numerous initiatives for people-to-people contact between Indian and Pakistani civil society groups which have been hindered and obstructed by both Governments. Until 1997 such meetings had to be secret and even though they have become more open, the Governments still refuse visas for travel and only gives approval at the last moment.
- 3.2 Hizkia Asifah director of the African Reconciliation and Peace-building Network was doubtful if there were any examples of African Governments promoting or supporting inter-community understanding and he argued that they feel it is dangerous and gives too much influence to civil society. In addition, Governments are aware that inter-community conflict is not amenable to the normal forms of state intervention. States function better at a macro-level rather than dealing with micro-level person-to-person interaction. The normal response to a social problem is the delivery of services to those in need and the state may be more or less efficient in providing such services and more or less adequately resourced to ensure an adequate level of provision. But community conflict requires a different response which involves the active participation of the community and processes of interaction which deal with individual attitudes. It is very difficult for a state to contemplate what would be required to initiate and manage such a comprehensive programme. By definition the states where inter-community conflict is most severe are states which are most limited in their capacities to govern, but established western states often have no more developed approaches to inter-community relations. We will see throughout this paper that there is a reluctance to engage at this level, but at the same time there are ways in which the state can indirectly provoke such processes of awareness-raising.
- 3.3 A rare example of an “unforced” initiative is a visioning project by the Indian state of Nagaland. Since the foundation of the state, the Naga people have claimed that they were wrongfully incorporated into India and have pursued an independence struggle. In this context the state Government initiated an exercise, mainly within the administration, which invited participants to express their vision of the state in the future. This idea was extended into the community by the United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organisation who trained teachers and youth leaders to carry out a similar process through grass roots organisations, churches, schools and similar groups. Individuals could focus on any aspect of the future of the state that they wished but the process allowed the participants to express their views on future relations with India and the Indian people and in fact this was one of the main issues on which they focused.

- 3.4 The lack of Government initiatives means that there is a dearth of good practice by Governments in promoting inter-community understanding while there are many examples of programmes of inter-community contact initiated by non-governmental organisations.
- 4 By and large, Governments only seem to become directly involved in supporting and even taking a more proactive role when there is some pressure to do so.**
- 4.1 A Government may feel that the situation between the different communities is leading to such tension and conflict that it cannot be contained and it is necessary to act to take the heat out of the situation. Emerging states may also be committed to the process of nation-building and inter-community relations is part of that process. For example, in South Africa the African National Congress, and later the Government, recognised that it would need cross community support and took measures to try to address inter-community conflicts which included the setting up of the Peace Councils under the National Peace Accord. Government action may also be a response to public campaigns and pressure by ethnic or racial groups for changes in government policies towards their group. Often these demands are related to issues such as land and cultural rights rather than towards programmes of inter-community understanding. External pressure may also come from international bodies or neighbouring states, often those who have a kinship with one of the communities suffering as a result of poor community relations and lack of understanding. A superior authority can impose conditions on the authorities as in the case of Northern Ireland itself where the central Government introduced measures within the local administration, or in Bosnia Herzegovina where the international community imposed conditions on a weak state. The role of the High Commissioner on National Minorities is interesting as he encourages states to introduce policies which will improve community relations. He has no enforcement powers, but points out the consequences of inaction when tensions are high and indicates the potential negative impact of policies which ignore the needs of sections of the population or advantage one section of the community over others.
- 4.2 On some occasions Governments do act without pressure to gain the support or good will of minorities. One area where Governments have on occasion taken a more principled position is in relation to indigenous communities where attempts have been made to redress past wrongs during the period of colonisation. Examples would be Canada and Australia where there was some pressure from the original inhabitants which may have triggered shifts in public policy but the extent of government response may be explained as much by consciousness of past injustice rather than a reaction to pressure from the demonstrations.
- 5. Government policies may actually hinder the improvement of community relations**
- 5.1 While Governments may on occasion act to try to improve community relations, they may also on other occasions have different priorities which means that they act in ways which may exacerbate inter-community tensions. For example the Baltic states were concerned about the promotion of the national languages in each case as part of the process of nation building, and therefore introduced language laws which disadvantaged Russian speakers and which were resented by

sections of that community. In those circumstances civil society took the initiative to try to overcome problems in inter-community relations.

- 5.2 In situations of conflict there is often a desire to intensify difference and the Government may share this feeling and take steps in that direction. Another example, which again relates to the question of language, is the promotion of a separate Croatian language after the independence of Croatia. The languages spoken in Yugoslavia was known as Serbo-Croat and the main difference in its form in Serbia and Croatia was the script. However the new Croatian Government supported the identification of Croatian as a separate language with its distinct vocabulary.
- 5.3 General development priorities may also affect the capacity to work on inter-community relations, and the priorities of donor agencies may create or exacerbate inter-community tensions. Donors often support cultivation projects which are in conflict with pastoral or shifting traditional cultivation patterns which were previously practiced in the area. The aid project may require private ownership of land where traditionally land was held in common. Often the traditional farmers are not interested in the new methods and settlers are brought in from other areas. All these changes are potential sources of conflict. Some sections of the community are better placed to take advantage of the changes and when ethnic groups are differentially affected by the changes then there will be a new source of inter-ethnic conflict. The Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh are but one example of these processes at work where the traditional communities have lost much of their land, on the one hand by the building of a dam to provide power for the Plains People and on the other by the resettlement of Plains People into the hill areas. The Government has reached a settlement with the Hill Tracts people but little has been done to tackle the tension and resentment between the Hill Tribes and the Bangla settlers.

6 The approaches Governments adopt will be influenced by its preferred form of inter-community relations.

- 6.1 Nation-building does involve the question of inter-community relations, but there are different assumptions about what should be the outcome of that process. Options available include homogenization, separate development, co-existence and pluralism. These terms are often used loosely but nonetheless it is possible to identify four distinct orientations which imply different approaches and policies by Government and other interested parties.
- 6.2 *Homogenization*
Homogenization aims to include the whole population in one common identity based around citizenship and assimilating minorities into the society. In such circumstances there will be little interest in recognising different cultures practices, or at the most they are treated as private matters. Initiatives, if any, will be geared to creating a common sense of identity and are unlikely to promote awareness of different communities, their cultures and their concerns. The policy of the Government of Singapore might be characterised in this way. It creates and encourages opportunities for different racial groups to meet but the main focus is on social interaction without reference to racial differences and in this way a common Singaporean identity is encouraged. In the case of Singapore this policy may be partly explained by the nature of the demographic balance in the state as the vast majority of the population are Chinese and the numbers of Malays, Indians and others are small. The Government is also more motivated by concern

about the low birthrate and the need to establish families rather than concerns about inter-ethnic relations.

6.3 *Separate development*

A second goal might be separate development where the Government promotes separation rather than contact or at the least is unconcerned if the different communities develop independently. This was the intention of the apartheid regime in South Africa although the development of the two communities was not equal and in any case the needs of the South African state were such that the different communities were dependent on each other and segregation could not be maintained. On the other hand systems of devolution have been given to homogeneous territory and as a result the possibility of separate development could be realised. One such example is the Åland Islands which have benefited from their special status within Finland, though it may leave resentment among other Swedish speakers in mainland Finland and among the Finish population as a whole.

6.4 *Co-existence*

Co-existence seeks good relations between the different communities without reference to the issues and concerns that divide them. These concerns may be avoided deliberately if they are considered divisive and unhelpful to the development of good community relations. The term “co-existence” has been particularly used to describe the goal of many programmes which address inter-community relations between Jews and Arabs in Israel and Palestine, though these programmes are mainly sponsored by non-governmental bodies rather than government programmes. In Lebanon most programmes of interfaith dialogue between Christians and Muslims avoid the political issues as divisive and separate from the work of building understanding. However subordinate groups are often suspicious of co-existence as a goal because they believe participants are encouraged to value good relations between communities at the cost of leaving fundamental issues unresolved. Israel may be an example where their co-existence programmes do not deal with the structural issues about the future of the country and in those cases people may be wary because of the danger of co-option or assimilation.

6.5 *Pluralism*

Finally the goal of the policy may be to create a pluralist society, encouraging a positive diversity or pluralism. The latter requires opportunities for communication understanding and respect but a homogenization policy may also look for mixing between the people to create a common identity.

6.6 The choice of political structure, which will also influence the potential for inter-community understanding, follows from the preferred model for inter-community relations. Yash Ghai's report for The Minority Rights Group on Participation, narrows the choices to two: consociationalism and integration. Consociationalism seeks to ensure that identity groups are the basis for representation, perhaps on the basis of separate electoral roles. Integration treats the whole population equally, but, in order to ensure that minorities are not disadvantaged, measures may be necessary to allow them to compete with the rest of the community on equal terms. The Minority Rights Group¹ favours an integrationist approach as more conducive to long term inter-group harmony. It argues that identity continues to be significant

¹ Yash Ghai **Public Participation and Minorities** (2001) London, Minority Rights Group

within a consocial system and there is therefore more likelihood that identity will continue to be a source of tension. On the other hand there can be a more unaffected and unconstrained expression of and sharing of cultural identity when it does not have political significance. The view of MRG may be rather sanguine and over-optimistic. While consocial arrangements do have the tendency to entrench identities, societies such as Holland demonstrate that this is not always the case and attempts at integration can deny genuine minority grievances and even the existence of the minority. This is especially true when the state attempts to enforce integration as in the case of Turkey's treatment of the Kurdish community.

