



Recommendations & next steps

Gary McFarlane  
Co Chair Public Health Alliance  
Director CIEH NI



Public Health Alliance  
for the island of Ireland

The slide features a background of a metal grate. The text "Recommendations & next steps" is at the top. Below it, the name and title of Gary McFarlane are listed. The Public Health Alliance logo is in the bottom right corner, featuring the letters "pha" in a stylized font, a gear icon, and the text "Public Health Alliance for the island of Ireland".

## Objectives

- To document the nature and extent of social inequality in dietary intake and eating patterns using existing data;
- To assess current policy responses to food poverty in Northern Ireland;
- To identify priority areas and make recommendations for current and future policy ;
- To heighten awareness at both strategic and operational level of the issue of food poverty and the implications for public health and stimulate action on the same; and
- To provide clearer understanding and create opportunities for all island collaboration to tackle food poverty.



## Methodology

### Secondary Data Analysis

- Consumer surveys
- Current government policies / strategies

### Primary Data Collection

- Consultation with key stakeholders
  - Interviews
  - Seminar
- Focus Groups



## Conclusions.....

- **Food poverty is alive and well in Northern Ireland, as in the Republic of Ireland.**
- **That this is so within so called “civilised” society is unacceptable.**
- **Potential solutions lie in existing government policy frameworks – provided that they are delivered upon and are coupled with sustainable and proven practical interventions.**



.....to build a peaceful, fair and prosperous society in Northern Ireland...where everyone can enjoy a better quality of life now and in years to come.

To achieve this we need to pursue an innovative and productive economy and a fair society that promotes social inclusion, sustainable communities and personal health and well being.

Building a better future: Draft Programme for Government  
Northern Ireland Executive  
October 2007



## Recommendations



- **at strategic level**
- **at operational / community level**



## Strategic Recommendations

- **many of the solutions lie in existing policy.**
- **comprehensive mapping would help.**
- **need better linkages between policy development and delivery.**
- **implementation not always as robust as it needs to be.**



## Structure is important!

- The principals set down in the terms of reference for RPA must be upheld.
- Must improve the opportunity for integrated, joined up working.
- Mechanisms to allow cross transference of funding.
- Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater!



## Resource allocation – Have we got it right?

- Public awareness V practical intervention
- Longer term, sustainable resourcing of what has been proven to work!
- Communication – case studies and “seed planting”



## Operational/Community level



- Food subsidy/voucher scheme?
- integrated with other cross cutting objectives e.g. Sustainable development
- Ongoing roll out and delivery of practical interventions that work

## Food standards



- Further development of simplified food labeling
- Greater emphasis on food standards work within local authorities

## Planning



- **“Out of town” as a last resort!**
- **Serious consideration of policies and incentives to limit closure of small independent retailers – particularly in rural areas.**



## Public transport



- **extend existing community transport schemes.**
- **Frequency of service – an issue for more rural communities?**
- **Consultation with users**



## Food retailers



- **Radical rethink of policies and incentives on delivery of food shopping.**
- **alternatives to “online”**
- **Improved assistance for elderly or “less mobile” customers.**



## The school setting



- **Health promoting schools – vital!**
- **Fit Futures Task Group recommendations - crucial**

