

BILL OF RIGHTS FORUM

OUTREACH

'UNIONIST COMMUNITIES'

FINAL REPORT

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JANUARY 2008

Bill of Rights Forum

Outreach Final Report

BACKGROUND

Under Strand 3 of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement (The Agreement) all “parties affirmed their commitment to the mutual respect, the civil rights and the religious liberties of everyone in the community”¹. The Agreement also provided for the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC) which was established under Section 68 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. On 1 March 1999 the NIHRC came into existence and “is required by statute to advise the Secretary of State on the scope for defining, in a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland to be enacted by Westminster legislations, rights supplementary to those in the European Convention on Human Rights”². In the St Andrew’s Agreement the British Government “agreed to take forward a number of measures to build confidence in both communities and to pursue a shared future”³. Under Annex B “a forum on a Bill of Rights”⁴ was established in December 2006,

BILL OF RIGHTS FORUM

The Bill of Rights Forum consists of 29 representative reflecting the political, economic, and community structures of Northern Ireland. It is chaired by Chris Sidoti, an Australian human rights expert and is tasked with producing “agreed recommendations to inform the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission’s advice to Government...”⁵ by 31 March 2008. The Forum’s policy for consultation included an outreach strategy which aims “to reach those sectors of the community that were unable to engage adequately in the previous processes relating to a Bill of Rights”⁶.

1. Good Friday Agreement Strand 3 Rights, Safeguards and Equality of Opportunity, (1), page 16
2. Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission www.nihrc.org
3. St Andrew’s Agreement Section 8, page 3. www.nio.gov.uk/st_andrews_agreement.pdf
4. St Andrew’s Agreement Annex B, page 12. www.nio.gov.uk/st_andrews_agreement.pdf
5. OUTREACH WORKERS’ ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, NI Bill of Rights Forum, November 2007
6. Ibid.

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The Outreach Programme aims were to

- ✓ Raise awareness of the Bill of the Rights;
- ✓ Inform about the Forum's work;
- ✓ Consult and report on groups' views;
- ✓ Build support for the Forum's proposals.

Four part time outreach workers were engaged to work within specific sectors. I was appointed to consult with the unionist community. In order to encourage discussion and address the varying levels of knowledge regarding the Bill of Rights I prepared a presentation with some background material. I also compiled a handout that included references to websites for those participants who wished to obtain further information on both the NI Bill of Rights and International Human Rights Conventions.

PROJECT COMMENCES

Work began officially on 14 November 2007 but the role of the outreach workers was not formalised and agreed by the Forum until week commencing 3 December 2007. Despite the initial confusion I began by making contact with unionist Political Representatives. I have contacts in the unionist community but I felt it was crucial to meet with all the unionist political parties prior to meeting with community and other organisations.

The objectives of the meetings were to:-

- Ø Advise the politicians of my role and remit;
- Ø Obtain their views and practical support;
- Ø Seek introduction to appropriate groups or organisations.

The meetings took place as follows:-

Ulster Unionist Party - 28th November 2007

Present: - Paula Bradshaw
Stephen Nicholl

Democratic Unionist Party - 3rd December 2007

Present: - Nelson McCausland
Peter Weir

Progressive Unionist Party 10 December 2007

Present: - Dawn Purvis

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These meetings were very beneficial in broadening my existing contact base thus ensuring that I consulted with groups and organisations that had been excluded from previous exercises. After these initial meetings with the parties I started to contact groups, by letter, email and telephone. Although December is a difficult time to arrange meetings as Groups had lots of festive and personal commitments, many individuals went out of their way to attend meetings.

During December 2008 I also attended two Forum meetings that were very useful in clarifying my role, the Forums objectives and required outcomes.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITY

The following organisations have been contacted since November 2007: -

Community Organisations

<u>Name</u>	<u>Status</u>
CC&DG	Urban TSN
COSTA	Rural and remote Older People Women
Families beyond conflict	Urban Older People TSN Women
Carrick Mediation Centre	Rural and remote Young People TSN
Donegall Pass	Urban Older People TSN Women
TADA	Rural and remote TSN Women
Markethill	Rural and remote TSN Women
GVRT	Urban TSN Women
BSRC	Urban
After care service	Urban and rural Security Forces Women
HINI	Urban and rural Young people
East Belfast	Urban TSN Women
Altnaveigh House	Rural and remote Older People Women

