



# Nonviolence and third party interventions

- Observing 12-page insert
  - Facilitating  
political discussion page 22
  - Consensus page 29
- ...plus feature on  
nonviolence and  
culture..... • starting on page 4







## WELCOME

Welcome to this annual edition of Dawn Train! Well, it is more than a year since the last one. Once more we hope to bring you some nonviolent stimulus for your brain cells with lots more to keep you thinking; observer-mediating, nonviolence and culture, consensus, 'men of violence', facilitating political discussion - it's all here.

As ever, contributions and comments are welcome. Don't forget that INNATE also produces a quarterly newsheet ('Nonviolent Daily News') and mailing which can be used as an information forum inbetween the regular, ahem, annual issues of Dawn Train. 'Nonviolent Daily News' sheet is available on a 'cost' basis - send us a few pounds and we'll send you NDN until your money runs out. If you'd be interested in being involved in any of this, do get in touch - your assistance would be welcome.

- Your loving editor, with a little help from his friends.



## CONTENTS

- Editorial; Rooting out 'the men of violence' page 3
- Feature on nonviolence, culture and training:
  - Introduction page 4
  - Handel, with care by Rob Fairmichael, page 5
  - Total revolution page 10
  - No one is an island, interview with IKG Chandrasena page 13
- Insert (between pages 16 and 17);
- Observing - a third party nonviolent response.
- A report and recommendations on its relevance in Northern Ireland.
  - Nonviolence in the African context, an interview with Stella Sabiti, page 18
  - Facilitating political discussion page 22
  - Consensus by Peter Emerson, page 29.

Additional copies of this issue; £1 plus postage (Northern Ireland and Britain 34p; Republic and international surface mail 60p). 5 copies for £5 post free anywhere.

## DAWN TRAIN 11

Edited by Rob Fairmichael.

Issue date; July 1992. (phew)

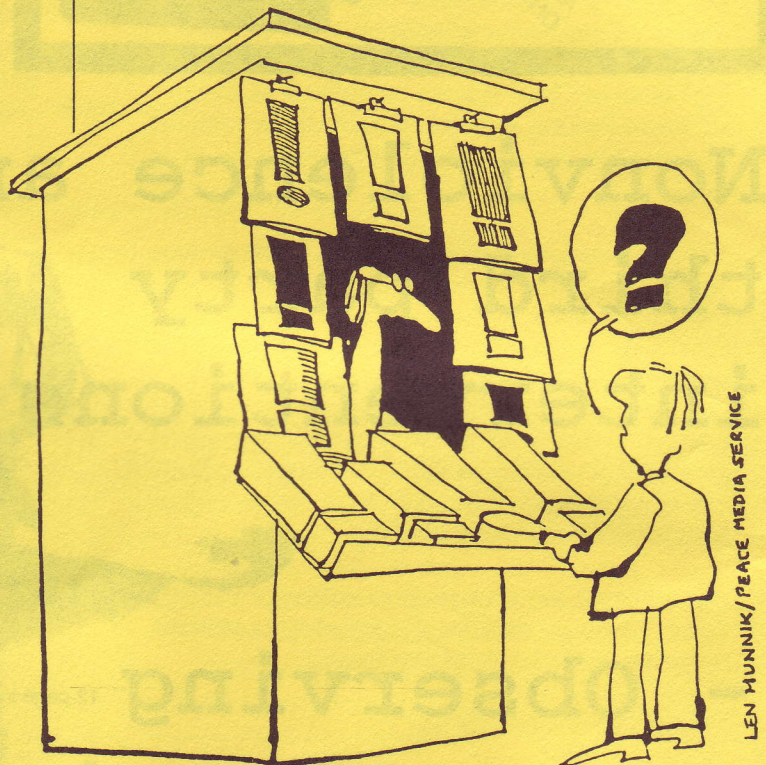
Thanks to Martin O'Brien and Bill Love for help with this issue.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS AND BACK ISSUES

Subscriptions are £3 minimum (£6 supporting) for which you will receive £3 worth of magazines and postage. Frequency, size and cover price will vary.

A back issues list is available on request.

Send to; Dawn Train, 16 Ravensdene Park, Belfast BT6 0DA (phone Belfast 647106). Cheques should be made payable to 'Dawn'.



LEN MUNNIK/PEACE MEDIA SERVICE

## INNATE

Dawn Train is an occasional publication of INNATE, an Irish Network for Nonviolent Action Training and Education (a network of upwards of twenty groups and organisations, also with individual membership); please enquire for further details to the same address as Dawn Train.

INNATE produces a quarterly mailing for members which includes the newsheet 'Nonviolent Daily News' - also available to non-members for the price of postage.

DAWN TRAIN and INNATE, 16 Ravensdene Park, Belfast BT6 0DA.



## ROOTING OUT 'THE MEN OF VIOLENCE'

Ah ha, does the title of this editorial article mean that Dawn Train is supporting a resolute military crack-down on the 'men of violence', that paramilitary supporters should be 'rooted out' of their localities and put behind bars?

No. What we mean by "Rooting out 'the men of violence'" is that the use of the term 'men of violence' is unacceptable and posits the problem as something 'out there', and makes out that we (pure as the driven snow) are not part of the problem. Furthermore, 'rooting out the men of violence' is an enemy image which can only lead to further military confrontation, death, escalation and misery.

We do not for a second dispute that those who use guns and bombs, on all sides in Northern Ireland, have been responsible for death and misery beyond our imaginations. But who are these people holding weapons? They are our neighbours, our brothers, sisters, cousins. And why have they chosen to use violence? Leaving aside the psychopaths that there may be in any society, people here have chosen violence because they see no alternative.

That is the sad fact. Violence is chosen as the way by people who see no alternative. The task of peace and nonviolent groups must not just be to campaign and mobilise for peace, but also to explore what alternatives there are for people, to provide people with real, morally based, physical and psychological security which does not depend on the barrel of a gun.

We do have to mobilise public opinion to express the need for a peaceful resolution of conflicts and an end to the spirals and cycles of violence. There have been limited successes, though time limited, over the years on this score. But the overwhelming need is to break into history, to break into the ongoing cycle of violence with alternatives so that people no longer feel they have to use violence to be heard or to achieve their ends.

Nonviolence is not easy. Applying nonviolence is not easy. And violence and nonviolence are not exactly equivalent methods of struggle. There is no nonviolent equivalent of a car bomb. And nonviolence does not seek to inflict suffering beyond what people (who have chosen to participate in nonviolent action) can bear.

But because of the terrible deaths and destruction of families, with the suffering of those who are left to mourn, we have allowed ourselves to be sucked into using military images of the other as enemy, such as 'the men of violence', tarring them all as evil devils who have nothing in common with us folk.

The uncomfortable reality is that they have all too much in common with us, and we with them. Above all, they have sprung from the same society as us, simply reacting in one particular way. We need to ask much more basic and deep questions about what needs to change in our society and how those changes can come about. We have to explore how change has come about, and how change can come about to a situation where violence is not just unacceptable but also unnecessary.

Meanwhile those of us who support peace initiatives and a nonviolent path must avoid enemy images. We need to enter into dialogue with those who use violence or are prepared to use violence (including all official and unofficial military and paramilitary forces). At the moment, many people who use physical violence as a means of struggle in Northern Ireland are reinforced in their beliefs and their actions by the vitriolic response they achieve - "If we get that much condemnation and attack, we must be having an effect".

We should fully mourn and grieve over those who have died. No one deserves to lose their life, their health, or their abilities. We must mourn but we must beware who we blame and how we blame. For the more we rave against those who kill, the more we try to set aside those who deal in death from us ordinary mortals, the more so communication with these people becomes difficult and often impossible. We must communicate effectively.

We have too many misunderstandings. We have too many gaps. The men and women who use violence do not need isolated but communicated with and loved. What we do need to root out, by patient and nonviolent action over decades, is the causes which have led people to regard violence as an acceptable means of communicating.

This is the difficult task that faces us; being strong and resilient in building a new and positive future while facing down the easy responses which would beguile us into the cul de sac of blaming 'the enemy'.

We are all part of this society. We have all had a part in creating the violence that besets us. We can all have a part in changing it. A first step is respecting other people, no matter how much we disagree with them, and enabling communication to take place nonviolently rather than with the trigger or the timing device.

And so to work.



# Feature on

## Nonviolence, culture and training

### INTRODUCTION

Nonviolence can be thought of as expressing certain universal human values - such as complete respect for human life - but as soon as we start to contextualise it in a particular location we come up against the problem, or opportunity might be a better word, of culture. Nonviolence can only be understood in a cultural context - our own or someone else's.

There are of course differences worldwide due to disparities in wealth; it might not be thought part of a nonviolent response in a rich country to do something that might automatically be thought of in a poor country, in terms of helping people provide for the basic necessities of life such as food or shelter. But there are also the great disparities in cultures around the world - in attitudes to authority, to relations between men and women, to outspokenness et cetera - which necessitate nonviolence being adapted locally.

And every culture has a side to it which can be fostered as a nonviolent approach. Cultures vary in their attitude to war and killing and some are essentially peaceful, but even the most violent has sides to it which speak of a nonviolent approach, and which can be developed as an indigenous response. Ireland, often thought of as the epitome of violence because of the troubles in the North, has much in its history and culture which is redolent of a nonviolent approach. The 'Dawn' pamphlet on 'Nonviolence in Irish history' (first published in 1978) will shortly be reprinted.

But while we need to develop the most positive aspects of our respective cultures, we can also be prisoners of our culture - bound to models of thought and behaviour which are inappropriate to the voyage to empowerment and enrichment which are part of the nonviolent quest. This leads us to having blind spots - which by definition we don't know we have; we fail to see such and such as an opportunity; we write off this or that; we have a mistaken grasp of nonviolence at its deepest. We thus miss opportunities and misjudge possibilities. Even in thinking (as above) in terms of Northern/Southern hemispheres and of us being in the 'rich' world we can miss the 'third world' problems of poverty, deprivation and alienation which are on our doorsteps or even in our homes.

An example of culture-blindedness comes to mind. In running a workshop on nonviolence I referred to the culture-related nature of nonviolent tactics; nude protests were not in keeping with the culture in Ireland, I said - and common sense would say I was right. I was wrong. I was immediately corrected by the example of the women who swam naked at the Forty Foot bathing place in Sandycove, Co Dublin, to protest about it being men only some years ago. I have since also learnt of a nude procession through the streets of Dublin by members of the White Quaker sect in the first half of the nineteenth century; they supported simplicity of living and plainness of dress so whether the procession was to advocate this I don't know.

That doesn't mean that the next time we wish to make a political point we have to take our clothes off! But it does mean that to write this off - or any other tactic or strategy because of preconceived notions of what is 'possible' or 'appropriate' - is to do our causes unnecessary damage before we begin. Assessing the likely effects of any tactic is, however, an essential part of deciding what to do and how to do it.

But it would be unfortunate simply to think of nonviolence and culture in terms of tactics. Nonviolence is a spiritual/philosophical/moral cause as well as a pragmatic means of struggle. We have to be involved in a dialectical process of interaction with our culture and belief system at the deepest level as well as the most elementary.

So, how can we get a handle on this 'nonviolence and culture' thing? In Ireland we can call on much in our past and much in the predominant religion, Christianity. The Fellowship of Reconciliation in Ireland and the Belfast branch of Pax Christi are cooperating on a pack on Christian nonviolence - which is another day's work not covered in this Dawn Train. But what we are doing in this feature is publishing four pieces which give us something to think about in terms of other cultures, giving us the opportunity to reflect on what their experience might mean for us, attempting to see without our culturally-tinted spectacles.

I kick off this particular ball with a report on the Transnational Nonviolence Trainers Gathering which took place in Handel, the Netherlands, in the summer of 1991; this event encapsulated just some of the issues involved.

Then we publish two pieces from Asia. The first is an annual report written by Narayan Desai about the work of the Sampoorana Kranti Vidyalaya/Institute for Total Revolution in Vedchhi, India.

The second piece from Asia is an interview with I K G Chandrasena, head of the Shanti Sena/Peace Brigade of the Sarvodaya movement in Sri Lanka. Sarvodaya is a massive movement and even the Shanti Sena is enormous by northern/western standards. Again, we can reflect on the work they do in the divided society that is Sri Lanka - an island, incidentally, not dissimilar in size to Ireland.

Finally, we publish an interview with Stella Sabiiti, Africa secretary (based in Uganda) of the IFOR/International Fellowship of Reconciliation. This should challenge some of our thoughts and prejudices about Africa but also have us thinking about what can be learnt for here. An interesting piece of information here is that, as I understand it, the modern western mediation models - to some extent thought of here as US American imports - were actually American adaptations of original African practices.

We need to break free from the shackles and negative constraints which our own culture imposes on us. That is what this lengthy feature is about.

- Rob Fairmichael.



Rob Fairmichael reports on the Transnational Non-violence Trainers gathering which was held at Handel, Netherlands, in July 1991.

## Feature on Nonviolence, culture and training

# HANDEL, WITH CARE

## CULTURE SHOCK

It was just so natural. There was myself as an Irish person having a drink with Americans, Russians and Chinese around the same pub table. And the small, affinity group I was in consisted of people from Taiwan, Thailand, Russia, Palestine, Israel and Ireland. It was so natural and yet, when I stopped to think about it, so surreal. However when we held hands in the middle of our small circle in our affinity group at the end of the week, like spokes of a wheel, we knew we were one.

But, the focus being to some extent on inter-cultural training, there was plenty of inter-cultural learning through inter-cultural conflict. The medium was the message. How we related to each other, planned programme for each other, our images and perceptions of each other, were not peripheral to our learning about nonviolence; this was where we learnt most. There were of course tensions between personalities and political approaches but more so between cultures; between North and South (the South in this context including India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Palestine, Israel), between the USA and Europe, between English speakers (the conference language was English) and others (principally because we native English speakers - and a few others - tended to talk too fast).

Since the United States has very developed models of nonviolence training existing in the dominant world culture, was inter-cultural training for them something which they did elsewhere? I suppose a reflection on this is the difficulty for people from dominant world cultures to become un-dominant. It was not a question of the people from the United States being uncommitted or uncaring; they were as caring as anyone else there. The difficulty was starting with a cultural advantage and a cultural handicap at the same time (the advantage was being in the forefront of things; the handicap was their cultural model, and the negative reactions to it from others). Most of the organisers of the conference were US-American.

However I don't want to give the impression that the United States was the only issue here. In reality the North-South one was a bigger divide. Training in another culture is not just knowing what countries you're in where you've to take off your shoes at the door (see box); it is something profoundly deeper -

## LOGISTICS

The trainers gathering had about 50 people from about 26 countries. We met in a large former Capuchin monastery which is now a centre run by a small (Lanza del Vasto) Community of the Ark, De Weyst, named after a local underground stream and linked with their communities in France. Nonviolence and respect for world religions are part of the community's beliefs and code; so it as a very fitting place to be, and the community were very friendly. They have a beautiful organic vegetable garden which supplied us with the bulk of ingredients for our meals; good stuff. The only negative comment about the venue would be that the rambling old monastery lacked a comfortable/comforting 'sitting and being' area for a group of our size.

The conference was intended to look at various aspects of training, especially the cross-cultural aspect of it, and also the developing of resources and materials and of an international training network. Various committees took responsibility for different aspects of the week; agenda, vibes (all right...feelings, perceptions) and process, games and social. Programme evolved during the week.

The conference was co-sponsored by the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR), International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB), Peace Brigades International (PBI) and War Resisters International (WRI).

knowing the people, what makes them tick, and what might make sense to explore regarding nonviolence in their culture. A difficult task, and one where mistakes are inevitable.

And, a thorny question here was - in what contexts, in inter-cultural training, are you entitled to challenge behaviour which you consider counter-productive, sexist, or in other ways reprehensible? The minimum guideline was that there was no point challenging something which would bring a training to an abrupt halt - that way relationships would just break down. Beyond that, this can only be determined by the sense and sensibilities of those involved.





Left to right; Paula Green (Karuna Centre, USA), Marie Catherine Menozzi (Le Cun de Larzac, France), Daniella Kitair (Neve Shalom/Wahat al Salam, Israel), Supaporn Pongpruk (now executive secretary of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists, Thailand). Back left, from left; José Blanco (Philippines), Sami Komsieh (Palestine), Pat Patfoort (Belgium)

## HOME CULTURE

The other aspect here is cultural differences within countries. Some countries are relatively homogenous, some, like the former Soviet Union (or even some of its successor states), contain vast differences. However it was interesting to get the insight of the importance of looking at differences within countries or areas which might be thought the same; Magda van der Ende shared some differences between the North and South of the Netherlands as regarding punctuality and openness. So we always need to have our antennae out, being sensitive and responsive.

There is a lesson here for us all. And a sensible marker which was being expressed by people from the USA about their compatriots wanting to work abroad was that they should first work with minorities within their own country - dealing with inter-cultural issues in their own backyard first.