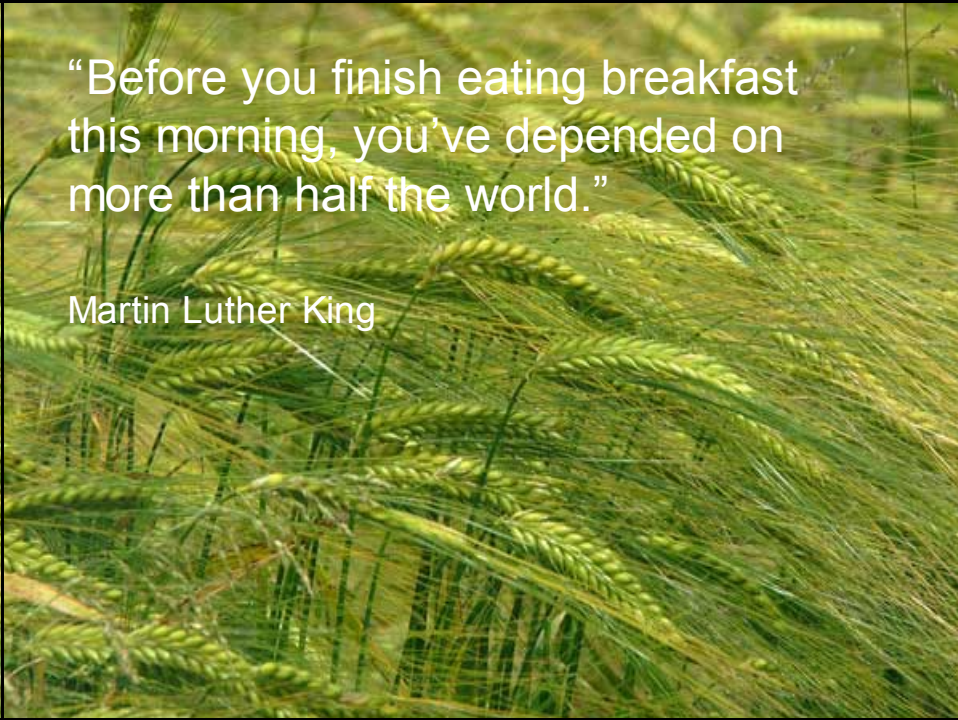




## Wider debate, engagement and action!

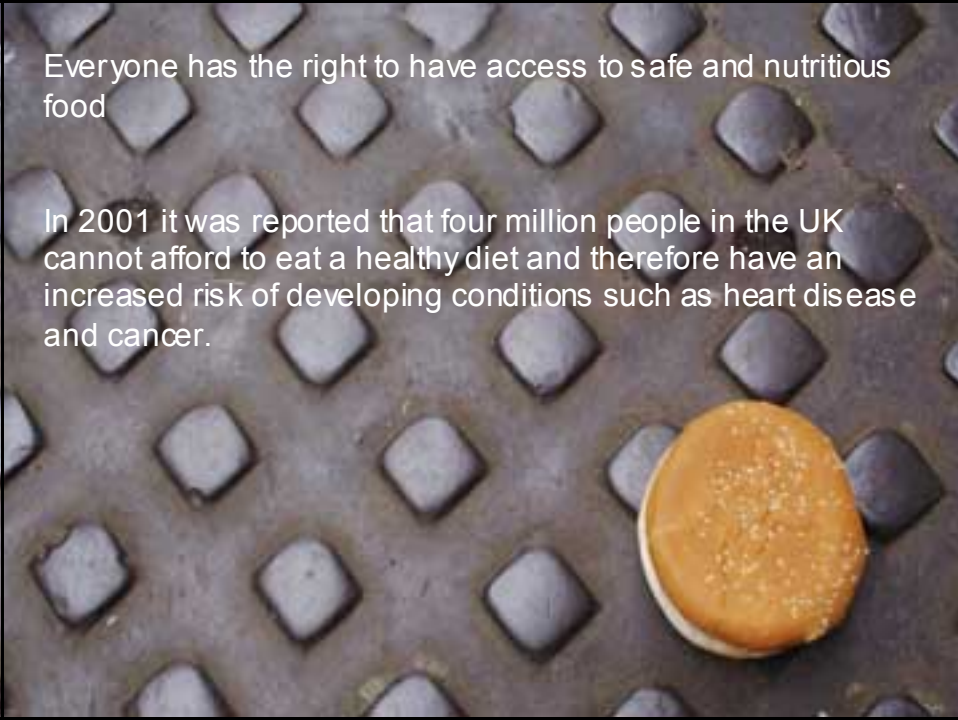
- **This report is a starting point.**
- **For the first time we now have a picture for the whole island.**
- **Need wider engagement and commitment to action at multidisciplinary and multisectoral level.**
- **Government (DHSSPS?) should facilitate.**





“Before you finish eating breakfast  
this morning, you’ve depended on  
more than half the world.”

