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“You just went out and talked to them.”

An Interview with Maurice Hayes (1927-2017) on the Work of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Commission (1969-1975)

Abstract: This article reflects on the practice of reusing past interviews in order to improve our knowledge of historical events. It focuses on the period of the early years of the Troubles in Northern Ireland and draws on Martin J. McCleery’s recent work on internment (2015) to stress the importance of personal testimonies in reassessing the historical impact of micro-events and/or local events on people’s lives. By revisiting an interview with Maurice Hayes conducted in 2004, the author investigates how the interviewee gives meaning to his personal experience of violence by using the scientific framework provided by specialists in oral history. The interview also serves to uncover some aspects of the ground-breaking work that had been implemented by the Northern Ireland Community Relations Commission (1969-1975).

Keywords: history, Northern Ireland, interview, testimonies, Troubles.

Résumé: L'article propose une réflexion sur la pratique de la réutilisation d'entretiens effectués par le passé dans le but de développer la connaissance historique. Il se concentre sur la période du début du conflit des Troubles en Irlande du Nord et s'inspire des travaux menés récemment par Martin J. McCleery (2015) sur la mesure de l'internement administratif. L'auteure souligne l'importance du témoignage qui permet de réévaluer l'impact sur la vie des gens d'épisodes qui ont pu se produire à l'échelle locale et/ou de la micro-histoire. En réanalysant un entretien mené avec Maurice Hayes en 2004, l'auteure s'intéresse à la manière dont il donne sens à son expérience personnelle de la violence en ayant recours au cadre scientifique développé par les spécialistes de l'histoire orale. L'entretien permet également de mettre en lumière certains aspects méconnus du travail extrêmement novateur mené par la Northern Ireland Community Relations Commission entre 1969 et 1975.

Mots clés: histoire, Irlande du Nord, entretien, témoignage, Troubles.

Who was Maurice Hayes?

Maurice Hayes was a key figure in the recent history of Northern Ireland in many ways. He was the first Catholic to be appointed Ombudsman for Northern Ireland and was also a member of the Patten Commission in 1998, which eventually contributed to the creation of the Police Service of Northern Ireland. As a leading Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) figure and a former high-ranking Stormont

civil servant, he was a well-respected, extremely resourceful person. He was also a prominent figure in the Republic of Ireland, where he was nominated to Seanad Éireann by Taoiseach Bertie Ahern in 1997 and re-nominated in 2002.

He was also involved in the first statutory policy promoting community relations in Northern Ireland¹ which was put in place during a highly troubled period, in 1969, by the Stormont administration under the influence of Harold Wilson's Labour government². No such policy had ever been put in place since the creation of the regional government in 1921. In reality there was little enthusiasm in Stormont for this new policy of community relations, as indicated by the fact that six different ministers were appointed in five years (1969-1974)³. Besides, the position was unfilled for two months in September and October 1971, during the crisis triggered by the introduction of internment in August⁴.

The community relations policy was spearheaded by two statutory bodies between 1969 and 1975: the Community Relations (CR) Ministry and Commission (NICRC). The latter was in charge of a novel approach which sought to involve the community at large by supporting "local voluntary organisations"⁵. Its two main leaders, chairman Maurice Hayes and director Hywel Griffiths, developed a series of audacious and ground-breaking policies in the fields of reconciliation and community development (CD)⁶.

In 2004, when I was researching the history of the NICRC as part of my doctoral thesis, I met Maurice Hayes in Leinster House, Dublin. He had a very clear, insightful recollection of the work of the Commission in the short period in which he had chaired it (1969-1972). Hayes' memories and reflections were key to understanding what was taking place at the time. Additional sources were also

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1. In Northern Ireland, the 1969 community relations policies sought to improve relations between Catholics and Protestants.
 2. The full historical analysis of the policy is available in: Joana Etchart, *Les premières politiques de réconciliation en Irlande du Nord (1969-1998): l'histoire d'un renoncement*, Brussels, P. Lang, 2017.
 3. Robert Simpson (Stormont – Unionist): December 1969-March 1971; David W. Bleakley (Stormont – Northern Ireland Labour Party): March 1971-September 1971; Vacant: September-October 1971; W. B. McIvor (Stormont – Unionist): October 1971-March 1972; William van Straubenzee (Westminster Northern Ireland Office – Conservative): March-April 1972; Lord Windlesham (Westminster Northern Ireland Office – Conservative): April 1972-November 1973; Ivan Cooper (Stormont Assembly – Social Democratic and Labour Party): November 1973-May 1974.
 4. On the meaning and consequences of internment, see: Martin J. McCleery, *Operation Demetrius and Its Aftermath: A New History of the Use of Internment without Trial in Northern Ireland, 1971-75*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2015.
 5. This had been introduced by C. J. Bateman, *Joint Working Party on Community Relations, Final Report*, in *Cabinet Meeting 2nd October 1969*, Belfast, Offices of the Cabinet, 1969, CAB/4/1478/11, p. 1-2: "But it ought to encourage the growth of local voluntary organisations – only in this way can it get down to the 'grass roots' and involve local religious and political leaders".
 6. Additional explanations on the history and meanings of community development in Northern Ireland may be found in: Joana Etchart, "Community Development: Origins and Hybridization in Northern Ireland", *Revue Miroirs*, no. 2, 2015, p. 139-152.

used⁷, but interviewing him – and Griffiths⁸ – was deemed necessary to confirm some historical aspects concerning the inception of the policy.

