

**The Sixteenth Countess
Markievicz Memorial Lecture**

Education for Partnership

Dr Patrick J. Moriarty

The Countess Markievicz Memorial Lecture Series

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Sixteenth Lecture 1991

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F.C.I.S., F.I.P.M., F.I.E.I., LL.D. CHAIRMAN, ELECTRICITY SUPPLY BOARD. (E.S.B.)

The Countess Markievicz Memorial lecture has been established by the Irish Association for Industrial Relations with the support of the Department of Labour. Countess Markievicz was appointed Minister for Labour in the Executive of the first Dail Eireann in 1919. The object of the Memorial Lecture is to provide an occasion for a substantive contribution to discussion in the industrial relations area by a distinguished practitioner or academic.

The sixteenth lecture was given by Dr. P.J. Moriarty at the Royal College of Surgeons, Dublin on 4 November 1991.

Dr Moriarty was Chief Executive of the Electricity Supply Board (E.S.B.) from April 1986 until April 1992, when he was appointed Chairman of the Board by the Government, thus continuing his life-long association with the industry.

He was also Chairman and a Member of the Board of the National College of Industrial Relations. He is a Member of the Board of the Central Bank, and is actively associated with a number of voluntary bodies in the education, health and sports sectors.

Published by the Irish Association for Industrial Relations
c/o National College of Industrial Relations
Sandford Road, Dublin 6.

Address by Patrick Moriarty to the Irish Association for Industrial Relations in the Royal College of Surgeons on 4 November 1991.

"EDUCATION FOR PARTNERSHIP"

In the week before Easter 1916, my father marched with the men of Dingle, 30 miles to Tralee to land and dispense the arms being brought by Roger Casement from Germany. It is history that it was an ill-fated voyage for Casement and the arms were captured; the failure led to the Easter Rising being confined to Dublin, more a heroic gesture than a realistic rebellion. I am proud of my tenuous link with that rebellion. I have no sympathy with, or understanding of, the latter-day historical revisionists who seek to trivialise the historical significance of the Easter Rising. Heroic gesture though it was then, it led to the War of Independence and ultimately to independence. That independence has meant things to different people. To my family it has meant that all 7 of us in my generation were able to stay in Ireland whereas all our ancestors in previous generations, for 200 years, had to settle for Butte Montana, Chicago, Texas or the Bronx.

As well as pride in the tenuous link with a great historical event and gratitude for being able to enjoy the fruits of independence, the other feeling I have here this evening is one of being honoured to give the commemorative lecture remembering that tireless worker for the underdog and brave patriot, Constance Markievicz. She was second-in-command in this part of the city in Easter Week; she was the first Minister for Labour in an Irish Government and the woman to be elected to the British Parliament. May she be remembered by generations of Irish yet unborn -she was one of the great women in our history and her life story is known by far too few.

I have worked for 46 years in the public service in a State Company. There are some today who would want me to admit that, in a whisper, in a dark room, for State Companies are under attack from all sides. Last week, a University lecturer from UCD, would you believe, who would aspire to be taken seriously, so much lost the run of himself in condemning all State Companies as to declare "Scandals do occur in private enterprise but they are rare". Clearly, a man not wanting to spoil a good story with the facts of economic history.

Scandals and business failures have occurred in every sector of economic life in Ireland and in every other country as well. The effects of frailty of the human condition will always be with us and all we can do is have the management structures and controls to minimise them. But we should not become mesmerised by shibboleths like "low standards in high places" or transfixed into immobility by the public wringing of hands which is going on at present.

I want to proclaim loudly and trenchantly that State Companies have a proud record. They made modern Ireland. If Paddy McGilligan did not have the courage and the political strength in 1927 to set up the ESB, if Sean Lemass had not the vision to set up Aer Lingus in the 30's and Rural Electrification in the 40's, if others, in their time, had not their own visions to launch Bord na Mona, the ICC, the ACC, BIM, CIE, IDA, CTT and many others, Ireland would not be what it is today - it would be a landscape deserted by infrastructure or development. Let's not forget that all these agencies were set up because of the total failure of private enterprise to take on the responsibility and developmental tasks entrusted to companies in the State sector.

