

The unequal victims

Loughgall Truth and Justice Campaign

ISLAND (40) PAMPHLETS

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Introduction

On 8 May 1987 eight members of the East Tyrone brigade of the IRA were shot dead by the SAS in Loughgall, a small village in County Armagh. A civilian who happened to be driving near the scene was also killed by the SAS team and his brother was severely wounded. The IRA unit had set out to blow up the police station in Loughgall, unaware that the security forces had prior knowledge of this operation and had been lying in wait for two days.

Controversy erupted in the immediate aftermath of the shootings. The security forces at first attempted to suggest that the two civilian casualties had been part of the IRA operation, then admitted that this was not the case.

Controversy also surrounded the killing of the IRA men. When it was revealed that the SAS squad outnumbered the IRA unit by three to one, it was asked why no attempt had been made to arrest them, and the accusation was levelled that the SAS had deliberately pursued a 'shoot to kill' policy. Furthermore, the security forces claimed that the IRA men had exchanged shots with them – and, indeed, that the two civilians had been killed in the 'crossfire' –while the relatives claimed that no such exchange ever took place.

When the date of an inquest was repeatedly postponed the relatives of those killed at Loughgall finally came together as the *Loughgall Truth and Justice Campaign* and set about lobbying for answers to the many questions which surrounded the SAS ambush. One of the primary reasons the relatives felt they needed such clarity was to allow them to reach an adequate sense of closure in the process of grief and bereavement.

However, they repeatedly found that one major barrier always intruded – the demonisation they repeatedly experienced at the hands of the media for being 'the relatives of IRA men'. Except within their own local communities they could not find avenues through which they could tell their side of the story – as grieving relatives who had lost either a son, a brother or a father.

In early 2001 members of the group approached the Community Think Tanks Project, aware that it made itself available to all sections of our divided community as a vehicle for telling personal stories, and a means by which these stories could be shared with others. A series of group meetings was organised and this pamphlet is an account of the discussions which ensued.

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The unequal victims

Portrayed as monsters

The members of the Loughgall Truth and Justice Campaign, in their attempts to have the facts behind the events of 8 May 1987 fully disclosed, have faced one particularly difficult barrier – the hostile image which has been created not only with regard to their loved ones but with regard to themselves.

Those who were killed at Loughgall are always portrayed in the media as ‘monsters’, as evil people. No-one wants to know that they were all real people, with their own individual personalities, that they each had families – that they were our loved ones.

They have been demonised out of recognition. My young children once asked me: what happened to Uncle Declan? And when I told them about what happened at Loughgall they looked confused and said: but some people told us they were just terrorists. And this demonisation isn’t only coming from the Brits, you get it from the Catholic Church and right down through certain elements within our own community. And whenever our children go to school other children cast such attitudes up at them, attitudes they have picked up in school or in their own homes.

When Jim was murdered, his sister Tara was twelve. And when she went to school there was certain people who were not allowed to speak to her – yet it has got nothing to do with Tara; but they wouldn’t speak to her because of Jim.

Even when they are not faced with rejection, the children are not seen as people in their own right – they have become ‘the children of the Loughgall victims’. That incident is gone over time and again, and the kids become part of it all, they’re not allowed to be known for themselves. And they have a huge resentment at being labelled as only that. And I’m sure that happens in many other families who have lost loved ones.

It happens to us adults too. People say: oh, you’re so-and-so’s sister, or so-and-so’s mother – and you begin to lose your own identity.

The relatives have found themselves being portrayed as negatively as their dead loved ones – guilt by association.

We were also constantly presented in the media as ‘IRA relatives’ – it was like using a dirty word to describe us. They wouldn’t see us simply as

bereaved relatives – that didn't suit many people, we had to be presented as something more than that, something evil.

Throughout the last thirty years whole families have been criminalised. And that happened on both sides of the border. Once you had any taint of Republican connections, the whole state system began to kick in against you. And other people were so intimidated they were afraid to be associated with you, it was terrible the amount of fear that the state could impose – and the media were part of it.

I was actually down in Dublin when Patrick was killed, and I had been living in the same house for three or four years. And to this day I have never had one of my neighbours come and say to me: I'm sorry about your brother. Not one person mentioned him, and it wasn't because they didn't know what had happened, for it was on television, yet not one person mentioned it when I came back after the funerals.

Once you say who you are, you know that your name just registers and you can sense ears pricking up and you imagine people going: oh, here we are, these are the troublemakers. And that's just ongoing and it hasn't changed today, it's no better than it was 14 years ago.

That image, which the media in particular have largely been responsible for creating about us, follows us everywhere. If we have a public meeting, or if there is media attention on a certain aspect of the incident, or about the present lobbying campaign in which we are involved, the way we are portrayed is this: these people are representing eight IRA men – and 90% of the time they completely ignore that there's actually a civilian involved –but those words 'relatives of eight IRA men' automatically creates this negative image. The media don't actually look at *our* hurt or *our* needs. Take the time we met Adam Ingram¹: once it got out that we were meeting him as a victims' group, the angle that was put out by the media was: but you're not victims, you're the family members of IRA men, how can you call yourselves 'victims'? And in any of the interviews we were asked to give, none of the journalists ever asked about *us*, all their questions followed the same line: do you realise what he was out doing that night? It didn't matter what our feelings were, they weren't interested in that. In fact, our meeting with Ingram was actually supposed to be about how we had been treated as people who had been left behind after their loved ones had been killed. Now, no other victims' group would have been treated like that; the media wouldn't have insisted upon going into the background of the deceased or what they were doing. So, in terms of our grieving and our needs, we can't get past this image they have created around us.

And after we left our meeting with Adam Ingram we faced verbal opposition from the members of another victims' group. Now, in my opinion, they

1 The then Security Minister with responsibility for Victims.

should have empathised with us, because they too had each lost somebody who was close to them. So they should have been looking at things the way I was: I had lost somebody, I had only one brother and I had lost that brother. And anyone who has lost a loved one should have felt the same way as I felt. But they actually assumed, because of who my brother was or what he was doing, that somehow I shouldn't have had any feelings for him. And we come up against this attitude everywhere: from ordinary members of the public right up to the authorities. You even get it from other victims' groups; as soon as you mention who you are, or who you're related to, it's sort of: oh, we don't want them alongside us, because they've a bad image, they're representing people who were actually killed when they were out bombing... we don't want them associated with us. And I'm talking about that happening among our own people, you get that attitude from among your own: that it mightn't be good to have somebody from 'that group' alongside us if we go into a meeting here; it mightn't be good to have somebody that's representing IRA men; it would be better to have somebody who's representing civilians.

