

REF/CPA



TACKLING POVERTY
A Priority For Peace

**Submission to the
Forum for Peace
and Reconciliation**

Combat Poverty Agency
December 1994

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COMBAT
POVERTY
AGENCY

The Combat Poverty Agency is a state-sponsored body established under the Combat Poverty Agency Act (1986). Under the Act, the Agency's Board of Directors is appointed by the Minister for Social Welfare.

The Agency has a staff team of 17 core posts.

The Combat Poverty Agency:

- advises the Government on economic and social policy in relation to poverty;
- supports projects that test out and demonstrate new approaches to tackling poverty and acts as a national community development resource centre;
- develops research into the nature, causes and extent of poverty;
- promotes a greater public understanding of poverty and related issues.

Foreword

This is a time of historic opportunity. If we are to make the most of it we need to develop a radical vision for the next millennium. This should be focused on building a society in both parts of this island which is inclusive, pluralistic and fair. We must envisage a future in which there is parity of esteem between all cultures and traditions and equality of dignity for all people. We must work for a future that belongs to everyone.

If we are to achieve this vision and if we are to remove violence from both parts of the island three things are vital. First, we must tackle the scourges of poverty and unemployment. Secondly, we must create a more open, inclusive and participatory democracy. Thirdly, we must promote reconciliation and respect for diversity both within Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and between both parts of this island.

This submission to the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation analyses these issues and proposes a radical programme of measures that would contribute enormously to consolidating and developing the peace process.

Hugh Frazer
Combat Poverty Agency
December 1994

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Combat Poverty Agency unreservedly welcomes the peace process and the current cessation of violence. It believes that the peace process has created an historic opportunity to overcome divisions and to build a fairer and more inclusive society in both parts of Ireland.
- 1.2 The Agency believes that advancing the peace process requires an open and inclusive dialogue involving as many strands of opinion and experience as possible. Progress will involve both identifying areas of common interest, recognising and accepting the rich diversity of culture and aspiration that is evident on the island and identifying the underlying issues that exacerbate division and violence. The Agency thus warmly welcomes the establishment of the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation as an important contribution to this process.
- 1.3 From its contacts on the ground in Northern Ireland the Agency had been aware of the growing demand for peace at local community level for some time. A key factor in this process, and indeed in preserving some degree of stability and normality over the past twenty five years, has been the work of local community and voluntary organisations, women's groups and community relations and reconciliation projects. They have worked tirelessly to tackle issues of poverty and alienation and to promote contact and understanding between communities, often in the most difficult of circumstances. They have kept the light burning at the end of the tunnel. Thus the Agency is convinced that it is essential that their voice is fully heard in the development of the peace process. The political developments and accommodations that have occurred, and will continue to be needed, could not have happened without this work at local level. Their contribution will continue to be vital to progress.
- 1.4 It is thus the Agency's view that if the peace process is to be consolidated it must be a fully inclusive process and not purely the property of politicians, important though their role is. Thus the Agency urges that the Forum takes a proactive approach to encouraging and facilitating participation by as wide a range of groups and interests as possible, with special priority given to groups from the most marginalised and disadvantaged areas and the areas of highest conflict. Furthermore, their participation should be more than a once-off formal consultation. Ways of maximising their ongoing input should be explored such as through direct involvement on working committees of the Forum, through the Forum moving out to carry out consultations at local community level and ultimately perhaps through creating a North/South structure which would allow the voluntary and community sector to regularly discuss and put forward their ideas and experience on key issues and problems. The Agency will be happy to assist in any way it can in developing such a process ■

