

Towards a shared future

(2) Confronting sectarianism

compiled by

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Introduction

The 100 documents produced to date as part of the *Island Pamphlets* series have been compiled from over 400 small-group discussions held at community level over the past twenty years. In these discussions the myriad problems facing Northern Irish society have been discussed in great depth, and given rise to a complex range of responses. Indeed, more questions have emerged than answers. Given the recent upsurge in inter-communal conflict, however, some of the more fundamental questions need to be addressed with a new urgency. Where are we going as a society? What do we want for our future? How do we envisage getting there? These questions are not just for politicians and communities to address – each one of us has to ask whether our own attitudes assist or hinder moves to reach a new accommodation and build a more tolerant society.

In an effort to assist this process, some forty individuals working at the grassroots in Belfast were interviewed, each being asked two specific questions:

(1) What do you believe to be the difficult questions our two communities must address if we are to move to a shared future?

(2) How do you believe we can best confront the legacy of sectarianism?

The initial intention was to publish the answers in one pamphlet. However, more material was gathered than anticipated, and it was decided to spread the responses over two pamphlets (Nos. 101 and 102), with each question being accorded its own document, a slightly problematic approach given that many of the interviewees saw the two questions as inextricably linked.

Michael Hall *Farset Community Think Tanks Co-ordinator*

Note: The interviewees were interviewed sometimes singly, sometimes in pairs, and their contributions collated under themes. Normal practice in the pamphlets is not to attribute any of the quotes. However, a few people who read the drafts felt that this created some confusion, given that people from both communities were involved. Accordingly, I have prefaced each quote by one of four letters: [**L**] representing a member, or former member, of a loyalist organisation; [**R**] a member, or former member, of a republican organisation; [**C**] a community worker based largely in the Catholic/Nationalist community; and [**P**] a community worker based largely in the Protestant/Unionist community. This is not entirely satisfactory, as *all* of the interviewees are involved in community work of some kind, and a number of them would see their work as embracing both communities.

A brief overview of events often referred to in this pamphlet

Out of 2500 Loyal Order parades held annually across Northern Ireland, only 5% are considered contentious. One of them is a feeder parade by three North Belfast lodges making their way into the city centre on the Twelfth [of July], where they join with other lodges and proceed to the 'Field' on the outskirts of Belfast, for refreshments and speeches. The outward (and return) route of this feeder parade takes it past Ardoyne shops, at an interface between the Protestant and Catholic communities. In recent years the parade has occasioned a nationalist counter-protest and frequent disorder. In the lead-up to **12 July 2012** a nationalist residents' group again announced that it would be holding a large counter-demonstration and march.

Given this history, the Parades Commission (set up by government to adjudicate on contentious parades) determined that the return parade must be completed by 4pm. The Orange Order condemned this ruling, claiming that it did not give their members time to attend the celebrations at the Field. After some deliberation the Order decided that it would 'bus' a token number of the lodge members back to Ardoyne just before 4pm, where they would parade the contested stretch before being bused back to the Field.

Soon after the token parade had taken place serious rioting broke out, with petrol bombs thrown and the police using water cannons. Three cars were hijacked (with one set on fire) by nationalist youths and a dissident republican gunman fired ten shots at police.

In a separate incident in North Belfast a Shankill Road-based loyalist band was filmed marching in circles outside St. Patrick's Catholic Church, and playing a tune to which onlookers sang sectarian lyrics.

Members of this band were later interviewed as part of BBC1's *The Nolan Show*. The programme was notable for both the fraught studio exchanges, and the negative opinions expressed by the young bandsmen, who claimed that Protestant culture was in retreat and under threat.

In its determination regarding a Royal Black Institution parade on **25 August**, part of which would also pass St. Patrick's, the Parades Commission stipulated that this band should not take part, and that no music be played outside the church. These rulings were ignored.

On **2 September**, a Nationalist parade, organised by the Henry Joy McCracken Flute Band and Republican Network for Unity, took place in North Belfast. It had originally been deemed uncontroversial by the Parades Commission, but, given the prevailing tensions between the two communities in North Belfast, the outcome was three nights of the most serious rioting seen for years (largely centred around the Carlisle Circus/Denmark Street area).

On **6 September** The Royal Black Institution apologised to St. Patrick's Church for what had transpired on 25 August. Loyal Order representatives later met with the parish priest and some of the parishioners, but not members of the nearby Carrick Hill residents' group.

On **29 September** 30,000 people took part in a march through Belfast to mark the centenary of the signing of the Ulster Covenant. The march passed off peacefully. However, a number of bands broke a Parades Commission determination that only hymns should be played going past St. Matthew's Catholic Church in East Belfast. A small crowd of Protestants were also present outside the church, urging bands to break the determination, and one bandsman was photographed urinating at the church gates.

On **1 October**, Orange Order Grand Chaplain Rev. Mervyn Gibson visited St. Matthew's Church to apologise for the behaviour of the bandsman.

All interviews were completed before the murder of prison officer David Black.

Confronting Sectarianism

Admitting to the problem

Most interviewees accepted that sectarianism was deeply embedded.

- [P] We have to acknowledge our sectarianism. All of us harbour it, some to a deeper extent than others; scratch the surface and we will find it lurking there. Having acknowledged its existence, we might then begin to find ways of addressing it, and even move towards eradicating it. But we must admit to it first. It's like an alcoholic: they will never begin the process of recovery until they acknowledge that they have that illness. Otherwise they go off in great circles of denial and never get anywhere.

- [P] There is a core in each community who don't believe in a shared future. I would say it will take generations to erase that, if it can even be done. You have buzz words now to the fore, such as 'cross-community work'. But years ago we did cross-community and cross-border work long before there was funding available. We did it because we felt it was the right thing to do. But some people weren't happy that we wanted to work with Catholics, with 'Fenians'. And when we went across the border, to work with people in Drogheda on children's holiday schemes, we faced bitter criticism. Sectarian attitudes were rife – and still are. And it exists on *both* sides. I know a lot of people from Carrick Hill, I have been to funerals of people I greatly admired there. But last month I heard people from *both* sides using language at each other which was horrendous. I think when I am being lowered into my grave the problem will still be there.

- [P] The churches fiddle about, trying to, as they see it, 'bridge the sectarian divide'. But there are plenty of pious church-goers who are not all that fussed on such efforts, though they will not say it openly. You have these 'respectable' Protestants, and 'respectable' Catholics, who claim that sectarianism is 'nothing to do with us' – it is always somebody else's problem. The middle class distance themselves from it: to them, it is mainly a problem of the working class. But the Malone Road types can be just as sectarian – in more subtle ways – as people from the Shankill and the Falls.

- [L] According to the world press, Northern Ireland is held up as a model of good practice for the eradication of sectarianism, of the issues that led to the conflict in 1969. But, even leaving aside divisions up at Stormont, that is by no means the reality on the ground. In my opinion there are communities, particularly

within North and West Belfast, where sectarianism is as rife as it was in '69. And I think there needs to be a serious knuckle-down from political leaders to eradicate sectarianism. Because Irish violence is cyclical and my fear – and some of your pamphlets have described it in detail – is that there is a generation of young people and twenty-somethings out there who currently believe they have missed out on something. Time out of number when we engage with young people – encouraging them not to get involved in violence – we are told quite bluntly: 'Well, how come it was okay when you f**kers done it?' There is a massive job of work to be done in tackling the root causes of sectarianism. And if we don't succeed my fear is that a significant upturn in dissident republican violence will almost inevitably lead to a mirror-image response within the loyalist community. And there are a number of factors which feed into that. Parading is a massive issue for Protestants/unionists/loyalists, and it could so easily be used as a catalyst for people opposed to the peace process. And as for the Assembly's CSI [Cohesion, Sharing and Integration] document, I don't know where it's at. There are parties talking about it, there are parties have walked away from it. It needs to be given some major effort to make it a reality. Because if it is not brought forward and is not implemented on the ground I have a fear that we will see a repeat of the cycle of Irish violence.

• [L] If you take anyone in this society and cut them deep enough you are likely to find a bigot. And we have to be honest: some people in this society hate each other. That's another reason why Denmark Street happened. Many people just hate each other. What is that down to? Sectarianism. What is sectarianism about? Putting the blame on others: *they* are responsible

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for my condition; *they* are responsible for the reason I live like this; *they* are responsible for why my culture is being denied. That's the reality. And none of that has been dealt with by the Good Friday Agreement, in the sense that since then nobody has confronted those issues. This might all sound doom and gloom, but it *is* doom and gloom, and until somebody puts the light on we are not going to see a way forward, for we are all scrambling around in the dark. Leadership needs to come from those who are in power, otherwise things are going to get worse. However, I'm not sure that the people in power are interested in giving leadership to anyone other than their own communities.