But what is the relevance of listening to that interview again more than fifteen years later and, besides, of publishing it?

On the practice of revisiting interviews

Joanna Bornat reflected in 2010⁹ on the possibility of revisiting interviews, which in itself is a contested practice in the field of oral history¹⁰. Can they simply be considered as historical traces that may be explored and re-explored by others? While fine-combing through past testimonies may have pitfalls – especially as regards the necessity of having an excellent knowledge of the historical, social, political and economic context of the interview to be able to revisit it, we will argue that reusing interviews may also be central to better understanding the past.

Concerning the history of the early years of the Troubles, which is the historical episode that we are concerned with, it must be noted that oral history interviews have become quite readily available since the 1990s¹¹. They could be studied to

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7. Maurice Hayes, *Minority Verdict: Experiences of a Catholic Public Servant*, Belfast, Blackstaff Press, 1995; Maurice Hayes, *Community Relations and the Role of the Community Relations Commission in Northern Ireland*, London, Runnymede Trust, 1972; Maurice Hayes, *Conflict Research*, Coleraine, Centre for the Study of Conflict, University of Ulster, 1990; Maurice Hayes, *Why Can't They Be Like Us*, Belfast, John Malone Memorial Committee, 1984; Maurice Hayes, *Community Relations – A Historical Perspective*, Belfast, Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights, 1987; Maurice Hayes, *Northern Ireland Administration in Retrospect: Challenge 90 Seminar*, Belfast, unpublished, 1990; Maurice Hayes, “Neither Orange March nor Irish Jig: Finding Compromise in Northern Ireland”, in *The Long Road to Peace in Northern Ireland. Peace Lectures from the Institute of Irish Studies at Liverpool University*, Marianne Elliott (ed.), Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2002, p. 96-108.
 8. Interview with Hywel Griffiths, Cardiff, 8 April 2005.
 9. Joanna Bornat, “Remembering and Reworking Emotions. The Reanalysis of Emotions in an Interview”, *Oral History*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2010, p. 43-52.
 10. I should wish to thank my colleague Simona Tobia, who is a specialist in oral history, for providing information and insight into these issues.
 11. For example, the following four major projects could be cited: INCORE (International Conflict Research Institute), University of Ulster, “Accounts of the Conflict. A Digital Archive of Personal Accounts of the Conflict in and about Northern Ireland”; Queen Mary University of London, in association with Dundalk Institute of Technology and Trinity College Dublin, “The Peace Process: Layers of Meaning – Layers of Meaning Online Directory”; Falls Community Council, “Dúchas Oral History Archive”; Northern Visions, “Our Generation – The Northern Irish Archive”. Written transcripts of interviews related to the early years of the Troubles and various forms of community activism may also be found in a series of pamphlets published by Michael Hall in 2005-2006: Farset Community Think Tanks Project, *Grassroots Leadership. 1, Recollections by May Blood and Joe Camplisson*, Michael Hall (ed.), Newtownabbey, Island Publications, 2005; Farset Community Think Tanks Project, *Grassroots Leadership. 2, Recollections by Fr. Des Wilson and Tommy Gorman*, Michael Hall (ed.), Newtownabbey, Island Publications, 2005; Farset Community Think Tanks Project, *Grassroots Leadership. 3, Recollections by Jim McCorry and Jackie Hewitt*, Michael Hall (ed.), Newtownabbey, Island Publications, 2005; Farset

better apprehend the importance of historical events which are considered as critical moments in many interviews, such as the 1969 rioting and the episode of internment (1971-1975).

Precisely, McCleery¹² recently proposed to reappraise the historical episode of internment by looking at the impact of that decision on local communities outside Belfast. He argued that the consequences of internment were far-reaching because of the extent and brutality¹³ of the arrests, which contributed to generalising the conflict outside the urban areas of Derry and Belfast. McCleery also links internment with the prisoners' protest movements in the 1979-1982 period: according to him, a *de facto* special status was attributed to the internees¹⁴ which was then extended to republican prisoners in July 1972. However, this status was repealed in 1975 and a major crisis ensued in prisons. It also led to a surge of contest movements such as the rent and rates strikes by tenants in public housing¹⁵.

McCleery's study forcefully brings back to the fore the violent context of the late 1960s and early 1970s and the harsh realities of people's lives. His work emphasises two central aspects of the conflict that were also present in the interviews I had made back in the 2000s. Firstly, the pervasive, invasive, brutal and profoundly sad reality of violence is made apparent when McCleery mentions a series of critical episodes that took place locally: for example when the Army took over the premises of a primary school in Lurgan and then raided the Kilwillkie estate, which triggered rioting¹⁶, or, when local unionist councillor John Taylor was shot six times in Armagh by the Official IRA¹⁷. McCleery's work rightly gives a central position to the local reality of the conflict. This raises the question of the impact of that violence on people which, in turn, highlights the importance of "slowing the pace" of the historical analysis by paying attention to such micro-events and their impact.

