The Irish Third Sector and Collaboration with the State: 
A Case Study on the Redefinition of Civic Virtue

Fred Powell and Donal Guerin

Introduction

The key argument of the paper is that an official redefinition of the relationship between the voluntary sector and the State is currently taking place. Many organisations are moving from a relationship based on 'separate dependency' to one of 'integrated dependency' (e.g. higher levels of statutory funding linked to agreed results and greater consultation). Based on these closer relationships, it has been argued that such a 'partnership' approach is laying the basis for a blossoming of Irish civil society (Dept. of Social Welfare. 1997) Drawing upon recent research findings published by the authors, this paper will critically assess the sociological basis for such an optimistic vision (see appendix 1 for a full description of the research). The paper will provide an overview of the current literature, highlighting the influence of those writers [such as Fukuyuma (1995), Etzioni (1994) and Putnam (1993)], who have stressed that such a 'third sector' is integral to a healthy civil society. The paper will argue that these perspectives on the nature of civil society are rooted in demands for an enhanced voluntary sector and a minimalist role for the State. After discussing current perspectives on the relationship between civil society, the State and the voluntary sector, the paper will present some findings of the empirical research carried out by the authors. These will focus on answering the question whether the trend towards a greater integration of the voluntary sector with the State represents a strengthening of civil society.

Civil society and active citizenship

The publication of the Green Paper on the Voluntary and Community Sector and its Relationship with the State in 1997 firmly locates Ireland within the European social market model that favours partnership between the voluntary sector and the State. The Green Paper outlines a vision of civil society where there is dialogue between the
voluntary and community sectors and the State:

--- it presupposes the central allocation of resources within a facilitative and enabling framework which promotes the growth of what is known as civil society. It requires the development of an enabling and open State which is engaged in partnership and which allows bottom-up responses to emerge from voluntary organisations and community groups (Dept. of Social Welfare 1997, p. 24).

The concepts 'civil society' and 'active citizenship' have in recent years enjoyed something of a revival. Politicians and academics in many countries have embraced it as a prescriptive model for the future organisation of society. Exponents of civil society present it as a mediating space between the private and public spheres in a pluralist democracy. As Wedel has put it 'a civil society exists when individuals and groups are free to form organisations that function independently and that can mediate between citizens and the State'. (Wedel 1992, p. 323). Civil society is frequently equated with the voluntary or non-governmental sector. The equation of civil society and active citizenship with the voluntary sector is explicitly stated in the recently published Green Paper, 'The Voluntary and Community Sector and its Relationship with the State'. Active citizenship is defined as referring to 'the active role of people, communities and voluntary organisations in decision making which directly affects them. This extends the concept of formal citizenship and democratic society from one of basic civil, political, social and economic rights to one of direct democratic participation and responsibility' (Dept of Social Welfare 1997. 24-25).

The exponents of civil society in the contemporary debate about the moral economy of welfare view reciprocal responsibility and social well being as the basis of 'social capital'. Fukuyuma asserts:

Social capital is a capability that arises from the prevalence of trust in a society or certain parts of it. It can be embodied in the smallest and most basic social group, the family as well as the largest of all groups the nation, and in all other groups in between. Social capital differs from all other forms of human capital insofar as it is usually transmitted through cultural mechanisms like religion, tradition or historical habit (Fukuyuma 1995, p. 26).

Social capital is therefore comprised of the institutional relationships of a vibrant civil society, based upon solidary individualism and active citizenship, from extended
families to neighbourhood networks, community groups to religious organisations, youth clubs to parent teacher associations, local businesses to local public services, playgroups to the police on the beat (Borrie Report 1994, p. 307 - 8). At the heart of civil society is empathy, compassion, trust and participation. This is the basis of the 'good society' that we all yearn to belong to in the midst of uncertainty, scepticism, disillusion and institutional fragmentation. Consequently the pluralisation of lifestyles and the search for meaning in the midst of uncertainty has stimulated a revitalisation of the concept of civil society as a means for resolving the problems of contemporary society. Keane has defined civil society as:

an aggregation of institutions whose members are engaged primarily in a complex of non-State activities - economic and cultural production, household life and voluntary associations - and who in this way preserve and transform their identity by exercising all sorts of pressure or controls upon State institutions (Keane 1988, p. 14)

The renewal of civil society has been associated with demands for a larger role for voluntary welfare provision in both western society and the former Soviet Block. The voluntary sector is perceived as (1) an alternative to State bureaucracy and professional elitism and (2) a public space between government and market. Civil society in its reinvigorated form is presented by its advocates as a democratic movement based upon the concept of active citizenship as opposed to the dependant status imposed by the entitled citizenship of the welfare State. The emphasis of active citizenship is on participation in the decision-making process leading to empowerment of the citizen.

