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Understanding organisational tensions in voluntary action: National-Local relations in the Simon Community and the Cyrenians (1)

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Abstract

This paper is based on doctoral research. It begins from the position that the general contextual changes relating to the growing space taken up by the state and the growing dominance of business modes of organisation (critical developments in the twentieth century) have had a crucial influence on the development of voluntary action.

From this, the paper considers the history of the recurrent and changing organisational outcomes of this development. A central theme within this has been the evolving relationship of national body to local group. This theme provides a mechanism or 'lens' with which to consider the question – how have voluntary bodies organised themselves to achieve their objectives.

Many organisational issues relating to membership, decision-making, communications, funding, will cluster around this theme. More specifically there are general questions relating to how an organisation originated (did the national body come first or second?); what were/are its aims and objectives (did these vary between national and local bodies and in what way?); what is the membership and how is it organised (does the national body own the local group or is it the other way round?); what is the power structure (unitary or decentralised? Federative or hierarchical?).

How these features are organised on a national-local basis is crucial to understanding the internal organisational dynamic, especially the degree of interdependence and the balance of power between national body and local group. This in turn points to the degree of autonomy between the respective parts and is central to the nature of the relationship. However this idea of autonomy has an external dimension as well and one which impinges on the nature of the national/local relationships, namely the context within which a voluntary organisation operates and more specifically how autonomous a voluntary organisation is vis a vis the state and business.

The general issues and questions outlined above provide a framework for unpicking the organisational history of voluntary action and this paper will use case-study material by way of illustration.

Introduction

The existence of national voluntary bodies and local counterparts is very much a taken-for-granted aspect of the current experience of the voluntary sector that it is easy to forget that there is a history behind this and one that is worth exploring because it raises important points about the organisational history of voluntary action.

This paper is based on doctoral research which not only considered the theme of internal organisational history but also the impact of the context on the development of voluntary action. The first part of this paper considers the impact of two main contextual influences – the state and the business sector – on voluntary organisations, in particular pressures to centralise and amalgamate. The discussion then considers themes relating to the internal

organisational dynamics, before moving on to look at the Simon Community and the Cyrenians from the early sixties to the early eighties.

Background

The existence of local groups and national bodies and their relationship to each other, has been a recurring theme within both the main traditions of voluntary action, from the nineteenth century: mutual aid and philanthropy (Beveridge, 1948). The former, in essence an associative relationship based on equality where the beneficiaries were also the owners or members. The latter, involving an unequal associative relationship where the beneficiary and owner or member were separate. Nevertheless, various studies have shown (Yeo, 1976; Prochaska, 1988), both traditions were above active involvement, the importance of members knowing one another, of small locally-based organisations, the importance of a value-base. In order to combine the advantage of smallness and locality with that of largeness and regionality or even nationality, a common organisational form was that of federation, namely an association of independent or autonomous units joined together in a larger movement, with a central (usually national) body, which stood in contrast to the more unitary organisation of central body and branches, which were not constituted separately. Whilst the federation was pioneered by the earlier, working-class mutual associations, it was by no means exclusive to it. For example, the Charity Organisation Society (COS) was organised as a federation of district committees, each represented on a (central General Council) (Rooff, 1972, p53).

The development of these two traditions of voluntary action from the latter part of the nineteenth century has to be seen in the light of two main contextual influences: the growing dominance of business modes of organisation and the expansion of the state sector.

The increasing space taken up by commercial activity influenced not only the type and range of voluntary activity (witness the gradual eclipse of older, working class forms of mutual aid under competition from the private sector) but also the organisational forms through which such activities were carried out. One result of the competition from the private firm was the increasing pressure to adopt similar organisational structures, that is, to move towards large, amalgamated and centrally directed bodies, as well as to adopt similar approaches to business, based around ideas of efficiency and objective-oriented activity where ends dominated means. The Friendly Societies (particularly the affiliated orders) and the Co-operative movement found themselves under enormous pressure 'to modernise' – to move away from their social or non-market values in favour of commercial ones, and away from direct, locally-oriented control of the organisation towards large, amalgamated and centrally directed organisations.

In the field of welfare provision, the decisive switch towards statutory activity in the early part of this century, expanded the institutional base of the statutory sector immensely and was accompanied by an increasing similarity in size, procedures and decision-making structures within developing state institutions and the private sector. This reinforced the organisational pressures referred to above: the apparent need to join together, to centralise and even to adopt hierarchical organisational structures. The scale of organisation which increased dramatically from the late nineteenth century was an important contextual influence on the development of voluntary organisations.

In addition, as the state moved from the role of enabler and regulator to that of direct funder and provider, the local and particularly the national, state was seen as the arena through which to influence and to effect reform. Increasingly having a national organisation to influence the state was seen as an essential mechanism for influencing government legislation and the development of social policy. For example, the allotment movement, originally a mutual aid organisation for rural labourers whose struggle to maintain their rights

during the latter part of the nineteenth century required the organisation of firstly local and subsequently national, activity (Crouch and Ward, 1988). In the field of mental health for example, the Mental Deficiency Act of 1913 was accompanied by the establishment of a national association, the Central Association for Care of Mental Defectives (Rooff, 1957).

Whilst the reforms prior to and during the First World War, marked the acceptance of the principle of the central state being involved in the organisation of welfare provision, the reality was the state, either nationally or locally, simply could not assume complete responsibility for the provision of services and had to rely on using voluntary organisations as agents, for example, the friendly societies in the administration of the National Insurance Scheme and organisations from the philanthropic tradition in the fields of infant welfare, mental health and blindness. Such an agency role was not only advantageous to the state, the funding provided was a key to the survival of many voluntary organisations. Whilst much reform encouraged local authorities to use local voluntary organisations on an agency basis, central state funding was directed at national organisations and, in turn, greatly enhanced their own role (Rooff, 1957, pp259-263).

This developing statutory/voluntary had **organisational** implications – the autonomy of voluntary organisations presented the state with problems of how to influence and how to control, for the state has simultaneously provided opportunities for voluntary action (funding) but also constraints to voluntary action (conditions of funding, scrutiny of standards). Other less direct influences include statutory membership of voluntary bodies (increasingly important from the inter-war period) and pressure on organisations to join in some way.

