

3-21-2005

Editor's Note

Padraig O'Malley

University of Massachusetts Boston, padraig.omalley@umb.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarworks.umb.edu/nejpp>



Part of the [Higher Education Administration Commons](#), and the [Urban Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

O'Malley, Padraig (2005) "Editor's Note," *New England Journal of Public Policy*: Vol. 20: Iss. 2, Article 2.

Available at: <http://scholarworks.umb.edu/nejpp/vol20/iss2/2>

This Editor's Notes is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks at UMass Boston. It has been accepted for inclusion in New England Journal of Public Policy by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at UMass Boston. For more information, please contact library.uasc@umb.edu.

Editor's Note

Padraig O'Malley

Everyone who knew Robert Wood — LBJ's man to develop the Model Cities Program, President of the University of Massachusetts, Superintendent of Boston Public Schools, and author — has an anecdote about him. He was that kind of man. You remembered him and if it was not quite in a way that was always warm and fuzzy, that delighted Bob for whom the battle of ideas was fought on a terrain where he, at least, did not know the meaning of running for intellectual cover. Nor, for that matter was he much inclined to take prisoners of sloppy thinking.

This issue of the *New England Journal of Public Policy* has two appreciations of Bob. Dick Hogarty and Marcy Murningham were both protégés of his who worked closely with him at different phases of his multifaceted career.

We are also proud to publish the first extract from Bob's memoirs, not quite finished at the time of his death, but a manuscript, nevertheless, that covers in depth most of the major public policy issues he grappled with in his different public personae.

I began this editor's note with a reference to anecdotes, and I should add my own since it reveals a little known story of how Bob, when he was President of the University of Massachusetts, was instrumental in facilitating an event at UMass Amherst that had repercussions spanning twenty-five years and that secured for the university, especially the Boston campus, a small but important niche in the efforts to bring peace to Northern Ireland, a land that has not known peace for four hundred years.

In 1974, I and some equally naïve friends, what the Irish writer Flann O'Brien would call the "plain people," believed that we could somehow convince protagonists from all parties to the conflict in Northern Ireland — and the early 1970s were the worst years of the conflict in terms of deaths and bombings and sectarian murders — to come to Boston to talk with each other. We had a Committee — The Committee for an Irish Forum — and not much more. We were dismissed as "wool" heads at best, and Brit agents at worst, for there were not many among the Boston Irish community at that time who had the time of day for the Prods (Protestants).

Padraig O'Malley is a senior fellow at the John W. McCormack Graduate School of Policy Studies of University of Massachusetts Boston.

Besides the obvious problem of convincing major players in Northern Ireland to come and to talk to each other, a proposition not previously entertained by paramilitaries on either side, there was the issue of raising the money to bring them here, finding and paying for a venue that was not accessible to either the media or the public — one where the parties could live and work together for a week without committing mayhem on each other, one that would provide adequate security, food, accommodation, and at least one watering hole where sufficient imbibing of native spirits and foaming pints might lubricate tongues, dispel inhibitions, induce an aroma of conviviality, spur spontaneous sing-songs (essential ingredients for conflict resolution), and guarantee the massive hangovers that would create an across-the-divide common sense of shared suffering.

Maurice (“Mossy”) Donahue, who as President of the Senate was largely responsible the funding for UMB through the legislature, arranged a meeting with me and my brother and Bob. After Donahue explained the project, Bob, kneading his worry beads, looked us over (in the mid-seventies it was fashionable to look scruffy if you wanted to have any social standing among people under thirty) and asked: “Mossy, can you guarantee me that the O’Malleys are not Proxies?”

How he knew that in the argot of Northern Ireland a member of the Provisional IRA was called a “Provie” remains one of those mysteries I had meant to have Bob demystify. But like so many things in life, we leave unasked the questions that are the most obvious until we find we have put them off too long. And then our sense of loss is compounded by the aggregation of the seemingly inconsequential — items that somehow remain permanently on our short list of things to attend to.

To Bob’s query, Mossy swore that he had unassailable information that the O’Malleys were cleaner than the uileann pipe. Reassured, Bob made available the conference center at UMass Amherst, accommodation for forty plus, watering hole, food, security: the whole shebang. And UMass picked up the tab. (This wasn’t quite the way it was supposed to be but that’s the way it happened.)

That conference in August 1975 broke new ground. That ground was cultivated further in January 1985 when UMass Boston with the Committee for an Irish Forum hosted a three-day conference at Airlie House, Virginia attended by senior officials from both the British and Irish governments, the constitutional political parties in Northern Ireland, (at that time Sinn Fein was regarded as belligerently unconstitutional) with the Rev Ian Paisley’s Democratic Unionist Party (regarded as belligerently constitutional) participating in such an event for the first time, and members of all political parties in the Republic of Ireland and Britain. And twelve years later, in June 1997, UMass Boston and the government of South Africa, with President Nelson Mandela, the host, convened a conference in Arniston, South

Africa, that brought together all parties — the first time Paisley's party agreed to participate in any proceeding that smacked of an attempt to resolve differences with Sinn Fein also a participant. The Arniston conference is widely credited as one of the critical factors that unlocked long-locked peace talks in Northern Ireland and paved the way to the Good Friday Agreement in April 1998, which has brought peace, albeit an uneasy peace, to Northern Ireland.