Secondly, McCleery's work also highlights the fact that the early 1970s were extraordinary times as regards the variety and dynamism of protest movements. For example, in July 1972 in Dungannon people were involved in local civil rights movements, local rent and rates strikes, anti-internment groups, and so

Community Think Tanks Project, *Grassroots Leadership. 4, Recollections by Jackie Redpath and Eilish Reilly*, Michael Hall (ed.), Newtownabbey, Island Publications, 2005; Farset Community Think Tanks Project, *Grassroots Leadership. 5, Recollections by Louis West and Anne Gallagher*, Michael Hall (ed.), Newtownabbey, Island Publications, 2005; Farset Community Think Tanks Project, *Grassroots Leadership. 6, Recollections by June Campion and Billy Hutchinson*, Michael Hall (ed.), Newtownabbey, Island Publications, 2005; Farset Community Think Tanks Project, *Grassroots Leadership. 7, Recollections by Michael Hall*, Newtownabbey, Island Publications, 2006. More generally, on the nascent field of oral history in Ireland in the 1990s, see: G. Beiner, A. Bryson, "Listening to the Past and Talking to Each Other: Problems and Possibilities Facing Oral History in Ireland", *Irish Economic and Social History*, no. 30, 2003, p. 71-78.

12. Martin J. McCleery, *Operation Demetrius and Its Aftermath...*
13. *Ibid.*, p. 56-57.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 78-79.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 59-60.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 155.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 137.

on. Others were joining local brigades of paramilitary groups. Concomitantly, unionists organised rallies in support of internment and to demand more security measures¹⁸. People were “getting involved” in many different types of responses. Interviews, and more generally interviews conducted as part of oral history projects, are an interesting source of information to better understand how people have interpreted their “involvement” in one form of activism or another.

As I reflected upon this, I came to realise that the interviews I had conducted for my previous research work could help me investigate these two aspects. I listened to them afresh, paying particular attention to the notion of one’s involvement and how it was constructed by the interviewee: what is the underlying *logical construction* that is built by the interviewee in order to explain how and when they “got involved”? What events marked him/her? And how is the link established between oneself and the historical event?

For instance, in the following extract taken from Maurice Hayes’ interview, he testified to the fact that the impact of internment had been far-reaching:

Maurice Hayes: The first [CR] Minister was actually quite a nice man called Dr. Simpson. It was his first Ministry. Then, next thing, they had an interesting guy just before McIvor, David Bleakley. And Bleakley you see was a trade unionist, he was a Labour Party member and he was brought in by Faulkner to run this. Faulkner was opening up things in Cabinet and he made the man Minister of Community Relations. This guy on a Friday he was applying to me for grants and on a Monday he was the Minister. And he was very centralising. He was also sort of an evangelical. He was a really nice man, good man. But he put it all on a very preachy side, like preaching people. If we all pray together and if we all learn to be together.

Whereas we were much more inclined to recognise the reality on the ground and how difficult it was to work with people where they were, you know. So he did six months there and of course the big disaster in the middle of that which I think virtually subverted the whole thing was internment because how can you talk about community relations when the government is putting its citizens in jail without trial? I was under a lot of pressure at that time to resign¹⁹.

Joana Etchart: Why?

Maurice Hayes: From nationalist politicians. They wanted everybody to withdraw from public life. But we [members of the NICRC] turned ourselves almost overnight into an emergency relief organisation, you know: help people to find their relatives, help to deal with people who are in the middle of, you know, mass movements. And that changed the nature of our work I think for a while now.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 129.

19. Many testimonies from the period highlight the chaos that reigned following the introduction of internment in August 1971. See for instance those collected by Michael Hall in the series of pamphlets entitled *Grassroots Leadership*.

Hayes described internment as a turning point: “the big disaster in the middle of that” which “virtually subverted the whole thing”. Internment radically changed the work that they were doing in the Commission. This is corroborated by the description he gave in his autobiography:

The Commission staff struggled into work, each with his or her own horror story. It was clear that the city was in turmoil. Two meetings were rapidly convened, one of the field workers under Hywel Griffiths and one of the Commission, or such members as could get there. The field workers reported confusion, distress and fear on all sides. Local people were erecting improvised barricades to seal off entry to Catholic areas, which were becoming increasingly isolated and cut off. Public transport had broken down, and there was increasingly a breakdown in services. Catholic anger was directed towards the police and the army, who had swooped in fairly heavy-handed snatch squads in the early hours. There was the ominous rattling of hundreds of bin-lids as communities sent out a call to arms and for defenders to man the ramparts. Buses were being hijacked on all sides, cars were dragged from burned-out showrooms, builders’ skips, rubble, anything was being used to make barriers. Milk vans were being commandeered and the bottles used to make petrol bombs, pavements were being ripped up for missiles and to build barricades. Smoke, fire, disorder, noise and impending disaster were everywhere. In many Protestant districts too, similar if smaller barricades were being thrown up, out of fear of attack – unnecessary and unfounded, but none the less real for that – and at the ends of streets and at the entrance to housing estates groups of men with sticks who might be concerned citizens, or vigilantes, or worse, were standing an uneasy guard²⁰.

