New Thinking
for
New Times

democratic
dialogue

Democratic Dialogue
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Preface

This is the first report from Democratic Dialogue, a new think tank based in Belfast.

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It also acknowledges the initial help and advice of Geoff Mulgan of Demos and James Cornford, former director of the Institute for Public Policy Research.

Further copies of this report are available from Democratic Dialogue, at the address on the inside front cover, price £5 (£10 institutions) plus postage and packing.

Democratic Dialogue aims to publish six reports per year—the themes of the initial substantive reports are indicated inside. Readers may wish to return the enclosed subscription slip, to avail of reduced-rate payment for all reports, free copies of DD's newsletter and notification of all DD events. DD

Introduction

Robin Wilson

The Opsahl Commission on ways for ward for Northern Ireland—and, in particular, the process of making submissions and the public hearings that followed—said something very striking. Whether it had been there all along, and hadn't been tapped, or whether it was newly emerging, what was evident was a willingness to participate in public debate in a way that perhaps hadn't been evident before in Northern Ireland. And not only to participate—but to be prepared, as at the hearings, to present an argument, explain it and defend it.

One of the notions the leading social theorist Anthony Giddens develops in his latest book, **Beyond Left and Right** (Polity Press), is what he calls 'fundamentalism', which he defines as not only the defence of a traditional view but making that defence *in a traditional way*. The Opsahl Commission showed an encouraging willingness on the part of many people in Northern Ireland, whether they held traditional or non-traditional views, to defend them in a rational and serious way.

In the aftermath of the commission in 1993, I began to think there might be merit in taking this process further, *via* the formation of a think tank. Then last autumn the paramilitary ceasefires took place, and again what was striking to any observer was how public meetings were happening all over the place—whether about specific issues like policing or *Question Time*-type discussions, where members of the different parties expressed their views before a public audience and took their questions.

Those two experiences encouraged me to believe there could be scope for such a

new project in Northern Ireland. In some respects what we do will be similar to think tanks in Britain—generate reports on issues and hopefully help elevate discussion. As we say in our mission statement[1], "Democratic Dialogue seeks to provide an independent inspiration for reflective thinking upon the critical issues confronting the people of Northern Ireland."

What we envisage will make us a bit different, however, a bit more attuned to the regional situation, and that is our stress on a participatory ethos. We are not planning to ask individual academics to sit alone in front of their word processors in some ivory tower for two months at a time and generate tablets of stone.

We are, certainly, going to rely heavily on people who have particular intellectual expertise, but we also want to ensure that our office in Belfast becomes a hive of activity for brainstorming sessions, focus groups or meetings. We want to ensure our work includes public seminars, conferences and so on, at which real debate can take place, with as many people involved as possible, on the issues which are going to be addressed in final form in published reports. And, after these reports are published, we want to ensure the widest possible debate around them, in the media and elsewhere.

In line with that aspiration, we decided to make the launch of Democratic Dialogue a conference in itself, rather than a media event. Though the notice was short, the net of invitees was cast as widely as possible: political parties, interested academics, the community and voluntary sector, women's organisations, churches, trade unions, business and so on. Around 125 people attended; many more apologised for their inability to do so but asked to be kept informed.

Our thanks are due to Maggie Beirne, who efficiently helped organise the event until our assistant director, Kate Fearon, was appointed; to Kate herself, who hit the ground running when she started just a fortnight before the conference; to Breidge Gadd, of our management committee, who chaired it so ably; and to Geraldine Donaghy, also of the committee, who presented its proposals on a programme of work to the conference.

Indeed, all members of the committee[2], especially our chair, Beverley Jones, deserve praise for the way Democratic Dialogue has got up and running within the space of a few months. They have proved a very efficient team to work with.

We are also mindful of the valuable support of our six respected patrons[3].

The conference heard two stimulating addresses, from Prof Giddens, of Cambridge University, and Rory O'Donnell, director of the National Economic and Social Council in the republic, and these are reproduced inside. Prof Giddens set out a sweeping panorama of the new context of politics into which Northern Ireland will blinkingly emerge, should the current fragile peace be sustained.

Largely unrecognised in the north, the republic has seen rapid social and economic progress in recent years. A key factor has been the emergence of a régime of social partnership, whose outlines and significance Mr O'Donnell very effectively charted.

These speeches were by way of appetisers for the discussion, introduced by Ms Donaghy, of Democratic Dialogue's draft workplan. Her remarks are also reproduced inside, as are highlights of the wide-ranging and enlightening debate which followed. Many delegates also kindly completed the evaluation sheets, which gave further guidance to the committee.

The report concludes with the revised workplan on which, in the light of this feedback, Democratic Dialogue is embarked. In doing so, it sets out our stall.

What was encouraging about the conference was that it suggested there may be more than a few customers. DD

Footnotes

[1] See appendix 1
[2] See appendix 2
[3] See appendix 3

The new context of politics

Anthony Giddens

We live, today, in a world full of surprises. Who would have foreseen, a few years ago, that communism in eastern Europe would be peacefully dismantled after 1989? Who would have foreseen that a vicious war would exist almost in the centre of Europe?

On a more positive note, who would have foreseen that there would be a peace process in the middle east or that massive changes could happen in South Africa, without the violence which most people of all political persuasions expected there? And who would have foreseen that there could be a peace process in Northern Ireland, which looks—we all hope—as though it will be successful and longstanding?

Considering all these changes, one begins with a conclusion—that they cannot

LESLEY DOYLE

Globalise it—Tony Giddens offered a wider perspective

be separate from one another. These events going on across the world cannot surely be understood as independent happenings, but must, in some way, be linked. How they are linked is the theme I explore here.

We are living in a world undergoing very, very profound transformations. Not only do these help us understand what has happened here over the past three or four years—and over a longer period too—but also one can't really work out what will happen in the future in Ireland without looking at these broader processes of change, transforming the world as a whole.

There are three sets of massive changes going on today, in the social, political and economic worlds. There are other changes too, but I'll concentrate on these three, which are producing something of a seismic shift in the sorts of society in which we live, which have caused us to break in some ways with the past, but which also allow us to think innovatively about the future.

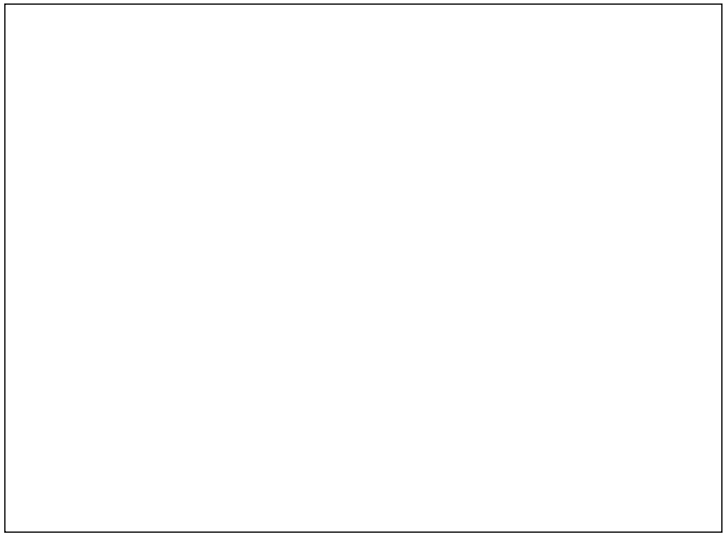
First of all, we've all become dramatically conscious over the past few years that we live in a world undergoing massive 'globalisation'. Globalisation is the prime agenda of our lives today, though it is not yet very well understood. One has only to pick up the newspapers to see how a word which no one really mentioned even 10 years ago is now discussed with extraordinary frequency.

There are many such discussions in the economic press. There, one sees globalisation identified with competition in worldwide economic markets—the idea being that we live in a much more integrated global economy than we ever did previously, and that this economic globalisation is accelerating. Now, with reservations, this is true. It is true that we can't carry on our economic lives in the way we once did.

Think of what's happened over the past 30 or 40 years: not only the collapse of communism, the collapse of a certain way of organising the economy through centralised direction; but at the same time, in all western countries, a crisis of the welfare state and the crumbling of what seemed the very foundation of economic theory, Keynesianism. These things are plainly not unrelated: they are bound up with global economic competition, and it's clear to everybody, whether on the right or the left, that conditions of economic competitiveness are different now from what they were even a quarter of a century ago.

But this is not the most fundamental sense in which globalisation is changing our lives, so it will not do simply to concentrate on the importance of global economic competition, essential though that now is. We should rather understand by globalisation something more profound—a transformation of our personal lives, our local lives, in the context of much larger global events.

What has been the leading influence in the globalisation of society over the past 20 or 30 years? The communications media. A technological fix on the change in the nature of the global expansion of the west across the rest of the world is offered by the establishment, some 30 or 40 years ago, of the first global satellite communications system. When one has global satellite communications, one can have instantaneous communication across the world.