7. If Government perceives a problem of racial or ethnic harmony it will often adopt an approach which is more structural than human relations

- 7.1 The preferred approach of Governments to any social policy issue is to create structures and mechanisms for managing the problem rather than dealing directly with inter-group relations. In the case of community conflict possible approaches include constitutional arrangements such as devolution, protection of the rights of minorities, provision of resources for cultural activities for each community and increased policing and security measures. Governments find it easier to ensure the implementation of such strategies compared to the difficulty of mobilising people and working on attitudes and attitudinal change. Considerable attention has been given to identifying appropriate ways to protect the interests of minority groups which have resulted in documents such as the Council of Europe's Framework Convention on National Minorities or the Lund Recommendations on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Public Life, sponsored by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities. General Human Rights Charters also include provisions which are relevant to situations of community tension and inequality. There is a growing number of states which have introduced arrangements which apply these recommendations such as Rumania's provision for Hungarian and other minorities, or Finland's provisions for the Sami.

8. Structural changes on their own may not be sufficient to ensure inter-community harmony and may in fact exacerbate community tensions

- 8.1 The multi-ethnic constitution of Fiji might have been taken as another example of good practice in creating positive arrangements for managing diversity, but it was the cause of the coup of 1987 which overthrew the Government and constitutional uncertainty has continued until the present day. These events are perhaps a cautionary reminder that structural arrangements on their own may exacerbate the situation. The constitution allowed the full participation of the Indian community in public life but many indigenous Fijians were concerned that they might be losing status and influence in their own state and became increasingly anxious as time went on. More attention might have been given to inter-community understanding so that the Indian community was more aware of the fears of the indigenous Fijians and the Fijians were more sensitive to the aspirations of the Indian community. It might then have been easier to reconcile the conflicting interests of the two communities for the benefit of the whole.
- 8.2 Other examples relate to positive discrimination policies. India for example has extensive systems of preferences and quotas for lower and backward castes and tribal peoples. However others not included in these preferences have resented these privileges and the anger has been evident in protests such as those which

followed the recommendations of the Mandall Commission to extend the system. While the main focus of positive discrimination in India relate to employment in the state sector there has also been continual inter-communal caste violence in rural areas, most notably in Bihar and Tamil Nadu. The conflict in Sri Lanka was directly related to the government policies of positive discrimination such as preferential entry to university for Singhala students. The founders of the Tamil Tigers were young Tamils who were unable to gain admission to university because of the application of these policies.

- 8.3 In Western Europe the dangers of positive discrimination have been recognised and policies of affirmative action are favoured because they do not offer actual advantage through quotas but encourage and assist disadvantaged groups to compete with other groups. However the operation of these policies in Northern Ireland for example has also caused resentment and dissatisfaction.
 - 8.4 These reactions point to the importance of finding ways to deal directly with inter-communal relations and to increase understanding, alongside measures to increase opportunity for disadvantaged sections of the community. Crawford Young says “accommodation does require the framework, which in turn needs affective attachments by citizens at large [i.e. engagement with attitudes and feelings]”.
 - 8.5 Provision for minority cultural and other rights may also have a negative impact on inter-community relations. The Framework Convention on National Minorities and other international documents encourage respect for and promotion of national identity through, for example, the provision of education in the mother tongue. It is important to ensure that the existence of separate education provision does not mean that disadvantaged children are not further disadvantaged, in the job market for example. It may also mean that there is less contact between children who may attend different schools and therefore fewer opportunities for mutual understanding to grow. Limited understanding of each other’s language is itself a barrier to communication, both for young people and adults. Reliance on media in one’s own language also limits the level of shared experience between the communities and yet it is right that minority groups should have access to the media and education in their own language and Governments should take steps to ensure that such provision exists.
 - 8.6 However it is important that thoughtful measures are put in place to ensure that affirmative action to protect minorities does not lead to these kinds of additional barriers to inter-community contact and understanding. For example when it was argued in Malaysia that there should be separate school provision, the Government proposed that the schools should share a common campus with an overall principal in charge so that the children would continue to interact and meet in the playground and hopefully have an overarching identification with the whole campus and not just their own ethnically-defined school. In contrast to separate arrangements for cultural expression, the authorities in Delhi, India have encouraged inter-community sharing during religious festivals such as Dussehra and Diwali. Interestingly the police were assigned this task and one approach was through traditional poetry readings in the Muslim (Mushaira) and Hindi (Kavi Sammelans) traditions.
- 9. The improvement of inter-community relations cannot be achieved solely at the level of personal interaction and understanding, and attention must also**

be given to the structural matters which influence inter-community relations

- 9.1.1 In the same way that structural changes need to be supported and backed up by efforts to increase understanding, equally contact programmes to improve inter-community understanding will be inadequate if problems of inequality, disadvantage and marginalisation are not tackled. “Participation in public affairs by minorities is central to their sense of identity. It is crucial to their feeling a part of the state and the wider community. It is essential to the protection of their interests. It helps to inform decision-makers of the concerns of minorities and leads to better decision making and implementation.”²
- 9.2 Often groups that feel weak and in a subordinate position will resent community relations programmes because they seem to be intended to co-opt them into accepting the status quo. The existence of such programmes can appear to make it more difficult to deal with political problems. It can also seem hypocritical to explore inter-community understanding if the actions which cause resentment and distrust are continuing. Israel is but one state where sections of each community have been hesitant to engage in co-existence programmes in the absence of some progress on issues such as settlements, security and the status of the Palestinian Authority.

10 Governments are limited in the degree to which they can implement attitudinal change

- 10.1 Governments are much more comfortable in introducing programmes with a tangible output where they can monitor and enforce implementation. They are much less comfortable with programmes to foster attitudinal change such as inter-community relations schemes, which appear more nebulous and where the outcome cannot be so easily controlled. There may also be a concern that programmes directed at attitudinal change are open to the charge of manipulation. It is true that ideally attitude change is a voluntary process. People cannot be coerced into having respect and understanding for those to whom they have previously been hostile and there may be a backlash against attempts to do so.
- 10.2 Nonetheless Governments have enforced programmes which affect the individual’s behaviour in order to bring them into more direct contact on an equal basis with people from different identity groups, for example at school or in the workplace. That contact gives the opportunity and stimulus for engagement and understanding between different groups and also points up the necessity for interaction if regulations are to be embedded and accepted. The enforcement of racially mixed schooling in the United States may be a case in point. The Government faced widespread opposition from sections of the white community, particularly focused on the system of busing children out of their own area to ensure that the enrollment of all schools reflected the full range of social and racial groups. In time the policy became the accepted norm and the busing

² Yash Ghai ibed.

programme may have created the opportunity for the breakdown of prejudice and misunderstanding. The approach to the parades issue in Northern Ireland recommended by the North Commission and implemented by the Parades Commission also introduces a level of coercion which it is hoped will encourage the parties to engage with each other.

- 10.3 In some cultures and traditions the population is more amenable to persuasion by the state and the state may be able to take a more active approach to social mixing. This may be a feature of east Asian societies. The king of Thailand is held in high regard by the people and his pronouncements have an immediate effect on public attitudes. He was able to call on the people to end the conflict between the majority Thai community and the Hmong indigenous community in the North East.
- 10.4 Singapore has been able to allocate housing on the basis of racial mixing and the population has complied with minimal tension. As a result people are more aware of the habits and lifestyles of other racial groups and it has been argued by Ooi Giok Ling and others³ that the Government's ethnic intergration policies and multiracial participation in grassroots organizations in public housing estates have contributed to the absence of ethnic tension and violence. This is an approach which would be hard to replicate in other countries and even in neighbouring Malaysia housing allocation operates on the basis of market forces and housing areas tend to be segregated. However the Singapore Government is often characterised as paternally authoritarian and the population seems fairly compliant. Thus Governments take into account their capacity to impact on the community before embarking on policies and programmes of community relations and social integration or taking other initiatives to influence social attitudes.

11 Many initiatives bring together people at the level of influential leaders and the elites, but they do not increase the level of contact, communication and understanding at the level of the ordinary citizen.

- 11.1 It becomes more difficult to control the implementation of policies the farther one hopes to penetrate into society, and therefore Governments will often find it more feasible to work with influence leaders and elites and hope that through those contacts changing attitudes and greater inter-communal awareness will filter into the wider population. The primary motivation may be to provide opportunities for consultation but they are also situations where interaction and dialogue can take place, and this may have an impact on the wider society. If the leaders of a community are treated with respect and consulted then the rest of that community is less likely to feel alienated from the state and the wider community.
- 11.2 A number of countries in Eastern Europe set up consultative bodies on minority issues in the post-Soviet area. They were prompted by the Council of Europe

³ Ooi, Giok Ling, Siddique, Sharon and Soh, Kay Cheng (1993) **The Management of Ethnic Relations in Public Housing Estates**, Singapore: Times Academic Press for IPS

which was concerned about the status of minority populations and they were willing to comply as they were seeking to become members of the Council. These bodies can have an influence on government policy and they may provide an opportunity for dialogue, but the way these bodies are seen to function can also have an impact on attitudes within the wider community. They have had a mixed reception. For example Rumania established the Council of National Minorities as a consultative body in 1993. Within six months the representatives of the largest minority, the Hungarians, had withdrawn seeing it as a token body with no powers and controlled by the Government. Shortly afterwards the Roma representatives also withdrew in protest at the Government's failure to take action on attacks on Roma people. However it was reconstituted as the Council for National Minorities by the new Government in 1996 and was given more independence, and control over a budget and it had a direct channel for recommendations to the new government Department for the Protection of National Minorities. When representative bodies are manipulated or ignored by Government, attitudes in the wider community will be affected. However it is not certain that positive inclusion of the elites will have an impact on the average minority citizen's sense of inclusion and they may not even recognise that their community is being consulted.