The number and diversity of voluntary organisations was, and continued to be, a problem for statutory bodies – the watchwords of ‘co-ordination’ and ‘amalgamation’ were about making it easier for the statutory bodies to deal with such diversity. The pressures for some sort of centralisation, either formal amalgamation of an organisation or their grouping (‘co-ordination’) under a single representative body was another important feature from the inter-war period onwards. This general trend usually served to reinforce the position of many national bodies vis a vis local bodies. However whilst this development was dominant, the individual responses and experiences of voluntary organisations varied. For example, in the mental health field with a tradition of close voluntary and statutory collaboration there was little resistance to this process (Rooff, 1957, p146). The Board of control exerted a strong influence on the mental health societies to amalgamate. In the field of welfare for the blind, the tradition of local autonomy was strong and moves to strengthen the national body were met with resistance (Rooff, 1957, p191 and p226).

For the period up to 1945 then, whilst the majority of voluntary activity continued to be organised at a local level, a growing minority was organised at the national level. The reasons were bound up with the growing need to have a central body providing key services, a mechanism for local groups to communicate one with another and, increasingly important, to enter into a dialogue with the central state which implied the establishment of a national body. Overall, the growing importance of the national body has developed.

This occurred within and around two major changes in the traditions of voluntary action: the displacement of the older, mainly working-class, mutual aid organisations which were squeezed on the one hand by commercial organisations and also had some or all of their functions overtaken by the state. Whilst some organisations from the philanthropic tradition were eventually displaced by the state, others were, with the support of statutory funding, able to develop any agency role as junior partners to the expanding state institutions, a metamorphosis of philanthropy from the ‘giving of relief’ to the provision of specific services. This, together with the emergence of new organisations, such as the National Council for Social Service (NCSS) and the local Councils of Social Service (CSS), concerned with the development of ‘community’ resulted in a relative blurring of the earlier, clearer distinctions

between mutual and philanthropic activity. Membership structures extended to include statutory representatives, paid professional staff and representatives from other organisations.

The tradition of organising on a federative basis continued and was extended to many new organisations which emerged, particularly those in the fields of leisure, recreation and education. They became large, individual membership-based organisations, with autonomous local groups joined together in a wider movement led by a national body. Nevertheless, even in organisations such as the CSSs for example, which did not have a large, individual membership base, they remained organised as autonomously constituted local groups under the umbrella of regional and national organisations. The tradition of local activity remained an important one even within those organisations with a more unitary structure of central organisation with branches.

Post-1945 Voluntary Action

i) Modernisation processes

The further expansion of the welfare state after 1945 had differential effects on voluntary action: for example, in the field of infant welfare the absorption of the welfare centres into the statutory sphere meant a curtailment of activity and the National Council for Maternity and Child Welfare was wound up in 1948. In contrast, the National Association for Maternity and Child Welfare changed its orientation by widening its aims to include general publicity, education and the co-ordination of statutory and voluntary initiatives, extended its membership to include representatives from statutory and professional bodies and changed its name to the National Association of Maternal and Child Welfare (Rooff, 1957, p59).

In the period up to 1960 a number of organisations attempted to 'modernise'. This often included a 'review' of the organisation, frequently accompanied by an internal organisation and sometimes a change in name. The combined effects of the expanded role of the state and the problem of financial insecurity, meant that a whole range of voluntary organisations were faced with having to make major readjustments. Such a 'readjustment' often meant a re-examination of an organisation's overall role as well as particular methods of working. The resulting 'reorganisation' was prompted by both financial precariousness and dominant definitions of efficiency which viewed amalgamation as a step to 'modernisation'. Morris writing in the early nineteen fifties noted that the:

....move towards amalgamation has taken place in the interests of general efficiency and economy, to prevent overlapping.....Added impetus has been given to this development by the widening of spheres of state action, which has meant that groups with like interests have had to learn to speak with a common voice if they wished to be heard and to influence official policy (1955, p197)

In response to the absorption of mental health within general health services following the National Health Service Act, organisations in the mental health field amalgamated into the National Association for Mental Health in 1946, with the local branches providing homes and the national body continuing mainly as a consultative and advisory body, with the exception of the Mental After-Care Association which had a strong tradition of independent activity (Rooff, 1957, p149 and p163).

ii) Centralising tendencies

The belated acceptance by the Charity Organisation Society (COS) of the increased role of the State in the provision of welfare resulted in the decision to concentrate its efforts on family casework and signified this by changing its name in 1946 to that of the Family Welfare

Association (FWA) (Rooff, 1972). Nevertheless its precarious financial position resulted in an internal reorganisation in the late 40s – a self-conscious attempt to replace the ‘old’ with ‘the new’ – which entailed the reduction in the number of Districts from around 25 before the war to 19 in 1948, and their grouping into eight areas and resulted in friction between the District and Central Committees, with the former continually emphasising their autonomy. (Rooff, 1972 p223). [This situation was compounded by the friction between lay and professional worker which tended to be resolved in favour of the latter.] The second phase of modernisation followed in 1960 with the streamlining of administrative structure and the centralisation of functions such as fund-raising and accountancy.

Similar modernisation processes took place within the Family Planning Association (although its role had not been directly affected by the post-war legislation). It began with a small restructuring after the war, whereby branches were encouraged to join together in Federations, but the rapid expansion in the fifties (Leahard, 1980, p101. This occurred despite severely limited finances) meant that the organisation was under increasing strain. The outcome was a review in 1959 which was critical of the amount of involvement by the local branches in the governing association and in the formulation of policy-making: *burdened by cumbersome government machinery, the Association needed a streamlined new look* (Leahard pp119-120). The result was a reorganisation in 1963 into a single national charitable society, which was also legally incorporated. The federations were asked to disband and become regional branches, serving two or three local health areas, with each new branch sending one representative to a National Council meeting twice-yearly, thus reducing their involvement. Yet many branches were resistant to this reduction in their local autonomy, but the dominant approach was one of the inevitable progress towards modernisation: in order to become an authoritative and professionally respected agency it was felt necessary to have a strengthened centralised organisation (Leahard, 1972, p121).

This drive towards modernisation extended beyond service provision organisations, for example, in the area of recreation and leisure, the Rambler’s Association, established and developed in the inter-war years, consolidated its organisation after the war. In so doing it changed from a loose coalition of clubs, area federations and national council into a more unitary body, with a national organisation with paid officers, and clearly defined geographical areas. This was given impetus by a financial reform whereby subscriptions were paid directly to the national office, replacing the previous system of subscriptions being paid firstly to the local group which then passed them on to the national body (Holt, 1985, p16).

This preceding outline of the centralising and decentralising tendencies evident in post-1945 voluntary action is largely descriptive. Further exploration of the reasons what and particular details, especially at local level, is necessary.

iii) Decentralising tendencies

Despite a dominant trend towards either amalgamation or centralisation (or both), there were also instances of reverse processes. For example, in the field of disability in the fifties there was the trend towards the formation of sectional groups amongst the physical handicapped, for example, the National Spastics Society founded in 1952 by parents of handicapped children, which cut across the movement towards amalgamation and professionalisation worked out by the older voluntary societies such as the British Council for the Welfare of Spastics (Rooff, 1957, p288).