So, Bob, you have your footnote in Irish history. The decision you made in early 1975 — one that combined intuition, a quick assessment of the potential of such an event, and your willingness to take risks and go where others would fear to go — provided a forum that developed a life of its own over the span of twenty-five years.

And you certainly have your footnotes in Boston history.

In the late 1970s, the Boston Public Schools, the nation's oldest school system, was subjected to numerous Federal Court Orders, stemming from the 1974 finding that the school system had knowingly violated the equal rights of black children. By 1976, the city was in turmoil, as many white parents refused to send their children to the public schools or, if they did, worried about the dangers associated with compulsory cross-town busing and violation of neighborhood solidarity. Federal District Court Judge W. Arthur Garrity, Jr.'s desegregation plan, issued in 1975, evoked immediate reaction at local, state, and national levels, with many characterizing it as a disaster or, at best, remaining neutral.

In "Looking Back without Anger: Reflections of the Boston School Crisis," Robert Wood himself provides us with a unique perspective into the miasma of Boston school politics of that time when near civil war erupted in some of Boston's neighborhoods.

In "Thwarted Ambition: The Role of Public Policy in University Development," Michael Bastedo examines some of the critical factors that prevented the University of Massachusetts from achieving national stature as one of the preeminent public educational institutions. While advertising itself as a state with world-class private and public higher education, the state government has shamefully neglected public higher education to the detriment of its citizenry and despite the best efforts of successive Presidents and Chancellors of its university system to create public institutions of higher learning that might rank with the best. Personal antipathy between Wood and Governor Dukakis doomed Wood's efforts and his own "presidential style" — perceived extravagance in maintaining offices in pricey downtown Boston — undermined his support among faculty at Amherst and infuriated the parsimonious Dukakis.

Bastedo identifies numerous factors that bedeviled the university's efforts to become a major national competitor — the pervasive opposition of the

private institutions to the emergence of a public higher education sector that would pose a threat to their hegemony, political maneuverings over position and power, bureaucratic infighting over resources for the state's community colleges and UMass, a slew of scandals involving higher public education officials, and a political and education culture that lacked a public higher education ethos.

More important, from the 1970s through the 1990s, Massachusetts had a series of Governors — Michael Dukakis, (three terms), Edward King and William Weld (a term and one-half) — for whom public higher education was a necessary burden to bear, not a system to nourish. When fiscal crises engulfed the state in the late 1980s and twice in the 1990s, public higher education, with no substantial public constituency, became the sacrificial lamb at the altar of fiscal rectitude. State appropriations fell by 33 percent, the largest divestment in the history of U.S. public higher education. And more recently, from 2001 to 2004, funding has fallen by 26 percent.

Paul Forrant's article, "Greater Springfield Industrialization" is a masterly exposition on the decline of a way of life, once and still elegized by presidential aspirants in touch with nothing but their contributors' pockets. In the Northeast, the old industrial manufacturing base of America — once upon a time the nation's bastion of economic superiority and the envy of other countries — has been gutted, leaving hundreds of thousands of working families in peril and gutting, too, communities of closely knit neighborhoods, stripping hard working people of a chance to send their children to college. "Can a young, married couple with one or two children," he asks, "reasonably expect to accumulate the down payment and mortgage payments for a new home, or pay skyrocketing rents? And, if so, does it mean a collective weekly eighty to ninety hours of work and gut-wrenching anxiety that a lost job equals an economic meltdown?"

With such questions framing his analysis, Forrant examines the Connecticut River Valley's current economic plight and the establishment of a governor-appointed Finance Control Board to oversee Springfield's spending. To gauge the impact of the uncertain and painful transition from an industrial-based economy to a service-based one, he compares the wages of lost industrial jobs with the wages of service sector employment and analyzes how the wage gap contributes to a decline in workers' standards of living, which in turn contributes to financial stress in older industrial communities. And finally, he puts the pieces of his research together and offers some tentative thoughts on what it all means for the future of work in Massachusetts.

His conclusions are unsettling: Well-paying manufacturing jobs have largely disappeared and the result is "wage depression, declining household wealth, increasing income inequality and a degraded quality of life."

“Climate Change in Metro Boston,” presents the findings of a study by Paul Kirshen, Matthias Ruth, and William Anderson of the impacts of climate change on metropolitan Boston’s infrastructure systems. The authors discuss the effects of emissions of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide and what “adaptive” measures we should consider to reduce the impacts of global warming, given different climate change scenarios. We can either begin to put these adaptive measures in place now, say the authors, or wait for the full impacts to occur at which time the problems will be much harder and more expensive to deal with.

