

# **A process of analysis**

## **(1) The Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist community**

*Compiled by Michael Hall*

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The **Island Pamphlets** series was launched in 1993 to stimulate a community-wide debate on historical, cultural, political and socio-economic issues. Most of the pamphlets are edited accounts of discussions undertaken by small groups of individuals – the ‘**Community Think Tanks**’ – which have embraced (on both a ‘single identity’ and a cross-community basis) Loyalists, Republicans, community activists, women’s groups, victims, cross-border workers, ex-prisoners, young people, senior citizens and others. To date 106 titles have been produced and 190,400 pamphlets have been distributed at a grassroots level. Many of the titles are available for (free) download from <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/islandpublications>.

# Introduction

Sixteen years after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement issues surrounding identity, marching and flags in Northern Ireland remain as contentious as ever. These unresolved matters have poisoned political discourse and at times threatened to destabilise the political institutions. Even the Stormont House Agreement (announced in the final days of 2014) in which Northern Ireland's political parties reached a belated consensus on a range of financial and legacy matters, once again pushed any discussion of identity-related issues further into the future.

Concerned at this ongoing situation, in October 2014 community activists had asked Farset Community Think Tanks Project if it could help to stimulate dialogue on these matters at a grassroots level. The Project decided to revisit an approach first utilised in Northern Ireland (in the 1970s) by Australian conflict resolution scholar/practitioner John W. Burton (1915-2010), who had been assisted by West Belfast community activist Joe Camplisson.

Burton believed that governments and mediators often confused a 'conflict' with a 'dispute'. A *dispute* could normally be resolved through negotiation and compromise, but a *conflict* – particularly one containing a strong identity-related dimension – was usually not amenable to compromise and required a quite different approach: one in which the protagonists engaged in an in-depth analysis of their respective positions, with the hope that if – as a result of this analysis – they were encouraged to view their conflict as a 'shared problem', they could then seek ways of moving – jointly – to a 'win/win' outcome.

As a test-run of a somewhat slimmed-down version of such a process, Farset Community Think Tanks Project decided to facilitate the setting up of two separate series of discussions: one involving the Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist community, and one involving the Catholic/Nationalist/Republican community.

Each grouping would be asked an identical set of questions:

- (1) ***What do you feel lies at the root of the conflict?***
- (2) ***What are your community's core goals and aspirations?***
- (3) ***Have you considered the possibility that some of the strategies employed to advance your core aspirations might actually serve to undermine them?***
- (4) ***Can you envisage sitting down with your opponents on the basis that what you are confronting is, in reality, a 'shared problem'?***

If the answer to this last question was affirmative (or if there were sufficient participants who felt this way) then a third series of discussions would be facilitated, bringing participants from both groupings into a *joint* process of analysis.

In this joint analysis the participants would be encouraged to identify impediments to the resolution of the conflict and explore how these might be collectively addressed. They would explore possible actions and strategies which could be taken, both by themselves and by the other major players, to engender *movement towards* conflict resolution and move the situation towards a ‘win/win’ outcome. They would explore possible alternative strategies for the attainment of aspirations and goals.

This pamphlet is an edited account of what transpired in the discussions (and a number of one-to-one interviews) engaging the Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist community. Those who took part were members of a range of political parties and organisations (Democratic Unionist Party, Ulster Unionist Party, Progressive Unionist Party, Ulster Political Research Group, and a member of the House of Lords); some were members of Orange lodges, the Apprentice Boys of Derry, or marching bands; most were involved in a variety of grassroots activities (community development, cultural and historical initiatives, the Twaddell Avenue Civil Rights Camp, etc.) and some were ex-combatants. Everyone who took part did so in a purely personal capacity.

<b>Dr Ian Adamson</b>	<b>Fraser Agnew</b>	<b>Charlene Anderson</b>
<b>Issac Andrews</b>	<b>May Blood</b>	<b>Sammy Douglas MLA</b>
<b>David Hagan</b>	<b>Jackie Hewitt</b>	<b>Raymond Laverty</b>
<b>James Magee</b>	<b>David McCrea</b>	<b>Jackie McDonald</b>
<b>Dr Chris McGimpsey</b>	<b>Barney McCaughey</b>	<b>Ian McLoughlin</b>
<b>George Newell</b>	<b>Teena Patrick</b>	

A wide-ranging analysis ensued, which highlighted the deep sense of unease and uncertainty currently felt within the Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist community.† And although it was evident that viewing the conflict as a ‘shared problem’ was a difficult concept for some, nevertheless the facilitation of a *joint* analysis remains a realistic prospect. (This, of course, will be dependant on what emerges from the discussions engaging the Catholic/Nationalist/Republican community.)

**Michael Hall** *Co-ordinator, Farset Community Think Tanks Project*

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† The group discussions had been completed just before the ‘Stormont House Agreement’ of 23.12.14. However, as contentious issues such as flags and parades still remained unresolved, group members, when discussing the draft in January 2015, felt that the concerns which had been voiced over the politicians’ failure to make progress around these issues still remained valid.

# A process of analysis:

## The Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist community

*The engagement with the members of the PUL community took two forms: (a) a series of group discussions, and (b) a number of individual interviews. The initial plan was to bring the various responses together in one narrative. However, there was a marked difference in the nature of these responses. The analysis undertaken in the group discussions largely concentrated on the myriad problems currently besetting the PUL community, and the impediments these posed to progress. The one-to-one setting, however, while also addressing these problems, seemed to lend itself more to the articulation of additional perspectives. Hence, the responses are presented below in two separate segments: (1) a summary of the opinions expressed during the group discussions, and (2) an overview of what was said during the interviews.*

### 1: The group discussions

- *Okay, can I start with the first question: What do you feel lies at the root of our conflict?*
- I think it is very easy for people to go way back into our history – “in such and such a century you did this to us” – but I see the core of our conflict as being in the *here and now*. And people don’t want to deal with the here and now, especially issues around culture and identity, and the dissident threat. But unless we confront those issues, the tragedy of our history will just repeat itself. I work with young people, trying to create a better future, and I can see a lot of anger in them. Yet these young people have never experienced the violence of our conflict, their anger is being passed down through their families. And those who are supposedly tasked with tackling these issues – at both a party political and at a community level – are simply acting as gatekeepers and not really addressing them at all.
- I think that, at the present time, the ‘peace process’ itself is now at the core of the conflict, for it was built on lies and deceit. People were handed a formula for peace, and as everybody desired peace we went for it. But as it has unfolded, we can see that it was all smoke and mirrors. I think communal divisions are becoming as bad as they ever were. Okay, it might no longer be manifesting itself in violence but the question is: how long will that last? And one of the reasons this ‘peace process’ is not working is because we don’t know what it really was. In the talks leading up to

the Good Friday Agreement people from our side entered those talks with sincerity: people like Hugh Smyth, Billy Hutchinson, Gary McMichael and others, who said, ‘Okay, we’ll run with it.’ But *behind the scenes* the ‘other side’ was working on *separate* deals, and nobody knew anything about them. We only found out recently about the Royal Pardons†, and the OTR†† letters, which were quite literally ‘get out of jail free’ cards. We see a man in England, charged with murdering people on The Mall, calmly walking away from the Old Bailey – because he had been given one of these letters! And only the other day it was confirmed that two of the main suspects in the Kingsmill massacre were also given letters! So, to me, the real irony in all this is that the peace process itself is now at the core of the conflict.

- The agitation from the republican side continues about what was done to *their* community in the past. But they’re not concerned with the horrors *they* visited on *our* community. The ‘peace process’ has ended up totally one-sided. On the one hand you have terrorists accepted into the government of this country, while on the other the Protestant/unionist/loyalist community is being continually demonised.

- I wouldn’t want to go back to a whole historical review, but we do need to recognise that there are many centuries’ worth of divided identities and accumulated grievances. There’s an awful lot of ammunition out there – about who did what to whom – which is still in people’s psyches. Then we reached the peace process, which supposedly provided opportunities to move on and break away from entrenched attitudes and our divisive history. People who were in leadership roles were expected to take that forward, but haven’t really. But, most importantly to me, behind all

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the political posturing, no-one is focusing on tackling the basic inequalities that impact upon people’s lives. I think that that will be necessary if we are going to make a real change, rather than focusing on the contentious issues all the time. Those contentious issues grow out of an unjust and unequal society and I don’t see *any* political party making a real attempt to tackle that.

- I am a mother of five adult sons and three grandsons and I am guilty of sitting in

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† On 2 May 2014 the Northern Ireland Secretary of State disclosed that 365 royal pardons had been issued in Northern Ireland between 1979 and 2002. The Northern Ireland Office said that the vast majority of these pardons were not terrorism-related.

†† ‘On The Runs’. In early 2014 it emerged that almost 190 on-the-run republicans had been given letters informing them that they were not being sought by the police authorities in the UK. It further emerged that 95 of these individuals had been linked by the police to 295 murders.

front of the TV and screaming at it when certain politicians come on, so I know that my views are being passed on to my children. I wish it was different, but when you see what the dissidents have been doing: attacking and murdering soldiers, policemen, prison officers... And it's continuous: take that incident at Twaddell the other week when a rocket was fired at a police vehicle outside our 'camp'.† Our community is being treated as the aggressors, but there is no threat from our community to the police, or to Catholics; you never hear now of people being 'targeted' by anyone from our community; yet we're the ones being punished. 800 people have been arrested to date for their involvement in the 'flag protests'††, some of whom have ended up in jail. Yet when dissidents are wheeled up in front of crown court judges they invariably get off. This is the stuff our young people are picking up on. And these kids are gradually getting involved. Nearly every other house in my street now has a flag out. If you mention there's a protest, half the estate is out for it. They see their culture being attacked. They relate it back to "that's the stuff granda talked about, that mummy talked about – they're still out to get us." We need to get into a proper discussion with our young people before it's too late.