According to the concept of civil society, communities, neighbourhoods, voluntary associations and churches are the basic building blocks of society because they teach civic virtues such as trust and co-operation. These 'new communitarians' (e.g. Etzioni. 1994; Fukuyma. 1995; and Putnam. 1993) promote the fostering of intermediate institutions, i.e. families, neighbourhoods and schools in civil society. They view these intermediate institutions as the source of moral and social cohesion in the globalised market society. At the same time they regard a revitalised civil society as a bulwark against an overweening welfare State, that in their view, has lost its legitimacy because of its remote bureaucratic structure and domination by professional elite's. As Landry and Mulgan put it:

Associational life in the form of family networks, networks of interest groups and others have often provided an important glue through which the individual and the
group have been bound together in some larger whole. Traditionally this 'civic' realm has provided the means for people to transcend pure individual self interest in the name of the public good. More recently, as the State has lost its legitimacy as the upholder and arbiter of that public interest, other types of civic association have come to seem more important (Landry and Mulgan. 1994, p. 6)

**Civil society and its applicability**

In the Toquevillian tradition, the link between voluntary associations and the inculcation of democratic ideals in society are particularly strong. This position has been reaffirmed in much of mainstream sociology where associations have been seen as social integrating forces: as intermediary bodies between individuals which counteract the processes of fragmentation and individualisation in modern society. In political science, voluntary associations have been seen as political integrating forces: as intermediary organisations between the individual/groups of individuals and the State. They help the processes of articulation and aggregation of interests in society (e.g. see two leading exponents of this viewpoint, Dahl. 1971 and Fukuyuma. 1995). It is therefore no exaggeration to claim that one of the most undisputed theses within the study of political culture is the relationship between political culture and democracy. Putnam who has written extensively on the subject, has distinguished between the external and the internal democratic effects of democratisation. The external effects are related to the role of association in the processes of articulation and aggregation of interests. The internal effects are related to the effects on members of associations. These effects can be attached on the one hand to *mobilisation* (development of collective resources and political participation) and on the other *democratic socialisation* (voluntary associations create habits of co-operation among their members, a sense of concern for public affairs and a sense of mutual respect and acceptance) (Putnam 1993, p. 89-90). The possibilities for voluntary associations to act as carriers of these democratic values becomes problematic if they function more as professional enterprises than membership-based organisations.

This question brings to mind Croft and Beresford's assertion that participation is an issue which tends to be long on rhetoric and short on information (Croft and Beresford 1986, p. 5). However the democratic associational model of voluntary organisations assumes that members should not only be expected, but actively encouraged to participate in the running of the organisation (Lansley 1996, p.76). The quest for participation has become both a feature both of statutory and voluntary agencies. The implications of participation raises a host of issues relating to the definition of user
involvement (Taylor 1996, p. 57). The use of the term 'user' has been modified by many organisations - both statutory and voluntary - to reflect the influence of the 'customer/consumer relationship'. The concept of customer may not always provide the best basis for users/members to have a direct say in the running of the organisation. The application of democracy across a variety of differentiated organisational types (e.g. the basic distinction between organisations run By Us For Us and organisations run By Them For Us) must also require an elastic definition of what meant by user control of an organisation.

The association of civil society with demands for a larger role for voluntary welfare provision, have been highlighted by its critics as putting the real emphasis on the **dutiful** citizen, engaged in self help. The logic behind the dutiful citizen leads in the direction of workfare, perceived as undermining the **entitled** citizenship upon which the Welfare State rests. In their view, social rights are subordinated to the forces of altruism and mutualism. There is an element of unreality about the larger claims made for the concept of civil society as an alternative to State welfare. As Kramer puts it:

Voluntarism is no substitute for services that can be best be delivered by government, particularly if coverage, equity and entitlements are valued.......there is a danger that those who have jumped on the bandwagon of the era of limits, signalling the end of the Welfare State by advocating more volunteerism, are being co-opted by others who share less concern with social justice than with tax reduction (Kramer 1981, p. 283)