2. Why a Combat Poverty Agency Submission

- 2.1 The Combat Poverty Agency is a state agency established under the Combat Poverty Agency Act, 1986. It has statutory responsibility to advise and make recommendations to the Government on all aspects of economic and social planning in relation to poverty in the state. It is the national agency with responsibility for promoting and supporting local community development activity. It also undertakes research into issues of poverty and social exclusion and is involved in creating a greater public awareness of the nature and extent of poverty and what needs to be done about it.
- 2.2 Since its establishment in 1986 the Agency has been committed to fostering increased links between individuals and groups involved in addressing issues of poverty and social exclusion in both parts of the island. Successive three year Strategic Plans have contained specific commitments to developing links with organisations and policy makers concerned with poverty issues in Northern Ireland. As a result, over the past eight years the Agency has developed strong links with community and voluntary groups, academics and policy makers in Northern Ireland. In particular it has:
- developed close links with key voluntary sector agencies such as the Community Relations Council, the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action and the Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust;
 - had representation from Northern Ireland on its main committees to ensure that the Agency is kept fully aware of any relevant developments in the North;
 - engaged as consultants community development experts and researchers from Northern Ireland;
 - supported, spoken at and attended many conferences and seminars on issues of poverty and community development both in Northern Ireland and those run on a North-South basis;
 - involved academics, policy makers and community representatives in seminars run in the Republic.
- 2.3 Two of the Agency's senior staff, the Director and Research Manager, come from Northern Ireland. Prior to working for the Agency they worked there in key positions in the voluntary and statutory sectors on poverty and community relations issues.¹ They have maintained close contacts with colleagues in the North since joining the Agency thus enriching the Agency's contacts with groups and individuals in Northern Ireland.
- 2.4 In preparing this submission for the Agency the Director, Hugh Frazer, consulted with a range of people in Northern Ireland in the voluntary and community sector as well as with policy makers and researchers. Board and staff of the Agency also visited a number of voluntary and community organisations in Belfast and met with the Board and staff of the Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust.
- 2.5 For all the above reasons the Agency is particularly well placed to make a submission to the Forum, especially around issues of poverty, alienation and community relations. It very much welcomes the opportunity to do so ■

¹ The Director, Hugh Frazer, who has prepared this submission for the Agency is a former Director of the Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust and former editor of Northern Ireland's social policy / voluntary sector magazine, *Scope*, is a co-author of 'Improving Community Relations in Northern Ireland' and is a Board Member of the Community Relations Council. The Research Manager, Helen Johnston, is a former member of the Policy Planning and Research Unit in the Northern Ireland Civil Service where she specialised in poverty and community relations issues, latterly for the Central Community Relations Unit in Stormont.

3. Poverty, Social Exclusion and Violence

- 3.1 The connection between poverty, social exclusion and violence is a complex one. Clearly the high degrees of poverty and unemployment are not the cause of violence. However, it is striking how the areas in Northern Ireland with high levels of violence have a strong geographical correlation with the areas of greatest disadvantage and with working class areas. Thus it is reasonable to conclude that poverty and social exclusion are important contributory factors which exacerbate and perpetuate violence.²
- 3.2 This is scarcely surprising. Successive European Poverty programmes have shown that one of the key effects of poverty and unemployment, especially long-term unemployment, is to marginalise and exclude people from the mainstream of society. It is now widely accepted that poverty is not only about economic exclusion but it is also about social, cultural and political exclusion. It leads to feelings of isolation and powerlessness. It means that many people feel that they have been rejected by society and do not have a stake in society. They are not in control of the events and decisions that affect their day-to-day lives. This often results in feelings of alienation and disaffection. When this experience is combined with the complex cultural and political divisions in Northern Ireland then it is likely to add to the potential for violence.
- 3.3 This is especially the case for young people. In the most deprived communities there are very high levels of educational disadvantage with many young people leaving school with no educational qualifications. Their prospects of getting a job are remote. Up to one-third of 16-25 year olds are unemployed. For many young people it seems that no one is offering them any status, respect, meaningful identity or role except the paramilitaries.
- 3.4 It is important to note that the issue of poverty and social exclusion is not confined to one community. Indeed, it is striking if you compare the socio-economic profiles of the key interface areas between the two communities in Belfast how they share very similar experiences of poverty and social exclusion.³ There is a growing awareness that poverty and unemployment are now as harsh a reality in some Protestant working class communities as in Catholic areas. This has added greatly to feelings of loss, demoralisation, insecurity and alienation in these areas.⁴
- 3.5 It is also important to note that poverty is not confined to the main urban areas. For instance, the border region, much of which is rural, can be distinguished from non-border areas in both Northern Ireland and the Republic as having a greater dependent population and higher levels of overall unemployment and long-term unemployment.⁵
- 3.6 It follows from the above that in consolidating and developing the peace process it will be vital to address the issues of poverty, exclusion and alienation. People who currently feel that they are excluded from the economic, social and cultural mainstream must believe that they are directly benefiting from the peace process. They must have a genuine sense of participation and ownership if transformation is to take place. In other words a purely political/constitutional solution will not be sufficient. As long as widespread poverty and social exclusion persist they will undermine the building of a stable, pluralistic society that will have the confidence to accommodate political and cultural differences. Indeed, if the problems are not addressed there is a danger that the most alienated will either become reinvolved in paramilitary activity or become involved in drugs and crime. Thus, tackling poverty and social exclusion and empowering the most disadvantaged communities will be essential if the most disaffected are to feel that they have a stake in the peace process. It will also be important that this is recognised as a long-term process. The regeneration of the most disadvantaged areas will not be achieved overnight ■