- It's a minefield, trying to determine what is at the core of the conflict. You can go right back to the Plantation and look at all the problems that have come from that in either a religious or an ethnic sense. But to look at it as of today, the widespread perception is that the Protestant community has been continually losing ground. And one reason is that the unionist/Protestant people have been very poorly served by – and I suppose I must include myself in this – the present bunch of politicians that we have. Time and again they have let people down, and people's needs have become secondary to party-political ambitions. On the one side there is a republican machine that is second to none, and tightly focused, with a goal. On our side you have splits and divisions, with people constantly looking over their shoulders at one another. Unionists have lost the propaganda war big-time. There is a feeling of hopelessness, that we lack the political leadership.

- Sinn Féin want everyone to take 'corporate responsibility' for the Past. They say, "We regret all the deaths. . . but if you want to know who done what – no, no, that's not where we are going with this." Factor that type of comment into the bloodlust that keeps demanding inquiry after inquiry. The Bloody Sunday families wanted the truth – which they deserved and which they got. They wanted a public inquiry

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† In July 2013, when local Orange lodges were refused permission to complete the homeward leg of their Twelfth of July parade, rioting ensued. At Twaddell Avenue, a 'Civil Rights Camp' was set up on derelict ground, vowing to remain there until the marchers were able to 'return home'.

†† On 3 December 2012 Belfast City Council voted on a Sinn Féin and SDLP proposal that the Union flag, which had been flown every day on the City Hall, should not be flown at all. The Alliance Party's compromise was carried: that the flag should be flown on 18 designated days. The decision led to widespread street protests, some of which involved inter-communal conflict.

– which they got. They wanted an apology from the British government – which they got. Has that satisfied them? Not a bit of it! Now they are demanding prosecutions. Ordinary Protestants are turning round and asking: what *did* we sign up to in the Good Friday Agreement? What was that all about? The vast majority of the PUL community assumed that it was an end to the conflict, a peaceful resolution to the internal difficulties within Northern Ireland. But it soon became abundantly clear that the Provisional movement saw it as a simple but effective stepping-stone to the reunification of Ireland through political means.

- The root cause of the problem in this country is sectarianism, and since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement there has been little or no attempt made to eradicate it. From *any* quarter. So we have generation after generation who are now being indoctrinated into their respective sectarian mantras.

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- When the peace process started we had 17 contentious parades – now we have 48. This has all come about by design. And it's not down to dissident republicans alone, it's Sinn Féin as well. They are involved in these residents' groups. Even when you come to an understanding with the likes of St Patrick's Church, and Fr. Sheehan... I have been involved in the dialogue there: complete understanding with him, with his parishioners, about music being played. The deal was done, there were two statements to come out. Who came in and squashed that deal? Sinn Féin. People are saying that it was the dissidents. It wasn't, it was Sinn Féin.

- I believe the Union is safe, I'll not see any difference in my lifetime. But there is appeasement day in, day out, and the more that continues the more people will feel agitated, and go back into their trenches. And Sinn Féin talk about a 'truth process', but you will never get at the truth, you will only get different versions of it. Adams can't even admit that he was in the IRA, yet everybody knows he was!

- Built into the structure of the country is a form of sectarian apartheid, and while we keep kids in a separate education system, and in separate housing, you will have two different tribes living apart. And that must contribute massively to it.

- You have two major blocs at Stormont who are totally opposed to each other, and anybody who thinks that there is going to be any lasting agreement or understanding between those two blocs is living in cloud-cuckoo land.

- I *don't* think the Union is safe. Look what has been given to republicans to date. As far as I can see the British government has been in a process of disengagement

with us for some time now. So to me the Union is *not* safe.

- We are still being used and abused by Unionist politicians as cannon fodder. The Union flag protest was instigated by the DUP and UUP through their 40,000 leaflets – which got them nowhere. But it *did* get a lot of kids put into jail. Those kids now have a criminal record because of it all. I hold the flag dear, but not that dear that I want to see hundreds of kids going through jail.
- One of my sons was arrested for jumping on a land rover, just like Gerry Kelly was, but, unlike Kelly, he ended up in jail! I have seen people coming in charged with serious crimes who get off with less.
- We have had hundreds of young people get jail sentences for the simplest of things, like waving a flag. One young person got three months for simply standing on a white-line protest holding a flag. On the same day, in the same court, you had five former Provos, who were being brought to court on a serious charge, and were all released on the day. One was able to go straight away to give a speech at an IRA commemoration. These are not perceptions, they're facts.
- If Protestants were targeting police officers, or people in the Catholic community, the British government would be coming to our politicians and community leaders and demanding: “You need to get this resolved, this can't happen, we are supposed to be in a period of peace here! There's AK-47s being brought out on to the street, there's bombs being threw at police officers – you need to get into your community and get this resolved!” But is that happening within the nationalist community? No. Nobody is demanding that Sinn Féin sort it out.
- I run a band; I try to keep young people out of jail. I have went to meetings with the Orange and asked have they the balls to call for 100,000 to go up to Twaddell. GARC [Greater Ardoyne Residents Collective] told the Parades Commission† they would put 2000 nationalist protesters on the road, and the Parades Commission bowed to that threat and scrubbed the march! So, why not call their bluff, and call for 100,000 up there? Average Protestants are getting involved in this, people who were never involved before. People are angry.
- Let's be honest here. For years we demanded that republicans give up the gun and the bomb and enter into democratic politics. Well, whether we like it or not, the flag was removed by a democratic decision. And when I hear people complaining, I ask them: “So, did you exercise your right to vote, in the City Council or any other elections for that matter?” “F\_\_king sure I didn't!” That's the problem. Large sections of the PUL community don't vote.

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† The body set up by government to adjudicate on contentious parades. Its ‘determinations’ can impose legally-binding restrictions on routes, bands, flags, and the number of participants.

- You're right: they don't. I represent a vast area in East Belfast, which could be seen as the heartland of Protestant East Belfast, and yet only half the councillors voted in are Unionists.
- The Good Friday Agreement promised huge inward investment. People's living conditions were to be improved right across the board. Millions were thrown into nationalist/republican areas to do away with this Catholic perception that they were more disadvantaged than Protestants. The Catholic housing sector has received millions for redevelopment. And what about our areas? Nothing like that. And our Unionist politicians are largely to blame – they're not interested in working-class Prods. So I can understand people not voting. Voting for f\_\_king what?
- People will not vote loyalist parties into Stormont. If you try to do anything you will be victimised, the way Winston Irvine was demonised. As for Sinn Féin, it doesn't matter what you done – even if you blew six people up – their supporters will vote them in... our people won't.
- Middle-class unionism will not vote for anybody connected to loyalist paramilitaries, because they are seen as part of the problem, whereas nationalists will vote for *their* paramilitaries. And we have heard talk about all these thousands of moderates. But where are they? People still continue to vote in sectarian ways.
- The media have an agenda to demonise anyone who wants to stand up for their culture or their traditions and identity. We went from having peaceful protests to being called 'loyalist dissidents', and from that to being called 'anti-Peace protesters', and from that to being called 'anti-law'. And these labels are being used up in Stormont – like 'rejectionist Unionism' – and I have still to hear anyone from our side stand up and say clearly: hold on a minute here, we're not that. It seems that if you criticise the Good Friday Agreement it means you want to go back to conflict, you want to go back to the bad days, you want to get involved again. But there is no appetite for that.

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- *Can I go on now to the second question: What are your core goals and aspirations?*
- I want to be able to celebrate my cultural and religious identity, my Britishness.
- We have a solid cultural identity that stands up to scrutiny. I believe in equality of citizenship, equal rights for all, special privileges for none – that is a core part of my belief in civil and religious liberty. But I'm not too sure that our opponents – for all their rhetoric about 'equality' – would actually agree with that. I think that they would have a more dictatorial view of things: that historically they were 'right', and

that we were ‘wrong’, therefore our culture and our identity must be of lesser value.

- Sinn Féin has an agenda to undermine and destroy our British identity. And you can see them working to that agenda all the time.†
- And part of our identity is being able to celebrate Orangeism. But that is something the nationalist/republican community detests; they are determined to demonise and destroy our freedom to express that aspect of our culture. I believe that that is what is really at the core of the dissidents’ opposition to a march at Ardoyne – let’s be honest: it is blatant sectarianism on their part. Apart from using us to get at Sinn Féin.
- The only reason that parade was banned was because of the threat of violence, when GARC told the Parades Commission: “We’ll bring thousands onto the street to stop this parade.” And what happened? The Parades Commission bowed down to that threat. They told me face-to-face that they have to take the likely consequences†† of such threats into consideration when they make their decisions. During the whole twelve years of dialogue the residents never put anything constructive on the table, and it was always compromise, compromise, compromise on our side. They never put anything on the table, not one thing. Now, we have two groups in there: the Sinn Féin CARA [Crumlin Ardoyne Residents’ Association] group and GARC. So even if we were to reach some sort of agreement with CARA, GARC will oppose it and threaten violence. If Ardoyne – the people of Ardoyne – are truly up for anything, they need to be coming to the table with one voice. People keep calling for dialogue. But that dialogue needs to start *within* the Ardoyne community first. It is all about internal

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† In a previous pamphlet one loyalist described his perceptions as follows: “It’s all a drip, drip process. Queen’s University no longer plays the National Anthem on graduation days. The Crown’s coat of arms has been removed from most courts in Northern Ireland. The Shinners opposed the erection of ‘Welcome to Northern Ireland’ signs along the border. The list of items Sinn Féin councillors demanded be removed from Limavady council offices ranged from a ‘Charles and Di’ commemorative mug to a statue of local Orangeman William Massey. In Newry they voted to name a children’s play-park after Raymond McCreesh, whose gun was linked to the Kingsmill massacre. They even refuse to accept that Londonderry is part of the United Kingdom.\* Then the removal of the Union flag from Belfast City Hall. The next day three Sinn Féin councillors walked around the City Hall making a list of everything which represented Unionism or Britishness. It was clearly a ‘to do’ list of what they could take down next. They want symbols of Britishness out and symbols of present-day Irish nationalism in.” (\* A reference to Derry/Londonderry’s bid to be ‘UK City of Culture’ in 2013. The Sinn Féin party leader on Derry city council had said, ‘While we are a city of culture there has to be a recognition that we’re not part of the UK.... [There are] tens of thousands of nationalists and republicans in this city and region who do not recognise themselves as part of the UK.’)