• [L] People need to recognise that they are sectarian, and the difficulty is that for republicans to justify the conflict they need to deny that *they too* were sectarian. I take issue with that. They drove past shopping centres in Catholic areas and planted bombs in what they perceived to be Protestant towns. If they just wanted to damage the economy they wouldn't have needed to go out of West Belfast. But if they were deliberately driving to Protestant towns then it was sectarian.

• [P] The difficult questions for me lie around dealing with the legacy of not just sectarianism but the very deep legacy of hurt and pain, and how we come to address all such things. I would be widely supportive of [Sinn Féin chairman] Declan Kearney's initiative reaching out to unionism, but when I met with him I told him that 'while I respect what you are trying to do, unionists are going to come to this with a fair amount of scepticism, and you're going to have to appreciate that that's the case, because you can't have been involved in a murderous campaign for forty years and then all of a sudden say now we're going to sit down and have nice cosy conversations about how we can share this piece of land – because the hurt and the pain are still going to be there for people.' And I know it is equally the case in the nationalist community. We need to find a way beyond all that. And, for me, moving beyond it won't just happen by chance, won't happen by us forgetting about it, it needs to be discussed and debated. We will probably never come to a mutual understanding of what happened, and will probably have to 'agree to disagree' at some level, but somewhere down the line we need to have those uncomfortable conversations.

• [P] Republicans like to see themselves as purists: they were fighting an occupying force, and the 'armed struggle' had nothing to do with sectarianism. I remember bringing a group of people over to Conway Mill for a discussion. And one of our people from Tiger's Bay had been shot in the back when he was sixteen. He and a group of friends were standing outside a chippy, and a car went down and the IRA opened up on them. As he was telling his story the question of sectarianism came up and a former member of the IRA said that the IRA and republicans were not sectarian, because to be a republican you couldn't be sectarian, you had to believe in the 'unity of Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter'. I said, 'But how can you account for what you have just heard? That group of young people, who most people would know to be Protestants, were shot at indiscriminately. They weren't members of the British Army or the police, these were just young Protestants and they were shot by republicans. If that wasn't sectarian, what was it?' And she replied, 'I am not saying that there were *no* republicans who didn't have sectarian views, what I am saying is that those of us who became republicans and took part in the conflict didn't do it for sectarian reasons.' To be quite honest, I would dispute that. Those purist attitudes are out there. And it is the same on the loyalist side, where people claimed that what they were doing was solely in defence of the Protestant community, rather than because they hated Catholics. *Neither* community had to do all that was done. What we should have been doing in the seventies was to try and build a shared future *then*, rather than allow events to spiral into more violence.

• [R] I'm not saying we weren't sectarian, or didn't carry out sectarian attacks – and I mean republicans as a whole not just the INLA – but a lot of people felt their communities were in danger, and to many of us the only reason loyalist organisations seemed to exist was to kill Catholics. We had to retaliate.

- [R] Nobody can deny that within the republican movement there are sectarian individuals. The *ethos* of republicanism is certainly non-sectarian, but there are undoubtedly republicans who hold sectarian views. I have friends who would very much see themselves as republican and would claim they are non-sectarian, yet I am constantly having to check them about sectarian comments and attitudes.
- [R] During one of the first encounters between republican and loyalist ex-prisoners which took place after the ceasefires, this guy, who had given a lifetime to the struggle, started to tell his story. And he was being very genuine and sincere – but in the middle of his story he admitted to the sectarian killing of a Protestant. And if you could have seen the looks on the faces of the Provies in that room! He told me later that he was accosted by them afterwards, and told in no uncertain terms: ‘*Never, ever, say that we were involved in sectarian killings!*’ And the guy felt shattered.
- [R] There is no way that republicans cannot say that some of their decisions, their actions, were not sectarian. Look at Kingsmill – that was sectarian. Now, people might say: no, that was an effort to stop the sectarian murder of Catholics as effectively as possible. But those people were targeted because of their religion, so it was a sectarian attack. If people really wanted to stop sectarian attacks in that area they should have identified those who were carrying them out and executed them instead.
- [P] I was watching a programme a few days ago, and they showed a clip of the booklet, *The Good Friday Agreement*, being printed, and it reminded me of the government TV advert of the two boys skipping over the stones at the Giant’s Causeway, and the voice-over: ‘Wouldn’t it be wonderful if it was like this all the time?’ Yes, it *would* be, but I think at that point in time – I suppose because we had moved from circumstances where people were murdering each other to a point where, to be honest, we tended to look at it through rose-tinted glasses – it was a case of: ‘Let’s throw our arms round each other and we’ll sail off into the sunset and everything will be wonderful.’ The reality was quite different.
- [P] I did a talk at a conference one time. And I was basically talking about the value of life, the value of the human body, and whether anyone had the right to blow it to pieces. I talked about what I found when I served in Cyprus – seeing bodies lying there with no arms or legs. Same as I actually witnessed after the Oxford Street bus station bombing on ‘Bloody Friday’ – I was working nearby and ran out to see if I could help. I remember this man turning to me and saying, ‘I wonder is this an Orange arm or a Green arm?’ Now, he wasn’t trying to be funny; that was his way of handling the trauma he was experiencing. He felt angry at the sectarianism which lay behind the violence. One of my relative’s sons married a Catholic, and was ostracised in his community. The wee lad couldn’t take it and committed suicide – threw himself into the sea. These things are the brutal legacy of sectarian attitudes. That’s what it can lead to.

What is sectarianism?

A range of opinions were voiced as to the nature of sectarianism.

• [C] What is ‘sectarianism’? When we label someone’s behaviour or attitude as ‘sectarian’ there is the assumption that they are motivated by religious bigotry. I would question that. Certainly, for some people, on both sides, there definitely is a religious element to their actions, but for most people I think it is just linked in with the question of identity. For the majority of young people around here [North Belfast], it isn’t really about religion, it’s about who they’re identified as. They just know that the people ‘over there’ are different.

• [C] Another question is: what does a *lack* of sectarianism look like? The way some people talk, it’s as if they blame our different identities for being the root cause of sectarianism. It’s as if they’re saying that if you have any strong identity then there must be something wrong with you. Somehow it would be much better if we all got together in some ‘middle ground’, some mish-mash of nothingness. The reality is that most people possess a strong sense of identity – but what is wrong with holding to a deep-seated identity? Is it not legitimate to do so?

It’s as if they’re saying that if you have any strong identity then there must be something wrong with you. But what is wrong with holding to a deep-seated identity?

• [C] There is this so-called ‘middle ground’ where it is okay to support Ulster at rugby, but if we support Cliftonville or Linfield we are somehow seen as being tribal. I can be passionate about Gaelic football, and passionate about the Irish language, *without* feeling I am a nationalist. But others will say: ‘But all that is a sign of nationalistic fervour.’

• [C] When people say ‘Let’s meet in the middle’, that ‘middle ground’ still assumes an acceptance of the current status quo – that is, in a Northern Ireland context. Why can’t any ‘middle ground’ be seen in terms of a new Ireland? We are *all entitled* to have a position on the constitutional issue.

• [C] I don’t think there is anything wrong with people saying: I am a Unionist, or a Nationalist, and I am going to fight for my cause through politics. I don’t think it is any different from trade unionists confronting the bosses. In the US Democrats and Republicans constantly harangue each other, yet that’s acceptable, it’s seen as evidence of a vibrant democracy. But here, if we have a strong identity or aspiration it is looked upon as something sinister.

• [C] I think people don’t necessarily object to the person, but the historical background. People don’t just look at Orangemen and their values, but the fact that

they have come through years of abuse from loyalists, the state *and* Orangemen. They don't separate the different elements, because they are collectively part of their experience.

- [C] To me, what we call 'sectarianism' is only truly sectarian when it is personalised – people who will say to another person: 'I hate your guts, you Fenian bastard!' or 'I hate your guts, you Orange bastard!' I know people like that, who *are* blatantly sectarian, but I don't think they are the norm. Most people, including most of the young people we work with, just take up an identity position. If you are a Protestant sitting in the White City and you are the recipient of attacks throughout the year, and you feel that people from the Catholic community are behind it, does it make you sectarian to resent them, or is it not normal? And the same the other way.