² There are relevant discussions on these matters in A. Po'lak (ed), 'A Citizens' Inquiry - the Opsahl Report on Northern Ireland', 1993 and in M. Poole, 'The Geographical Location of Political Violence in Northern Ireland'.

³ see for instance B. Murtagh, 'Ethnic Space and the Challenge to Land Use Planning: A Study of Belfast's Peace Lines', 1994.

⁴ see Island Pamphlets No 9, 'Ulster's Protestant Working Class', 1994.

⁵ see for instance: L.O'Dowd, 'Whither the Border - Sovereignty, Democracy and Economic Integration in Ireland', 1994, B. Robson et al, 'Relative Deprivation in Northern Ireland', 1994.

4. Principles for a Fair Peace

- 4.1 In preparing this submission the Agency has drawn on some of the principles that its experience indicates are key to building a fair, just and inclusive society. The Agency suggests that these principles are equally relevant to the peace process on this island.
- 4.2 **Tackling Inequality:** Poverty and social exclusion result primarily from the fact that resources and opportunities in both Northern Ireland and the Republic are distributed very unequally. Thus, in building a fairer society a high priority must be to address the underlying structural problems so as to reduce the degree of inequality that currently exists and to promote greater social inclusion.
- 4.3 **Advancing social rights and combating discrimination:** Poverty causes much pain, undermines human dignity and results in people leading harsh, restricted and unfulfilled lives. It curtails people's ability to participate fully in society and to enjoy full effective rights of social, political and civil citizenship. Poverty and the denial of rights are often closely linked to intolerance, discrimination and racism. Thus, at the heart of the peace process must be a commitment to advancing basic rights and to combating discrimination. In the Agency's experience this is best achieved by a combination of establishing a clear legal basis to rights with a strong mechanism for monitoring and upholding these rights combined with programmes of education and awareness-raising.
- 4.4 **Promoting empowerment and participation:** Overcoming powerlessness and alienation involves the empowerment of those who are excluded. Thus those affected by poverty and disadvantage must themselves play an active part in designing and developing responses to it. Solutions should not be delivered from above or left entirely to politicians. The aim must be to seek the maximum possible participation in the process.
- 4.5 **Fostering partnership and multidimensionality:** Poverty and social exclusion are not only about having restricted access to income but also to things like employment, housing, education, health, the arts and local services. Thus, tackling the problem requires a multi-dimensional approach that treats the needs of those who are marginalised in an integrated and holistic way. To achieve this means that all government departments and agencies need to become involved in the process and that the statutory sector needs to work in partnership with the social partners and with the community and voluntary sector.
- 4.6 **Promoting Understanding and Building Consensus:** Given the seriousness of the problems of poverty and deprivation and the fundamental nature of the actions required to tackle it there is a need to develop a broad understanding of the problems and to build a national consensus that tackling them is necessary to create a society that is fair and inclusive. Thus, a priority must be to enhance public awareness and to build consensus around the need to tackle poverty.
- 4.7 In applying these principles to developing a way forward in relation to Northern Ireland it is equally important that we also apply them in the Republic. If they are valid in one part of the island they are also valid in the other ■