†† In 2012 when Orangemen were told to have their return parade over by 4pm fourteen men came back from the ‘Field’ to ensure that they complied with the Parades Commission’s determination. This was followed by extensive rioting on the nationalist side. Petrol bombs were thrown, cars were hijacked and set on fire, and a republican gunman fired a volley of shots at the police.

feuding within republicanism, not just in Ardoyne but elsewhere. Don't forget that this parade can walk *down* the same stretch of road in the morning without any violence. Instead of the Parades Commission being set up to uphold the *right* to walk – and determine how that right should be exercised – it was set up to appease the nationalist community's *lack of consent*. It is a waste of time.

- You're right: Twaddell is a sideshow, it *is* all about republicanism in Ardoyne. People need to refocus their attention on the battle for hearts and minds within republicanism. For that is at the core of the issue.

- Over twelve years the Orange Order have compromised. On flags, bands, the timing of parades, supporters, drink, stewards, music, the number of parades... they have compromised on *everything*. The Orange Order had six return parades down that road, now they have only one. The Parades Commission won't look at that. So you are going to the table with nothing much left. Gerry Kelly has said that it wouldn't matter if one Orangemen, at night, walked alone up the Crumlin Road, there would still be a full-blown riot. So my question is: what is Gerry Kelly and Sinn Féin doing in that community to change the hate which exists towards everything Orange and Unionist? What have they been doing for the last forty years in that community to overturn that? Their supposed republican vision is to 'unite Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter' – but they have done very little about it.

- It seems to be the perception among Protestants, whether it is over parades, prisoners, justice... that it is all appeasement. 'Don't do anything to rock the shaky peace process.' Whenever a republican comes into a court situation, invariably one of the defences put forward is: "This person has been 'instrumental to the peace process' " – as if to do anything to him would undermine that process.

- We are supposed to feel ashamed that we wear an Orange collarette, ashamed to be a member of a band. Republican bands are able to play their music going past St. Patrick's church, but we're not. During the Ardoyne festival a republican band, 'The Druids', told us "to go home to England!" Now, if Rangers supporters were to start singing *The Famine Song*, telling people to "go home", it's sectarian, it's political. But if it happens on their side it's just unfortunate. The PPS said there was to be no prosecution – but *our* side would be treated differently.

- *Could I try to move the discussion on? It seems clear that a primary goal of everyone here is to protect the Union. Now, demographically, the two communities are approaching 50:50 Protestant/Catholic – I think there is only 3% difference. In real terms, Unionists don't need Protestants to secure the Union – they need the support of Catholics. But if Catholics are frightened off, that could lessen their desire to remain within the UK. Catholics have told me that when they saw the hundreds of protesters waving Union Jacks and storming the City Hall, they felt: "These people are not just upset at the removal of the flag; they don't*

want a Catholic about the place.” And some, who had been content to remain in the Union, were now wondering: “Is this what we can expect in a future Northern Ireland? A new version of the old Paisleyite sectarianism?” So, have people here considered that the manner in which they act to protect the Union might actually be undermining it?

**Have people here considered that the manner in which they act to protect the Union might actually be undermining it?**

- Look, you can sit all day and talk about the wherewithal and the ‘why nots’ of our politics, but you’re on a hiding to nothing. Because it’s more than politics that is wrong with this country. The basic fabric of this country is corrupted. Law and order in this country is bankrupt. The NIO clearly infiltrated the devolved justice system. A senior civil servant hid the OTR scheme from the justice minister and yet he is still in post, still collecting a large salary. We could talk all day, but the bottom line is that you cannot have confidence in the political structures if the legal system which is duly bound to support it is bankrupt.
- My son is very bitter about everything. Are we preparing the ground for another round of loyalists going into jail? The potential is certainly there.
- I’m being honest with you, there’s a lot of bitter young people out there. And it just takes the hawks to say, “Right, let’s go!”
- We might sit here and say people won’t go back to the past... but these young people aren’t connected to the past, they never experienced all the violence.
- What we really need is a commitment to change. Look at the DUP and Sinn Féin. Their expertise is in the politics of division, and that’s where they get their votes. Why would either of those parties be committed to change, if it could have a detrimental impact on their electoral base? They are not committed to change; they are both committed to *being right*. I am up at Stormont all the time, and there are people who walk up and down those corridors and won’t even look at each other. It is politics based on division.
- I’ll tell you how Stormont operates. Say an executive meeting is booked for 11am. Sinn Féin and the DUP would have a meeting at 10am, to agree everything, because they have the majority vote. The UUP, SDLP and Alliance would all sit around, then maybe 11.30, depending how the discussions went between Sinn Féin and the DUP, they would come in, and one of them would propose something and both those parties would vote for it. It is totally undemocratic. It’s incredibly cosy between the DUP and Sinn Féin; they take all the decisions between them and control everything. The rest of the parties are just making up the numbers. The important issues are not being addressed; it is all window-dressing. Public expectations were for these

people to work on the key issues, the important issues, like flags... but they are now totally toxic. These issues are always ahead of us, we are never getting to them. And while you have that cosy relationship Stormont will continue to be irrelevant to people's lives, except for the damage that follows from some of the decisions taken.

- *Yet it is presented in the media as fractious. On The Nolan Show all that is being aired is the continuing conflict between them.*

- But they don't mind that. That helps them to consolidate their votes. The DUP are saying that if you don't vote for us, you'll end up with a Sinn Féin First Minister. The Good Friday Agreement has run its course. Stormont needs to be reconstructed.

- There's another aspect that people forget: the human cost. I think the politicians have missed the human cost to all this, and we're living it, we're seeing it day and daily. Our communities are going nowhere, we're stagnating, our young people see no real future.

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- How are we going to change anything? How do we bring these young people forward? There are young people ready to join up. And when they get into trouble for the simplest of things, like flag waving, our politicians wash their hands off them. But Sinn Féin won't wash their hands off *their* young people; they stand by those kids and they get them the best solicitors. And people in my area will go to Sinn Féin to get help over housing and such things. So why are we continuing to vote for people who, one, are not moving this society forward, and two, are washing their hands off its present ills? We can talk here for weeks, but we'll never change Stormont. That grassy train will not be stopped.

- The Civic Forum was tried, but, apart from a couple of individuals, it was all the great and the good. Not the working class, who are struggling away at the grassroots with minimum resources and trying to move people on.

- On the Shankill Road they are quick at knocking houses down but not building more. They say there is no demand, but people are being pushed out to the outskirts. But the nationalist community? They get their houses built without any problem. So our people feel under siege. Government talks about 'shared housing' and a 'shared future', but the reality is that our people are feeling more and more isolated.

- *Final question: Can you see the situation facing us all as a shared problem? And that each community has to help the other to move forward?*

- But who knows what a shared future looks like? Nobody.

- Sinn Féin are the people who shouted the loudest for a shared future, but let's

be quite honest, Sinn Féin are the people who are saying: “No, you’re not walking up the road” – so how can there be a shared future?

- *I said shared problem, not shared future. We have a shared problem even in determining what a shared future might look like. What I am asking is: if you were sitting down with people from the ‘other side’ would you be saying, “This is what your community has done to mine”, or could you say: “Both communities have a shared problem here; how can we work together to resolve it?”*

- I don’t know, I don’t believe the trust is there for that. We are not honest enough with each other yet.

- I think we all still carry too much baggage. I once did ‘reverse role play’ in a cross-community setting, where I was the protester and they were the Orange marchers. One of them turned to me afterwards and said: “I wish you were one of our protestors, because you’re brilliant at it – the hatefulness in you!” And I said, “To be honest, I learnt it from youse, because of the way youse get on when we’re trying to walk past you on the Crumlin Road, taking a peaceful parade home. You want to spit on us, you want to brick us... so of course I am going to learn it from youse!”

- The pressure is always on to work cross-community. Why? I have my own identity, I don’t feel I should be forced to sit alongside someone who has opposite views to mine. The same for them; we just have to agree to respect our different identities. But my identity as a Protestant is under threat, we are getting nothing out of this peace process. I don’t care whether there are Irish symbols all over the place, but they are not allowing me to have *my* identity alongside that. They don’t want our identity. They think *they* can leave all their baggage behind, but *we*’re not allowed to. When we’re in a cross-community setting, I know someone is saying behind my back, “See him, he’s in the Cloughfern Young Conquerors [flute band]; a few of their lads were lifted the other day for rioting, don’t trust him.” That’s never going to go away. So how do you build trust, genuine trust, to sit down with people? Some people can get into pretend dialogue, happy to lift their funding for their ‘cross-community’ efforts. But I mean *real* engagement, which serves to change hearts and minds. I honestly don’t believe nationalists and republicans want to change their minds about loyalists, the way they expect us to change our minds about them.