- [C] People talk about the new ethnic groups coming in and facing prejudice. But that's only part of the picture. Some of these ethnic groups have also *brought in* their own ethnic tensions and divisions. A friend in Monaghan told me that some of the Latvians and Lithuanians there detest each other. Let's challenge what is being brought here as well; it is not exclusively *our* problem.

- [P] We also have to accept that some people are contented to be segregated. We don't necessarily need people to be together all the time.

- [P] But unless people interact they will never start along the road to understanding one another.

- [L] When I was a kid growing up I assumed that every Catholic I saw in the street was either in the IRA or an IRA supporter. That's the sort of belief you get brought up in.

When I was a kid growing up I assumed that every Catholic I saw in the street was either in the IRA or an IRA supporter. That's the sort of belief you get brought up in.

- [L] It was never just simply about Catholics and Protestants: it always seemed to be about *downtrodden* Catholics and a Protestant

'*Ascendancy*'. I grew up in a two-up, two-down; and the house was always soaking with damp. When I was a kid I remember my granny taking the straw out of our mattresses, with a big darning needle, and putting it into bags. I helped her carry them round to the gateway in Downing Street [below Agnes Street] to give to a man who then gave her fresh straw. My grandfather had a suit which went into the pawn on a Monday and came out on a Friday again. So I was hardly brought up as part of the 'Protestant Ascendancy'.

- [R] There's a young crowd round here who wouldn't be republican – indeed, wouldn't even like republican organisations, because of what ONH [Óglaigh na hÉireann] have done to them – yet if Prods came up from the 'Village' looking for a confrontation they would readily get stuck into them. But their response wouldn't necessarily be one of sectarianism, but of territorial and group identity.

A lot of them kids are just trying to get their day in, stealing lead, getting drunk, and they really don't give a shit about *any* organisation, republican or loyalist.

- [R] Some of the older generation knew that the war would end up sectarian, but we were too deaf, too idealistic, to listen. I recall my granda saying to me: 'Look, you are playing chess with the master, and what they will do is drag you into a religious war – the Prods against the Taigs – and then say: "Oh, we had to step in to keep the two sides apart." Why are you killing working-class people who are just as downtrodden as you are?' But we wouldn't listen. We just wanted to get stuck in. And it's sad that there's men on the Shankill Road today just baying to get back into a sectarian war.

- [R] You could see how easily it could revert back. I go into the bar and they're playing the old Celtic music and singing basically sectarian songs and getting them going. And the young lads are then in a mood to fight with other young lads from the Village. No politics involved in it. Cheap cider and the songs and away they go. If you have people who feel that they have no future and are being told that they're just scum who will never amount to anything, you have a new discontented and alienated generation. And sectarian attitudes, when added to all this, will only make matters worse.

- [R] Sectarianism for me is very difficult to understand. I was brought up in unionist East Belfast, just off Ravenhill Avenue, and whenever I got involved in the IRA they were about getting the British out of Ireland, and for me the Brits were the guys with guns on the street and in the helicopters, not the Protestants. I am not saying that all republicans thought like that, but in the main people did not get involved in the IRA to fight with Protestants. But when I was released in 1988 I actually felt there had been an increase in sectarianism among young nationalists, which troubled me. Because even in the dark days of the loyalist murder gangs, for me the way to end all that was not to get rid of the UDA or UVF, for they were a product of their environment – the way to get rid of that was to get rid of the British. To end the connection with Britain and to allow some sort of relationship to develop between nationalism and unionism here.

- [R] I think sectarianism is a deliberate symptom of the wider problem which is the British occupation, the denial of self-determination, and the ongoing presence of capitalism in Ireland. British rule and capitalism requires that the working class be divided, and they have succeeded in that. Orangeism was used as a tool by the capitalist and gentry class for political and economic reasons. There was that whole fabric of relationships between Stormont and the business class, and Orangeism helped them keep the working class focused on petty patriotic mantras and away from real issues.

- [R] The generally-accepted socialist analysis of sectarianism would say that it is purely class driven, in that the ruling class *created* sectarianism to divide the working class, so as to exploit them better. Yet in today's global economy most

capitalists would realise that sectarian division is now an *obstacle* to profit-making. But, rather than seeing sectarianism being slowly eradicated, it *still exists* among the unionist political class. So perhaps sectarianism was never anything to do with ‘divide and rule’ at all – perhaps these people were just bigots?

- [R] You’ve probably right. There’s probably too much put down to exploitation. Maybe it is nothing more than something driven by religious bigotry.
- [R] Look at the DUP. Not only are there some very wealthy people among the leadership, but quite a few ‘men of the cloth’, not forgetting the Rev. Ian himself. Now, I’m sure that many people in the DUP would say, ‘We are religious, we rear our children in a Christian way, and teach them to “love thy neighbour”.’... Yet look at how often the DUP have protested against ecumenism, or gay people, or all things Catholic. You wonder how these people square their fundamentalist Protestantism with the basic precepts of a loving, all-embracing and forgiving Christianity. When the Rev. William McCrea shared a platform with sectarian murderer Billy Wright it didn’t look to me as if he cared much about ‘loving thy neighbour’ – unless he only meant his Protestant neighbours?
- [R] No-one will tell me that the DUP and the Shinnars are not happy with the sectarian carve-up. It guarantees their votes. People think that because the two parties are working closely together it must be great, but it’s not, for it’s a sign that sectarianism is consolidated, it is copper-fastened, it is institutionalised.

Some of the interviewees felt, however, that too much was attributed to religious differences.

- [P] People talk of their despair of ever uniting Protestants and Catholics. Yet vast numbers of Protestants and Catholics are *already* united: they get on with their lives, they work alongside one another, they already do things together. In our own work we have seen that for years people have been more than willing for their children to go away together on cross-community activities. In the ecumenical movement people worship together. There’s a million and one ways people have come together, and yet for some reason we hone in on a bunch of people – on both sides – who *don’t want* to live together. And we pour resources into tackling their intractability, and the more resources we pour into it the more untruths we hear from these same people. And, to be cynical, the more they will claim that if their grant-aid comes to an end the greater the risk of a return to the old ways.

For some reason we hone in on a bunch of people – on both sides – who don’t want to live together. And we pour resources into tackling their intractability.

- [P] It’s easy to confront sectarianism. In fact, sectarianism is a small problem. Sectarianism implies that there is a problem between Protestants and Catholics.

There is *not* a problem between Protestants and Catholics; Farset has proved that they are easily brought together, even during the worst of the Troubles. The problem is those people within both our communities who agitate and put fear in people's minds, and place them in a particular camp. Now, I can't reconcile with those people.

- [P] Okay, there are certainly many examples of people coming together, but there are certainly an awful lot of bigots out there as well. This country is full of different religious groupings, all believing that they each have something special that the others don't have. It is inbuilt in this society, we teach it to our children and bring them up in that environment. Now, not everyone takes the worst out of it and ends up hating everyone else, but it is a potential breeding ground for people to hold judgemental views on other people. And all that is fed by, and in turn feeds, the segregation of people into different areas, who live separately, get schooled separately, learn different versions of history, even sing different songs. Now, all those things can be tackled, but you need a different type of leadership to do that, even to identify them as problems.

- [P] During the worst of the Troubles if a Protestant said to me that he or she hated Catholics, I would ask them, 'Why; what is it you don't like about Catholics?' 'Well, they blow things up!' 'No, they don't,' I would tell them, 'armed republicans who might *also* happen to be Catholics blow things up.' The Troubles weren't driven by religion, there were other reasons. And I'm talking about both sides. Anyway, how can it *really* be about religious differences, when most Protestants don't even know what the inside of their own churches look like, never mind the inside of a Catholic chapel?

The Loyal Orders and parades

Not unsurprisingly, reference to the Orange and other Orders, and the marching/parading issue, repeatedly featured in the opinions expressed.

- [C] One of the things that I think the Protestant/unionist/loyalist community needs to address is the Orange Order and how it impacts on Catholic/nationalist/republican communities. For, to me, Orangeism is one of the most negative parts of what Protestants/unionists call their 'British' or 'Ulster-Scots' culture. And yet when I think of the more positive things about that culture: the Gaelic language being preserved by Protestants, the work ethic, ideas about democracy... things like that, that made them proud to be a part of the island of Ireland. All this is undermined by the negativity of Orangeism and its undercurrent of sectarianism. I think they need to confront that and come to terms with the negative effect Orange marches have on the nationalist/republican community. In my view, it seems to be one of the main stumbling blocks to moving on.