This description conveys the feelings of fear and anger in the community. In the interview, Hayes’ testimony sheds light on the deep antagonism that existed between “the government”, that is to say the Stormont administration, and “the citizens”. In reality, Hayes refers to nationalist citizens, as the majority of people arrested were alleged republicans²¹. This feeling of ostracism was prevalent up until the abolition of Stormont in 1972. Besides, Hayes intentionally referred to nationalists as “citizens” in order to attribute a universal feature to them and to assert their full citizenship.

In his ground-breaking 1981 work on the importance of considering oral testimonies in historical research, Alessandro Portelli²² insisted on the notion of “meaning”: how does the interviewee give meaning to the facts or to his experience? He argued that the personal interpretation may be indicative of a wider, collective construction of meaning. In the case of Maurice Hayes, he described the chaos induced by the implementation of internment and linked it with Stormont’s prejudice against nationalists. But, in theory, the NICRC was also acting on behalf of the

20. Maurice Hayes, *Minority Verdict...*, p. 133-134.

21. According to McCleery, between 1971 and 1975, following the introduction of internment, 2,060 suspected republicans were arrested and 109 suspected loyalists (Martin J. McCleery, *Operation Demetrius and Its Aftermath...*, p. 87).

22. Alessandro Portelli, “The Peculiarities of Oral History”, *History Workshop*, vol. 12, no. 1, Autumn 1981, p. 96-107.

same government who, under the pressure of Harold Wilson's Labour government, had created the novel CR institutions in 1969. Hayes' position was awkward as the body he was chairing – the Commission – was under the authority of Stormont. This was criticised by “nationalist politicians”, who wanted “everybody to withdraw from public life” and to boycott the Stormont administration.

But, as shown in this extract, he refused to do so. Interestingly, at that precise moment of the interview, Maurice Hayes' voice paced down and he paused. Then he explained he had a firm belief that their role was to be “on the ground” and that they had “to work with people where they were”. He clarified his decision to remain in the Commission. It is, in itself, indicative of the intensity of the context induced by the introduction of internment.

When Maurice Hayes established a connection between the events and his position (“I was under a lot of pressure at that time to resign”), he was sharing what Albie Sachs – in the context of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission – has described as the “experiential truth”²³, as opposed to what is considered as the historical or logical truth. Sachs has sought to enhance the importance and features of experiential truth, which allows the person to talk about the historical events but also about how they link the event to themselves²⁴. Specialists in oral history have highlighted the value of such testimonies, which should not be merely discarded as subjective statements. It is precisely because they are personal, and sometimes emotional, that they are interesting.

Interviews and historical knowledge

Besides, interviews may also contribute to developing historical knowledge by bringing to the fore some elements that had not been recorded in any written document. When interviewing Hayes, I was interested in learning about the choices that were made by the leaders of the Commission, of which only traces could be found in historical documents. Why did the NICRC develop a community development (CD) approach? Why did they employ officers (community development officers – CDOs) who worked with “the community” in some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in Northern Ireland? More intriguingly, *how* did they work in places like Sandy Row, Lower Shankill and Lower Falls in Belfast, at a time when social tensions were at their height and when state institutions were radically repudiated in some of these places? Hayes' and Griffiths' recollections on

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23. Albie Sachs, “The South African Truth Commission”, *Montana Law Review*, vol. 63, no. 2, 2002, p. 35.
24. Dany Rondeau, “Vérité et narration dans les processus de justice post-conflit: le cas de la Commission de vérité et réconciliation du Canada sur les pensionnats indiens”, in *Les pratiques de vérité et de réconciliation dans les sociétés émergent de situations violentes et conflictuelles*, Joana Etchart, Franck Miroux (eds.), Bayonne, Institut francophone pour la justice et la démocratie, 2020, p. 32-54.

the choices they made proved crucial to understanding the type of reconciliation work they developed.

One of the most audacious choices made by the Commission was to employ CDOs who worked in and with the communities. Simple as this idea may sound, it nonetheless seemed to be one of the most complicated aspects to implement. As Hayes said in the interview, the “social” dimension of their work, such as dealing with housing issues for example, provided “a reason for being on the ground”. Ultimately, the objective was to promote non-violent means of action or, as he put it: “a civic culture of discussion and of organisation”. The means, however, were quite bold given that the missions of the CDOs remained extremely flexible. Hayes specifically said that it meant “going into the community and *not with any particular specification*” (my emphasis). Hence, in a true bottom-up fashion, the policy was defined by / from the needs of the community. When asked how they worked with the communities, Hayes replied: “You just went out and talked to them”. This was emblematic not only of his personality, but also of his global approach of dealing with conflicts by networking and liaising.

His testimony also sheds light on the various forms of resistance to the type of work they promoted. Elected representatives and civil servants in Northern Ireland Office departments were rather suspicious of their work. Eventually, Hayes resigned as chairman of the Commission in 1972 as he believed that his position was no longer tenable following the violent episode of Bloody Sunday. Yet, the approach he developed together with Griffiths and the CDOs remains extraordinarily modern, notably regarding their insistence on liaison work and the acknowledgment of the risks involved.

There are more lessons to be learnt from the experiences and reflections of people like Maurice Hayes²⁵. As he passed away in December 2017, it seemed even more relevant to bring his testimony to the fore.

Interview with Maurice Hayes

Joana Etchart: How did you get involved in the NICRC?