- How do you lead loyalist people? Nobody can do that at present. And that’s in every area. We can discuss like this for days, months, but we’re in a dead end. We all signed up to peace but we didn’t think of the long-term outcomes.

- Republicans went into the talks with a wish-list the length of your arm and we went in with a list the size of your wee finger. Basically all we got was prisoners released. People voted for the Good Friday Agreement for only one reason: to stop the bullets

and bombs. But we never knew about all the other deals which were being made behind our backs. Or that celebrating our culture would still not be tolerated.

- People are afraid to raise their heads above the parapet. If they do they'll be demonised, they'll end up in the papers. But Sinn Féin are not afraid to put their people forward. They will even speak about their past with passion, no matter how atrocious it might have been. There are lots of young people, with *no* historical baggage, who want to step up to the plate and work within the UPRG or PUP, and yet the minute they stick their head up and utter one word publicly, the media automatically says: "So-and-so, East Antrim PUP, closely aligned to the UVF." Or "So-and-so, West Belfast UPRG, closely aligned to the UDA or West Belfast UFF." And our middle-class Unionists, the comfortable ones sitting dipping their biscuits into their tea, turn round and say "Isn't that person a disgrace?"

- That's true. My niece is very politically aware, and joined the PUP because she wants to fight on the real issues confronting working-class people, but any time she is at a conference the first thing people ask her is: "How do you feel being connected to the UVF?" Not about her ideas or the work she wants to do. You have a Stormont Assembly where half the people there from Sinn Féin were former terrorists, but the media isn't going on about *their* past; instead it is hell-bent on demonising anyone from a loyalist background who wants to stand up and be heard. They can't acknowledge that loyalists have a constructive part to play. Or, indeed, that we have *already* played a constructive role. Parts of the *Common Sense* document were embedded into the Good Friday Agreement, but you never hear mention of that. And all we hear constantly from the Sinn Féin leadership is that "loyalists are all anti-peace". And why? Because we criticise Sinn Féin. Sinn Féin will not take any criticism; if you criticise them you are labelled as 'anti-peace'.

- *The tone of this discussion is very much doom and gloom. Is it really as bad as that?*

- It *is* doom and gloom. But what's wrong with talking about the doom and gloom? That's why Stormont is in the position it is, because they don't want to talk about the real issues. They don't want to tackle sectarianism, they don't want to talk about what divides us. As for the victims, I have heard politicians saying: just forget about it and move on. How the Hell can they do that! It's an absolute disgrace. We are being told that we are never going to get justice. But in a democracy that shouldn't be the case: we should *expect* justice as our right. And as for collusion, let's look at collusion in the republican movement: let's look at Freddie Scappaticci, Martin McGartland, Denis Donaldson... but nobody wants to talk about that. Yet these people were directly responsible for the deaths of many people from the Catholic community. But there is silence about that.

- The Policing Board have issued a 'code of conduct' for the use of language

for PCSPs [Policing and Community Safety Partnerships]. And in that code of conduct, which applies not only to the police but everyone who signed up to the PCSPs, you are not allowed to say the words ‘Sinn Féin’ and ‘IRA’ in the same sentence, you are not allowed to refer to anyone as being ‘Sinn Féin/IRA’. Police officers on duty are not allowed to. The first time I got suspended from the PCSP was for mentioning a certain IRA bomber from Ardoyne as ‘Sinn Féin/IRA’. “Point of order,” I was told, “you’re not allowed to use that term.” “Says who?” A document was thrown across the table. “You signed up to that language code. Will you withdraw that remark?” “No.” “Well, then, you have to leave the meeting.”

- Yet politicians and the media can say whatever they want about loyalists, label them in whatever way they want. When something happens on the Shankill, the media say it happened on the ‘Loyalist Shankill’, or ‘Loyalist Woodvale.’ But in Catholic West Belfast? No, it was simply: “A man was shot in the knees today in Ballymurphy.” Not ‘Republican Ballymurphy’? On, no – never that!

- *Are people here willing to sit down and discuss the future together?*

- Why would we not?

- We cannot discuss the future. When people say they want to talk about the future, it’s about the past. It’s all about our stories of the past, and that’s what’s holding us back. Because even though I, and others, are committed to working for a new future, I will not sit back and leave republicans unchallenged when they try to tell me what my past was and what it wasn’t.

- Nobody wants to go back to conflict, there’s no appetite for that. But if there is continued appeasement of one section of the community, purely to keep them in the peace process, that’s where we could end up.

- Out of all our discussions here with Michael I would struggle to start with a clean sheet and write down what we all *want* to achieve. People have talked about Sinn Féin going into talks with a wish-list. Maybe the first step would be to look at what we say is *wrong*, and then put down a three- or five-year plan of how we might get to a place that is *right*. Like being able to march down the road through a mixed community, and with people standing there applauding: now that would be some vision. But that’s what we might have to do: set down our vision, and how we might realise it.

***I would struggle to write down what we all want to achieve. Maybe the first step would be to look at what we say is wrong, and then put down a three- or five-year plan of how we might get to a place that is right. That’s what we might have to do: set down our vision, and how we might realise it.***

- See all the talk there is in the media about the march up at Twaddell... people don't realise the amount of work that has already been done up there. People outside Twaddell think that the problem all evolves around the nature of the parade and the marchers, that there are still changes required to make it more acceptable. But that's *not* the case at all. The Catholic community are already acknowledging that. CARA have said that the parade which comes down in the morning – and which is *no different* from the one coming back in the afternoon – is a dignified, respectful parade. So it is not about that, it's not about the *nature* of the march – it is all to do with internal feuding within republicanism in Ardoyne.

- The Apprentice Boys have had personal experience of that. I know people in Unity Flats and some of them were saying among themselves: “These people are not misbehaving, they're dignified, so why are people from our community getting up early in the morning to protest? Protest about *what?*” Fr. Sheenan agreed that the Apprentice Boys marchers were dignified.

- But maybe somebody needs to start putting down what the PUL community has as their vision for the future, in a coherent way?

- In 2005 [Chief Constable] Hugh Orde indicated that the government would look after republicans and the police would look after loyalists – and that's exactly what has happened. At the time of the CTI† Orde said, in a TV interview, that he wouldn't “give that group 50p”. Yet he phoned me an hour later and asked me if I could go up to Twaddell Avenue, to try and calm the situation until the police got there! And I did go up, and I said to the senior PSNI officer: “Orde is only after saying on TV that he wouldn't give people like me 50p.” And he replied: “Awh, sometimes people have to say these things.”

- You are asking how we might move forward. What worries me is that we don't even know *how to get back to where we once were*. Many of the cross-community gains which had been so painstakingly made at a grassroots level have been largely lost and I don't see *any* process which could assist us to *even regain lost ground* let alone move us all forward.

***You asked us how we might move forward. What worries me is that I don't see any process which could assist us to even regain lost ground let alone move us all forward.***

- I would agree with that. Michael, your hope is to get people from both communities to see our conflict as a ‘shared problem’. The reality is that each community still sees the ‘other’ community as ‘the problem’. So you have your work cut out for you!

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† Conflict Transformation Initiative, which was an attempt to try and move UDA ex-combatants into community development roles. Funding for the initiative was blocked by the SDLP.

## 2: The one-to-one interviews

*To simplify this section of the pamphlet, the various opinions expressed during the one-to-one interviews have been brought together under each of the questions asked.*

- *What do you feel lies at the root of our conflict?*
- I believe that in the early Sixties Irish Republicans saw their ideals of a United Ireland disappearing. The IRA's border campaign in the 1950s had been a total failure. I think when the Civil Rights movement emerged in 1968 the IRA saw a new opportunity. I accept that there was justification behind the Civil Rights claims: things were not right here – but there was no justification whatsoever for what followed. Adams said, only a few months ago, that the Provisionals arose because of the lack of reform,<sup>†</sup> but – and I'm sure you could check my dates – my recollection is that the Provisionals only formed *after* those reforms were granted.<sup>††</sup> And even now I believe that Irish Republicans view the 'peace process' as yet another opportunity to undermine the Protestant/British community. Do you know the way I see it? I feel that I have opened my door to people I acknowledged had not been treated fairly, and asked them to help me make the house run properly, make it a better place – and whilst that has been going on these people have been working behind my back to put me *out* of that house, and take it completely over.
- You also had the likes of Paisley adding to it, stirring things up. And Paisley had only one objective: to become prime minister of Northern Ireland. People who were in his way were pushed aside, and eventually I think he just got too full of himself. When asked why he finally did the big U-turn and sat down with Sinn Féin he said, "Oh, the alternative [that Tony Blair had seemingly threatened] was too serious to contemplate." But *nobody* knows what this alternative was. Anyway, it still wasn't Ian's decision to take – that was for the people of Northern Ireland. And some have since asked: was there *really* this terrible alternative? Or did Ian see this as his last chance to become prime minister of Northern Ireland? I would love to know.

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<sup>†</sup> In a speech on 8 August 2014 Gerry Adams stated that, "The failure of Unionism and of the British government to agree fundamental reform in the 1960s led to a militarisation of the situation and to decades of conflict."