Within NCSS for example, the immediate post-war period was marked by relative decentralisation. The National Council had moved away from its more directive role evident before the war (Brasnett, 1969) and widened its representative structure to include local groups. It also established a structure of Associated Groups, constituted separately from

NCSS (for example the National Federation of Community Organisations, the National Old People's Welfare Standing Committee) each with their own policies, own autonomous local groups for example, but bound together through the agreement of general aims and a variety of services provided by NCSS: the provision of accommodation, information and other administrative services; paid staff; in the case of the NFCA, NCSS was a formal holding trustee (Brasnett, p 227). This relatively fluid arrangement continued up to the late 60s.

The formation of new voluntary organisations, was particularly marked after 1960 and in part it was a reaction to the limitations of the welfare state. The significant increase in the number of pressure groups (for example, the Disablement Income Group, Child Poverty Action Group, Shelter) and mutual aid organisations (for example, Spinal Injuries Group, Spina Bifida Association, National Schizophrenic Fellowship, Gingerbread, Pre-School Playgroups Association, National Housewives Register) was bound up with this (Brenton, 1985, p36). This stimulated not only local activity and the formation of local groups but also the formation of national bodies – as many of the new organisations had a campaigning function, a national body was required to influence the state, the central state in particular (Twelvetrees, 1985, p8).

The impact of statutory reorganisation

i) Corporate management and organisational reviews

Another reason for the expansion of voluntary action after 1960 was the impetus given to further statutory-voluntary collaboration given by the Charity Act 1960 and subsequently the expansion in funding for voluntary organisations (Brenton, 1985, p230-36; Cockburn, 1977 p186).

Voluntary-statutory collaboration was the central theme to the approach of NCSS – indeed its whole *raison d'être* since its formation in 1919 had revolved around voluntary action complementing statutory activity. An important aspect had always been the formation of local voluntary organisations co-terminous with local government areas. Hence the importance accorded to its own constituent groups working to areas which reflected statutory administrative organisations: the Community Association in the neighbourhood; the Council of Social Services in the town; the Community Council in the country (NCSS AR 1953/4).

This became increasingly significant following the expansion and subsequent rationalisation of local and central state activity (itself an attempt not only to ensure the more effective delivery of services but also a mechanism to keep a rein on ever-increasing expenditure). Various reorganisations occurred – in London in 1964; central government departments in the second half of the sixties; local authority welfare and children's departments in 1971; the health service in 1973; and the rest of local government in 1974 – where further 'modernisation' processes were evident.

Significant in this process was the use of business consultants and the introduction of corporate management techniques from the private sector, where the emphasis was on the benefits of organisational reform, enlargement of scale, of planning and budgeting, where co-ordination and integration of service provision became keywords (Brenton, 1985, p41). Similar centralising tendencies were evident in all of these reorganisations: the grouping of functions, less committees, small departments consolidated into larger ones with more responsibility and elected members specialising and involved in fewer policy fields (Cockburn, 1977, p13). The overall effect of this rationalisation was to reinforce the trend towards the dominance of professional officers (Cockburn, 1977, p 20-23; Brenton, 1985, p41). The introduction of corporate management techniques including Management by Objectives (MbO), a hierarchical system of objective-setting, helped clear the way for the

expansion of hierarchical administrative structures which further concentrated decision-making at the organisational apex (REF?).

This process also transferred to the voluntary sector and there is some evidence of its impact on the larger voluntary organisations, for example, Dr Barnados and NCSS. In the former case, Dr Barnados had had three organisational reviews from the late fifties as it attempted to respond to the changing pattern of child care, culminating in the introduction of a corporate management in 1973 (Rose, 1987, pp257-273; Windlesham, 1973, pp67-8).

In the case of NCSS, an organisational review was undertaken in 1969 by those at the centre of the Council, concerned with the diversity within the NCSS and the autonomy of the Associated Groups which made it harder for the national body to give a clear lead – considered increasingly important at a time of central state organisation. However the only option for reform considered, and indeed pursued, was that of establishing a stronger central body. Any alternatives such as a strengthening of the federative decision-making process and/or the establishment of financially independent Associated Groups were never considered. The aim, as state in the Review Report, was clearly to ‘tighten up’ the organisation, in the sense of making it more unitary:

*We had said that **its central organisation must function as a single living entity and not as a federation of varied associated groups** (my emphasis) (NCSS, Report of Review Committee, 1969 as cited in Penn, 1992)*

The outcome was a much reduced Executive Committee which effectively removed the Associated Groups (and their local counterparts) from the centre of real influence. The result was growing tension between NCSS and Associated Groups, reinforced by the National Council’s continued control of their financial and administrative resources. In the case of the National Old People’s Welfare Council (perhaps in anticipation of possible future conflict) it used the opportunity of the reorganisation of NCSS to establish its own independence. It presented a resolution to the NCSS Executive Committee in July 1969 recommending an independent body be established on April 1st 1970 which became Age Concern (Penn, 1992). The reorganisation of the National Council staff showed a similar process whereby the seventeen senior officers responsible to the Director for the various Associated Groups were replaced by a small Chief Executive team, which ‘to be effective must be small’ (NCSS Review Report 1969, cited in Penn, 1992). In effect the National Council was introducing a form of corporate management to replace the older, looser, quasi-federal organisational form which had been adopted after the Second World War.

NCSS, located at the boundary of national voluntary and statutory activity, provides an interesting example of the impact of these dominant contextual influences not only at the level of the national body but also around its relationship with its own local groups, the CSSs.

ii) The reorganisation of the CSSs

Complementing the statutory bodies has been central to the work of NCSS and to this end the local CSS and Rural Community Council (RCC), under whose umbrella many local voluntary organisations were grouped, were important co-ordinating agencies. This aim also explains the emphasis given by NCSS to ensuring that such local groups reorganised along lines similar to those taken by local government. For organisations like NCSS, such co-terminosity was an important aspect of their complementary status, and one which would facilitate ‘co-ordination’ and ‘co-operation’ between statutory and voluntary bodies. Thus local government reorganisation had a major impact on voluntary organisations – mergers and amalgamations took place to ensure that the geographical coverage of voluntary

organisations continued to be co-terminous with that of the newly formed local government boundaries.