Loyal Orders

<u>Name</u>	<u>Status</u>
Orange Order	Urban and rural All generations
Apprentice boys	Urban All generations
Armagh Band Forum/REACT	Rural and remote All generations TSN Women

Religious Group

<u>Name</u>	<u>Status</u>
Evangelical Alliance	Urban and rural Older People Women

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Prisoners Representatives

<u>Name</u>	<u>Status</u>
EPIC	Urban and rural TSN Males
PEC	Urban TSN Males

Political Parties

<u>Name</u>	<u>Party</u>	<u>Constituency</u>
Paula Bradshaw	Ulster Unionist Party	
Nelson McCausland MLA	Democratic Unionist Party	North Belfast
Stephen Nicholl	Ulster Unionist Party	
Dawn Purvis MLA	Progressive Unionist Party	East Belfast
Peter Weir MLA	Democratic Unionist Party	North Down
Jim Allister MEP	Traditional Unionist Voice	Northern Ireland

Of the Groups/Organisations contacted meetings were held with: -

Community Organisations

	<u>Date of meeting(s)</u>
CC&DG	07 December 2007
COSTA	10 December 2007
Families beyond conflict	10 December 2007
TADA	12 December 2007
Carrick Mediation Centre	13 December 2007
Donegall Pass	17 December 2007
Markethill	05 March 2008

Loyal Orders

	<u>Date of meeting(s)</u>
Orange Order* 2007	07 December 2007 & 13 December
Armagh Band Forum/REACT	18 December 2007

Religious Group

	<u>Date of meeting</u>
Evangelical Alliance	09 January 2008

Prisoners Representatives

	<u>Date of meeting</u>
EPIC	04 January 2008

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Political Parties	<u>Date of meeting(s)</u>
Democratic Unionist Party	03 December 2008
Progressive Unionist Party	10 December 2008
Ulster Unionist Party	28 November 2008
Traditional Unionist Voice	TBA

*Documentary evidence presented by Orange Order attached to the report of January 2008

Summary of key discussion points: -

- § There was suspicion and reluctance from groups within the unionist community to engage in discussions on the Bill of Rights;
- § Most groups acknowledged that they knew little or nothing about the process prior to the outreach project;
- § These suspicions and concerns governed most of the discussions and consequently limited the discussion on specific aspects of any Bill;
- § Groups reflected the suspicions of their political leadership around the question of a separate Bill of rights for Northern Ireland as it might threaten or weaken the union with Britain;
- § The political concerns regarding the Legislature being held to account by a judiciary that may not be neutral and/or hold a different political agenda was strongly reflected by the participants;
- § A Bill of Rights is distrusted as groups hold genuine concerns that it will restrict or curtail the expression of unionist culture particularly regarding parades and marches;
- § Concerns that rights to express religious beliefs regarding controversial issues such as homosexuality and abortion may be curtailed;
- § Some groups felt that the Bill of Rights was a 'greening' of Northern Ireland;
- § Some groups considered the Bill of Rights as necessary to deal with the circumstances of Northern Ireland's past and to build new relationships for the future;

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- § Others viewed the Bill of Rights as a balance against the legislature given the unique set up of the assembly and the need to ensure accountability;
- § Major concerns exist amongst the unionist community regarding current economic conditions, particularly the availability of reasonable employment. Health, education, especially attainment levels in working class areas, rural transport and housing matters were all issues that required immediate attention. As discussions developed groups began to consider how a Bill of Rights could establish, confirm or protect minimum provisions in these areas.
- § It was felt that a Bill of Rights should have some meaning regarding improvements to day and day life.

Bill of Rights Forum – Outreach Report (Summary continued)

- § Particular concern was expressed over planning that allowed new private sector builds, at the expense of good affordable public housing, which was destroying community cohesion. Local people cannot afford mortgages or private landlords rent and were therefore forced to move out of the District.
- § Subsequently, members of the new Communities were occupying these houses and this was creating local tensions. While Community Activists acknowledge that these migrants were, in most cases, being exploited this did not diminish the resentment regarding the breakdown of their communities;
- § There was a view from a number of groups that any Bill of Rights should not interfere with market forces and economic decision making;
- § It must be recognised that Rights also mean responsibilities and must reflect and respect the needs of others;
- § Groups felt that any Bill must deal with the past; it must address the societal and political context that led to the conflict;
- § Overall there was no opposition in principle to a Bill of Rights for the United Kingdom; it was the introduction of a separate Bill for NI that generated suspicions and misgivings.