The concept of the voluntary sector as being necessarily in opposition to the State has also been challenged by the findings of international research. Based on cross-national analysis, Anheier and Salamon have found that the concept of the non-profit sector does not exist in many countries and does not seem to bear any relation to the extent of "caring" evident in the society. Their research found that the factors affecting the provision of social services were highly localised and reflected a broad range of issues: the legal framework in use, the level of development, the degree of social differentiation and the extent of centralisation of social and political control (Anheier and Salamon 1994, p. 1). Anthropologists such as Hann and Dunn have also warned against the appropriateness of generalising a narrow western blueprint of civil society for universal applicability. They argue, that in many cases, the concept has been used in simplistic ways, notably in opposition to the State and that its reduction by governments and aid agencies to the world of non-governmental organisations represents an impoverished view of social life (Hann and Dunn 1996, p. 22).
The Irish voluntary sector: changing conceptions of civil society

The partnership perspective adopted in the Green Paper is the culmination of a process stretching back over 30 years, which has clearly emphasised the integration of voluntary social services with the functions of statutory agencies. The changes in the relationship between the voluntary sector and the State can be understood in the following terms:

Until the beginning of the 70's, an institutionally independent voluntary sector, which was largely supported ideologically and materially by the Churches and which provided social services, with limited accountability to the State;

From the 70's onwards, a more interventionist State, which has in equal measure provided higher levels of financial support and demanded greater levels of accountability and co-operation, culminating in a 'partnership' approach.

This changing relationship between the voluntary and the statutory sectors in Ireland has been a defining feature of Irish social policy over the past 20 years. Based within an interpretative framework, using alternative conceptions of civil society, Irish social policy has incorporated a change from a classic model (residual State services, complemented by large-scale non-governmental provision of social services) to an social market model (there is increased statutory intervention, stressing the need for Government intervention in the interest of equity).

The evolution of social services in the direction of a social market model has enabled voluntary organisations to receive higher levels of statutory funding, together with an apparently greater degree of consultation in policy issues. These developments have occurred in an institutional environment biased towards centralised planning and decision making. The scale of the success in implementing a partnership approach across different sectors is however varied. Contrasting approaches to statutory/voluntary relationships can be seen in relation to the elderly and community sectors.

Mulvihill argues that the model of the voluntary/statutory relationship, which approximates most clearly to the provision of community based services for the elderly in Ireland is welfare pluralism, combined with a strong element of subsidiarity
Welfare pluralism - associated with the administration of services by voluntary organisations and finance is provided by the State. The State and voluntary organisations are expected to play different but interdependent roles in providing social services. Funding arrangements depend largely on commitment of State to ensure widespread provision of social services;

Subsidiarity - the principle that a larger unit only assumes functions to the degree that the smaller units of which it is composed are less competent to do so. This approach is strongly associated with Catholic social policy and has recently been revived by the EU as a mechanism for achieving a balance between the centre and the periphery and for distributing public authority among different levels of government.

Elements of all these approaches are being debated in many other European countries. As Mulvihill points out, the nature and extent of these approaches is shaped by particular historical, demographic and prevailing ideological currents-social democratic, conservative or liberal. This welfare pluralist approach is far from ideal with problems existing in relation to funding and participation in the decision making process. As a response to these difficulties a more comprehensive partnership approach is favoured (Mulvihill 1993, p. 68). It is in the area however of community initiatives that there has been a new found orientation by the State which would seem to reflect a more localised partnership approach as compared to the more national visions of collaboration as outlined by activists in the 80's and 70's.

In relation to the social services, a partnership implies the creation of a 'third arm', which draws skills and resources from both the public and private sectors. In fact the novel aspects of the partnership approach towards community development in Ireland has been noted with considerable interest in an OECD evaluation of the 38 Area Partnerships created by the Irish Government and the Structural Fund of the European Union, beginning in 1981. The OECD report describes the partnerships as:

Legally the partnerships are independent corporations under Irish company law. Their boards bring together representatives of local community interests, including the unemployed, representatives of the national social partner organisations of labour and
Business and local or regional representatives of the national social welfare, training or economic development administrations. They thus simultaneously pursue area-based economic development and the local integrated implementation of national programmes connected to it; and they do in a way that blurs familiar distinctions between public and private, national and local, and representative and participative democracy. The preliminary results of this effort to foster development and welfare through new forms of public and private local co-ordination are quite promising, if still inconclusive (Sabel 1996, p. 9).