In 1964 local government reorganisation in London afforded NCSS and its London counterpart the London Council of Social Service (LCSS) the opportunity to develop the network of local CSS in every London borough (Brasnett, 1969, p258). Indeed LCSS, played a crucial role in steering the local groups through the changes, as many were either unprepared or opposed to the introduction of changes, fearing the effects of amalgamation – the loss of identity, problems of size of new organisation, financial insecurity (Guiton, 1967). In contrast organisations such as the Women’s Royal Voluntary Service and the Family Welfare Association whose local groups functioned more as branches, such changes were relatively easy to effect. But the local CSS were autonomous and for the LCSS such autonomy needed managing, thus its own role as a source of information, advice, discussion and persuasion was critical. LCSS was aided by statutory funding policies, namely the distinct preference by London boroughs to grant-aid borough-based organisations and for the GLC to grant aid London-wide organisations. LCSS was able to use the opportunity to promote borough wide CSS, but there were still significant variations. New ones, established where none had existed before, tended to be more organisation-oriented (concerned with providing support for all the voluntary organisations in membership like Old People’s Welfare Committees, CABx, Physically Handicapped organisations). Those consisting of an amalgamation of existing organisations continued to be more concerned with providing personal social services. This also occurred within the member organisations of the CSS, like the Old People’s Welfare Committees which were the forerunners of Age Concern.

In 1974 further local government reorganisation presented NCSS with another opportunity to strengthen its network by re-establishing the relevance of many Councils for Voluntary Service (CVS) – the new name for CSS in order to distinguish them from the newly established local authority social services departments – both to their member organisations and to their local authority. However, for local groups this was problematic – many were resistant to amalgamation or merger and thus hostile to the developmental role which NCSS and its regional counterparts undertook at this time.

Some of the issues raised and problems encountered can be seen in the study of the role of development officers in assisting CVSs reorganised in the new metropolitan districts of Manchester and Liverpool (Lansley, 1976). One such tension was present in the ambiguous position of the development officers, who on the one hand were there as external ‘neutral’ advisers yet on the other were there to encourage the CVS in a particular direction. They also faced different traditions within the CVS network and tried to encourage reorganisation by emphasising different benefits to different types of CVS:

To traditional organisations, the emphasis was on the advantages they (the CVS) would gain from improved communication channels, the availability of undefined expertise from the secretariat, and the need for solidarity on the part of the voluntary organisations vis a vis the new local authority. With community workers and the more radical organisations, on the other hand, he concentrated on the CVS’s potential for social action and social planning. (Lansley, 1976, p80)

On the issue of how exactly to structure the newly emerging CVS to be effective, the project faced clear choices. In the case of the Wirral section of the project there were three main options. Firstly, forming a federation of separate CVSs, retaining almost total member autonomy and submitting their own grant-aid applications. Secondly, a central CVS, membership limited to smaller CVS which would be semi-autonomous. Thirdly, a central CVS with local branches replacing local CVS and thus having no autonomy. The first option proved untenable because the local authority would not accept an application from five

separate organisations. Indeed the influence of statutory bodies in this process of change was important. As had been the case in London a decade earlier, it became the policy of the newly established local authorities to only grant-aid organisations co-terminous with themselves. This in turn also provided a stimulus for the introduction of paid staff into the CVS network (Lansley, 1976, p50). The third option was not acceptable to the voluntary organisations as it would have entailed them merging completely and this was considered too threatening to their autonomy. The second option, by default, became the model for the new metropolitan CVS although its formation was still a lengthy and painful process (Lansley, 1976, p43).

What is particularly interesting about this example is that the way voluntary organisations steered their way within and around dominant contextual influences – in this instance coming from the expansion and rationalisation of statutory activity. In general whilst there has been a dominant ‘pull’ towards largeness, centralisation, hierarchy, unitary organisational form, there has been a continued and opposing, even resisting tradition which emphasises the continued importance of smallness, locality, federation, loosely-tied organisational form and autonomy.

Other contextual influences include the increasing dependence of voluntary organisations on statutory funding as well as the way that voluntary action has been increasingly calculated in the same way as statutory or business activity (in terms of product or service), but these have been excluded for reasons of space. Nevertheless, these contextual influences raise questions about autonomy – namely how autonomous voluntary action has been vis a vis the state and business.

Internal organisation dynamics

i) Autonomy

However the issue of autonomy also has an internal dimension, in this instance how local groups have been autonomous vis a vis a central or national body. The balance of influence or power between national body and local group, that is, the degree of autonomy and existence of centralising pressures has been influenced by the type of organisational structure, for example, federative (with autonomous local groups) as opposed to unitary or corporate (local branches owned by the national body).

The degree of autonomy and centralising pressures have also been influenced by the way the organisation originated. That is, whether the national body came first or the local groups. The lesson of the historical development of voluntary action prior suggests that where local groups have existed separately and prior to a central or national body, the traditions of local autonomy and resistance to the national body have remained strong. In contrast, where the national body has existed prior to the subsequent development of local activity, the influence of national organisations has tended to be more dominant. Thus an important difference between, for example, the Charity Organisation Society and the affiliated orders of Friendly Societies was that in the case of the former the impetus for the establishment of local groups came from the central body rather than, as in the case of the latter, pre-existing local groups coming together to form a central body.

The issue of national-local relationships is integral to the issue of autonomy and as such raises fundamental questions about both the origins of voluntary organisations and the way they run themselves. This focusses on the nature of the activity itself and the question of ‘how have voluntary bodies organised themselves to achieve their objectives?’, and in turn emphasises the idea of voluntary action as autonomous, purposive action. In this way national-local relations function as a lens or ‘pair of spectacles’ through which one can view important features of voluntary organisations concerning their mode of formation, method of government, sources of finance and value-base.

ii) Origins and aims

Consideration of the question of how an organisation originated and what were its aims is crucial to opening up its history. Why an organisation is formed, and when, is intimately bound up with a particular historical conjuncture. Whether or not an organisation has a consciousness of its own origins or whether 'the past' is buried can give some indication of its own autonomy. Furthermore the specific mode of formation has a major influence on both the direction of future development and the whole 'culture' of the organisation. The question of whether an organisation began nationally and then established local activity or the other way round can provide an indication of its likely subsequent development as well as point towards the likely balance in power between the national body and local groups.