<sup>††</sup> On 22 November 1968 Terence O'Neill announced his reform programme, consisting of a points system for housing allocation, the appointment of an ombudsman, the reform of local government elections, a review of the Special Powers Act, and the replacement of Londonderry Corporation by the Londonderry Development Commission. On 10 October 1969 the Hunt Report recommended the disbandment of the 'B' Specials. On 12 October People's Democracy leader Michael Farrell acknowledged that "all the Civil Rights demands have been met". On 29 December 1969 *The Irish Press* reported a split within the IRA which saw the birth of the Provisional IRA.

- The way the Troubles ended was bound to cause problems. Both Adams and Paisley were able to manipulate their respective constituencies into an Agreement, and it was only later, when both communities were able to reflect upon it, that they realised – and I mean *both* communities – how far it was from their aspirations. So what you have is an Agreement with massive dissatisfaction in both communities. The only thing which is holding it in place is the desire of ordinary people for peace.

- Catholics and nationalists will say that the Civil Rights Movement was a defining moment for them. But it was also extremely divisive because it was promoted as something only affecting *their* community. Yet if someone told me that living in Brown Square on the Shankill Road, with twelve family members in a two-bedroom house with an outside toilet, meant that I was privileged... I mean, there is something wrong somewhere. What rights did I have more than my Catholic neighbours? We knew all about poverty. I can still remember the pawnshops, or running up bills in the local shops, and hoping that you could pay them off with your dad's wages at the end of the week. I was never privileged. There was never a time in my life when anyone came to me and said: "Because you're a good, loyal Prod I'm going to give you a job, or let you go to the front of the queue." And not only did working-class Protestants feel *equally* disadvantaged *then*, they feel *more* disadvantaged *now*. Within Protestant working-class areas hardship is increasing.

- My worries are not about how the conflict started, but where we are going in the future. There's a lot of young people growing up now with a lack of education, a lack of motivation – their lives are lived on a day-to-day basis. They don't look to the future, whether that is next week or next year. Many are becoming more and more dependent on welfare, or drugs or alcohol. They don't give two hoots what happens to them. They no longer have the aspiration, or education level, to look beyond that. Their only attachment is to their perceived cultural identity.

***My worries are not about how the conflict started, but where we are going in the future. There's a lot of young people growing up now with a lack of education, a lack of motivation.***

- At the core of the conflict for me, and perhaps all Unionists, is the link with the rest of the United Kingdom. All the majority of unionist people want is peace; they just want to get on with their lives. They want equality; they don't want to be treated any worse or any better than anyone else. But a lot of people within the unionist community are on a fear footing, because they believe a hidden agenda is being pursued by republicans: we're being taken here, we're being taken there... where is this all going? And that is gaining momentum. We see it in the blocking of parades, the 'OTR' letters... I think republicans are pushing people down a road which could take us back in the direction we came from. And that is dangerous.

- You talk to people out on the street and they will say they have lost everything... it's a constant tale of loss, loss, loss. I am not sure that that is the case: I actually think the Shinners are boxed in at Stormont, I think they've got all that they're ever going to get, in term of their republicanism. But what we're seeing on the streets is the sideshows. People within Sinn Féin have to keep certain sections of their community happy, and portray themselves as advancing the old republican dream. Take the whole thing about the Union flag – they deliberately manipulated that. However, I think that this manipulating is pushing our two communities further and further away from each other. They are fuelling extremism. I have heard people say, "If Billy Wright was alive today, we would have another paramilitary organisation formed." And young people would flock to it.
- This current impasse we are in is all being played out on the radio and TV, on *Nolan*. I think that is causing no end of difficulties. Because everybody is hearing it. And it is all confrontational, there is no real dialogue. Nolan reinforces everything that is negative. The media is destructive.
- Some of us are trying hard to move people forward. But when you try to encourage ex-combatants to get involved with their communities some will say: "I didn't join to become a community worker!" My argument to that is: "Well, I don't think Martin McGuinness joined the IRA just to be where he is now; everything evolves with time." Adams said at the City Hall: "We haven't gone way, you know." And they certainly haven't gone away, but *they have transformed*. Into community development, into politics. My question to loyalist ex-combatants is: '*They* haven't gone away, but have *you* gone away?' For me things aren't over, yet some loyalists have just walked away from their community's current needs. If you were prepared to engage in armed conflict, and risk death, in order to defend your community, then community development on behalf of that community should be easy. Some still talk as if they are SuperLoyalists or SuperProds, but in terms of the everyday needs of their communities they *have* gone away. Not everyone: there are some who are working hard, who see the benefits of developing their community.
- The IRA are sitting in Stormont talking about billions of pounds and how to run this country, and our people are throwing petrol bombs at the police and fighting each other – the sort of stuff that's going on in North Belfast. How are we ever going to get above that? We're all feeling sorry for ourselves – 'they're getting everything'. The flag came down basically because our people don't vote.
- The IRA did horrendous things – like trying a man into his van and blowing him to pieces, and countless other atrocities. But because Sinn Féin now has an electoral mandate they feel that that part of the past should be forgotten – because the IRA are not doing it any more. But loyalists are not doing those things either, yet we are given no credibility.

- When the new [Sandy Row] mural was launched Ivan Little was talking to me about the way things were slowly changing. I was chatting to him for about five minutes, telling him about all sorts of positive developments, and at the end he asked: “Well, are you looking forward to the Twelfth?” And I said, “I hate that whole period. See the problems it causes me.” And the headline in the paper was: ‘Loyalist leader hates the Twelfth!’ And I get that thrown up at me all the time now. But it *is* the worst period of the year for me. In the build-up to the Twelfth there’s always the risk of interface violence, or the possibility of attacks by Catholic youths sparking off our young ones, all the anti-social behaviour, and far too much drink taken! A few years ago I was running about at four in the morning because some bandsman from Scotland got into a massive fight after trying to touch for someone’s wife. On the way home I had to call over to a bonfire because Protestants were fighting each other. It’s the worst time of year for people like me; we are on constant alert in case these problems arise, or spiral out of control. Everyone knows about these problems but are in complete denial about them. We need to be more honest with one another about such things.

- I don’t think there is an easy answer. Certainly one of the things I see on a regular basis is this whole sense of identity, and what’s feeding into our present difficulties is the whole legacy of the Past; there’s a lot of hurt and anger. And I think the ‘peace process’ has also created space for people to espouse sectarian views, including people I wouldn’t have thought had felt like that. I was at a public meeting in the Welders Club soon after the flag dispute erupted, and it was scary: naked sectarianism, race, flags, everything. And the biggest cheer of the night was when someone said, “See Stormont – F\_\_king close it down!” People haven’t worked out the implications. If you close Stormont down you will have Direct Rule, and the Irish government even more involved, no doubt about that. And do you think the British government is going to say, “Let’s put the flag up again! Let’s get the Ardoyne marchers through.” No, they won’t.

- We haven’t sold the ‘peace process’ properly. Belfast, Northern Ireland, is a greatly changed place, despite all its problems. No doubt you’ve been getting the “F\_\_king Taigs are getting everything” comments. I drove along the Newtownards Road counting the money that had been put in: a £2M development at the lower end: the Connswater Community Greenway Scheme costing £40M; Templemore Avenue school now a £2M community hub.... There is a lot of positive stuff going on, and the political reality is that the Union is stronger than it’s ever been.

- If people are being constantly told that they are second-class citizens, that they are losing out, well then, people start believing it. Especially when the leadership of Unionism is telling people that. There has definitely been a lack of leadership, and as the biggest party the DUP must shoulder the largest responsibility.

- If a community group came out with the anti- Irish language stuff spouted by Gregory Campbell, or called DUP members ‘bastards’ as Adams did, they’d have their funding withdrawn in an instant. But politicians can continue to undermine any positive work done at the grassroots without suffering any penalties. If anything, government tries to mollify them even more, and offers them more sweeteners. Take the expenses scandal. BBC’s *Spotlight* [Tuesday 18 and 25 November, 2014] revealed that Sinn Féin had claimed £700,000 in expenses for research by a company run by the party’s financial managers, yet the programme-makers were unable to find any evidence of this research! *Spotlight* also revealed the extensive network of family members on the DUP’s Assembly payroll. Now, see all the issues which they fight over up at Stormont: the Irish language, the Maze Prison scheme.... Will they now add expenses to that list? Not on your life!

- In one sense I think the Good Friday Agreement is at the core of it. The Good Friday Agreement was written in such ambiguous terms everybody took out of it what they wanted. I don’t think it was clearly understood what was in the Agreement. People expected totally different outcomes. I can remember being involved in [the negotiations for] the Agreement, I can remember all the euphoria:

there was going to be massive investment, they were going to listen to civic voices, old attitudes were going to change... yet none of those things materialised. And what it looks now to the Protestant community is that we have actually got *nothing* out of it. Now, in reality that’s not true, but it would be very hard to convince most Protestants that it isn’t true. And that has now become a generational perception within the Protestant community. People in Protestant areas have almost given up, and decided that whatever is going to happen is going to happen; there is no push left in them to make a difference. And I think

***What it looks now to the Protestant community is that we have actually got nothing out of the Good Friday Agreement. Now, that’s not true, but it has become a generational perception within the Protestant community.***

one of the downsides of the Haass Talks was that we were promised that grassroots opinions would be taken on board, but they weren’t. It is almost as if the Protestant community has taken the place of the Catholic community where *they* felt they were before 1968. We now think that *we* are the oppressed people, who haven’t got anything out of the Agreement, that everything is working against *us*. Now, if you look at statistics and all that’s not true. But people don’t look at statistics, they look at what’s happening around them in their daily lives.