And when one has instantaneous electronic communication across the world, one doesn't only shift economic things. Certainly, 24-hour global money markets weren't possible before the marriage of information technology and global satellite systems. But one doesn't only have economic transformations: there are transformations in experience, in nature, the way we lead our lives; there are major transitions in the nature of the state; and, particularly importantly, we now live a new agenda. This links our personal lives much more closely than ever before with global futures and, in turn, links global events much more directly with our personal experience.

Two sorts of experiments, as it were, are going on in the world. One has a grand experiment on the global level: what will we make of an industrialising world with the first global economy that's ever existed, if there is not much prior experience on which we can build? But also our everyday lives, in a certain sense, have become experimental: look at the changes affecting the relationship between the sexes, at this fantastic debate

over 'family values', now seen throughout the world—in third-world as much as first-world countries.

What is the reason for this? It is a shift in how we live our everyday lives, associated of course with claims of women to power which they didn't have before, but associated with many other seismic changes too. One has to understand the conjunction of change, therefore—linking personal, even emotional, experience with much larger global events—and that electronic communication plays a central role, shifting the texture of how we live our lives.

This means that when one speaks of a society—Northern Ireland, Ireland, the United Kingdom or the wider European society—it's going to mean something different from what it used to mean, even a couple of decades ago.

Associated with globalisation—if globalisation means shifts in space and time, transformations in the ways we relate our experience to larger systems—one sees a second set of changes everywhere in the world. These are the sweeping effects of what sociologists, if one can forgive the 'sociologese', have come to call 'detraditionalisation'.

Detraditionalisation means that globalising processes eat into, attack, local customs and traditions, local ways of doing things. They do so in our personal lives at the same time as they do so at the level of the nation-state, and larger systems too.

For about 150 years, with the advent of modern industrial society, there was a collaboration between modernisation and industrialisation on the one hand, and tradition on the other. Industrialisation destroyed a lot of the pre-modern world. But, at the same time, there was an accommodation: tradition persisted in the 19th century, in the invention of nationalism, the resurgence of religious movements and, especially, in everyday life. There was a retraditionalisation of the

family, of gender, of various aspects of personal life. That's what made modern society stable—a marriage of modernity and tradition.

In a globalising world, with the immediate and shattering effects of electronic communication—a much more urgently cosmopolitan world—this marriage of modernity and tradition becomes prised apart.

In our local lives, detraditionalisation means, for example, that women are no longer simply just 'women'. One has to *decide* what it is to be a woman. One has to decide now even what it is to be a man—something which is very unusual and difficult for men to do. But this is certainly going to occupy our lives in the future: gender identity is no longer fixed, no longer given; it's something we have to achieve. The same applies to family life: the family is no longer something given.

We don't accept our lives any longer as fate. Even a quarter century ago, if one was a woman it was one's 'fate' probably to have children, to live in the domestic milieu, maybe to work part-time. It was one's 'fate' as a man to leave school or college, get a job, retire at 65 and spend the rest of one's life wondering what to do. We don't live our lives as fate any more, so these things no longer hold for either sex or in family life. One has today to construct an emotional life much more actively than ever before.

That's why there's no sense talking about going back to the 'traditional family'. We're stuck with the democratisation of family life, of which we have to make the best. Again, we don't know quite where it will lead, but there is no turning back from that.

The detraditionalisation of local life is much more important than many people would accept. It intersects with economic development; it intersects with politics; it becomes a meeting-point of what one does in one's working life, in respect of the other groups to which one

belongs and where one casts one's vote.

At the level of the state, we see everywhere that leaders can no longer lead. Why are all leaders suddenly lacklustre? It's not just because the individuals involved have become so; rather, when detraditionalisation affects the political system, one simply can't depend on the same deference as before. Again, we see this happening throughout the world, not just in the west; there are massive problems for political leadership, plainly related to the 'hollowing out' of the nation-state both below and above the level of political action.

What some sociologists, if one can again forgive the terminology, have called 'the politics of un-politics' is set to become much more important. This refers to the very many changes going on in society —such as women's claims to new autonomy in everyday life—which do not emanate from the political sphere, but to which the political sphere must respond. The state, in some sense, must respond to these claims, even though they are not, by and large, first established within the political system. The political system has lost a good deal of the autonomy it once had. It doesn't follow, however, that it can't re-establish it.

What does follows from this is that in personal life, in business and in the state we will depend much more upon active trust, rather than a passive acceptance of fixed roles, fixed economic systems—of work for life and all the rest of it. Active trust entails having to gain the trust of others in an active fashion—having to recognise that one is dependent on them, no matter how much power formally one has over them. This is one of the reasons why the shape of economic organisation and political structures has changed.

Bureaucracy, after all, used to work. It used to work in the period of Keynesianism and the dominant theory of organisations, until relatively recently, was that the more bureaucratic the industrial organisation, the more effective it would

be. Now everyone is escaping from bureaucracy. Why? Not just because of the impact of new technology, but because of the impact of this wider set of changes.

If one is going to have the active trust of a workforce, one must give that workforce some autonomy. Giving them autonomy means a much more flexible authority system and, in a world of decentred globalisation—where it's no longer true that West is Best—an 'Easternisation' of industry is not surprising. One no longer speaks of Westernisation; there are many aspects of Easternisation going on today: bottom-up decision-making, non-hierarchical systems of authority and so forth.

These things all belong together. They are not different from what's going on in the sphere of the family, and they are not different from what's going on in the sphere of politics.

In all these cases, therefore, it is possible to retrieve legitimacy. It is possible to restabilise, for example, the political system. One isn't stuck with a society where politics no longer counts for anything, but we won't be able to make it count for something without acknowledging the importance of new systems of authority, symbolism and legitimacy, which depend on active trust.

Active trust normally means a much more volatile electorate—shifts in political allegiance, surprises. The sort of surprises that have happened in Canadian politics or in the United States, where no one really anticipated the election of Bill Clinton, and very few anticipated the sudden resurgence of the Republicans. Such things will probably become more commonplace in a detraditionalised world, where one has to build trust much more actively, where trust and risk become central organising notions for us.

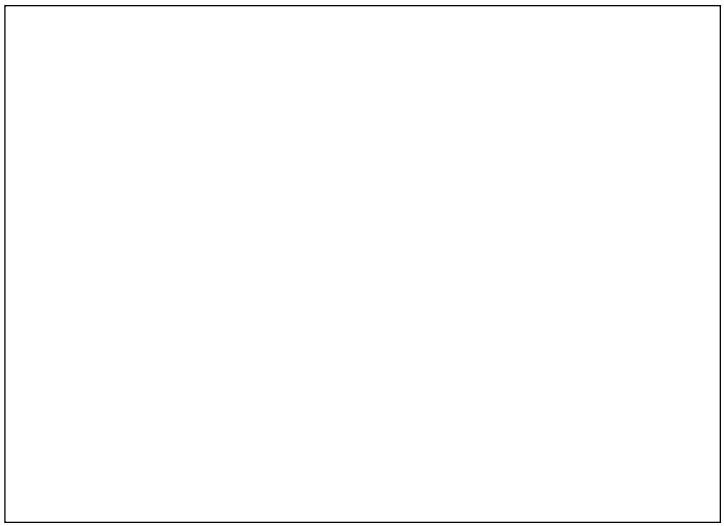
Take what happens when one gets married, for example. One got married 30 or 40 years ago, in most western societies, with some sense that one knew what one was doing. Marriage was an established role relationship: one knew what it was; one knew what expectations followed. If one gets married now, this is no longer true: one does so against a backdrop of a very high divorce rate, in lots of western countries anyway. Anyone who gets married now knows that women stake much more claim to autonomy than before.

Everyone knows that traditional family systems are in some sense dissolving. Everyone knows there is a fierce debate about all these things. These are not just external environments to one's decision:

they are part and parcel of what that decision is. There is an important sense in which, when one gets married now, one doesn't really know what one is doing. One is participating in an experimental relationship, both for oneself and the wider society. A lot of our life has become like that, producing enormous anxieties for all of us, but also producing some very interesting new opportunities.

The third set of changes, linked to the others, is the development of a much more active, 'reflexive', citizenry. One may often read in popular accounts of what's happening in politics, what's happening in economic life, what's happening in emotional domains, that we're paralysed—that people are disempowered by living in a global economy, by living in a globalising society. And this is, to some extent, true. On the other hand, living in such a society means one cannot but be active in relation to it.

The more tradition releases its hold, the more we no longer live our lives as fate, the more it's true that in some sense we must actively grasp control of our circumstances—read, acquire knowledge about what we do and, through using that knowledge, reorganise what we do. That's what it's like to live in a reflexive world.



A reflexive world is not an increasingly self-conscious world: it's a world where one must use lots of sources of information about one's life.

It doesn't matter whether one is an individual, whether one is running a big corporation or whether one is running a state; we all live in this information environment today, where one must use information about the outside world to live in the outside world, but where that information may be too much to handle, may be inconsistent, may be changeable—there are many difficulties in dealing, reflexively, with an enclosed information environment of the sort we now have to handle.