The huge number of community initiatives (mainly stemming from financial support from the EU) which have received State funding has not prevented community activists and workers from recognising that significant problems exist in relation to the States activities. These difficulties have been characterised by Lee, in her discussion of community links with the State in Ireland, as referring to:

- excessive centralisation and bureaucracy;
- inefficiency and incompetence;
- suspicion of its own constituent parts as well as of others;
- vulnerable to direct action;
- high-jacking of community for its purposes;
- politically and personally oppressive

(Lee 1989, p. 96)

The new emerging complex inter-linkages between the voluntary sector focus key questions about the role of the State. In particular, in light of the growing trend towards a partnership model and widespread acceptance that Ireland has a mixed economy of welfare, the clash between the reality of statutory/voluntary arrangements and their idealised workings within a welfare pluralist or partnership model becomes apparent.

The remaining part of the paper deals with a presentation and discussion of some of the findings of research published in 1997 by the Social Studies Research Unit, UCC.
The research sought to locate the discussion of voluntary activity in the context of the evolving debate on the nature of civil society. To do this, a national opinion poll survey on attitudes towards voluntarism and the voluntary sector, a postal survey of a representative sample of 223 voluntary organisations and interviews with 17 managers in the Irish voluntary sector were undertaken. Significant sections of the research dealt with analysing relationships between the voluntary sector and the State, in particular the growing interdependence by the voluntary sector on statutory financial support. Researching the characteristics of these relationships provides a firm basis for understanding how the pitfalls and advantages of closer co-operation between the statutory and the voluntary sectors shapes the applicability of a notion of civil society dominated by independent 'third sector' organisations.

**Funding and the State: findings from UCC research**

As part of the postal survey of selected voluntary organisations, respondents were asked to estimate the changes in the approximate percentages of incomes derived from a variety of funding sources, both in the past and now. Organisations were asked to contrast the profile of their funding sources in 1996 with those of their year of formation (or 1975 if their year of formation was prior to this date).

The answers are shown in Tables I and II. In interpreting the results in Tables I and II, it is important to point out that this question only deals in percentages as respondents were not required to provide detailed estimates of their funding. The interpretation of the mean figure also has cautious overtones because of the high degree of standard deviation associated with the wide range of responses.

In comparing the results of Tables I and II, overall increases are noted in the contribution of European funding, statutory funding and charges for services to organisations income sources. This is reflected in the greater absolute number of organisations obtaining funding from these sources as well as increases in their average mean percentage contribution to total income. Comparison of the tables also show that decreases have taken place in the mean percentage contribution of membership fees and organised fund-raising, despite the increase in absolute terms of organisations using these income sources. These results reflect the increasing importance of reliance on the State for funding. They also reflect the importance of EU funding.
Table I Approximate percentage of income derived from the listed sources in either 1975 (or the year organisation was formed if after 1975).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Std Dev</th>
<th>Number of organisations</th>
<th>Variable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>8.10</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>European funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.99</td>
<td>31.38</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>Statutory funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.97</td>
<td>23.91</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>Non-statutory groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.25</td>
<td>36.38</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>Membership fees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.80</td>
<td>17.77</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>Charges for services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.90</td>
<td>35.40</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>Organised fund-raising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.15</td>
<td>24.38</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>Personal donations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>12.66</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table II. Approximate percentage of income derived from the listed sources in 1996

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Std Dev</th>
<th>Number of organisations</th>
<th>Variable</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>10.03</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>European funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.34</td>
<td>31.24</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>Statutory funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.92</td>
<td>20.48</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>Non-statutory groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.02</td>
<td>30.45</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>Membership fees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.87</td>
<td>19.95</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>Charges for services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.42</td>
<td>28.43</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>Organised fund-raising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.13</td>
<td>23.68</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>Personal donations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>11.34</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This increased reliance on statutory funding is not without its limitations. These difficulties are intimately associated with a continued adherence to a welfare pluralist
model where the voluntary sector is both separate from and subservient to centralised statutory sector, despite the espousal of partnership in recent years. The difficulties faced by voluntary organisations, relying mainly on funding from the health boards, were clearly identified in an important contribution to the debate on the difficulties facing the voluntary sector, arising from research carried out by Faughnan and Kelleher on 42 voluntary organisations in the Dublin area and their relationships with the State. The study identified difficulties in three principal areas:

- funding relationships with the State;
- ongoing contact with the State;
- role of voluntary organisations in policy development.