- I remember when I first started in community work, when I first came to the Shankill, I remember trying to get legal advice because we wanted to do certain things. We couldn’t get it anywhere. On the Catholic side they had solicitors and

other professionals who *lived in their community*, and anyway they could have gone down to St Mary's Hall on a Saturday morning to get free advice. Our elected leaders have never taken up that challenge. We have a lot of elected unionist leaders who speak *for* us, but they don't speak *to* us. Take this project we are sitting in. We were given £6.5M twenty years ago, but I was told by unionist politicians that it wouldn't work, because we were 'only community people' and what would we know about running such an ambitious scheme. We work with over 800 families here, looking at the different problems experienced by those families, and not only did the elected representatives tell us it wouldn't work, we have never, ever had one of those representatives over our door! In twenty years! They get invited but never appear. Anything of value that has been done on this road has been done by community people, who have grasped opportunities, seen ways forward for their people.

- We haven't learned the lessons of the past. We have well-educated people up 'on the hill' who don't seem worried that we might be going down the same road again which led to '69 and everything that developed from that.
- The vast majority of the Protestant community want to move forward. Do they want an all-Ireland? No. Do 90% of the Catholic community want one? No. We have to build the society we all want *here and now*. But there is a psyche in the Protestant community that we have lost everything. I was reading yesterday a report on how the schools are doing here, and Catholic schools are actually doing *worse* than Protestant schools! But that's not the perception out there on the streets; the perception is that underachievement is only in Protestant areas.

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- *What are your core aspirations?*
- Once I would have answered that question by saying that I wanted to protect and promote my British identity. But now, my real goal would be to see the strengthening of a 'Northern Ireland' identity. I think today you can see the beginnings of a sense of that identity, as becoming more important to people, and in both communities. I think we have to cultivate that.
- I believe that, prior to the Troubles kicking off in 1969, you had a growing number of Protestants who felt comfortable with a sense of Irishness alongside their Britishness; indeed, I recall some who felt *more* Irish than British. In East Belfast, for example, you had a lot of Protestant families sent their children to Irish dancing. But the violence of the Troubles ended all that, and people became totally polarised: you either had an Irish identity or a British identity. The irony

is that Irish Republicans, by taking the violent path that they did, destroyed any prospect of a United Ireland for generations to come.

- The flag issue has raised a lot of concerns, but it also raises a lot of questions for me. A lot of Protestants see the Union flag as their lifeline, the thing which attaches them to their British identity. But it's like a child growing up, sooner or later you have to let go of your mother's hand and stand on your own two feet. Northern Ireland has to take those steps, it has to be able to develop its own identity. If we don't we will always still be holding the hand of either Westminster or Dublin.
- I think the flag issue was done deliberately to score points, trying to get one over on the Protestant/unionist community or to show elements within the republican community that Sinn Féin was still taking the fight to the Unionist/British establishment. If it had've been done through a more gradual process there mightn't have been such an uproar over it. But to just walk in and pull it down was a terrible tactical mistake. And they should have predicted the reaction. The same thing happened to their own community in the early Sixties with the removal of the Tricolour from the shop in Divis Street, which led to a whole week of rioting, and was the forerunner to the Troubles. Those linkages to symbolism still have a foothold, and if there is an attack on symbols – from *either* community – it can result in severe consequences. That is one of the problems that we have, that the separate cultural identities which have developed here for hundreds of years are still intact.
- Many people are now seeing that our *self-identity* has to be developed a lot more than the British or Irish identity, and I think if they were given that opportunity it would grow. Look at the pride there is when someone from Northern Ireland becomes world famous, particularly someone who has no problem in proclaiming their 'Northern Irish' identity – the likes of Rory McIlroy and Graeme McDowell, and our football team. And it doesn't matter whether that person is a Catholic or Protestant – it gives people a more positive image of themselves, and a more positive vision of what the future could hold for them, especially young people.
- To me my Britishness is also very much about my upbringing. My family were all in the armed forces, still are, and we also have this feeling that we have given so much to Britain, the sacrifice we have made. Being brought up in that culture. The flag is part of that connection, that identity.
- The perceived threats to our culture are creating a lot of anger at different levels. I was speaking to a man at the weekend, a middle-class Alliance voter, who said he would never vote for Alliance again. Another person said the same: she was very middle class, owns a lovely house in East Belfast, and said she wanted to go out with the flag protesters. There is a widespread anger there. The scary thing now is that a lot of the ones who would be involved were not even born during the conflict. Yet I could take you to some other areas, like Tullycarnet, where a lot of good work

has gone on, and people are working away, lobbying, and have dozens of people back into third-level education; they're not complaining that the educational system has failed them, but getting on.

- In light of the Scottish vote, people are asking what 'Britishness' is. I myself would struggle at times to define it. Okay, I could boil it down to parades, flags, the Queen... but I think Britain is changing, it will never be the same again – and so 'Britishness' will also change. Even the fact that we are now talking about working with the Scottish administration, because the English and the Welsh are going to unite to try and change the Barnett Formula (because we do better out of it).

***In light of the Scottish vote, people are asking what 'Britishness' is. I think Britain is changing, it will never be the same again – and so 'Britishness' will also change.***

- Mark Carruthers interviewed people for his book *Alternative Ulsters: Conversations on Identity*, and Paisley Senior said, "I am an Irishman, I have always been an Irishman, and I don't make any secret of that fact."

- I did a thing last year and people from both communities were present, and a question came up about an all-Ireland. And there were people there from the Falls Road who, to a person, said: "We don't want an all-Ireland." And people down south don't want one either. I can remember in my trade union days whenever I would go south for meetings, the first thing they would say when we all went into a pub was, "Now, we don't want to hear any talk about the Black North."

- *The Protestant community clearly wants to protect its cultural identity. That implies that cultural identity per se should be protected. Now, in Wales there is a Welsh identity alongside a British one. In Scotland there is a Scottish identity alongside the British identity. In Northern Ireland, half the population profess to an Irish identity. So, does the protection of culture also apply to the protection of those in Northern Ireland who see themselves as Irish? And how can both communities assist one another to protect and celebrate their respective cultural identities?*

- I think that will be very hard to do. Mainly because we are so much on the defensive about culture. And I blame our Northern Ireland parliament for a big lot of what took place. When I was growing up, if you had asked me the date of the battle of Hastings, or Trafalgar... I could have rhymed them off to you. But if you asked me something about our local history and culture – we weren't taught it, we knew nothing about it. And I found that an awful drawback whenever I started to talk to people from across the divide. Because when these people started to talk about their Irish history and culture I was left fidgeting my lips. I couldn't really join in the discussion, because I was ignorant. And that wasn't my fault, because our government and education system did not instruct us. And people look at me when

I say to them: we call this place the ‘emerald isle’, but it’s a wonder the Stormont government let grass grow around Parliament Buildings, because it was green in colour. They tried to distance us from *anything* Irish, even Ulster-Irish history. And that was a big failing: they did not teach our own culture and history in our schools. And our children today are in the same boat. Those kids throwing stones at the interfaces probably couldn’t join in cross-community discussions on culture. So how can we accept one another’s culture, when we haven’t a full grasp of *our own*?

- Yes, I think *all* our traditions and cultures must be protected. But, by the same token, we must be able to ask searching questions about culture. Such as: why should we spent a small fortune translating everything into Irish when our health and education sectors are in dire need of funding? Or: why is Orange culture promoted to the extent of overkill? I am not knocking Unionist or Orange culture, but often I can’t see the rationale for having so many parades. In Rio they look forward all year to one massive carnival; the same in Notting Hill. Yet we seem to need them *week in, week out*. Why? Are we really that insecure in our identity that we have to remind ourselves of it daily? We are suffocating ourselves.

- Being British, and living in Northern Ireland, doesn’t mean that I identify strongly with England. Or Wales. I feel closest to Scotland. And after years of cross-border contacts I feel closer to the southern Irish than I do to the English. Protestants are feeling more comfortable with the South, whereas prior to the peace process people from these areas would have seen the South as alien. Anyway, what *is* identity? Identity is a fluid thing: one minute people see their identity as exclusive, the next as inclusive. We are working with Short Strand and Ardoyne and many kids have no problems at all relating together. Even kids who take part in riots tell us that “it’s a bit of fun”, and they resume their cross-community activities the very next day! But one thing I will say: identity cannot be forced on people. That was the big mistake of the Republican movement. They demanded: “An All-Ireland or Nothing!” And what resulted? The trenches were dug deeper and the mental wall between communities became more consolidated.

- I was in a room once when a leading republican talked about the bigoted nature of the Orangemen as they come down past Ardoyne shops. And someone asked him: “Have you never considered that the people who are out protesting might *also* be bigots?” And he admitted, “I hadn’t thought of that.”

- Nationalist areas once detested the RUC, yet republicans and the nationalist community are now engaging with the police on a regular basis, at a very positive level. But they treat Orangeism differently. If they can seemingly forgive, or put aside, past hurts caused to their community by the police, how come they cannot put aside old hurts caused by Orange marchers, and start anew with them? They label Orangemen and bandsmen as if they were all Ku Klux Klan supremacists, but

that's not only totally unhelpful to moving forward, but completely at odds with reality. Many of the people I know in the Orange Order would bear no animosity to anyone. I think there is a serious lack of understanding within the Republican community about what the Protestant community really is, and what is important to us – and I think they need to start finding out pretty quickly.