Consider, for example, the simple

decision of what to eat for breakfast. A lot of people eat muesli for their breakfast in the belief that muesli is healthy, that it helps one to stave off various illnesses from which one might suffer. Latest research seems to indicate that muesli isn't very healthy at all, and that certain things we used to think were healthy, such as water, are less healthy than red wine. So if one drinks two glasses of red wine a day—even one for breakfast—it thins the blood and helps one's heart.

How does one relate to a world like this? This is a world of elementary scepticism: it has changed so much in terms of how we live in it, in terms of the information we get about it, partly because the role of science has changed so much—and it's science one is talking about here, in that simple decision about what to eat for breakfast.

Science used to be a sort of tradition: it used to be an authority to which we could turn, and we believed in the probity of science. But now, we see that science depends upon scepticism. The essence of science is the belief that *no* belief is cherished—one gives up even one's most cherished belief if empirical research shows it to be wrong.

Popper shows us that science is built on shifting foundations; there is no foundation to science. Anything one believes in could be shown to be wrong. That view is no longer confined to science, but is part of our everyday lives.

There is, therefore, a new debate in the modern world, between scepticism and fundamentalism. Fundamentalism is not something which has always been around: it is a creation of a world where we exist in a new relationship to all sorts of potential information around us. Science declares that nothing is sacred, whereas fundamentalism asserts that one cannot live in a world where nothing is sacred. There's a sophisticated dialogue here, not just a dialogue of violence—though there are connections, in a more reflexive world, between fundamentalism and violence.

In a more reflexive world, in which active trust has an important role, the citizenry increasingly live in the same information environment as those, like political leaders, who are empowered to take decisions which affect them. This has many consequences, again, for politics.

The same is roughly true of the economic world. In Brazil, there are a lot of very poor people, and until recently there was a very high rate of inflation. What

one finds in the very poorest parts of the cities, where people are living in indescribable conditions, is that very poor people have learned to use their minimal resources to stave off the worst effects of inflation, by playing the global money markets in a sophisticated fashion.

There is no one outside a world of high reflexivity any more: we all tend to live in the same information environments, and we all have access to various kinds of expertise within those information environments. Recently, the press reported a comparison between finance ministers and dustmen, in terms of predictions about inflation, economic development and so on. The dustmen were definitely superior to the finance ministers in the predictions they made.

We live in a world where we all discuss the same things—it is an extraordinary change. In my years of going round the world and participating in academic dialogues, there has been a tremendous globalisation of information: one finds the same debates, the same discussions, the same ideas wherever one goes now, a change which has taken place in a very short time. There is some sense in which we all live in the same reflexive environment now, whatever we make of it. There are, however, many possible reactions to that.

In a world marked by these concentrated and fundamental changes, a lot of consequences arise. These can be compared to a settling out after a large earthquake—a massive ripple-effect across the world. Some of them are bound up with democratisation.

If one asks what happened in the Soviet Union, what happened in South Africa, what's happening in Northern Ireland; if one sees these things as part of a global communications system, one gets some purchase upon the fairly rapid spread of democratisation across the world today. And one arrives at a different theory about democratisation than the orthodox one.

There are 'catching-up' and 'leapfrog' theories of democratisation—I prefer the second. A catching-up theory of democratisation looks at what went on in South Africa, in eastern Europe, and says: these countries were authoritarian, they lagged behind western liberal democracies; what they have to do is catch them up. They have to catch up by a joint process of economic development and political liberalisation, so that they establish stable, multi-party political systems of the sort

long found in western Europe, Australasia and north America.

Now, that view has some substance: it's plainly true that these were authoritarian systems, unacceptable to large chunks of the people ruled by them. But the theory doesn't make enough sense of the double fate of democracy in contemporary times: although we see the spread of democracy across the world, at the same time surely, we see democracy in trouble.

We see trouble all around us in western countries. At the high point of its apparent global success, western, liberal, multi-party democracy seems to be under enormous strain. If one has a different view of democratisation, however, one can explain both the attractions of democratisation and the strain to which liberal democracy is subject.

The spread of democratisation across the world is bound up with the very changes I have described: global communication, detraditionalisation and a more reflexive citizenry create urgent pressures towards democratisation, towards involvement. If people start to live in a similar information environment, of course they are clued in to what's going on, and of course they make claims as to their interests in respect of what's going on.

But if these things explain the spread of democratisation, at the same time they show why the older models of democratisation are likely to come under pressure and to be inadequate. With all these other changes going on, there is a great resurgence of discussion about other forms of democracy today, in addition to—not as a substitute for—liberal, multi-party democracy. There is a sudden interest again in participatory democracy, which, for a long time, was written off as of no relevance to anyone living in a large industrial society. Why? Because of this shakeout, where new forms of democratisation become not only possible, but necessary.

We look now for forms of democratisation which stretch right through from our personal lives, through the nation-state, to larger global systems. We look to forms of democratisation which reflect these fantastic changes affecting the global society.

The United Nations has designated 1995 as the UN Year of Tolerance. How, if one looks at these changes, might one apply them to this country? How would one orient oneself to the problems of building a liberal, pluralistic, peaceful society in Northern Ireland, in a united

Ireland or in a different form of Ireland, and in a wider European system? I offer three reflections in conclusion.

First, when we look at Ireland now, in the light of the changes I've described, we see that it is neither so unusual, nor so alone, as it used to appear. For a long while, to many commentators—and this would still be true if one applied a 'catching up' theory of democracy—there was an atavistic interpretation of Northern Ireland. In Northern Ireland, so it went, one has archaic conflicts which have not yet been quelled; a civil society has not yet, for various reasons, been fully established along the same lines as in other western societies; and one has a situation approximating to a civil war in a world in which, at least in the west, civil war has been largely forgotten.

One cannot any longer follow that interpretation. If one looks at Northern Ireland today—and one *must* look at it in a globalising context—one can see that both the problems and the opportunities which face it, or Ireland as a whole, are not different from those faced by the rest of the world. Elsewhere, now, one sees a new relationship between radical democratisation, on the one hand, and resurgent fundamentalisms, including religious, nationalistic and ethnic fundamentalisms, on the other.

These things are part of the global shake-out I'm describing; in this context Northern Ireland looks, in a certain sense, typical, rather than unusual. And the sort of institutional building blocks that one would seek to create here are

surely the same as those we would look to construct in other European countries and in other contexts, in which we must all now deal with this new intersection between fundamentalism and democracy—forms of fundamentalism ringed with violence, but in some sense in dialogue with democratisation and with modernisation, in the form of economic development.

Not just here, but everywhere, if here particularly, there is a question of what Charles Taylor has called the 'politics of recognition'. The politics of recognition must be accommodated in a pluralistic society. It entails recognising the authenticity, the identity of different cultural groups who have different views—whether these be religious or of other kinds—these views having a right to be stated, to be heard and to be organised around.

The politics of recognition comes up against the politics of solidarity: how does one build a multi-cultural society, a society in which there is an effective politics of recognition but which still has mechanisms of social cohesion? The simple answer is that we don't yet know, but there's nothing very distinctive about Northern Ireland, as compared to many other parts of the world where we must seek to resolve the same problem.

What we're dealing with here is a genuinely global issue. In a world where the nation-state won't look the same any more, we can't confine problems of ethnicity, of religious pluralism, of other kinds of claims to recognition within the nation-state's sphere; we have to look for other ways of accommodating these two forms of politics. I would see this as *the* struggle for the early part of the 21st century—the struggle between the two, but the possibility of accommodating them also.

When one thinks of the state, one no longer thinks of what one used to think of. What is the United Kingdom? What is Northern Ireland? What is Ireland? What is France? What is Canada? They don't have the same resonance as they used to do, largely because of the transformations I've mentioned. Nowadays, if one is in one country, one is linked to other countries in a new fashion. One is linked to the European Union, and many different forms of accommodation—of federalism, of local autonomy—seem to be possible; we're all pioneering these.

Look at what happened in Spain. Spain is still a country, but with extraordinary autonomy for the regions. Catalonia, for example, is more strongly

linked, economically and culturally, to other parts of the European Union than it is to Castille. Will this be a pattern for the future?

Secondly, there is an intrinsic connection between democratisation, pluralism and economic development, and this will apply in Northern Ireland as elsewhere.

The relationship between democracy and economic development is more complex than one might imagine. There's a new discussion, for example, of the impact of authoritarianism on economic development, when one considers the debate about Easternisation and the rather unusual accommodation that seems to exist between fairly authoritarian systems of political power in some of the 'eastern tigers' and their very rapid economic development. Some people are again saying: we don't need democracy, we don't need pluralism for economic development; one needs an authoritarian outlook—maybe even what the Chinese communists provided, and the Russian communists wrongly eschewed with *perestroika*.

That's what some are saying, but I don't think it is true. There is a close connection between democratisation and economic development. Economic development is the condition for democratisation; therefore discussion of economic partnership is crucial to the future of this country[1]. But that partnership is bound to entail new forms of democratic association—not just the old relationship between markets, liberal democracy and the nation-state. These things will no longer hold, here as elsewhere.