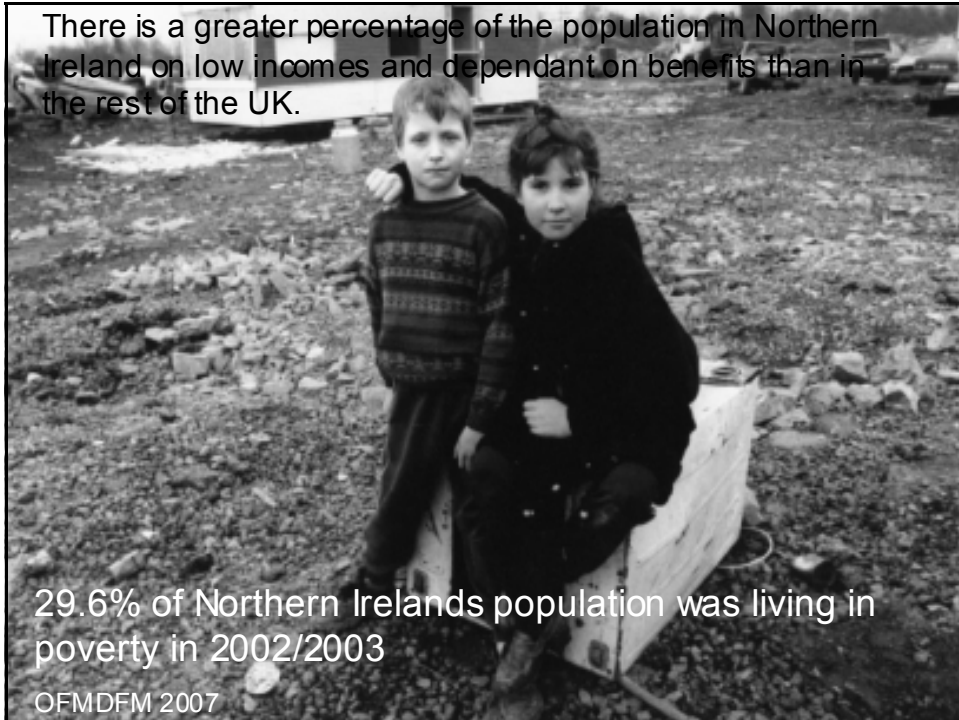
Martin Luther King



Everyone has the right to have access to safe and nutritious  
food

In 2001 it was reported that four million people in the UK  
cannot afford to eat a healthy diet and therefore have an  
increased risk of developing conditions such as heart disease  
and cancer.

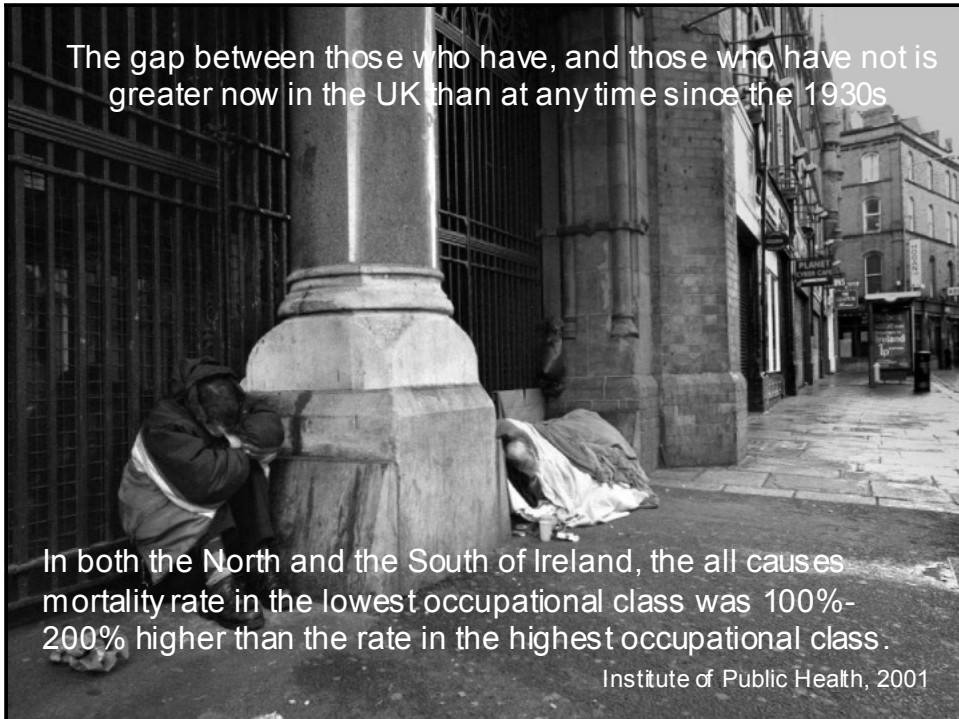
There is a greater percentage of the population in Northern Ireland on low incomes and dependant on benefits than in the rest of the UK.