There are obvious cultural differences in Northern Ireland; in politics, in religious belief, in attitudes to the state, and so on. The challenge to me is to address these where necessary but always to take them into account. And to see the fine-tuning of programme as part of fitting on a circle which goes from sameness through differences back to sameness again. The challenge there is to address adequately the needs and concerns of the 'other' Catholic/Protestant community.

Speaking of circles, one aspect of the inter-cultural discussion was the 'linear' and 'circular' historical views. In the West/North we usually see history as linear, as progress. In the South, in Buddhist and other world views, history is seen as circular, going in cycles.

The discussion was enlightened by Per Hemgren that post-modernist philosophers have taken to criticising both worldviews; history may not be a path, it may just be some stories, there may be no generalisations. So you pay your money and you take your choice. But we need to understand where people think they are going, and even, in Northern Ireland, where people think they're not going or fear they might go!

## PROGRAMME TENSIONS

We probably tried to jump into programme too fast without spending more time to get to know each other; Northern/Western culture at work here! So I was personally pleased that the affinity group I was in worked so well in this situation. But as a whole we did get together and work things through.....when things got to crisis point. If time had to be pared from the programme, it had tended to be from small group sessions; and some facilitators had the time allotted them slashed. These and other cultural cockups caused anxiety, concern, crisis and learning. But trying to fit in everything in a week was impossible.

One tension was between those who wanted to focus particularly on 'training' - some people felt the training end of nonviolence insufficiently dealt with - and those who wanted more to focus on nonviolence as a whole; one difficulty here was that for some cultures and languages 'training' was something done to animals! So, a need for new, inclusive terminology while learning from the perceptions.

Another difficulty was the presence of a couple of people who were not trainers but who had burning questions about nonviolence in their own, difficult, situation. The event was designed for trainers. Personally I felt that once someone has been invited and attends an event like this they deserve the respect of their questions being dealt with as fully as possible. Particularly given the fact of these people being from China (Federation for a Democratic China) I think it was a challenge for us to rise to the occasion, of relating nonviolence to such a difficult situation and such a large country; I'm not sure we rose to the occasion.

It is surprising, on reflection, that there was so little discussion on sexism. Perhaps this was because it wasn't an issue within the conference (one reason was that most of the organisers, and 45% of participants, were women). A planned session on dealing with



sexism got shoved aside - along with some other items - as the week progressed. But sexism was an area of work for a small but significant number of people present.

I did facilitate an optional evening workshop on Northern Ireland, on at the same time as a couple of other workshops including one on China. Seven people attended from six different countries; it worked by starting off with people's images, and suggested nonviolent responses before looking at what was actually taking place and in place. It went very well. It was followed by a lengthy discussion with an American, Scot and Scandinavian (Dorie Wilsnack, Helen Steven and Jørgen Johansen) about the situation and the lack of international peace movement responses, particularly from Britain. On the one hand I think people in Britain could more easily respond to demands and suggestions made from Northern Ireland, and these aren't always forthcoming, clear or vocalised; on the other hand I think a lot more could be done in Britain. But this is to applaud, and not criticise, those in Britain who have tried to do something.

## FEAR AND VIOLENCE

There were a number of fishbowl demonstrations of the introductions to nonviolence that people run. A 'fishbowl' is where an exercise is run with some people participating in the exercise and other people looking on; in this case, some people were the 'participants' in the training while the others observed. It must have taken bravery to demonstrate your approach to such a critical audience!

What was particularly interesting was the contrasting approach to fear which people took where people had reason to be afraid of becoming active and involved. Part of this was to do with the personality of the facilitators. Part was also whether those participating had already made an option to 'stand up' or whether

they were taking a first, tentative step in that direction. Much of Fernando Aliaga's approach, from Chile, was in reassuring people, physically as well as verbally, and helping them initially to take a limited first step; under the dictatorship the first action a group might take could be handing out to passers by pieces of paper with the message "Violence is lies; truth builds peace". Thus they got courage to take a step further.

The question also arose as to why some facilitators started with looking at and analysing violence; because that was what people knew was the answer (i.e. their experience of being on the receiving end). However Barbara Smith, speaking from the African American perspective, said she wouldn't start with violence because they (African Americans) were considered the violent ones; she would start with the Chilean model (overcoming fear). Magda van der Ende said that in working with people in Romania she would start with violence, but not in the Netherlands; in the case of the latter she would start with building up trust, necessary to overcome the guilt people felt.

Some people are afraid in Northern Ireland of being involved in certain forms of activity, including especially aspects of politics. For others it is more a question of apathy, some of it bred by indifference and some by resignation. The extent to which fear needs to be dealt with in the Northern Ireland situation depends on the area, the group and the individuals concerned. Maybe we need especially delicate antennae to feel our way to what is necessary; Northern Ireland is not Chilean dictatorship but it is not a 'western democracy' either. I find an awareness of the different approaches taken internationally helpful.

## MODEL MAKING

Another issue of hot debate was generated by the workshop run by George Lakey from the USA exploring his model of movement building in revolutionary situations (conscientisation, organisation building,



Is it the Scandinavian god of nonviolence, double-jobbing as the god of sleep, or is it just Jørgen Johansen, chair of the War Resisters International, taking a break at Handel?





Left to right; Tess Ramiro (Philippines), Roger Power (USA), Richard Deats (USA), Ivan Timofeev (Russia), Lynne Shivers (USA), Leonard Desroches (Canada).

confrontation, mass noncooperation, and parallel institutions; not always in this order). Was George Lakey being manipulative in the way he gave the categories but allowed us to order them, and to fit our own examples of resistance into them, allowing us to take any model so long as it was his?

I felt it was a legitimate way to explore his model, and his model does illustrate a number of truths about change; he did also deal with limitations of models. We didn't have to like it and ever think about it again if we considered it inappropriate. Part of the issue here was methods of teaching and learning; an interesting insight from Narayan Desai was that in all the Indian languages the word for 'teaching' is built on the word for 'learning' - the two are inextricably linked.

Bill Moyer's 'Movement Action Plan' model for non-revolutionary situations was mentioned by George, and Lynne Shivers passed out copies. I use the latter which is more mundane but useful in 'normal' Western/Northern circumstances. But be warned; give people opportunities to criticise a model and develop their own if necessary!

It should also be said that there was plenty of crack, or should I spell it craic to avoid confusion with another addictive substance, at Handel with the songs and dances of many countries (we went nuts for the Filipino 'coconut' song, and trying to do Thai dancing was a new experience!). The final party included an Irish-Scandinavian duet rendering (as in 'tearing asunder' - neither of us can sing a note!) of that old Irish classic ballad 'Old trainer in a garret'!

## CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The conference did deal with some other aspects of training, e.g. role plays, conflict resolution approaches. The small affinity group I was in also did some sharing on approaches to training and techniques, and there were other demonstrations I haven't mentioned; these were all useful in getting a feel for people's approaches, and some I may use myself. I did feel I would have liked to hear more from the Asian delegates, including Narayan Desai (India) and I K G Chandrasena (Sri

Lanka); my fault I suppose for not standing up and demanding! Another illustration of the need for taking into account different cultures and the way some people would not put themselves forward until asked. It was great that Chandrasena was able to come to Belfast for a short visit as a guest of INNATE and help us to compare situations in the islands of Ireland and Sri Lanka; though I haven't noticed an Irish Shanti Sena (peace brigade) with 71,000 members?!!!!

Nonviolence. It is as deep and wide as the ocean and as small and clearly defined as a drop of sea spray. It is no wonder we have difficulty defining it. But complexity does not need to mean it should be difficult to grasp and experience; complexity should not be thought of as an enemy of simplicity. We can experience the ocean by swimming in it; we can feel the sea spray on our faces.

Training in nonviolence cannot be just imparting expertise, although that is certainly part of it. Narayan Desai said training was bringing out the best in those being trained so that they can grow and grow. Training has to be seen as a dynamic process of interaction with no point where we can rest on our laurels and say "We have arrived", full stop - though celebration of success should be part of it. If nonviolence is like the ocean then there is always more to learn, more to explore.

The organisers of the gathering worked against a deadline to put the conference together. They achieved much. Perhaps if there had been more time for cultural considerations to be taken into account in planning it might have made in some ways for a better conference but with less dramatic representations of cultural division! When 'The South' has a nonviolence trainers gathering in 1993 they can do it as they want....and I think 'The North' as represented at Handel is a bit older and wiser.

Respect for others going in the same general direction but using different methods or approaches can be a difficult lesson to learn. Intellectually it is something I believe in but can find difficult in practise to feel; the egotism of our own work can prevent us appreciating what others do, and we can ignore the fact that while it takes all types to make the world it takes many types to try to make nonviolence relevant to people. For me, Handel was an experiential lesson in respect for many approaches to many situations. May a thousand flowers bloom!



## OTHER INFORMATION

- in no particular order!

- The method we used to get silence for announcements, or the start of a session, was handraising. One person raised a hand; whoever saw this also raised theirs, and became silent, and so on until all fell silent. A lovely, silent way of getting silence in a sizeable group.
- Definitions of violence included; an assault on someone's life, spirit and body (Joanne Sheehan); the breaking of harmony (Narayan Desai).
- In engineering, design performance is sacrificed for safety - which is relevant for nonviolence (Qian Haipeng).
- In an exercise led by Flemish trainer Pat Patfoort, we were listing the arguments on either side of an issue in small groups. Our group decided to take a simple issue 'I like to get up late'. Narayan Desai stated "I like to get up with the sun"; the assumption I would have made

was that this was an argument for getting up early. But actually it was an argument for getting up late as he normally rises at 3 or 4 a.m.

- Jørgen Johansen's metaphor for a network (as opposed to hierarchial organisation) was a jazz jam session; harmony through individual cooperation without anyone telling others what to do.
- The IFOR is setting up a training project with a worker to be based in Alkmaar, Netherlands, to specifically support and develop nonviolent training. This coordinator of the 'Nonviolence education and training project' would do networking, gathering and disseminating of information and some training. A starting point could be some of the suggestions made regarding networking at Handel.
- The Filipino method of self-appreciation for a group is a single clap. We tried it.

## WHAT DO TRAINERS FROM OUTSIDE NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MY COUNTRY?

This is taken from the wallchart without any further comment. In some instances it was developed further later on. The most important general comments later seemed to be; when training in another culture, establish agreement between host and guest trainer so as to be informed about mistakes; find comfortable channels to express doubts and questions so that conflict won't grow and explode; mistakes are inevitable - what is important is how we learn and recover from them. These seem like pretty sensible suggestions for any lengthy training anywhere!

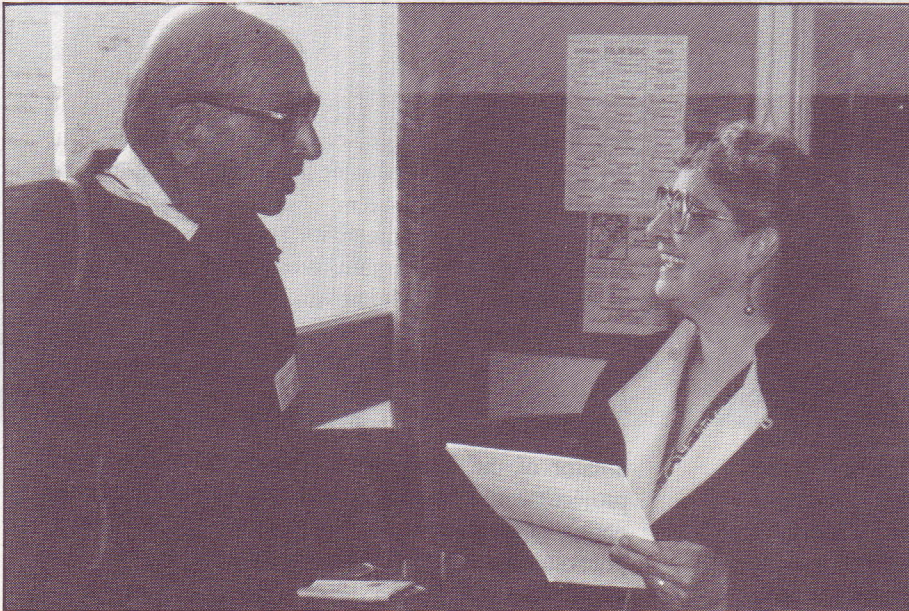
The list is reproduced here not so much for what it says about individual countries as for the areas in general that we should be conscious about. What goes for other cultures may apply in our own culture too in a similar way or for some people.

- Ambiguous attitude to violence (USSR) (as it then was - Ed.)
- No offensive talk about the royal family and army (Thailand)
- Behaviour between men and women (India)
- Language - meaning of specific words (South Africa)
- Humility (in all cases)
- Bicultural differences, e.g. regarding money (Belgium)
- African American trainers feel trainers are making dollars but not helping push the African American agenda (USA)
- Nonviolent actions are common but often hidden (Northern Ireland)
- Taiwanese independence (Taiwan)
- 1) Not the USA 2) Attention to native peoples as well as British and French founding nations (Canada)
- 1) Salutations 2) Nonviolent activities under political conditions of the country (Sri Lanka)



- Faith, love for music, sense of humour, history (Philippines)
- Atheism, materialism (Sweden)
- Sensitivity to history written v lived (African American USA)
- 1) Privilege is giving more to project than people 2) Not consider natural leaders and impose self as leader (Chile)
- Need for comfort with regard to privacy (India)
- Way we dress - wearing shoes inside houses (India)
- Concept of time (Brazil), punctuality (also Africa)
- Concept of training (India)
- Know centralised economic/political system (France)
- Realise that food will not be health food or gourmet (USSR)
- Habits, values, traditions (Palestine)
- Need coffee break every two hours; effects of Second World War on attitudes towards violence and non-violence (Netherlands)
- Suspicion towards concepts such as social justice (USSR)
- British (English) carry load of historical guilt (Britain)
- Face-saving important; don't hurt others' feelings; relate to heart not head (Thailand)
- 'Boy' and 'girl' referring to adult is an insult (USA)
- Cartesian spirit of France (France)
- Legitimise training by visiting important leaders before training (South Africa)
- Are people in position of oppressor or oppressed - different psychology (Israel)
- Scotland doesn't equal England. People considering training like other hobbies (Scotland)
- Egoism/'personalism' of trainer; research for effectiveness in short time (Chile)





## Feature on Nonviolence, culture and training

Narayan Desai (left) speaking to Caridad Inda of Mexico at the Social Defence conference in Bradford in 1990.

# TOTAL REVOLUTION

## **Sampoorna Kranti Vidyalaya**

(Institute for total revolution)

Annual Report, 1 April 1990 - 31 March 1991

### **1. Objectives and vision**

The Sampoorna Kranti Vidyalaya (Institute for Total Revolution) is a centre for the training of activists and workers for constructive social change in the tradition of Mahatma Gandhi, Vinoba Bhave and Jayaprakesh Narayan. A deep commitment to both non-violence and revolution forms the basis of the institute's activities. The Sampoorna Kranti Vidyalaya was founded in January 1982 by Uttara and Narayan Desai in Vedchhi. In order to maintain its independence the institute does not accept financial help from the government or foreign funding agencies.

### **2. Long term course - study programme**

Among the three types of course offered at the institute - long term, three months, seminars - the long course lasting ten months is meant primarily to develop non-violent attitudes. The emphasis is on learning through living and working together. The students, who come from all over India, develop their own curriculum, learn different skills and become conscious of social problems through discussion and experience. This course was started twice a year: January 1990 and 1991, August 1990.

The students were offered two formal classes per day. An early morning period covered the following topics: ahimsa, history of the independence movement, Gandhian philosophy, theory of total revolution, ekadasha vrata, shanti sena, nonviolent struggles in India, an outline of Indian culture, political philosophies, communalism.

Whereas the early morning period has been conducted for all students together, another period covered various topics relevant to students coming from different backgrounds. According to their interest small groups were formed studying the following topics:

- Sarvodaya economy, Khadi, criticism of development strategies;
- Gandhiji's autobiography, basic literature on Gandhi, Vinoba, J.P.;
- environment, nuclear energy, alternative energy sources;
- natural farming (Fukuoka method);
- general knowledge of history, geography, science, and Hindi;
- general health, hygiene and nutrition;
- village survey, people's organisation, decision making in groups;
- critical journalism;
- Sri Lanka;
- anarchism, constitution, human rights, elections;
- international peace movement;
- accounting

An effort was made to inspire the students to actively use the library and discover the relevance of their reading to actual life.

### **3. Crafts**

A crafts session of two hours was part of the daily programme. Each student learned one or more skills. The most extensive course was connected with all aspects of clothing - from cotton plucking to manufacturing of complete dresses. This included preparing and carding the cotton, making shivers, spinning, weaving, cutting off cloth and sewing. Other crafts were mat making, broom making, typing and office keeping.



#### 4. Manual work

Students and staff participated in daily 1/2 to 5 hours of manual work, according to the need of the day. Priority was given to agricultural work on the institute's 2.25 acres of land with two harvests of rice per year, a cotton field, and various vegetables all around the year. No artificial fertilizers and no chemical pesticides or herbicides were used. These were replaced by biological composting methods, interplanting, and pest repellants produced from leaves and herbs. Mulching with dry leaves and paddy straw assisted in water conservation and weed control. The students were instructed in non-chemical methods of food storage.