Consideration of the origins is inextricably linked to the issue of the aims – or the purpose for which the organisation was established to achieve. These are a crucial determinant to the value-base and thus culture of the organisation. Here the typology relating to function, namely the distinction between mutual aid, campaigning and service provision is useful (Handy, 1988). In particular, the issue of whether aims differed not only between the national body and local group but also whether they changed over time and how this relates to contextual influences. Such differences may remain unacknowledged and result in organisational confusion and/or may result in a clash between different parts of the organisation. Furthermore, such differences in purpose are important because they hint at the sources of power and influence – as Handy pointed out, the campaigning organisation tends to be 'led', the service provider 'managed' and the mutual aid group 'served' (Handy, 1988, p12).

iii) Ownership and method of government

Turning to the issue of method of government, the organisation's constitutional base has an important influence on the ownership or membership structure and in defining who has formal power. It is also the single most important factor in determining the autonomy of the local group and the authority of the national body. At the same time, national and local organisations are bound together in a relationship of varying degrees of interdependency. A significant question concerns how far the members belong to the organisation as opposed to how far the organisation belongs to the members, and from this how far the national body belongs to the local groups rather than the local groups belonging to the national body?

Who owns the organisation and whether or not the owners include the beneficiaries is a crucial determinant of the membership base of the organisation. In the case of a charity, the beneficiaries cannot also be the legal owners, although there can be other levels of involvement. In this respect the legal status of the organisation – charity, trust, limited company, friendly society or unincorporated association – can have an important influence on the membership structure and in turn the internal democratic structure. For example, a trust structure, which confines ownership and decision-making to a small number, tends to generate a less democratic organisational structure. In contrast, a company limited by guarantee offers more potential for having a wider membership and one which affords some degree of participation by the membership in the running of the organisation.

iv) Membership and decision-making

How the representation of the membership is organised and conducted is an important part of the national/local relationship. Some membership structures invest little power or involvement in the individual whereas others constrain the individual to membership of a local group, which then belongs to the national organisation, and some make decisions at Annual General Meetings based on the feelings of which individual members have chosen to attend. The issue of membership goes beyond the formal members of the organisation, that

is, those with voting rights which may be groups or individuals, there are other types of members in the sense of those with an interest in the overall activities of the organisation. This may range from those on a mailing list, often for fund-raising purposes; the general constituency; and also the paid staff, who can develop their own interest in the development of an organisation. Why the membership wants a national organisation; what the national body does for local 'members'; and whether there is a regionally organised membership are further considerations.

This leads into further aspects of the issue of method of government, in particular the actual decision-making process. Whilst this derives from the constitutional base of the organisation, it can vary in practice from heated debate and discussion to the merely formal presentation of motions and voting. The nature of such 'participation' is itself an indication of amount of 'ownership' and involvement of the various parts of the organisation, of the whole. The degree of delegated authority is important in such a decision-making process and this may range from the 'elected tyrant', accountable in theory but not in practice, to the situation where the elected representatives cannot resolve a problem because their authority is constantly qualified, circumscribed or interfered with. More specific considerations relate to who actually gets elected to the governing body or management committee and how; in what capacity and for what reason; and how this has changed as the organisation develops; whether or not there are paid staff and/or volunteer (unpaid) workers, are all important when considering the question of who decides an organisations' policy and how, as well as who implements it. The presence of any charismatic leaders can also be an important influence on the development of an organisation, as often voluntary organisations originate from the inspiration of a particular individual or group of individuals. Their legacy relates not only to the 'core mission' of the organisations but also the way the nature of charismatic authority can affect the internal democratic process. In addition, the presence of paid staff can influence the decision-making process and also influence the balance of power between the national body and local groups. A paid salariat, has access to information and communication and their 'expertise' can often put them in a strong position vis a vis the committee members. Furthermore, it is often the national body which develops a paid staff or at least is the first to do so and such a move often enables the national body to develop itself. If the amount raised by the membership is limited, this can inhibit the employment of paid staff. However, the introduction of external funding, from trusts or the state, can release a national body from financial dependence on its local bodies.

v) Finance

Thus the question of who organises and controls the finance of an organisation also has important implications for the nature of the relationship between national body and local groups, in particular the degree of interdependency. For example, do funds go direct to the centre where a proportion is distributed back to local groups or do funds originate from local groups which pass on a proportion to the centre? An organisation relying on individual subscriptions is more likely to have members with a vested interest in what they get for their money than the individual member in a large charity which raises substantial sums of undedicated money from the public at large. There are implications here for the nature of accountability, the likelihood of an active rather than a passive membership which also points to sources of possible friction. Another dimension to the funding aspect of the national-local relationship concerns territory, for example, when local groups conflict with their national body over the geographical location of a fund-raising drive and how the results are to be distributed.

vi) Communications

Finally, consideration of the communications' process covers the ways in which different parts of the organisation are kept in touch, which can vary from purely informing, to consulting, to the more extensive participating. The patterns and flow of communication

within an organisation can indicate various aspects – not just how much information is being given out and the purpose – but also who controls the processes of communications; whether there is a regional structure to develop communication and if so, who manages this. Furthermore, who manages and who participates in turn points towards the issue of who actually has power and influence within an organisation.

It was using this broad framework, that an in-depth case-study of the Simon Community (1963-1970) and the Cyrenians (1970-1986) was undertaken. This focussed on both the internal organisational dynamics AND the context within which the organisation operated. Again, for reasons of space it is only possible to focus on some aspects. As this paper is historical in approach, it will focus on showing understanding fully the issue of origins or mode of formation is critical to unpicking organisational history within voluntary action. In so doing I shall also touch on issues to do with value-base, membership and constitutional structure.

Case-study: The Simon Community and the Cyrenians (2)

i) The Simon Community 1963-1970

When did the Simon Community originate? The Simon Community emerged in the early sixties as a particular response to a general set of circumstances. It was an organisation oriented towards the provision of small-scale, supportive accommodation for single homeless people (mostly men), emerging at a time of increasing criticism of the inadequacies of the post-war welfare state provision and a concurrent growth in voluntary activity aimed at rectifying such inadequacies. As such, the Simon Community was simultaneously a reflection of the growing 'rediscovery' of homelessness as a social problem and a significant contribution to that discovery. In an important sense it was not simply that the Simon Community was an organisation in a particular context, but this context existed in the organisation itself. One aspect of this was the way that the Simon Community, in its recruitment of volunteers, was able to draw on the growing interest amongst young people, especially graduates, to perceived 'alternatives' to conventionality. This had internal repercussions – some very articulate people became involved, some of whom subsequently challenged the founder.

The Simon Community originated from one person's 'vision', that of Anton Wallich-Clifford, namely to provide something distinctive for homeless single people – a rural Community, served by a network of urban bases, where a small group of committed people would live and work alongside homeless people on a long-term caring basis. This 'vision' had implications for both the value based and the form the organisation took.

With regard to the former, the value-base was very much influenced by the existence of certain principles, which derived from this original aim. These principles were very much about a way of working (process) and less about specific objectives (ends). Thus the Simon Community was not simply about providing a service (accommodation) but also about doing this in a particular way – namely, volunteers living and working alongside homeless people in small group homes on a co-equal basis. These principles were very much general statements of intent and derived from the founder's vision.