State Companies made modern Ireland and I will proclaim that from every mountain-top and butter-box available to me. And what annoys me in the present strange times of public flagellations, which would do credit to imperial Rome, is that nobody has the courage to say one good word for State Companies and their role in the making of modern Ireland. It is great that Governments and politicians now have the option, the luxury, to sell the family silver to private enterprise. It would at least show a certain nobility of spirit on the part of politicians and media and, above all, on the part of banks, financial institutions and consultants in all the commercial professions, who have a powerful vested interest in the selling of the family silver, to acknowledge where we came from and how successfully State Companies accumulated that silver for the State over decades of careful management and employee commitment.

As well as being annoyed at a lack of balance and courage towards State Companies in these strange times, I have a far more serious concern that State Companies will not be allowed to use their enormous talents and strengths to create new enterprises, new jobs and wealth. There are many now shedding crocodile tears about jobs and recession who seem determined to so shackle State Companies as to kill the spirit of enterprise and risk-taking without which there will be no progress. The most likely

disastrous consequence of the 'scandals' is that they will legitimise the return of the small mind to Irish politics, public service and journalism. On all sides I hear "why bother with new ventures - if there is success there will be no credit, if there is the slightest failure, you get you know what". From now on I fear that, as well as the job and profit-potential of new ventures, Boards and managers in the State Company sector will be concentrating more on KITA potential, to use an acronym. We in State Companies can hold our heads proudly high. It is time that politicians and other opinion-formers, who should have an interest in Ireland's progress, started saying something positive, morale-boosting and confidence-building, not only to State Companies but to everybody who is trying to keep the show on the road. 260,000 unemployed might see some hope in positive news and positive action for a change. Someone must pick up this country from the ever-decreasing spiral of negativism and introspection into which public life has fallen. There is a recovery job to be done and everybody, on all sides, has something to do about it.

The trouble about selecting a title for a paper so far ahead is that when the time comes other important things have appeared which need comment. I am sorry for the digression from the subject which I chose - "Education for Partnership".

More so than ever before in history, during the past twenty years the most common word used to describe the human condition has been the word "CHANGE". For decades educationalists and social researchers have been writing about it, reflecting on the changing nature of society and, above all, writing about the impact of technological change being different from anything ever before. The developed countries of the world demonstrate broadly similar patterns or manifestations of change. These are too many to list, e.g. the evolution of a credit rather than a cash-based economy; seemingly intractable problems in the employment of the less skilled in society; the traditional muscle power of industry now replaced by intelligent robots.

Clearly the influence of the wider world environment is the major force for technological change in Irish society. It presents both opportunities and challenges to us; Ireland has already undergone major change in all areas of economic, social and cultural activity. But we are still in a transition stage with many questioning if the smallness of our community and its inherited introversion will forever prevent us from reaching our place, not necessarily in the sun, but at least out of the shadows.

Change in Ireland has been uneven and Ireland displays the features of both a developed and underdeveloped economy. Many see Ireland as a society in which both traditional and modern lifestyles, values and attitudes co-exist. This is perhaps most visible in the economic sphere. A few successful Irish indigenous companies, leaders on the world stage in their own fields, stand out in stark contrast with the grim reality of there being so few such native companies. The leading sectors in industrial technology, such as business machines and Pharmaceuticals, are foreign companies and they produce a very substantial part of our exports. They highlight the moribund developmental state of most of our indigenous industry with few notable exceptions. Only in the food industry have native entrepreneurs ventured beyond the borders of Ireland, if not their native parishes. No wonder we have such a high, intractable level of structural unemployment.