- 11.3 Action at this level can of course be combined with broader and more comprehensive programmes, which may benefit from the existence of such consultative mechanisms.

12 Government can in certain circumstances have an impact on inter-community relations by managing physical space and the spatial distribution of populations.

- 12.1 Physical segregation is a major limitation on the capacity to influence community relations. If communities are separated geographically then it is more difficult for them to meet and have dialogue with each other and establish positive relationships. Therefore if the Government is committed to a pluralist society it will try to avoid further segregation and to encourage greater integration. However identity groups often occupy discrete territories and the creation of mixed areas is not a feasible option. However in many other areas the communities are intermingled in a patchwork somewhat similar to the situation in Northern Ireland, and the possibilities of further mixing is a possibility. Reference has already been made to the policy in Singapore to avoid separate housing areas and housing is allocated to ensure an ethnic mix. This policy is possible because the Government controls most housing and the population is amenable to Government direction on where they may live. It is noteworthy that tenants seldom attempt to move later to other locations.

- 12.2 Housing managers are often in the front line in dealing with ethnic issues. However there do not appear to be many formal government policies on this aspect of housing management. Professional bodies provide insight into the range of good practice which exists. The UK Chartered Institute of Housing offers courses and other services for those concerned with the subject of race and housing and has produced a good practice guide⁴. Its courses cover subjects such as "Empowering Communities - race equality and social housing, "Challenges in

⁴ Bob Blackaby, Bob and Chahal, Kusminder (2000) **Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Strategies: a good practice guide**, London, Chartered Institute of Housing

Management - for black and minority ethnic managers” and “Working with Black and Minority Ethnic Elders: Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Strategies”

- 12.3 Physical proximity also creates the possibility of tension and conflict and in these situations Government will be under pressure to keep the different communities apart. In the Czech town of Ústí nad Labem-Nestemice tension between Czechs and Roma reached such a pitch by 1998 that the local authority proposed the building of a dividing wall somewhat along the lines of the Belfast Peace Walls. The non-Roma population supported the move and it was in fact built, immediately pulled down by Roma residents and then rebuilt under the protection of the police. The national Government and the Czech Commissioner for Human Rights wanted its removal as it damaged its liberal credentials and the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination also sought an explanation of the scheme. It is noteworthy that the eventual agreement which was reached between the municipality and the national Government meant that the wall would not be rebuilt but the Government would provide finance to purchase the houses of non-Roma – which was in effect an encouragement of a process of territorial segregation.
- 12.4 Segregation in these circumstances is an understandable reaction and it may contain the level of violence but it does not contribute to a long-term lasting improvement in relationships and may in fact make good relationships less likely. An agreed process of neighbourly co-operation needs more local involvement and takes more effort, as we know from experience in Northern Ireland, but such an approach may be more effective in the long term

13. Educational is one area where the Government is in a position to impact throughout the population.

- 13.1 Governments have established systems for influencing the work of schools throughout their territory including the management structure, teacher training and control of the curriculum. The pupil population are fairly amenable to the authority of the education system, although parents may oppose community relations programmes if they appear to be a form of manipulation and acculturation. The education system can also promote separation and we have already noted the tensions between, on the one hand, the value of education in one's own language and in one's own cultural environment, and, on the other hand, the value of mixing with children from other ethnic and racial groups. The proposed solution in Malaysia of separate schools on the same campus has also been referred to.
- 13.2 International bodies and national Governments have seen the potential of the school for encouraging inter-community awareness and understanding and possibly enabling young people to meet those of different backgrounds. The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation has taken a lead in this field in the last decade and developed an Integrated Framework of Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy believing that these three components are the fundamental elements of a culture of peace. It produced a teacher/learning guide on Tolerance for the UN Year of Tolerance in 1995 and it has argued that these concepts are matters for the entire community and not just young people. Certainly work with school children often has an impact on their wider families.

14 Joint work on infrastructure is very visible and benefits a wide cross-section

of society and as such it is one area where specific action at one level can have an impact in the wider community

14.1 Shared infrastructure projects are evidence of joint problem solving even though they may only directly involve a small section of the community. However the whole community can be aware of them as end users and also because of their high visibility. The UN in Cyprus encouraged the construction of a new sewage and water system in the divided city of Nicosia which required the co-operation of the separate Greek and Turkish municipal authorities on each side of the line of division. The project was needed but it also provided an opportunity for the engineers and planners to work together, though it is not clear whether the ordinary citizens of Nicosia were aware of the project or viewed it as an example of the capacity of the communities to work together. In the Caucasus after Abkhazia broke away from Georgia they continued to share the Inguri hydro-electric scheme, even though the two entities have reached no resolution of their conflict and Georgia does not recognise Abkhazia's independence. Again it does not appear that the two populations view this co-operation as a sign of the potential for a long-term resolution of the conflict. Nevertheless the UK Department for International Development has taken such lessons and attempted to apply them to joint power supply in Bosnia Herzegovina. It is probably important that such projects are necessary in their own terms, but the Government can then be alerted to their potential to facilitate improvements in community relations.

15. Public bodies and government agencies may themselves contribute to inter-community conflict if their performance does not take account of cultural sensitivities.

15.1 Public agencies may be mainly made up of members of the dominant community and they may be unaware of or unconcerned about the impact of their behaviour on other racial or ethnic groups. However this is one area where the Government has direct control and can take measures to improve relationships between these bodies and the wider public, and at the same time between public officers and people from different backgrounds. While many areas of government interact with the public and need to be mindful of the way they relate to the public, one sector which can have a crucial impact on community relations is of course the justice system. Not only does it deal with the most alienated parts of society but it deals with very intimate aspects of the individual's life and is therefore more likely to intrude in private and culturally sensitive matters. This is an area where Governments are becoming increasingly aware of the issues and providing training and orientation for staff. Canada has led the way in sensitising correctional staff and members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to the cultural issues in dealing with members of the First Nations.

16. The state can identify and initiate processes and mechanisms which review each communities understanding of itself and the other community.

16.1 In a divided society each racial or ethnic community develops its own world view separately from the other sections of society. It attempts to explain the nature of the society, how it works and why there is a conflict. Often that world view is created in reaction to the other groups and justifies the actions of one's own community as a reasonable response to the unreasonable behaviour of the other. But seldom is there an attempt to engage with the other groups in analysing and modifying that perception in the light of the experience and understanding of the

other group. The need to reconcile these perceptions is most evident in societies which have experienced overt conflict with perceived wrongs suffered by one or more community. That past will continue to haunt the present. The South African lawyer and ANC activist, Albie Sachs, speaking of the situation in his own country said “The essence is what has been buried from the past. When you have divided memories among the people, one community having experienced life in one way, the other community in a completely different way, you cannot come together in the future. If you grow up in a country with divided memories those divisions will articulate themselves and your future view of one another. The country cannot move forward.” While these contrasting perceptions can be dealt with between individuals and through small group discussion, academics can also work together to analyse the perspectives of each community and construct a shared memory of the past and vision of the future which can be offered to the society. For example historians can develop a new history curriculum for schools which is acceptable to all sections of the community.

16.2 Government can also initiate ways in which this process can be carried out at a national level and in which the whole society can share. Symbolic gestures can be organised. We are aware of the problems which can surround the removal of weapons after a conflict. In many situations weapons are disposed off away from the public gaze. However in some cases there has been a very public ceremony in which the weapons are handed over. This can be a demonstration of the surrender and humiliation of one side but it is sometimes an act of honour and respect in which the soldier formally presents his own weapon in an agreed termination of the struggle. The establishment of a truth commission to try to search out the truth of what happened can also profoundly affect public attitudes especially if its hearing take place in public as was the case with the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The Chairperson, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, has said that the function of the Commission was to promote reconciliation not to achieve it itself. In other words the hearings of the Commission provided an insight into the experience of the other community and opportunities for mutual understanding that might never be possible at an individual level. The individual can then internalise and use those insights in his or her own relationships with the other community especially if there are structured opportunities to do so.

17. The media is an important tool for communicating with the wider society and influencing attitudes to community relations.

17.1 At the beginning of this paper it was noted that attitudinal change and the development of a new perception of the other requires an individual experience, and that Governments are reluctant to initiate policies which attempt to engage with the whole community. There are practical difficulties and perhaps, as Hizkias Asifah says, awareness-raising, which is a necessary part of the process, may create a more critical population which can not easily be controlled. One of the most important ways to involve the individual in society is through the media. They can highlight many of the initiatives which have been mentioned in this report and involve the individual in those experiences. Much of the significance of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission resulted from the decision to broadcast its hearing so that millions of viewers could see and hear the testimony and the reactions of the listeners, who might be the perpetrators or the victims, and feel something of the emotions of all those involved. This experience has had a deep effect on many who will never read the reports of the Commission or even be aware of its findings. It can be contrasted with the rules that apply in Northern Ireland which means that judicial proceedings are not

broadcast. The only access for many people to the proceedings of the Saville Inquiry into Bloody Sunday are the summaries by journalists which are mainly disseminated in the North-west and are unable to capture the emotions and total experience of the Inquiry. In any case the reports are probably ignored by the majority of the population as too dry and boring.