5. Specific Measures

5.1 Given:

- the central importance of poverty and disadvantage,
- the key role that has been played by voluntary and community groups in bridging divisions within and between communities, and
- the importance of involving the most marginalised and alienated in the peace process,

the Agency recommends that a very high priority should be given to three types of measures. These are:

- measures to tackle poverty and unemployment;
- measures to promote social integration and foster stability;
- measures to promote reconciliation both within Northern Ireland and between both parts of this island.

5.2 In making its recommendations the Agency is conscious of the limitations of models of development that have been traditionally used. In particular, the Agency is concerned that an over-concentration on infrastructural projects and on conventional investment priorities, for example by the International Fund for Ireland, has resulted in the most needy communities being largely bypassed and excluded. It is increasingly clear across Europe that this elite model of development, which depends on the benefits of economic growth trickling down to the most needy individuals and communities, does not work. In fact, it often reinforces social exclusion.

If the needs of the most disadvantaged areas are to be addressed we need a new vision, a new inclusive approach to development that puts people first and recognises the interdependence of economic and social development. Such an approach would recognise that direct intervention is required in the most disadvantaged communities and with people who have become most marginalised and alienated. Thus, the priority must be to invest in people first and to put capital expenditure second. The middle-class and those who are already affluent must not

be allowed to carve up the peace dividend for their own benefit. If people who are excluded and disadvantaged do not feel that they are benefiting directly from the peace process and being given the opportunity to regenerate their own communities then their support for the peace process is likely to be limited. They must be the main beneficiaries of the peace dividend and be made stakeholders in the development process.

Details of each of the three types of measures recommended by the Agency are outlined below. The Agency would be happy to expand further on all or any of the proposals it makes.

5.3 Measures to Tackle Poverty

- i) **Introduction of Poverty Proofing Mechanisms:** All government departments and agencies in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland should be required to make targeting poverty and disadvantage a strategic objective. They should be required to regularly assess and report on their success in doing so.

Targeting Social Need is already one of the three public expenditure priorities of the Government in Northern Ireland. This is welcome. However, the initiative needs to be strengthened. This could be done in three ways. First, by ensuring that the resources becoming available as a result of the peace process are used to target social need. Secondly, by strengthening the powers and resources of the Central Community Relations Unit in monitoring the initiative. Thirdly, by requiring a more transparent and formalised process of reporting by government departments and agencies and by establishing clearer mechanisms for integration between departments. Fourthly, by giving a greater voice to voluntary and community groups in the development of policies around implementing the Targeting Social Need priority.

In the Republic, the Government should reinforce existing commitments to addressing issues of poverty and unemployment by declaring that tackling poverty is one of its core strategic objectives. Under the Strategic Management Initiative it should require all departments and agencies to make tackling

poverty a core objective. It should put in place arrangements for regularly assessing and reporting on their progress in implementing this objective. Responsibility for monitoring and reporting to Government on overall progress on this initiative should be in the Department of the Taoiseach with advice and assistance from the Combat Poverty Agency.

ii) **Integrated Local Development Targeted on the Most Disadvantaged Communities:** To address the problems of urban and rural communities with very high concentrations of poverty and unemployment resources should be targeted on these areas with a view to improving the quality of life, assisting people back into the labour market and overcoming their sense of isolation and exclusion from the political, cultural, social and economic mainstream of society. This process of regeneration should be coordinated by local partnerships which bring together the public sector, the private sector and local community and voluntary groups to develop an integrated and coordinated strategy. It should be recognised as a long-term process requiring investment and commitment over the next decade at least.