Thirdly, and finally, I was very pleased to see that the name of the new think tank is Democratic Dialogue, because among the new forms of democratisation which will be particularly important for us, not just here but elsewhere, is what I call 'dialogic democracy'.

Democracy means two things, really. On the one hand, it means recognition of diversity of interests, so that one can form political parties and other associations. On the other, democracy always also means dialogue. It means the possibility of substituting discussion for violence. And one of the main threads of democratic theory in the west—and now across the world—has been the substitution of dialogue for violence, of talk for bullets. The substitution of talk for bullets is surely one of the great civilising contributions of western, liberal-democratic theory.

Dialogic democratisation, however, is

unlikely to be limited any longer to the sphere of parliaments. Parliament plainly is a dialogic system—it's a place where one debates things and, hopefully, one reaches conclusions without the use of force. But in a world with these new connections and disjunctions between local life and global systems, one must look for forms of dialogic democratisation which will run through from personal and family life to large institutional systems.

I'd like to conclude by arguing that there is an inherent connection between dialogue, violence and the possibility of living along with others, both in gender relationships and in larger systems. In both cases, one depends upon the possibility of what I call a 'positive spiral of communication'. A positive spiral of communication substitutes dialogue for violence and substitutes discussion—public policy discussion—for the use of force to achieve one's ends.

We know that in violent marriages, where men are violent towards women, such men can change. They can change through inner communication and outer communication. We have many cases of successful therapeutic intervention, where violent men do manage to substitute talk for violence. When that occurs, it can produce a positive spiral of communication: the more one gets to know oneself, the more one gets to know the other; the more one gets to know the other, the more one understands oneself.

This is a positive politics of recognition, where difference with the other is a means to get to know oneself better, which in turn is a means of getting to know the other better, in a positive spiral. There are many cases across the world of interaction between religious groups, ethnic groups, cultural groups, where one does see positive spirals of communication. I take it this will be one of the meanings of Democratic Dialogue—the furthering of such spirals of positive communication.

The question for us is how to avoid a relapse into negative spirals of communication. If, in a positive spiral, in an emotional relationship, love feeds on love, like feeds on like, tolerance feeds on tolerance; in a deteriorating cycle of communication, hatred feeds on hatred. What happened in Bosnia can't be understood in terms of what I earlier called an atavistic view of history. What happened in Bosnia wasn't just that centuries-old hatreds existed which had never been accommodated, in an awkward corner of Europe which had never modernised.

One certainly has to understand what

happened in Bosnia in relation to the past, but in relation to how that past is used in a globalising context, where one has a new encounter—a global encounter—between Islam and Christianity, an encounter between different modes of modernisation. One doesn't simply have a reservoir of hatred lying around for hundreds of years, ready to fuel conflicts. That isn't really how hatreds work, in Ireland any more than anywhere else.

What one has is certain situations which can accentuate, can draw upon, pre-existing antagonisms. Once these become communicated as hatreds, then one can get a negative spiral of communication, so that people who were previously neighbours, and had got along quite well, can end up hating one another, to the degree they are prepared to visit the most horrific brutalities upon one another.

Managing the global society of the future is not going to be a matter of sending in UN forces to clear up areas of conflict—of which there will be many—such as Bosnia. It's going to be a question of somehow producing democratic institutions and creating interventions which avoid negative spirals of cultural communication.

As with all I have been describing, this is an open future for us. We can't really, any longer, use our past traditions of thinking to understand it. In confronting this open future, while we certainly see many difficulties, many uncertainties, we see many new possibilities too. DD

Footnotes

[1] See next chapter

Modernisation and social partnership

Rory O'Donnell

In recent years, the Republic of Ireland has been undertaking an important experiment in policy-making, at both national and local level.

The background to this experiment, which began in 1987, was a combination of crises.

The economic crisis stemmed from the recessions of the 70s, adjustment to membership of the European Community—which involved an enormous change in the structure of the Irish economy, including the loss of many traditional industries—and, in the early 80s, a fiscal crisis, pushing the country almost towards insolvency.

That was combined with a political crisis. With no party able to command anything like a majority, intensified political competition lowered the quality of political behaviour, rather than improving it. Political decision-making became worse—more expedient, more short-term—exacerbating the fiscal crisis.

At the same time, in the early 80s, there was a social crisis. There was deep despair in the face of an economy stagnant for six or seven years in a row, falling real consumption, a doubling of unemployment and intractable debates around fundamentally divisive issues, like abortion and divorce.

The National Economic and Social Council is roughly similar to the Northern Ireland Economic Council. Funded by the state, it comprises the 'social partners'—representatives of trade unions, business and farmers (in the NESC case, civil servants are also included.) In 1986, the social partners, acting in the NESC, put together a package to get out of

this vicious, downward spiral.

It was a package to avoid insolvency, while protecting welfare recipients and the unemployed, and envisaging fundamental changes in public expenditure and policy. This programme, put together voluntarily by the social partners—by a twist of fate, perhaps—was adopted by government in 1987 and formalised in a three-year agreement between it and the business, trade union and agricultural interests.

An aspect of the agreement—explored in more detail below—was the republic's adherence to the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM). Indeed, the initiative reflected an emerging perspective on the republic's experience in the European Community.

Four main policy areas in the European Community influenced the republic dramatically: the internal market, the common agricultural policy, the monetary policy and structural (regional and social) policies. Yet, after 10 to 15 years of experiencing these policies, we discovered that the way they influenced the republic was dependent on our approaches to them—on domestic economic structures, political structures and firm structures.

This was quite surprising. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) was always the most centralised and common policy of the European Community, and yet the way it affected the republic was very much influenced by elements of agricultural policy over which we still had control, but had forgotten we had.

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Take your partners—Rory O'Donnell explored an aspect of the republic's modernisation

For example, there were fundamental structural problems in agriculture, which couldn't have been addressed by the CAP, but we had neglected making policy on them during those years. Similar comments could apply to the other Euro-policy areas: the internal market, the monetary policy and so on.

Borrowing from an American writer, I would describe this new understanding as an 'interactive outlook'. We discovered that the way European Community membership and, perforce, globalisation influenced the republic was, in fact, *via* an interaction between that globalisation and those larger European forces, on the one hand, and the domestic structures and policies, procedures and norms, on the other.

That interaction is much stronger than we first understood, having assumed—perhaps reflecting a long line of Irish thinking—that much in the republic was determined by some larger external force. There are two versions of that view—that it is benign and that it is malign; either way, it's a well-entrenched line of thought.

We had to abandon that view, that things were definitively externally determined. Likewise, we had to abandon the opposite view—equally mistaken—that the republic is an organic entity and that one can apply principles to it on its own, without taking account of its openness and its interactions. (Although these two views are clearly faulty, it's very hard to avoid them when one starts to generate policy advice.)

What emerged, after a dozen or so years of European Community membership, was a quite different understanding of the scope of domestic policy and institutions, in shaping the way membership worked for and against the society. It's impossible to understand what has happened to the republic, without seeing the enormous impact of EC membership—not only through the state and high-level policy makers but also upon the society, through autonomous activity: people joining environmental groups, women's groups, local authority groups, at European level, and involving themselves in the numerous networks which really are what comprise the European Union.

There is also an interactive understanding of what happens at home in the republic. In looking at those policy areas—the internal market, the common agricultural policy, the monetary policy and the EU structural funds—one needs new ideas to understand how, in the European economy, a small region like the

republic fares. One has to draw on a range of ideas, from regional studies, business studies, geography and so on, all of which are moving in the same direction: they're all saying that the outcome is not as predetermined as we once thought.

An earlier body of geography and regional theory would have said that, in the face of globalisation, the periphery of Europe would definitely go in a negative direction. That deterministic view has to be qualified now, and that same qualification has occurred across a range of areas of expertise.

All this says to us that policy-making has to be different from in the past, when expert knowledge and bureaucratic techniques could put together a functioning policy fairly well. Whether policy will work or won't work now is much more dependent on engaging the main players in the society.

In sum, then, the notion of interaction—an interactive framework between the republic and international events and forces, and a more interactive view of what happens domestically—are important backgrounds to the new experiment in social partnership.

Now to the experiment itself. The Programme for National Recovery (PNR), agreed in 1987, was a three-year deal determining the evolution of pay in both the public and private sectors, but it was much more than a wage bargain. It involved an agreement on the state's part as to the broad evolution of the tax system, and of health and social welfare spending. The social partners and government also committed themselves to adhere to the ERM: if the punt came under pressure, neither employers, nor unions nor farm interests would immediately call for devaluation, but would stick to the policy for the medium or long term.

The PNR was successful and it was followed, in 1990, with a second three-year programme, the Programme for Economic and Social Progress. The PESP contained many of the same elements, but there was a new focus on the long-term unemployed and an experimental, area-based approach to addressing it.

In 1994, a third three-year agreement followed, the Programme for Competitiveness and Work (PCW). That, again, had the same key elements: wages, tax reform, expenditure on social welfare and health, adherence to the Maastricht criteria for transition to monetary union, as well as a further focus on employment and unemployment, training and local

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economic and social development.