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Group: - Evangelical Alliance

Contact: - Karin Jardine

Date: - 09 January 2008

Numbers in attendance: - 14

The Evangelical Alliance was founded in 1846 and is the largest body serving evangelical Christians in the UK, and has a membership including denominations, churches, organisations and individuals. The Alliance speaks on behalf of its members and represents evangelical concerns to Government, the National Assemblies, the media and key decision-makers.

Key Discussion Points:-

- The Group stressed that the Human Rights Bill should not become a sticking plaster to heal past wounds as this would undermine its value and relevance;
- Members of the group had some concerns around freedom of speech issues when preaching the work of god, that a member(s) of the gay, lesbian or transsexual community could take a Church/Minister to court if they preached against homosexuality;
- Similar concerns were expressed over similar sensitive issues including abortion;
- Evangelicals held concerns that the Bible is the word of God and no law is superior to the laws described in the Bible;
- Group discussed the purpose of a Bill of Rights and whether this was generally known within their congregations;
- Group advocated that an Bill should not be prescriptive, it should be aspirational;
- Rights also mean responsibilities and must reflect and respect the needs of others;
- The Bill must deal with past; it must address the societal and political context that led to the conflict;
- British constitution not strong enough, Bill of Rights necessary for NI because of conflict and the violence;
- Bill of Rights to hold the political parties to account practically because the present set up of the Assembly means each Department is carved up by party and run with that party's ideology;
- To build relationships across the sectarian divide;
- Rights issues around stop and search, individual rights and society safety should be addressed and balanced;

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- Right to protect property must be included;
- Issues within education regarding the expectations of children and parents should be addressed and in particular where teachers are subject to litigation the Bill should include a clause on compulsory mediation prior to a formal legal action;
- Debate to be broadened to include the UK Bill of Rights;
- Extension of process to include wide ranging public debate when the recommendations are with the Commission;
- Employers' rights to know of applicant's criminal record should be reviewed;
- Some participants held the view that a Bill of Rights should just focus on the issues arising from the conflict;
- Rights for children to be brought up by both natural parents to be included;
- This society needs Bill of Rights to promote a healthy democracy that can hold its legislature to account;
- Bill needs to balance the needs of the majority and minority;
- Also the relationship between individual and collective rights;
- Protection of minority rights i.e. new communities including religious rights (Muslim for example)
- Respect strong religious tradition of NI

Follow Up

None

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Group: - Families Beyond Conflict

Contact: - Sharon Bailey Development Officer

Date: -10th December 2007

Numbers in attendance: - 8

Meeting held with Families Beyond Conflict Management Committee. This group was formed to counteract the effects of the internal paramilitary feud in the Shankill district of Belfast. They are a self help, support and advice community group. They also advocate second chance learning and personal development for everyone in the local community.

Key Discussion Points:-

- It was agreed that there was a lack of knowledge of the issues and what exactly a Bill of Rights would mean to their community;
- Group felt all communities could agree about fundamental/positive rights;
- Group had concerns about issues within the Community regarding cultural rights: Felt that maybe too much money was going to be spent on the Irish language;
- Their community had major concerns about new housing being bought by property developers and no proper public housing initiatives;
- New properties not going to people from the community as purchase prices out of reach for couples, even those who both work, consequently long term young couples forced out of the community;
- The group also raised the exploitation of migrant workers paying over the market value for rents which causes resentment in the community and may lead to future conflict.

Follow Up

Sharon Bailey agreed to advise other groups of the consultation exercise and give them my contact details.

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Group: - Community Convention and Development Company

Contact: - Lee Reynolds, Director (CCDC)

Date: - 7th December 2007

Numbers in attendance: - 1

The Community Convention was established from an ad-hoc group of politicians and community leaders (known as The Think Tank) who agreed that a programme to 'Transform Loyalist Communities' should be developed. The Convention's aims and objectives are set by the community which reflects its local ownership. The Convention aims to establish a new sense of community confidence, unity of purpose and resolve to work together to effectively address unionist community problems and to encourage transformation.