- 17.2 The media can also provide an insight into the cultures and values of other communities. It has been increasingly accepted, following the Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities, that the state has an obligation to ensure that the media caters for the needs of minorities. Television and radio programmes which feature the culture, music and lifestyle of one group can also be enjoyed by people from other backgrounds though they may be less accessible if they are in a language which is not shared. At the same time they can help the outside group to acquire that language. Programming can also bring the different cultures together and demonstrate the possibilities of artists and performers enjoying and respecting each other's traditions. In Plovdiv, Bulgaria, the public service television in co-operation with the local authority and NGOs produces a 20 minute regional programme, "Neighbourhood", which has been taken up by other cable television channels. Using a multi-ethnic production team the programme presents the customs and traditions of the various ethnic communities, their problems and viewpoints and has provided an impetus for marginal groups to speak and show their way of life.
- 17.3 An interesting use of the media is the production of soap operas which promote messages of peace and understanding. The model is the British radio serial, "The Archers", which was devised to catch the attention of the farming community with "an everyday story of country folk" and then to use the drama format to communicate messages which highlighted good farming practice. Perhaps because the origin of the idea was in the United Kingdom, the UK Department for International Development has sponsored the production of drama series in conflict zones such as Afghanistan and Albania, though in the latter country the conflict is not inter-ethnic or inter-racial in nature. Non-governmental organisations such as Search for Common Ground have also been involved in the production of such soap operas in Rwanda, and in Macedonia.
- 18. The state may be hampered in its ability to intervene in situations of inter-community tension if it is unwilling to recognise the legitimacy of the representatives of one or more of the communities involved.**
- 18.1 In some conflicts the state is unwilling to recognise rebel groups as the representatives of their community while that community is unwilling for others to represent them. Where secessionist groups have broken away the international community may refuse to recognise the new entity. At the present time Northern Cyprus and Abkhazia are two examples of de facto independent entities which are unrecognised by the international community. However we have noted earlier some examples where infrastructure projects are functioning in each of these situations and they have the potential to make a contribution to way the two populations view each other.
- 19. Some of the limitations in the role and actions of Government can be filled by non governmental organisations**
- 19.1 Non-governmental organisations and self help groups have often played a pioneering role in the development of good practice in the field of inter-

community relations as has been demonstrated in various contexts in this paper. They have the freedom and flexibility and commitment that allow them to try out new programmes often in difficult circumstances. There is limited governmental support for these efforts and they often have to rely on charitable trusts or inter-governmental organisations for support. More financial support from Government would ensure that activities that it cannot carry out itself would be undertaken by voluntary effort.

20. Community Relations Councils can provide a mechanism which bridges the gap between the state and the ethnic communities which make up the state.

- 20.1 Given the state's limitation in implementing directly many of the actions which will contribute to the improvement of community relations, a Government-sponsored body can fulfill an important role in linking with the community and taking responsibility for organising, funding, encouraging and extending the types of community relations initiatives with which the non-governmental sector is already familiar. It can also act as a clearing house for the development of new ideas and approaches. However it is striking that there are very few such bodies in existence. The Community Relations Council in Northern Ireland is somewhat unique and there is the Race Relations Commission in the United Kingdom. But most bodies which are called Community Relations Councils or Commissions are in fact voluntary initiatives which involve community organisations, including ethnic community groups, the business community and sometimes the local authority.
- 20.2 In this as in most of the other areas covered in this paper Northern Ireland has much to tell the rest of the world and Northern Ireland can in turn take encouragement from the existence of activities in other parts of the world which are similar to the kind of initiatives which have been tried in Northern Ireland.

Clem McCartney

CASE STUDIES

1. SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa is perhaps the most notable example of the state involving civil society in the process of conflict transformation. This may explain why the process has been attended by comparatively little violence. The society is not totally settled but nonetheless progress has been significant.

At the beginning of the 1990s South Africa was still a very unequal society. The apartheid regime was still in place ensuring that the white community controlled all the levers of the state and the black community were in a very subordinate position with their human rights severely curtailed. However the pressures for change were increasing and the prime minister realised that there were only two options: to try to manage the process of change and perhaps ensure that the white community had a future in the society or else resist change and probably provoke a bloody conflict out of which the white community might ultimately lose.

He therefore began a process of dialogue with Nelson Mandela and the leadership of the ANC which opened up a number of possibilities for transformation of the society not just a resolution of the conflict. The transformation would seem to have made the resolution process easier. For example the level of participation in the first and second elections after Agreement was reached (not only in voting but in voluntary participation in voter awareness campaigns and election monitoring) suggests that the people cared about their new constitution and felt some ownership of it. But the decision to involve civil society was not a purely far-sighted appreciation of the potential of civil society. Most of the initiatives were an attempt to respond to the tensions and strains which were growing in the society and trying to find ways to channel anger and tension and even use it to create a new South Africa. This case study will focus on two elements: the programme under the National Peace Accord and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The National Peace Accord

Following the release of Nelson Mandela from prison the negotiations about the transition to majority rule might have taken place at leadership level and the initial agreements were between the leaders of the Government and the ANC and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). However they were ineffective and were being overtaken by events on the ground. Rallies and political funerals heightened tension and often led to rioting and violence, while gangs and supporters of different groups were carrying out intimidation and killing. It was said that a broad multi-party peace accord was needed to try to contain the violence. The Government, the business community and the church all tried to initiate a peace accord without success. However eventually a cross-sectoral meeting was organised for 22 June 1991, chaired by Archbishop Tutu. From this meeting working groups were set up to look at various issues and on 14 September the work of these groups were brought to a National Peace Convention. This Convention was made up of 36 organisations including the leaders of virtually every political group including the governing National Party. The Convention endorsed the National Peace Accord committing the participants to implement its proposals and to comply with a common code of conduct designed to minimise political intimidation and violence. The Accord had provisions in a number of areas including the establishment of a National Peace Committee made up of two representatives of each signatory of the Accord and a Commission of Inquiry for the Prevention of Public Violence and Intimidation (to become known as the Goldstone Commission). Most relevant for the present case study, it

provided for local bodies: one to deal with socio-economic reconstruction and development and the other with problems of law and order. For the latter a National Peace Secretariat was established, responsible to the National Peace Committee, with the task of establishing regional and local dispute resolution committees later renamed peace committees. They started in the most violent regions of KwaZulu-Natal and Johannesburg. The peace committees were made up of representatives of political organisations, churches, trade unions, business and industry, local tribal leaders and the security forces. In July 1992 the structure was given statutory recognition with the passing of the Internal Peace Institutions Act. . By 1993 every region had a Regional peace Committee and there were about 250 local peace committees. 239 people were employed and some 8500 volunteers were also involved. During 1993-1994 expenditure amounted to \$15 million of public and private money, though finance was always in short supply and local peace committees relied mainly on using the facilities of churches and other institutions, and the efforts of volunteers.

Their role was to settle disputes and combat violence and intimidation, create trust between grass roots leaders and the security forces and to liaise with police to ensure that meetings, rallies and marches could be held peacefully. Sometimes the members of the peace committees personally acted as a human wall to keep angry belligerent groups apart. From late 1992 international observers were attached to the Peace Committees from the United Nations, the European Community, the British Commonwealth and the Organisation of African States and their presence at situations of tension helped to ensure greater restraint by participants. They were able to keep a reasonable level of local stability during the negotiation process, though at the cost of the assassination of some peace committee activists.

They also performed an important symbolic role and brought the idea of non-violent dispute resolution through dialogue and citizen participation to the watching public. Peter Gastrow⁵ the chair of the National Peace Secretariat has said:

Residents were for the first time *witnessing* local leaders, sitting round the same table, who in the past would not have spoken to each other. In some areas no communication had existed between the IFP, the ANC, and other rival groups. Police and defence force members had not been able to establish normal communication channels with many black activists in townships. To have community leaders, police, political groups, tribal chiefs, and church representatives jointly addressing community issues had never happened before. It helped to create a measure of trust among members of the peace committees that it is possible to work with "enemies" for the common good. Political tolerance and the notion of political pluralism is therefore being introduced by *example* into every community.

(italics added)

The public was made aware of the work of the peace committees in other ways. The anniversary of the signing of the National Peace Accord was marked media events and street festivities. There were national promotional campaigns with songs and logos. Mediation and conflict resolution became fashionable concepts.

One factor, which made the creation of the peace committees possible, was the existence of local groups which had been mediating in local disputes since the mid-1970s. As a result there were experienced people available when this new comprehensive structure was

⁵ Bargaining for Peace: South Africa and the National Peace Accord (1995) Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press Pp. 68-69

developed in a statutory/private/voluntary partnership. Many more people with no experience were recruited into the system, and introduced to the idea of community conflict resolution. The Secretariat organised training programmes and national and regional conferences to disseminate ideas and approaches which were being developed at local level.