What is significant about those three agreements—which differ from previous centralised wage agreements and other policy-making—was the shared analysis of many elements of the economic and social problem. That analysis was that, in a very volatile international economy, a country which is small and extremely open—in terms of its economic interactions—has to have three elements to its policy, all of them consistent.

It needs a macro-policy which ensures the growth of demand and low inflation. It needs distributional arrangements, which maintain competitiveness in the international environment and reduce tensions in the workplace and elsewhere, so that distributional conflict does not disrupt the economy. And it needs an ability to make structural changes—in firms, in the state, in the health system and so on—because it has to compete in a very volatile international environment which it can't influence that much; this calls for flexibility and continuous adjustment of the economy, the society and the public sector. It needs to achieve those three things.

The development, through various forums—like the NESC—of a shared analysis of some of the key problems was thus a fundamental, second element in this experiment.

Thirdly, there were institutional developments. A Central Review Committee was established, to manage these agreements. Every few weeks, the relevant ministers or senior civil servants meet the unions, business representatives and agricultural interests and monitor the programme, thus involving themselves in a continuous dialogue on key matters of policy as they arise.

Another institutional innovation, again unlike previous wage bargains—which were really put together by unions and business with each then settling

separately with the state—has been the much more collective character of this experiment. In many ways, the state has played a key role as a co-ordinator of the process.

Given this broad outline of the national programmes, which made up this experiment, we must now consider a second strand of social partnership, which has operated locally.

When the PESP was being negotiated, the unions pushed very hard for a new initiative on long-term unemployment. The response was 12 pilot partnerships—local boards consisting of community groups, unemployed representatives, the social partners themselves in a given area, key state agencies (such as the training agencies and the tourist board)—with links to government. These were to attempt new ways of tackling long-term unemployment and reintroducing the long-term jobless into the labour market.

Secondly, a set of initiatives coming from the European Community were very significant. The Leader programme for rural development had a very similar structure—local boards on a partnership model, bringing together the key agents. (There, the focus was less on social exclusion and unemployment than on business development.) And there was Poverty 3, which operated in Northern Ireland as well: the European Commission's input was very significant in prompting the republic to experiment with local partnership in that sense.

Also, in managing the large transfers under the regional fund and the social fund, the republic—a very centralised state—was pushed by the European Commission towards some regionalisation of the monitoring of those expenditures. There's debate about how great and how genuine that regionalisation is, but it certainly has been there.

Finally, the PCW embraces a more articulated approach to local economic development—with partnerships established not only to address long-term unemployment, but also commercial and employment development, at a local level.

How should one assess and interpret this experiment? In terms of economic performance, it has undoubtedly been extremely successful. Between 1987 and 1993-4, the republic achieved one of the highest rates of output growth in the OECD countries and the second highest growth in employment.

The programmes played a key role in

making the republic's macro-economic strategy work. The early 80s saw a vicious circle, in which the fiscal crisis was dealt with by raising taxes; workers then sought those taxes back in pay bargaining. Business was squeezed, between the state on one side and the unions on the other; this, in turn, compounded the fiscal problem.

What these agreements have done—as against previous centralised wage bargains—is to embrace in a common accord all the necessary elements to break out of this vicious circle, including taxation and the 'social wage', health and welfare expenditure. Only if all these are managed in a consistent way, in a way that is essentially agreed, can the policy hold together. In effect, inflation is taken out of industrial relations and domestic politics.

After the first experiment, the NESC saw a connection between the agreed understanding of some of the key problems, the consensual approach to distribution—in terms of both pay and public expenditure—and, interestingly, a distinct improvement in the quality of public policy-making. The ability of government to take strategic, non-pragmatic decisions seemed dramatically to increase under this régime.

It may or may not be connected, but the coincidence is striking, and indeed it has continued. In a still very competitive political environment—indeed, the instability of party support is even greater than in the late 70s and early 80s—the quality of policy-making is much more strategic, with hard decision-making where decisions need to be made.

So, in terms of economic performance, the assessment has to be very positive.

There is also a renewed focus on development. One of the striking features of a fiscal crisis is that it bleaches out any developmental thinking. There was a strong strand of developmental thinking in public policy in the republic, from the late 50s through to the early 70s, but this was wiped out as policy-makers became preoccupied with public expenditure. We have managed to reintroduce—again, very much prompted by the European Commission—a developmental element into policy-making and debate, at national and local level.

Thirdly, there has been a regeneration of local development and involvement. The republic is not only centralised, but has a strong tendency to perpetuate that centralisation. We have seen, under this régime, a renewed recognition, both in society and in policy-

making, that local involvement is one of the wellsprings of both prosperity and social solidarity. Local partnership has been a very distinct achievement of this experiment.

There are, needless to say, severe difficulties in developing partnerships at local level. The success of local social and economic development, under this partnership model, seems to depend on a very strong 'vertical' relationship with high levels of state agencies, such as those responsible for training and industrial development. So it isn't 'bottom-up' development in any simple sense: it involves a strange mixture of bottom-up and top-down.

This experiment in policy-making is appropriate to a very internationalised economy, partly because it allows us to focus on those areas where a very small country—or, indeed, region—can still have some influence on its economic prosperity. To some degree, in the republic, it is a matter of getting clear what limited autonomy we have in areas of macro-policy.

But, more and more around the world, there is a concentration on the importance of 'supply-side' policies—education, training, technology, science, infrastructure and developing a flexible economy—to the prosperity of given countries and regions. All such policies, which influence prosperity much more now than in the past—and in ways which macro-economic policy or, indeed, large-scale industrial policy simply can't any more—are dispensed with great difficulty, and quite ineffectively, by state structures on their own, particularly by bureaucratic administrative structures.

What they depend upon is the collaboration of all the parties who are relevant to the policies. So it's impossible to imagine a successful training policy which doesn't engage the involvement, the willingness, of those whose skills are supposed to be improved. And the same applies across the board—to technology policy, infrastructure, communications and so on.

There is a lot of debate, internationally—and a little bit in the republic—about how to understand this model of social partnership. It's more than consultation: it's not a process whereby the state simply consults the social partners, or local community groups or whatever. It's more like negotiation or, indeed, shared authority. Government shares its authority—its right to pass law and spend public money—with those partners. It is

addressing the limits of legal regulation and bureaucratic administration to solve problems, not only by consulting but also by sharing authority in a genuine partnership.

What are the challenges that remain? Two major challenges confront this experiment in the republic. It has succeeded in getting the macro-economy and macro-social issues into some balance, but it hasn't successfully addressed the core, long-run problem of the republic—weak indigenous economic development. So the question is: can this process be pushed into industrial policy, training policy, technology policy, finance for industry and so on?

Secondly, there is a challenge of long-term unemployment and social exclusion. This has not been utterly ignored in these programmes, but clearly it's an enormous challenge which requires continuous change.

A third challenge is that there *is* a challenge: there is opposition to this experiment. Opposition comes very strongly from liberal economists and from those at national level who are quite unhappy with the notion of the economy being regulated in a continuous dialogue between the state and the social partners.

At local level, too, there is a challenge to the notion of partnership, from those with a more traditional notion of democracy—who say it is quite inappropriate that public money be handled by voluntary associations of community groups and so on, and who wish to see all these programmes brought back firmly within the local authority or central government structure. The NESC looked at this issue very recently, and was not persuaded by such suggestions.

I am very reluctant to be prescriptive about what this model might imply for Northern Ireland, except to say two things. In thinking about this experiment in the republic, I've found it useful to forget, temporarily at least, one question: *how much* autonomy does the republic still have in a global economy, or in the EU? (Because when you look at it, the answer seems, on many fronts, to be really very little.)

Putting to one side the *amount* of autonomy at national level—and this might apply at regional level as well—allows us to look, instead, at policy-making and implementation. This means *not* focusing on the *quantity* of power to be mediated or the money to be spent, but rather on the *patterns* of policy-making. That way of thinking seems to be useful in the

republic, at least up to a point, and it may have some parallel in Northern Ireland.

A second parallel is the involvement of the EU. Its impact on these processes may be very indirect, but it is very strong. The republic has been thrown open to Europeanisation of everything, and that seems to open up networks for ideas—finance, of course, as well—which can be used in a variety of ways. These networks are not determined entirely by high politics, by the Council of Ministers, and indeed are simply not recognised in the conventional debate about Euro-sovereignty *versus* national sovereignty: that debate looks right over all the networks of influence and misses much of what is relevant.

Globalisation is occurring worldwide, and with devastating and sometimes beneficial effects. But the EU is the most remarkable attempt to manage global-isation in the world: two years after the North American Free Trade Agreement, by comparison, both Mexico and Canada are in severe crisis. The EU model of internationalisation involves far more accompanying policies, far broader and deeper management of internationalisation.

It's to that process that the republic has been exposed. It did not cope too well for a while, but it has begun to get a handle on it. And, in diverse ways, it has let that influence the way people make policy and implement it. DD

Talking, and listening

Geraldine Donaghy

Only in being challenged and confronted about our thinking will barriers and mindsets be broken.