And because of this image you had to be on your guard *all* the time. The fact that journalists were only interested in one issue meant that you couldn't talk to them freely, because you didn't know if what you said would be misinterpreted. I learnt that the hard way. I was doing an interview over the phone with this girl and when it was finished she said: can I now ask you something 'off the record'? And I said 'sure'. Now, up to that point I had kept my personal opinion to myself, because when speaking about our campaign I was in a way representing nine different family groups, and not everybody had the same political persuasions as I had, so it wouldn't have been fair for me to give my personal opinion, because my opinion might have been taken as everybody's opinion, which wasn't the case. Anyway, she asked me: how did you feel when you heard the news about what happened to your brother? And I said I was devastated. And she said: no, I mean, what did you feel about what he was doing? What were your personal feelings when you heard that he was actually involved in trying to blow up a barracks and kill people? And I said: first of all, he wasn't trying to kill anybody that night; I accept he was trying to blow up the barracks, yes. And she said: do you agree with what he was fighting for? And I said: I do; my personal opinion of my brother will never change, I agree with what he was doing, and nobody will ever change that. And the next morning the headlines were: 'I had no problem with what my brother was doing.' And the paper then quoted this other woman saying: 'how dare she say she has no problem with her brother murdering people!' And I spent about a week trying to clarify that that was my own personal opinion –which had been given 'off the record' – and not the campaign's opinion. That's the way these things can be used against you, and that line was taken even by Adam Ingram when he asked: you've no problem with what they were doing? I still stand by everything I said, but people should look beyond that to the fact that we all have been left grieving.

We always tried from the start to keep the actual campaign non-political, which is difficult to do because it was an actual political situation. The way

we looked at it was straightforward: we as family members wanted to get behind the truth of what happened that day to our loved ones. And *irrespective* of what our loved ones were doing that night, we still need – indeed, we have a right, the same as anyone else – to know the truth about their deaths.

I must be honest, but when our campaign to uncover the truth first started some of us doubted, myself included, that we were ever going to get anything from the British authorities, and, anyway, why should we have anything to do with them? But I can see the sense of it now to at least expose them and to stand up to them and force the real story to be told. But I can remember at one time thinking: what's the point? We know what they are, we know their system, we are totally against it. But I think that people are now saying: let's talk about everything which has transpired over the last thirty years, let's deal with it – it's part of the dialogue that has to take place with other people – because you are having to confront them about themselves, much as they have always been confronting us about who we are.

It is especially difficult to go to the authorities when you know the way they reacted to the incident at the time. They weren't just content to shoot our boys, they gloated about it. And what was more, they put out all the dirt of the day they could get: they said the boys shot so many more people... or that Jim was supposed to be responsible for murdering Sir Norman Stronge and others, despite the fact that Jim was walking about the streets day in, day out, and nobody ever tried to arrest him for these murders. Yet the minute he's dead suddenly he was responsible for all these deaths. It's unbelievable how far they can go.

The authorities presented this picture that all those who opposed the state were mindless, violent, evil people who had no human background at all. The state wanted the public to believe that if they could just get rid of these bad people, kill them, do whatever they had to with them, then the conflict here would all be over. But we know the reality: there were whole communities opposed to everything that was happening in this society and who supported those who fought to change it.

The political context and closure

It is the political context surrounding the Loughgall incident which the relatives feel creates the greatest barrier to their search for the truth.

We cannot separate what happened at Loughgall from its political context. I mean, everyone who lives in this country is virtually a victim in some way or another. And, for me, there should be equality of victimhood, there shouldn't be flesh made of one and fish of the other. Yet the way in which each incident is presented is very much weighted around whatever context the British have set it in. It is a very politicised context.

For a lot of people within the communities we come from, what our loved ones were doing that night would be seen as legitimate activity. The activities of the IRA would have been supported and they would have been seen as people to be looked up to within the community.

Yes, within our community there was an understanding of the reasons behind the actions people took. People felt they were fighting a just war, were fighting against an oppressive state. And I think that the story needs to be told in that context, so that people can understand that it was not some deviant criminal act that was taking place perpetrated by 'disturbed' people; these were people who were coming from the same principled position as maybe a policeman who felt he was upholding the law in his society, or a British soldier who felt he was protecting the Realm or whatever. I think that it needs to be stated that many people in our community would have seen these people as soldiers fighting for a just cause.

Admittedly, not everyone within the Nationalist community would be so supportive, but that is exactly because these issues are usually dealt with within a context determined by the British. The real political context, and the real underlying issues, rarely get talked about. Such as the question of: who controls the state; were the state's actions right or wrong? Such issues are never talked about. But the deeper context *must* be talked about. This incident, as with other incidents over the past thirty years, was not something that just happened out of nowhere; there was a context, a political context, there was a situation which caused it, and which caused people to get caught up in it, and which determined how the whole thing has panned out ever since.

It even determines the context in which people are now trying to resolve the conflict. People are now talking, especially since the Good Friday Agreement, about 'victims', and nominally there's supposed to be a parity in the treatment of people. But that is not the case –because the context, as determined by the British and the media, still prevails, and this creates a difference in how the numerous deaths and bereavements are viewed and responded to.

All people who find themselves in a situation of bereavement search for some kind of 'closure' that will let them go on with their lives. But it is so difficult to find that closure if you have something like our situation. On that particular day when we met Adam Ingram, a certain DUP member had wound up all the people in [the victims' group] FAIR who had been holding a picket outside our meeting. And there was one woman who started shouting that our Patrick had murdered this, that and the other person, and she accused him of murdering her husband. The point is: she went home that day feeling exactly the same as we did –consumed with her grief –and I think that's the point that everybody is missing. People forget that feelings of grief are equal, they are the same for everyone. But we have not been allowed to grieve in the same way as everybody else because of the way the death of our loved ones is presented, and the way *we* are presented at the same time. There should be

a natural process of grieving for everyone, leading to closure, but we can't reach that stage when so many things are always being shoved in our face.

Even Adam Ingram, the Minister for Victims, told us that we didn't have the same right to grieve, for how could we compare our grief to victims of the Omagh bomb and incidents like that.

There was another sad thing about that particular day. When that woman walked away from Stormont you could see she was still looking distraught, yet shortly afterwards, when some Sinn Féin MLAs took us into the Stormont canteen – so that we could recover our composure – didn't we see the same DUP man who had been winding up the ones from FAIR sitting there with two other prominent DUP politicians, tucking into a 3-course meal seemingly unconcerned about it all. They didn't even invite any of them in to join them.

I think the biggest thing about closure is knowing 'why?' Why did it happen? And it's the same for people who have been involved in the British forces and who have lost people. If they had fought in Flanders in the First World War and came back to a hero's welcome from the whole community, they would feel resolved about it. But because the reason things have happened here is disputed by our divided communities – was it right, was it wrong? – and remains a contested issue, I don't think anyone will make any sense of it unless the overall political situation can be understood. Why was this, was there sense to it, was it right or wrong?

What erupted here in this society was something which, although it embraced the entire community, was not of the making of ordinary people. And yet the thrust of much of all this 'community relations' stuff is that the problem has been largely put down to people as individuals; you know – Protestants and Catholics fighting each other. And people are being asked: well, how do you, as an individual, deal with your neighbours in the Protestant community, and Protestants are being asked the same about us. And I think people are only made to feel *more* isolated by such an approach, because in reality it is *not* down to them individually. I think that it is this *whole society* which has caused these problems, so therefore it can only really be tackled at that level.