29.6% of Northern Irelands population was living in poverty in 2002/2003

OFMDFM 2007

The gap between those who have, and those who have not is greater now in the UK than at any time since the 1930s



In both the North and the South of Ireland, the all causes mortality rate in the lowest occupational class was 100%-200% higher than the rate in the highest occupational class.

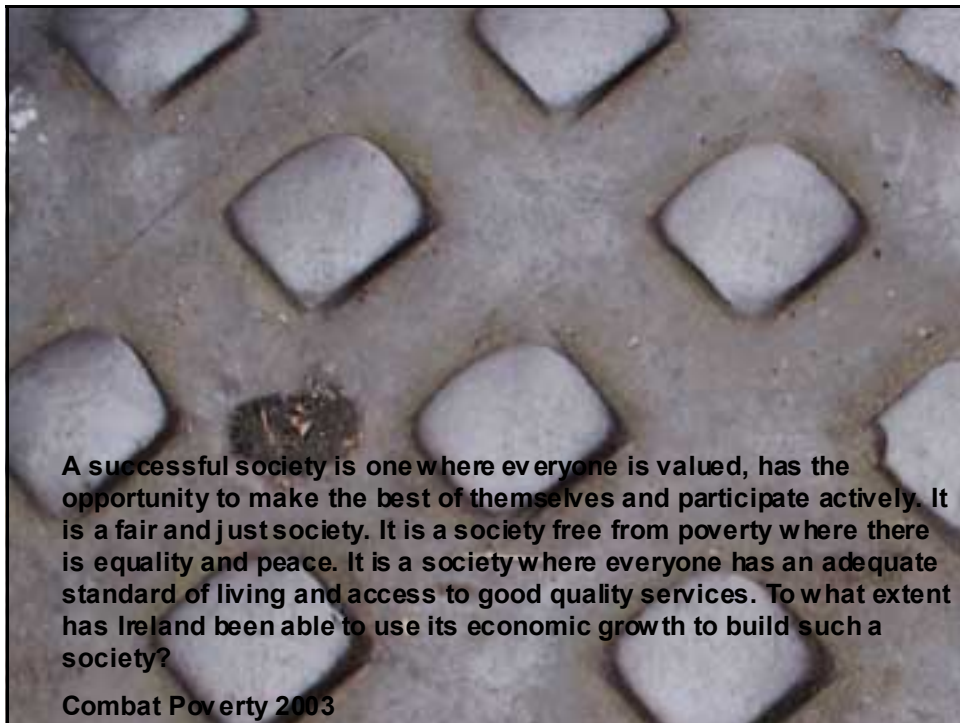
Institute of Public Health, 2001

Children from disadvantaged backgrounds are twice as likely to die before the age of 15 as children of professional parents  
General Consumer Council NI 2000



In 2002 only 3% of all Travellers were aged over 65 compared with 11% of settled population