iii) **Programmes to Tackle Unemployment and Promote Employment:** Developing a healthy and vibrant economy is the single long-term most important response to the very high levels of unemployment. However, it is essential to recognise that the scale of jobs that are required will not be achieved in the short- to medium-term. Furthermore, if left to an unregulated market those in most need and most disadvantaged, such as the long-term unemployed, are least likely to access the jobs that are available. It is vital for the success of the peace process that these people are given a stake in society. Thus a continuum of measures such as education measures, training opportunities, advice and counselling services, unemployment centres, active job placement initiatives, employment subsidies and community and cooperative enterprise programmes need to be put in place in order to create a clear progression route to assist as many people as possible back into mainstream employment. In addition, for those for whom this objective is not immediately possible, there needs to be put in place a sufficient volume of

direct employment opportunities. These jobs could contribute to improving the quality of life through the regeneration and reintegration of the most marginalised individuals and communities. In particular no young person under the age of 21 should be involuntarily unemployed - all should be guaranteed either education, training, work experience or employment.

iv) **Supporting Families and Tackling Child Poverty:** Fundamental to building a stable and fair society is ensuring that all children have an opportunity to develop to their full potential. At present the very high levels of child poverty coupled with educational disadvantage result in many young people growing up to a life of poverty and unemployment.⁶ This cycle must be broken. In the first instance the importance of a stable and secure family environment in young people's development must be recognised. Families need to be supported through measures such as adequate child income support, child care, and home-school liaison officers. Educational disadvantage needs to be addressed from an early age through intensive programmes of early childhood education and an investment in primary level education in the most disadvantaged schools. Special programmes should be developed which are targeted at young people who have either left school early or are at risk of doing so. It is recommended that in the most disadvantaged communities task forces consisting of the main statutory education and youth service providers, schools, youth organisations, probation service, community groups and young people be established. They should be charged with developing a coordinated strategy to meet the needs of all young people, particularly those most at risk.⁷

⁶ The recent report 'Focus on Children - Blueprint for Action', which was a joint initiative of voluntary organisations concerned with children's welfare in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, highlighted key issues and made a range of recommendations.

⁷ See for instance 'A New Deal for Children and Young People in North and West Belfast', 1994.

v) **Support for Marginalised Groups:** Area-based initiatives to tackle poverty and disadvantage sometimes do not reach those who are most isolated and at risk. Thus, special programmes to reach the very long-term unemployed, lone parents, Travellers, the homeless, people with disabilities and prisoners and their families need to be developed.

5.4 Measures to Promote Social Integration and Foster Stability

The active involvement and integration of people who are marginalised and alienated from society is an essential element in building a fair and stable society and a more participatory form of democracy. Thus every effort should be made to foster community involvement in the development process. The aim should be bottom-up, not top-down approaches. This will involve:

i) **Promoting Community Development:** There should be a significant increase in support for local community and voluntary action. Community development by empowering and involving local people in tackling the issues and problems that face them is an essential component in an anti-poverty strategy and a key building block in developing a more inclusive and participatory democratic system.

Increased support for community development activity should include:

- enhancing the number of and level of core funding to local community development resource centres;
- encouragement of community development initiatives in areas lacking a community development tradition such as many loyalist working class communities;
- increasing resources available to local projects in areas of disadvantage through local development partnerships (see 5.3 ii above);
- support for local leadership training and capacity-building programmes;

- the development of effective regional and national support networks for community development through increased support to organisations like the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action, the Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust, the Rural Action Network, the Holywell Trust, the Ulster People's College and the Workers Educational Association in the North and to the Combat Poverty Agency, regional support agencies and community-based networks in the South.

ii) Supporting Local Women's Groups

One of the most significant and hopeful developments in disadvantaged urban and rural communities in both Northern Ireland and the Republic over the last decade has been the emergence of local women's groups. They have played a key role both in the personal development of many individuals and in the development of local communities. In many cases they have also fostered contacts and exchanges across divided communities. In recent years increased funding has been made available to such groups from a number of sources in the Republic (e.g. the Department of Social Welfare, the Combat Poverty Agency, Vocational Education Committees, the Allen Lane Foundation, the NOW programme). The potential of such groups now needs to be further recognised. Existing funding needs to be consolidated and similar levels of mainline funding need to be made available in Northern Ireland to complement the resources that have been made available by independent sources such as the Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust.