But to do that, there has to be an acceptance at society level that: look, things badly went wrong in this country, and because of that you had eight young men embarking on violent activity against the state, and this is not a normal situation. So, to make sense of it we have to determine *why* people felt forced to take certain actions. We have to explore the whole circumstances, rather than just pretending that these young men – and hundreds of others like them – suddenly decided to act in some kind of crazy, mad way against society. For that is how the media always portrays it, and how the state portrays it. But that is totally inadequate; there needs to be an acceptance that there was a war in this country, and that people had disputes which they will eventually have to resolve. And until that happens I don't think you are ever really going to come to closure on it.

And while we wait for that larger picture to be explored, I think we all need to undertake our own personal explorations – *all* of us in this society. Someone who had been connected with the State forces should be able to share with others how they felt about it, how they felt about their husband going to work as a policeman or whatever, and what it meant to them as a family, especially if he had been killed or injured. Likewise, people like us should be able to tell the story about our loved ones and what motivated them to engage in what they did. We all need to talk from a straight-up honest point of view and say: look, let's share our stories... in the hope that that might help us to resolve things. All those stories need to be documented for future generations, if nothing else, and people should be able to say: this is how we felt about it – rather than having to go round the bush or tiptoe through what's acceptable and what's not acceptable. We all need to be allowed to give a clear statement of our feelings.

The fact that the 'story' of what has happened here is controlled by government creates other problems for us. In a normal situation when someone dies people usually resolve their grief with the support of their families and with their community. Usually everything that is necessary for 'closure' is contained within the family and the community. But because people in our situation are forced to appeal to the Department of Foreign Affairs in Dublin or to the British government to resolve those missing elements that are needed for proper closure, you can get deeply hurt, because you almost open yourself up to allowing *them* to decide whether your grief is legitimate or not – just because the circumstances of the deaths are in dispute. And, especially for the children, unless that dispute is resolved and there is a clear understanding of the political context in which their father died, they will never make sense of it or come to terms with it. Until then, 'normality' is impossible, because it wasn't a normal situation.

And the dispute still continues. The state especially has a continuing need to dehumanise the Republican struggle, to rob it of any legitimacy. I think for a lot of us we would accept that policemen and the British forces have all suffered terrible traumas, but some of them feel the need to legitimise their war against us by demonising us. And, as has been said, some of these 'community relations'-type activities try to pretend that now we're in a normal context and now let's resolve it. But they want to resolve it *outside* of its political context, and that just can't be done.

Let's face it, not having an understanding of the wider political context must make things just as hard for British soldiers' kids, or policemen's kids or UDR men's kids, when they try to understand what the hell happened to their fathers. For if their fathers' deaths are just being put down to random acts by deviant people who took this notion to go out and break the law, that's hardly going to help those children come to terms with their loss. But by understanding that there was something badly wrong within the *entire* system in this country, which led to everyone getting caught up in an ongoing conflict, it puts the loss of their parents into a different perspective. I think that only such an

understanding will give those left behind to grieve the opportunity to make some sense of it all.

Everyone can gain by an honest exploration of the context. For that context corrupted whatever normal activities a police force would usually have, the British system was corrupted, their legal system was corrupted completely, so many institutions in society became subject to the war effort against the IRA. And the only way out of that, the only way to undo the effects of that corruption, is to first of all admit that certain things happened as part of this war effort. For example, with regard to telling the truth about the extrajudicial killings that happened in Loughgall, if they were to put their hands up and say: look, we killed these people, because this was part of a war effort and we saw it as a necessary evil. But to continue to deny that reality only prevents the corruption being undone.

Ordinary people caught up in extraordinary circumstances

By establishing the political context within which their loved ones had died, the families felt they could also begin to reassert their basic humanity.

Our loved ones are usually portrayed as psychopaths, which we all know they weren't, for we all could see the human side of them. And it is very difficult to share that with others.

Sometimes you couldn't even share the fact that you were related to them – even up to recently you always had to be careful who you talked to about certain things. I'm thinking of myself, for at my work there was nobody I could tell. I had to go back to work very soon after Tony died because if I took off too long people would notice, they would enquire why you were off, and you couldn't afford to say too much. Now, some people might have said: well, you should have stood up and said you were proud of who you were – but it's not just as easy as that, it can be really difficult at times.

Our people are portrayed as the villains, because they were out on active service when they got killed. But they were our loved ones, our family members, and *we* know what they really were. And they wouldn't have been out there only for the political situation – and you cannot get away from that.

Even not that long ago, during the time we were over in Europe, there were things in the English papers about the incident. Their line was that these people were murderers, and so they'd dig up little stories. Like: 'this person killed my brother', or 'this person killed my husband'. In actual fact none of our ones had ever been found guilty of any of those murders. I remember Mummy was very upset at some things that were said in the paper, she was saying things like: 'there must be something you can do, can you not sue these papers?' But this is the image that has now been created. Now, my

brother had four children, and at the time he was killed the oldest was seven, so they wouldn't really have their own image of him. Yet this is the image they're getting from the papers. Now, the wider family will tell them what their father was really like, but when these things appear in a newspaper, it's very hard to counteract it. So the children would be exposed to that image.

People who knew the person will know exactly what they were like. But somebody who knows nothing about the person or about the family, what are they going to base their perceptions on other than what they have read? And I don't know how you actually counter what is said out there, I don't know how you do that. Especially when it comes to our case, when it comes to actual media coverage they're not interested in how we see things as family members. There's always a barrier there from people, including at government level, whether here or with the Department of Foreign Affairs in Dublin. For example, our group is seen as 'different' from other victims' groups. We've been told that there's no comparison between ourselves and the Bloody Sunday group. But surely the feelings of the family members in both groups are exactly the same? But our loved ones were 'guilty' people, and that in some way is supposed to take away from how we feel about them, or how other people should see them. This image of guilt is what they see first, not them as victims, and therefore they don't see us as being equal victims either.

Many people will have already closed their minds and won't even want to read this pamphlet. But you might get some who will read it – they might just be curious as to what they were like – and I suppose if even a few people realised there was a human side to these men, it would be a small step.

Our Patrick was really humorous, and he did some witty things. And then you read some of the things said about him and it doesn't add up. But you don't know that side of the person, and I think it would be a good thing at some stage to talk to people who were with him, or did things with him, for you don't know that person completely. Sometimes there can be an inner conflict, and you're going: did I really know that person at all? You *do* know that person, 'cause he's your brother or whatever, but it's really strange, when you read something in the paper, it's almost like having a double personality on somebody. Yet people have this perception that they were murderers, scumbags, whatever, but if you take them out of that, they were the brother, the son, the father.