• [R] Can you imagine anyone today starting up an organisation and saying: ‘you can’t join if you’re gay, or overweight, or have a disability’ – they’d hang you out to dry. Yet the Orange Order, who ban Catholics from joining, got £900,000† of European Peace money earlier this year to create ‘dialogue’ – within themselves, by the way – looking at whether they are sectarian. Bloody hell, it doesn’t require a million quid to tell them that! That annoyed people here, who said: we’re providing good decent services that are going to go to the wall due to lack of funding, so how did a divisive organisation like that get all this money?

• [R] Even more funding has just been announced: supposedly to help them explain to others what the Order is all about.†† I find that so ironic, when they can’t even sit down and explain what they are about to a handful of residents!

• [R] The sectarian issue has always been there. You could even take it back to the Plantation, and the siege mentality in the plantation areas, which seems to have maintained itself up to today. But then it became institutionalised under the Unionist regime at Stormont, with the Catholic Church gladly accepting segregation of the schools, for to them it was a case of, ‘what we have, we hold’. On that TV programme [*The Nolan Show*] loyalists were saying that their culture was being squeezed, and they couldn’t do what they used to do – like walk their ‘traditional routes’ and things like that. But they don’t realise that for them to do what they used to do required that the nationalist community be squeezed. The state allowed these people to walk wherever they wanted. There is more awareness of equality issues now: people are saying, ‘Hold on, this isn’t right what you were doing, coat-trailing through nationalist areas.’ It’s like saying that apartheid was squeezed out – of course it was, for it was morally wrong. If walking through nationalist areas and playing sectarian tunes is your culture, well then, stuff your culture, I don’t want any part of it, and don’t see why I should even negotiate or talk about it. We need to be honest about this: Orangeism is not about culture. But when you get young men like on that show, it is frightening; there seems to be a mental block there, they’re not prepared to open up a bit.

• [P] Nationalist views about the Orange Order haven’t changed for decades. Yet the Orange Order, like every other institution in this society, *has* changed. There has been nobody in the Orange Order drummed out in recent years for attending funerals or weddings in Catholic churches. David Trimble, Denis Rogan and others, after the Omagh bomb, went over the border to attend Catholic funerals, and there was no problem. You had a couple of bigots within the Order who

† On 17 April 2012 it was announced that the Orange Order had been given a European Union grant of £884,000 to address the legacy of the Troubles in the Protestant community. William McKeown, grand treasurer, said that ‘The ultimate aim is to allow Protestant communities to... feel able to move forward with inter-community and cross-border reconciliation.’

†† On 31 October, it was announced that the Order was getting almost £4m from Europe’s Peace III programme to develop two interpretative centres in Belfast and County Armagh.

tried to get them thrown out but the conclusion was that they had no charge to answer. Now, that's a milestone, because twenty years ago if you had done that you were out, no matter how well got you were – because it breached a rule that you should 'not countenance by your presence' the Mass, and that got you excluded from the Order. The rule is still there but it is ignored. I have been at more Catholic funerals and weddings than enough and I have openly said so to other Orangemen – and it has never been a problem. Some people criticised Danny Kennedy who went to Constable Kerr's funeral and they tried to get him thrown out of the Order – but again, no charge to answer.

I have been at more Catholic funerals and weddings than enough and I have openly said so to other Orangemen – and it has never been a problem.

• [P] Our community today thinks that the Orange Order is the epitome of Protestantism. When you mention the Orange Order Protestants automatically go into defence mode, irrespective as to whether they are members of the Order or not. They feel that any attack on Loyal Order parades is also an attack on their Protestant heritage. We also have a Parades Commission which is making horrendous decisions in terms of how these parades operate. Its decisions are not credible and they have whipped up a lot of concern in communities, who see it all as an attack by republicans. This in turn damages our efforts to build bridges with the nationalist community, and causes more suspicion and sectarianism. There is no easy way of moving away from that. Especially when some republicans are clearly contesting Orange Order parades as part of a deliberate strategy.

• [P] On the other side of the coin, the Orange Order had a ready made bogey man in the shape of the Catholic Church – a rigid, reactionary institution which they could readily point to as a threat to Protestant culture. Furthermore, the child abuse scandal has revealed how much hurt it also caused to Catholics.

• [R] I don't think the Catholic Church had any wish to get on with Protestants. My mother gained a place in Trinity College, and she was told not to go there by the Catholic Church – because of the perceived Protestant influence in Trinity – but she went anyway. The Catholic Church had just as much to gain from sectarian tensions. It suited the Church to have people's minds deflected away from social issues and into petty patriotism. If you can keep people relatively dumb politically you can build the type of empire in these wee side-streets the Catholic Church wanted, with women knowing their place at home, no-one using contraceptives, and all these ridiculous rules they had. The Catholic Church were sitting pretty, they never showed any urgency to better the lot of their flock – bar a couple of notable exceptions. If anything, they were hostile to progressive forces within society. We know how they chased around the Markets after Joe McCann, condemning his social activism.

- [P] Everything you hear about Protestantism seems to relate to Orange marches and it being a bulwark against Catholicism. Nothing beyond that. I don't hear Protestants telling their people about the likes of Francis Hutcheson, the Presbyterian who became one of the founding fathers of the Scottish Enlightenment, and who was probably the most influential moral philosopher in America in the eighteenth century. Or the impact of the revolutionary ideals of the Presbyterian rebels in America. Or even the profound impact Protestantism had on the consolidation of democratic values and institutions. No, none of this. Just keep feeding people a diet of marches and bands. Sure, that'll do them; they wouldn't understand anything beyond that. Or, worse, they might get radical ideas from it.

This last comment was echoed by a Catholic priest:

- [C] The politicians have redefined Protestant culture. Protestant culture is *not* about insisting on walking down a particular road, Protestant culture is about something quite different. Protestant culture was something which changed the whole face of Europe, and indeed, initiated many fundamental changes throughout the world. But in this country, you hear people saying that being able to get down a particular road is 'Protestant culture'. Sorry, it's not – it was never part of it. Culture has been redefined. Whenever necessary, our lords and masters will redefine culture, will redefine religion, redefine everything, even us. And we have let them get away with it.

Reflections on the summer of 2012 (see overview on page 4)

Events on the Twelfth itself...

- [L] It's respect, respecting each other's culture, each other's faith. Wee niggly things seem to start everything off: the parades, it's always the parades. You have to understand where working-class Protestants or loyalists are coming from, they get frustrated, they see the tide turning in favour of the other tradition. And the Parades Commission haven't helped matters. People think it's only a wee simple thing, a band walking down the road, but it's deeper than that, people are feeling they are being abused the way the Catholic community once claimed to be when the whole Civil Rights thing started. I believe Protestant people are second-class citizens in this country, I really do. I don't agree with the wrecking and rioting and what is being done in our areas. I also think that the PSNI made a real boob on the Twelfth. They let some 2000 dissident republican supporters onto that road, walking down by our community. The police weren't even walking with them. After saying they weren't going to let them out, because cars had been burnt. And people on this side of the divide see that as rewarding these people. I think that loyalism is very frustrated. I am sure it is the same complaint on the other side: 'They're getting this, they're getting that....' Young lads are coming

to us, saying, 'What're you going to do about all this? We're not allowed to walk here, or walk there; they want to ban our culture!' And they take their frustrations out by rioting.

... *the band playing outside the chapel...*

- [L] Sometimes you have to admit that we were wrong. Like that band marching round outside the chapel. How do you defend that? That's a place of worship, and they're doing a circle outside it, and playing the 'Famine Song' and all that. But we try to make all these excuses, and say it was some other tune, or this, that and the other – and we end up a laughing stock.

- [L] Why did Nelson McCausland try to defend the indefensible outside that chapel? Nobody wanted to take responsibility there. Okay, the band mightn't have meant to, but it *did* offend people within the other community, so we have to sit back and say: okay, this did annoy people, so how do we resolve it? Not prolong it or make it worse. Either that, or come out openly and say: 'Okay, we did mean it, so f**k youse!'

- [P] I suppose it's the old 'win/lose' thing: if 'we' apologise here, then 'they' will win something.

- [L] But that's not showing leadership.