With the elections of 1994 and the establishment of the National Unity Government, the parliament did not think it was appropriate that a democratic Government should need a system such as the Peace Accord and the Act was repealed. Many problems remain in the communities and the KwaZulu-Natal Committee was allowed to continue because of the level of violence in that region. The funding and statutory support had gone but many people continued to work on community relations and conflict resolution in their localities and to promote the importance of local dispute resolution in South Africa and elsewhere.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission

The establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was also the result of the need to respond to the difficult situation in the community but much preparatory work had been done to explore how the problem of dealing with the past could be tackled. For example the ANC had already established its own internal commission of enquiry to investigate allegations about violations of human rights in their own camps. As the new Interim Constitution was coming close to reality the security forces were seeking an amnesty for security force personnel. This was incorporated in the constitution without specific arrangements for implementing an amnesty. As elections were planned under the new constitution the security forces claimed that it would be difficult to maintain law and order during the campaign if their members were not assured that they would be granted an amnesty. In this context the details of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission were hammered out. Much has been written about the TRC, its structure and working arrangements and the principles to which it worked – that amnesty would be given to those who gave full disclosure of events in which they were involved. What is of particular interest here is how the working of the TRC influenced opinions and attitudes at an individual and community level. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission not only had the responsibility of dealing with the individual victims and perpetrators and awarding reparations and amnesties as appropriate but it had an important community role. Significantly the enabling legislation of 1994 was entitled “Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation” and one of its specific remits was “analyse and describe the causes, nature and extent of gross violations of human rights that occurred between 1 March 1960 and 10 May 1994. As noted in the main body of this report there was very little shared understanding of what had been the experience of whites and blacks in South Africa. Most whites were unwilling to accept that there had been violations of human rights. Most members of the security forces believed that they were justified in the way they treated the black community. As a result of the TRC it was acknowledged that gross violations of human rights had occurred and many of those involved expressed regret for their part in it. The TRC was involved in developing some shared history of the events of the previous 30 years. This was not simply a rational and academic enquiry, not could it be. It was also an attempt to acknowledge the pain and hurt that had been felt by the victims and in some cases an opportunity for the perpetrators to acknowledge their own feelings about what they had done. In the context of the Commission the perpetrators were more likely to express regret and guilt rather than defiance. Often the victim and the perpetrator sat in the same room hearing each other’s testimony. There are also occasions when perpetrators and victims met after the hearing and in private to find their own way to deal with their shared past.

The impact of all these process was much greater and deeper because the hearings were broadcast on television. The Act allowed for hearings to be in private but the intention had always been that the hearings should be public. Millions of viewers tuned in to the hearings and so the process of reconciliation and building a shared understanding of the past was observed by the general public who then discussed their reactions in their own homes and communities. As Archbishop Tutu, the chairperson, says, "We obviously did not discover all of the truth. But I believe we discovered enough of the truth to be able to paint a reasonably accurate picture of our past."

2. CANADA

Canada is a country of low population density. It has the second biggest land area of any country in the world and a relatively small population. Nonetheless there are sources of tension and inter-group conflict and its attempts to deal with these issues are instructive for smaller countries. The two main ethnic divisions in the country are between the Francophone population of Quebec and the Anglophone population in the rest of the country and between those of European stock and the indigenous people or First Nations as they prefer to be called. It is this latter relationship which is the focus of this case study. On one level the Canadian experience brings out the problems of ensuring respect for minorities whose status is insecure and which feel threatened by the majority and its culture and ways. But firstly this case study will look briefly at work in the Canadian justice system.

Developing cultural sensitivity in the justice system

The Canadian experience is significant because it has been to the fore in promoting ethnic awareness and, within government services, improving the cultural sensitivity of staff and making the delivery of services more culturally appropriate. This development has been particularly marked in the justice system – the Canadian Mounted Police and the Correctional Service. These services have a significant impact because of the difficult circumstances in which members of the public normally come into contact with them. And members of the First Nations are disproportionately likely to come into contact with the justice system. For example in the late 1980s they represented 10% of the prison population (and there is likely to be a level of under-reporting) but only 2% of the total population. This in itself raises questions about why they might be more likely to commit offences or the possibility that they are more likely to be targeted by the authorities.

The police and prison services have taken a number of initiatives. The RCMP has an Aboriginal liaison unit. They have produced attractive publications explaining the customs and practices of the First Nations so that officers can recognise the significance of particular behaviours and artefacts. They have also prepared advice on the implications of First Nation values and practices for the officer carrying out his or her duties - for example how to conduct searches in an appropriate and respectful manner.

The prison service has much more intimate contact with prisoners and so the potential for misunderstanding and offence are much greater. The officer is encouraged to learn about family structure, eating habits and how incarceration may bring extra tensions and difficulties compared to someone from a more individualist community. They also need to know how traditional customs can contribute to the individual's well-being and ensure that those practices are available to the inmate. For example the use of ceremonies such as the sweat lodge are encouraged. Written materials and training courses help to orientate the officer. The service recognises it has a problem in recruiting staff from the First Nations, ultimately such

staff can play an important role in making the service more acceptable. Fundamentally the whole service needs to absorb the lessons of cultural sensitivity but, if that context exists, then the individual officer from the First Nations can give his or her compatriot a sense of confidence that the service respects his community and can provide someone with whom he or she may be able to communicate more freely.

The Status Of Peoples Of The First Nations

The history of settlement in Canada reflects the experience in other countries where the economic and military power of more technically advanced settlers displaced the indigenous people and, with the introduction of unfamiliar diseases, the indigenous community declined until they now only exist in scattered pockets. The First Nations who lived in Canada before the arrival of settlers from western Europe starting in the 17 century, were made up of Inuit in the harsher sub-Arctic and Arctic zone and the North American Indians stretching through the more southerly part of the country and into what was to become the United States. The way of life of the Inuit and that of the native American Indians were differentiated by the different environment in which they lived but they were rather similar in values and culture. They all had subsistence economies based on simple low technology agriculture, fishing, hunting or a combination of these. They had and still have a strong spiritual system based on a close connection between man and nature but it is a purely oral tradition. The settlers viewed it as primitive, unsophisticated and inferior, like the rest of their way of life.

The settlers soon began to squeeze out the First Nations as they arrived in increasing numbers and they also gained advantage with their technology and modern legal and political systems. The indigenous peoples' land was seized, the stocks of animals on which they relied were depleted, the land was exploited and degraded through mining or large-scale farming. The peoples themselves declined through disease and killing at the hands of the new-comers. The remainder were encouraged to move into reserves where their lives were governed by the nineteenth century India Act, which the First Nations came to see as patronising. The indigenous people themselves were also attracted by the superficially easier way of life of the settler community and by the modern tools and luxuries which can only be obtained through the cash economy. Others moved into settled urban communities or reserves and rejected their traditional values and customs and adopt western ways.

By the last census in 1996, the population of the First Nations was only 800,000 out of a total population of 28,500,000, not quite three per cent. This includes the Métis of mixed descent. In comparison the numbers of "visible minorities" or recent immigrants from Japan, the Caribbean and elsewhere was much higher at over 3,000,000. Not only were the First Nations a small minority scattered in small pockets across the vast country, but over the years their morale had been sapped and their dignity and self-confidence undermined. As their way of life had become outmoded and their capacity for self sufficiency had disappeared, the Government response had been to provide handouts together with benign neglect, but this only further undermined their sense of self-worth. Perhaps one of the most fundamental aspects of the malaise is the sense that one does not have any control over one's life and one's own destiny, in the face of government policies and the success of other communities in taking advantage of the processes of modernisation and globalisation. From this perspective the things that make life worth living and give meaning to life are being destroyed. Social and health problems such as alcohol abuse became endemic and the health professions also were slow to acknowledge

the nature of the underlying malaise.

In 1987 Richard Scott and Selina Conn⁶, stated:

Self-determination, cultural, economic and political considerations are truly the central issue in health care. That most of the problems which present themselves as “medical” to the nursing station are the result of socio-political pathology is clear. Alienation in all its forms leads to a morbid environment which is the substrate for disease. Using any other than an extremely blinkered scientific medical perspective, it is difficult to deny the validity of this causal sequence. Because the medical profession is powerful and is recognized by both the government and the public as an authority on health, its refusal to recognize the link between politics and ill-health does not merely lead to much futile and wasteful activity; it also does much to stifle wider public recognition of the real socio-political problems underlying ill-health. It gives the illusion of providing health care even as it fails to acknowledge the causes of the disease.

The picture is very similar to other indigenous groups elsewhere, who have felt squeezed out, ignored and under-valued. However articles such as this indicate the shift in perspective that was taking place. Gradually the malaise in the community began to be acknowledged by public bodies, together with a sense of responsibility for having ignored the rights and needs of the indigenous communities. However the shift in thinking was also partly brought about by the success of the First Nations in gaining some leverage over the political system.

Acknowledging the Rights of the First Nations

From the 1960s the younger members of the First Nations, who had received a modern education, became aware of the indignities that their communities were facing and began to lobby and campaign for their situation to be appreciated by the wider population and for recognition of their rights. Direct action and protest were also used, as in the widely publicised closing of the US-Canadian border by the Mohawk people of Kahnawake Reserve near Montreal in 1990. Concurrently the consciousness of other indigenous peoples began to increase, and contact and sharing between indigenous people around the world encouraged the recognition and articulation of common grievances and the development and similar methods of protest.