It's like with policemen and British soldiers. Republicans might tend to categorise them as simply agents of an oppressive state, but I'm sure when they go home to their wives and kids they're warm, family people like everyone else.

Of course, they're all human.

Exactly, they're all human, and they're caught up into a situation... What is it that turns a world upside down and makes ordinary people, coming from ordinary homes, do extra-ordinary things –that's the story that needs to be

told and accepted. We need to break the myth that the whole thing was down to a deliberate conspiracy by a small group of individuals, rather than people who are victims of a whole society that was so messed up. Look at this country: neighbours talking to one another one day then shooting each other the next. What happened to cause that?

But cops and the UDR, and people like that, go out and get paid to do a job and that's the difference. It's trying to come to terms with the question: what did it take to make a daddy of four children go out and fight for his country, for no gain, only his principles?

But even for policemen and such, there's more to it as well. I mean, for anyone going out to do a job which you might get shot at, there's more to it than money, with your family living in constant fear and all that.

Some people would say our loved ones were brainwashed, or that they were so stupid they were talked into doing this. But you have to accept that they did what they thought was right, and they wanted to do that, and they were for the most part backed by the communities they came from and their families. Nobody put a gun to their heads or brainwashed them in any way; but I think some people think that.

Even in the media, apart from the stories and the language they use, see the photographs they use? They use horrific pictures of them, they actually look criminal – is that part of the master plan to prove they were scumbags, like?

When it was made known that we were going to meet Adam Ingram, this journalist rang me up and asked if I had a photograph of Patrick, to put in alongside a news story. I gave him one where Patrick was holding Cianan, who was a baby at the time, and it was used in the paper. And somebody said to me that it was a great photograph to have got put in for it showed a different side from what had always been presented. The photograph which had always been used was one where he had been in Gough Barracks and he was refusing to put up his head to get his picture taken, and somebody is actually holding it up for him. So the photograph I gave them was a good image to put across. Someone said to me that that image probably wound a lot of people up, for it showed that there was a human side to somebody who had been portrayed in most articles as the very opposite.

Absent family members

When it came to talking about their feelings, whether in regard to their loved ones, or the impact of the incident at Loughgall upon their families – a problem arose. To begin with, many of those feelings had remained largely un-voiced outside the family circles.

Some of us have talked together about our feelings, some haven't. I suppose we never came together as a group and talked about feelings and what effect what happened that day had on each of our lives. Some people want to keep those feelings private, and we must respect them for that.

It was so many years after what happened that we first got together. I mean, we all wouldn't have known each other until probably the inquest, that's eight years later, we never got together before that. Now there are some families who live near each other, they would know each other. Then you had that reluctance to go to people in case you gave them problems. There was many a time Daddy wanted to go up and see Mrs Hughes but he was reluctant to do it, he was afraid people would make a connection with him being the father of an IRA man, and maybe say there was something in this after all, maybe Mr Hughes was in something after all.

Everybody just tried to get on with the shock of it themselves, for it is still very raw. But after eight years we did meet.

Some family members, unable to share their feelings openly during the discussions, agreed to present something in writing about their loved ones, and the following extracts have been taken from their submissions. However, while everyone was able to present a 'pen-picture' of their loved one, few felt able to describe their own personal experience of the event which engulfed their family. And a few families could not engage at all, so painful was their loss, leading one of the group to comment: "that in itself is a story worth telling, that people feel like that."

Jim [Lynagh] was a happy, outgoing child with a ready smile and easy personality; friendships came easily to him and people seemed attracted to his zest for life. Educated by the Christian Brothers he was nevertheless prepared to challenge his teachers over perceived notions of right and wrong. It was clear that he had a strong sense of justice – perhaps due to his working-class background and identity. Neither of his parents involved themselves in politics but Jim's growing up coincided with the rise of the Civil Rights movement. The unravelling story of injustice in the North made it inevitable that he would be drawn into the unfolding events. As he watched the state react violently to the peaceful protests Jim was only one of many who felt that an argument for armed resistance was easily made. At the age of seventeen, and unknown to his family, he joined the IRA. Within a year he was injured while on active service and captured by the British Army. Although he suffered major injury and narrowly escaped death he made a full recovery and spent the next five years in Long Kesh. On release from jail Jim made it clear, to the great disappointment of his family, that he would not be ceasing his activities, and, indeed, he was to spend a further four years in jail. We last saw him on the day of his 31st birthday. As usual he was in good humour and he made the most of his visit home, for by now visits home had become occasional and fleeting. When we heard the news of his death at Loughgall a deep sadness descended over our home. An ordinary boy had

been plucked from his life by extraordinary events and thrown into a war not of his making. With his comrades and friends we waked and buried Jim as a soldier of Ireland. He had lived and died that others might be free. Our pain was little to pay for such an ideal.

Tony [Gormley] left school when he was sixteen, commenced work in the engineering industry and trained as a fitter-welder. He was a quiet, unassuming person, but one who was very single-minded and knew what he wanted out of life. He could fall in with any company in a social gathering and have a good time with them. Tony liked to see others do well for themselves; he hated gossip or running people down, and was well respected in the local community. Tony didn't get involved in the IRA because of any desire for power or glory, nor was it for financial gain – he had good prospects of being quite wealthy and he would have inherited land from his father – nor was he pushed into it by his family or anyone else. He was from a stable background, intelligent and well-adjusted. He got involved primarily because he hated injustice, and when he saw what was happening to the Nationalist people he felt he had to do his bit to change things. Martin Hurson's death on hunger strike had a profound effect on him. As well as suffering a lot of harassment at police and UDR checkpoints – as well as house searches – Tony had been arrested and detained for 7-day periods on quite a number of occasions. However, he was never charged with any offence.

Padraig [McKearney] was born ten weeks prematurely. On both sides of his family there was a strong Republican background. On his paternal side his grandfather and granduncles were in Coalisland on Easter Monday 1916. On his maternal side his great granduncle was executed for being a 'Young Irelander' and another was deported for life to Tasmania. His grandfather fought in the North Roscommon brigade of the IRA from 1916 to 1923. Padraig was a very normal young boy with high academic abilities, and Irish folklore – alongside Gaelic football – was his first love. At secondary school he obtained good 'O' level results, but then, just prior to returning for his sixth year, he was arrested and accused of taking part in an attack on the local post office. Six weeks later his innocence was eventually proven – he was actually with the local priest that evening, bringing him to administer the last rites to his dying grandfather. Unfortunately, those six weeks were to change his life. When he tried to resume school the principal refused to accept him after his 'prison record', even though he had been found innocent. With the escalation of the war in the Six Counties his interests – now with a lot more time on his hands to think about things – drew him into the ranks of the IRA. He was arrested in late 1973, this time accused of planting a bomb, and served four years in prison. While he was in prison his brother Sean was killed when a bomb prematurely exploded, but Padraig was refused permission to attend the funeral. In prison he was subjected to numerous beatings, on one occasion getting his head stitched with black sewing thread – no freezing, no hygiene. When he was released he could never travel anywhere without constant harassment, and was imprisoned again in 1980. During this period

of imprisonment he endured 53 days of anguish while another brother Thomas, along with six others, was on hunger strike in Long Kesh. (His third brother, Kevin, was to be shot dead in a sectarian attack in 1992; an uncle was also to be fatally wounded in that attack.) In 1983 Pdraig was one of two Tyrone men to escape from Long Kesh – that was one of his proudest days. On Pdraig's escape he returned to active service –not for money or status, but for his principles – until his execution by the SAS at Loughgall.

