

**The National Multicultural Institute
Annual National Conference,
Washington.
Thursday, 29th May, 2003.**

Panel Discussion on

**‘NATIONAL SECURITY, MULTICULTURALISM
AND PEACEBUILDING’.**

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**Q1.
HOW DO WE BALANCE BOTH NATIONAL SECURITY AND CIVIL
LIBERTIES?**

- Northern Ireland has a population of 1.675 million. During the thirty years of our Troubles, 3,500 people died through violence and tens of thousands suffered various forms of injury. To put this figure in proportion, the equivalent number of deaths in the United States would be 68,000.

302 police officers died during the Troubles in Northern Ireland. An equivalent in the United States would be 15,414 police officers. Thousands of people were injured. Hundreds of millions of pounds' worth of damage was caused by bombs and other forms of violence.

There were times when the State's capacity to tolerate violence or the fear of violence was stretched to breaking point and huge political pressure fell upon the police and army to solve the security problem.

There were many occasions between 1969 and 1998 when the security forces killed people in controversial circumstances.

- In 1972, for instance, the British Army shot dead 14 unarmed civil rights protestors in Derry on a day which became known as Bloody Sunday.

The British Government of the day commissioned a phoney inquiry which exonerated the soldiers. However, a new inquiry is currently being held, at an estimated cost of £170 million. So far it has uncovered evidence that elements within the security forces believed that the protest in Derry on 29th January 1972, presented an important opportunity to teach a lesson to republican campaigners. The army's robust response to the civil rights march was meant to serve the national interest by suppressing dissent. Instead the Bloody Sunday massacre inspired hundreds of young Catholics to join the IRA in the belief that violence was now necessary to remove the British from Ireland.

- There were many other incidents where the security forces engaged in unethical activities in pursuit of national security. For example, for a period in the 1980's there was an apparent shoot to kill policy being followed by elements within the police force and the military: a number of individuals were shot dead in extra-judicial killings rather than being arrested and have the right to due process before the courts.
- And in recent times, allegations are emerging of how the State used highly placed double agents within terrorist organisations and turned a blind eye to murders involving those agents so that, in the service of national security, the agents' cover would not be blown. There is also a growing body of evidence to show that the State used its agents to supply terrorists with information used to kill people whom the security services viewed as a problem. Obviously, all these activities were carried on at the expense of civil liberties. With hindsight it is now clear that apart from the immorality of such activities, the overall effect has been to corrode the integrity of the State itself and to blur the difference between the values of a democratic society and the values of those engaged in violence and terrorism against it.

Of course it is the case that a country under threat must develop a security response and it follows that the higher the threat the higher the security response must be. But such measures do have a cost. There is a price to be paid, not just one borne by individual citizens whose rights are extinguished but also in terms of the health and integrity of the State and its institutions.

- A number of years ago, two Spanish policemen implicated their bosses in 'dirty war' operations against the Basque separatist organisation, ETA. The investigation which followed unearthed a path up through the State security system which ultimately led in 1998 to two former government ministers being sentenced to 10 years in prison.
- At this stage in the Northern Ireland peace process there are weekly revelations about the murkier parts of the British security system's covert war on terrorism over the past 30 years.

Some critics would argue that the dirty war was prosecuted enthusiastically by a system which, at its heart, would stop at nothing to protect a status quo. Others will suggest that a dirty war emerged as the least worst option; that it saved more lives than it cost; that it was prosecuted by people with a very sincere commitment to national security at a time when our society was being torn apart by terrorism.

Whatever the motivation, honourable or otherwise, one of the consequences being revealed at this time in N. Ireland is a lessening of respect for the integrity of government, for law and order and for the concept of accountable democracy.

- The warning lights, therefore, are flashing for the United States – a country which has a long established covert security infrastructure stretching across the globe and whose operations have all too often involved gross violations of human rights in other countries, now with a vengeance turns the attention of that security infrastructure to the issue of homeland security at a time of unprecedented fear and trepidation among its citizens –

there is a growing danger that for some people in authority, there will be no balance to be struck between national security and civil liberties: national security will win hands down every time and, if that happens, there will be further damage done to the character of democracy in the United States and to its integrity in the world.

Q2.