(Faughnan and Kelleher 1992, p. 17-21)

The principal difficulties in the area of funding was the lack of clarity as to the basis for grant allocation and the discretionary nature of the funding. Faughnan and Kelleher write that:

Funding was frequently ad hoc, insecure, lacked a clear commitment by an appropriate State agency and failed to match the needs of the organisation. It was not much the level or the amount of funding, which caused most concern among voluntary organisations but the framework within which it occurred (Faughnan and Kelleher 1992, p.19).

The discretionary nature of the funding process is in-built into the principal mechanism for the distribution of statutory funding for voluntary organisations in the social services - Section 65 of the Health Act, 1953, which is one of the main funding mechanisms for many voluntary organisations. Under this Section of the Act, grants may only be paid by health boards in respect of 'services similar or ancillary to a service which the health board may provide' (taken from guidelines for grants to voluntary agencies under section 65 of the Health Act, 1953). Faughnan and Kelleher, in commenting on these funding arrangements write that:

There appeared to be no pattern or coherence to the funding arrangements with the health boards. Historical precedent, access to key decision makers, political
expedience and a measure of luck appeared to provide the basis on which the funding arrangements between individual organisations and the health boards were initially established and then consolidated (Faughnan and Kelleher 1992, p.49).

As part of the UCC research, interviews were also carried out with 17 representatives of a variety of social service organisations. The majority of the interviews with these representatives of voluntary organisations identified concerns affecting reliance on statutory funding. These included:

- the terms of reference for receiving funding;
- reliance on statutory funding conflicting with independence of organisation;
- level of funding received.

A graphic description of the difficulties facing some voluntary organisations is clear from the following remarks, taken from interviews with respondents:

Question marks were placed over the core funding when criticism was voiced by the organisation over a particular Department's policy.

Another respondent from a youth organisation believed that the State treated the funding requirements of the voluntary sector differently from those of the public sector:

The Dept. of Finance would not index pay rates of staff in the organisation with those of the public sector, despite admitting that their particular role was indispensable.

These findings, together with those of other research studies (e.g. see National College of Industrial Relations: 1995 and 1993) reflect clearly that dependence rather than independence still remains the norm rather than the exception in many statutory/voluntary relationships. Undoubtedly, however, these aspects of the relationships are changing with an increasing transition from a welfare pluralist/subsidiarity approach to one of partnership and social dialogue across many sectors of the social services. The formalisation of statutory funding arrangements would seem to obviate the difficulties identified by the UCC research findings, among others. This formalisation is not without its pitfalls - principally the ability of voluntary organisations to inculcate civic values, if they are incorporated into the
Future trends in statutory/voluntary collaboration: findings from UCC research

Organisations who were surveyed in the UCC research were asked to indicate how they would see the role of the State across a number of areas. These were:

- involvement of the State in directly providing the activities of the organisation;
- monitoring performance of organisation;
- adequacy of co-ordination/communication with statutory agencies;
- ability of organisation to impact on decisions of State.

Fifty four percent of respondents were in favour of the State taking a more active role in the direct provision of the services of the organisation. Only 9 percent of respondents were against increased State involvement and 37 percent were content with the present situation. Fifty three percent of respondents were content with the present level of monitoring with a over one third of respondents (40 percent) in favour of an increased regulatory function for the State. A large percentage of respondents (43 percent) were opposed to increased co-ordination/communication with statutory agencies. Only 7 percent of respondents were in favour of increased co-ordination with statutory agencies. Over half the organisations (61 percent) felt that they little or no power in relation to the decision making policies of relevant statutory organisations.

The pattern of findings from the UCC suggest that despite the best intentions of the Green Paper, many statutory/voluntary relationships are still grounded in Mulvihill's definition of a welfare pluralist model where statutory funding provides no subsequent assurance of an impact on policy formation. The findings also suggest that many voluntary organisations place defined limits to the extent to which they will be incorporated into statutory structures. This ambivalence towards increased co-ordination with statutory agencies by voluntary organisations may well be justified if Peillion's critique of the Green Paper as a corporatist strategy is justified. Peillion argues that the Green Paper fails to address the requirement of public agencies to address the issues of openness, accountability, respect for individual dignity, privacy
and confidentiality and participation of people who avail of services in the planning, delivery and management of services. Peillon also warns that a 'Only a thin line separates centralised participation in the process of decision making from incorporation into the state apparatus' (Peillon 1998, p.7).