iii) Supporting Community Arts and Local Culture

A succession of pilot projects in both parts of the island have shown the importance of the arts and culture in the process of development. Community arts projects can reach people who are isolated in local communities, assist individuals to gain self-confidence and skill, allow communities to express their sense of identity and value and create a dynamic for change and development. Cultural traditions work can be an important way of helping people to recognise and celebrate cultural diversity. There should thus be a significant investment in the arts and culture in disadvantaged communities. It could

help to bring about a cultural renaissance which could be a bridgehead for further development in other spheres.

- iv) **Supporting Victims of Violence:** There will be a special need over the next period to support and work with the relatives and the victims of violence. They are liable to be particularly isolated, confused and distressed and may be in danger of being forgotten or ignored. A lot of people and indeed whole communities have not resolved or talked out the traumas they have gone through.

There are many dimensions to this problem. For instance there are the victims of inter-community and sectarian violence and of intra-community violence. There are the relatives of people who have been shot dead by paramilitaries or by the security forces. There are the random victims and relatives of those killed by explosions. There are the victims of punishment shootings or the families of informers. There are the people who have been intimidated out of the areas they grew up in and have been exiled from their childhood friends and memories. There are the victims of both paramilitary and state harassment.

There is the need to recognise the scale of the problem and the reality that, for many, difficulties and trauma are likely to persist for some considerable time. The problem should be dealt with both strategically and comprehensively. Account should be taken of the fact that there are different constituencies of victims depending on the perpetrators of violence. There should be a mix of community-based support services and professional assistance available to individuals. Local communities also need to be supported and assisted to move from denial to admitting and talking about all the hurts in their community. The process must not be one of denying or just forgiving and forgetting. Rather there must be a process of remembering hurts and bereavement, coming to terms with them and moving positively towards change. ...

- v) **Reintegration of Offenders:** There are currently many politically-motivated prisoners in Northern Ireland, in the Republic and in Great Britain. Over time, as they are released, their successful

reintegration into the community in economic and social terms will be vital to securing the peace process. They will face particular problems in reintegrating and will have particular needs including education, training and access to employment. There will be a need for help in reestablishing personal and family relationships. They and the communities they come from will need to be assisted to come to terms with the end of conflict and to heal the divisions that exist.

- vi) **Extending Democracy:** In general the middle classes are able to participate in and influence democratic society in a number of ways which are often problematic for people who are disadvantaged to access. They are able to express their active citizenship through the market place. They are more often actively involved in political parties. Many are in key decision-making positions or, through their various contacts and networks, they can readily access those who are. What is urgently needed now is to broaden democratic structures so that those who are living on the margins of society are brought fully into the democratic process.

If efforts to build a more inclusive and participatory society are to be successful the emphasis on participation and involvement at a local level needs to be complemented with developments at a number of other levels. In the words of one community worker in West Belfast "politics is too important to be left to the politicians".⁸ Thus mechanisms need to be established to enable the new voices emerging in local community groups and women's groups to contribute to discussions on policy. In this regard the establishment of a body similar to the National Economic and Social Forum in the Republic of Ireland may also be appropriate in Northern Ireland.⁹

⁸ May Blood, community worker with the Blackmountain Action Group speaking at a University of Ulster/Community Relations Council conference 'Beyond Violence - the role of the community and voluntary sectors in the rebuilding process' in November 1994.

⁹ The NESF includes representatives from the 'third strand' such as from groups representing the unemployed, the disadvantaged, people with disabilities and women, alongside the traditional social partners and politicians.

There is also a need to encourage and assist many of the people who have stood aside from party politics in recent years to get actively involved. Political discussions would be greatly enriched if more local community activists became involved in the various political parties and in the process of dialogue about the way forward. Thus support, training and resources should be made available to develop skills in political dialogue.