- It is well known that many Protestants are learning Irish; there are language classes in East Belfast. But nationalists won't try to understand *our* traditions. They demonise bandsmen. I know many bandsmen who have loads of Catholic friends, and stay well away from any trouble. Nationalists don't understand the community role bands play in our areas. To me, the bands are like the local teams within the GAA. And people in our community are trying to use culture in positive ways. Like the play, *More than a flag*. Dan Gordon took young lads from this area out of three bands and did a production with them. It was part of the Belfast Festival. And that play was really thought-provoking. Or take the band called 'The Hounds of Ulster'. They were down playing, by invite, at the Rose of Tralee festival. They are just a bunch of guys who started out in flute bands, but wanted to take their music further. They are fantastic; and they play all the old-type music.

- We had a thing there, 'Row on Row', where we laid out crosses on the Newtownards Road. Every night, starting the 1st November, *The Last Post* was played. We gave out 100 tree saplings for people to take away and plant – as a symbol of renewal for the future. And every night people from the local community who had died in the First World War were recognised. Two brothers from the Short Strand, the Rooney brothers, were among those recognised – they had joined the Royal Irish Rifles. People were encouraged to lay crosses not only for family members who had died in the world wars, but for *any* loved ones who had died. There were over 5000 crosses. Then the media came out. Now, they didn't come out when there was anybody there. And they searched and they searched, until they found a cross that was to someone who had been a local paramilitary, and that's what they focused on. And we were disgusted. That could have wrecked that whole event. Because we had church people, we had the Army, we had the Irish Guards playing the pipes, we had people from the British Legion. The mother of Channing Day, who had been killed in Afghanistan, read out the 'Ode of Remembrance'. Every night *The Last Post* was played on a different instrument. A guy from the homeless centre played it on the tenor horn, we had kids from Ashfield School, we had an accordion player. We would love to have involved the Catholic community; we had one idea that the chapel might be asked to sound the bells before 8 o'clock. We had the Polish community there. They laid crosses and wreaths on behalf of the Polish airmen who died. The media had 5000 crosses – and they chose to focus on that one cross. They came to look for something divisive. I think the media are playing a really negative role. They don't want positive stories. We have told them positive stories about

young people in this area but they only want to hear about the ones out throwing stones. You get a fairer presentation on that new local TV station, *NVTV* [Virgin 159], which is on in the evenings. It highlights a lot of grassroots initiatives.

- We have a group of young people in our [community] centre at the minute doing a drama: *The Secret City: the Voices of Us*. It is young people from East Belfast, who are going to join up with other young people from right across the city, and they're going to look at their Voices: are people listening to them? Represent through drama what it is like for young people living in East Belfast at an interface: all the pressure, whether from the police, the community, parents, school....

- People use the terms 'Irish identity' and 'British identity' as if these are two mutually-exclusive concepts. In fact, they are very closely interrelated. Indeed, it would be more accurate to say that the communities in Northern Ireland possess a *common* identity. And I believe that awareness of this common identity has been gathering momentum in recent years. And not just because of the material you and I have been producing for many years†, but as a result of spontaneous grassroots initiatives. Take the massive sea-change which has taken place in public attitudes – both North and South – regarding this island's

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sacrifice during the First World War. Part of the impetus behind that change originated with a group of young people involved in a Farset exchange project, which had taken them to France in 1983.†† There are many aspects which we could focus on. One in particular would be to explore the legacy of St. Columbanus. When Columbanus departed from Bangor in 555AD the monastic settlements he established in what is now France, Switzerland and Italy had a profound impact on European history. Indeed, Robert Schuman, one of the founders of the EU said, "St. Columbanus is the patron saint of those who wish to construct a united Europe." And the legacy of Columbanus belongs to *all* of us. The people of Northern Ireland – indeed, the people of the 'British Isles' – are basically of very ancient stock. And we should focus more on the many aspects of our *common* inheritance. We can *all* gain by doing this, and, hopefully, it can assist us in moving to a better future.

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† Ian Adamson: *The Cruithin; The Identity of Ulster; Bangor-Light of the World; The Ulster People; Dalaradia-Kingdom of the Cruithin*. Michael Hall: *Ulster-the Hidden History*; Island Pamphlet No. 6, *Ulster's Shared Heritage*; Pamphlet No. 83, *Is there a shared Ulster heritage?*

†† Island Pamphlet No. 84, *A shared sacrifice for peace*. (Both this pamphlet and No. 83 are available as free pdfs from <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/islandpublications/>)

• *Is it possible that the manner in which Protestants try to protect the Union can actually serve to undermine it?*

• Of course! But how do we get that message out there? Some people don't want to know a Fenian about the place. They still imagine you can have a 'Protestant Ulster' here. There won't be one. There might be Protestant parts of Ulster, but the old 'Protestant state for a Protestant people' is long, long gone – we will never go back to that. But people get offended when you try to tell them that, or else they label you a 'Fenian lover'.

• After I came back from the Field I was watching the Twelfth celebrations on TV and there were tens of thousands walking all over the country. Celebration of our culture is *not* being prevented, except by a handful of nationalist bigots at Ardoyne and elsewhere. We bring problems on to ourselves by over-reacting to these idiots. And we mustn't deduce from the reaction of a group of bigoted, dissident republicans that the entire Catholic community opposes our Britishness. We are *not* losing our Britishness. If anything, it is Irish nationalism which is being forced along a new path, whether a grudging acknowledgement of the Queen, or our shared sacrifice in the British Army. We have to insist that Unionist politicians stop drumming up fears, when they know rightly that they are only doing so for their own ends.

• We don't have the leaders who can engage the flag protesters in genuine debate and warn the young people of the consequences. They are either afraid *not* to go along with the populist mood or, more cynically, they see votes in it. Nobody is able or willing to come out and say: hold on here, we are only defeating ourselves by doing all this. I know from all my contacts that ordinary Catholics would be as concerned at what the dissidents are doing up in Ardoyne as Protestants are. We are *all* being held to ransom by two blocs of people who seem to be equally determined to destroy this wee country.

• It took far too long for unionists to accept that Catholics had a right to live here on equal terms. And that was at a time when unionists were well in the majority, but it's now almost equal. So, even for our own selfish reasons, it is *imperative* that we all have equal rights.

• I personally feel very despondent. The Protestant community seems so downbeaten, so unable to move forward. Yet Ulster's history provides vivid examples of how forward-looking and creative the Protestant community were in the past. The ones who emigrated to America and were to the forefront of the American Revolution. The people whose cultural and political energies once made Belfast known as the 'Athens of the North'. People like Henry Joy McCracken and his sister Mary Ann, and their anti-sectarian, progressive politics. Where has all that gone? Where has the forward-looking, creative

potential disappeared? I despair, not only about the circumstances currently facing the Protestant community, but at the absence of any real vision to rise above those circumstances and make something special about this country.

- I think the PUL community need to stop their constant lamenting: “We are finished as a community, our identity is being taken away!” *Nobody* can take our identity away. Certainly our opponents can tamper with, or even trample over, its symbols, but they can never take it away – it is lodged deep inside us. And our politicians need to begin to present our case quite differently. To me, British values have far more to offer the modern world than Irish nationalism. Yet to listen to our politicians you would think that all Britishness stands for is the Union flag, the Queen, and the right to march. No wonder Irish republicans can belittle our identity – we make it easy for them! It’s time our leaders spelled out – in a rational, measured way – what British values really are, and their relevance to today’s world. And if people are unaware of those values, even from within the PUL community, then let us create a public debate on the matter. And bring the young flag-protesters into that debate; help them to articulate just what it is they are so often unfairly ridiculed for defending.

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- *Would you be willing to sit down together with people from the Catholic/Nationalist/Republican community and discuss our conflict as a ‘shared’ problem?*
- Certainly. But as important as it is for both communities to sit down together, I also think they first have to take a serious look at *themselves*. I think the loyalist community have to look at parades and how parades are promoted, and the ideology around parades. I think the Catholic community need to look at what Irish republicanism really is, and to explore the benefits of a *united Northern Ireland*, with both communities supporting it. When people from the nationalist community reject or belittle the Northern Irish identity, by doing so they are belittling one section of the Irish people with whom they profess to want to unite. And when they attack the British people of Ireland, Orangeism, and Irish Unionists, by doing so they are rejecting a large section of those they claim to be ‘Irish people’, and saying: the only people who we really want in our Ireland are Catholics who see themselves as Irish.
- I fully accept that we have a shared problem. We have the same problems. And as for politics, I think Sinn Féin have their sights set much further than most Catholics. Sinn Féin go on about their United Ireland but I find that most Catholics just want a decent life for their family – just like in the Protestant community. We have so much in common, we cannot allow another

generation to sleepwalk into another round of horror. We cannot allow that to happen. We had forty years of it; it cannot go back to that. And, as '69 showed, it doesn't take an awful lot of people to start the thing off, and then momentum grows. We have to be very careful. We need to move forward together.

- I think there needs to be more honesty in our dealings with one another. People are saying all the right things when they're sitting round the table, but when they go away from that table they often do something quite different.

- I would certainly sit down, I think the only way of getting the reality understood is when you're sitting down with people face-to-face. Just after the ceasefires were called Bertie Ahern – he wasn't Taoiseach at that time – was making all sorts of statements that came over as very pro-Republican. A group of us went down to his office to talk with him. We said: "Look, we understand you're a politician, and you have a constituency, but you need to curb your rhetoric a bit, because it is unsettling people in the Protestant community." And, fair play to him, he did pull back. And I think that's what we need to be saying to republicans. There is a serious lack of understanding on their behalf.