What distinguishes Democratic Dialogue in this regard is the philosophical basis its participants share, as to the extent that people, and their beliefs, are capable of changing. Change *is* possible, through challenge, and one fundamental means of challenge is to question ideas and beliefs—and, in particular, the language we use to convey them.

Over the past 25 years, Northern Ireland has developed a considerable glossary, rich in concepts and clichés. Ones that spring to mind are 'democratic deficit', 'parity of esteem', the 'peace process' and so on. But too often language, if isn't analysed in itself, acts as a barrier to understanding instead of enhancing it.

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Going local—Geraldine Donaghy outlined DD's draft plan

We in Democratic Dialogue challenge ourselves, and others, to adopt a new and transparent approach to reconstructing debate around key issues in Northern Ireland, as we start out on what we hope to be a peaceful and new future.

The last thing, however, that Democratic Dialogue needs to do is to reinvent the wheel. So before indicating what the management committee of Democratic Dialogue thought might be useful for this new think tank to do, let me set out some criteria we have discussed as to what, perhaps, it should *not* do.

The first of these is that we don't want to tread insensitively on anyone's toes or clumsily nudge anyone aside. We don't want to duplicate what others are doing. That is to say, we want what Democratic Dialogue does to be distinctive. That is not to say, however, that we are afraid to stamp old or currently researched topics with our own brand of inquiry and consultation.

Secondly, and importantly, we do not want to operate in a remote or overly academic manner. This isn't to downplay the impact and importance of ideas or intellectuals: ideas are, after all, what we are about, and intellectuals will play a crucial role in putting their finger on the pulse.

But we would stress the participatory and inclusive nature of the process upon which Democratic Dialogue is embarked. There is a role, of course, for academics—as there is for politicians and church representatives—but there also has to be a role for the excluded groups in our society, such as the community and voluntary sectors, trade unions and even interested individuals.

Whether the format, in future, is brainstorming sessions, seminars, focus groups or whatever, we mustengage wider interests and grassroots voices in the preparation of our publications, as we address the substantive issues that confront us. We hope that our round table in our offices in University Street in Belfast will quickly become worn through the discussions around it.

But, thirdly, Democratic Dialogue is not just a debating society. If the work it generates does not appear relevant or useful, then it will have failed to hit the target. It has, in other words, to make an impact. It is not, nor can it be, a campaigning organisation. But it does not intend to produce publications that will simply gather dust on the shelf.

Nevertheless, if Democratic Dialogue should not reinvent the wheel, at the risk

of mixing metaphors, it must be prepared to grasp the nettle—and focus on the key, critical issues that face us.

The first category is those issues which are widely recognised as crunch political concerns, but are often deemed too difficult for polite conversation. Whatever other things Democratic Dialogue can promise to be, polite is certainly not going to be one of them.

The second is those issues which have been historically neglected because of the narrow focus of the 'troubles' political agenda, or because of the marginalised character of those groups who have articulated them. Whatever the rights and wrongs of that—mostly wrongs in our view—in neither case is such negligence appropriate to the new context and the demands it places upon us all.

This leads me on to what the management committee thought would be a useful programme of work for the coming months.

Beginning later in the year, we envisage a report emerging every two months or so on a substantive theme. Suggested topics which we have flagged up initially include social exclusion, 'creating positive cultures', women in Northern Ireland life, 'reconstituting politics' and the fair employment review. Let me explain the basis of our selection.

• *Social exclusion* has become a critical issue which hasn't really been addressed by any of the political parties—or indeed, at a conceptual level, by any of the voluntary sector groups. Particularly in the context of the new European peace-and-reconciliation funding package for Northern Ireland—since the socially excluded are a target group within that measure—it is incumbent on Democratic Dialogue to address this and look at who exactly is excluded, and how they are affected. This is going to be a very challenging subject.

• Identity politics are another key concern, which are never far removed from the reality of life in Northern Ireland. This summer's clashes in Belfast have reminded us of the power of identity politics, and its ability to sustain tension and threat. Parity of esteem has become the buzz phrase, but we have a long way to go to determine how we *create positive cultures*—how, in practice, we address these deeply felt perceptions of identity in a time of rapid and, for many, unsettling change.

The position of *women in Northern Ireland* is another neglected area. Northern Ireland's biggest oppressed minority—its female majority—has a very big claim to a portion of the peace dividend. It has been women who have, to a large extent, borne the brunt of keeping the sunny side up in the hot spots of Northern Ireland. And it is to the key issues of addressing how we engage women in the political process, how we engage women in public life in Northern Ireland, that Democratic Dialogue feels we need to turn.

• Fourthly, *reconstituting politics*. Must post-ceasefire politics be the same as pre-ceasefire politics? The obvious answer is no. But to talk of reconstituting politics raises far more questions than ready answers. What sort of principles should a new politics be based on? How should these be written down and translated into reality, and what new roles emerge for political parties and the wider public? The whole arena of participatory politics engages people right across the spectrum of life in Northern Ireland. One of the emerging themes is: how does one involve everyone in the political process? Long since has gone the 19th-century notion of the parliamentarian who holds the key to public life. There has to be a role for everyone.

• Finally, *fair employment*. The idea seems to have become widely accepted, yet recent debate in the United States reminds us how very fraught the associated issues remain. The 1989 Northern Ireland legislation is under review by the Stanley Advisory Commission on Human Rights. It is certain to raise difficult challenges.

These were some of our ideas for a programme of work for the coming year, stemming from the criteria I outlined earlier. In such a rolling programme, there would be room for adjustment over time, as well as the incorporation of smaller or perhaps less public pieces of work. In particular, there would be scope for specifically contracted work, which, if Democratic Dialogue is to have a future beyond its initial two-year span, will have to loom larger over time.

The process is important too: Democratic Dialogue will continue to be grateful for comments as to how it does things and what it does. We hope that will be a continuing conversation.

Prof Giddens talked about how, in some global hotspots, bullets have been substituted by talk. It called to mind an

expression of Winston Churchill: "Jaw - jaw is much better than war-war." A more contemporary illustration is perhaps the current BT advertisement, with Bob Hoskins: "It's good to talk."

Democratic Dialogue believes it *is* good to talk. But we don't just want to talk: we want to listen too. DD

Debating points

Kate Fearon

'You are being too ambitious'; 'you are not being ambitious enough'. 'You must stay at grassroots level'; 'you must involve the middle classes'. 'You must work with politicians, not against them'; 'you must seek an alternative to the political party structure'.

This section records the issues which the conference participants identified as important, in both the plenary session and their completed evaluation sheets: what they said on the proposed agenda of Democratic Dialogue, the role of young people, the basic principles of democracy itself and—overarching all these—the absolute need for dialogue at any and all levels.

Below, we highlight some of the comments, suggestions and questions the participants offered, together with some of the answers from the invited speakers, grouped according to the major themes which emerged.

Although young people had been identified by Democratic Dialogue as key contributors to the conference, various factors—not least that it was examination season—led to their being underrepresented on the day. However, those who were there had no hesitation in expressing typical youth perspectives:

I am a 23-year-old woman in Northern Ireland who is very, very interested in politics, but currently there is no political party in this state that I could vote for. That means I've no stake in my future. There is a group of people in Northern Ireland that have been

totally excluded from politics or anything else that has happened in the last 25 years: young people. I want to know what Democratic Dialogue are going to do for the young people in Northern Ireland. Are they going to consult them?

This viewpoint was echoed by older participants, who spoke of a different kind of agenda young people might have:

> *The existing political agenda, not only in Northern Ireland but in large parts of the world, is perceived by young people as being of very limited relevance to their experience, for example because they live in a more global world, they don't accept traditional structures and so on. We need to find ways of specifically trying to encourage dialogue amongst young people around issues that young people themselves identify as being crucial. The question of the different kind of agenda young people will tend to present, and how Democratic Dialogue can best create a forum which could address that issue, is something that we need to explore.*

Other delegates prioritised the role of young people to an even greater degree:

> *Our young people are our future. The young people are the people that we want to work for, to ensure that they don't have to go through the same agony and horrors, and terrorism and tragedy, that we have had to go through. I can sympathise with the*

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Young, gifted and ... hacked off with local politics

young people when they say that no political party is paying attention to the bread-and-butter issues.

The idea of a changing world-view, for both older and younger generations, was developed further: we are moving away from traditional thinking, and in this younger people are taking the lead. It is something Democratic Dialogue should maintain and develop. As one attendee put it,

I want to say that older people would have no difficulty in subscribing to a youthful agenda, and in that sense I would like to congratulate Democratic Dialogue on taking the first steps to establishing a youthful and new agenda. I took on board the remarks that were made about the changing position and the changing global atmosphere that we live in and the fact that greater and greater numbers of people are not seeing the world—and this goes for older people as well—in the same traditional terms as it was seen hitherto.