The direction in which we are moving, and indeed must move, is clear. We are changing from an economy based on primary and secondary productions towards an economy based upon the management of services and systems. In the decade now starting, the last of the 20th Century, followed by a new millennium, the majority of people will be in white-collar jobs associated with the service or information activities of industry or government. The dominant industry will be the production and application of 'knowledge' and we must focus education on this and the other new characteristics of such a rapidly changing society.

Education : For What ?

There has been, in recent decades, what amounts to an education explosion in Ireland. Fortunately, for the information and service direction our economy must take, the Irish population is now more extensively educated than ever before. However, questions are asked about the appropriateness of the emphasis we are placing on our educational efforts. All parents know the emphasis we are placing on the huge battle for points in the leaving certificate examination. Are we thereby risking a distortion of what education should be about? Are we providing disproportionate awards for demonstration of the ability to "learn" and "take" what the education system gives out rather than encouraging the development of mind and body? Are we encouraging unnecessary competition between schools and between students within schools? Of course the ability to learn is extremely valuable and some level of

competition is undoubtedly healthy. But is there a risk that, as a result of this emphasis, we are failing to educate our children for life? Are we encouraging the development of their self worth, self esteem and self reliance? Are we encouraging them to be enterprising, to have the self confidence to take a risk, to become our future entrepreneurs? Are we emphasising the technical and the scientific at the expense of the cultural, the classical, the traditional, the understanding and the caring? A recently published study by the ESRI shows that there is widespread dissatisfaction among school leavers with the quality and content of their education in personal and social development, and with preparation for work and for other adult roles. And what will we say to them, when after getting high points, even when they become honours graduates - 'sorry, there is only a low paid and unskilled job for you - or no job at all'. There is no longer an expanding civil service, or an expanding teaching profession, to absorb so many of our brightest young people. The 64,000 dollar question is can we adjust to this new reality? Is it even possible that this change may present us with new opportunities? When I ask myself the question what qualities need to be fostered in education, I realise that I am no soothsayer and that many better qualified than I have asked the same question.

In today's society, and in tomorrow's world, in order to survive -compliance and passivity are not enough. People must be encouraged and facilitated to develop a strong sense of personal autonomy, otherwise they cannot maximise their potential as individuals. We need people who :-

- Take initiative
- Are self reliant
- Are self determined
- Are creative
- Are risk takers
- Are assertive
- Have a positive self image
- Are comfortable in their own culture and have an overall empathy with the cultural traditions and customs of other people.

But, above all, I think Partnership is the Key:

We need people who can work competently and happily with others -people who work with others with a strong sense of partnership. There is no contradiction in this list of qualities. To work effectively and creatively

together, individuals require a strong sense of their own identity and a positive self image. I am by no means the first to say that low levels of self esteem and stunted creativity contribute to the formation of a society that is characterised by begrudgery, dishonesty, fragmentation and a serious failure in partnership. Joe Lee's monumental "Politics and Society" analyses this in great depth.

If partnership is the key, what are the key elements in partnership? Several elements have been identified as being necessary for an effective partnership process.

These include:

- Trust and openness
- Equality in relationships
- Institutional links
- Flexibility and cohesiveness
- Involving people at all levels
- An integrated decision making process
- Definition of needs and unmet needs
- Agreed objectives
- Joint planning
- Joint decision making
- Partnership at different levels.

Let us now look at this concept of partnership and how it applies at different levels.

European Level

In Europe there is a drive towards greater economic and social unity within the EC. The enlargement of the community is a live issue. The potentially destabilising effect on the community of the pace and scale of change in Eastern Europe is a major concern. In the face of these seemingly contradictory factors, the EC sees the development of partnership and strategies to tackle social and economic exclusion as a high priority. Partnership processes are seen to be vital structures, not only as a means of reducing ghettoization and marginalisation, but more positively as a means for liberating the creative energy of people and helping them to have more fulfilment in their lives. Partnership is required for a more productive society and to produce a competitive edge, for a more stable society and for the enrichment of the

quality of life of entire populations. Speaking at the seventh Statutory Congress of the European Trade Union Confederation, Jacques Delors said that the Social Charter is a manifestation of European values and is illustrative of the European Social Model. He added that

This model aims at reconciling economic efficiency and social justice, the role of the market, the responsibilities of the State and the Social Partners. Social cohesion is an essential factor in competitiveness

National Level

On the national level, in Ireland, we have seen a gradual movement of macro-economic and social policy, not without some setbacks on the way. Though the "First National Understanding" was largely undermined by the second oil crisis, it had included policies on employment, taxation and social welfare.