There was also growing sympathy for the situation of the First Nations, but it did not necessarily translate into understanding of their needs or acceptance of their demands or appropriate responses. However the issue of Quebec separatism gave the First Nations an opportunity to gain greater leverage and ensured that their point of view was taken more seriously.

The growing strength of Quebec separatism and its rejection of the proposed Constitution Act of 1982 forced the Government to enter into negotiations with Quebec to find an acceptable compromise. Meetings of the Government and all the provincial premiers were held at the Government's retreat at Meech Lake which resulted in the Meech Lake Accord of June 1987. While it satisfied the Quebecois, it eroded further the situation of the First Nations, who were not represented at the meeting. The Accord had to be accepted by all the provinces before it could become law and the First Nations took the opportunity to lobby against it and their opposition was an important factor in its rejection by two provinces. Now the claims of the First Nations could not be ignored because they were able to block constitutional change. Consequently when a new round of negotiations was held

⁶ “The Failure of Scientific Medicine: Davis Inlet as an example of sociopolitical morbidity” Canadian Family Physician, Vol 33, July 1987

representatives of the four main organisations of the First Nations were present. The result was the Charlottetown Accord of 1992, which was much more favourable to the First Nations, including a recognition of the right of self-government. Discussion now centred on what would it be like to have self-government without a land base, because the First Nation populations were dispersed and intermingled with the rest of the community. Perhaps self-governing bodies could enact different personal laws, reflecting the First Nations' values and customs. This would be somewhat similar to, but more comprehensive than, the system of personal laws which exists for various religious groups in India.

However the Charlottetown Accord was rejected in a referendum though not on the grounds of its provisions for the First Nations. In 1995 in a referendum on secession in Quebec the people voted narrowly against secession which removed the immediate pressure to find a constitutional arrangement to satisfy the Quebecois. As a result, the First Nations' concerns were also left in abeyance, but now that the rights of the First Nations have been recognised, the issue cannot be ignored indefinitely. Recently in October 2001 the Canadian Department of Indian and National Affairs initiated a new round of consultations on a new act to be called the First Nations Governance Act. The draft legislation is due to be published during the Fall.

One lesson which can be drawn from this experience is that a communal group will deteriorate individually and collectively if it does not feel that it is treated with dignity and respect and that it has some control over its own destiny. That sense can come through the daily interaction between the community and other communities though in this case there was often little intimate contact. But equally that sense is dependent on the relationship between the community and the state. It is only recently that the state has begun to recognise the outlook of the First Nations and to explore ways by which they can manage their own affairs. The other pertinent lesson is that real listening only began to happen when circumstances gave the First Nations some power and leverage. This would suggest it is important for the majority or dominant group to find ways to improve its sensitivity to marginal or weaker groups.

3. INDIA

India is another very large country. It is the second most populous country in the world with over one billion inhabitants and that population may be the most diverse in the world. There is a rich mix of races, religions and languages. Even within the largest religious community there are deep divisions on the basis of caste, each individual being born into a specific caste which traditionally determined your role and function in life. The society is marked by great inequalities of wealth and opportunity, with the doctrine of caste accentuating those tendencies and providing some justification for them. While size makes the problems more complex and intractable they also provide a fruitful source of study. For the present purposes India is an interesting example of a country which has concentrated on the structural and macro-level to deal with communal relations, introducing many policies and programmes, but has done less at the level of inter-group relations. The consequence of this approach may be the apparent increase of communal tension even though there has been some success in creating more equality of opportunity.

The Secular State

The India Congress Party adopted a principle of secularism before independence mainly as a reaction to the growing inter-religious tension between Muslims and Hindus which eventually led to the partition of the country at Independence. The Congress hoped that the country would not be divided and felt that secularism was the only basis on which they could ensure that outcome. They were not successful in preventing partition and there was a mass migration of Hindus from Pakistan into India and Muslims in the other direction. Nonetheless, the population of the independent India was still very diverse, with about 80% Hindu and 14% Muslim, still has one of the largest Muslim populations of any country in the world. Partition had provoked great inter-communal bitterness and resentment, with many having lost their homes and livelihoods and there had been numerous atrocities perpetrated by members of each community on the other. Congress was therefore reinforced in its belief that secularism was the only basis on which the state could be built.

Secularism means that there should be no preference given to any religion. In practice it means that the state provided certain privileges for minority religions, some originating in colonial times. These communities have been able to organise their own schools and they have had control of their own places of worship. They also are able to apply distinct personal laws in areas such as marriage and the family. While such policies appear liberal and accommodating they have had some negative effects. It is ironic that Hindu temples come under more close scrutiny than other places of worship and the funds of the temple can be overseen by the state. There are also restrictions on the capacity to open Hindu schools. There seems to be a kind of reverse ethnic blindness. While the state has claimed that it was secular and religiously neutral, it seemed to assume that Hindus would have no problem identifying with it and therefore they should be more willing to use state services and accept state interference with their affairs. However some sections of the Hindu population have felt that special privileges were being given to other groups and the resulting sense of grievance aided the growth of Hindu chauvinism as represented by the organisations in the Sangh Parivar. It was out of this faction that emerged the dominant party in the current coalition Government, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and it becomes increasingly difficult to capture a sense of the present state of the idea of secularism.

Secularism and Personal Law

In the area of personal law, the Hindu personal law is much more limited than for other religions but there are other more complex areas of dispute. India prides itself

on its commitment to liberal democratic standards with full respect for human rights but the personal law of religious groups may conflict with those standards, notably in the area of women's rights. The Muslim personal law for example incorporates Sharia law and limits the rights of women in marriage, divorce, custody of children, rights of property and so on. This is a concern to some Muslims but it is also sometimes used as a means to criticise the Muslim community. The state has not found it easy to handle this situation. It is difficult for the state, especially an avowed secular state, to interfere with the internal matters of a religion. No religious community wants to be told that its laws and practices need to be reformed. Another solution is the establishment of a uniform civil code but as religious tensions rise it has proved difficult to find agreement with the religious communities on the form of such a code – even more difficult than to encourage each community to accept the reform its own laws. Another option is that there are certain fundamental rights which must take precedence over any law, and such fundamental rights are written into the Indian Constitution. However the courts have ruled that the personal laws are outside the remit of the Fundamental Rights chapter of the Constitution. This dilemma is a good example of an escalatory cycle: a reasonable level of inter-community respect and co-operation is needed to resolve issues of conflicts but issues which cause conflict further erode that respect and willingness to co-operate.

Secularism and Conversion

Secularism is also challenged by concerns that one's religious group is being targeted for conversion to another faith. Christian churches are particularly charged with attempting to convert Hindus. Christianity and Islam are of course proselytizing religions. They believe that they have good news which they have a duty to share with others. Hinduism on the other hand does not have a tradition of proselitizing. In fact it has a tradition of respecting the truth in other religions whereas in Christianity and Islam there is a belief in a unique revealed truth. This makes for a rather unequal relationship between Hinduism and the monotheistic religions. Hindus have no wish to compete for converts but they feel vulnerable in the face of conversion efforts which seem natural and appropriate to the other religions. The situation is compounded in some areas where low caste Hindus see the social benefits of converting to Christianity or Buddhism and possibly losing their stigma.

All the religious tensions spill over into a strengthening of Hindu chauvinism which tries to promote a more exclusive Hinduism and to minimise the contribution of other communities to the Indian culture and state. In turn it has exacerbated tensions at a political level with the growth of sectarian politics and the emergence of the BJP, and in the community there have been riots and violence. One of the most dramatic incidents was the destruction of the mosque at Ayodhya which is reputed to have been built on the site of a temple to Ram – the Babri Masjid. The lack of action by the Government and the security forces raised questions about the impartiality of the Government. It has also created a continuing sore about how the site will be dealt with – there is a strong demand for the erection of a temple to Ram on the site.

Language and Federal India

Language is a potentially divisive issue which has not in fact become very problematic. There are a rich variety of languages, some spoken by many millions and others in the hill areas by only a few thousands. At independence, there was an attempt to make Hindi, the largest, the national language, but it is only the natural language of some 30% of the population and there was much resentment in some of

the other large languages at any attempt to impose Hindi. English was the most widely spoken language of the elite across the whole state but it was seen as the imperial language and not appropriate to be the national language. However it was eventually recognised that any other option was unworkable and would be a source of conflict so Hindi and English are now the accepted national languages.

There were also tensions around the use of languages in the states which make up the union. Initially the Government was reluctant to organise states on a linguistic basis fearing that the states would become a focus for separatist claims. Therefore, somewhat like the Soviet Union in the 1930s, states were multi-ethnic and multi-lingual. However almost immediately the Government had to concede that this arrangement was fraught with difficulties. Language groups which were in a minority in a state resented their situation and lobbied for a re-organisation of state boundaries, and by the mid 1950s a reorganisation had been carried out with language one of the main criteria. For example in the south the new state of Andhra Pradesh was carved out of the mainly Tamil speaking Madras on the basis of the Telugu speaking areas.

This willingness to be flexible on language issues has meant that it has not become a major source of inter-communal tension.

Preferential policies

The extent of inequality and poverty has led to a recognition of the need to take action to advance the most backward sections of the community, specifically the lower castes and the backward tribes. It is not necessary to go into the specific actions taken but they have been mainly based around the creation of “reservations” of positions in the public service or access to education for specific disadvantaged groups (i.e. quotas). So extensive has the policy become that in some areas the majority of the population are protected by reservations. There are other special protections in relation to, for example, land and debt.