Globalisation, touched on by Anthony Giddens, was the subject of further discussion during the ensuing debate. Both the positive and negative offshoots of this new, yet inescapable, phenomenon were illustrated by Prof Giddens—for example, global co-operation as evidenced by the economic ties of a structure such as the European Union, and, conversely, the ignorance, alienation and sometimes violence of fundamentalism:

Globalisation doesn't mean, of course, the development of big systems. It means a shake-out of local systems. If you get demands for, say, local autonomy, local nationalism, what do they represent? Localisation. An emphasis on the significance of local initiative, the resurgence of various forms, anyway, of local organisation—these are made possible precisely by globalisation. One shouldn't exaggerate, but as for the idea of partnership as has been described—a sort of network of authority—some of the most successful sites of economic development in the European Union are those that precisely apply such a model.

In previous times you got along with other people, often just from being separate from them. Geographical separation was the condition of a globally cosmopolitan world. It can no

longer be so when everyone is in touch with one another, especially through electronic media. It's a very different situation for us, and consideration of fundamentalism is really very important. It has application in any domain. It doesn't have to be religious fundamentalism, it doesn't have to be ethnic fundamentalism; it can invade any domain where there's a refusal of dialogue.

In response to a question on social exclusion—particularly in terms of the long-term unemployed, Rory O'Donnell argued that the notion that all the unemployed were excluded, and not represented in dialogues between employers and government (in the republic), was debatable. He felt the trade unions could argue, with some merit, that many unemployed people were represented through the unemployed centres they ran. He argued that the difficult issue was that unemployed people were excluded much more from access to everyday things than from these bargaining processes.

Mr O'Donnell suggested that there was a "functional logic to this kind of partnership" between the employers, trade unions and the state, even if at that level the unemployed remained excluded. In local partnerships, however, representation was quite different, with community groups, unemployed groups and so on represented, as was entirely appropriate. He felt the challenge was to find ways of representing the socially excluded that were meaningful and effective.

Expanding on his notion of dialogic democracy—which he distinguished from participatory democracy—Prof Giddens again referred to how the life-plan systems of today "aren't the same as they used to be". In many domains, there was a renegotiation of authority, in which it was recognised that both sides had contributions to be made. This not only applied in business, but in the family and gender relationships, and in many other domains of the modern world—where in essence what was at stake was a negotiated system of authority. The distinction between participatory democracy and dialogic democracy was that the latter required institutionalised fora in which people not only participated but *discussed* with one another and reached decisions—by the force of better argument, rather than by force itself.

The core of the discussion, however, focused firmly on the need for dialogue—with, in particular, the idea that Democratic Dialogue should pioneer a regular forum for discussion. Contributions were extensive, yet self-explanatory. People were, contrary to common opinion, very sure of what they wanted, as the excerpts below demonstrate:

• I think it goes without saying that in the last ten months big and small initiatives have been very useful in underpinning the peace process. I think that there's an obvious need for more dialogue at this level. At this particular time, there's an imbalance in the process of dialogue that is actually taking place in the country. There is an absence of seriousness on the part of the British government in terms of their contribution to the process of dialogue, which is absolutely essential if we're going to go forward to find a political settlement to this long-standing conflict. I thought it was very interesting the way Prof Giddens linked together the global, the local and the personal. What has happened in the past 10 months, arising out of 25 years of conflict, is that expectations have arisen that the opportunities provided by the two ceasefires will indeed bring more dialogue—bring more people out to discuss, in a more serious way, institutions which do reflect the diversity of the Irish people, and can, actually, help ensure that we don't find ourselves slipping back to events prior to August of last year.

• We welcome dialogue and we welcome the fact that Democratic Dialogue is going to promote it. There isn't enough of it. Very few people are involved in dialogue: political party membership, for example, is very low. We should let people practise dialogue, work out different ways of facing procedures, different ways of making decisions and also look at the political parties—how they are structured, the membership—because people have wanted to get involved for a long time. At the same time they haven't heard anybody offer a satisfactory alternative to political parties.

• As a coalface community worker, one who has lived and worked in north Belfast over some of the most hectic times, witnessing the violence at first hand, I would refer you to a statement in the Frameworks document, which

states that the British government will act as facilitator in conjunction with the Irish government, the Americans and Europe to allow the people from here to establish a system for themselves. Regarding what delegates said when they stated that dialogue was not being allowed, I would ask Democratic Dialogue to urge the government, to make representations to the government to please start getting their act together and please let people talk because, if we don't talk, we're going to go back to where we were before. No preconditions. We don't need them.

• There are some people who are interested in the academic world-view. Some people will be very interested in the practicalities at local level. If you try and bring these two together in discussion, it won't work. You'll be working at two different levels. So we have to get together and think intelligently about who we get together and talk about different aspects, and also at what levels they will be discussing it. Then you should bring those together to get the true direction that we should be taking. In order for this to work, we will have to encourage a self-belief in the people of Northern Ireland that they can make the change.

• The main constitutional parties don't want to get involved in dialogue, particularly with community workers and the smaller parties. Is there any possibility that Democratic Dialogue could set up an alternative forum for so-called round-table talks and any future Northern Ireland assembly? There is a difference between representative democracy and participatory democracy, and elected representatives have never represented the people of Northern Ireland.

Democratic Dialogue did mean this as a genuinely consultative conference, and we took careful note of what people said. We have by no means presented an exhaustive account of the day's proceedings in this rather eclectic sample of quotes, themes, suggestions and questions—even some answers—in this section. We hope, however, that it reflects the experience of those present, and that it conveys, to those who were not, a flavour, not only of the day but also of the organisation.

Democratic Dialogue certainly acquired a definite taste of what people

in Northern Ireland might want from it. It will continue to identify and create platforms for the promotion of dialogue. DD

Revising opinions

Robin Wilson

On the strength of the foregoing feedback, Democratic Dialogue's management committee revised its workplan in two ways.

First, the most popular theme recorded on conference participants' evaluation sheets—where they could prioritise the proposals Ms Donaghy advanced on behalf of the committee, or nominate their own—turned out to be 'reconstituting politics'. This, plus the strong calls for political dialogue at the conference, led the committee to push this theme up its agenda, following only the social exclusion report (the latter having such strong topicality in the context of the European Union peace package).

The idea of a parallel political forum, suggested at the conference, may gel neatly with preparatory work on this report. Such a forum could give the smaller parties more of a say—another theme raised, by the 'fringe' parties, at the conference—as well as providing a voice for interested citizens. It could look at cross-party concerns, like the lack of attraction of young people and women into Northern Ireland politics. And, by not being structured as a negotiating table, it might generate broader multi-party involvement more quickly than the conventional talks-table structure might permit. Views on this idea—from party and non-party sources—would be very welcome.

Secondly, no doubt in part because of the Standing Advisory Commission review of the issue, fair employment was not seen as a priority for DD. But, as the conference debate highlighted, issues around young people and distinct youth agendas were a common concern. So the

committee decided to substitute a report in that broad area, with the precise themes to be worked out through establishing a discussion group of young people themselves and those involved in education. Anyone interested in taking part in that group should contact the DD office.

Thus the revised DD programme, with provisional publication dates, is:

1. Social Exclusion, Social Inclusion	**End September 1995**
2. Reconstituting Politics	**November 1995**
3. Creating Positive Cultures	**January 1996**
4. Women in Public Life	**March 1996**
5. Youth and Education	**May 1996**

Updates on these reports, and associated opportunities for participation, will be available in the DD newsletter. Subscription details, including for the reports themselves, are included in the enclosed form.

Early forthcoming events include a seminar in September to discuss the draft elements of the social exclusion report, and a public event in Derry on the 'reconstituting politics' theme.

Anyone who would like to take part in any of these events, or who would like more information, or who has further comment on DD's plans, should contact Kate Fearon or myself at the DD office (details on inside front cover). DD

Appendix 1: DD mission statement

The mission statement of Democratic Dialogue is as follows:

The formation of Democratic Dialogue, using the model of a think tank, coincides with the emergence of a potentially new social, political, economic and cultural order in Northern Ireland. Realising the fullest potential of this new era will require a fully engaged citizenry and an inventive approach by government. Democratic Dialogue seeks to provide an independent inspiration for reflective thinking upon the critical issues confronting the people of Northern Ireland. Adopting an interdisciplinary, intersectoral approach, it seeks to contribute a distinctive and informed perspective on contentious issues, generate new ideas and sketch challenging but achievable scenarios. Its style will be variously catalytic and inclusive, and proactive and change-setting; its success will be measured by its ability to make an impact. DD

Appendix 2: DD management committee

Geraldine Donaghy—director, Confederation of Community Groups in Newry

Employed as director of the Confederation of Community Groups in Newry, Geraldine Donaghy has wide experience in the community and voluntary sector and is currently involved in a major project to develop a centralised multi-purpose resource centre in the town centre. She has a number of regional commitments, which include acting as an independent assessor for the Children in Need appeal, as advisor to the Voluntary Action Studies Unit at the University of Ulster, and as a non-executive director of the Southern Health and Social Services Board.