Approximately two thirds of the eucalyptus trees planted in 1982 were felled this year. In November 1990 work on the construction of a new library building began. The manual labour to a large part was done by students and staff members. As with all other activities, it was tried also to make physical work a means of instruction. Therefore, the planning for construction, the characteristics of building materials, prefabrication of building elements, cost calculation, etc., were discussed during or after the work.

#### 5. Community life

The attempt at the institute has been not only to change existing structures, relationships and attitudes, but also to visualize and create alternatives. Therefore, there is an emphasis in trying to achieve self sufficiency in daily necessities of life such as food and energy (use of biogas, solar energy for cooking and irrigation). All decisions are taken collectively by consensus and special efforts are made to avoid hierarchical or non-participatory behaviour.

Thus, the students shared the kitchen work and cleaning, and there was a daily assembly which decided about the day-to-day activities, evaluated the community life, solved inter-human problems and discussed news and literature. Once a week and again on special occasions a cultural programme was organised by the campus community. The main festivals of all religious groups were celebrated. The students participated in running the institute and took responsibility for different positions on a monthly basis.

#### 6. Three-months course

Short term courses are meant for those who wish to intensively study one special topic. From March to May 1990 a course for Shanti Sainiks was conducted. It covered the following topics:

- Gandhiji's autobiography;
- history of shanti sena, ahimsa;
- working in riot situations, fighting rumours, relief activities;
- organising camps, preparation for social action, people's organisation.

Four students from Orissa participated in this course.

Another course, on 'Nonviolent Revolution in Theory and Practise', attended by one student from Orissa and one student from Bombay, was held from October 1990 to January 1991. The course programme included the following topics:

- history of JVP and LTTE movements in Sri Lanka; what alternatives can nonviolent activists offer to the youth attracted by these movements?
- Che Guevara and the Cuban Revolution: what can we learn from its mistakes and successes?
- Basic concepts of Marxism, comparison of Gandhi and Marx.
- Algeria's independence war and Frantz Fanon: the rising self-consciousness of the Third World.
- Anarchism and education.
- Constructive aspects of nonviolent revolution.

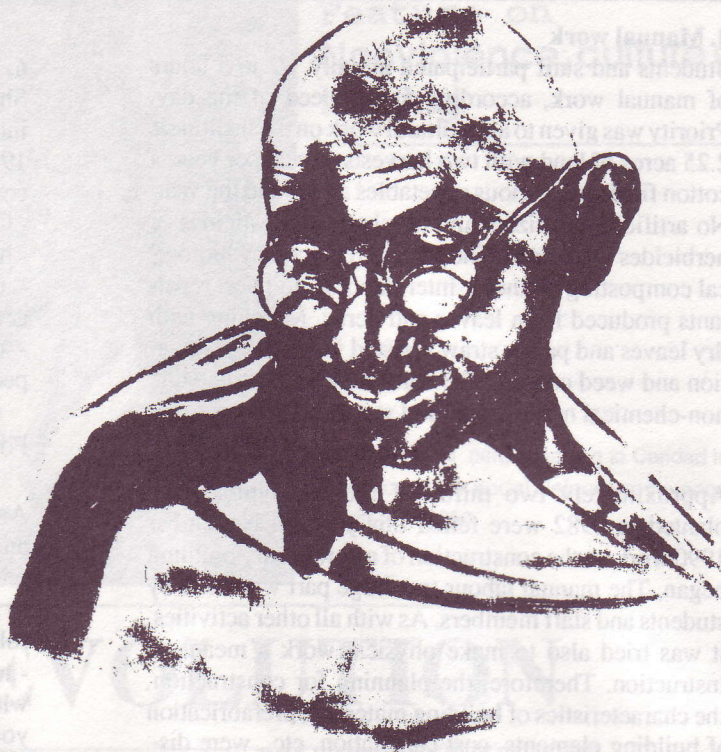
#### 7. Camps and seminars

The seminar programme of this year was characterised by the involvement in the Gandhi's Challenge campaign and a two-weeks workshop on 'Reconciliation in Sri Lanka' which was organised in cooperation with Peace Brigades International and attended by activists mainly from Sri Lanka and Tamil Nadu. In total eight seminars, camps and workshops were organised. The statistics are as follows:

In total there were 42 seminar days with 425 participants, 138 female and 287 male.

Number	Name	Dates (Days)	Total participants	Male	Female
1	Gandhi's Challenge: Organisers' Seminar	4-9 May 1990 (5)	24	23	1
2	National Youth Camp	1-6 June 1990 (7)	62	41	21
3	Gandhi's Challenge:	27 June - 1 July (5)	57	47	10
4	Workshop on Nuclear Energy	4-5 August 1990 (1)	30	30	-
5	Gujerati Youth Camp	11-14 August 1990 (4)	27	21	6
6	Gandhi's Challenge: Cultural Workshop	27-31 August 1990 (4)	151	69	82
7	Gandhi's Challenge Campaign Meeting (Nijhar)	6 October 1990 (1)	43	30	13
8	Seminar on Reconciliation	16-30 October (15)	31	26	5





### 8. Public programme

- 9 - 18 April 1990; Anti-nuclear cycle yatra from Kakrapar (Gujarat) to Rawatbhata (Rajasthan).
- May 1990; 'Peace Brigades International' - lecture and discussion conducted by Mary Link (USA)
- 8 October 1990; Jayaprakesh Vyakhyanmala: 'Power and Progress' - talk by Dr. Kusuma (Kaiga, Karnataka)
- 9 October 1990; Jayaprakesh Vyakhyanmala: 'Only the people can defend the country!' - talk by Dr. Kusuma
- 11 September 1990; Vinoba Jayanti; programme on Vinoba Bhawe with Pravinbhai Shah (Vedchhi)
- 2 - 11 November 1990; Gandhi's Challenge: a) Narayan Desai conducted meetings in various districts of Gujarat b) a group of students visited about 65 villages in Nijhar Taluka, Surat District
- 30 January - 12 February 1991; Vedchhi-Sabarmati tour against communalism
- 2 - 12 February 1991; Padyatra against communalism in Surat District.

Besides, All India Radio (Ahmedabad) recorded a radio programme on the Sampoorana Kranti Vidyalaya in May 1990 in Hindi. This programme was broadcast on 24 August 1990 by various stations of AIR.

### 9. Contact with movements

Special care was taken to maintain and develop contacts with various social awareness movements in the country and also with neighbouring villages. the issue of nuclear power has been of special interest, because not far from Vedchhi, at Kakrapar, a nuclear power plant is under construction. 'Anumukti - A Journal Devoted To A Non-Nuclear India' is published bi-monthly in English from the Institute. It serves as a newsletter of the anti-nuclear movement in India and helps in networking with other environmental movements all over the world. A volunteer from Germany worked in the Anumukti office between December 1989 and June 1990.

Activists of the Sampoorana Kranti Vidyalaya participated in anti-nuclear programmes at Rawatbhata (April 1990), Tarapur (August 1990) and in Udaipur (August 1990). Press releases and articles on the health situation in the villages around the nuclear power plant at Rawatbhata (Rajasthan) attracted worldwide attention. Regular contact was maintained with environmentalists throughout the country including activists of the movement against the Narmada dam.

The office of the chair person of War Resisters' International being situated at Vedchhi, the institute was in regular communication with peace organisations around the world. The office of the Indian WRI branch War Resisters of India/West shifted from Vedchhi to Madhan (Maharashtra) in December 1990. In this connection the institute in cooperation with Kasturba Sarvodaya Mandal Madhan organised a meeting of peace activists there. Regular contact was also maintained with youth groups in Navsari, Ghatkopar and in Sabarkanth District of Gujarat.

### 10. Publications

Besides leaflets on nuclear power, communalism and the Sampoorana Kranti Vidyalaya itself, the institute published a booklet in Hindi - Anu Lokjagriti - with songs of the anti-nuclear movement. A poster exhibition on nuclear energy was prepared.

*The address of Sampoorana Kranti Vidyalaya/Institute for Total Revolution is; Vedchhi 394-641, Surat, Gujarat, India.*



## Feature on Nonviolence, culture and training

An interview with I K G Chandrasena

# NO ONE IS AN ISLAND



Chandrasena explaining things at the start of the first amity camp at Muratawa in 1980

I K G Chandrasena is head of the Shanti Sena (Peace Brigade) of the Sarvodaya movement in Sri Lanka. He talked to Rob Fairmichael during a visit to Belfast as a guest of INNATE in the summer of 1991.

## STARTING OUT

**Rob** - If you could start by talking of your own path to nonviolence and the spiritual or philosophical background that you would have that led you to the work you do now.

**Chandra** - I retired from my work in 1976 and joined the Sarvodaya movement. I had been involved in teacher training colleges, also with labour department work. I had been a scout commissioner and had a certain amount of experience in community activity and youth activities.

I first joined Sarvodaya as a workcamp organiser. While that work was going on, in 1978 these communal disturbances took place in the island. Our leader, Dr Ariyaratne, called the various youths in our villages where Sarvodaya was working to form peace groups, Shanti Sena groups, and protect the people - in the Tamil speaking areas where the Sinhalese are living to

protect these people, and in the Sinhalese areas the Tamils to be protected by these Shanti Sena groups. That was the primary intention of forming the peace groups.

**Rob** - What was it drew you personally to involvement with Sarvodaya, was it a natural development of a direction in your life.

**Chandra** - Yes, I have consecrated my life for the service of the community, and this has been my life from the beginning even though I was working in the various departments, I was doing voluntary work with various social organisations. This made me interested in continuing this as my work of life.

I found Sarvodaya as a movement committed to do the grassroots level work and to work among the depressed classes, and this was a great vision for me that I could give my services for a movement like that.



## SIZE AND RANGE

Rob - When I've been introducing you here to people in Northern Ireland I've tended jokingly to describe Sarvodaya as a small organisation. Maybe you could say something about the size and scale of the activities.

Chandra - Comparatively it is a small organisation when you take the population and the number of villages in Sri Lanka. There are 23,000 villages and actually we are working only with about 8,000 villages; so there are 15,000 more villages to work.

Rob - But you have involvement from 4 million people out of a population of 16 or 17 million.

Chandra - Yes, there is a membership of 4 million people, they are all volunteers. In the villages the whole village is working in a way that everybody is involved in the self reliance programme that we have introduced. We have children's groups, we are doing work even before the child is born, the mothers are being looked after, their nutritional side is looked after. Once the child is born our health workers are there to visit them and look after them, to help give them the necessary nutritional food and things like that. We start from there really.

Then when the child is about three they can enter the pre-school, and preparing to enter the primary education schools. We have over 4,000 pre-schools in the island. We have often heard that the children coming from Sarvodaya pre-schools are much further on than children coming from other pre-schools. Our workers in the pre-schools are a committed lot and sacrificing their time and sharing their knowledge for the people of their village.

From 5 - 15 years the children services help children to grow up in a healthy and an active manner. We organise classes, motivate the youth groups to help the children's groups, in various educational programmes, physical activity programmes, games and so on. From 15 to about 30 years is the youth section which looks after the community development side of the village, organise workcamps and also they start vocational projects with the resources available in the villages.

Rob - This is training for jobs?

Chandra - This is training maybe for jobs but also making use of the resources in the village and their expertise is given to the villages to improve the resources in the village. Whatever economic side they build up, the money will remain in the village for the development of the village.

## STARTING WORK IN A VILLAGE

Rob - It also strikes me that you have a good community development philosophy in how you approach working in a village, assessing what the needs are and involving all the village in working for what are set as the primary goals.

Chandra - If I can explain how we go into a village. First our full-time workers go into the village and will discuss with the people and find out the needs of the village. Once they are evaluated then they will have a meeting with the village people, finding out the priorities. Once the priorities are listed, one by one they will take those items and start on a project for the first priority. It may be sometimes that they don't have a road, or a common well, or maybe the village has no toilets. They will have various committees for the organisation and carrying out of the improvements to the village.

The first thing is to involve every family in the village in this project so it becomes not a project of the workers who have gone there to discuss it but one of their own projects. Every household must contribute something towards the cost of the project - maybe in kind, a handful of rice, or some vegetables grown in their own garden. When the date of the project is set, one day or two days or maybe a week, everybody comes together and lives and works together as a family, and the family atmosphere is maintained throughout.

Rob - The family is a model that you use within Sarvodaya as your model of working.

Chandra - Once a person becomes a member of Sarvodaya, he has joined the Sarvodaya family. We address each other as family members, brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers.

## OTHER ACTIVITIES

Rob - There are other sections within Sarvodaya which you haven't mentioned such as legal aid or the work for the elderly.

Chandra - We have the farmers group, people engaged in agricultural activities. Then we have the elders groups, people who are not attached to one particular group but who are maybe the school teacher, or maybe some person working outside the village; they give all the advice necessary and become representatives in our society of the village, the Shraniadana Society. Shraniadana is a sharing of labour. Whenever we are going to do a shraniadana the society is consulted, they agree on it and then and then the working starts.



Dr Ariatne, leader of Sarvodaya, entering a church for inter-faith activity before a march



We have in the Sarvodaya movement a few independent sections. One is the women's movement. Then we have the legal aid section who give assistance to poor people with legal problems, land disputes or anything like that. Then we have the Suwa Setha who deal with malnourished children, and maybe disabled children. Then there are homes for children and the elderly, and also relief activities that they look after in the event of floods and things like that. And we have the Shanti Sena section.

## SHANTI SENA

Rob - Which you are head of.

Chandra - I am head of it. Shanti Sena is peace brigade. Shanti is peace, sena is groups, peace groups. This is a section involved in nonviolent peace activities, and reconciliation activities, and nonviolent direct action activities.

Rob - Within the Shanti Sena you have how many members?

Chandra - We have 71,200 members. We have 5,361 groups. These groups are formed, sometimes there are 11 in a group, one leader and ten others, that is the minimum; there might be 3 or 4 such groups of 11 members in a village, but we expect at least 11 members in a group. They join the group and are initiated into the Shanti Sena through a certain system of training. There is initial training; we expect them to know all about Sarvodaya, know something about nonviolent direct

scheme we are planning, the peace programme we are having, then generally know the environmental conservation programme, and there is a pledge which they must know, and something of the civic needs of the country.

Once they have gone through that they are initiated into it. As a sign of a member we give them a small badge to wear and also a sash. Then they graduate into certain proficiency activities like first aid, environmental conservation activities, sports activities and physical training to keep them fit. As an incentive the training ends with what you call a president's award, the Sarvodaya president's award. People have three choices; if they are going for higher studies we give them the necessary books; if they are doing any self employment we provide them with the initial money that is required to start off the work; or we try to put them into an exchange programme with some other country.

Because we are a peace brigade movement and have to be prepared for any eventualities we give them emergency preparedness training. We have fire fighting, life saving activities. They have to be prepared for natural disasters.

Rob - And in fact Shanti Sena people have worked in situations where medical staff have withdrawn in fear, from the likes of a hospital.

Chandra - We have a hospital visiting programme, to train them in hospital work in the out patient department where they get a training in dressing wounds and things like that, and ward work. They get practical experience. This is done particularly so in an emergency they can





A peace march in Colombo.

give their services to the hospital. In our recent troubles, it is often daily that Shanti Sena members are working in refugee camps on health activities and first aid activities. In the case of a lot of trouble where people are wounded their services are sometimes taken by the hospital authorities. Sometimes the regular nurses and other people may have abandoned the place but then our people come to the rescue - some of our groups worked for over a month in a hospital in the Eastern province.

## PEACE MARCHES

Rob - There are two other aspects of the Shanti Sena work that I would like you to say something about. One is the peace marches which you have had to draw people together and indicate the groundswell of public opinion for peace. Secondly, the time when talks were taking place and you had plans for Shanti Sena members to provide a buffer between opposing factions.

Chandra - Since these troubles started I think we have had over 44 peace marches, to my knowledge, that we have done centrally, there would be others done on a district level.

Rob - But I think they are something different to what people would know as peace marches here; when there is a peace march here it is for an hour or two. You're talking about something longer.

Chandra - Yes. On a district basis they may do it for a day or so, it's not an hour's march. But if it is a nonviolent reconciliation march or for a specific purpose it always lasts seven days or more, once we prepared a march for five months, that was in '83. That was organised with the hope of bringing about reconciliation between the Tamil militant groups and the Sinhalese people because we found that with the '83 holocaust things had developed to very serious propor-

tions so someone had to do something about it. As a peace organisation, Sarvodaya had to come forward and do something about it.

Rob - It is an active tool of reconciliation because you are bringing together people to walk together, to meet others on the way. It's more than just symbolic.

Chandra - That particular program was a peace education program. Our idea was to start from Kataragama at the southern end of the island, and we were going to the North. While going the programme was so designed to educate the people on the importance of peace and harmony and inter-faith integration.

Rob - And even the seven day march which you had to Adam's Peak which was to reclaim the right of everybody to make that pilgrimage.