Seamus [Donnelly] was the fourth child in a family of eight. After leaving school Seamus assisted his father on the family farm and was always ready to lend a helping hand to a neighbour when the need arose. He was the life and soul of the family home and always liked to play pranks and jokes on his brothers and sisters. Seamus was a member of 'Tir Eoghain Freewheelers' and took part in many sponsored cycle events to raise money for different charities. He was also a musician and loved to play the banjo at parties and singsongs. Seamus' first encounter with the Crown forces was when he was fifteen years old. He was walking along the road, after assisting a friend with excavation work. It was raining heavily and his clothes were soaking wet. An army patrol held him there for two hours and eventually a police Land Rover drove him to Gough Barracks where he was kept in his wet clothes for several more hours. On several other occasions Seamus was harassed at roadblocks and received many a blow from the security forces. He finally felt that such injustices meted out to him and his community were not to be tolerated and he joined the IRA as a Volunteer. After Seamus and his comrades were assassinated at Loughgall, we had a lot of people calling at our home to offer their condolences. My family were deeply distressed at that time. The army and police set up roadblocks on the roads leading to our house and created a lot of hassle for the local people. On the day of Seamus' funeral they drove their big army trucks up and down the road until it was covered in mud. We had to walk through muck all the way to the chapel with the funeral cortege. At the chapel the police were everywhere – they wouldn't allow us to bury our son with dignity. The days and nights after the funeral were very lonesome. The younger members were inconsolable over losing their brother – he had been their idol, they just adored him. We received plenty of hassle in the coming months from the British forces. Every time some of the family were stopped at roadblocks the soldiers would ask about Seamus and sneer at the same time. Our house had been searched on numerous occasions, and on the last house search before Seamus' death my young family were ordered out of bed at 6 o'clock in the morning to allow the police to carry out a very intensive search. When I asked one of the police officers what he was looking for he told me to mind my own business. Outside, a member of the security forces was walking about with his face totally masked. I was really concerned for my family's safety. When they were leaving I scolded the sergeant in charge; he just turned and said: Mrs Donnelly, it won't be long until I'm back here with the bad news about Seamus. I didn't understand what he meant but a few weeks later Seamus was murdered at Loughgall. The police sergeant never came back to give us

the bad news. In fact, no member of the security forces came to tell us he was dead, that task was left to our neighbours.

Declan [Arthurs] was a robust and sturdy child and his personality was always very clearly defined. The ‘quiet one’, he was single-minded and focused on what he wanted. He had an almost wicked smile and laugh, which often caught you off-guard, but his most striking feature was his sparkling blue eyes. All our children were active in various community activities and Declan and his brothers served as altar boys. When the close-knit community of Galbally, where Declan grew up, lost one of its sons in the Hunger Strike, Martin Hurson, it was to make a deep impact upon Declan. In the next years he was to experience continued harassment from the security forces and at the same time his political activities deepened, the exact nature of which always remained a mystery to the rest of the family. However, as police raids on the family home and harassment of Declan intensified we grew more concerned for his safety. His sudden death as a result of the Loughgall incident was a tremendous shock and devastating blow to the family. The family continues to feel his loss and find it difficult to talk about him in anything but the present tense. We imagine him fourteen years on, how he would look and where he would be in his life. He will always remain an important component in our lives and a place will always be reserved for him at the family table. Sometimes a silent friend can be your best friend –he still gives us all inspiration.

Patrick [Kelly] was born in Carrickfergus, a predominantly Loyalist town. His family received a Mass card through the post with ‘UVF–Get Out or else’ written on it, and subsequently the family moved to Dungannon from where their father came. Patrick stayed on in Carrickfergus to finish his O-levels. Soon after he arrived in Dungannon he was stopped by a UDR patrol. When he gave them his name and address they beat him up in the street. A neighbour found him and brought him home to his mother. This was to be the start of many times being harassed and beaten up by the Crown forces. Patrick was incarcerated on the word of Patrick McGurk as part of the supergrass trials. He was kept in prison for 22 months and released when McGurk withdrew his charges – he was never convicted of anything any other time. Patrick’s killing is a massive loss for our family. He was the only boy and the eldest of five children. He is talked about in some way every day. Patrick was married with four children –one of whom was born two weeks after he was killed. She will never have the opportunity to say ‘Daddy’. When you see his family grown up you feel extremely proud. You can’t help but feel sad too because they never had the opportunity to share their lives with him. Fourteen years later it is still very hard to reconcile with his loss. He was a kind, humorous person and every one has such respect for him, even after all these years. He fought honourably for his country. He loved his family dearly and because of this did not want for them the life he had endured. He wanted to make positive changes so his children would grow up feeling secure in our country. He is around us every minute of every day in our lives.

Innocence denied

It was the wife and one of the daughters of Anthony Hughes, who was the innocent civilian caught up in the ambush (along with his brother Oliver, who was shot 14 times but survived) who were most prepared to talk about the actual event and their feelings of loss. The fact that her husband's innocence was still a matter Mrs Hughes had to repeatedly restate over the years was something she found hard to cope with.

Not so long ago I went on one of these cross-community outings and I fell into conversation with this woman, and she said: oh, you're Mrs Hughes, you're the woman whose husband was shot at Loughgall? I said: yes, he was, he was an innocent party. Oh, she said to me, they said he wasn't. What can you say to that? Do I have to go into all the facts every time I meet strangers? The one thing I did say was that with her husband being a policeman the only difference is that whoever shot him is probably doing time for it, but my husband's killer got off scot-free. But she didn't want to hear that, and you meet this all the time.

The other Loughgall relatives were extremely sympathetic to the Hughes's circumstances.

Mrs Hughes, you were pushed into that situation. Maybe some of us had been living in it before... but you can't just walk down the street and say to somebody who has the complete opposite opinion of you: well, this is the way it happened, it didn't happen the way you think. I think that it's terrible to always have to be confronted with that.

It was one thing the State taking on the IRA the way they did, you can understand that, there's a war going on, people knew what they were at. But in order to hide what they did to your husband they had to make him into everything they said they were against. They couldn't even turn around and say: look, we wronged you, and we want to deal with you properly.