Conclusion

The issue of developing formalised funding arrangements is central to the Green Paper on the voluntary sector. The further development of the partnership approach is also implicitly addressed in the recent report 'Better Local Government - A Programme for Change' where there is further discussion of the possibility of the integration of local government and local development systems, including voluntary organisations (Dept. of the Environment 1996, p. 19).

Increased resourcing of the voluntary sector is an indicator of emerging models of statutory intervention in civil society (transition from simple welfare pluralism to the partnership model). Despite the real changes in the way the State is working with the voluntary sector (in the form of EU funded regional partnerships) and the diversity of funding available from statutory sources, traditional barriers are still firmly in place in many areas, as evidenced by the results of the UCC research. The survey of voluntary organisations showed that there were strong preferences for increased State funding and an increased statutory monitoring role. However difficulties still exist in relation to influencing statutory policy.

The voluntary sector is at a cross-roads in terms of its role and direction. The Green Paper outlines a strategy for the voluntary sector where its relationships with its statutory counterpart are based on the emerging principle of 'social dialogue'. This presupposes the development of an enabling State which is engaged in dialogue and partnership and which allows bottom-up responses to emerge from voluntary organisations and community groups. This ideal form of a responsive and enabling State envisages a realistic transition in the relationship from 'separate dependency' to 'integrated dependency'. The inherent implication in such a relationship is that it represents an incorporation of the voluntary sector by the State, with the attendant dangers of formalisation, based on the necessity of consensus politics.

The future contribution of the voluntary sector to an enhanced civil society in Ireland will depend greatly on the ability of the voluntary sector to respond imaginatively to
the challenges posed by both closer co-operation and dependence on the State and the encroachment of for-profit principles deriving from the influence of the commercial sector. The relevance of many voluntary organisations in contemporary Irish society will also be tested by their ability to adjust to a post-modern society where the requirements of reflexive modernisation are increasingly felt in demands for accountability and user lead initiatives from within organisations. In the transition to a post-modern society, the challenge of social policy is to respond reflexively to changing needs and demands. The suggestions in the Green Paper point towards a more integrated working relationship with the State. Here risks the dangers of formalisation and incorporation, unless the State also recognises its responsibilities in meeting the reality of openness and accountability.

The desire by Irish officialdom to apply the rubric of 'civil society' to the amalgam of relationships between the voluntary sector and the State will prove meaningless, unless it is accompanied by a recognition that statutory initiatives must also respond to the interventions of free citizens who demand accountability and participation in decision making, as of right. The desires of a critical citizenry may manifest themselves in an energetic voluntary sector who work in partnership with a reformed State. Such a conjunction of interests provides the best hope for a blossoming of civil society.

Bibliography


London.


Appendix

1. The Social Policy Research Unit in UCC, commissioned between June 25th and July 23rd, 1996, a national omnibus opinion survey of attitudes towards the voluntary sector and civic responsibility. The survey was carried out by the Taylor Nelson AGB polling company using a nationally representative sample of adults aged 15+. Interviews were carried out face-to-face in the home. Between 16 - 17 adults were interviewed in 60 different locations throughout the Republic of Ireland in accordance with predetermined interlocking quota controls.

The results of the Omnibus survey are weighted to reflect the population parameters of adults in the Republic of Ireland. These population parameters are derived from the 1991 Census of Population, produced by the Central Statistics Office.

2. During 1996, the Social Policy Research Unit in UCC undertook a national study of the attitudes of respondents in voluntary organisations. The study was concerned with providing information on the degree of change faced by voluntary organisations in relation to service provision, organisational re-structuring, volunteer recruitment and funding requirements. Voluntary organisations were also asked to give their views on the changing roles of the State and the Church and the primary influences, which have affected the voluntary sector. The purpose of the study was to assess the structural factors affecting the potential of the Irish voluntary sector to contribute to a reinvigorated civil society.

A random sample was drawn from the Directory of National Voluntary Organisations, Social Service Agencies and Other Useful Public Bodies, which was published by the National Social Service Board in 1994. From this directory, 566 voluntary organisations, representing a wide variety of organisational types, were sent postal questionnaires. 223 questionnaires were returned. Follow-up interviews were implemented with a selection of voluntary organisations who participated in the survey.