Maurice Hayes: I was just asked to chair the Commission, being a town clerk in local government [in Downpatrick, Co. Down]. I was the secretary of the town council. I think I wasn’t intended to be the chairman, I think they asked somebody else to be the chairman, but he turned it down. Anyway, we started off with virtually no staff, with just an empty office and a desk and the question of how to make it up. I think the people who drafted the legislation²⁶ were very influenced by what was

25. Historians, practitioners and anyone interested in Maurice Hayes’ work and reflections can now visit the Maurice Hayes Archive held at the James Hardiman Library, National University of Ireland (Galway). The archive was launched in March 2019.

26. The 1968 Race Relations Act served as a model for the Northern Ireland legislation, as shown by the similarities between the two pieces of legislation. Also, two high-ranking members of

happening in the civil rights movement in America in the late 1960s: you would have a riot and then the mayor would call a meeting with the churches and the businessmen and the really moderate exponents of different constituencies. And I think that's what we were expected to do. We were expected to bring people together, the assumption being that if they got to know each other better all these misconceptions would fall away and misconceptions falling away then they would all be at peace with each other. They quite ignored actually the deep structural faults in the society and the way in which unfairness was there. It also, and this was a difficulty for us as a state-sponsored body, it rather defined the state out of the problem. They said "Well here are these Catholics, these Protestants and they're fighting with each other, if they would only behave themselves. And we are up here the government. Everything will be all right". And what they didn't realise was the extent to which the government was itself, and certainly from the point of view of Catholics, seen to be a main driver of the problem in that the people who were not employing Catholics were public bodies, people who weren't giving houses to Catholics were agents of the state and the police who were generally anti-Catholic as well were agents of the state. So that was part of the thing.

So I think we had to find a focus for ourselves, we had to find some ground to stand on, which would enable us actually yes to bring people together, but to do something, and which would enable us to have a credibility particularly to these people here, the Catholics. To tell them that we weren't simply another public relations sort of exercise or window-dressing sort of thing. So, we decided the best thing to do was to concentrate on community development and again you get a challenge, you see, or a dilemma, because what community are you talking about? Are you talking about this utopian community in which there are both Catholics and Protestants who will do things together?

And you say "We'll have community development and community work but only when it involves both sides". Or do you say: "Well here are communities who feel very hurt, they are finding it hard to organise themselves, there are failures of leadership, there is an inarticulacy and the rest of it"? So what we got to do is to build them up as communities on their own there and there in the hope that after a while they could begin to approach each other with a degree of self-confidence and that they would then together find that they had problems with these people up here in relation to poverty, in relation to housing, in relation to employment and the rest of it. One of the difficulties, and the later CR Council [1990-] I think fell into this trap, if you're insisting on togetherness, if you're insisting that you are interested in people doing things together, it becomes an exercise at head counting,

CR bodies from Great Britain came to assist Stormont civil servants, notably C. J. Bateman, who led the Joint Working Party on Community Relations in 1969: "We had the assistance also of Mr John Lyttle, Chief Conciliation Officer of the Race Relations Board and Miss Nadine Peppard, General Secretary of the Community Relations Commission in Great Britain, at several meetings" (C. J. Bateman, *Joint Working Party on Community Relations, Final Report*, p. 1).

you know we have forty Catholics and we have forty Protestants. So we decided, as a strategy, on community development²⁷.

J.E.: The name of the institution (Northern Ireland Community Relations Commission – NICRC) echoed the legislation on Race Relations in Britain. Any comments on that?

M.H.: It was a complete transplant. The UK borrowed it from America. It was based on the assumption that the problem was the immigrant community. And it wasn't actually to a great extent the problem; it was the host community. The idea was that if these immigrant communities could only come along and tell the host community about their dances and this and that, they would learn about each other. So that was imported into the UK and then when they had these talks going on under Callaghan particularly and people were being sent over, the people who were sent over to write the legislation and to write the prescriptions for the NICRC were people from the Home Office who had been doing the Race Relations stuff over there.

J.E.: But you didn't follow exactly what the Race Relations Committees and Commission were doing in Britain.

M.H.: No, no, because we didn't see any sense in it.

J.E.: You went into CD. Did you intend to focus on social issues?

M.H.: It was partly to get people a reason for being on the ground. Secondly to give people a focus around which to organise and cohere. Here you are talking about 1969, you had riots in the street, you had people being beaten up, even though they didn't really have the sustained real warfare that you had afterwards. And what we were saying to people was: "You don't actually have to burn down the City Hall in order to get your houses repaired, you know, there are other ways of doing it". So CD was just a useful tool and we took it and I think we introduced CD into Northern Ireland.

J.E.: How did you get to know about it yourself?

M.H.: There is a couple of things. There was a movement in the South in the 1930s. Do you know who *Muintir na Tíre* are? It was run by a priest called John Hayes – he was no relation of mine but we happen to have the same name. There is a book actually out at the moment²⁸. They were built on the rural organisation. They were

27. When Maurice Hayes says that the leaders of the Commission "decided, as a strategy, on community development", it shows that the Commission was put in place with no clear strategy – in reality there had been little reflection on how the British policy would be adapted to the Northern Irish situation. But it also means that the leaders of the Commission were able to choose the sort of policy that they wished to implement. The notion of the "empty office" is interesting. When Hayes declares that they "started off with virtually no staff, with just an empty office and a desk and the question of how to make it up", it shows that the leaders of the Commission had the possibility of "making up" a reconciliation policy with a certain level of autonomy. It was possible to devise and implement a new and audacious approach. In contrast, this was to be impossible in later years and especially after 1972.