... *the Henry Joy McCracken march...*

- [R] It was an anomaly which came apparent to us when we were planning the Henry Joy commemoration in Clifton Street cemetery. We were aware that we were on the edge of a flashpoint area; however, we were not for a second going to compare ourselves to an Orange march going past a sectarian flashpoint; we were going to honour a Protestant, we were going on an anti-sectarian theme, and very openly and deliberately we were announcing the event as an anti-sectarian event. And that was to be done through the speeches, through my own speech in which I emphasised the futility of sectarianism and acknowledged that there had previously been sectarian currents running through republicanism, or nationalism. And confronting that. And this was really to be the central message of the day. But, as we know, for one reason or another, Nelson McCausland began to attack the event the week before it happened, started raising awareness of it, and I believe as a direct result of that, the UVF were waiting for us at Carlisle Circus, and attacked the march and the ceremony. The speeches didn't even have a chance to be read out in full due to concerns for the safety of children present. One of the wreath-bearers was hit with a bottle, and then we had days of ferocious rioting at the bottom of the Crumlin Road. We are now left with this dilemma: that even our best intentions of anti-sectarianism led to an upsurge in loyalist sectarian feeling on the Shankill Road. So the question has to be asked: at what stage do we say that our actions are counter-productive to our anti-sectarian intentions?

I suppose it's the old 'win/lose' thing: if 'we' apologises here, then 'they' will win something.

... *The Nolan Show*...

• [R] There is absolutely no doubt that sectarianism is still to the fore, still hasn't been dealt with. You watched the young people who belonged to that band and some of them too young to remember the conflict, yet bitterly sectarian and still believing the same things their grannies and grandas were told in the forties and fifties: that 'them Taigs' get everything. And one of them actually said that the media, the government, the police, everybody, was in the pocket of the republican movement, that 'them nationalists get everything'. And that's a frightening thing to hear from young Protestant kids, that they believe that kids the same age on the Falls Road are better off than them. I thought we had come a long way to smash and dispel such notions, such bullshit. Every young person in that room was unemployed, like so many in the Falls Road, Short Strand, Ardoyne, wherever. No future for most of them, but yet they can't see that. That kid has been fed all these myths, and like a sponge he has taken it all in. Middle-class Protestants and unionist politicians still play the 'Orange card' when it suits them. It is still tribal politics, and in *Teach na Failte* we are trying our best to educate young people, saying to them: 'Look, that kid from the Shankill is just the same as yourself: he's unemployed, he's no qualifications, he's sent from one government training scheme to another, with no prospect of genuine employment.' And it's sad, for there's two ways they are going to go: either criminality and drug dealing, or they're going to turn towards organisations. From what I hear the UVF is still recruiting heavily in East Belfast, and kids are queuing up to join. And in 2012 I would ask myself 'why?', and why are they accepting them in? But then you don't have Billy Mitchell any more, or David Ervine, people who were progressive.

• [C] The recent stuff was a shock to the system; to have come so far and yet find that there is that underbelly of sectarianism and division still there. We thought we had begun a dialogue on those issues twenty years ago. That kid saying 'the Fenians get everything'. We don't. We have had to fight for everything from traffic lights to whatever. There is no difference between working-class people on either side of the peace walls.

The recent stuff was a shock to the system; to have come so far and yet find that there is that underbelly of sectarianism and division still there.

... *and the Covenant celebrations*

• [C] I have a lot in common with people from the Lower Newtownards Road, more in common than what they think we have. We are all in the same boat in terms of working-class realities. There are no concessions any longer. I remember when I was growing up I couldn't get a job in the Shipyard or anywhere like that. A teacher in school said to me, 'Don't even bother applying, there's little chance a Catholic getting in there.' Yet there was very little difference in our

living conditions. My father was a barman; most people from this community worked in the catering and bar trades because they couldn't get a job in the heavy industries. Now that's not there any more. I don't think there is anything blatant going on nowadays in terms of employment. But the mindset is there, and I watched that Covenant parade and saw people from Pitt Park actually giving one band a hard time because they stopped playing music going past the chapel – and I mean, a really, really hard time: 'Fenian lovers! Cowardly bastards!' And that's the second time I have witnessed that. A few years ago I witnessed it outside the chapel as well. And some of these people who I saw on the road would be known as community workers, and I'm going: Jesus Christ! Even if you think like that, would you express it in such a manner across the street from people you're supposed to be building up relations with?

- [L] There needs to be more people saying that we have to understand where the 'other community' are coming from, we have to meet together and we have to talk about things. Take that micro-group of loyalism standing outside the chapel. When our band walked past they called out 'Play *The Sash!*' but we didn't, we just played a single drum-beat, that was our choice. And they kept calling on us to play *The Sash* and we carried on regardless. And so they booed us. But we cannot let a small group again dictate what is happening in our community. And they are extremists. I would call them right-wing loyalist jihadis. And *why* did they want everyone to play *The Sash* going past a chapel? To prove how 'loyal' we were, how Protestant? I don't need to do any of that to demonstrate how much of a Protestant I am. Certainly I don't need to stand and shout, trying to incite violence at interfaces. It is totally wrong, and there are loads of people like me saying it is wrong. But we need even more people to say that that is wrong.

Two steps backwards...

- [L] If I am honest, during the summer I was very concerned. I have never seen it as bad in working-class unionist areas. It was at boiling point. And it would be easy to blame it all on parading, but I think we need to understand that parading is not the cause but one of the symptoms. It is all of the other things which are happening. I am imagining that if you have that in working-class loyalist communities, you will have exactly the same response on the other side, so both sides get in conflict around certain issues but they are not the real problems. I think that both communities probably feel the same problems and argue the same neglect, but assume that it is *their* community which is being hardest done by. On the Protestant side it is Catholics who 'get everything'; whereas for Catholics it's them Prods who 'want to walk all over us, we need to put our foot down'. People in both communities are directing their anger at each other, and it is very hard to deal with that, because that allows the lowest common sectarian denominator to make things worse. I think there are a number of issues involved. There has been no peace dividend. There is also the issue that there has been no hot-housing

by our politicians of the socio-economic problems which exist in working-class areas. We also know that ‘selection’ at the age of 11 doesn’t work in working-class areas, Catholic or Protestant. There is evidence that Protestant boys do badly. But the political parties won’t confront that problem directly.

- [R] At what stage are you compromising too far? You might genuinely want to end sectarian tensions, but at the same time is it right to capitulate to Orange Order and loyalist threats: ‘If we can’t get marching, there’ll be hell to play.’ Anyway, see trying to say to Ardoyne people in our meetings: let’s have a debate on the counter-productivity of your picket against the Orange march... it’s impossible. The first thing they will say is: ‘Well, it’s okay for you, you don’t live in Ardoyne.’ And they’re right, I can’t argue with that. But the fact is that you have three months out of the year in which the Tories are left free to shove all their shite politics onto us because all our time is spent talking about Brompton Park shops! And that’s all we’re talking about, for three months of the year, while the Tories are getting away with everything.

- [L] When I watched all the parades during the summer and listened to the young bandsmen being interviewed – all of whom were unemployed – I just wondered how much time we spend on identity-related issues or talking about the past, culture and our feeling of righteousness, as opposed to time spent on debating how we can build prosperity, satisfaction, fulfilment – in a way that works for all of us. We have got our priorities all wrong.

- [L] In my opinion the parading thing is bigger than the Orange Order, in the sense that it’s about Protestant culture in general, including the band culture. There are some 660 bands, with something like 30,000 members, and they spend approximately £3.5m a year in the local economy. I learned that six bands spent £60,000 in their area, buying uniforms, which were sourced from local tailors and all that. Bands are not just formed so that people can get up in the morning and torture somebody, there’s a lot of organisation, creativity, fund-raising, goes into it. Bands are a microcosm of our society; we can’t just say that band people are aliens, or all bigots. People join bands for different reasons. There’s different types of bands, world champions among them. Competitions are going on all over the place. The bands are an outlet for young people to learn music, an outlet to draw people away from anti-social behaviour. But in this society what we do is we pick the 1% of something which went wrong and we hammer it, and we ignore the 99% which is doing okay. And so when one band is criticised for seemingly acting in a sectarian manner *all* bands are tarred with the same brush.

- [C] I have come to understand the important part a band can play in some loyalist communities. Take Suffolk: the role that their band plays is central within their community. Previously I would have found that very hard to understand, because in our own community we have so many other things we would look to, say, a sporting organisation like the GAA, or an educational or cultural organisation,

that people would gravitate towards. But within some loyalist communities I can now see that the band is the focal point. So, you need to create a space which allows people there to feel reassured that nobody is going to stop their band marching or nobody is going to stop them expressing their identity. As long as they don't go out of their way to offend anybody else by marching places where they are clearly not wanted.