Key Discussion Points:-

- The CCDC group will be making a submission to the Forum;
- Mr Reynolds agreed that they will advertise my consultative role work throughout the unionist Communities;
- He said he would try to arrange a meeting with CCDC Board;
- Stated that there was still a lack of knowledge of the subject within the unionist Communities;
- unionist Communities have lot of suspicions that the rights issue was politicised by the Republican and Nationalist Communities who would be the main beneficiaries of a Bill of Rights.

Follow Up

Lee Reynolds to arrange meeting with Board of Community Convention and Development Company

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Group: - Orange Order

Contact: - Drew Nelson Grand Secretary

Date: - 7th December 2007

Numbers in attendance: - 3

The Loyal Orange Institution was founded after the Battle of the Diamond on 21 September 1795. 'The Institution is composed of Protestants, united and resolved to the utmost of their power to support and defend the rightful Sovereign, the Protestant Religion, the Laws of the Realm, and the Succession to the Throne in the House of Windsor, BEING PROTESTANT, and united further for the defence of their own Persons and Properties, and the maintenance of the Public Peace'⁷.

Key Discussion Points:-

- The group want their rights to be protected by the police and judiciary as they felt that Orange Order parades were subjected to more scrutiny than Republican parades (documentary evidence on paramilitary regalia) Reference: - European Convention on Human Rights. Section 8
- Objected to the law that prevents anyone who does not belong to a political party standing for election as a Unionist, this term should not be the property of recognised political parties. They see Unionism as cultural and part of their community and not the property of traditional political parties.
- The requirement of "declarable membership" is pitched strongly against the unionist community i.e. Loyal Orders, Masons, while the nationalist communities do not have to comply i.e. Republican Old Comrades associations (Felons) GAA, which is supposedly a sporting organisation but is also a cultural and political organisation, their supporters do not have to declare membership;
- Documentary evidence was presented regarding the levels of attacks against Orange Halls, since the 1990's. Police seem unable to protect the community, and this is particularly pertinent in rural areas where the Orange Halls are a focal point for community activities.

⁷ Education Committee, What is the Orange Order, The Grand Lodge of Ireland, July 1997

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Follow Up

Drew Nelson to arrange further meeting(s) with members of the Loyal Orders.

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Group: - Orange Order (Second Meeting)

Contact: - Drew Nelson Grand Secretary

Date: - 13th December 2007

Numbers in attendance: - 5

The Loyal Orange Institution was founded after the Battle of the Diamond on 21 September 1795. 'The Institution is composed of Protestants, united and resolved to the utmost of their power to support and defend the rightful Sovereign, the Protestant Religion, the Laws of the Realm, and the Succession to the Throne in the House of Windsor, BEING PROTESTANT, and united further for the defence of their own Persons and Properties, and the maintenance of the Public Peace'⁸.

Key Discussion Points:-

- This group also felt that their culture was not being protected as it should be;
- They also felt that to express or to articulate membership of the Loyal Orders was seen as negative and could lead to exclusion from education, jobs, promotion in the workplace, participation in sport or community activity;
- There is reluctance amongst the membership to mention their Orange Order background;
- Even though the Orange Order had undertaken a tremendous amount of work to reach out, engage and to change attitudes it is still viewed very negatively in most areas;
- First example, 12 July celebrations are one of the biggest cultural events in Europe but receive little mention from the tourist industry, the group felt if they were treated equally it would be promoted;
- Second example, a primary school teacher can not promote orange culture as it would not receive support from the school or the local education Board;
- Third example, third level education students are reluctant to declare their membership of the Orange Order for fear of ridicule, discrimination or violence;
- Queens University especially seen as an institution where Orange and unionist culture is considered as very negative particularly since all

⁸ Education Committee, What is the Orange Order, The Grand Lodge of Ireland, July 1997

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the symbols that represented unionist history and culture were systematically stripped away;

- It was felt that if someone wore a GAA top that was OK but that wearing an NI top would be frowned on;

Bill of Rights Forum – Outreach Report (2nd Meeting continued)

- In all areas they felt that there was a “greening of NI”;
- The removal of all symbols pertaining to royalty within the Court Service, Police Stations and the latest incident within the Fire Service (removal of plaque dedicated to those killed in the Enniskillen bomb) were representative of an erosion of unionist identity;
- No signs at the border when crossing into NI
- It was felt that that a Bill of Rights passed at Westminster would be sufficient to protect general rights i.e. voting, freedom of assembly, civil and religious liberty.