It will also be very important to encourage young people to become constructively involved in the democratic process. Ultimately if we aspire to a more just, peaceful and democratic society it is important that schools help young people to learn that they too can participate and make a contribution. Hence the encouragement of civic, social and political education within the curriculum will be important.¹⁰

5.5 Measures to Promote Reconciliation

- i) **Enhancement of Cultural Traditions and Community Relations Work:** Community relations and cultural traditions work are essential elements in overcoming the problems of a deeply divided society. The end goal of such work is not necessarily integration but rather the acceptance of plurality and diversity both between and within communities and building harmonious relations between people. It involves not just a recognition of the divisions between the two main communities but also the differences within the main traditions. It is concerned with challenging the public to recognise the need for compromise and reconciliation if progress is to be made by politicians. It is thus essential underpinning of the development of effective democratic structures. The need for such work and for healing will go on for a generation. There should thus be a significant investment in community relations/reconciliation work.

In this regard there is strong evidence that community relations initiatives are most likely to be effective where there is a strong community development base.¹¹ Thus part of this programme should be to support community development activity. There should also be ongoing and increased support for cultural projects which enhance mutual understanding and the acceptance of diversity and

parity of esteem, for work with groups and institutions in society (i.e. the churches, sporting and cultural organisations, local authorities, politicians, schools and other education institutions, the trade unions and employers) and for efforts to challenge sectarianism and oppose intimidation. There is also a need for additional support to existing peace and reconciliation organisations, such as the Community Relations Council, Corrymeela, Peace and Reconciliation Group, Harmony Community Trust, amongst others, to consolidate and strengthen their lead role.¹²

- ii) **Promoting a Rights Approach:** An important element in the peace process will be ensuring that everyone living in Northern Ireland feel that their basic human rights, including civil, legal and social rights are secured. Promoting dialogue around issues of rights and pressing for a Bill of Rights in Northern Ireland and Equal Status Legislation in the Republic could be important ways of ensuring that everyone can feel that their status as citizens is secure.
- iii) **Special Initiatives for Interface Areas and to Counter Housing Segregation:** There is a need to start work urgently on addressing the economic, social and inter-community problems of interface areas and to work towards dismantling the 'peace' walls. In addition there is a need to challenge the role of planning in addressing issues of housing segregation.¹³ This will also involve breaking down the isolation of particular communities (especially peripheral public housing estates) by investing in public transport into the city centre and to where jobs are. There should be efforts to expand the affluent centre areas, especially in Belfast, to disadvantaged areas through environmentally-friendly corridors. It will take a long time to reverse the trend towards segregation both in terms of class and religion. It is important that this work starts as soon as possible.¹⁴
- iv) **Community Involvement in Justice and Policing Issues:** In severely disadvantaged and alienated communities issues of justice and policing are always complex and sensitive matters. In the particular context of Northern Ireland this is even more true.¹⁵ Indeed they are likely to be some of the most crucial

issues over the next few years. Thus inclusive dialogue and discussion will be particularly important on this issue.

It is vital that an approach is adopted which emphasises the principles of participation and partnership. As should be the case in the development of all key public services the participation of local communities in developing and monitoring effective arrangements should be a key concern. This will mean developing local consultative processes which involve local community organisations as well as local elected representatives. It will also be important that responsibility for the prevention of crime is not left to the police alone. Community-based models of policing should be explored which recognise that involving the police in conjunction with local communities and with the statutory and voluntary bodies who service such communities is important.