28. Mark Tierney, *The Story of Muintir na Tíre, 1931-2001: The First Seventy Years*, Tipperary, Muintir na Tíre, 2004.

based essentially on the Catholic parish. The same sorts of things were going on in different parts of France before the war. But anyway that was one germ, I had seen their work you know and I was interested in it. And then I remember going to a conference about 1965 organised by the Castle Social Services, the local authorities, in which there was a Dutch man, the name I forget now, who came over and talked about how they were developing communities in the reclaimed polder lands, where they were putting villages, etc. So their emphasis was on CD too.

So there was stuff I had been reading about and knew a bit about. And then we deliberately employed Hywel Griffiths because he had a background in CD²⁹. Now the interesting thing is that CD in Britain very largely came from people who had worked in former British colonies. They were nearly all ex-colonial officers³⁰. And so you have that back entry really into the thing and Hywel himself had been out in Nigeria I think³¹.

J.E.: Your idea was to strengthen one's sense of community. Could you explain what that meant?

M.H.: What we did actually was very interesting. You see, John Malone, who was a very gifted man, had been employed (he was a teacher) to develop programmes for schools, you see, and then having got him to do it they gave him no resources or anything to do it, so we gave him the resources and he developed a sort of a teaching pack which was far-ahead of its time in terms of cross-cultural work³². It was an attempt to create a syllabus and it ultimately emerged in a thing called

29. The approach focused on the notions of self-help and empowerment. It was influenced by the theories and practices of CD (Joana Etchart, "Community Development..."). The leaders of the NICRC were also influenced by the Burtonian method of conflict resolution, based on the analysis of needs (John W. Burton, *Deviance, Terrorism & War: The Process of Solving Unsolved Social and Political Problems*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1979). This was taken over in Northern Ireland by people like Joe Camplisson, who was a CDO at the Commission at the time (Michael Hall, Joe Camplisson, *From Conflict Containment to Resolution: The Experiences of a Moldovan-Northern Ireland Self-Help Initiative*, Newtownabbey, Island Publications, 2002).

30. Indeed, CD was mainly developed in Britain by people who had worked as colonial officers in Africa in the 1930s and 1940s. For example, T. R. Batten worked in education and development in Africa between 1927 and 1949 (Nigeria and Uganda). When he went back to the United Kingdom, he established the *Community Development Bulletin* in 1951 and then, in 1966, its successor the *Community Development Journal. An International Forum* (Oxford University Press). He introduced the non-directive approach in social work in Britain in the 1960s, also known as community development (T. R. Batten, Madge Batten, *The Non-Directive Approach in Group and Community Work*, London, Oxford University Press, 1967, p. 11-12). On the colonial origins of CD, see: Steven J. G. Clarke, *Community Organization and Development: From Its History towards a Model for the Future*, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 2017.

31. The director of the NICRC Hywel Griffiths had joined the Colonial Service in Central Africa, then Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) and eventually in Nigeria. He was also involved with adult education (interview with Hywel Griffiths, Cardiff, 8 April 2005).

32. John Malone initiated the "Schools Project" within the Commission as mentioned in: NICRC, *Community Development and Community Relations in Northern Ireland – Some Proposals*, Belfast, NICRC, 1974. See also Paul Burrows, "Schools Community Relations Project", *Community Forum (Northern Ireland Community Relations Commission)*, no. 1, 1971, p. 25-26.

Education for Mutual Understanding [in 1983]: how people might look at history together and how they might look at different things. Now he came at it from the point of view of moral education, the ethics of citizenship and the ethics of respect for other human beings and human rights. And the interesting thing was that when he reported back to the Department of Education they didn't want to know about it at all³³.

J.E.: I have the impression that some of the things that came out in the 1980s regarding community relations work had already been mentioned or done in the period 1969-1975.

M.H.: That's right. In a sense the 1980s was an attempt to recapture what had been lost. You see it's very interesting what happened, there were the SDLP [Social Democratic and Labour Party] who were the main nationalist party, they were the people who stood down the NICRC [in 1974]. There were always tensions between elected politicians and activists on the ground. By and large the elected people didn't want any other people on the ground because they were creating rivals to them. They were people who may run for elections themselves. The result was that when you had what they called the power-sharing executive [in 1974], there was an SDLP minister [Ivan Cooper] who said "Well we are here now. What do you want the Commission for?". That was a mistake.

One of the difficulties in the whole thing was that you had a Commission and a Ministry, which had different notions of what community relations were about and community development. So the executive was an opportunity for this group actually to make their take over.

J.E.: Still I have the impression that it worked fairly well under Mr. Simpson's Ministry, until 1972.

M.H.: The first Minister was actually quite a nice man called Dr. Simpson. It was his first Ministry. Then, next thing, they had an interesting guy just before McIvor, David Bleakley. And Bleakley you see was a trade unionist, he was a Labour Party member and he was brought in by Faulkner to run this. Faulkner was opening up things in Cabinet and he made the man Minister of Community Relations. This guy on a Friday he was applying to me for grants and on a Monday he was the Minister. And he was very centralising. He was also sort of an evangelical. He was a really nice man, good man. But he put it all on a very preachy side, like preaching people. If we all pray together and if we all learn to be together.