HOW DO CHANGING NATIONAL PRIORITIES HINDER OR AID IN THE ADAPTATION PROCESS OF OUR GROWING IMMIGRANT POPULATION?

- As I reflect on this question I become conscious of being a citizen of the European Union, a part of the world where there is a broad consensus among governments that the State should adequately provide for the social and economic welfare of its people. The United Kingdom, in particular, has one of the most comprehensive National Health services in the world.

As I visit the United States and meet community activists I notice that one of the reasons why their work is so heroic is that the State provides so little by way of support to its citizens' health and educational needs.

Even under Bill Clinton, a Democratic president, welfare provision was reduced. The Bush administration came in committed to lower taxes. Added to that comes the cost of war in a time of recession. Cuts in social and educational expenditure across the U.S. have been dramatic.

Immigrants struggling to make a new life in this country under such circumstances can only experience greater hardship as the gap between rich and poor steadily increases.

- In recent days our press have been carrying stories about U.S. government plans to introduce stringent new security measures for all visitors, including finger-printing on arrival. The concept of 'homeland security' is set to grow from an abstract idea to an ever-present reality.

Of course there is a danger that American civic culture will develop a xenophobic strain as fear of the stranger takes hold. For immigrant communities there will be a growing need to prove one's American credentials; one's loyalty.

- I recently spoke with the New York police commissioner, Ray Kelly, about the effect of September 11 on the character of policing in the city. He told me that two new Assistant Commissioners had joined the NYPD: one from the Secret Service and one from the military. Although a counter-terrorist strategy was now in place, Mr. Kelly did not believe that it would interfere with the nature of community-oriented policing in New York.

However, our own experience in Northern Ireland has been that as the State geared up to fight a long war with terrorism, the police became defined by counter-terrorism, both in the public mind and in their own.

They became estranged from these sections of society from where they felt most under threat. In our case that meant that the relationship between the Catholic community and the police became greatly strained. There is a danger of a similar police estrangement with Muslim communities in the U.S., with a consequent negative impact on community relations.

- Last year I spoke to some State Department analysts about the enduring significance of black-white racism in this country. Their response was that the issue of 'racism' had been overtaken by the issue of 'diversity'. In other words, the cutting edge had moved away from black-white relations and on to the multiplicity of ethnic minorities now living in the United States. The hispanic population, in particular, has emerged as larger and more impactful than the African American.

However, I take the view that the extent to which the old quarrel between black and white is addressed will determine this country's capacity to deal with the issue of ethnic diversity. Around the race issue there is so much unfinished business that it undermines the moral authority of institutions who would wish to divert their energies to the wider question of accommodating diversity. Re-appraisal of the black-white issue can enable important learning points to emerge which can inform new approaches to diversity. Failure to address black-white racism will perpetuate social and economic injustice at the heart of American society.

Q3.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION EFFORTS AROUND THE WORLD?

- Deep societal conflict is cross-generational. Within each tradition, each generation inherits values, principles and an agenda that shape their sense of integrity.
- Conflict cannot move positively forward unless people feel that their integrity is being upheld or accommodated in the change process.
- Societal Conflict moves forward in stages, like nature moving through the seasons. The stages (or seasons) could be described as:

Conflict Maintenance → Conflict Transformation → Conflict Resolution → Maintaining Consensus.

- Societal Conflict is systemic. It is more than inter-personal. It involves at least seven key dimensions of change:
 1. Personal Change
 2. Inter-personal Change
 3. Systemic Change
 4. Inter-group Change
 5. Structural Change
 6. Societal Change
 7. Inter-societal Change
- Conflict Transformation must be organic rather than hierarchical. (J.P. Lederach)
- There is a need to promote change among the comfortably divided not just those on the sharp edges of society.
- Conflict cannot be transformed without Reconciliation.
- Reconciliation is a process rather than an event. Events merely punctuate the process.
- Reconciliation involves the suspension of disgust with the enemy/opponent/rival and the strengthening of good intentions.
- Reconciliation involves a range of challenges, such as,
 - addressing personal ‘alienation’.
 - managing enmity.
 - engaging estrangement.
 - living with mystery.
- There’s a difference between ‘state-craft’ and ‘peacebuilding’.
- At its more advanced stages, peacebuilding and reconciliation involves those hitherto considered as extremist.
- Nonviolence consists of serving truth, with compassion.