This vision of a small closely-knit organisation based around Wallich-Clifford, also affected the form the organisation took. It never originated as a membership-based organisation in a formal, constitutional sense. As founder, Wallich-Clifford functioned as a prophet, leading believers in a new direction. As such he was the main source of authority within the

emerging movement, an essentially charismatic authority: Wallich-Clifford was synonymous with the Simon Community and the ownership and control revolved around him.

This was reinforced by the legal structure adopted – the Trust – seen as the easiest and cheapest one needed to acquire property (central to achieving the overall objective of establishing a Community) and was only seen as a formal, legal necessity. Yet it served to concentrate ownership and control in just four people, three of whom were dominated by Wallich-Clifford. The Simon Community began as a ‘centre’: its establishment was announced in the press and following this a number of local Companion Groups were established – small groups of supporters around the country to provide publicity and finance. The particular form the Simon Community took, focused around one person’s vision and with a Trust to enable the legal ownership of property, together with an ‘instant’ national profile, meant that it started with a centre and developed local activity afterwards. This affected the relationship with the groups – in some senses they were ‘owned’ by the centre. The balance in the relationship was one-sided, for example, in the flow of funds from local group to centre rather than the other way around. The Trust structure together with the personality of the founder meant that accommodating growth was very difficult.

Understanding these origins is crucial to understanding firstly the development of the Simon Community in the sixties and secondly the origins of the Cyrenians in schism from the Simon Community in 1970.

The ‘instant’ national profile was given further impetus by a rally in Trafalgar Square in 1964, which resulted in the acquisition of a house based in an urban environment, which meant in effect that the organisation began ‘back to front’. It also produced a rapid growth, not only in terms of the numbers of properties it acquired but also in the Companion groups. Having shared his idea, Wallich-Clifford found that many other people, became interested in putting the vision into practice. Thus some of the Companion groups evolved away from just providing funds and publicity for the Simon Community Trust to acquiring their own property and running their own projects providing accommodation for homeless people.

These people, who organised groups with their own management committees, came to develop their own interest in how the organisation developed, that is, they began to function as a sort of membership, although lacking formal representation. Wallich-Clifford was resistant to the development of autonomous local activity because it implied a sharing and with it the potential for challenge to his personal authority.

Throughout the rest of the sixties, there was a constant tension, between the founder trying to maintain control and influence whilst having to make concessions and adaptations as the organisation grew and developed further. This tension could be seen in terms of a conflict between ‘charismatic’ authority – based around the personality of the founder – and constitutional authority – based on the need to have clear rules and procedures and a form of representation to the growing ‘membership’. This tension could also be seen in the inadequacy of a communication process based around personal contact with the founder – a lot of confusion and instability was created by one part of the organisation not knowing what was happening elsewhere.

Furthermore, the legal structure of trust was not able to accommodate the growth of the organisation. Following intervention by the Charity Commissioners the establishment of Local Advisory Committees was recognised. This allowed some decentralisation, for instance, local groups could raise and spend money locally whilst continuing to operate under the auspices of the national Trust (for example, submitting accounts, using the common charity number). However this decentralisation did not extend to the ownership of property leases which remained with the national Trust, thus providing an important linking mechanism. Nor did this reform allow the formal representation of local groups at Trust

level, and by implication a greater degree of control by them of the Trust. Collective local group activity remained within other forums, for example, the National Council of Companions of Simon, the Community Leaders' Conferences, but these were largely ignored by Wallich-Clifford.

The tension between national body and local group was strongest over the issue of financial autonomy of the latter vis a vis the former. The Simon Community had been plagued by financial instability from the outset and the tendency to rely on 'Divine Providence' for the supply of funds was insufficient for an organisation taking on serious financial commitments. The tendency of projects centring around Wallich-Clifford to suffer debt problems suggested an effective approach to financial management and in turn sowed seeds of doubt about the 'centre' in the minds of people working in the local groups. In addition, the flow of funds was very much from the local Companion groups and local projects to the central Trust (and then to Wallich-Clifford's projects) and not the other way round. The balance in the relationship was one-sided, which became increasingly apparent as the local groups realised that they were legal responsible for the debts of the Trust and their own future was potentially threatened by financial instability in the centre.

The period from mid 1968 onwards marks a series of attempts by some local groups to confine the activities of Wallich-Clifford and to ensure some effective voice for the local groups. For example, a national office was established and the Communities' Conference of local groups emerged as the voice of local activity. This was followed by moves to restructure the Simon Community with financially and legally autonomous local groups. As there was no fundamental ideological difference, the local groups did not seek to leave the organisation. However it was Wallich-Clifford, who prompted the split, by withdrawing from the local groups, probably in the realisation that a scaled-down Simon Community afforded him greater opportunity to maintain his personal authority and control.

ii) The Cyrenians 1970-1986

When and how did the Cyrenians originate? The Cyrenians originated in schism from the Simon Community in 1970, for reasons which were structural rather than ideological. The desire of local groups to have their own financial and legal autonomy resulted in a movement of autonomous local groups. Finding themselves without a central body, after the withdrawal of the Simon Community Trust, the groups agreed on the need for a central servicing body which would also undertake national campaigning. The National Council of Companions of Simon filled the gap almost by default – it was there – and metamorphosed into the National Cyrenians.

What form did they take? The local groups and the national body were legally and financially separate from each other – all registering as charities and companies limited by guarantee. This enabled not only the holding of property as well as limited personal liability but also a more democratic structure, as it allowed not only more people to be formally involved but also the potential for their removal through election.

The way the Cyrenians were established and the form the movement took was very much in reaction to the controlled (even centralising) tendencies evident in the Simon Community. The Cyrenians were formed as an association of autonomous groups affiliated to a national body, which derived its existence from groups not the other way round. Although both local and national bodies were legally constituted around the same time, in an important sense the local groups existed prior to National Cyrenians, for without the split by the local groups National Cyrenians would not have been formed. The balance in the relationship was the reverse to that within the Simon Community where the local groups emerged after the central body, and were legally and financially 'owned' by the centre.