Chandra - After the troubles, which came on and off, particularly in the plantation area trouble broke out in a serious way. Adam's Peak is in the Hatton area, in the hills. Once a year people go on religious pilgrimage to Adam's Peak; there is a season for that, and during this season thousands go up there - Muslims, Sinhalese, sometimes Christians, particularly the Sinhalese Buddhists and the Muslims, they do the march.

That particular year because of the serious situation and the clashes, people were frightened to go. Hardly anyone went up during the season. So towards the end of the season we thought we had to bring these people together. So we spoke to the Tamil people on the estates, we spoke to the heads of those plantations and we made arrangements for those Tamil people to help us to bring about some settlement. We arranged a march up to Adam's Peak. That was a seven day march because we started from Kandi, gathered the people and came up. Then the people on the plantations were persuaded that food and other requirements were met; I am happy to say that the Tamil people responded very well.

*continued after observing pamphlet insert...*



Rob - You're talking about thousands of people.

Chandra - Over 10,000 people participated in that march. The Tamil people from the estates distributed food and drink, and they also joined in the march, they all went up together.

Rob - It was successful?

Chandra - It was a great success. Ever since then people are going up during the season. We are also now having a peace march during the season in commemoration of our first march.

Rob - Then the time there was talks a few years ago you had plans for a peace zone.

Chandra - We organised a programme that was known as the PPPO - People's Participation and Peace Offensive. The government was at that time having a dialogue with the terrorist leaders, so we thought to have a peace zone in that area, so that our trained Peace Brigade people would be there, maintain the peace that the government was planning.

Rob - So you would be establishing a de-militarised zone.

Chandra - Yes. It is not only establishing peace, we have also to see that it is carried out and not disturbed. Sometimes accords are made but still the fighting goes on so we wanted to see that doesn't happen. To carry out this we had talks with the army, the police and all these people.

## AMITY CAMPS

Rob - Was there any other aspect of Shanti Sena work you wanted to mention?

Chandra - We believe that every little activity towards reconciliation and changing of attitudes is a necessary aspect. While others are doing work on this, we felt we also must do something. So we started a programme of amity camps. In these amity camps, we brought 50 or more Tamil people from the Northern or Eastern areas, sometimes Muslims also joining, and then Sinhalese people, and they would camp together for two weeks. During the camp we have developed a programme where a lot of interaction and integration takes place, and also the comparative cultural backgrounds being explored and discussed. Then the language is also introduced, the language barrier is a thing that keeps people apart, so you try to introduce the language there.

At the end of the camp, they pair off, two friends, a Tamil friend and a Sinhalese friend. The Sinhalese

friend goes to the Tamil friend's village and lives for three months, and vice versa. During their stay they learn the language, meet the people, plan and carry out community needs programmes, and the fellowship is built up. Then the Tamil friend goes to the Sinhalese village and does the same thing.

The third step in that programme is the group from one village visits the other village for a day or two on a cultural visit. Then the Sinhalese will go to the Tamil village on a cultural visit. The next programme was an economic programme; we were able to go through these three steps, to the village exchange programme but we couldn't go on to the economic exchange programme because with the '83 holocaust we had to stop it.

Rob - The amity programme now, what's happening?

Chandra - We stopped that because of the situation in the Northern area, now we are doing it with plantation worker Tamils and the people from the neighbouring villages. So we bring them together and have a changing of attitudes programme where people have formed hatred towards each other and we are trying to see that hatred is removed. We have had very fine responses.

## RELIGION AND THE CONFLICT

Rob - Maybe we could move on to more general questions about Sri Lanka. One question which people interested in the Northern Ireland situation would want to know - does religion play a role in the conflict? The majority of Sinhalese would be Buddhist and the majority of Tamils would be Hindu. Is religion a factor?

Chandra - Actually religion is not a factor. There was thinking among certain foreign people that Sinhalese Buddhists were killing Hindu Tamils. But it is not so. When you say Sinhalese, 79% are Sinhalese and 69% are Buddhists, but 10% are Sinhalese of other religions, including Christians of various denominations. There is no religious background to this at all.

Rob - And would the various religions and churches be helpful in your work?

Chandra - Oh yes. There are Buddhist priests, Catholic priests on our committee, Muslim mosque devotees are there, we work together. In our vast membership you find all these religious people in there. When the family meets, the minority religion gets the first chance of saying their prayers, then comes the next minority, and lastly the Buddhists.



## THE FUTURE

Rob - Finally, how do you see the future and are you hopeful for Sri Lanka? Is it a matter of building up nonviolent, peaceful and community development work so that you will be in a position to effect change in the future?

Chandra - I think so. We are hopeful. Once this conflict is resolved, in some form or another, we should be able to bring about better, harmonious understanding between these people - we are hopeful of it as the Sarvodaya movement. We are working in the North and in the South, we are working everywhere in the island. Only thing is the conflict must stop. In the meantime we are doing peace education work.

Rob - Are there irreconcilable differences in terms of Sinhalese desire for unity and Tamil desire for an independent state?

Chandra - That's a question I can't answer easily. The Sinhalese people so far as we see and we know are a peaceful people. If you take Colombo, there are a lot of Tamil people in Colombo and they are living quite harmoniously.

Rob - Are they living there a long time or are they refugees?

Chandra - Some of both. There is no trouble, they are getting on very well. The Sinhalese people want to live in peace. And I think the Tamil people are also the same, they don't want these kind of conflicts. In the amity camps it takes a while to break through, but once the break through comes they live like friends and relations.

Rob - But there are minorities on both sides who are prepared to use violence.

Chandra - Yes, minorities. It is not that they want to use violence, but circumstances lead them to.

Rob - Right, they see no other way.

Chandra - Not that they are violent, there are no violent people, but circumstances and certain conditions lead them to it.

---

Two short videos "From violence to nonviolence", and "Peace march" (about the march to Adam's Peak, mentioned above) are available on loan from the Nonviolent Action Training project, 16 Ravensdene Park, Belfast BT6 0DA, phone Belfast 647106.

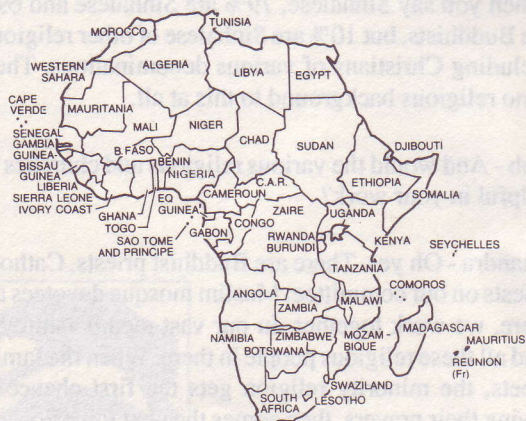
---

# NONVIOLENCE IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT

---

Feature on  
Nonviolence, culture and  
training

---



---

Jim Forest talked to STELLA SABIITI, Africa secretary of IFOR/International Fellowship of Reconciliation.

---

*Jim Forest* - The vocabulary of nonviolence has largely been developed in the northern hemisphere. How do you see nonviolence in the African context? Is it imported or indigenous?

*Stella Sabiiti* - It's deeply rooted in African culture. You even find it in many African greetings. A much used word in many languages is the word "peace", meaning that which is the opposite of violence. In my own language, Runyankole, if you haven't seen a friend in a long time, after you welcome the person you say, "Buhoro?". It means, "Peace?" or "Is your life at peace?". Probably the person will respond positively. But that isn't enough. You say, "Buhoro gye?". This is like saying, "Is it real peace? Perfect peace?". If you receive another positive response, you can go on with the conversation. Then you ask, "Agandi?". That means, "Any other news?".

*Jim* - The picture of Africa that comes through the mass media is mainly of tribe versus tribe with many being killed. What do you find missing?



*Stella* - I was talking to a friend recently and saying how I hated what in school was called "history". All they were teaching us was the history of wars - this tribe fighting that tribe and who was the greatest warrior. I knew that this wasn't the whole story. If it were, we would all be dead. You wonder how come we are here! It's the same with the news media. Its tendency is just to focus on the bloodshed that's going on, the assumption is that this is what people are most interested in, that violence is hot news. But there is another side of the story.

In fact there are many peacemaking efforts going on, sometimes quite successful, but this isn't recognized as news. We have many different traditions, many ways of bringing about peace within families, within tribes, between tribes.

There is a widespread tradition in Africa that if a stranger comes into your neighbourhood, you are not allowed to do anything wrong. Our traditional belief is that if you harm a stranger and he goes away, then there is no chance of you ever reconciling, and this can cause permanent harm both to him and to you and all the communities involved. So you must never, never do anything wrong to a stranger. It isn't quite the same when there is conflict within the community because you know you live together and so there is the continuing possibility of reconciliation. Within the community there is more space to disagree and argue, knowing that there is time and resources within the community to solve the problem.

The question of tribalism really is not only our problem. The tribal conflicts we have now often have much to do with the colonial period. For example when the British came to Uganda, they chose Bantu speakers for the civil service. The Bantu speakers are lighter in skin color and live in a very fertile part of Uganda. But for the army they chose the Nilotics, people who live along the River Nile in the north of Uganda. Even today there is a conflict having to do with this special use of the two different tribes. Though Uganda, it must be said, was more fortunate than a number of other countries. We weren't totally colonized. We were what was called a "protectorate."

In Africa you can notice a difference in temperament between those who come from countries which were colonized and those who had more autonomy. In my experience, people coming from countries fully colonized, therefore very repressed, are less free even today. The Ugandan is a freer person. He doesn't react like someone who was under bondage for a long time. While in countries that were fully colonized you easily find a more servile kind of person. I know people in other countries who have said to me, "I envy you Ugandans. You are so independent."

*Jim* - Are there rituals of conflict resolution in the African context?

*Stella* - Many! For example, let me tell you about the Acholi tribe in northern Uganda. When there has been a conflict and people realize that they must be reconciled, they have a tradition of all the parties drinking the juice of the oput plant. This is because the oput plant never grows by itself. It only grows in groups. Yes! It's a communal plant, not solitary. So they take this plant, squeeze it, mix it with a little water, and they drink this as a way of remembering that you can't live by yourself. The two reconciling parties drink the juice and they make a solemn promise never to fight again.

There is another tradition I like that comes from the Karamajong tribe, also in Uganda. This is a very war-ringing tribe. When they have conflicts among themselves, elders from the two conflicting groups take a spear - a symbol of war - and the two elders break the spear. That means the conflict is over. No more war. And they really have to stick to it.

We have strong taboos. When the elders say don't do something, you better not do it. You don't dare because you never know what might happen to you if you don't obey. We still believe in this way of thinking.

*Jim* - Too bad we don't believe in it too. God save us from ultra rationalism. It has nearly condemned us to death.

*Stella* - We don't rationalize. You just know that when something is forbidden you are wise not to violate the prohibition. We believe in the wisdom of our elders and of those who went before us. At least this was the way it was. Now we have the problem of many people, especially younger people, who are not aware of our traditions. They don't know and don't want to know. This is one of our most serious problems.

*Jim* - What is behind the threat to traditional society? Films? Television? Or what?

*Stella* - It varies from country to country. For example in Uganda television doesn't have the same destructive impact it has in some other countries. It is on just a few hours a day, in the evening, and it's mainly news and reports. We have strong censorship that forbids showing violent, brutal movies. But in other parts of Africa it can be quite a different story. Some countries are much more influenced than we are by the western world. There are more tourist countries, countries looking more to European models, struggling to be as European as possible.

The political strife in Africa is another threat to traditional life. When normal life is disrupted, you may not have the time to tell your children traditional stories and teach them traditional ways. Children may find themselves in a situation in which, from books and other sources, they learn more about other societies than about their own.





My own children's understanding of Uganda was disrupted because we were living outside the country as refugees. Living abroad, the children didn't learn the Runyankole language. Now they are struggling to learn it, but it isn't easy. They would rather speak English. Fortunately they are making progress. Everyone wants them to learn and therefore they refuse to speak English with them. It's hard but it works. Our songs help. We are always singing and dancing! Children learn a lot this way. And in our tribe you can't just memorize the song. Each singer has his own lines. He is telling his own story as he is singing. The chorus is the same but not the rest.

*Jim* - What is the work of the Fellowship of Reconciliation in the African context? Clearly it isn't just to promote nonviolence. The attack against people isn't only with weapons.

*Stella* - In our Ugandan FOR we think that peace education is extremely important, especially with young people. Grown-ups have already formed their own ideas about life. It is difficult to convince them of something else, though sometimes you can reach them through their children. So there are two reasons to give special attention to children, to reach them and through them to reach the older members of their family.

One parent with a child in our program came to a meeting and told us, "I didn't realize until now that I was a tribalist!" She said that as far as she was aware, she liked a certain family that lived nearby. But then her child said to her, "Mommy, how come every time you call me to go and play with my friend you say, 'Your Karamajong friend wants you to play'? His name is John! He is not Karamajong. Don't call him that. He has his own name." The mother belonged to the Muganda tribe. Then she said, "As soon as he said this, I realized that I wasn't as anti-tribalist as I thought." In experiences like this we see how what we are doing with children has a real impact not just on the children but on their families.

*Jim* - Are there other groups in society you try to reach?

*Stella* - Also we try to influence government leaders but this is very difficult. They have big heads! But we know that they too have children so, here again, we try to reach them through their children. As my husband is in the government (as Undersecretary of Water and Natural Resources - Ed), it is possible to involve them. We all move in the same circles. Some of them are relatives. Some are ex-schoolmates. We know each other very well.

*Jim* - What other priorities do you have?

*Stella* - For me, it's important to fight for the woman's place in society. When I moved back to Uganda from Holland, I was very struck by the oppression of women. Our men say that they are educated and that they know what they are doing, but certain things they do show you that they are not as liberated as they claim. I remember being involved in a discussion with some men in the government about the environment. They were supposed to be experts. I didn't agree with some of the things they said and I told them what I knew about the protection of the environment. "No, no, no, That's not right! The fact is that this is such-and-such. Look here, it's like this." I was very aware that if I were a man instead of a woman, I would have been listened to with respect. But the way it is, they see certain subjects being for men, others for women. Therefore woman can't possibly be informed about the environment. Our subject is babies and families, prices in the market, growing food - domestic things.

Traditionally our women don't talk about personal problems, unless it's really serious. Then they talk to relatives and finally it comes out. Strangely enough the situation is worse now than it used to be. The 'educated woman' tries not to be traditional. She wants to be modern. And what happens is that they are not all that modern and yet they have thrown away their tradition. They are really isolated.



I remember a letter from a traditional village woman to an educated woman who lived in a well-to-do modern neighbourhood. She said, "My dear sister, it is you who are in prison. You are there with all these things. You are wealthy and all that. But I know your way of life is not what you would like it to be. At least I have my friends and we talk freely and we move up and down. But you are stuck in your house with your servants. You have nothing to do and you rarely go out. You are a prisoner."

But I see in various ways that women are coming up in Africa. We are getting our voice back.

*Jim* - The third world's environment has become a big issue...

*Stella* - Whenever I hear the western world attacking the third world about destruction of the environment, I feel angry. Now they are telling us not to cut down trees. But you know traditionally we never cut down trees, we only took dried up branches. You saved the tree. We never used charcoal. Destruction of trees came with 'civilization'. Europeans told us we were being stupid not to cut down trees and not to use charcoal. We were taught, in the name of civilization, to destroy our environment. Now they criticize us for what they trained us to do! This makes dialogue complicated. What we are trying to do is recover our former respect for the life around and perhaps other countries will learn from us.

*Jim* - Is your job restricted to Uganda or does it involve other countries?

*Stella* - It involves the whole of Africa. The FOR groups have divided the continent so that we now have a representative from western Africa, southern Africa, eastern Africa, and then a central African-francophone

representative. We still don't have strong contacts in the north. We have regional and continental meetings. Now we are starting a continental newsletter in order to exchange news. We hope some recent seminars by Hildegard (Goss-Mayr of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation) will help develop new groups.

*Jim* - Is the membership only Christian?

*Stella* - In the past this was the case but in the last few years more and more Muslims are getting involved. In southeastern Nigeria, for example, one of our groups is involved in arranging Christian-Moslem dialogue. And now they are taking this process to the north of the country. We also have Moslem involvement in Uganda. One of our members is the head of a Moslem Teacher Training College and she started a group there. The whole group is comprised of teachers or people preparing to be teachers.

*Jim* - Your work has come a long way in just a few years.