- [C] I think the only way sectarianism can be dealt with is head on, and it's not just about young people. Our generation and the older generation hold sectarian attitudes which they will pass on to the next generation coming up. I watched *The Nolan Show* and to have a young Protestant say the 'f**ing Fenians are getting everything'... it just took me back twenty years, when we started these debates to try and come to some understanding around culture and identity. Both sides worked hard to build up good relationships between our communities. We can't let all those relationships slip away; we have to constantly work at it.

Both sides worked hard to build up good relationships between our communities. We can't let all those relationships slip away.

Is identity the real issue?

Many interviewees believed that identity-related fears were at the core of the problem.

- [L] I think that the sense of one's identity being under threat is probably the root cause of sectarian animosities. Protestants/unionists/loyalists believe that republicans ultimately want to take away everything that relates to our Britishness or even our sense of being Northern Irish. An example of that was seen recently when Sinn Féin supported the removal of 'Welcome to Northern Ireland' signs along the border with the Republic. Now, if they were genuine in their claims to want to create a new relationship between our two communities – for the purpose of building a shared future – why would they want these signs removed? Unless, of course, the 'shared future' that Sinn Féin are thinking of doesn't allow for the existence of Northern Ireland.
- [P] I challenge you to go into any pub on the Shankill, or around here, and see what people talk about – and it is this fear of their Britishness being slowly taken away from them. It may not be happening right in our face, it is a slow process. And when you talk about gaining from the peace process, I am not aware of any working-class unionist/loyalist community which has really benefited, in real terms, from the peace process.
- [P] I think one of the biggest things which confront the community is identity. I think people struggle with this thing: am I Irish, am I British? am I Protestant – and

what does that actually mean? Having spent most of the Troubles protecting our respective camps, the question now is how do we bring those two camps together and yet keep our individual cultural identities, and not have one submerged into the other. You have a West Belfast Festival and now an East Belfast one; it seems that communities are looking more and more at their 'own' culture, and that is not going to lead to a shared future, because it is still a case of 'them and us'.

- [P] I see young women proclaiming 'We are Protestants!' and they take their kids to every parade and every protest. The politicians and others have convinced these people that they are losing out to the Catholic community. But, when it boils down to it, fundamentally have they *really* lost anything?

- [P] In terms of the difficult questions I think there are still a lot of difficult questions that we would have with republicans. Will they ever accept unionist aspirations of their culture? Will they ever accept the Orange Order as a viable movement associated with loyalism and unionism? I don't believe they will.

- [R] Personally I don't think republicanism and loyalism, nationalism and unionism, are reconcilable, in regard to sharedness. I can't envisage a day when the Rising and the Covenant will be treated by both sides as equal. Does that mean that you have to disrespect the other side's history? I don't think that you do.

- [R] Republicans are fairly relaxed about identity. It used to be feared that republicans were somehow or other going to force the Irish language onto everybody. I am involved in the Irish language movement, and I know that it's a language you have to want to learn, or it will not happen. You can't force people to learn Irish. And those who don't want to learn it – that's okay.

- [R] There is this whole unsettled situation within the unionist community, in terms of nationality, in terms of being opposed to change, in terms of where they are going, of what their future is. All those contradictions are a reflection of poor leadership, an inability to take people into a place where they can strip away some of the old hatreds and be comfortable in their own skins.

- [R] In terms of a shared future: that means different things to different people. I am an Irishman, a republican, who lives on the island of Ireland, and it's an island I want to share with *all* communities – nationalist, unionist, republican, loyalist and these new minorities who have come here. The biggest barrier to me is that it is going to be very hard to convince Protestants/unionists that they have a place, an equal place, in a new society in Ireland. For it is obvious that, if anything, there are elements which have become even more entrenched in their Britishness, and I think political leaders, particularly in the DUP, are leading them down that path.

- [C] Our problem is how to reconcile identities. A study was done about the peacelines and most people weren't so much afraid these days of being physically attacked, but of a weakening of their identity, by people coming in.

• [L] I think it is the Protestants who are second-class citizens now. They're asking: what did we get out of the peace process? Especially in social and economic terms; we're worse off than we ever were. And young people say to us: 'What did *you lot* do when you were frustrated? You joined paramilitary organisations. So what's the difference?' Young people don't see the peace process, but most of them didn't see the war either, didn't experience the conflict. And I feel most of them think they missed out on something.

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• [L] I had been out of the country for a long time and recently when I watched the Twelfth of July parade and then the Covenant parade, I asked myself: what has changed? what has actually changed? To me, nothing has changed, and by that I mean that people are still grounded in belief in either loyalism

or republicanism. When I look at the 'folks on the hill', they *talk* about shared space, about working together, about respecting each other's cultures and beliefs, but yet they are the ones who can't agree on it. And when they come onto the media, in various debates and discussions, all that I see is argument, conflict and disagreement.

• [L] I asked a group of young Protestant males: What do you like? 'Rangers.' What do you dislike? 'Celtic.' Why? 'We just hate them.' Why do you hate them? 'Dunno. Because everybody else hates them.' Why do you burn a bonfire on the Eleventh night? 'Dunno.' So, you hate Celtic, you love Rangers, but you don't know why you burn the bonfire. Why do people walk on the Twelfth of July? 'Dunno.' Not one of them knew! So, they are sectarian, but none of them knew why they were sectarian. They know nothing about their own history, even to have a constructive conversation with someone about that history. If they are only getting a load of sectarian guff, that's what they're going to believe. And they're listening to that 'Oh, play us *The Sash!*' stuff down there, and they're loving it, and thinking it makes them big boys and big girls.

• [P] You get these Protestants who say that their only desire is to protect their 'British' culture, but it's often just a cloak for bigotry. I was down at St. Anne's Cathedral many years ago and DUP members were standing outside with placards, protesting because a Roman Catholic priest was going to a remembrance service. But that man was actually a war hero, and a chaplain in the Royal Navy! He was as British as they were, but to those binheads he was just another Fenian!

• [L] In the sixties many Protestants would have easily considered themselves both British *and* Irish, some even more Irish than British. It wasn't unusual for Irish dancing classes on the Shankill, far more than you would ever see now. I came from Brown Square at the bottom of the Shankill and it was a mixed

area. But the Troubles set people poles apart and now you have a much more entrenched sense of identity. I don't think it will ever go back to the way it was, the divisions are too deep now. Thirty years of brutal conflict has seen to that. Even kids today are fully aware of a 'them and us' – for that's their reality. Sadly, there is probably more chance of sliding back into conflict than moving towards a resolution.

• [R] When republicans challenge the 'Brits', the Protestant community respond by saying, 'That's us you are talking about; *we* are the Brits.' But republicans should challenge unionists on that very point. Are they really the *same* as the other Brits? Are they identical to the English? Of course not. Are they as British as Finchley? Of course not. They are British, yes, but of a *Northern Irish* type. I mean, the Covenant was an example of a massive rebellion *against* the British government of the day. They are British *on their own terms*. And that is something that has been lost in the debate and discussion around identity. Just as many people in the Free State see us *all* as 'those Northerners'. The truth is that in the North we are Irish of a particular type and British of a particular type. Can we not find common ground somewhere in that?

• [P] Recent polls have shown that an increasing number of Catholics in Northern Ireland now favour the Union. It has frightened some of the republican, nationalist politicians. Look at the furore which erupted [on Twitter] when [golfer] Rory McIlroy admitted that, even though he was born a Catholic, he felt he was 'more British than Irish'. I believe that as more and more people become contented with their stake in this society, sectarian attitudes will begin to drop away. To me, sectarianism was never at the root of the problem, it was our political divisions. The sectarianism became a cloak for other things.

To me, sectarianism was never at the root of the problem, it was our political divisions. The sectarianism became a cloak for other things.

• [P] But the unionist parties have, until recently, kept that cloak very tightly around them. For a long time I would have seen the Unionist Party as representing a cold house for Catholics.

• [L] People need to feel safe within their own identity. And if they have the perception that it is being eroded they will defend it to the last nail. I am quite clear about my identity, I don't need to be out there beating my chest about it. I don't want people to *tolerate* my culture, I want them to *accept* it. And if I can accept theirs hopefully we can both move to a new place.

• [L] A question I sometimes ask people when I work with them is: would you rather be right or would you rather be happy and contented? Consider that you can't have both. Loyalists say that they're British and must always remain British; Republicans say that they're Irish and must always remain Irish. That's what it means for each side to stick with being 'right'. But what if being right

means that there will forever be a friction between us which will prevent either community from being totally happy or contented? Imagine that the only way to have a contented society would be for all of us to compromise on some of our aspirations, and meet somewhere in the middle. Which would we chose? Which is more important, not only for us today, but for our children and grandchildren?