Yes, it was always made out as an IRA thing. The depositions clearly stated that your husband was: 'deliberately shot from behind.' And that is a civilian we're talking about, and I would imagine that it's horrific for anyone to have to live with the fact that their husband/father was going about his normal business and some character, who is supposed to be upholding law and order, says he deliberately shot him dead from behind. It is something you will carry all your days, that the people who are supposed to uphold law and order can quite openly admit they can do such a thing. I mean, where will you feel safe, you're not going to feel safe anywhere? There's no proper closure for any of us here, but especially not for you and your three girls.

At first they tried to claim that all the ones who were shot were dressed the

same, in boiler suits. But Anthony had a jumper and a pair of trousers on him – his boiler suit was wrapped up in the boot of the car. They did everything they could to cover up; once you're dead they can say whatever they like about you and there's nothing you can do about it.

For your own grieving process, you need to be told the truth. But it's like you're up against the big guns, and because you know there's deliberate lies being told, you're never going to find closure until that all stops and the truth comes out. We're not looking the truth for the sake of revenge, it's for our own personal grieving, to allow ourselves to move on.

They did actually state in writing – in the state evidence at the inquest – that your husband was shot intentionally because they assumed he was part of the IRA unit, and yet, when they realised he wasn't, nobody has ever come and said: I'm sorry for what happened.

Not at all, they never bothered saying nothing. In fact, it was in one of the newspapers at the time about how the SAS gloated about what they had done, how they shot nine people at Loughgall and they didn't regret shooting the Hughes brothers.

I can see how the British feel they need to say what they can about IRA volunteers, for they're fighting against them, but to murder and then try to smear somebody who offered no threat to their state...

Our loved ones were at war with the British state, and as families we will take on the responsibility for telling the bereaved children – there's eight left fatherless – what happened, and why the state doesn't want to reveal the truth. But surely the state was not at war with an innocent mechanic? Surely they have a moral responsibility to your three children to at least provide *them* with a proper explanation of how their father died.

Mrs Hughes and her daughter Maura then spoke at length about their loss.

Deirdre was only four, Sheila was six and Maura wasn't eight when it happened, and we all went through a terrible time. Yet we were never offered any help, any counselling. Social workers would call very occasionally but they were more of an encumbrance than a help. If you wanted real help of any description there was none available. I had a priest in Aughnacloy, Father McHugh, and I swear to God I don't know how he was even bothered with me – I must have seemed away in the head. But every time I rang him – and in the beginning it was nearly every day – he came over to see me, and I thought that was very good of him. And then within three months wasn't he moved to Ardboe. And then there came Father Begley and he was very good as well. If it hadn't have been for them I don't know what I would have done. Even if they came for only five minutes you felt they really helped you in those five minutes. It was dreadful, what we all had to go through. We were promised an inquest for that following November but it never came about. In fact, it was years before they held one.

I was only seven and a half when Daddy was killed, and I remember times from before that and then afterwards – the differences. We were a nice wee family – Mummy, Daddy, and us three girls. Then there was Uncle Oliver. We lived in Caledon and things were good there, we were a normal family, and Uncle Oliver would be in and out of our house all the time, like, so it was nice, and we all got on great. Daddy worked at the back of the house, so he was never too far away, and Mummy was at home all the time. And every Sunday was like a ‘family day’, we used to go to Nutts Corner [market], it was one thing that was set because Daddy used to buy a lot of tools there every week. And on my seventh birthday we headed away to Butlins and had a great day. That’s my best memory, a lock of months beforehand.... I’m sorry about getting upset here... Daddy was very gifted, like, he was a mechanic, he could basically build anything; he bought us this swing and seesaw thing; he brought it home and got it all fixed up and I remember –it was so funny –he wanted to make sure it was safe so he had the first go, and the swing came crashing down! I think it was his weight that brought it down, it wasn’t that it was unsafe. He was a big child, along with all the rest of us. He was also very smart –so was Uncle Oliver, and, like, they didn’t go any further than maybe primary school – and he used to take me on a Sunday and go through what I had done that week at school, and then after I had my homework done he used to take me down on the bike to the end of the road, where there was this big hill, and I used to be taken up the Red Brae on my bike which I had got on my seventh birthday. Sometimes when Mummy and Daddy were going out, Uncle Oliver used to look after us for the evening, and we all got on great. And Daddy would never have lifted his hand to any of us, even though we tried his patience sometimes, especially me!

The circumstances on the morning after the incident at Loughgall are indelibly imprint in Maura’s memory.

That Friday he lifted me from school, and I just played away in the house, and I remember going to bed that night and he wasn’t home. And I was woken up early the next morning because my Auntie Margaret had made a noise dropping something in the bath. And that seemed odd to me, for Auntie Margaret would never be in our house at that time of the morning, and I went out to the living room and immediately asked: did Daddy come home last night? And Mummy started to cry and told us ... that Daddy ... had gone to Heaven... I’m sorry for getting upset again here... I suppose you don’t know what to think at that age, and Mummy and Auntie Margaret went out and we were sent to my granny and Auntie Celia’s, she looked after us all day. Then that night I just remember it coming on the TV about Loughgall and it came on about Daddy and Uncle Oliver, and my granny went over and switched it off, and said: the child shouldn’t be seeing that. Then we went home, and Daddy was brought to the chapel. And I remember at the graveyard my cousin Delores was holding the baby, and one of the photographers was trying to take their picture and I always thought that it wasn’t right to take a picture of somebody grieving, especially a child that age – she was only about four. Then life completely changed for us. Mummy took it very bad,

just wasn't the same. Mummy's a great mummy, she has done great for us, but things would be a lot different if Daddy was here now, a lot different.

The intrusion of the media into the family's grief, something which countless families have had to endure throughout the last thirty years, became unbearable.

Around that time there was a lot of reporters in around the house, and I remember my uncle threw out these ones this particular morning, and we were going: go on, go on! I don't like reporters, I don't like journalists, personally I think they're all snakes. The papers wrote a lot of lies about what happened. They said he was killed because he was 'caught in crossfire' that 'they were all wearing the same clothes' – they tried to make it out almost as if he deserved it. I think that the way the media handled it was the way the government wanted them to, and a lot of people would say: 'oh, he was at the wrong place, at the wrong time'. Which I always thought was wrong, because he had already been down that road a couple of times that day; it would have been quite easy for them to have rung through and find out who he was. And there was a lot of other things I was not happy about. Such as the fact that it took so long for an inquest. It was eight whole years, and when it came it was no inquest at all, it was a whitewash job. But it was the fact that you were promised it, and then a lock of days before it you would be told: oh, it's not coming off, and all this type of thing. And I'll give you another example of media intrusion, the fact that... I don't know what programme it was, but it actually showed Daddy lying dead in the car – it was horrific to see that.

The school environment could be both supportive and problematic for Maura and her sisters.