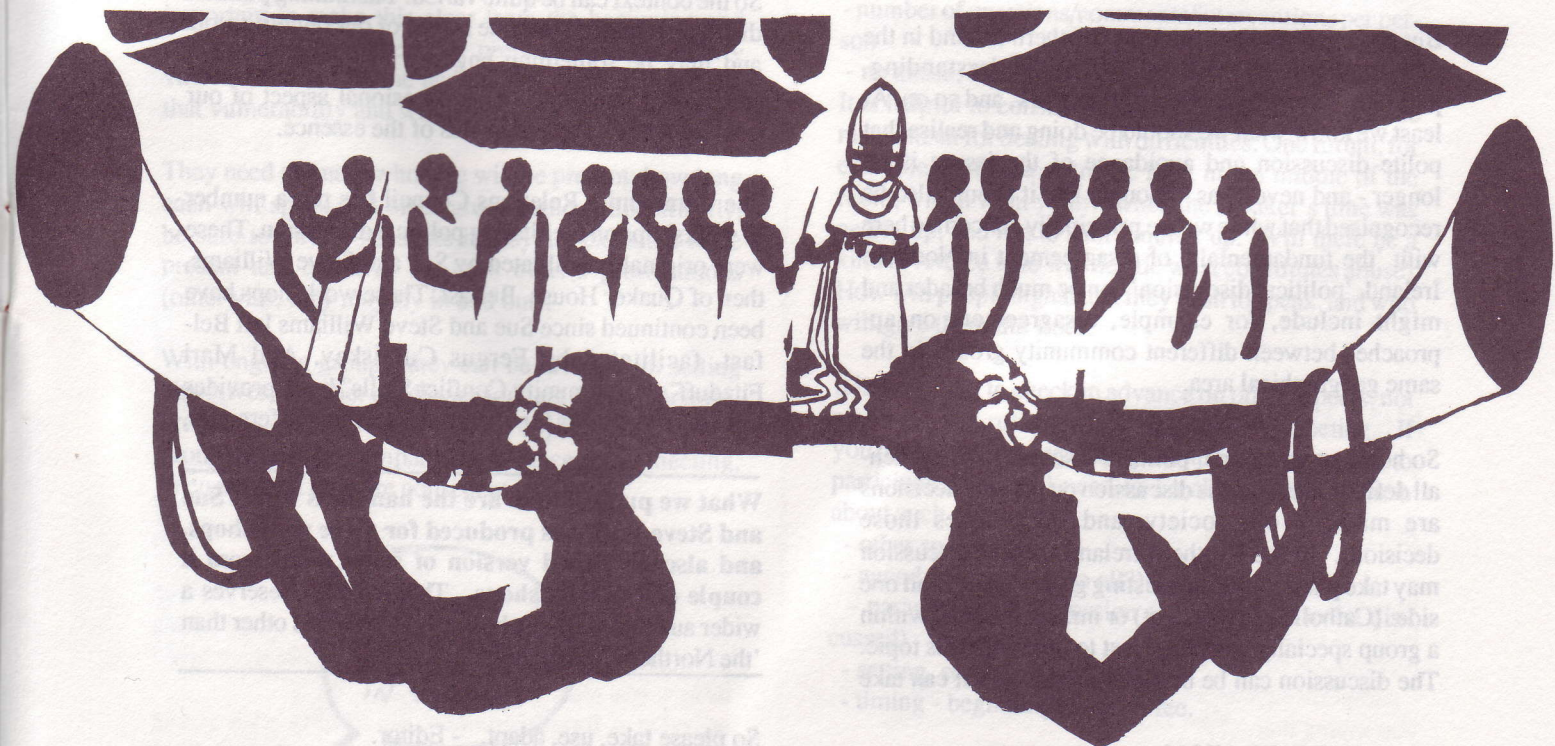
*Stella* - I was just looking at the first IFOR proposal to find funds for me to do Africa work. That was six years ago. Then I did my work from the IFOR office in Holland. It is amazing all that has happened since then!

---

*This interview was conducted in February 1992 and is taken from the March 1992 issue of Peace Media Service, Kanisstraat 5, NL - 1811 GJ Alkmaar, Netherlands.*

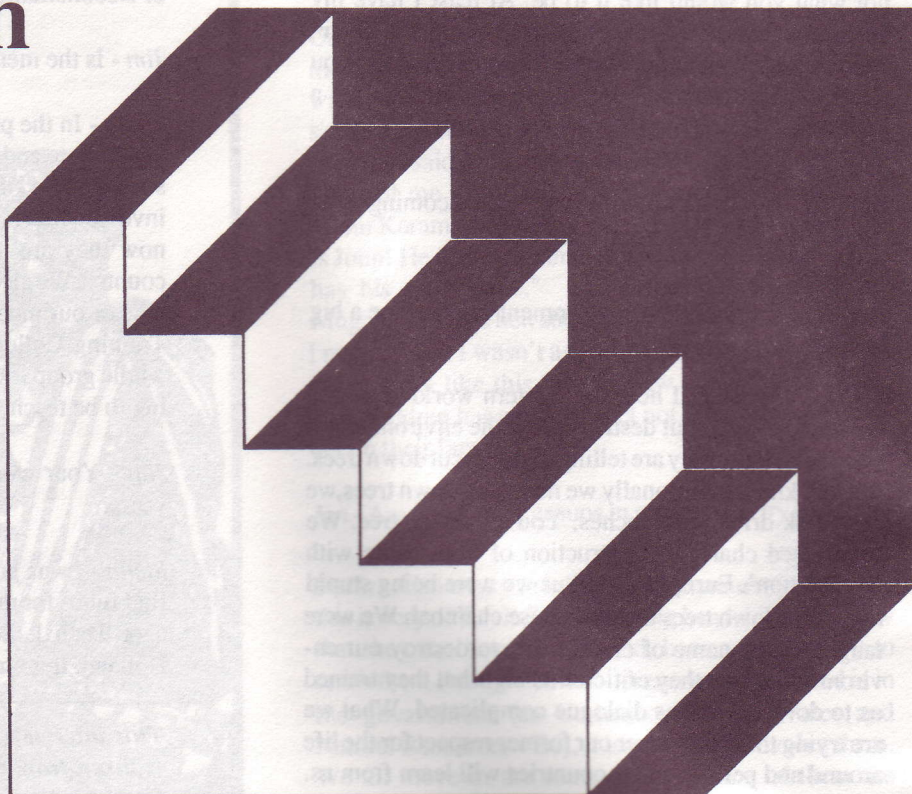
Peace Media Service is an independent nonprofit foundation providing news, articles and graphics about movements and people seeking to build a just society through nonviolent methods. Subscription rates on application (or from INNATE which also has copies).

---





# Facilitating political discussion



## Introduction

Everything is easy until you try.

Those who have attempted to facilitate political discussion between differing groups will recognise the truth of this aphorism; and those who shudder at the thought of particular experiences in this field will identify with it even more. It is not likely that we should be ashamed of our efforts but that, in the immortal words of the stereotyped school teacher's report, "could do better" is so often the case. We all have much to learn.

But progress has been made in Northern Ireland in the development of work on mutual understanding, prejudice reduction, anti-sectarian work, and so on. At least we know what we should be doing and realise that polite discussion and avoidance of the issues is no longer - and never was - enough. But it should also be recognised that while we are principally concerned here with 'the fundamentals' of disagreement in Northern Ireland, 'political discussion' can be much broader and might include, for example, disagreement on approaches between different community groups in the same geographical area.

So how can we define 'political discussion'? A catch-all definition is that it is discussion on the way decisions are made in our society, and who makes those decisions. In the Northern Ireland context discussion may take place within an existing group which is all one side (Catholic or Protestant) or mixed. It can be within a group specially convened just to deal with this topic. The discussion can be between groups. Or it can take

place between a visitor, such as a politician or politicians, and the group or groups; this can be informal discussion, in public or private, or in a formal or semi-formal meeting with a politician as a guest speaker or as part of a forum.

So the context can be quite varied. Facilitating political discussion may be just one aspect of our ongoing work and may be something engaged in regularly with a group, or it may only be an occasional aspect of our work. But clarity of purpose is of the essence.

The Community Relations Council has run a number of workshops on facilitating political discussion. These were originally facilitated by Sue and Steve Williams, then of Quaker House, Belfast. These workshops have been continued since Sue and Steve Williams left Belfast, facilitated by Fergus Cumiskey. And Mari Fitzduff's "Community Conflict Skills" book provides a range of exercises for exploring sectarian differences.

---

**What we publish here are the handouts which Sue and Steve Williams produced for these workshops, and also an edited version of some notes from a couple of the workshops. This material deserves a wider audience and can be of use in contexts other than 'the Northern Ireland issue'.**

---



# SETTING OBJECTIVES

## Objectives of the facilitator

The overall objective is to provide a setting and an atmosphere in which differing political views can be exchanged and listened to honestly but without hostility. This is not to be lobbying, point-scoring, or traditional debate.

The facilitator may have to consider the objectives in deciding whom to invite, based on previous contacts and knowledge of the individuals/groups involved. Or, the facilitator may be invited purely as a resource person to a discussion set up by others.

## Objectives of those asked to speak

Work with politicians or other speakers in advance to clarify what they hope to achieve, e.g.

- presenting their side's perceptions -
- presenting their party position
- envisioning the future
- personal perspective

Politicians, for example, need to know what can reasonably be expected in a particular setting, with a particular audience, with other politicians present. If their objectives are unreasonable or out-of-tune with others present, there may be emotional consequences - feelings of frustration, embarrassment, defensiveness, betrayal, anger, fear. The facilitator may define the objectives and ensure in advance (often at the time of inviting them) that they agree. Thus, if you want politicians to give a personal perspective or story, it is important to make this clear from the beginning and ensure that all speakers are prepared to be similarly vulnerable and that the audience (if any) understands that vulnerability and will not attack.

They need to know who else will be present, how long each will speak and other ground rules. Specifically, be sure to inform speakers if they are expected to be present and attentive for each other's presentations (otherwise, they may fly in and out).

With ongoing groups, they can be involved in setting objectives, whether the discussions are internal or inter-group. For inter-group work, the objectives of the two groups should be compared in advance of the meeting, to ensure that they are consistent.



## Clarifying objectives for audience (if any):

Where there is an audience (i.e. people not expected to contribute, though they may ask questions or make comments), the facilitator must ensure that they understand and accept their role. It is helpful to be clear about the speakers' objectives and the role of the audience with respect to them.

## Setting ground rules

Set ground rules in advance. Avoid introducing ground rules when people infringe them, if you can possibly anticipate them. It is helpful to set out ground rules and get the group's agreement (or, in an ongoing group, work with them to establish ground rules).

Where possible, give brief reasons for each rule, and opportunities that correspond to restrictions (e.g. We ask you not to interrupt speakers, but will see that each person has at least one chance to speak). In a larger group, consider writing out ground rules and posting them up.

Possible ground rules to consider:

- no interruptions of speaker
- length of time each may speak
- number of questions/comments/interventions per person
- no abuse, force, or threats.

It is helpful to consider in advance and make clear the mechanism for dealing with difficulties. One forum, for example, had a large traffic light in the middle of the room, which went yellow when the speaker's time was nearly up, and red to shut him/her up. Will there be a kind of referee who will decide what constitutes abuse? How will people signal that they wish to speak, and who will give them the floor.

It is important to check in advance on other aspects, not really ground rules, but the shape of the meeting. If you, as facilitator, are asking the speakers or groups to participate, you will need to be able to inform them about such matters as;

- other speakers
- agenda (acceptable to all?)
- parameters of discussion (anything not to be discussed)
- setting, seating, sound system
- timing - beginning, end, coffee.



# Role of the facilitator

The role of the facilitator in a political discussion includes the following elements:

- creating an atmosphere in which people can listen, by making clear that each will have time to speak without interruption
- providing safety for honest statements, by ensuring that speakers will not be attacked for what they say, and that all speakers are encouraged to be candid
- keeping an eye on the process:
  - recognise emotions/reactions and allow them to be expressed
  - nonverbal signals
  - sensitivity to what may be difficult to say/hear
- fairness: making sure that no one person/side dominates, but that each has the opportunity to be heard
- having built trust in advance with participants (which may mean several facilitators, working together or in turn, if each has a trusting relationship with different sides/individuals)
- being aware of time available
  - bring discussion back if wandering
  - warn when time is short
  - structure the time available
- expressing milestones
- where the group has got to
- what remains to be done
- summing up
- highlighting/seeking alternatives to adversarial positions (points of agreement, ways forward)
- having questions/methods in mind if discussion gets stuck.

Political discussions can be very scary for participants. Within groups, people fear the conflict that will break up the group. Between groups, people fear hostility, humiliation, the wrecking of embryonic relationships. Speakers fear making themselves vulnerable, letting the side down, or being labelled as traitors by their own side if they change or speculate about possibilities.

Political discussion can also be scary for facilitators. We, also, have political views, prejudices, likes and dislikes, vested interests. We should not think that we can lead groups through these difficult encounters without risks to ourselves. We, too, may be changed by the process.

## Methods for encouraging, listening and hearing

In addition to setting objectives and ground rules carefully, facilitators can sometimes find ways to encourage participants to hear each other. For example:

- paraphrasing/checking what people have said (Are you saying that....?)

- seeking/articulating points in common or differences
- asking questions that elicit personal rather than party statements, if the setting permits vulnerability (What experience led you to that conclusion? Have you always held that view?)

- responding/encouraging responses to feelings/dilemmas as well as "political" matters (That must have been painful....difficult....inspiring..)

- empathy

- help them to listen to each other's feelings (but not forcing it)

- model empathy yourself

- encourage empathy (Do you see how that would feel/seem to the other person?)

- suggest that they imagine the sequence of events that could have put them in the other person's position (based on commonality or convergence)

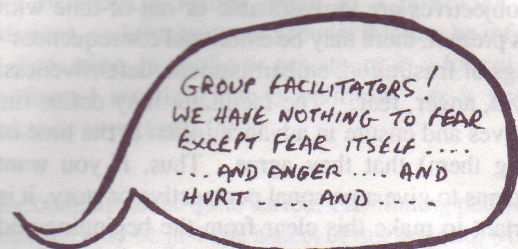
Most of us can only listen when we're sure we've been heard, so, if possible, give each person more than one opportunity to speak (perhaps for a shorter time).

The first time we hear something, we're still defending against it, so ask for elaboration about new ideas, don't press people to react to new possibilities immediately, and give people several opportunities to speak.

All of us need permission/space to change so:

- point out where people seem to have changed
- avoid forcing them to defend what they say
- help them to speculate about possible options
- notice when they've taken risks in choosing to change

- encourage such behaviour in participants



## Coping with anger/fear

What is it that we fear about discussing politics? Many of us as participants fear arousing strong emotions, or feeling them ourselves. We fear endangering relationships that are important to us, or ending up feeling isolated and hopeless. As facilitators, we may fear loss of control, or opening up something we can't cope with.

The first step in dealing with all these emotions is noticing them. As facilitators, we must be attentive to signals during discussions that indicate strong feelings. Then:

- try to provide a safe way for emotions to be expressed. e.g. ask open-ended questions that allow space to talk about feelings without forcing (Would you want to tell us how you react to that?)

or, offer a format/structure for dealing with strong emotions, encouraging people to express their feelings



in a structured way (e.g. When you do/say....., I feel .....because..... . I would prefer ..... )

- If possible, get to the experience that prompts the feeling, rather than having multiple expressions of the feeling.

- Try to provide opportunities for aggressive emotions to be transformed into more vulnerable ones (e.g. anger may mask hurt or sadness, fear may be an expression of helplessness or powerlessness) - but do not force people into taking more risks than they are ready for.

- Though it's best for emotions to be expressed by those who feel them, the facilitator can sometimes verbalise emotions diffused among an audience. (That makes me uncomfortable because it will hurt some of the people here).

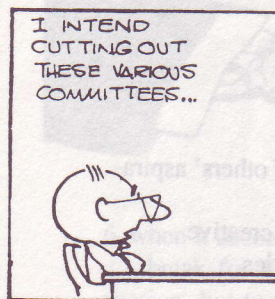
- Be prepared for parallel feelings to arise, and give them room to be expressed - but try to deal with one at a time, promising time and attention to other feelings later.

- Where possible, let participants respond to each other's emotions in a human way, without intervening to protect them unless it's necessary.

If participants fear that others may try to mislead the audience with false statements, an observer or umpire can point out and disallow misinformation. This helps to create an atmosphere in which people are careful about what they say, and feel that truth will be respected.

Once the feelings are openly expressed, it may become possible to seek ways of respecting all of them. Talking about emotions and experiences can free us of our positions and enable us to concentrate on needs. When we get beyond "party positions", honesty is more likely to lead to cooperation and non-adversarial discussion focused on the problem rather than on our strategies for emerging victorious.

The timing is important. People will feel thwarted if the discussion moves on to what to do before they've ventilated their emotions. On the other hand, the discussion will feel frustrating and futile if it never gets beyond feelings to action. Open-ended questions may allow participants to suggest future actions or new possibilities to try to meet everyone's needs.



## FACILITATING POLITICAL DISCUSSION SESSION

There follows notes written following a 'Facilitating political discussion' session run by Sue and Steve Williams for the CRC/Community Relations Council in April 1991. One section of this ('Role of the facilitator - How discussion gets stuck') is mainly replaced by the notes from the similar seminar of December 1990. It was written up by Sue Williams.