What was the nature of the association? Despite their independence or autonomy, there were a number of mechanisms which linked the local groups to each other and to the national body. At the practical level, there was the need for common services, such as recruitment and the training of volunteer workers, and for these services the groups agreed to pay an affiliation fee. However, from the point of view of the national body, this fee was nominal, that is, it did not cover the full costs of maintaining National Cyrenians, suggesting a low degree of ownership by local groups of the national body. This was compounded by the structure of the national governing body, the Council. Although established to allow local group representation, the Council comprised individuals who happened to be from a local group. This, together with the early emphasis on famous names, resulted in a preponderance of interested individuals with no necessary link with a local group, especially later on. Furthermore, whilst the local groups had, as part of their terms of affiliation, to agree to certain key aims or principles, these were recommended and not mandatory. This was another part of the legacy from the Simon Community – a conscious avoidance of imposing, a conscious recognition of local group autonomy. It also avoided burdening the national body with an active monitoring role.

For these reasons then the Cyrenians began as a loose association and as such provides an example of an organisation whose origins ran counter to the dominant external organisational influences that existed at that time, ones to do with amalgamation and centralisation.

The way the Cyrenians originated – in schism from the Simon Community over structural issues – meant that ideologically there was a close similarity. Indeed the local groups wished to continue using the name Simon but were prevented by Wallich-Clifford (legal ownership of the name remained with the Trust). They therefore chose the name Cyrenians, as it was the closest the new organisation could get to the original without using the name Simon (Penn, 1992),

Following from this, the Simon Community provided another important legacy, in terms of the value-base. The local groups took with them the ideas and approach of the Simon Community regarding the work with homeless single people. These were published in the *Cyrenian Principles* in 1971. These provided the embryonic movement with a set of common values and from this a sense of belonging to a 'movement' of organisations with similar purposes. The Cyrenians thus began consciously with a clear view of the need to have a core mission which would define the distinctive nature of the organisation. These principles were general statements of intent and included: non-judgemental acceptance; the establishment of a community through the provision of small-scale accommodation with homeless people and volunteers living together co-equally; participation through collective sharing and house meetings. However there were no detailed guidelines on their implementation, the only practical advice – *The Cyrenian Handbook* – concerned the nuts and bolts of setting up an organisation. Thus the looseness of their definition meant that as the organisation grew the principles became subject to differing interpretations and some of their contradictions were revealed. Most particularly, the principles of participation and equality ran counter to the unequal relationship of organisation (Cyrenian project) to beneficiary (homeless people), which the particular organisational form – governing body set apart from homeless people – served to reinforce.

The history of the Cyrenians after 1970 is about the various attempts to steer around this contradiction or tension and at the same time to deal with the differing interpretations of what the Cyrenian Principles meant in practice. However before considering further the internal organisational dynamics it is important to highlight the way the environment within which the Cyrenians developed had a significant influence – in particular the changing attitude to homelessness and the increasing and varied statutory involvement.

Between the late sixties and the late seventies there was a change in the view of homelessness – from one which focussed on personal inadequacy to one which focussed on housing scarcity. Organisations such as the Cyrenians contributed to this process through its campaigning activities. The change was also reflected in the Cyrenians own development as the emphasis switched away from ‘misfits’ to individuals with a housing need and local groups pursued the issue of residents’ rights.

Another significant development during this period was the increasing use of voluntary organisations by statutory authorities in the provision for the single homeless. This included both central and local statutory funding, for former a source for National Cyrenians and the latter a source for local groups. As part of the conditions of funding for National Cyrenians was the requirement of a reasonable number of local groups in membership, thus National Cyrenians actively encouraged the formation of local groups and the fairly loose affiliation agreement meant that a variety were accepted into membership. The funding reinforced the way the national body and the local groups were financed independently of each other. There was never a strong financial bond: the local groups neither provided funds for the national body in any substantial way, nor did the national body provide funds to the local groups. This, together with a fairly loose arrangement for the affiliation of further groups, meant that both the local groups developed their own separate momentum and the national body, particularly after the introduction of additional paid staff and the establishment of a national office, also developed a momentum of its own.

Statutory funding enabled local groups to extend considerably their own activity, albeit in different ways. Statutory funding, at least to begin with, tended to encourage provision such as night shelters (quantity) rather than what the Cyrenians wanted which was small-scale group homes (quality). The majority resisted this, although a significant minority continued with basic provision, producing conflicts over whether or not this was a correct implementation of Cyrenian Principles. The advent of housing association finance was very significant – it enabled local groups to link up with housing associations to secure property. Not only that but it brought with it the issue of standards and enabled a number of groups to move away from low-standard accommodation into better quality homes.

In addition, the Cyrenians used the opportunity to develop their own definition of standards which related to their distinctive way of working, to do with involvement and participation. In particular, it concerned providing both workers and residents with an opportunity to have a say in the running of the project. This tended to focus on the day to day running rather than the overall control of the project, but it did represent an attempt to steer through a tension arising from the underlying unequal relationship of organisation to beneficiary, referred to above. However this approach was more viable in small group homes than in night shelters and again it raised the issue of the implementation of Cyrenianism in practice. Increasingly a number of groups were critical of those others which continued with basic provision.

Following the period of growth from 1970-1974 there were continual attempts to resolve the apparent diversity in local practice and close the gap between national thinking and local practice. For example, the Re-Think of 1974, the Review of 1978, the Affiliation Agreement of 1979 and the Minimum Standards of 1981 – these all tried to address the outcomes which had followed from the way the organisation had originated and the way that statutory funding had influenced the early and critical development. The attempt to draw up a more tightly defined Affiliation Agreement, followed by moves to agree Minimum Standards and their implementation revealed a major tension between the existence of local autonomous groups and the ability of the national body to enforce either the Agreement or the Standards.

For a movement wishing to have a national body whose function was geared up to the provision of services such a role is less problematical. However, some within the Cyrenian movement (at national and local levels) wished for more than that. The national body

became an arena through which, and within which, they pursued their own interpretation of Cyrenianism and this in turned raised questions about the developmental role of the national body.

Indeed some local groups had argued as early as 1981 that the whole idea of independent groups and Minimum Standards was a contradiction in terms. Unless the national body was able and prepared to pursue the policy of disaffiliation, Minimum Standards would be unenforceable. In the instance of the Affiliation Agreement, one of the founder local groups, Oxford Cyrenians, would not agree to the final clause. This stated that any disaffiliated group would cease to use the name Cyrenian, but the Oxford group felt too much was at stake for them to potentially lose their name, partly because they were aware that some groups wanted them disaffiliated because of their operation of a hostel for homeless people. National Cyrenians prevented attempts to disaffiliate Oxford and removed the final clause.

Minimum Standards followed soon after – these concerned not only the physical standards of accommodation that local groups were to follow but also the practice of encouraging resident participation. But Standards again raised questions about the developmental role of the national body, in particular the role of the fieldworkers whose job it was to implement the standards. Were they there to encourage local groups to come up to an agreed standard of provision (as the national body felt) or were they there to facilitate the removal of 'UnCyrenian' groups, as some local groups wanted. This was never made clear and not surprisingly the fieldworkers found themselves in an extremely ambiguous and stressful position.