Whereas we were much more inclined to recognise the reality on the ground and how difficult it was to work with people where they were, you know. So he did six months there and of course the big disaster in the middle of that which I

33. According to members of the Commission, civil servants were rather suspicious of their work. See for instance: John Darby, Geoffrey Morris, "Community Groups and Research in Northern Ireland", *Community Development Journal. An International Forum*, vol. 10, no. 2, April 1975, p. 113-119.

think virtually subverted the whole thing was internment because how can you talk about community relations when the government is putting its citizens in jail without trial? I was under a lot of pressure at that time to resign³⁴.

J.E.: Why?

M.H.: From nationalist politicians. They wanted everybody to withdraw from public life. But we [members of the NICRC] turned ourselves almost overnight into an emergency relief organisation, you know: help people to find their relatives, help to deal with people who are in the middle of, you know, mass movements. And that changed the nature of our work I think for a while now. The members of the Commission were actually quite non representative, you know they were a middle-class group of people, fairly elder I think I was the youngest on it, which was nonsense. They were not all of them all that happy about CD, you know.

J.E.: Why not?

M.H.: It was a wee bit too radical. They were even less happy about the notion of this acting as a relief agency you know because some of them saw it as getting support and relief to people who were in revolt against the state really but anyway we got through that period and then Bleakley went at that time. In writing his own memoirs he said he went as a protest against internment, he didn't, he went because his six months were up. I think you can hold the job, under the law, you can only hold the job for six months. So then he was succeeded by McIvor, who was a nice man. He died about two weeks ago. A very good man, a very gentle sort of person. But it was very much in the hands of his civil servants in the Ministry.

J.E.: Is that when you resigned?

M.H.: Actually I resigned after Bloody Sunday [January 1972]. You see again, on the grounds that here the government that we were working for were shooting at citizens, they were having them locked them up first, and now they were shooting them in the street. The second reason was that in a sense I had workers who had gone off and worked in Republican areas and that sort of things³⁵, and if we were seen to be too closely associated with the state, we could have been shot. So it was necessary I thought for me to do that. And then Brian Rankin became chairman and then Brian went back to the original sort of doctrinaire community relations, and in the main, Brian was fine, he was a good man but you know his notion was to work with the moderates. They didn't like community development at all.

J.E.: Could you describe what community development (work) meant?

34. Many testimonies from the period highlight the chaos that reigned following the introduction of internment in August 1971. See for instance the ones collected by Michael Hall in the series of pamphlets entitled *Grassroots Leadership*.

35. There is an elliptic reference here to the facilitation work that was conducted by some CDOs with paramilitary leaders. See Joana Etchart, "Community Development...".

M.H.: It meant going into the community and not with any particular specification but finding out what were the things that they wanted to organise themselves around, and it might be housing, it might be schooling, it might be jobs, it might be whatever.

It was mainly social rather than political. But most of these things are political anyway too and of course this was one of the things that created the tension. I mean, as the war became too more intense, increasingly they were organising themselves against the police, so that was it actually, you found out who they were and what they wanted. And so you were creating a civic culture of discussion and of organisation which would enable them to deal with the problems without having recourse to violence and then hopefully they would see under new circumstances that violence was counterproductive and then hopefully they would see after a bit that they did actually have common interests with Protestant groups on the other side of the wall and that they would tackle those common interests together. It was all right up to that point, but once they got together and all that, the only people they were endangering or opposing were the government³⁶.

And other forms of community might not have been special at all. Women were a community, young people were a community, who hadn't generally mobilised in a way before that and in the main you were trying to do it in a way that would break down the actual starkness of the Catholic/Protestant rift and say: "Look there is all sorts of cross cutting things, there are all sorts of other ways in which people segregate themselves out or are segregated out, maybe as women, maybe as unemployed, maybe as young people, maybe as travellers, which had nothing to do with the religious thing".

So anyway, Hywel Griffiths left shortly after that and they got then a guy, his name I don't remember. And the community workers who had been very enthused by what they were doing, a lot of them lost a lot of their morale and I think at the time the executive closed them down [in 1975], I think they were ready for it.

J.E.: If you look at the way things have evolved since then, what would be the various meanings of "community relations" in the 1969-1998 period?

M.H.: The trouble is it's used to mean anything. I think one of the reasons the CR Council was set up then [in 1990] was to put emphasis on working with Catholics and Protestants and a lot of these bodies got their grants on the basis that they were actually cross-community, so that people would say well we had this thing and we had thirty Catholics in and thirty Protestants in, without having done a damn thing there.

Plus you might have had something where you had a group of extremely difficult people on either side and you were working with them to bring them up to the point where they could actually deal with people on the other side.

36. This reflection is emblematic of Maurice Hayes' pioneering strategy of conflict resolution, which, together with Hywel Griffiths, he tried to develop in the 1969-1972 period. It sought to empower local communities and to develop "a civic culture of discussion and of organisation", as he says, between antagonistic groups locally. This required a lot of networking and liaising skills.

