

AN ORGANISATION FOR PROMOTING UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIETY (OPUS)

Ireland at the centenary of the Easter Rising 1916
and at the Dawn of 32nd Dáil on 15th April 2016



Encouraging The Reflective Citizen

in association with GAP (Group Analytic Practice)

Introduction

The Convenor introduced the meeting and clarified that, unlike at the Global Listening Post, she would not be making a written report from this Irish LP. The irony of this in terms of the topic was noted by one member who commented that “there will be no dispatches to the UK then”. There was then a request from members that notes would be made of this meeting. This was agreed.

Part One: an hour of free association to the topic.

Reference was made to a perhaps unconscious re-enactment of the tram drivers lock out of 1916 with the current LUAS dispute and threat of a lock out. It was noted that there are currently a number of threatened industrial relations disputes: teachers, guards, Tesco. Reference was made of the “English take over” through supermarkets and high street shops. It has been reported that UK residents with Irish connections are getting Irish passports in the light of a possible Brexit.

How will we commemorate 1922? a member asked.

Talk turned to the Dáil's inability to form a government - a sense of unwillingness to give up individual desires in order to join a group. “How can we have a government if people are not prepared to work together. Is this the impact of the rise of narcissism?”

A member spoke of the recently completed wall in Glasnevin Cemetery which names all those who died in 1916 in an act of reconciliation and asked “Is the only way we can work together once we are dead?”

There is a sense of fragmentation of the Dáil and a break down of society in everyone's wish to get what they think they are due.

1916 has been projected as if it was a unity, as if we are all now able to co-exist. Complexity is being ignored.

A member spoke of going to the 1916 Commemorative Parade. "I saw the end, I saw the stragglers: the Red Cross, the RNLI. The end of the parade seemed to hold the messiness, the confusion."

A member responded: "I think confusion is a major step forward. It wasn't nice having an English accent in Ireland in the '70s"

But confusion in the Dáil is also disturbing and exasperating. "It's like there is a war on, a phoney war."

Government is a poisoned chalice. We feel stronger in opposition. We hold a phantasy of being an idyllic nation. One member couldn't really see the difference between the St Patrick's Day Parade and the 1916 Parade. "They were both TV events, RTE created events, marketing events."

It is interesting, said one member, that no-one is really touching Sinn Fein in this period of making a government. Perhaps it is an unconscious fear that they are the future. They have been allowed not to take part. They are waiting in the wings, not a rushing forward as in 1916.

Women have been airbrushed out of 1916 and of 2016.

Perhaps we are secretly hoping that someone will ride up and tell us what to do: martial law like in 1916; the EU or the IMF.

We feel powerless in the face of this complexity, powerless without strength. There is tension between working with the complexity or reducing it down to absolutes and rigidity. The grind of working it through.

1916 rebellion led to marshall law led to Sinn Fein led to civil war. Civil war wounds are not yet healed. In 2016 "the Government was fearful that Sinn Fein would take over 1916 so it put a march on them by giving the commemoration responsibility to RTE". Fear of Sinn Fein as carrying a history, having the loudest voice without taking responsibility of leadership.

One member said that despite or because of the pageant of St Patrick's Day. the Irish went to Glendalough. The Gardaí had to be called because there were so many there.

What is really our heritage and what is the make up version.

Language meant a lot to the leaders of 1916. Where is our language? "A country without language is a country without a soul."

Fear of identification with Republicanism and its connection with violence and bombing.

It feels like we are on the cusp of being able to talk about something. The lost generation - zero hour contracts; loss of connection with democratic institutions.

SF represents the dispossessed, people who have nothing to lose.

How to talk about politics and not revert to rowing. We are afraid that we'll kill each other.

One member asked where are the rows in here? In his country of birth there couldn't be a meeting like this without rows and arguments.

Here it is so complicated that it is hard to work it through.

The Dáil works on an adversarial, attacking approach but no-one wants to be attacked. Polarised positions.

Getting together and integration in a place of difference, the split is the defence. The touch paper for the division, the split, now is Irish water. What does water represent? - "Thank God we are surrounded by water."

Split into the purist and the messy. Fear of the purist and rigid approach, fear of the messiness.

Part Two: 40 minutes of small group

Members broke into two small groups, with convenors, to reflect on and consider what they heard in part one and to attempt to put meaning on it.

Part Three: Feedback from the two small groups

Group One

The Secret Society - IRB in 1916; Sinn Féin in 2016 - and the threat it holds

Threat of insurrection (resurrection) against the democratic institutions

Exclusivity in ideology of Sinn Féin. Is this how progress happens?

The unknown threat. Fear of explosiveness.

Who is going to rise up on the streets under the banner of Sinn Féin?

Rights (and responsibilities)

Trust - we don't trust government; we have lost trust in institutions.

Impatience (to form a government).

Tension between fear of anarchy and insurrection and an impatience to get it sorted to avoid the anarchy and insurrection. Afraid to grow up and take responsibility. This time there is no British Army, IMF, EU to come in. We have to do it alone which is difficult because it feels like we are in a massive regression. Our sense of ourselves as a pure race has been knocked by the ugly underbelly of greed and avarice being revealed.

Internal psychodrama is being played out in the Dáil.

Shame. Related to boom and bust. How well do we deal with issues, take up authority. Fianna Fáil shamed in 2011. Micheál Martin and the Big Stick.

Hypothesis:

We are in a shame/rage cycle. It is not an easy place to be. It maybe okay to be in an emergent place. Being uncertain is part of the process of growing up. We need to bear the anxiety and may need another election ... or several.

Group Two

Tension between a reduction to simplicity and rigidity versus possibility of complexity.

It's not my story

We are more comfortable opposing rather than identifying what we are for.

Idealisation of 1916. There is a failure to draw any insight from 1916 in 2016

Stuck

The most recent meetings happening after two months of negotiation and resistance between FF and FG in an attempt to form a government represent a move from the primitive schizoid-paranoid position to the depressive position. This LP experienced this move when we found ourselves feeling quite stuck in the large free association group "downstairs". Something in the small group "upstairs" allowed

something to happen again, to re-experience part one. We struggled to stay on task. We wanted to keep adding to the material rather than understanding it. Once that was let go of we were able to pick up. This perhaps is a parallel process, mirroring the meeting of FF and FG. Can they continue to let go and remain in the depressive position?

Hypothesis:

Bion's Basic Assumption behaviour has failed to deliver. Now there has to be a letting go of the basic assumption behaviour because they have been found to be not workable; psychodynamic defences could not yield a workable solution to forming a government. So Dáil (and society) are faced with having to find a new alternative to defence and opposition in order to find a workable response; a third way - growing up and the possibility of pragmatism - a new voice, women's voices such as the Deputy Leader of the Green Party.

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