Everybody at school was okay, but it was hard when it came to things like parent-teacher meetings, or you know the way ones come into school and say: me and my daddy did this here, or that there. But, at the same time, in primary school we had good friends. My friend Joanne would never refer to her daddy whenever we were around, she was always very good like that. Then when I went to secondary school, in any of the debates they had about politics and things like that, I suppose I was anti-government in my views. And because of that I was just classified as 'Republican', but I was not. I have a mixture of friends, we're the most non-bigoted type of people, we're friends with everyone. And a teacher practically argued with me one day about the police, and I said: well, there was no police whenever my daddy was killed, or they could have stopped it all. And she said: and what would you do if your house was broken into, who would you phone! There are certain people who don't want to understand. Even those who are sympathetic say to you: oh yes, Loughgall, your dad was caught in the crossfire, wasn't he? And I always have to tell them: no, actually, he wasn't, there was no 'crossfire', the soldiers shot the gun into the back of his car deliberately.

Certain people often displayed a real insensitivity when dealing with the family's needs, as Mrs Hughes recalled:

They had no call to kill anybody at all, not one bit of it. Anthony shouldn't have been killed, none of them should have been killed, nor wounded. I mean, the Army was there for days, waiting on them lads. And never once did they at any time ever send us a personal wee bit of paper to say 'sorry', or anything to that affect. At the end of the day, 'sorry' wasn't going to bring Anthony back but it would still have meant something to us. After waiting four or five years, one day I rang up the Coroner's office in Portadown. And when he come to the phone I told him who I was and he said: 'you have my deepest sympathies, Mrs Hughes, but please don't be bothering me on the phone about this – let your solicitor do the work.' I said: 'excuse me,' I said, 'my solicitor is doing very little work, and you're doing even less, you're doing nothing, and it's time somebody done something, that's why I'm ringing you.' And this was after waiting four years, to be told not to 'bother' him! And then the annoyance they give you when you go looking compensation off them. A whole four years went past, and there I was a widow, with four children, on widow's benefit. I didn't even have a car; it was four whole years before they even gave anything for the car, and I never knew where it went or anything about it, there's probably a ton of cement on it somewhere so that nobody'll ever see it. There's hundreds of bullet holes in the back of it, like a strainer, through the whole back window and all – it was unbelievable.

I had learned from a young age that education was the way. Daddy used to sit down with me on a Sunday; even Uncle Oliver used to sit down with me. Our encyclopaedias came out every Sunday – learning was made fun. And then whenever Daddy was killed, Mummy tried to continue like that, but there wasn't as much drive, it just wasn't the same. There's Deirdre absolutely hates school now, and yet she is the brightest person I know.

Yes, it affected their education, particularly Deirdre's. She is a brain box, she can turn a computer inside out, but at that time see getting her to school, I just couldn't get her to go, that child just couldn't cope at all. If she saw Army passing in the front field, that child went straight into the wardrobe, she had nightmares – and they were all related to her daddy's death. It done an awful harm to her; and they all had to work hard for where they got to with their studies.

I have acted as Santa Claus since I was eight.

Maura had to grow up in a flash, she was only seven, and my nerves went completely, and I'm not right yet, and probably never will be. Where we lived there was nobody I could rely on, only myself, and I had to do my best. I took hiatus hernia out of the whole thing, it was holy murder, I was in hospital the following August getting it checked out and I was really ailing from the time Anthony was shot to that August. I never got over it yet, and by God I suffered with it. What with things like that and my nerves it got so bad at one stage I had to get a social worker to come round, the children were living on spuds and soup. And yet I can cook and bake; I just couldn't get back to it, all I could do was open tins of soup and give them spuds. And I

was so bad I asked the doctor to get me a home help, to help me over things for a while. So there comes this social worker round and what did she say? That all I was was lonely, and I was more fit to go out and do home help than I needed anybody coming in! No matter what you asked for you never got it. As time went on, I suppose a couple of years later, I got a wee job in the school giving out the meals and that sort of helped. But the shock of Anthony's death nearly killed me. I was really ill after it.

The financial situation was a problem from the start.

Anthony was 36 when he was murdered, and I was 40 in a couple of months, and they turned around and gave me a third-class pension – because of the stamps he hadn't on his card since he was 26 years of age. And then whenever I fixed his stamps – as I thought; I put £130.20 on his card to rectify it, thinking that I'll now get the same as any normal person for my pension –but I still get 89%, I don't even get the proper pension. They're doing me out of £7 a week yet, and I have been on that this 14 years coming now May. There's this big wallop of money came into the country now from Adam Ingram's office or whatever. That should be used to help people like us – although Sheila and Deirdre did get 10 driving lessons out of it, which was a blessing. But do you know what it's doing: it's keeping certain people –lawyers and all – in big jobs, that's what it's doing. I think there should be money out there for students and for anybody that's really in need, not to keep somebody running about with ledgers under their arm and they maybe don't even know what's in them. One morning I was listening to the radio and here didn't that lady come on, a lovely lady, whose husband died there not long back, he was awful years in a coma from the Enniskillen bomb. And she said she thought most of the help should go to the children and the widows in isolated areas, widows anywhere, and the teenage children trying to push their way into higher education. And she said as far as these other schemes being set up she didn't really see no call for them, they will tell you about this and that, this counselling stuff, but she said she was in the hospital and the people there couldn't have been nicer to her, and she couldn't understand why people were wasting money on these other things.

For ages Mummy used to look out the window at 7 o'clock –waiting for Daddy to come home, you know? It took a long time for us to adapt, to accept that things were never going to be the same again. I can remember us going to Nutt's Corner for the first time after it happened, it was terrible ... we only stayed a while then my aunt brought us home. It was really hard, it was really hard for everybody. At first we didn't talk much about him, it was too painful, but you just, slowly and surely, start talking about things again ... the good times. I always think of him as a good person. I always try to think of the good times, but you never get over it. And then you always think you should be doing more to clear his name and things like that, but then you get bogged down with everyday things.

But to think you can be just driving down the road and be shot down. He was up to town to get a part for this roundabout he was making for the children

and he was rushing home to get it finished, and there was no excuse whatever. If you go up behind a car and deliberately shoot into it, nobody can say that was an accident. And the IRA fired no shots, and yet they talk a bloody pile of nonsense about 'crossfire' and stuff like that there. There was no 'crossfiring' at all, because them other boyos done all the firing. It was all one-sided. If you had knew Anthony as a person he was the quietest, civilest person – and so was Oliver – that you would ever have met in a day's working. And to think that some cruel body could go and do what they done, it was unbelievable. And then that afterwards they got off scot-free and you never knew who done it or nothing. And you write letters galore, to here, London and everywhere – and "it's being looked into", you're told, but you never hear tell of it again.

We used to sit all hours of the morning writing letters, big long letters, even to Maggie Thatcher, but to no avail. At one time I wanted to become a solicitor so that I could fight all this.

Birthdays and times like that are the saddest. He would have made a point of taking half a day off, or he would have landed back at the house with a rake of buns, that sort of thing. And on Maura's birthday they all went away to Butlins for the day.

That hurts a lot, so it does.

Maura's at university now, her father would have been very proud of her, if he had been living today. She has worked hard in relation to anything she has got in the line of education.

Whenever you think of the future and, like, whenever you get married – who gives you away? My twenty-first birthday was very depressing...