It will of course be equally important that whatever form of policing emerges in the future that the service is representative of the different traditions and social classes, is clearly seen to be accountable and is pluralist in its approach to the different traditions.

v) **Fostering North-South Dialogue and Exchange:** An important part of the peace process will be fostering dialogue and exchange of learning and experience on common issues of poverty and social exclusion between individuals and groups in the North and South. Such dialogue and exchange has been increasing in recent years. Given the crucial importance of the issues involved this should now be formalised as much as possible. The following initiatives are suggested:

- the creation of a formal North-South Institute for Social Integration to undertake, promote and fund dialogue, research and exchange; to act as a think-tank or source of creative thinking and new ideas and to be an advisory body to both governments on problems of poverty and disadvantage. For example, it might address issues such as the problems of disadvantaged young people, the needs of the long-term unemployed, child and family poverty, the

development of effective models of local development, the collection of comparative statistics on the distribution of income and wealth and so on;

- the establishment of a North-South Centre for Community Development which would provide a focal point for community organisations and local women's groups for the exchange of information, experience and knowledge and for the development of training programmes on issues of common concern. The Centre could also act as a catalyst for constructive dialogue and creative thinking on issues of community development and building a more inclusive, participatory and just society;
- the creation of a Border Development Agency to which the national governments would devolve considerable powers and resources for developing an integrated socio-economic development strategy for these most peripheral and marginal areas. Such a body should have strong local representation, especially from local voluntary and community groups;

10 The Combat Poverty Agency is developing educational work with schools around issues of poverty and social justice in the belief that the education system should provide a vision of society which is committed to the values of social equity and justice. In doing this it has been developing modules which encourage young people in developing an interest in being involved and taking action on issues which affect students and/or the wider community. Similar initiatives should be developed in schools in Northern Ireland.

11 see for instance the recent 'Policy Evaluation of the Northern Ireland District Council Community Relations Programme' by the Centre for the Study of Conflict at the University of Ulster.

12 see for instance H. Frazer and M. Fitzduff, 'Improving Community Relations in Northern Ireland' and the various reports and publications of the Community Relations Council.

13 see B. Murtagh, 'Land Use Planning and Community Relations', 1994

14 In this regard it is important to note that at present while over 70% of both communities in Northern Ireland want mixed living territory and integrated schooling, only 7% live in areas that are culturally mixed and only 2% are catered for by integrated schooling.

15 see the 'Social Attitudes Survey in Northern Ireland, 1992-93', which shows that low income groups are the least satisfied with the RUC.

- the replication in the Republic of key Cultural and Educational Programmes from Northern Ireland aimed at promoting an understanding and acceptance of cultural diversity - for instance the work of the Cultural Traditions Group and the schools programme on Education for Mutual Understanding¹⁶;
- the promotion of dialogue and discussion on a North-South basis on the issue of human rights through the establishment of a Cross-Border Human Rights Body.
- the development of an extensive North-South Exchange Programme which would give increased support and encouragement to organisations active in this field like Cooperation Ireland, the Irish Association and Glenree and which would encourage increased interchange between experts and professionals, for example by enabling civil service secondments between Northern Ireland and the Republic and by appointing at least one representative from Northern Ireland on to the board of each State Agency in the Republic of Ireland ■

16 The education for mutual understanding (EMU) theme is now compulsory right across the curriculum at both primary and post-primary levels in Northern Ireland. The aim of EMU is to enable pupils to learn to respect and value themselves and others; to appreciate the interdependence of people within society; to know what is shared as well as what is different about their cultural traditions and to appreciate how conflict may be handled in non-violent ways. There is a strong argument that in the interests of pluralism and democracy such a theme should be introduced into the curriculum in the Republic.

6. Conclusion

6.1 The strong correlation between urban and rural areas with a high incidence of violence and areas with high levels of poverty and unemployment must not be ignored in developing the peace process. People who are excluded from the economic and social mainstream of society, who experience serious inequalities and who feel marginalised and powerless often become alienated from society. Thus, if we are to build a peaceful and prosperous future for all the people on this island we must not only work to bridge and reconcile political divisions. We must also address the fundamental social and economic divisions in our society, both North and South. We must empower the excluded and marginalised to become part of the mainstream, to become stakeholders in society. In other words we must put in place, as a high priority, a series of policies, programmes and structures that will build an inclusive, fair and cohesive society in both Northern Ireland and the Republic ■

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