Sammy Douglas—team leader, East Belfast Development Agency

Sammy Douglas has been involved in community and economic development since the 1970s, beginning in the Sandy Row area of Belfast where he was born and reared. He worked for the first workers' co-operative on the Shankill Road. He was a founding member of East Belfast Development Agency, of which he is now team leader, and was deeply involved in the publication of two major reports, *Community Development in Protestant Areas* and *Poverty Amongst Plenty*. He is a lifelong Linfield supporter and is married with four children.

Breidge Gadd—chief probation officer, Probation Board Northern Ireland

Breidge Gadd has been chief probation officer for Northern Ireland since 1986. She joined the probation service in 1969, and has extensive experience of the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland and Britain, including working in prisons. She has served on the board of the European Conference on Probation, and is currently an expert advisor to a Council of Europe committee looking at the future role of prison and probation in Europe. She was educated at Queen's University and the University of Ulster at Coleraine. She has three children, and lives in Belfast.

Ann Hope—Advisory Services Officer, Irish Congress of Trade Unions

A founder member of the first women's centre in Northern Ireland, Ann Hope is now chair of the Women's Training Group. She has been employed by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions since March 1992, as advisory services officer with responsibility for gender equality. She was

previously employed by the Workers' Educational Association as a tutor/organiser for women's studies and trade union studies. Since 1993 she has been a commissioner with the Equal Opportunities Commission, before which she served as a member of the board of the Health and Safety Agency, as well on the board of governors of the Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education. She has also been a volunteer with the AIDS Helpline.

Beverley Jones—solicitor

Beverley Jones is partner in the solicitors' practice of Jones and Cassidy. This Belfast-based law firm specialises in discrimination law. She was previously chief legal officer of the Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland, where she participated in the formulation of policy and litigation strategies in the area of sex discrimination. She holds a masters in human rights and discrimination law from Queen's University. She has acted as chair of DD since its inception.

Dr Paula Kilbane—chief executive, Eastern Health and Social Services Board

Paula Kilbane qualified in medicine at Queen's University. She undertook postgraduate training in public health medicine in London, working there for 10 years in academic and service appointments. She returned to Northern Ireland in 1986, and worked in the Eastern Health and Social Services Board as a consultant. She became director of public health in the Southern Health and Social Services Board in 1990. She was appointed chief executive in 1993, moving to the same position in the Eastern Health and Social Services Board in 1995.

Declan McGonagle—director, Irish Museum of Modern Art

Declan McGonagle was born and grew up in Derry. He studied painting at the College of Art in Belfast in the 1970s, lectured in the Regional Technical College in Letterkenny and was a founding member of the Orchard Gallery in Derry in 1978. In 1984, he went to the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London as director of exhibitions. On his return to Derry, he developed a visual arts programme for the city, including education, community and public arts initiatives. In 1987, he was shortlisted for the Tate Gallery's Turner Prize for "making Derry an international centre for the artist". He was appointed first director of the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin in 1990. He lectures regularly on contemporary visual arts.

Elizabeth Meehan—professor, Department of Politics, Queen's University

Elizabeth Meehan has been a professor in the Politics Department at Queen's since 1991. She is also the holder of QUB's Jean Monnet chair in European social policy. Before moving to Belfast, she lectured at Bath University and was a Hallsworth Fellow at Manchester University. Her

main publications are in the fields of equal opportunity policies, women and politics, and citizenship, in the contexts of the United States, the UK and the European Union. She is chair of the Political Studies Association of the UK, a member of the research programmes board of the Economic and Social Research Council, a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, a trustee of Charter 88 Trust, and a commissioner on the Northern Ireland Fair Employment Commission.

Michael Morrissey—senior lecturer, social policy and administration, University of Ulster

In his work, Mike Morrissey is involved with local trade unions, particularly the Amalgamated Transport and General Workers' Union, and sits on the management committees of the Belfast Unemployed Centre, the Community Information Technology Unit, Community Training and Research Services, and Charities Evaluation Services. His principal research interests include poverty, unemployment in local labour markets and local area regeneration.

Eilish Rooney—lecturer, adult education and community development, UU

Eilish Rooney has been a lecturer in the School of Social and Community Development Science at the University of Ulster since 1985, where she has developed the Diploma in Community Development and Education. Her recent research has focused on community, women and politics in Northern Ireland.

Paul Sweeney—Department of Environment advisor on community development and urban regeneration

Paul Sweeney is a social administration graduate from the University of Ulster. Before moving to Belfast in 1983, to take up an appointment with the Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust, he worked in the voluntary sector in his native Derry. He served as director of NIVT from 1987 to 1994, and is currently on secondment to the Department of Environment, acting as an advisor on community development and urban regeneration programmes.

Paul Teague—professor of economics, UU

Paul Teague taught at the London School of Economics, Cranfield School of Economics and the University of Massachusetts before taking a post at the University of Ulster, where he now holds a chair in economics. His main research interests are European integration and labour markets and the two Irish economies. His publications include **The Big Market: 1992** and **The Future of the European Community: European integration and national labour market systems**. He is completing a book on labour markets and economic performance in Ireland. DD

Appendix 3: DD patrons

Sir Kenneth Bloomfield

Sir Kenneth Bloomfield was secretary to the power-sharing Executive in 1974, permanent secretary of the Department of Environment and of Economic Development, and head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service from 1984 until 1991. He is BBC national governor for Northern Ireland, chair of the Northern Ireland Higher Education Council, and a board member of Green Park Healthcare Trust and the Bank of Ireland (Northern Ireland). He also sits on the Law Reform Advisory Committee, and is a member of the advisory committee for the (UK) inquiry into the implementation of constitutional reform. His **Stormont in Crisis: a memoir** was published in 1994.

Eilis Gallagher

Eilis Gallagher was assistant director of social services in the Western Health and Social Services Board. She was chair of the advisory committee set up by the Department of the Environment in 1986 to examine issues of concern to the travelling community, and remains an active member of that committee. In 1984 she received an MBE for her work for people with disabilities, and in 1991 an OBE for her work on the travelling community. She is a past president and current member of the Londonderry Soroptomist Club, and is vice-chair of the Family Centre in Gobnascale.

Dr Maurice Hayes

Maurice Hayes was town clerk of Downpatrick from 1955 to 1973, and in 1969 was appointed first chair of the Community Relations Commission. He is a former Northern Ireland ombudsman, was assistant secretary to the power-sharing Executive in 1974, advisor to the chair of the Constitutional Convention in 1975, and permanent secretary of the Department of Health and Social Services. He has been involved with numerous public and academic bodies, including the BBC, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and the Linen Hall Library. He recently published the second part of his autobiography, **Minority Verdict: experiences of a Catholic public servant**.

Jennifer Johnston

The daughter of the writer Denis Johnston and the actor/director Shelah Richards, Jennifer Johnston was born in Dublin in 1930. After early education at Parkhouse School, and Trinity College in Dublin, she went on to become a prizewinnng novelist. Perhaps best recognised for her **How Many Miles to Babylon**, she has also written short stories and plays. Her tenth novel is due in September.

Eilis McDermott QC

Eilis McDermott was born in Derry City in 1950, becoming a student at Queen's University in 1968, from where she graduated in 1972. Since 1974 she has been a barrister, working in Northern Ireland, where she became the first woman QC. She has three children.

Sir George Quigley

After graduating from Queen's in history, and submitting a thesis in mediaeval history, Sir George Quigley was successively permanent secretary to four Northern Ireland departments: Manpower Services, Commerce, Finance, and Finance and Personnel. He now works as chief executive and chair of the Ulster Bank. He is also chair of the Northern Ireland Economic Council. DD

Contributors

Anthony Giddens

One of the most prominent British social thinkers of the last quarter century, Anthony Giddens is professor of sociology at Cambridge University and head of King's College. A prolific writer, his more recent publications include **The Nation-state and Violence** (1985), **Modernity and Self-identity** (1991), **The Transformation of Intimacy** (1992) and, most recently, **Beyond Left and Right** (1994).

Rory O'Donnell

After studying in Dublin, London and Cambridge, Rory O'Donnell became a lecturer in economics at University College, Galway, before taking up a post as senior research officer at the Economic and Social Research Institute. He moved from there to being an economist at the National Economic and Social Council, of which he is now director.

Geraldine Donaghy—see p 49.

Robin Wilson—DD director

Robin Wilson was for eight years editor of *Fortnight* magazine. He was co-founder of Initiative '92, which established the Opsahl Commission. He was initial Northern Ireland correspondent of the *Independent on Sunday* and has provided freelance commentary on Northern Ireland for numerous British, Irish and international media. He is a member of the executive of the British Irish Association and the northern committee of the Irish Association.

Kate Fearon—DD assistant director

A former president of Queen's Student Union, Kate Fearon worked as women's rights officer for the Union of Students in Ireland before taking up her position at Democratic Dialogue. Her interests include equal opportunities, health and education. She is a member of the management committees of the Brook Advisory Centre in Belfast and the first Higher Education Authority Equality Unit in the republic. DD