- [P] To move away from current aspirations would be highly unsettling. I doubt whether many people here have that type of courage.

- [L] Every conflict around the world is rooted in righteousness in people's beliefs, whether religious, political or cultural. But it has reached the stage, not just in Northern Ireland, but globally, that people really have to ask themselves: what is it that I really want for my children, what do I *really* stand for? All of us need to be asking serious political, social, and personal questions about what we actually do stand for.

- [L] You only have to look at what is going on in Great Britain at the minute: identities are evolving and changing. It will be the same here. There is never ever going to be a pure green Ireland, there's always going to be that wee bit of Orange in it. 'Britishness' is not going to stay the same, it is going to evolve – look at Scotland getting the right to hold a referendum on independence. We need to sit down together and see how our changing identities can best serve us all. I think we can do it, but it might take generations. Protestants are at a disadvantage in that most Protestants never learned any Irish, or even Ulster, history at school – we learned English history. And you have to ask why this was the case. Did our forefathers not want us to know the facts of our history, other than what *they* felt necessary – like 1690 and the Somme?

- [L] It used to be that people believed the world was flat, and you would fall off if you went to the edge. And that's the question: would you rather be safe or would you take a chance and explore? The safety is supposedly in our identities – people think that makes them safe and so they aren't willing to take risks. Now, that's okay, you can stay safe, but then you will never know. And in the political leadership end of things there needs to be people willing to take a risk, and to do so with integrity and clarity. But they don't, they would rather feel safe. And that worries me, because the way it looks today we are going backwards rather than forwards. It will only be a matter of time before things begin to deteriorate and we go back to conflict. A lot of anger is rooted in the fear that people's culture and heritage is being taken away from them, and they will eventually feel they have to defend it.

- [L] We are stuck in the past, and with questions of identity. And we can't see a way forward, *because* we are stuck in the past.

How can these problems be tackled?

What can be done to confront such complex problems?

- [C] Community workers have engaged in decades of work with people, and I often wonder whether many people's attitudes or mindsets have been altered in any fundamental way as a result of that work. Okay, they might be more open, but has anyone's political beliefs changed in any way? Entrenchment is just as deep as ever. So, where are we after all these years of work?
- [P] I see young people being brought up to view the other community as 'the enemy'. Sectarianism is rife, and we have to face up to it. That's why I feel passionate about integrated education: start with our children before divisive ideas have formed. We can still retain our respective identities, but without the hate. Cross-community groups are also doing what they can, but we still have a long way to go. I don't think we are anywhere near taking the peacewalls down.
- [P] Not everyone wants integrated education. Particularly the Catholic Church; it would prefer to retain a hold over its people.
- [P] Monsignor Denis Faul was a man for whom I had huge admiration, for he spoke out against everyone: the police, the army, loyalists, the Provisionals – he spoke what he saw as the truth, with great courage and a lot of conviction. But I listened to him once being interviewed and the interviewer suggested taking the church out of education, and he was totally adamant that that is what Catholic education existed for: to bring up young people in the ways and the teachings of the church. I personally think it is important that the churches *do not* have that influence in society, and not only in the education system.
- [P] To be honest, I would love to see a time when people put all their different religious beliefs behind them, and view them as man-made historical oddities.
- [C] I think integrated schools are a great step forward, but the kids are still going back into segregated communities, and what they're getting in school is washing away in those communities because they will get involved in sectarian stuff at interfaces.
- [C] I had a group of kids from the Hollywood Road on the 'Training for Success' programme, and the majority would be from a Protestant/loyalist background. And they were talking about 'Blacks here', and 'Poles there'. One girl even said that 'the Turks are taking over the Newtownards Road'. This was because a kebab shop had been opened. We discussed it, and the girl admitted that of the three staff in the shop only one was actually Turkish. Yet seemingly the Turks were 'taking over' the Newtownards Road! I explained that we all originally came from black people; our roots lay in central Africa, and people from there

migrated to all parts of the globe. The next day I was walking past her in the corridor, and she stopped me. ‘My da says you’re a f**king liar; we don’t come from any niggers!’ And I says into myself: Jesus, your da needs help, love! It wasn’t her fault; she was getting all that at home. Now, the day before, that girl seemed genuinely interested in what I was saying and we had a good discussion, but what can you do when she’s getting that at home? And it’s not just Protestant kids; I know people round here would do the same thing. I used to believe that Catholics were not as sectarian as Protestants, but I’m beginning to think that this is all over the place, it is rampant. The sectarianism is there; I constantly hear kids talking about the ‘f**king Orangies!’

• [L] A lot of the sectarianism which is out there would surprise you. Because I would be known as a loyalist, many middle-class people – and I mean Protestants – would assume that I must be a sectarian bigot. Yet I listen to what *they* say, and it’s really sectarian. But because they are middle class, and even church-goers, and because they are not labelled as ‘loyalist’, they are not seen as sectarian. I have heard people who are in the Orange Order, a supposedly religious organisation, saying very, very sectarian things, which shocked me. But people would assume that such things were more likely to come from the likes of me. N____ L____ worked here when he got out of prison, and he has Ulster tattoos all along his arm. And we went out one day to argue with a couple of teenagers who were throwing things over at the Short Strand. He asked them why they were doing it and requested that they stop. And they just couldn’t understand why someone with Ulster tattoos was challenging them on what they were doing. All loyalist paramilitaries are assumed to be sectarian bigots. Far from it. I don’t think you can ever eradicate sectarianism. But it’s all about education. I heard some Protestants being racist against Poles the other night, and Ken Wilkinson said to them: ‘If you go up to Aldergrove you’ll see six Polish airmen’s graves, who all fought in the Second World War alongside us.’

• [P] To me, sectarianism is intricately related to the identity crisis, which has always been there but is getting deeper. How do we counter it? For a start, I think the politicians have to stop using divisive sectarian innuendos in their rhetoric. Also, we don’t have enough integrated educational schools. Our kids don’t mix enough from a young age – that needs to change. We need to begin to develop the capacity of people to not be so frightened to look beyond the confines of their own communities, their own identities. The more confident they are in their own identity, the more accommodating they will be toward someone else’s. With regards to sectarianism, maybe we need to see sectarianism as a crime and deal with it in the same way that racism is being dealt with across the water.

We need to begin to develop the capacity of people to not be so frightened to look beyond the confines of their own communities, their own identities.

• [R] I know people who don't want to have anything to do with Protestants whatsoever. They don't want to live near them, don't want to go to school with them, work with them – they want nothing to do with them. And obviously it will be the same in the Protestant community. How do you impact on that? I can remember my mother and father talking about going into town to work and socialise with Protestant friends. But once all the violence broke out in '69 guys just couldn't come up the Donegal Road to meet my da, or he couldn't go down to meet them. And some good friendships like that were ended. But what I learned was that not every guy in a Protestant area was a sectarian, loyalist killer. And I met with Protestant guys, sat with them and they told me: 'I don't want my grandchildren going through all this.' And they were working-class people who were struggling to make a pound the same as us.

• [R] Keeping the peacewalls gives security, but they also allow people not to have to confront our communal divisions. What do you do if the wall is not there, and you have to speak to your neighbours from across the interface? My old man's generation experienced being together more, but we have lost that.

• [P] If you listen to some of the debates in the Assembly they are scandalous; they wouldn't happen in any other part of the world. It's 'You lot did this...' or 'No, you lot did it first...' and we seem to have no politicians who can rise above that. We really have to step back from all this political posturing and ask ourselves: is our identity *really* in crisis here, would we *really* lose anything by crossing the line? It would be even better if we could elect a totally new batch of politicians who understand that we can't remain forever behind the barricades, and that megaphone diplomacy has to be replaced by rational political discussion. There is still a 'win/lose' mentality here: if the 'other' community is winning, then 'our' community must be losing.

We really have to step back from all this political posturing and ask ourselves: is our identity really in crisis here, would we really lose anything by crossing the line?

• [R] This rosy notion of a shared future, with Van Morrison playing in the background, is just sap. I don't know anyone round here who wants to move into a mixed area – there's too much hurt to be gone through yet.

• [R] The loyalist community is now going, 'Woe is us, look at us poor downtrodden people', but sometimes you have to ask: how did this develop? You can't just blame everyone else, sometimes you have to look at *yourselves* and ask: 'Why did we let this happen? Let's make our politicians, even our community workers, answerable for their failings.'