The Programme for National Recovery, launched in 1987, and, more recently, the Programme for Economic and Social Progress, subscribe more substantially to the partnership principle in respect of the representatives of those negotiating them, and their of provisions. In his introduction to the PESP the Taoiseach, Mr Charles Haughey, writes -"Partnership between all the interests in our society is the way forward". There is no change which does not have its critics. Even though we may think otherwise sometimes about Ireland, we are probably no different from other democratic societies. The important thing is that the partnership process has started with considerable success at national level and with support and encouragement it could be a powerful influence on Ireland.

Local Level

In addition to its contribution to partnership at national level the PESP supports partnership initiatives at local level, twelve area-based responses to long-term unemployment are planned.

Details regarding the area partnerships are set out in a document prepared by the Area Partnership Co-Ordination Office. The outline of the basic strategy makes it clear that the partnership envisaged is to be a cooperative working arrangement between: the local community, the social partners, i.e. trade unions, employers and, in rural areas, farmers and the

State agencies. The first objective takes account of what is termed the empowerment strategy in the partnership process, which places emphasis on the self-development of marginalised people and the progress of their initiatives.

Education, in a broad sense, inside educational institutions, and out in the community, can make a substantial contribution to partnership. We must not, however, assume that every effort that could be made is being made. Do our universities, our elite educational institutions, take sufficient account of the development of partnership in our society? Are their contacts with the world of work, for example, sufficiently broad, or are they too narrowly focused on research and development, science, technology and commerce? Links with industry have been really only developed with one of the social partners. Are they responsive to trade unions and to working people generally? And what about the marginalised, the educationally deprived? Have our educational institutions done enough? Have they done anything? Fortunately, the ability to act with a sense of partnership can be developed through educational processes, both within places of learning and elsewhere. Education for partnership, however, is not merely imparting information and skills. It has also to be through taking how people feel and act into account. You cannot talk to a person about partnership, or its advantages, and at the same time ignore how they feel and view the world; that's unreal and it doesn't work. Partnership is learned by doing and it is done right when it feels right. Let me give an example of positive change now in progress.

It is called People Action Against Unemployment

The PAUL project, People Against Unemployment in Limerick, is one of two Irish model action projects in the third EC Anti-Poverty Programme. It is supported by the Combat Poverty Agency and the EC. PAUL is a partnership of five community groups, two voluntary organisations and five statutory agencies in Limerick city. Its management committee comprises representatives from all partners and is responsible itself for the co-ordination and direction of the project. Six working groups have been established and these act as the operational arm of PAUL. These working groups are based on the partnership principle and 'down line' representatives of the community and statutory sectors jointly design innovative programmes. The six working groups deal with the following

issues: information and welfare rights, education and training, economic activity, environment, family support and community action. A key focus of the PAUL agenda is the development of self-sustaining community structures. It is recognised by PAUL that ghettoization of the most marginalised people in Limerick city continues to undermine the development of local communities. The empowerment process is founded upon the development of partnership structures to encourage and facilitate the members of the communities concerned to both define and find solutions to their problems.