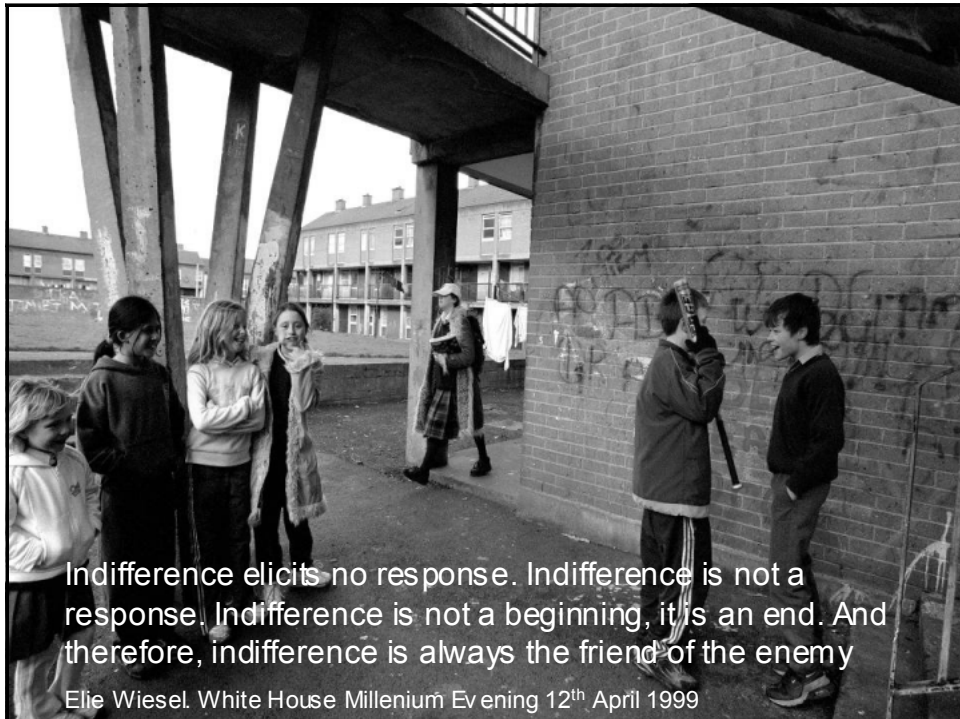


To deny any person their human rights is to challenge their very humanity  
Nelson Mandela



Health must be seen not as a blessing to be wished for but as a human right to be fought for

Kofi Annan



Indifference elicits no response. Indifference is not a response. Indifference is not a beginning, it is an end. And therefore, indifference is always the friend of the enemy

Elie Wiesel. White House Millennium Evening 12<sup>th</sup> April 1999

It is not how much we do, but how much love we put in the action



Food Poverty - fact or fiction?



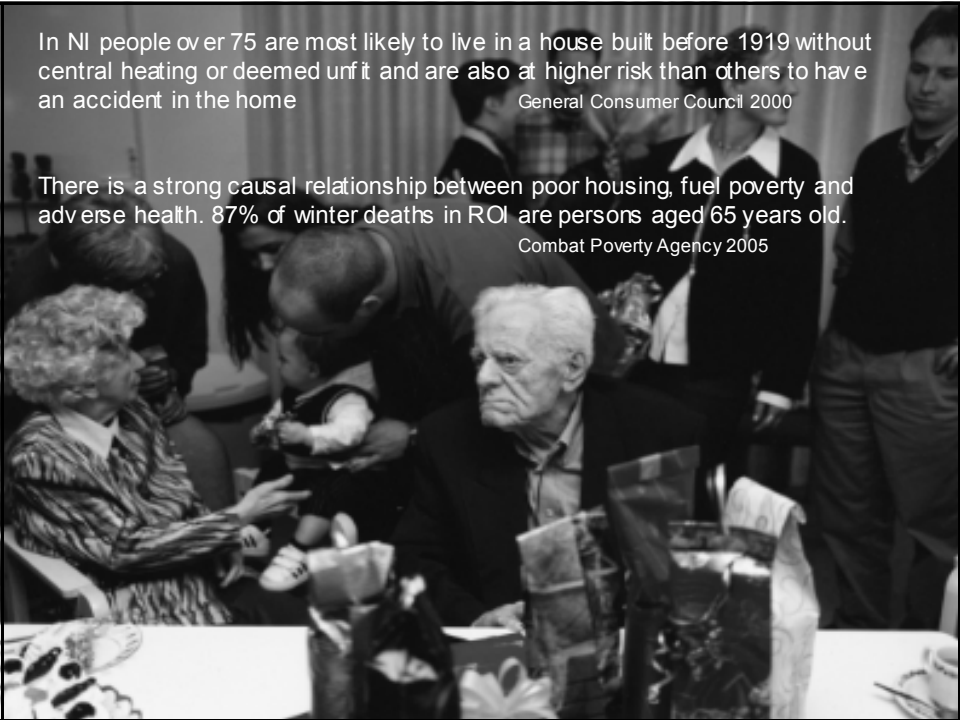
“Our lives begin  
to end the day  
we become  
silent about  
things that  
matter”