### 1 Introductions

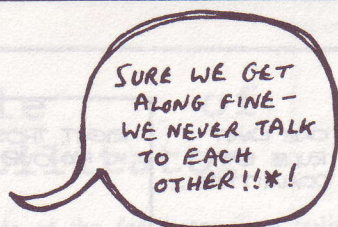
Participants described their objectives in doing this training:

- Skills and ability
- Learn from others' approach
- Skills for group exchange
- Ideas on how to introduce political discussion
- Skills in dealing with situations that arise in mixed residential
- Skills appropriate for younger groups
- Understanding of what happens in good political discussion, and what to do when things go wrong
- Aid to raising awareness about social change
- Skills for discussing community issues
- Confirmation of experience
- How mediation process can advance the political process
- Personal conversation/relationships

### 2 Brainstorm: Why do we want political discussion?

- Open things up
- Reach level of understanding
- Jaw-jaw better than war-war
- Communication for growth
- Why hold inherited beliefs - challenge
- Break down myths
- State one's position
- Create climate where there can be movement
- Convince people that we're right





Encourage understanding of validity of others' aspirations

Let people "walk around" ideas and be creative

Being able to speculate about possibilities

To create a better society

Releasing tension to acceptable level

Empower people by overcoming fear

Expose people to different viewpoints

Encourage people to listen

Facilitate movement from violent to non-violent conflict

Confront head-on what divides

We care even while we disagree

Equip people to utilise political discussion

Break down isolation

Show that everything political isn't bad

Show that politics is about power, and we don't have the power - can we get power by talking?

Help ordinary people realise how political they've become after 20 years

## What we fear about political discussion

Explosive anger leading to violence

Being misunderstood

Offending other people

Having to change what we think

Being rejected for our views

Break up friendships

Harassment

Discrimination

Intimidation

Losing some of your power

Assassination

Losing your community, heritage

Realising your own prejudices

Losing votes

Losing face

All blow up in your face, hopelessly incompetent

Left worse than it was

Being labelled

Lack of credibility; misrepresentation of the political process itself

Being exposed, not being able to hide, vulnerable

Having to come out of the group

Recognising your opponent

Not able to cope

Lacking confidence

Showing up ignorance in political things

Fear of other people's certainties

Damaging feedback, misrepresentation

Irrationality/subjectivity of politics

Feelings are unacceptable

Danger of intellectualising and losing touch with grass roots

## 3 Setting objectives

In the exercise, people were grouped in two's and three's and asked to pretend that one was a facilitator, helping a politician to clarify what he could reasonably hope to achieve in a planned discussion.

Participants made the following comments:

Importance of totality of relationships

Difficulties of defining and clarifying objectives of all sides

Need for previous individual contacts before bringing sides together

Dealing with "knee-jerk" reactions

Need to have specific focus or common ground to come together

Feeling responsible that the process will work

Noting specific questions to ask the other side seemed to help - but don't ask your own questions!

Uncomfortable in role of facilitator working with paramilitaries - "Republican" felt closer to "Loyalist" than to facilitator - Felt I was treated like a thing, was being talked about

Emphasise need for preliminary work with each side separately

Stereotyping prevents discussion

Need to be sensitive in use of terminology

Distinguish between objectives and preconditions

## 4 Setting ground rules

In the exercise, small groups tried to set ground rules for different kinds of political discussion: within an existing group, between different groups and one politician addressing a forum.

Comments reported were:

Facilitating was impossible

Very easy

Tempting to set ground rules myself

Other aspects, e.g. size of group, need to be discussed

Time constraints furnished possible ground rules, as did interruptions

Did facilitators push themselves too much, not enough?

Difficult to work with new person

Would have helped to have facilitators describe who they are, what they do

Be able to use own experience

Got nowhere because groups didn't have shared objectives

Again, advance work with each group separately

Felt that facilitators knew what they wanted, were trying to manipulate us





Facilitators should have drawn out what was behind our statements

Timing very important

Participants very emotional

Facilitator wanted to start from common ground, participants wanted to start from top (Politics)

Point out common ground

Participants had already set ground rules - so check it out again, what were objectives

Designed perfect meeting, wanted facilitator to just run it for us

Realised there were things we hadn't clarified

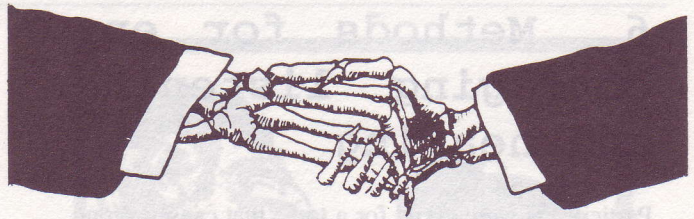
## 5 Role of the facilitator

The exercise was a brainstorm, to list ways that discussions can get stuck. After many sticking points were listed, participants offered suggestions on how to get some of them un-stuck. (Some problems were only listed; there wasn't time to deal with all of them, and the possible solutions tended to repeat themselves)

How discussion gets stuck (followed by what to do about it);

(Taken from December 1990 seminar)

1. own agendas; won't give way
  - look for common ground
  - help each other think through blocks
  - agree joint agenda
  - facilitator can reassure them that they won't be stuck there forever
  - maybe mediate and talk with each side separately
2. polite stage
  - work through something they disagree about
  - notice non-verbal signals and ask about them
  - may not be sure of ground rules
  - say controversial things in a neutral way
  - facilitator can paraphrase and generalise the reactions ("my community feels...", rather than "I feel...")
  - ask people to discuss issues without revealing one's own views as facilitator
  - sustain politeness for a while
3. afraid, uncomfortable
  - reassure about confidentiality, objectives
  - divide into small groups to articulate feelings
  - facilitator should articulate his/her own discomfort (anxiety, etc.)
4. When an accusation has been made
  - facilitator should probe to see what the experience is behind the accusation
  - facilitator should accept feelings of accuser and of others in the group
  - facilitator must intervene when an accusation has been levelled
  - sometimes advantageous to have an ally or confederate facilitator within the group, whose role may be declared at the outset (but facilitator should also be aware of competitors and undeclared facilitators)
5. when not sure of objectives
  - stop and agree objectives
  - recap regularly



6. when it becomes emotional, personal
  - break for tea and informal conversation (not as evasion, but to let friends help people work through their emotion)
  - sense the state of the group
  - silence may be needed
  - affirm other friends to support the individual who is emotional
7. running out of things to say
8. discrepancy in expectations
9. same thing over and over
10. when facilitator is asked for own opinion
  - declare one's hand
  - promise to reveal your views later, rather than influence the direction of the discussion
  - don't judge between the views of others within the group
  - reaffirm role as facilitator, be clear about role
  - declare own background but underline that as facilitator you are exploring and seeking new ideas
11. when someone has broken the ground rules
12. boredom, people joined the group just to join
13. when one person dominates
  - attempt to curtail the dominating individual
  - attempt to draw out others in the group
  - remind the group of ground rules, particularly if a process has been agreed (e.g. specific number of occasions for each individual to speak)
  - facilitator should attempt to help the dominant individual see that the rest of the group needs to move slowly
  - point out to the dominant individual that the group has actually heard what he/she has to say

.....and some points from the April 1991 seminar;

- a Dominant (male) leader, whom people react against
  - accept stuckness and acknowledge the fears .....
- i Haven't been heard
  - write statements and put up on wall
  - paraphrase, summarise
- j Nowhere to move to
  - move into another setting where they can test ideas, but then bring them back again
- k Two people get stuck into each other, the rest opt out
  - point out what's happening - to the group and the individuals
  - ask for other contributions, but affirm speakers
  - get permission of the group (to continue this way or to change)

There were also several general statements:

Silence is not the same as consent

Group development/empowerment needed

Reality that group may not be there voluntarily, may need motivating



## 6 Methods for encouraging listening and hearing

Participants were asked for a topic that causes strong disagreement and opted for: "the RUC are an impartial police force." Two people volunteered to speak on opposite sides of this issue and a third acted as facilitator, who tried to get them to listen to each other. At stopping-points, the group offered suggestions of what the facilitator might try.

Comments were:

Seating was wrong - in a line, not facing each other

Felt helpful

Other's position was so strong, it was difficult to reply  
Facilitator stepped back when intervention was difficult

Notice when one seemed to have repeated what was said by the other (point out agreement, commonality)

Difficulty in separating role play from one's own views

Focus on personal experience

One person had more facts

## 7 Coping with anger and fear

Participants were asked to think back to what they feared about political discussion, then think of how they might introduce themselves and the process of facilitation in a way that would minimise fears and suspicions.

They tried these out in pairs, then made comments:

Concentrate on the day

Don't try to prove neutrality

Brief statement on job, experience

"These are the skills I'm bringing"

"This is how I'd like to see us work today"

Use experience and people you talked with in advance

Empower people by allowing them to be part of the process

Don't put too much in

Tone, manner, body language

Know audience ahead of time

Authenticity

## 8 Role play

There was to have been a role play on the afternoon of the second day. Participants named the groups involved, the topic and the politicians. On the day, however, we never actually moved on to the role play. Instead, the group engaged in political discussion and saw some of the difficulties in facilitating it and engaging in it. None of this happened in the one day seminar (December 1990), no doubt because participants hadn't

built the trust even to consider exchanging their own views. I had anticipated that the role play would bring out some real disagreements, but had thought that this would happen within the framework of the role play, rather than instead of it.

There were several discussions of whether to do the role play, or whether to make this a proper discussion of politics and no agreement to do either. In particular, when the discussion seemed to involve only two people, there were suggestions of techniques to include more people. The technique chosen - possession of an object, which each speaker took from and returned to the centre of the circle - not only did not cause more people to be included, but stripped power from the facilitator, who then seemed to have no way to intervene. The two men active in the discussion seemed to feel caught up emotionally and slightly uncomfortable about monopolising the conversation. The others, silent ones felt somewhat unhappy at being excluded and somewhat relieved that the two would carry the whole burden.

The actual discussion was interrupted periodically by people with comments about the process. On one level, the interventions to deal with the process were intended to improve the discussion and ensure that more people participated. On another level, the interventions may have reflected discomfort at where the discussion had gotten to and a retreat to the safer ground of acting as facilitators in a role play, rather than as participants in a real discussion.

It seems to me that this session provided quite a bit of material for reflection and learning. It was perhaps especially good to see what happens when no one facilitates: in this case, the result was frustration. It is also useful to remember how we felt in the midst of the conversation - engaged or detached, threatened, vulnerable, or in control - because these are some of the feelings of people when we encourage them to trust us to facilitate such a discussion. It would have been helpful to have more time to continue to analyse this session, but several people had to leave and we were not able to agree quickly on a process for analysis, anyway.

The group was a good one, with talented, serious people and quite diverse backgrounds and views.....

- Sue Williams, May 1991.



"If I'd known you were going to invent politics I'd have stayed in the trees."



# CONSENSUS

by Peter Emerson

Conflicts should never be resolved, as some (para)militarists say, by force of arms; nor, as many of those "democrats" who believe in the (two-) party system of politics suggest, by force of numbers (majoritarianism). So the purpose of this paper is twofold: firstly, to declare both of the above unacceptable, because the "for-or-against" vote is almost as primitive and just as uncompromising as a duel; and secondly, to propose a better method, the consensual approach.... and this can or even should be used by any forum, elected or otherwise, either in conflict situations, or where happily none exist.

The solution to any conflict, be it violent or (thus far only) verbal, will doubtless involve a degree of compromise; so the first requirement is for a decision making process which allows any, and all, compromise (candidates)/options at least to be considered. This can be done in one of two ways:

- either the participants shall talk and talk, debating each and every proposed compromise, until an agreement is reached - (such a technique may be OK for Quaker meetings and peace camps, but at Stormont?!.....);

- or they shall (talk and) list all valid proposals, and then vote thereon, not in the above-mentioned two-option "for-or-against" vote, but in a sophisticated multi-option poll.

It's called the consensus vote or preferendum.

In just such a ballot, the participants shall cast their preference points for all the (candidates)/options listed, and of these there shall always be at least 3, usually from 6 to 10.

In so voting, each shall recognise the candidature of every candidate and/or the validity of everyone's stated proposals, (the latter being listed subject to the one proviso: only those policy options which do not infringe the United Nations declaration on human rights will be permitted).



In other words, in consensus voting, each shall cast his/her preference points for, and only for, but for all (candidates)/options; and no one shall vote against.

Or, to put it in yet a third way, because we all must live with each other, we must not only talk with each other, but also vote with each other!

In a 10-(candidate)/option poll, then, each shall give 10 points to the (candidate)/option he/she likes the most, 9 to his/her next favourite, 8 to his/her third choice, and so on, right down to a 1 for the (candidate)/option he/she likes least of all.

The "consensors" will then add up all the points cast for each (candidate)/option and express each total as a percentage of the maximum possible, so to obtain (in this case) 10 levels of consensus.

(When electing persons, we shall always elect at least two, both the chair and a deputy, for example; if such be the case, the pair with the two highest totals shall be the chosen two, and in this way, an element of (proportionality and) compromise will always be inherent in the system).

And when selecting a policy, the same air of compromise shall or certainly should be maintained. In just such a 10-option preferendum, for example, no one option can be mutually exclusive of all the other nine. If, therefore, one particular option is very consensually popular but another is a close runner-up, the consensors shall add any commensurate aspects of the latter to the full text of the former, to thus formulate the final decision.

-----  
That, then, is the theory of consensus voting. Now let's look at what should be universal practice.

When folks come together to resolve some issue or other in consensus, they should first reject both violence and majoritarianism; secondly, they should



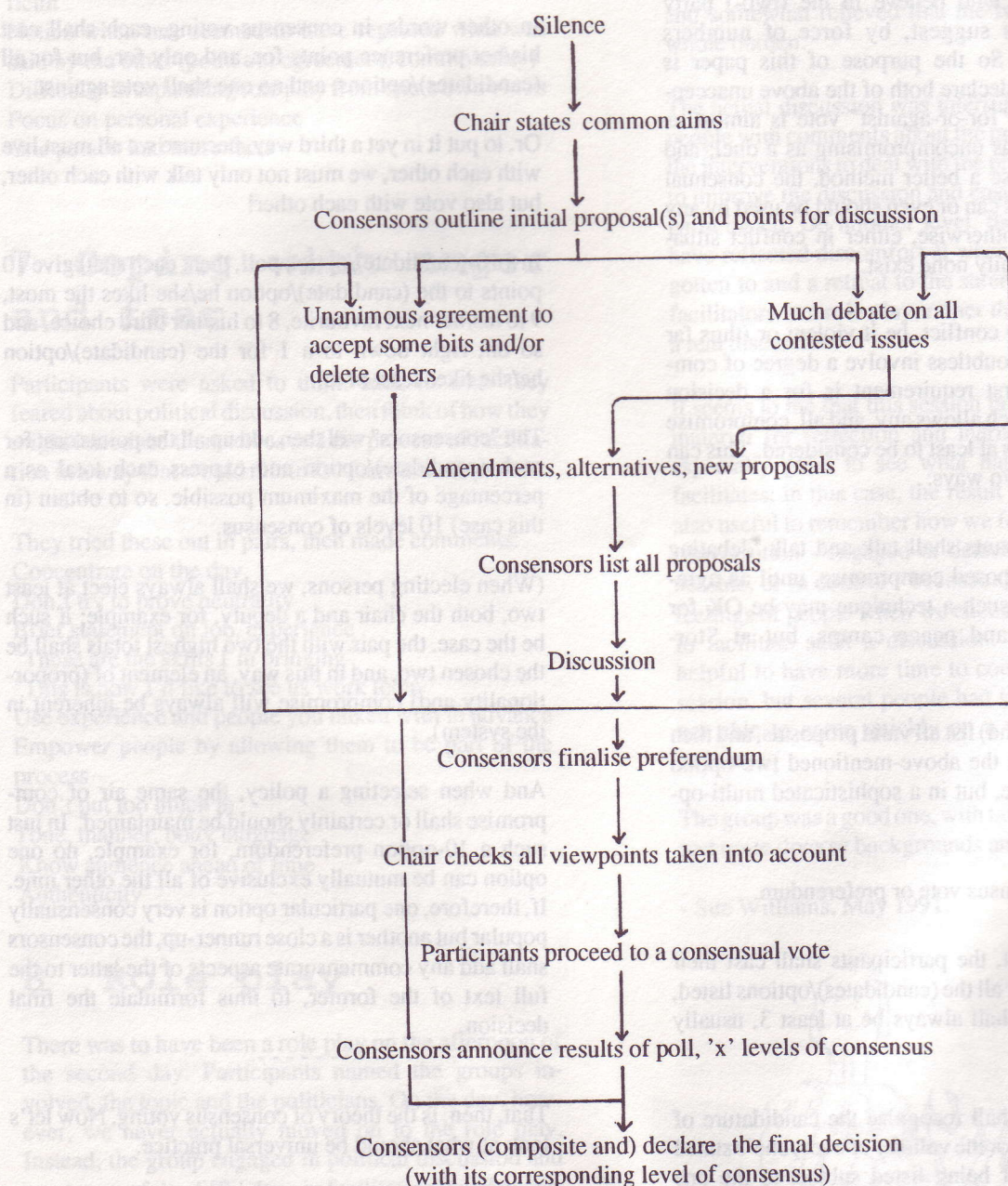
acknowledge that everyone shall have the right, not only to participate in the debate, but also to exercise an influence upon the final outcome, i.e. everyone should agree to accept the eventual outcome of the consensual decision making process, and that means accept that no one will "win" everything; there again, everyone will win something.