Yes, she was very depressed that day.

We lost Daddy but we also lost an uncle; I mean, Oliver is not the same person he was before; he used to see a lot more of us, but over the years he has drifted away.

And she misses him terrible, for she was used to him around the house. He was an old bachelor and he was up and down all the time. It makes me very sad when I look at his photograph, he was very camera shy, and you can tell that in the photos. It actually gets harder as time goes on; I miss him terrible and I know they miss him too. When they go out I am on my own in the house and it's depressing.

Even at night time when we go out, on Saturday nights say, Mummy is up to 'high doh' worrying where we are. Even if I was in someone's house I would get a phone call to see if I was there all right. But we are clingy too: when we went to Belfast to our auntie's house we wouldn't let Mummy out without us, we barricaded the door! In fact, the first time we went to Belfast Mummy never got out at all! I'm now in Belfast and I get a 'phone call *every* day! Mummy is certainly not as easy-going as she used to be.

Finances can be very low but you don't always want to ask for something, you're reluctant. We were told there was a lack of pounds one day for something to do with victims and what did they do? Maura filled the form in and sent it into them and they gave it – about £100 a piece – to Sheila and Deirdre. They wouldn't give it to Maura, though, they said she wasn't able to put on the application form how it affected her. At seven years of age!

I think the government money is begrudged; they don't want to give it to you.

Grief like anyone else's

The attitude of outside agencies occasioned a last round of comments from the group members.

Members of our group have been in contact with the Department of Foreign Affairs in Dublin. We wanted their legal department to look at all the papers on the case and give us an independent legal opinion on it. But they have dragged out their response – it is now two years since we first approached them. And it was always a stalling thing. Finally, we managed to get out of them that the Attorney General's office had read through the material and believed that there was 'a suggestion' that there might have been a 'shoot to kill' aspect to the incident but not enough evidence to support it. We thought this was at least something we could use in our campaign, but then they told us that their comment was confidential!

The interest of the people in Foreign Affairs in the North is minimal, their main interest is to keep it quiet, hoping it will go away. I have to say this about the North: they have actually started to tackle some of the institutional changes that were identified, through the Good Friday Agreement, as being necessary for progress here. But see in the South? There's nothing! They're supposed to have set up this, that and the other body, but they haven't bothered to do any of it. They're just running it on the same basis as they do everything else. And that's a kind of paradox when you consider that it is the British who are assumed to be less concerned with the North. But the truth about it is that the South couldn't care less.

Recent talk of 'professional support' now being made available to victims met with a dubious response from the group members.

See these conferences that are held with that 'Victim Support' money? It's all kind of social services people; you know, middle-class kind of professional people. And I can remember seeing them one day on TV and thinking: the amount of money they would have put in to organise that conference and producing their glossy publications could have helped God knows how many victims to actually sit around a room like this and tell their stories. And it's wild frustrating. There was one last week, I was at it myself. I mean, alright, publications do need to be done, but at the same time they keep missing or

skimming over grassroots things, where people like us can get into a room, and tell our stories. These professionals think the thing to do is to teach themselves all about dealing with trauma, so that they can then help us; but surely the best way to learn about trauma is to talk to the very people who have experienced it. But they just get into a room and discuss it among themselves.

They're now talking about counselling. Counselling wasn't something that was offered to the families before. We made an issue of that, that they could set up support services in the wake of other incidents, but not for us. I mean, this was a major incident too – there was nine people killed – yet there was nothing set up to either counsel people or to assist the families, in any way. The government's reaction to it was political, rather than supportive. We weren't going to be offered counselling because of who our loved ones were.

Yet at the time the children would have really needed it.. My youngest was only seven, and the next only a year and a half older, and the next thirteen and then on up to nineteen. We would have needed counselling badly; one of the lassies wouldn't even go to the toilet.

We all suffered terrible trauma; in fact, we're all still suffering. Through time the pain may not be as bad as it was back then, but it's still there.

Never mind counselling, there was no support of any other kind offered – there was nothing. We were just left to pick up the pieces.

I want to move on; this group is to try and find resources to try and help the young ones with their education, put any money to good use.

I don't know whether it's because of the change in the political atmosphere or what, they have begun to set up these victims' support services, and they're all very well funded. And some of them may be genuine in trying to help people, but there still is something at the back of your mind –you don't know whether you can actually trust these people to help you. And I have seen a few now who have contacted me and they have wanted to get involved with the group, but my suspicion is that they're doing it because they have to prove that they're making contact with 'both sides', rather than actually wanting to do it. So you always want to know if they genuinely want to help.

I was at a conference involving people who had been affected by the conflict in Ireland, and there was a UDA man at it. And I said who I was, and he said who he was, but he made it clear he didn't want to talk to 'certain people' in the room – and he was looking at me. The day went on, and there were professionals and others there... and my point was that the people who had something in common were like the UDA man, who had talked about his own personal tragedies, and people like ourselves. What I was trying to establish was a common bond as to how people should deal with the thing, and this UDA man, as the thing went on, started to agree and see there *was* common cause. But the professionals became annoyed about the way things were

developing, for it would have been in a way in which they weren't in control. And not only do they have this patronising way of dealing with the victims issue, but many of them see it as providing them with jobs. The same as what you have in the South with the 'poverty industry', in the North you now have the 'victim industry'. And people with no real understanding of our needs, and who have never been asked to explain what they were doing throughout the years of conflict – and whether they accepted what was happening here, or whether they opposed it – are now creating jobs for themselves on the back of all those who have been hurt by that conflict.

The ordinary people here, in both communities, are only seen as backdrops to whatever the story of the day is. I know Unionists feel angry and they're always protesting about us, but they feel used more than anybody else. We may not agree with them or like some of them, but they are in tatters in this situation, and they're being blamed for the whole thing that happened. We *all* need to engage with each other.

But you know what's happening now, and this sounds awful me saying this, but there's all these new 'support services', where the lawyers and professionals are getting their pockets palmed with these big wages. They're supposed to be there to provide help, but who's going to go to them for help, and what sort of help are you going to get? And as for some of these counsellors... they go into your house and tell you about somebody else's story, then they go into *their* house and tell them about yours. But you shouldn't be hearing my story or me yours. And I know that for a fact that's what has happened. And I said to myself: what the hell, what advantage is all this? You don't want to hear anyone else's business. And if that's what is happening, how can you know whether you can trust them? Many of them are only there for the week's pay, they don't really care about you.

The only people who really care are ourselves, and we can only hope we can somehow help each other become stronger. At the end of the day we're all sitting here because our boys could have been arrested –there was no need to kill them all. And our grief for our loved ones is just like anyone else's grief.

On 4 May 2001 the relatives' campaign secured from the European Court of Human Rights at Strasbourg the following judgement:

The Court unanimously holds that there has been a violation of Article 2 of the Convention in respect of failings in the investigative procedures concerning the deaths of the applicants' relatives.