Martin Luther King



Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has

Margaret Mead 1901 - 1978



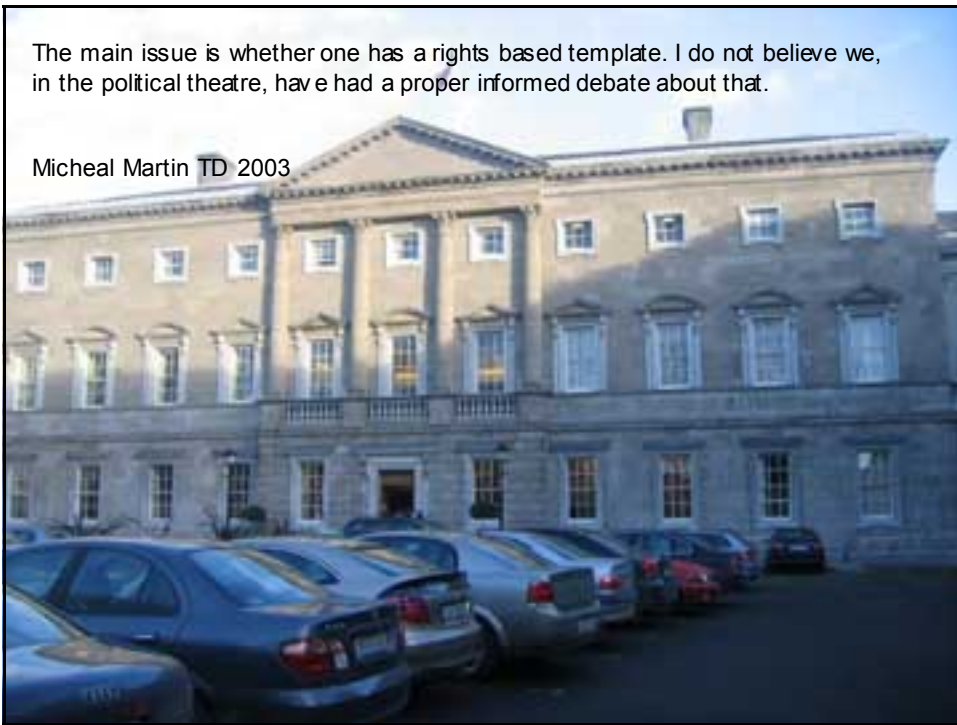
In NI people over 75 are most likely to live in a house built before 1919 without central heating or deemed unfit and are also at higher risk than others to have an accident in the home  
General Consumer Council 2000

There is a strong causal relationship between poor housing, fuel poverty and adverse health. 87% of winter deaths in ROI are persons aged 65 years old.  
Combat Poverty Agency 2005



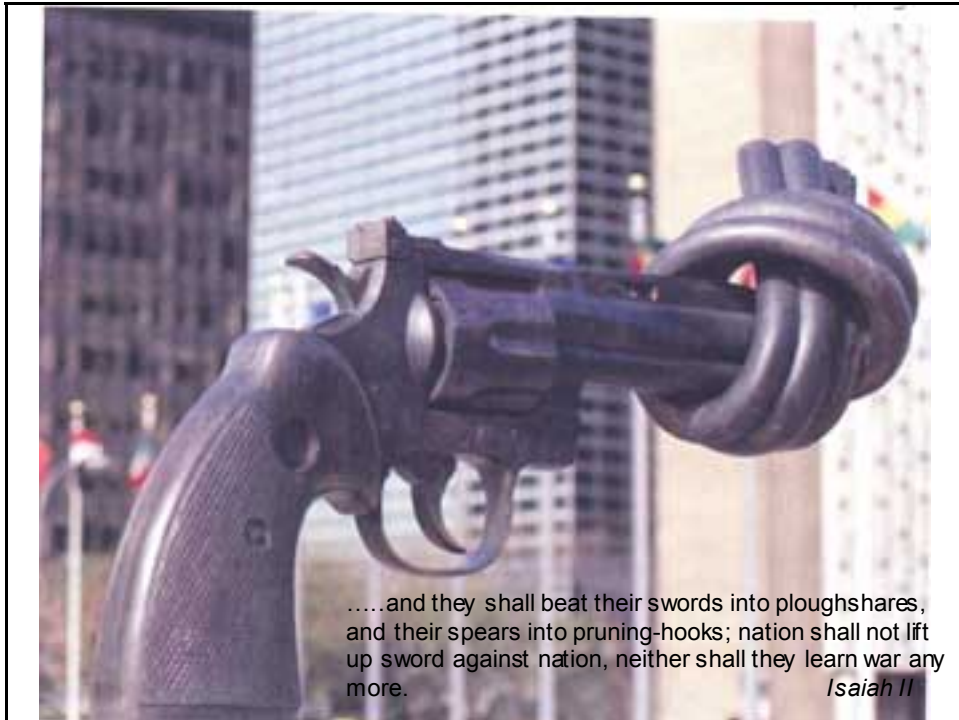
The main issue is whether one has a rights based template. I do not believe we, in the political theatre, have had a proper informed debate about that.

Micheal Martin TD 2003



No amount of rationalisation can take away the fact that homelessness is a blight on the Irish Community, a symptom of an illness in the body of society

Father Peter McVerry  
December 2004



.....and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,  
and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift  
up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any  
more.

*Isaiah II*