- Kids don't understand what it's all about, yet they can look across the interface and say, "There's the enemy." I find that really dangerous. Some of them don't realise the long-term consequences of going to jail; they think it's a game. And they certainly don't know what conflict could do to them, their family, their friends, their communities. My fear is that we have lost that opportunity to explain to a new generation the *reality* of what we went through.

- Sometimes I reflect on all the efforts emanating from the Protestant community, aimed at reaching out across the 'divide': plays, music, Irish classes. Indeed, as far as I can see, *most* of the efforts to 'unite Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter' are coming from *our* community, *not* the Republican community. Yet they are the ones who claim that their ultimate goal is to 'unite Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter'. But what are they actually doing about it? I wish someone could tell me.

***[Republicans] claim that their ultimate goal is to 'unite Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter'. But what are they actually doing about it? I wish someone could tell me.***

- We need to understand that what was done was wrong, on *all* sides. If Civil Rights hadn't been hijacked by armed republicanism I think things would have moved quite differently. We need time to sit down and understand our past, and agree to do things with a common purpose. Unfortunately, that sense of common purpose is not there, on *either* side. All sides have to ask hard questions; we all have to begin to think outside the box. We have to say: this is where we are; how do we get over there?

- During the conflict we dehumanised each other; it wasn't people we were fighting, it was 'them'. And we each hurt one another's communities badly. That's what our young people don't get; they only look at what the 'other side' did. They don't look at what *we* did. Some of the things that loyalism did, or loyalists did in the name of loyalism, is a disgrace. I am not afraid to say that, because I was part of it. But each side's young people think that their side is all the good guys and the others are all the bad guys. I work with 'Spike' [Sean Murray], but I don't hesitate to say to him: "You blew our two communities apart, and now you think that because you are in government and want to move on, that we can just accept that, and that everything is going to be alright? We are trying to move on, but actions like taking the flag down, and not allowing people to walk past Ardoyne shops, is doing untold damage not only to what we are trying to do in our own community, but also with what we are trying to do with you. You cannot expect to do these things and assume that relationships will carry on as normal, as if nothing has happened." I repeatedly tell Republicans: you are going to have to factor Loyalism into your thinking.

- We need to be thinking about our children and grandchildren, but many people only look to the needs of today. But it is the damage they are doing. They are not going to stop Sinn Féin by blocking roads and throwing stones at the police. *Leading* people is not leading people where they *want* to go, but leading people where you think they *need* to go. We don't elect politicians to be politicians, we elect politicians to represent our bigotry. And another thing: what will happen if Sinn Féin becomes entitled to take up the post of First Minister? What about all our rhetoric about 'democracy' then?

- Some of those who claim to 'lead' us – whether at a political or a community level – are not necessarily the people who can take us forward.

- Loyalists have a right to say what happens in this country. We helped to create the violence but we also helped to create the peace. It is our grandkids who are throwing stones at the police. We need to involve young people. The problem with many of the flag protesters is that if you are not with them then they assume you are against them; there is no genuine debate. People need to step back and ask: where are we all going, where are our present actions taking us?

- We did a thing recently in Queens and all shades of republicanism were there as well. And a Stickie said to the Provies: "You were sectarian killers. You wanted the Brits out of Ireland, but there were one million Brits here already." I tell you, it didn't go down too well. We were at another event as part of 'Prison to Peace' and one IRA guy said that the IRA had legitimate targets, although a few things went wrong at times, but loyalists just went out to kill Catholics. But before any loyalist could respond wee G\_\_\_ said, "That's a lot of nonsense."

Take the likes of Darkley. Was that an accident?” Yer man got up and walked out! People say to me, “What about La Mon, or Enniskillen?” But what should we do? Should we put all the atrocities down side by side, in two lists... with La Mon, Enniskillen, Kingsmill on one side, and McGurks, Loughinisland, Ormeau Road bookies on the other? Then tick one off against the other, and see who might have carried out the most? We *all* done wrong. If loyalists had’ve had Semtex we would’ve killed a lot more people.

- Take that whole incident involving Gregory Campbell. Is it any bloody wonder we are the way we are! When you listen to educated people like them talk like that and get on the way they do. I attended the DUP conference as an observer. Now, it wasn’t on television, but there was a whole half-hour of Ian Paisley Junior and Sammy Wilson doing like a pantomime up on the stage. They were making fun of Sinn Féin, and Gregory’s mocking of the Irish language – his “curry my yoghurt”. Half an hour of it, in the middle of a serious party conference! Yet the day before they had invited along Donal McKeown, the first time a Catholic Bishop had ever spoken at a DUP conference. They also had Gerry Loughran, leading Catholic, who at one time was the Head of the Civil Service here; they were all on the panel speaking. Now, what did *they* think of that nonsense on Saturday? It was so juvenile.

- See what you are doing [with the Think Tank discussions]... the political parties need to do something similar. It’s very rare that people like me or my party colleagues get a chance to sit down and explore issues in depth, or thoroughly discuss things with people at the grassroots. Political parties live in silos and they need to get out of them. We have a closed outlook on the world, we follow a group dynamic. I tried to break that dynamic recently. About five weeks ago we were discussing these current talks, and I said, “I want to mention a dirty word. Do you see if we are to make any progress, the word is ‘compromise’. I mean, the Good Friday Agreement, the St. Andrews Agreement, the Hillsborough Agreement... were all about compromise.” But my suggestion didn’t sit too well.

- Everybody knows we’re all on the wrong road, but nobody wants to say: “Hang on here; let’s take a fresh look at all this, let’s look at possible alternatives.”

- If people go into talks with the attitude that their opponents’ position is only bog-roll, how can you expect any constructive debate to take place?

- This country is riddled with sectarianism, in the middle class just as in the working class. And it embraces nationalists, republicans, loyalists, Orangemen... all of us. We all did wrong to each other; we hurt one another’s communities, we often *went out of our way* to offend one another. But surely, twenty years after the guns fell silent, can we not try to get beyond the baggage of the Past, and both communities agree to start again?

- There were many decent guys whose lives were changed forever. Take Billy Giles. From the minute he killed that fella he was never the same. He didn't want to live. He was interviewed on TV and said that the moment he pulled the trigger it was like somebody reaching inside him and ripping out his heart. He knew the fella, he had been a workmate, used to give him a lift to work. And Billy never got over it and eventually took his own life. That was all peer-pressure and what you were expected to do when you joined an organisation. And things like that have to be remembered. I have had people come to my house and I have had to hug them because they couldn't live with what they did, and they felt they couldn't go to anybody about what they were feeling inside. We have a programme called 'Shoulder to Shoulder', trying to support ex-combatants who are having difficulty with their demons and living with the past. Republicans are having the exact same problems. Part of the problem is that we were all supposed to have this big macho image – but behind the facade they couldn't live with it, they turned to drink or to prescription medication. In the suicide letter that Billy left he wrote: "Please let the next generation live normal lives." That's what we all have to work towards.

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## **What issues did the discussions/interviews highlight?**

On the *negative* side:

- A dangerous sense of defeat and betrayal is currently demoralising the PUL community.
- They lack constructive, purposeful and effective leadership.
- Many blame the 'other side' for most of their ills; they especially see republicans as having a deliberate agenda to undermine their cultural identity and Britishness.
- They feel they have gained little from the Good Friday Agreement, and many believe that their community was manipulated into its acceptance.
- They see scant evidence of any 'peace dividend' in socio-economic terms within working-class areas. Indeed, many perceive most benefits as going to the 'other community'.
- They had assumed that the Agreement meant that each community had agreed to 'start again'; they cannot understand why 16 years on their cultural expression is still being vilified.
- They feel concerned that a new generation of young people, alienated and angry, could gradually see a return to conflict.

On the *positive* side there were a number of suggestions made:

- Research should be done by reputable agencies, regarding any perceived imbalances, and if both communities are suffering equally, then this must be clearly highlighted through the media.
- Unionist politicians must cease scare-mongering, and stop perpetuating their ‘second-class, losing-out’ depiction of the PUL community.
- These politicians must also develop constructive and creative strategies for protecting, and promoting, the British/Unionist position.
- Grassroots and political representatives from the PUL community should sit down and develop a vision of where they want to be in three or five years’ time. In relation to the marching impasse that vision should endeavour to be constructive and imaginative.
- The PUL community should cease seeing themselves as isolated – “ourselves alone” – and not underestimate the amount of goodwill they might find within the Catholic community.
- The freedom to express and celebrate culture and identity must be protected, for *all* Northern Ireland’s communities.
- More emphasis could be placed on encouraging a cross-community ‘Northern Ireland’ identity. Furthermore, there is plenty of (historical and cultural) material which could be utilised to reveal the full extent of our *common* identity.
- People must begin to think outside the box, and not accept that there are any taboo topics. In October 1994 a ground-breaking conference was organised on the Shankill Road (described in Island Pamphlet No. 11, *Beyond the Fife and Drum.*); perhaps such initiatives should be revisited. Organise public debates on themes such as: ‘Leaving aside flags and symbols, what does Britishness stand for in today’s world?’; or ‘Do we need so many marches?’ Invite Republicans to address themes such as: ‘What does Irish Nationalism have to offer people in the 21st century?’ or ‘Did moving from Civil Rights to Armed Struggle advance or set back the goal of a United Ireland?’ (And suggest to GARC that they have their own *internal* debate on the theme: ‘Are we being sectarian too?’)

*After a similar analysis involving representatives of the Catholic/Nationalist/Republican community has been completed, the PUL and CNR groupings will be reconvened to prepare for a possible joint engagement.*