And what about - **Institutions in Education for Partnership?** This brings me to another example of partnership in education. As you may know, I am Chairman of the Board of the National College of Industrial Relations. The NCIR has been into partnership, long before it became fashionable, or before it was seriously adopted as a powerful tool for progress at local, national and international level. Its organisational structure, its board, includes representatives of employers, the Jesuit Order, trade unions and its staff. It demonstrates how real its pursuit for partnership is. But, more important, since its foundation it has aspired to provide an excellent and relevant education for working people. It has always had a student-structured approach which is the essence of an educational institution promoting partnership. It has enabled generations of mature students to realise their potential at university level, and to contribute their talents to industrial relations in Ireland and to Irish life generally. Its open door policy served to build bridges between all social groups and facilitated the development of an authentic partnership conducive to the pursuit of good industrial relations. I am very proud to be associated with NCIR. The NCIR's primary academic commitment is the teaching of everything that has to do with people at work - human relations, industrial relations and associated subjects. However, the NCIR believes that, in order to have good industrial relations on a long term basis, people must believe that the society in which they work is essentially fair, that genuine efforts are being made to address social inequity and that the needs of those who have been marginalised are being attended to.

The NCIR has a mission to become a world centre of excellence in its chosen sphere. To be such an institution with conviction it cannot ignore the many who are marginalised in Irish society. We have a commitment to enable people to share in Delor's vision of Europe. We have a commitment

to our own vision of a society that fosters the development of the full potential of each individual.

We have, accordingly, decided to develop further the college's role of empowerment through education of each individual. We will introduce programmes in second chance education and will develop outreach programmes in communities. This initiative is not changing the direction the NCIR. It is merely taking the mission the college always had to its full flower. All educational activity is empowering when it is focused on the development and liberation of the individual.

The NCIR wishes to extend its arms to embrace those who never got a first chance, never mind a second chance. The second chance (or first chance!) education programme is a major initiative in education funded by private sources. Persons with only a limited or no formal education will be enabled to attain an educational standard by means of Access Programmes and Foundation Studies. This will make it possible for them, in due course, to benefit from third level education and, perhaps eventually, achieve fully accredited doctoral status. Many such people have the intellect, what they lack is the chance, the support and the encouragement. The NCIR, with its strong tradition of adult education is, I feel, an ideal environment for such education. The focus of the Outreach Programmes is to encourage higher levels of educational participation from those who traditionally would not have viewed themselves, or their children, as candidates for higher education. One example of this is a community bases initiative where parents become the catalysts and can contribute as equal partners in the education system. Again, the strategy here is empowerment; those taught will be learned from and will be asked to teach others. In addition a mentor system, a one-to-one partnership of student and experienced person, will be instituted to provide role models, inspiration and practical advice for students whose circumstances are especially disadvantaged and frustrating.

Conclusion:

I will end this talk by summarising the benefits and nature of education for partnership. The emphasis on partnership is based on the belief that people themselves are often the best judges of their circumstances, and that ultimately they themselves have a substantial part to play in changing them. Education for partnership is base on a broad concept of personal and academic involvement. It is designed to develop their initiative, to

motivate them; in short, to empower them. Education of this kind is not limited to the transfer of knowledge and skills, though that, too, is important.

Those at the receiving end of the educational process must feel that their views are significant and that they have a contribution to make. Partnership is learned through experiencing it. Where education for partnership is being delivered in educational institutions, the climate of the institutions themselves must be right. They must be representative of the whole of society instead of starting with the great majority already an educated elite. This requires more than an expression of willingness to be partnership oriented. Rather, it requires that the institution is student centred and that the organisational structures and role definitions are appropriate. It requires that the institution would reach out towards the whole of society.

Finally, education for partnership opposes the authoritarian view of the world. It questions the concept that the led as well as the leaders may, continually and satisfactorily, emerge in a world governed by the authoritarian perspective and an education system which is rendered selective by the social circumstances of many people. Instead, partnership aims to redistribute both power and responsibility in society. The most successful and far-reaching national example of partnership in Ireland was the Rural Electrification Programme. It was a partnership between the ESB and community groups in parishes throughout the country. Through education and demonstration, this partnership encouraged a population basically conservative, against change and resistant, for centuries, to new ways to "take the light" and to embrace the new world. Modern rural Ireland, with its fine homes and improved quality of life is proof of the success of partnership.