Social and economic rights

- There are problems with unionist working class children regarding education and low levels of achievement;
- Levels of deprivation in unionist Communities;
- Communities need investment in education, manufacturing jobs to build confidence,
- There are issues with provision of public housing and a safety net, regardless of market regulation, is required;
- Social and economic rights had to be aspirational only implemented when they can be afforded;
- Economic issues must be dealt with by the Legislature; a Bill of Rights should not supersede the democratic process;
- There should be no interference with the market forces;
- The Assembly is a diverse process, there to build acceptance of each other and an idea of citizenship.

Follow up

Documentary evidence supplied by Loyal Orders was lodged with January 2008 Report

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Group: - EPIC

Contact: - Tom Roberts – Coordinator

Date: - 04 January 2008

Numbers in attendance: - 1

EPIC is a group which represents and reflects unionist ex prisoners concerns. Its aims to assist individuals integrate back into society. EPIC provides support, advice and information on social and economic issues.

Key Discussion Points:-

- Mr Roberts advised that ex prisoners are experiencing disadvantage in employment in both the public and private sectors;
- Groups who have ex prisoners as Board Members may be excluded from claiming compensation for criminal damage to the property purely because of their participation;
- Families disadvantaged by name and association;
- Exclusion of ex prisoners from consideration for adoption of children should be addressed in any Bill of Rights;
- Even though ex prisoners are elected to the Assembly, restrictions on ex prisoners in many other aspects of life still exist and need redress as some of these affect the individuals' basic human rights.

Follow Up

None

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Group: - REACT/Armagh Bands Forum

Contact: - Marion Jamison Development Officer

Date: - 18 December 2007

Numbers in attendance: - 6

REACT (Reconciliation Education and Community Training) and the Armagh Bands Forum are based in mid Ulster. Their remit is to provide education courses for the general community with priority given to members of bands. They also provide a safe space for dialogue and exploration of unionist culture and future.

Key Discussion Points:-

- Why is a Bill of Rights needed in NI, we should get it though Westminster;
- We do not need special treatment;
- Could undermine the political process by holding the legislature to account;
- We have the Assembly and freedom of speech so were would it fit in;
- Could create neutral town centres which would restrict marches and band parades;
- A Bill of Rights could be a disadvantage to the unionist community;
- Cuts in school transport in rural areas;
- unionist communities most disadvantaged by these cuts;
- There are rural urban differences in health care, education etc;
- Equality for all should mean just that with respect for tradition;
- Integrated schools are getting too much of advantage;
- We need more knowledge of the political system; still do not understand how it works;
- Any systems should be easily understood;
- Should be about equality for all.

Follow Up

Marion Jemison to advise other groups of consultation exercise and to provide contact details

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Group: - Markethill Consultative Forum

Contact: - Andrea Clarke, Community Worker

Date: - 05 March 2008

Numbers in attendance: - 5

This forum was called together by Andrea Clarke to specifically provide for consultation on the Bill of Rights for unionist organisations in the South Armagh area. The Groups represented were The Four Winds Group, Markethill Community Association, the Diamond Community Association and Armagh Confederation of Community Groups. The common aims of these groups are to explore and address issues of local concern and interest.

Key Discussion Points:-

- Some concerns about the need for a Bill of Rights for NI, when we can have the ECHR through Westminster, then that should be enough;
- Group felt that there can be too much legislation and that it is not easy to understand or use;
- If a Bill of Rights is to be produced it should be easily understood and not couched in legalistic terms;
- Strong view that it should cover right to protect property;
- Group wondered if Bill would be able to resolve disputes over parades and marches;
- Concerns were raised about the displaying of emblems particularly in the Council as there seems to be more issues arising regularly;
- The group raised issues about social and economic rights particularly equal treatment within health care regardless of age, life style choices or medical history.

Follow Up

None

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Group: - TADA Rural Support Network

Contact: - Carmel Creaney Support Worker

Date: - 12 December 2007

Numbers in attendance: - 6

TADA's aims and objectives are to promote community development and to provide a forum for groups in geographical areas to network with each other. This Group had little or no knowledge of the Bill of Rights so the main focus of discussion was on the background and processes.

Key Discussion Points:-

- The group was suspicious that this was just another initiative that would mean very little to local communities;
- Group felt the Bill of Rights would only be another thing for politicians to squabble over;
- Group were unsure what it would mean to the individual and they did not think it would make much difference.