The result of these policies is that sections of the backward groups have advanced into the “middle class” but there is now considerable inequality within these groups as the numbers that are living in poverty are so great that there are not enough reserved positions to cater for more than a small percentage. The policies do not extend to private sector employment. The successful individuals may act as a stimulus to their community and demonstrate the possibility of upper mobility though they may still also face prejudice in their contact with those from higher castes with whom they now have more contact.

A serious problem is the level of resentment which sometimes emerges among those who feel that they lose out because advantages which are being given to backward groups. This feeling is increased because we have noted that in some states the level of reservation is so wide that many people benefit who are not particularly disadvantaged. A notable incident was the 1990 riots which occurred in response to the Mandal Commission which recommended the extension of preferences in the national public service. More serious perhaps has been the inter-caste violence which occurs on a regular basis in Bihar, Tamil Nadu and rural areas elsewhere. They are characterised by anonymous gang attacks on low caste villages in which the residents are humiliated and sometimes killed.

India has not ignored the need to improve inter-community respect and understanding. For example the authorities in Delhi have encouraged inter-community interaction during the Hindu festivals of Dussehra and Diwali.

Interestingly the police was charged with the responsibility and organised poetry readings in both the Hindu and Muslim traditions. But the polarisation, tensions and conflict which has followed polices which were intended to ensure community harmony and well being are a reminder that the changes need to happen at the level of personal relationships as well as a structural level.

4. LEBANON

The Lebanon, like Ireland, is a small country - racially homogeneous but divided into a number of identity groups, based on religion: Maronite Christian, Sunni Muslim, Shi'ite Muslim and Druze being the main groups. Some Maronites, to strengthen their sense of distinctive identity, argue that they are in fact of ancient Phoenician stock though it is generally agreed that the vast majority of the population are Arab. The Maronites, Sunni and Shi'ites are fairly evenly balanced in numbers though since the French colonial period the Maronites were dominant with the Sunni next in influence. There are other small groups such as Armenians and Orthodox Christians and since the establishment of the state of Israel, Lebanon has also acted as host to a large (200,000-400,000) Palestinian refugee population, though their plight is not considered here. Lebanon is of interest because of its complicated system of sharing the offices of state with a Maronite President, a Sunni Prime Minister and Shi'ite Speaker of the parliament, and in this way open conflict was avoided until the second half of the 1970s. Then interference from neighbouring states and internal pressures resulted in the destructive civil war. The capital, Beirut, was devastated and many people were forced to flee from their homes. This was particularly the case in the Mount Lebanon and the Chouf valley areas, where Druze and Maronites in particular lived in adjoining villages or often in mixed villages on the sides of steep valleys. During the war their armies fought for control of the valleys driving out the other community. Some fled to the safety of adjoining villages of their co-religionists or more often to the outskirts of Beirut which by now was completely segregated. Many Muslims from the south had also been displaced mainly as a result of the incursions by Israel.

By 1989 Syria was firmly in control, and it used its authority to bring the war to an end with the signing of the Ta'if Agreement which revised the previous allocation of powers between the communities. While the system of government is remarkable and it gives the communities some sense that they have some protection, for present purposes Lebanon is of interest because of its attempts to deal with the problems of returning people to their original homes. Reference will also be made to the development of a shared peace education curriculum.

The return of the displaced

When the war ended there were estimated to be more than 800,000 displaced people. The importance of the issue of the displaced was shown by the establishment of a Ministry of the Displaced, though somewhat ironically the minister was Walid Jumblatt the Druze leader whose movement was responsible for the displacement of many villagers. At the same time he has taken a very personal part and some political risks in the process of return. Working with the United Nations agencies, including the UN Programme for the Social and Economic Reintegration of the Displaced, the Ministry in turn set up an agency UNRSD-Aidoun – “Return” – to manage the situation on the ground. Funds were provided by, among others, World Bank loans and UNDP. The problems in facilitating the return of the displaced were immense and mainly lay in three areas. Infrastructure had been degraded and the homes and farming terraces of the displaced had been damaged and destroyed. Significant funds were made available to provide infrastructural support for the return process – rebuilding damaged roads, houses and farming terraces. However the funds were of little use if people were not willing to return to their area or if the remaining villagers were not willing to receive them. Fear was the second major problem. People who had left were often afraid to come back and those who had remained were fearful of reprisals if the displaced returned bearing a grudge. Aidoun encouraged the establishment of local committees – a return committee representing those who had left and a village

committee of those who had stayed. The idea was that the two groups could liaise with each other and plan the physical arrangements for return. They could also explore the fears and concerns which might have to be faced and work out how they might be managed. If problems actually arose then they could be dealt with through these committees. In successful cases they could amalgamate into one committee.

However the process was much slower than had been hoped. A Ministry of Displaced Report in 1992 estimated that there were still approximately 450,000 displaced people. The trauma which had been experienced by each community was very deep, but as in many conflicts, each community found it difficult to understand the feelings and reactions of the other. Each community had very little sensitivity to the impact they had on the other communities or how they were viewed. In these circumstances a good deal of work was needed to help the communities deal with each other. To some extent Aidoun tried to deal with the emotional issues as well as the practical difficulties between the communities. It organised workshops and seminars to help the representatives of the communities to explore the attitudes and feelings involved and ways in which they could be dealt with at village level. However they were not able to promote a comprehensive programme on dealing with the trauma and developing the understanding and skills of village leaders, mediators and facilitators of the return programme mainly because of the lack of expertise available. There may also have been a lack of commitment to dealing with such difficult issues and methods of work.

The work was also hampered by a lack of commitment to return by the village people. The displaced had often become accustomed to the city after perhaps 15 to 20 years. Some might be living in poor accommodation but others had jobs and a good living situation. They were no longer interested in farming or living in a relatively remote place. They also did not want the uncertainty of living with people who were hostile and "different". However they did want to retain their stake in the village and wanted their land back partly for emotional attachment, partly to avoid it falling into the hands of their "opponents" and partly because it was an asset which they might use at week-ends or as a source of income. The process of natural demographic change and urban drift was masked by the consequences of the war. Perhaps in a somewhat similar fashion in Belfast natural processes of demographic shift and upward mobility to the suburbs is complicated by the tension and territorial competition between Protestants and Catholics. At any rate in the Lebanon many displaced people wanted to retain their land but did not want to re-integrate into the life of the village.

On the other side the current village people had no real incentive to want the displaced to return. They might have to give up land or property that they had taken over during the war and the equilibrium of the village might be disrupted by resurrecting the issues from the war. The only motive for welcoming the displaced was likely to be altruistic but that feeling had been blotted out by the experience of the war. Consequently there was a policy commitment to return and institutional arrangements to facilitate return but there was very little incentive on any side to push forward with resettlement and even 8 years after the war many displaced people have not returned.

Key public figures have played an important part in the return process including the Minister for the Displaced, Walid Jumblatt. He has chaired meetings of the return and resident committees and met and exhorted each side separately. In villages where there are tensions and reluctance on both sides, festivals of the return were

held attended by the Minister (Druze), the President (Maronite) and other dignitaries. The minister's involvement has not always been received with equal enthusiasm on all sides. His Druze followers felt he could do no wrong but others were suspicious and questioned his motives. Nonetheless the high level endorsement of the process in a very personal way is a striking example for politicians elsewhere.

Other efforts by non-governmental organisations are still made to help those who want to return and projects also work to improve relationships between neighbouring villages with different ethnic backgrounds. But these efforts are mainly motivated by their own commitment to rebuilding relationships and good community relations and supported by international organisations, governmental and non-governmental. There is only limited and passive support from Government.

Promoting Inter-community Understanding Through Education

There was an unquantifiable legacy of inter-community distrust and hostility left by the war and an essential element of national rebuilding is a process of re-connecting the divided communities and understanding each other. Educationalists, both in schools and further education have recognised the contribution they could make.

Interestingly the Government has discouraged discussion of religious or spiritual issues. There is a body for Islam/Christian Dialogue which has been set up by the state and it deals with more political sources of tensions. But two or three universities have activities where participants search for what is common ground between Muslims and Christians, in areas such as laws on marriage, human rights and so on.

One example is a Christian/Islam Study Institute set up in Saint Joseph's University, a Christian university. It runs separate courses for Christians and Muslims, but with the same course for each group. This university also provides a forum for Christian/Muslim dialogue. One participant has distinguished the nature of its dialogue as non-judgemental where participants can talk without fear. In the community people are judgemental but in the context of the workshops it is possible to talk about the fear and why it exists.

In the school system individual teachers have tried out various methods of education on peace, human rights and mutual understanding. The state education authorities have limited resources to support such efforts but individual university lecturers and UNICEF and UNESCO have made a contribution. The education system is private and mainly confessional at all levels including universities and key people to promote development of education for mutual understanding are in the management of the private education system. The state education authorities have limited capacities to support initiatives but the Centre for Educational Research and Development has greater flexibility and it provided staff support to these efforts and published jointly with UNESCO a manual on human rights and peace education. However the logistical problems of spreading skills throughout teaching staffs and promoting programmes in school has largely fallen to Lebanon's vibrant non-governmental sector and external funding.