They may wish to talk the matter out, either in part of in full, and/or they may wish to use a consensus vote. Sometimes, in fact, folks will prefer to resolve most problems with just such a poll, (especially if the debate in question is of a sensitive and sophisticated nature), and not least because the accurate knowledge of how everyone (votes and) thinks can often facilitate mutual understanding.

Now in the first (talk and talk) scenario, much patience may be required. Secondly, those who speak more frequently, persuasively or merely more loudly, may well exercise an influence greater than is their due. And while the final decision may be just the ticket for some, a step in the right direction for others, and only a tolerable compromise for a third group, maybe no one is really sure of just how consensual it is.

In the second (talk and then) vote instance, the whole process may be carried out comparatively quickly; all may exercise an equal influence on the final outcome; and all shall know the exact level of consensus achieved.

The flow diagram is as follows:





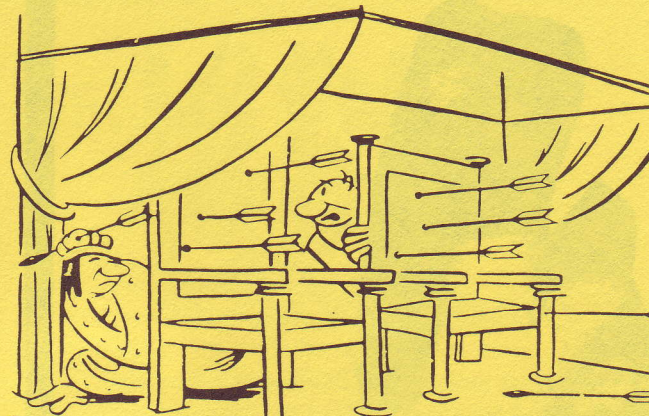
Now some may express reservations as to whether or not the final outcome will be accepted, either before the vote because of the unpredictability of the outcome of such a poll, (but that is an asset!), or afterwards, if they didn't get as much as they'd hoped for.

Well, history tells us that a resort to violence often tempts the eventual vanquished to then thirst for revenge, and that any use of the majority vote usually prompts the alienated minority to then seek redress; in contrast, or so our albeit limited experience suggests, the very use of the above consensual decision making process actually assists the achievement of consensus. And even in a conflict situation such as exists here in Northern Ireland, both a proper consensual debate from which the consensors shall produce a preferendum of from 6 to 10 options to represent all valid viewpoints, and a proper consensual vote in which every participant shall respect all his/her neighbours, could well lead to a final decision which enjoys a level of consensus of 75% or more. Such is much more likely to lead to a settlement than any majoritarian decision, the 1800 Act of Union, for example, or the 1920 Government of Ireland Act!

Violence was always wrong - it only leads to more violence. Majoritarianism is usually wrong, for such divisive voting techniques only cause more division. Consensus, on the other hand, is not only better. For because we are all our neighbour's keepers, because no sizeable group will ever be alienated by the process, and because no one group will ever be able to dominate while all will be able to participate, there will gradually evolve not only a confidence in the consensual system, but a belief that it is right, as of right.

And while the use of physical or numerical force invariably infringes the natural rights of those afflicted, consensus voting is a fulfilment thereof.

Consensus is a human right!

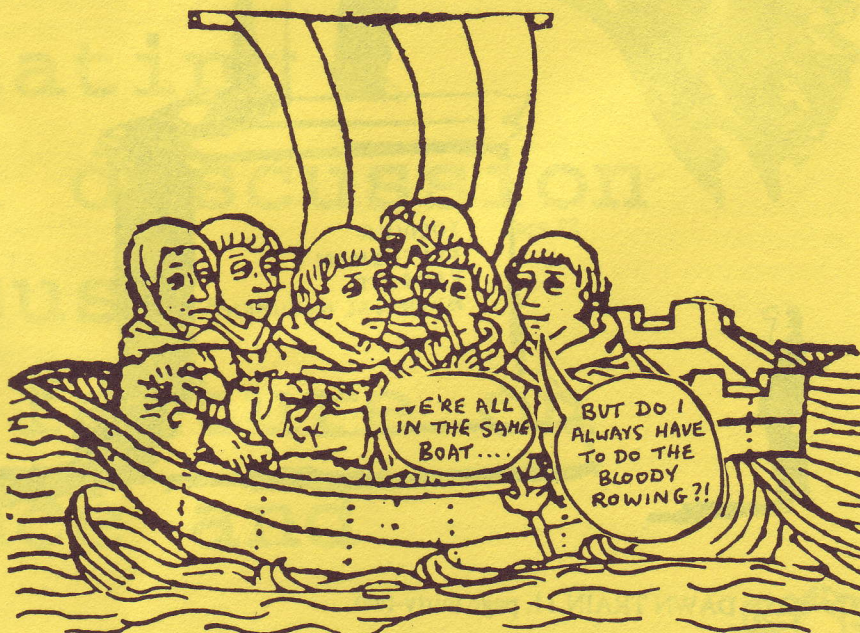


Through History With J. Wesley Smith

"Why don't we form a democracy? Then we'd only have to satisfy 51 percent of the people."

*Peter Emerson's book "Consensus voting systems" (74 pages), is available from the author, post free, at the price of UK£2.50/IR£2.75, from; Rhubarb Cottage, 36 Ballysillan Road, Belfast 14.*

*Well, Peter, how about a preferendum on introducing preferendums? The whole issue of 'consensus' at whatever level is one that requires work and understanding. 'Consensus' must be vying for 'the most abused term in Northern Ireland' award - and that's saying something! Peter Emerson's system is clearly thought out though it requires a number of 'consensual' preconditions and agreements. We hope that the issue of consensus may be one which we will return to in greater detail, possibly in a special issue of Dawn Train to look at the different options both at a small group and a large group or societal level. - The consensual editor.*









# OBSERVING

INNATE

## OBSERVING - a third party nonviolent response

A report and  
recommendations on  
its relevance in  
Northern Ireland



An observer (right) watches closely as a police officer and demonstrator talk



**INNATE,  
An Irish Network for  
Nonviolent Action  
Training and  
Education,**

16 Ravensdene Park, Belfast BT6 0DA,  
phone Belfast 647106.

INNATE, founded in 1987, acts as an informal network for groups and individuals interested in, or committed to, nonviolence in Ireland. Further details are available on request.



*This report stems from practical work and study which INNATE has been engaged in regarding observing over several years. Comments and suggestions welcome.*

OBSERVATING

INNATE



# OBSERVING - a third party nonviolent response



---

## A report and recommendations on its relevance in Northern Ireland

---

by INNATE

July 1992.

Additional copies of this report on observing are available free (for price of postage but we can try to sort out delivery) in Northern Ireland while stocks last. Otherwise they are available at 40 pence plus postage. Or it is included in Dawn Train No.11.

INNATE, 16 Ravensdene Park,  
Belfast BT6 0DA. Phone Belfast 647106.

---

## Introduction

1.1 Observing is a basic, third party, nonviolent response to a situation where there is the possibility of violence and/or where injustice is alleged.

1.2 There are different kinds of observing, and different possible aims on the part of observers. These aims could include; a desire to report the truth of a situation ('what really happened'); showing interest and support for one side or all sides; a concern to help prevent trouble by being present.

1.3 Observing can be carried out by different kinds of people. It can be carried out by members of powerful institutions (e.g. British MPs observing events in Northern Ireland early in the current troubles; EC (European Community) observers going to Yugoslavia in 1991). It can be carried out by prominent personalities (political figures, trade unionists or others).

Or it can simply be carried out by members of a body which sees part of its role as providing observers.

1.4 While this report deals with observing in general, the variety of observing we are talking about principally is a citizen 'mediator-observer' model. This mediator-observer, as the term would suggest, is someone who both mediates and observes; they would 'normally' be an observer, seeking to look at and understand a situation, and by their presence hoping to contribute to a peaceful, non-violent resolution of events. But they would step over to become a mediator on the streets between different parties if they felt that by doing so they could prevent an escalation to violence or a deterioration in the situation.

1.5 Our thinking in relation to observing in general, and to the mediator-observer model which we suggest, is outlined in the rest of this report. While we have been developing this model in both theory and practice, we recognise that developing observing in Northern Ireland will be a dynamic process which requires much further thought and work.

## Background and experience

2.1 Observing the situation was relatively common early on in the current troubles in Northern Ireland, at the end of the 1960's and start of the 1970's. Observing differs from fact-finding insofar as observing is usually of particular events while fact-finding is seeking to gather facts to understand a situation. Anyhow, different people from Britain and elsewhere did come to observe events such as demonstrations. Observing also took part within Northern Ireland (e.g. by the Central Citizens Defence Committee; see Dawn Train No. 10).





2.2 With the escalation in violence in Northern Ireland, and the move away from demonstrations to violence, shooting and bombing, observing became either too dangerous or pointless. If observing is normally of particular scheduled events, standing around waiting for violence to happen could have been a pointless exercise. Observing as an organised response in general died out (though fact-finding by people visiting from outside Northern Ireland certainly continued).

2.3 However with the drop in the overall level of deaths, and a drop in the overall level of fear and tension from the early 1970s, observing could again be a viable response. Some of the sources of the greatest tension in Northern Ireland are events which lend themselves to being observed, e.g. contentious parades and funerals.

2.4 As INNATE, our experience of observing is limited to one particular situation, Portadown, but is sufficient in depth and time (over a number of years) to make us confident in extrapolating from that situation to looking at the possibilities of observing for the whole of Northern Ireland.

## International experience

3.1 There is considerable international experience of observing but we have found it difficult to get hold of information. This is, we believe, principally because it has not been necessarily developed as a distinct discipline. While 'sending in United Nations observers' has been common, this has been at a level of inter-governmental, quasi-diplomatic intervention and has been mainly to report on a situation and/or to examine possible international actions.

3.2 At the level of citizens' actions observing has come a poor second in some situations to stewarding ('marshaling' in United States English). Stewarding is the prepared management of a demonstration or event by a group of people entrusted with tasks by the organisers; to help avoid trouble or deal with it if it arises; to keep a demonstration or event together and looking effective; to communicate between organisers, etc.

3.3 Within the United States civil rights and peace movements a relatively standard model of stewarding would have evolved (see "Marshals: What do they do? How do you train them?" handbook published by

Friends Peace Committee, Philadelphia, USA, early 1970s) To some extent, observing might have been seen as a sub-section of stewarding. While stewarding has been used extensively in European situations, the model has not been as developed as in North America.

3.4 Observing has been used effectively in disputes involving white and native peoples in North America (both the USA and Canada). Different models of observing have been utilised; both 'prominent people' and 'ordinary people', in the case of the latter including members of church congregations. Not being a 'partisan' action it could be thought of as appealing to people who wished to make a contribution to peacemaking without taking what they might consider militant action.

3.5 Observing has also been an aspect of the work which Peace Brigades International (PBI) has done in Guatemala, El Salvador and Sri Lanka. The main focus of such work has been as a nonviolent escort for threatened popular leaders, or a presence at the offices and houses of popular groups. Certainly here the international aspect of the presence is a vital ingredient. Observing of events would only be a small part of the work of Peace Brigades International.

3.6 A principal focus of the work of the USA-based Witness for Peace organisation was international non-violent interjection in Nicaragua. This sought to oppose US military intervention by being present in the situation as US citizens (though simply informing US citizens about the real situation in Nicaragua may have been the main goal). This would also be distinct from observing but would include some of the latter. (See Lynne Shivers article, Dawn Train 9)

3.7 The only known published formulations on the training of observers come from the United States; in 1971 Charles Walker put together guidelines for observers on the first anniversary of the Kent State University killings; and the peace movement handbook "Resource manual for a living revolution" ('Monster Manual') published simple guidelines on 'how to do it'.

## Arguments for and against

4.1 Like anything else, observing is not necessarily straightforward, and arguments can be put in favour of, or in opposition to, doing it. Here we will try to summarise some of the main arguments; most of these apply elsewhere as well as in Northern Ireland.

4.2 Arguments in favour include;

a) It is important to be able to record what actually happens as opposed to what each side thinks is happening.



b) The presence of observers helps all sides be on their best behaviour; no side wants to be blamed by neutral observers for starting any trouble.

c) Mediator-observers can help prevent escalation to a point where physical violence ensues; by being on the spot, and mediating between people in dispute, they can tackle issues as they arise.

d) Simply being there shows concern for people locally, and by focusing attention may help to avoid feelings of powerlessness.

#### 4.3 Arguments against include;

a) There are basic issues of justice and injustice which observing is going to do nothing to tackle.

b) Observers can't be neutral in the situation any more than anyone else, so what's the point.

c) Observers have no real power even in the limited role they propose for themselves.

d) All it does is keep the lid on something will eventually boil over anyhow.

4.4 We will now look at some of these arguments. Firstly, mediators are not 'neutral' in some supra-human sense; they are ordinary individuals with their own biases and beliefs. What could make an observer team relatively 'neutral' in the Northern Ireland situation would be its composition; it would need to be composed of both Protestants and Catholics, and where possible have some international participation. Different people see different things in the same situation, and this is particularly true in a divided society like Northern Ireland. A diverse observer team is in a much stronger position to pick up on everything that is happening than one which is composed of only the same kind of person.

4.5 It will happen that different people will see different things in a situation and there may be difficulties in reporting accurately 'what happened'. But it is important that these different perceptions emerge because it is in coming to terms with these that a deeper understanding of the situation will emerge; why did one person see one thing and another something different? What does this say about the situation and about the observers? Can these differences be resolved, and can a composite report do justice to both positions? How do the different perceptions gained by observers reflect the way ordinary bystanders, local people and others see the situation?

4.6 We do have strong evidence in even our limited experience of observing that it can be effective in helping to prevent the outbreak of threatening and violent behaviour on different sides. It may be obvious, but necessary, to say that this may not always be the case. This preventative role is, nevertheless, an important reason for adopting observing.

4.7 It may be necessary for observers to be present in considerable numbers for this effect to be most marked. One or two people may not be sufficiently noticed, and they may not be spread out so as to see what is happening in order to be able to intervene in a mediator role at the appropriate stage in the escalation of a conflict.

4.8 It has also been our experience in INNATE that observing can be understood as support for people locally; this is simply by being there, by noticing that there is a situation that people are worried about and by providing concrete proof that there are people sufficiently concerned to spend time there. The other side of this is, of course, that observing could thereby be seen by another side as being opposed to them. In our experience it is possible to be appreciated by different sides in a situation if each is treated with respect.

4.9 There are some things observing cannot do. It cannot by itself resolve an underlying conflict or issue of justice and injustice. All it can do, by helping to avoid escalation and physical violence, is contribute to a situation where dialogue and the resolution of conflict become more likely. It can also help draw attention to a situation. So while it is possible that it could 'keep the lid on' a situation 'where the lid was bound to come off sooner or later', the question remains - how does the lid come off? Does it explode off? Or is it lifted off? Observing could play a role in 'lifting the lid'. We have seen in Northern Ireland the effect of violence in driving people apart; observing has a limited role to play in avoiding further division in some local situations, and in providing reassurance to some people, and attention to situations that need it.

4.10 Observing is itself, in its own limited fashion, powerful. By being concerned outsiders in a conflict a certain amount of power is acquired which can be used to help prevent escalation to violence. We have experienced that limited power and the cooperation from different sides which it has engendered.

## The mediator-observer model

5.1 Especially because stewarding at events may be absent in Northern Ireland, there is greater scope for a mediator-observer. As already stated, an observer has







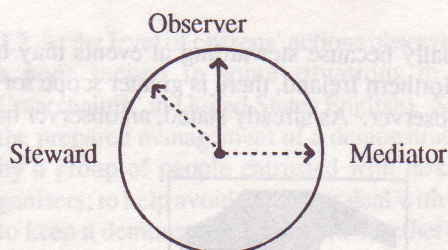
a certain, limited amount of power. We believe that power should be used actively to intervene in situations as observers felt necessary.

5.2 But where things were running smoothly the role of the mediator-observer would be to observe. The observers would be responsible to the different parties involved, including local people, to report back whatever comments the observer team felt it was necessary to make (and in whatever way reporting back is possible; reporting back to local people may only be possible through a group or groups). The point of this reporting back is not to lay blame but rather to point out things so that people can learn.

5.3 The mediator-observer role would include making suggestions on the spot to different parties as appropriate. If some particular event, situation or action could lead to violent confrontation or escalation it would be appropriate for observers to communicate immediately with any of the parties concerned who could do something about that. It might be something which it was quite within the power of one of the parties concerned to change if their attention was drawn to it. The importance here is of observers from outside noticing things which others do not, and having the power as relatively neutral outsiders to suggest that something be done.

5.4 Observers would receive training as to when it may be useful to become a 'mediator' rather than an 'observer'. But it would be finally up to observers on the spot to decide what was appropriate. It should be normal for observers to be grouped together in at least pairs so that each observer has someone to check out their perceptions with instantly.