Follow Up

Carmel Creaney to attempt to arrange discussions with other groups and provide some more information to interested individuals

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Group: - Carrick Mediation Centre

Contact: - Stephen Bloomer, Director

Date: - 13 December 2007

Numbers in attendance: - 15

Key Discussion Points:-

Carrick Mediation Centre aims to address the needs of all the community by tackling issues that would hinder groups' vision for a just equitable and peaceful society where citizens are secure, free and treated with dignity. It trains community activists in mediation skills so that they can resolve local disputes quickly and effectively.

Key Discussion Points:-

- This group held a strong sense of suspicious that the Bill of Rights was a republican agenda;
- They automatically felt that consequently it was something that they should resist;
- There were major concerns that their culture and identity would be under threat;
- They felt that any Bill of Rights should respect their right to display their Britishness through marches, parades and the display of flags and emblems;
- The group felt that whatever was approved for the UK parliament was sufficient and that a separate Bill was not needed for NI.

Follow Up

None

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Group: - COSTA

Contact: - Karin Eyben

Date: - 10 December 2007

Numbers in attendance: - 18

COSTA is the Rural Support Network for community Groups and individuals in the South Tyrone Area. Their aim is to empower the communities of South Tyrone and surrounding areas through networking and the provision of relevant development and support services. I was invited to attend this meeting by Karin Eyben (Rural Community Network) who had already arranged it to discuss the question of the Bill of Rights. Community Dialogue and I made presentations and participated in the general discussion.

Key Discussion Points:-

- Bill of Rights role in the legacy of the conflict;
- Special emphasis on marches and parades;
- Priorities were healthcare, housing and education;
- Major discussion took place about how social and economic rights were going to be paid for.

Follow Up

Organising group to produce formal report of proceedings

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Group: - Donegall Pass Community Association

Contact: - Elaine Mansfield Community Worker

Date: - 17 December 2007

Numbers in attendance: - 1

Donegall Pass Community Association was established to represent the views, ideas and aspirations of the residents of the district. It makes representations on their behalf to government and relevant agencies. It offers advice on economic matters, education courses and provides a space for discussion and development.

I meet with Elaine on 17 December 2007 to outline the objectives of the Bill of Rights Outreach project. She agreed to arrange a meeting with members of the Donegall Pass Community Association. A date of 24 January 2008 was agreed but due to Elaine's illness this meeting was postponed. I did speak with another representative, in Elaine's absence but the meeting was not reconvened.

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Conclusions

Most groups and individuals I met expressed deep suspicion and apprehension regarding the need for a separate Bill of Rights for NI. They are not convinced by the argument of special circumstances for NI. Unfortunately the Bill of Rights is still seen in most unionist areas as a republican agenda and therefore to be treated very cautiously. They find it very hard to assess the benefits to them of a shared future or understand how a Bill of Rights will address the legacy of the conflict. Furthermore, and very importantly the unionist community felt excluded from the debate to date. To the unionist a common standard of achievement, protection of the rights of everyone, equally and the simple basis of human rights protection already exists under current legislation. Any extension should reflect the Westminster situation and that any special NI Bill will at best erode, at worse eliminate their culture and traditions.

A genuine fear exists amongst the unionist community that a Bill of Rights for NI will not be neutral or beneficial to everyone. Those involved in marches and parades have grave concerns that a Bill will result in town centres being declared neutral spaces and will therefore further prevent or limit celebration of their culture. It is viewed as another law to curtail the expression of the unionist way of life. The groups points to the removal of emblems from Government Buildings, Council Chambers, Courts and Police Stations while they remain in the remainder of the United Kingdom. They identify these symbols with their Britishness and see their removal as, not creating neutrality but, undermining their rights and identity.

This outreach project merely scratched the surface of the concerns and fears of the unionist community. A number of organisations refused to participate in the process through trepidation and lack of understanding. Some groups expresses disappointment at the speed of the process which they felt was rushed and some suggested deliberately so. Therefore, not providing sufficient time for the groups to consider the issues and respond from a more informed basis. If a Bill of Rights is to receive support and be considered as a positive development by the unionist community then a great deal more awareness raising and confidence building is required at local level. It is essential that the follow on consultation is seen to be thorough and provides opportunity for many organisations to participate. Otherwise the unionist community will continue to view a Bill of Rights as an attack on their culture and not a means of protection for all.

I would like to thank all the participants and organisers for giving of their time and ideas

Joe Law