5. IRELAND

After Independence, Ireland perceived itself as a homogeneous society, and nation-building efforts concentrated on common values, culture and lifestyle. Some elements were based on a shared past which may never have actually existed (DeValera's reminder of "pretty girls dancing at the cross-roads"). Other elements were focused on the difference between Ireland and Great Britain and becoming self-sufficient in relation to Britain, though some sections of the community still considered themselves British. There was also an identification of the state with beliefs and institutions which were not shared by the whole community, most notably the portrayal of the state as Catholic. It ignored the most salient division at that time between Protestants and Catholics. There was a desire to avoid this source of polarisation and bitterness which had been associated with the struggle for independence. Acknowledging it would make the nation building project more difficult and it was hoped that by ignoring it the whole community would identify with the state. Perhaps there was a cultural blindness which did not perceive the sense of difference and alienation of those who saw themselves as British.

However there was a substantial Protestant minority of 10% at the time of Independence which had declined to 3% by the last census. The cause of the decline has long been a subject of controversy but it may in part be related to the failure of the state to find ways to recognise the Protestant people as a constituent element of the society. There was very little actual discrimination or intolerance and the Protestant people were welcome to identify with and share in the life of the state. For some Protestants that meant losing their identity, but the need to build a shared sense of Irishness was a higher priority than giving special support to one section of the community which was seen as privileged and had in any case been associated with the oppressive colonial system.

The decline of the Protestant population did mean that the society became more homogeneous. Until the end of the twentieth century the only other visible community with a different culture and life style were Travellers who were treated with a mixture of hostility, fear and contempt, and there was certainly no desire to integrate them into the wide society.

The trouble in the North of Ireland from the end of the 1960s raised again the question of Protestant/Catholic relations and as programmes were introduced in the North consideration was eventually given to the appropriateness of similar programmes South of the border. . The Government also for the first time had to consider what programmes were needed to tackle the community relations problems associated with race.

The end of the twentieth century saw an increase of immigration especially with the economic success in the 1990s. Interestingly the Census Office does not appear to provide statistics on the breakdown of population by ethnic or racial origin but there was a growing awareness of the presence of people of other races. Ireland had prided itself on its tolerance and welcome to strangers but as the strangers became more visible, prejudice and intolerance became more obvious. In the inner cities poor Irish people began to resent the presence of foreigners and, as happens in other societies, saw them as the source of their problems of poverty and unemployment. The first wave of immigrants came to study and work and were relatively self-sufficient. More recently the arrival of increasing numbers of refugees has added a new set of concerns.

The need to respond to the small but growing problem of community relations was

reinforced by the general growing awareness of the problems associated with immigration in other countries and of the international standards of human and minority rights. Ireland has a strong commitment to protecting liberal democratic standards. The Government was also influenced by the voluntary sector who worked on programmes of mutual understanding between Protestants and Catholics in both parts of Ireland, and by voluntary and self-help groups who campaigned on behalf of Travellers and new communities of overseas origin. The voluntary sector is still critical of the limited response.

The two most important initiatives have been the establishment of the Equality Authority which deals with discrimination and the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism. The Equality Authority was set up in October 1999 under the Employment Equality Act of 1998 and deals with discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, gender, disability, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, membership of the Traveller community and age. It replaced the Employment Equality Agency which had more limited powers. The authority not only deals with discrimination in the workplace but also under the Equal Status Act 2000 with the provision of goods and services, such as refusal to serve a customer.

The Authority has a development role as well as an enforcement role and it works to promote an equality conscious approach in society and encourages employers and service providers to develop Codes of Practice.

Of more immediate relevance is the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism which was established by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform in 1998 and is a partnership of Government Departments, agencies and non-government organisations. The Committee was set up to advise the Government on racism in Ireland and on responses to it. In particular, the Committee is to support the continuation of integrated strategic initiatives to address racism and promote interculturalism which programmes were already commenced by the Irish National Co-ordinating Committee of European Year Against Racism (1997).

One significant activity has been to promote the development of an anti-racist dimension into the Customer Action Plans being developed by each Government Department. It has recently reviewed what the Departments have achieved and has concluded that what has been done falls significantly short of what was required, particularly in the area of promoting "the provision of appropriate training" and linking this to a "necessary supportive culture" within Government Departments. So there appears to be much still to do and the Committee is continuing to offer advice on how the anti-racist dimension of the Departments' relationships with the public can be expanded and deepened.

Ireland has not had a strong tradition of public financial support in general for the voluntary sector, and there are only limited funds for voluntary organisations working on community relations. The Government did establish a Reconciliation Fund specifically for the situation in Northern Ireland, and over half the fund actually goes to groups in Northern Ireland. In 2000 the budget was increased to IR£2,000,000, but the voluntary sector naturally feels this is inadequate and more finance should be available for organisations in Ireland working on issues of community relations within the state.

6. GREAT BRITAIN

Great Britain has been a major receiver of immigrants throughout its history and especially since the Second World War it has received many immigrants who are highly visible in terms of their race and religion. At first they came mainly from colonies and ex-colonies but more recently they have come from countries where persecution is common place and they seek refugee status. In many ways the British experience is similar to that in other western countries, though states diverge in the basic approaches which they have adopted, and over time each country has changed its orientation as new issues emerge.

Initially Britain did not make any special provision for the new immigrants. They came to work and often were specially recruited in their own home areas. The immigrants often took menial low paid jobs which were of little interest to the British workforce. The immigrants also tended to keep to themselves. Living somewhat separately partly due to choice, but also due to economic circumstances, they often found themselves congregating in low cost housing areas because of lack of funds. Some immigrants were successful and were able to move up the social scale. They have not been immune to prejudice especially at times of increased racial tension, but the main focus on race relations has been associated with lower class disadvantage.

The main overt sources of racial prejudice have been in the white marginalised communities who feel alienated and disadvantaged and blame their problems on the immigrant community on the grounds that they took the jobs, that the immigrants' lifestyle lowered the standard of the areas where they lived and other common expressions of racism.

Immigrants were vulnerable to racism and racist attacks and had little opportunity or means to defend themselves. Therefore the original focus of statutory intervention was to deal with discrimination and prejudice. The Race Relations Act of 1976 outlawed discrimination and also established the Commission for Racial Equality, a non-governmental body to tackle racial discrimination and promote racial equality. The Act imposed a duty on the CRA and local authorities to 1) eliminate unlawful discrimination, 2) promote equality of opportunity and c) promote good race relations. Effectively the third responsibility was not actively carried out, and was often undermined by actions in the other two areas because they were unwittingly divisive. In time young immigrants who had grown up in Britain and who did not feel that they belonged anywhere else became more assertive and were unwilling to tolerate their second class role. Their anger and frustration spilt over into riots on a number of occasions, drawing attention to the explosive situation which existed in the inner cities. These problems were not confined to black areas and from the 1970s Government began to respond with a community development approach which did not focus on racism as such but tried to deal with the problems of the inner cities such as lack of employment and opportunity, poor schools and lack of leisure facilities. Racial tensions have also manifested themselves in gang conflict as young blacks and Asians became more organised and were willing to confront white racists gangs or defend themselves when attacked.

The clash of cultures has also become more apparent as some groups, with strong convictions, for example the Muslim community, challenge the dominance of certain values. Equally the state may intervene in personal matters, such as Hindu arranged marriages, where it feels that an individual's human rights are not being respected in accordance with the norms of the wider society.

Much of the Government response has not dealt with the need for attitude change and the exchange of views between races, though teachers, housing managers and community workers have developed expertise and good practice in working on inter-group relations. However recently there is a growing awareness of the extent of individual latent prejudice and the way it underpins and even legitimises more overt racist acts. One of the main catalysts of this understanding was the Stephen Lawrence incident when a black boy was attacked and killed by a group of white youths and the subsequent police investigation was poorly handled. The Enquiry into the incident found that racial prejudice was endemic in the Metropolitan police force and that this had influenced the way that the police had responded to the attack on Stephen Lawrence. The Enquiry has led to a radical review of practices and a realisation, at least at management level, of the way in which the service is influenced by racist attitudes. It may also have reinforced for policy makers the need to take more seriously the importance of promoting positive relationships between communities, and not only deal with negative racist behaviour through protection of minorities and punishment of racists.

The present Government has stated its goal as the “transformation of Britain into a society that is inclusive and prosperous and where equality of opportunity is a reality for all.” Its approach is to create a “legislative and administrative framework to remove barriers and improve the position of groups facing disadvantage and discrimination in employment, public life and public service delivery.”

However the thrust of policy has tended to be on those aspects of immigration and race relations which are problematic and then to try to respond. As a result racial diversity becomes seen to be problematic and people of other races as problems. This can create a vicious circle where Government is hesitant to take positive action on community relations because it may offend sections of the community and so the racist mentality is given space to grow. This provides the context for the current widespread, or at least vociferous, opposition to refugees.

To reverse the trend and to avoid the further deterioration of race relations, more emphasis will be required to promote a comprehensive approach to racial understanding. The Commission for Racial Equality, which has been itself criticised for not upholding traditional “British” values, does have the remit to raise awareness of race issues and it has established and supported local Racial Equality Councils of which there are over one hundred. It has also conducted poster campaigns and begun to promote the idea of a multi-ethnic, multicultural Britain. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 which extended the anti-discrimination scope of earlier legislation also places a duty on public authorities to promote race equality. Some local authorities have been in the forefront of working on positive race relations and the commitment of all local authorities could make a major contribution to the goal of positive race relations.