The other thing is that I see the CR Council as having as well a sort of a fire brigade role that when communities are meeting like that somebody should be there trying to keep the lines of communication open. When the big lines of communication break down there are still small ones that operate. It's much easier now with the mobile phones.

J.E.: Why's that?

M.H.: It gives people the opportunity to communicate across the lines, you know, when they couldn't have done in the past, if you have to go from here to there and cross barricades to talk to someone.

You see, unless you have some sort of a relationship built up with people before the trouble comes, there is very little point in building it up in the middle of the troubles. So part of the idea of this sort of strategy that we had was that you would have people there, some of them working for the Commission, some others trained by the Commission, you would have people over there on the other side who were at least able to communicate with each other. And the more you had of those around the place, the greater the possibility you had for diffusing tension and getting rid of it. I am looking at things like the Ardoyne situation over the last couple of years, about the school, the riots that you get around Orange marches and that. And you ask yourself "Where is the CR Council?". The CR Council aren't there, they are conducting some sort of esoteric training somewhere else.

J.E.: Do you think they should be more on the ground?

M.H.: I think they should be in cases like that, on the ground, they should be the mediating people, and they should be the people who can do it. That is in a sense the longer term purpose of the CD projects. CD projects enabled you to get entry into the communities and credibility in the communities, to have identified people in the communities who could be kind of spokesmen and leaders, and to get them some training.

J.E.: Were there tensions between CDOs and local political leaders?

M.H.: Yes, there were. The same is true too as regards the IRA. The whole purpose they set themselves up was to control populations, and they didn't want anybody else to come in trying to diminish that control or trying to provide things for the people.

J.E.: There was a lot of control by Orange lodges and the IRA. How could CDOs fit into that?

M.H.: That was a great difficulty, they were taking a lot of risks, they had to cope with their own doubts too, you know. There was a guy called Burton who wrote a book, I think it's *The Politics of Legitimacy*³⁷. He was up in Ardoyne actually

37. Frank Burton, *The Politics of Legitimacy: Struggles in a Belfast Community*, London – Boston, Routledge – K. Paul, 1978.

where he spent six or eight months, you know, doing observations. There is also a book called *Bandit Country*³⁸, it's about South Armagh, it's about how the IRA can terrorise and dominate a whole community. But Burton was good.

That may be the reason why the CR Council now does not dare go and work with those very organised close-knit communities. I still think that they should be in there. There was actually another interesting thing: that CD was a much easier concept to sell to Catholic communities than to Protestant communities and a bit of it was theological, you know where the Catholic stress was on togetherness and community whereas the Protestant stress was on the responsibility of the individual and they weren't into it. They were also used to the situation in which you know the government was Protestant and Unionist so the government would look after them. The government did only look after them up to a point. I mean what the government did for working-class Protestant areas was nearly nothing. I mean they were just as badly off as people in the Catholic areas.

The Catholic people at that time had decided that there was no point in relying on the government, and in that sense they did things for themselves. And the state of education in inner city Protestant areas was poorly. So it was only you know in the late 1970s, 1980s that Protestant groups began to learn about CD.

J.E.: Did CD continue after the demise of the Commission in 1974-1975?

M.H.: A lot of things continue under one guise or another. A lot of it has been done now through the European Peace and Reconciliation Funds that came along and there is another group which has been very influential actually I think in CD it is the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland (CFNI)³⁹. And a woman called Avila Kilmurray runs that. They're going to have their 25th birthday next year in January. It was set up as a voluntary trust which would give money to community groups and that sort of things. They've done a lot actually and they're now one of the intermediary bodies for European funds as well. They're the nearest people to doing what I thought we were doing.

J.E.: Has the idea of CD evolved in terms of theory?

M.H.: It has yes, it's now a respectable thing. You see, one of the difficulties when they stood down the Commission, they gave the role of CD to the Health Boards, you see where people were social workers and not community workers and they didn't really have a concept or whatever about. For them CD meant setting up support programmes in the community for their own services like the mental

38. Toby Harnden, *"Bandit Country": The IRA and South Armagh*, revised and updated edition, London, Coronet, 2000.

39. CFNI used to be called the Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust (NIVT). This had been set up in 1979 by the then Labour minister Peter Melchett. According to its first director Hugh Frazer, Maurice Hayes had been involved in the creation of that Trust in 1979 (interview with Hugh Frazer, Kenilworth Road, Dublin, 4 September 2006).

health, which has its own value I mean it's an important thing but it is but not exactly CD. And of course they saw it as a completely non-political thing⁴⁰. [...]

J.E.: To come back to what you said earlier on the importance of working with local groups, I was wondering how you got in touch with the organisations on the ground?

M.H.: You just went out and talked to them.

J.E.: But how did you choose them?

M.H.: Well you looked for who was there. We just went to different places. I had a sort of background in sports through which a lot of people knew me. At least you had a face that people recognised. And I think it has to be personalised in a little way.

Interview carried out in Leinster House, Kildare Street, Dublin, 7 December 2004.

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40. Various types of CD work developed from the mid-1970s on, some of which became more conventional and bureaucratic than the original, radical version. See the analysis provided by Hywel Griffiths, "The Aims and Objectives of Community Development", *Community Development Journal. An International Forum*, vol. 9, no. 2, April 1974, p. 89-92.