5.5 The observer-mediator role can be thought of as being on a dial as follows



In the model we are talking about, the 'normal' position on this dial would be pointing straight upwards to 'observer'. But in terms of how far they could move, an observer would go rather further towards being a 'mediator' than a 'steward'. Being a mediator remains a third party intervention. Being a steward means being part of another particular organisation or structure.

However, some of the role which an observer could play in terms of relaying information to organisers about something which required their attention could be thought of as being close to a stewarding role. But observers would also fulfil such a role for other parties (e.g. police, local people), pointing out facts and observations, so they would not become stewards in a conventional sense, and their responsibility would remain to all parties.

5.6 Different observers in a situation would need to be assigned different roles regarding where they were to position themselves, who (if anyone) and what relationships they were especially assigned to watch, who would be responsible for estimating numbers etc. These particular tasks need to be listed beforehand but can be assigned to observers on the day.

5.7 Following the completion of events, observers might wish to make public pronouncements on events, particularly where there was an important clash of perceptions which it was necessary to make some statement on. However observers have a responsibility to be even-handed, and will need to be aware that public criticism may damage the relationship with a particular party. This may be something observers have to do for an important reason, but it may be more effective to communicate comments to the individual parties privately.

5.8 Work may need to be done beforehand, and even possibly afterwards as well, to explain observing to the different parties, and to show that observers will be critical of, and praise, all sides as necessary. Where time permits, appropriate information can be relayed to local people through the appropriate media, e.g. informing people of the intended presence of observers and what their role will be.

5.9 Being a mediator-observer is a role which is demanding. It is also a concept which will need development and refinement. In particular the mediator side of the role, as an on-the-ground, instant mediator will need work to prepare people through training and exploration (even on such a simple guideline as avoiding any physical contact, e.g. putting a hand on someone, which might lead to immediate physical violence - possibly against the mediator-observer!)

## Relevant situations

6.1. There are a variety of situations where this role would be relevant; basically any crowd situation or event where there was a likelihood of tension and a possibility of violence. It could include; parades, demonstrations, contentious funerals, football matches between sides where sectarian feelings might be exhibited, sanctuary and situations of threat to individuals etc.



6.2 A basic question is whether the observing is done 'invited' or 'uninvited'. Obviously it is preferable to be invited by one or more of the parties concerned with a situation. But it may be necessary for observers to invite themselves to a situation; in this case especial attention is needed to communicate with all sides the role which observers hope to play - as many people as possible must be informed about the intention of observers.

6.3 Initially observing should be developed in response to particular events, such as those mentioned in 6.1. It may be appropriate to also develop observing to include situations of tension where there is no particular event happening. There are problems with the latter. Intimidation and violence can strike anywhere in Northern Ireland and not just in an area where a tit-for-tat killing is feared. Observing of such situations might entail a time commitment which was unrealistic (although this is a role played by Peace Brigades International in Central America and Asia). Nevertheless, observing of particular situations or geographical areas may be something which is appropriate for development at some stage.

6.4 Another question which would have to be decided was whether observing was provided in situations where a demonstration or event was in itself illegal. This could be a difficult decision. But the illegality of an event should be only one consideration to be taken into account. And the problem would certainly not disappear because an event was judged outside the law; there might be even greater need for the presence of observers.

## An observer body

7.1 INNATE, a nonviolence network, has been concerned to develop the theory and practice of observing. INNATE is a small network with few resources itself. While we have done any observing work in as impartial a way as we can, we recognise that through our option for active nonviolence we are taking a particular stand. At this stage we would feel it was most appropriate that a body was set up which would attempt to develop observing in the whole of Northern Ireland and which could call on reasonable resources to do the task.

7.2 This observer body would take on the task of recruiting and training volunteer observers. It would be a substantial task which would require the cooperation of people and bodies from a wide sector of society. Trained observers could be augmented in particular situations by public figures and observers from outside Northern Ireland as necessary. Realistically a time scale in becoming fully operational would be a couple of years - but observers could be provided as they became available.

7.3 Substantial numbers of volunteer observers would be needed. The largest observer team INNATE has fielded has been around 20 people; we could have done with 30 or even more, and this in a relatively small situation. Many situations could use 50 or more observers. Taking into account geographical considerations, and the fact that volunteers can only be expected to come if they are free to do so, would mean that there would be a need to recruit an absolute minimum of 300 observers and a more realistic figure to provide observers as required would be double that (600). Much depends on what demand is created for observers.

7.4 A further reflection on the need for a large number of observers is the fact that demand for observers, like the level of tension existing in Northern Ireland, would be cyclical. At one part of a year, or indeed for a longer time period, there may be relatively little tension and therefore relatively little demand. At another time observers might be working flat out in any available time they have to provide observing teams.

7.5 The observing body would need to first of all introduce the concept of observing to the public and to potentially sympathetic organisations and groups, with the possibility of recruiting members through different structures which already exist. Some bodies may consider it a contribution to active peacemaking; others may be concerned to see that 'their' kind of people are included in the process. All would be welcome.

7.6 The exact nature, aegis and financing of an observer body would need to be determined by a process of dialogue and exploration following the publication of this report. It could be a totally independent body. Or it could be attached to some other body which would itself be considered relatively independent and which would not hinder the recruitment of volunteer observers from any section of the population.

7.7 The setting up of a body specifically to recruit, train and provide observers for events (and possibly situations where no particular event was happening) does not preclude other people doing their own observing independently. We could even have observers (from one body) observing observers (from another body)! Without getting ridiculous, it could be said that the more the merrier. INNATE, for example, might want to continue providing observers for events organised by member groups independently of anything a Northern Ireland observing body might do.







7.8 The observing body would develop appropriate models of observing, exploring possibilities, refining guidelines, and seeking to learn more from the experience of observing and stewarding internationally. Even such a question as communication between observers could be problematic. In considering the question of communication, should mobile radios (walkie-talkies) be used? Would this give the wrong image of observers? Or could instant communication possibly entail instant action on mediation which could intervene at a crucial, early moment in an escalating situation? This is just one question to be considered where there might not be the same conclusion in different situations.

## Training of observers

8.1 A training process is necessary for observers. Observing is not as simple as it sounds, and the 'observer-mediator' model has further complications. Training would be a process of learning for apprentice observers where they are helped to know what they should do, and how they should do it.

8.2 There would be an up to date list kept of accredited observers. Accredited and apprentice observers should be used where possible but these could be augmented as necessary by other volunteers, from home or abroad, and by specialist or 'well known' people. The desire to have trained people should not interfere with the job that needs to be done!

8.3 Observers would be accredited on the basis of experience of observing, training sessions, availability to observe, and agreement to abide by the code of conduct.

a) Training would include on the ground observing where less experienced observers would be paired with more experienced people. Past experience prior to becoming an apprentice observer would be taken into account. Writing report(s) or giving verbal feedback on situations observed would be part of training (it would in any case be part of assessment of the situation).

b) Training sessions would consist of input, discussion, and role play. Input would include information on nonviolence and on observing in general. Role play would examine different kinds of situations observers might find themselves in, and in particular ways of coping with the mediator side of the 'observer-mediator' role (see Appendix 2).

c) 'Availability to observe' would imply a commitment to participate if free to do so, though general geographical areas could be specified (e.g. 'west of the Bann').

d) The code of conduct could be similar to that used on the Garvaghy Road, Portadown in 1990-91 (see Appendix 1).

Exact requirements for being accredited would be set as the training system emerged; new people would have apprentice status until they met the requirements for full accreditation.

8.4 Training the numbers required would actually be a considerable amount of work. Even when there was an optimum number of people trained there would still be a need for training of new observers as others dropped out. And occasional refresher trainings for ongoing observers would be necessary, part of which would simply be sharing of experiences. The use of video could be important, initially to show new observers events at which observing had taken place. In terms of the amount of training work to be done, 'training of trainers' might need to be a priority. Overall assessment of the training of observers should be undertaken by someone not involved in the training itself.

8.5 Training should be as flexible as necessary to try to encourage a representative involvement from different sections of society (Protestant/Catholic, female/male, rural/urban etc) and to try to avoid it being a barrier to people becoming observers. Training should be thought of as a passage to becoming a competent and experienced observer and be made as painless as possible.



## Conclusions

9.1 Observing has considerable potential in the Northern Ireland situation. However it is not just in Northern Ireland that it could be utilised, and it is hoped that this report may be useful in introducing the concept to other people in Europe and further afield.

9.2 How valuable observing turns out to be depends on the care, consideration and hard work which goes into building it up. It will be most valuable if it becomes something which is available to anyone, anywhere, almost as an automatic response to situations of tension and potential violence - "Let's get the observers to come".

9.3 Building up and maintaining an observer body including a large number of volunteers is a considerable task. It will initially require two or three years to set up but will continue to need considerable ongoing work and commitment.



## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1

## CODE OF CONDUCT FOR INNATE OBSERVERS,

As used on the Garvaghy Road, Portadown  
July 1990 and 1991.

It is assumed that all those acting as observers through INNATE assent to, and will adhere to, this code of conduct.

1. As observers coming through INNATE, a non-violence network, our prime responsibility is to add to the likelihood that events will take place without violence and with communication between the different people or groups involved.

1A. We hope that our very presence, as outside observers from a variety of different backgrounds, will help to avoid tempers flaring to a level where violence ensues. We feel that part of our strength is in our diversity and in the fact that we have no particular axe to grind.

2. We are observers. We are present to observe what happens and to report back to the different parties involved as appropriate so that all may learn from what happens.

2A. As individuals we are not necessarily neutral but in our observer role we will cast a critical, watchful and respectful eye on all sides and groups. We will therefore, as far as is appropriate or possible, relate and communicate to and with all sides or groups.

3. We will be clearly identifiable as observers by our white armbands.

4. If as concerned individuals we feel we need to intervene to help avoid violence then we will attempt to mediate.

5. However we state clearly that we are neither stewards nor police and do not seek to perform either of these roles.

*Code of conduct agreed at a meeting of observers in Belfast, 5th July 1990; agreed as code of conduct again, July 1991.*





## Appendix 2.

# EXPLORING OBSERVING

## Introduction

The following exercises are based on the INNATE experience of observing on the Garvaghy Road, Portadown over the last few years. Most but not all of the examples given are based on things that have happened; all should be taken as 'possibilities' rather than 'actualities'. Names have been changed slightly to emphasise the point that if these examples are being used they are at one remove from the original reality of the situation, and also to say that it is not intended to blame any particular party.

If preparing for particular events and situations, observers could role play different appropriate scenarios which might be quite different to the ones given here.

## The scene

The Dramcrow Fete and Jumping Group (DFJ) is an ecumenically-oriented group with a nonviolent philosophy and a pro-justice ideology based in a Catholic area of Putdown. They have opposed Purplepeople marches (consisting of Protestants) coming through their area as they have considered them triumphalist; they have had sit-downs on the road for several years now. But they have also been imaginative in trying to reach out to other people and have attempted to conduct their actions in as nonviolent a manner as possible. The first year they took action they held an Open Air Coffee Morning as a symbol of opposition but also of friendship and this has been continued since.

INNATE has again been invited by the Dramcrow group to provide observers. INNATE has once more chosen to adopt an 'observer-mediator' role in observing; to observe and report back as necessary, but also to intervene in a mediator type of role if there is trouble, violence or the likelihood that these may emerge before, during or after the Purplepeople parade coming through the area.

## Terms used

The following abbreviations are used for the kind of exercise appropriate to each situation;

**QD**; Quick decision making exercise; by only allowing a minute or two to decide on what action to take, this seeks to reproduce the way decisions in real life have to be made fast. In this instance, decisions could be made by a 'pair of observers' (i.e. two people adopting an observing role).

**FP**; Fighting Pairs exercise (or 'hassle line'), the simplest role play involving just two people. Roles would usually be reversed after a while.

**RP**; Role play; enactment of a scene with more roles being played and therefore more complex interaction.

Some scenes could be enacted in more than one way, e.g. first as a quick decision making exercise, then as a role play. Assessment would follow.

## Exercises

1. A girl of about 18 years old starts calling the police 'black bastards' and gives them the fingers.

QD / FP (girl, observer) / RP (girl, observer(s), DFJ member(s), bystanders).

2. Youths fly republican flags from the roof of a house just on the Purplepeople route.

QD / RP (youths, observer(s), DFJ members, bystanders).

3. A scuffle breaks out between police and the friends and parents of a local girl arrested by police for allegedly pulling a policewoman's hair.

QD / RP (girl, parents, friends, police, observer(s), DFJ member(s)).

4. A local comes to you with the allegation that police had smashed another person's camera and hit him in a nearby housing estate.

QD.

5. The police ask you in no uncertain terms that you move from a spot that you consider essential to monitor proceedings.

QD / FP (police/observer).

6. A woman Purplepeople supporter passing through is discovered by a small group of locals and risks being physically attacked.

QD / RP (Purplepeople supporter, observer(s), antagonistic locals, neutral locals)

7. A Purplepeople supporter on the edge of the area says - "What are you doing this for, these people are all republican gangsters or their sympathisers".

QD / FP (Purplepeople supporter, observer).

8. The band lined up by the Dramcrow group to entertain bystanders starts to play republican tunes as the Purplepeople parade approaches.

QD.

9. It is towards evening time. The march has gone by peacefully and most observers have gone home. However the few of you left hear that rioting has broken out at a nearby area.

QD.

10. The police aggressively push back bystanders off the road and pavement using their landrovers before the



Purplepeople march comes through.  
QD / RP (police, bystanders, observer(s), DFJ member(s)).

11. A man starts to harangue onlookers with strong, passionate language about the injustice of the situation and in effect is urging people to take violent action.  
QD / RP (man, onlookers, observer(s), DFJ member(s)).

12. Missiles in the shape of bottles, cans and stones are being thrown at the Purplepeople over the heads of the police and their landrovers. The missiles are being thrown by a small group of young men.  
QD / RP (Purplepeople, police, bystanders, missile-

throwers, DFJ, observers; rolled up newspaper as missiles!).

13. As the Purplepeople parade goes by, the police throw a cordon across the road, and a nearby walkway, which prevents many locals getting home. The police justification is that there is a danger of locals attacking Purplepeople supporters further down the road where it ceased to be a Catholic area, although this has never happened before. The anger of local people is rising. Observers are concerned that the situation may escalate further.

QD / RP (Police, locals, observers, DFJ).

### Appendix 3.

## Bibliography and resources.

There is very limited material directly on observing though if you include other relevant material, e.g. on stewarding (marshaling in US English) and crowd control, then there is more.

- "The role of observer", chapter III in Ronald Kraybill's "Repairing the breach; Ministering in community conflict", Herald Press, Pennsylvania. This includes 'Observers in a Farm Labor Dispute', 'Religious Observers at Miami Beach' and 'Training observers for Kent State University' (the last piece, by Charles Walker, was previously published separately and also appears elsewhere). 9 pages of A5.

- "Observation of an event", pages 281 - 283 in "Resource Manual for a Living revolution" by Virginia Coover, Ellen Deacon, Charles Esser and Christopher Moore (alias 'The Monster Manual, New Society Press, 1978)

- "Observing the sons and daughters of Ulster" by John Watson, Dawn Train No.10, including observing early in the present troubles and INNATE code of conduct for observers in Portadown, July 1990. 7 pages A4.

### OTHER RELEVANT MATERIAL

- "Marshals: What do they do? How do you train them? A handbook for training marshals for marches, rallies and other demonstrations", published by Friends Peace Committee, Philadelphia, early 1970's? 14 pages A4.

- "Crowd control; are there alternatives to violence? A study of methods of crowd control in the member states of the Council of Europe", published by Quaker Council for European Affairs, written by Sally Sadler, 1986. 48 pages, A4.

- "The marshal: new problems, new approaches" by Charles Walker from Charles Walker et al "Training for nonviolent Action". 8 pages, A4, published early 1970's?

- "French speaking workshop on training in general" (report in English!) from "European Gathering of trainers for nonviolent action" organised by IFOR, 1977; 3 pages A4. This analysed a Sardinian demonstration.

- "Violence and nonviolent action; dealing with conflict and maintaining nonviolence on actions" broadsheet, written by Theresa McManus in the British context, early 1980's? 4 pages A4.

- "Marshal training workshop", pages 175 -176 in "Resource Manual for a Living Revolution" by Coover, Deacon, Esser and Moore.

- "Peace marshalling: a case study in social control" by Hendrik W van der Merwe; paper presented at a working group on Conflict and Peace Studies at the Annual Conference of ASSA, Durban, 1986. 24 pages of A4 including appendices (including Charles Walker's piece on training of observers).

Those wanting to see this material, or possibly get photocopies, can do so by contacting the Nonviolent Action Training project, 16 Ravensdene Park, Belfast BT6 0DA, phone Belfast 647106.

Different organisations internationally could provide a resource for helping to develop knowledge and training. Specifically, Peace Brigades International (PBI; mentioned in paragraph 3.5) has offered that someone could visit Northern Ireland to share experiences of PBI work and training. This offer could be taken up at an appropriate time.

Obviously those who have had experiences of observing work in Northern Ireland, either currently or at previous times, would provide an important resource; some of these can be contacted through INNATE.





# INNOTE