What these conflicts within the movement point to is the different interpretations of the Cyrenians' core mission or aims which was not simply about housing single homeless people but doing it in a distinctive way. For the Cyrenian movement the issue was not simply about achieving its objective (the ends) as the means (how you go about achieving the ends) was also an end in itself. Thus the attempts to develop an identifiable movement (the means) always became bound up with attempts to define the overall aim or core mission (ends). One of the major tensions within the Cyrenian movement was whether to come up with a definition of the overall aim which reflected the existing development of the overall groups and was thus shared by all or whether the aim was to change what already existed to fit the definition of what the overall aim **should** be. The lack of clarity of the overall aim was one reason for its different interpretation by various parts of the Cyrenian movement. These differences had their origins in the way the overall movement developed in the early years, as a loosely arranged association of independent groups united by a general commitment to generally stated ideals. The impact of contextual influences such as statutory funding and the direction of housing policy compounded those differences.

Nevertheless, the Cyrenian movement made choices, even if these were not obviously clear-cut. One apparent and fundamental choice, made by most local groups and the national body, was to resist external pressures to become projects dealing with large numbers of homeless people and to maintain their internally-derived emphasis on small-group homes. However, these decisions tended to be arrived at independently by local groups and by the national body, and at separate stages, rather than collectively as a movement. Another important, albeit unconscious, choice made by the movement was in not taking up the opportunity of turning National Cyrenians into a housing association. This would have considerably enhanced the influence of this body vis a vis local groups, thus altering the relationship profoundly.

In general the way the Cyrenian movement found the resolution of such conflicts through its national body difficult to effect. The national body could not impose a solution from above, the nature of the relationship precluded that. However, whereas the national body might have provided greater leadership from the centre, there were signs that it tended to be

reactive rather than proactive, something which was exacerbated by the domination of two of the founding members of the National Cyrenians, the Giffords.

In addition, the culture of the movement meant that there were difficulties with the whole idea of authority and leadership. There was great emphasis within the national staff team and amongst a number of local groups of working non-hierarchically, that is without a formal leader. This was in order to avoid the authoritarian imposition of direction 'from above'. Interestingly, suggestions made in 1978 to have a Director were successfully resisted by the staff. This went against the dominant approach within voluntary organisations at that time of appointing a Director to provide the necessary 'leadership', clarity of direction and organisational unity.

This discomfort with authority also spilled over into the relationship between the local groups and their national body. Local representatives remained just that and rarely became managers of the national body. The way the ruling body, the Council, had been structured also contributed to this. It had not been strongly rooted in the local groups, and had a significant component of interested individuals and important names and also did not provide an effective forum. In addition, it is quite possible that some local groups had a vested interest in not having too tightly defined a relationship with other groups and with the national body, as this provided them with more autonomy in their own development.

Nevertheless and despite these various tensions and conflicts, the Cyrenians held on to the main aspects of their value-base and with it their distinctive way of working, resisting externally-defined approaches to homelessness which concentrate on quantity rather than quality. As such the movement retained its autonomy, although this was modified by the introduction of statutory funding, and managed to steer through contradictory tensions. Internally too, the movement sustained locally autonomous groups, although the position of the national body was more problematic and its developmental role under question.

Conclusion

This paper has started from the position that the existence of local groups and national bodies and their relationship to each other, has been a recurring theme within the history of voluntary action. From this it has been argued that this organisational theme or feature has to be seen in the light of two main contextual influences – the growing dominance of business modes of organisation and the expansion of the state sector. These have produced dominant directions of change, for example, the importance of objective-oriented activity, where ends dominated means. Another, although related, has been the growth in scale of activity, accompanied by various organisational pressures – the impetus to join together to centralise and even to adopt hierarchical organisational structures. At the same time, an increasing 'nationalisation' of social, economic and political activity.

In general the approach has been to identify and understand the historical context for the pressures for certain directions, and this stands in contrast to general, abstract, theoretical models about social and organisational development. This paper's approach has been to use the notion of a common and changing context for voluntary organisations with dominant types of organisations and dominant directions of change, but with resistances and exceptions (Yeo, 1976). Thus whilst in general there has been a dominant 'pull' towards largeness, centralisation, hierarchy, unitary organisational form, there has been a continued, although less dominant 'pull' towards smallness, federation, loosely-tied organisational form.

This 'pull' generates a tension which voluntary organisations have to work within and around and this tension extends to their own internal organisational dynamics. One particular manifestation of this has been in the apparent tension between national body and local groups, although this is not the only one. There are others, for example, reconciling

democracy with efficiency, maintaining the aims and traditions of voluntarism which accepting external funding, integrating voluntary involvement with professional activity, reconciling social movement with bureaucracy. Thus there are different ways of uncovering voluntary organisational history, each providing a different perspective or pair of spectacles/lens through which one can look at the issue of how voluntary bodies have organised themselves to achieve their objectives. This in turn leads into consideration of further issues to do with accountability, representation, participation and involvement.

The use of national- local lens involved the generation of many questions, the principle ones being:

- How did the organisation originate (did the national body come first or second?)
- What were/are its aims and objectives (did these vary between national body and local bodies and in what way?)
- What is the membership and how is it organised (do the members own the organisation or does the organisation own the members?)
- What is the power structure? (unitary or decentralised; federative or hierarchical?)
- How is the organisation financed? (externally, internally, what is the direction of flow of resources?)

These questions were used to uncover the organisational history of the Simon Community and Cyrenians, and some of that detail was provided in this paper. The case-study as such is unique, but many of the organisational issues discussed have wider relevance. The historical approach used rests very much upon the theme of general issues and particular outcomes – these are general themes and questions which can be identified but the way there are answered will be specific to that organisation. Thus, the history of the Simon Community and the Cyrenians is more than an illuminating study of one organisation but a specific study which illuminates some of the experience of voluntary action.

Finally, a greater understanding of the particular histories within the development of voluntary action is important for two reasons. Firstly, as an exercise in historical enquiry is shows how much more can be understood about the processes of change. Secondly, an understanding of organisational history is important for pointing to the value of 'the past' to voluntary organisations as too often there is an absence within voluntary organisations of understanding the value of the culture and traditions of their own organisations.

- (1) Paper presented to the Brighton Voluntary Sector Research Forum
- (2) The two case-studies are based on original archival research for my Doctorate:
Penn, A (1992) *The Management of Voluntary Organisations in the post-war period, with special reference to national-local relations*, DPhil Thesis, University of Sussex.

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