• [P] I think the social inequalities are tied in with sectarianism, and the improvement of one would improve the other. You sometimes have to go round the question to solve it.

- [L] At the minute it is still Orange and Green politics, that's where the DUP and Sinn Féin get their votes. And I think that *they* first of all have to prove that they are committed to a shared future. They have to be prepared to set aside some of their political ideals for the benefit of the whole community, if they truly want to move on. They have been looking at this CSI document for going on now five years and they still haven't produced it, so that is telling me that the politicians themselves are not even sure of the way forward and are not committed to a shared future.

- [L] There is a big push from the likes of the Alliance Party about people integrating and going to school together, and community centres being used by all sections of the community. But people in Highfield recently said they were happy the way they were living. Now, they didn't feel they were being sectarian, they just felt safer the way it was. And I would say it is the same in Catholic/nationalist/republican areas as well. Belfast City Council, IFI and others are being very pushy at the moment around the peacewalls, and putting out applications for projects which bring people together. But you can't force people to integrate.

- [C] I think we need to understand each other's cultures more; I think we need to create more opportunities for people to sit around and talk. On that TV programme the young people and the adults talked about being discriminated against, and the poverty in their areas – you would have thought you were back forty years listening to nationalists! And when they said, 'The other side is getting everything... the other side is getting this...' I was going: but we *aren't* getting anything! But if your political leaders reinforce that attitude it just makes it easier to switch off from blaming those in government; you just blame the other side. And to me we need to create opportunities whereby people from within all these working-class communities can be sitting in rooms together, and have discussions and debates around bread-and-butter issues, or the benefit cuts.

- [C] There needs to be more understanding. Most of the understanding I am going to get about loyalists at the moment is from the likes of listening to *The Nolan Show*, or *Spotlight* or whatever, where even twenty years ago – before the ceasefires – I would probably would have had more contact with loyalist community workers and people from within that community. Even with the conflict on I still would have had fairly regular meetings with people from the Protestant community, and we were sharing what was going on within our areas. Yet this last few years, outside of the neighbouring community that we work with here now, I wouldn't have much contact with unionist/loyalist community workers, or indeed people from within the Protestant community. It is mainly 'single identity' work we are doing. And that is strange, because you would think that with the situation of peace there would be more opportunities. I wonder if that is a deliberate thing on the part of our politicians.

- [C] We went to a residential about five years ago, and we were forewarned:

look, some of the people from the other community have never been in a room with our side before, so don't get annoyed at what they might say; this is the first time we have managed to get them to engage. And, as soon as we broke up into small groups, they came out with totally entrenched viewpoints. But we let them speak, listened to them with respect, and then worked patiently through each of their points, trying to allay their fears and concerns, and they began to see things as less threatening. They came to that residential with very hard-line views and by the end of it some of us ended up on first-name terms. We need to create such opportunities, not only for those who always go to community meetings but the ones who don't.

• [R] I can't blame an individual who has been brought up in an environment where sectarianism is drummed into them day and daily. We need to create opportunities, not for wishy-washy discussions, but to deal with contentious issues, and you have to give people room to express their fears. But we must be honest with one another. The first time I met with people from our neighbouring Protestant community I said, 'I am an Irish republican, I believe in a united Ireland, and that's where I'm at.' And this woman, a staunch loyalist, said, 'I think I can do business with you, because no-one from your background has ever been so up-front with me before. Because you have been honest with us, we could end up trusting you.' Now, it would have been easier for me to go into that room and pretend I was just a community worker, but I think you are better being honest with people. I think a lot of people would be up for dialogue. Not going into fancy hotels for residential but into community centres. Bring mothers together, young people, not just the same old community activists. Wouldn't it be brilliant if we could get that crowd of young bandsmen who were interviewed on *The Nolan Show* into a room with young guys from the New Lodge, Ardoyne, wherever... and say, 'Look, can we sit down here and have a constructive debate? We are both coming from very entrenched positions. Can we start discussing our social and everyday needs? We can leave the band stuff and cultural stuff to later. I heard you on the TV talking about unemployment. That's terrible that, but see us – not one of us has a job either.' Start by facilitating a discussion around things they have in common. The band stuff could come later. If you go into the heavy political issues first it will not work. Start on what people have in common.

Wouldn't it be brilliant if we could get that crowd of young bandsmen who were interviewed on The Nolan Show into a room with young guys from the New Lodge, Ardoyne, wherever... and say, 'Look, can we sit down here and have a constructive debate?'

• [P] Sometime people will avoid engaging in a genuine debate. If you take just recently, the fortieth anniversary of Bloody Friday and Lena Ferguson's programme that she made for the BBC, which I thought was excellent. We put her in touch

with a few people here who had suffered as a result of Bloody Friday, and then she came back to me very late in the day to see if – and this is quite ironic, given my background and what happened to me – I would have any inroads into republicanism, to see if any republicans would appear on the programme and speak about the rationale and the thinking behind Bloody Friday. Of course, there wasn't any, there was just absolute silence from the republican movement. I suppose at one level these conversations are probably best not done publicly. I suppose what you were asking them to do was to defend the indefensible, and I could understand why they wouldn't want to do that. But those sores run deep in our society, and people have not forgotten. If you are serious about reconciliation and peace building, I think we need to debate these issues. They are being debated and discussed anyway; there's not a week goes past when the *Sunday World* or *Sunday Life* hasn't got some sort of story into our past. Every day is someone's anniversary. I mean, today is the anniversary of the Shankill bomb – nineteen years today. It will be Greysteel's at the end of the week, so these things are there, they run deep in our society. And I think these are the uncomfortable questions which have to be debated.

- [P] I remember, many years ago, a trade union friend saying to me that things will get worse before they get better. I asked him why. He replied that with peace, people in both communities will feel they can now express opinions they were never allowed to express before, and challenge the reality they had encountered in their everyday lives. And that will be uncomfortable for many people. Such a process needs to be managed appropriately and sensitively, without becoming belligerent. And I don't think we have even begun that process; we haven't even brought the ordinary man and women on the street along with those changes which *have* taken place. We haven't dealt with the legacy of the past, we haven't dealt with the hurt we have caused each other.

- [P] Statistics have shown that since the ceasefires the number of 'peacewalls' have actually increased in Belfast, not decreased, At the same time there have been lots of resources thrown at this, but not always in a strategic way. I think it has been reactive rather than proactive, and one of the difficulties is that government departments look at funding in short-term cycles rather than taking a longer-term view: how will we measure this in ten years or twenty years? There will need to be a long-term approach taken.

- [P] This may sound a bit naive, but there needs to be a collective culpability, an acceptance that we were all part of the problem and we must all be part of the solution. And perhaps that's where we need sound political leadership. We maybe have to sit down and develop a 'cross-community charter', in which we agree what the problems are, list them in order of priority, and then determine what our two communities, both singly and collectively, are prepared, and able, to do about them. And we then move together: it will not be a case of, 'they must

move before we do’, or ‘they must apologise first’. We need to accept that as a society we all grew up in this and there is a significant level of sectarianism *right across* this society. We need to be realistic, we need to plan it out. For example, I would like to see the peace walls eventually come down, but they can’t come down just because certain people who live in the leafy suburbs say they should come down. Those sorts of issues need to be dealt with by the people who actually live beside these walls. Some might say ‘give it a try’, others might say ‘build it higher’. But one of the goals in the community charter could be that in so many years’ time 5% of the walls could be taken down, and 10% over the following few years. We need to set realistic, agreed targets, and expect to be measured collectively as to how far we have progressed towards those targets. And we will make mistakes along the way, but we must learn from them.

• [P] In one of the many discussions we had with folk from Ardoyne about parades, they had prepared this PowerPoint presentation, and it literally took us back to Cromwell! And our side were wondering: where do we draw the line here! As the debate got lively they referred to the pogroms and how many people around York Street were put out and ended up in Ardoyne – and the conversation was going in a direction that none of us really wanted it to. So I said, not with a tone of bitterness, more of dry irony: ‘Well, tell me this: who can *I* blame for beating my da up?’ And they went: ‘What are you talking about?’ ‘Well’, I said, ‘he served in the Royal Air Force during the Second World War and some of you f**kers from Ardoyne came out and beat the shit out of him as he walked past in his uniform!’ And it broke the intensity of the conversation. Maybe both communities have to say to each other: ‘Let’s all wise up, and get real here. We have to focus on where we are *today* – it’s our children’s and our grandchildren’s future which is at stake.’

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