Kirshen et al. remind us that 75 percent of CO₂ is from fossil fuels. The United States emits approximately one-fourth of the global total. Besides warming, climate change will also result in higher sea levels due to melting of ice on land and thermal expansion of the ocean, storms with greater precipitation, higher maximum temperatures, and more frequent droughts. Even if there are significant decreases in emissions, the climate will continue to change, with temperatures rising 1.4 to 5.8 degrees Celsius by 2100 according to the 2001 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). At higher levels the melting of West Antarctic ice sheet or a shutdown of the Gulf Stream is possible.

In New England, temperatures have increased approximately 0.4 C since 1895. The sea level in Boston has increased approximately 0.30 meters since 1900; half due to climate change and half due to natural land subsidence.

The study urges Metro Boston to address the potential problems relating to energy, rising sea levels, river flooding, transportation, water supply, and public health sooner rather than later. But the costs are significant.

Hurricane Katrina devastated large areas of the Gulf States and deluged New Orleans leaving America with images of havoc, destruction, and death that we are used to associating with Bangladesh or third world countries. The infrastructure simply collapsed, and although there had been ample predictions of just such a disaster Hurricane Rita reinforced the country’s lack of preparedness. Again, the infrastructure of roads was inadequate to evacuate large numbers of people, and the coastal area protective structures proved inadequate to their task.

Whether global warming due to carbon emissions is the villain in these cases will be argued for some time. What seems clear, however, is that what Kirshen and his colleagues prescribe in terms of public policy must be acted on and acted on now.

In “A Very Dangerous Woman,” Sherry Penny and James Livingston reflect on the life of Nantucket Island born Martha Wright, who was relentlessly committed to the abolition of slavery and rights for women from the 1830s through her death in 1869. Wright, an exceptional woman with

limited education, played the roles of homemaker (seven children), reformist, and visionary — the insights from each role informing the other. She was a pivotal, albeit little known figure in two of the great social issues of her day, one — the abolition of slavery — she lived to see triumph, the other — equal rights for women — was not legislatively addressed until 1920 and not fully addressed until 1980, when the Declaration of Sentiments, which she and others drew up in Seneca, New York, in July 1848, was formally recognized by Congress. Nothing better exemplifies the inability of white men, with western civilization's approval of their privileged position, to even conceptualize the idea of the equality of *all* human beings than the treatment of Martha and her sister Lucretia (a Quaker preacher and fellow-reformist) when she and other female delegates from the Pennsylvania Anti Slavery Society were refused seating by the male delegates to the first World Anti Slavery Convention in London in 1840.

What accounted for her fierce determination in the face of the widespread and sometimes vitriolic public disapproval? What, the authors ask, motivates a reformist, the individual who challenges the status quo with new paradigms of thinking and behavior? In the case of Martha Wright they identify three dominant influences — the Quaker religion teaching that each individual black, white, male or female, has an Inner Light that shows the way of God — combativeness, which enabled her to continue through the many years required to effect major change despite all the ridicule and hostility she faced from established groups that resisted change, and despite her frustrations with the inertia of the general public and the weight of the political process, and her basic beliefs reinforced by self-interest, by things they want and don't have, and things they have and don't want. This combination of influences, the authors assert, is germane to the making of reformists today.

There is an ironic symmetry between “The Travels of Our Bodies, Ourselves” and “Lessons about Reform from ‘A Very Dangerous Woman.’” The manner in which the women in the abolitionist campaign were treated created a springboard for the campaign for equal rights for women in the 1840s, similarly, Jane Pincus says that the manner in which women in the male dominated civil rights movement were treated — as helpers, secretaries, lovers, and cooks — became a rallying point for women to question their roles and to start addressing more openly their own concerns regarding reproductive issues.

The women's health book, *Our Bodies, Ourselves: A Book By and For Women*, placed female sexuality firmly within the framework of women's health and combined vividly experienced medical encounters with available health and medical information. It critiqued prevailing cultural and medical views, enumerating the social, political, medical, and economic obstacles that prevent women's health and medical needs from becoming known, met, and respected. It helped create the women's health movement.

The way this book traveled, from being sold word of mouth to becoming an international best seller is part of publishing lore, but often lost in its retelling is that the women kept editorial control and found, through dialogue with other women and the then mushrooming networks of women and increasing numbers of medical professionals, the optimum balance between recounting their personal narratives and medical advice, now reconceptualized. The book's worldwide success has ranged from purely personal empowerment for hundreds of thousands of women into the broader arenas of research, education, and health policy initiatives related to women's health.

OBOS was a collaborative not just of a single group of "reformist" women but the product of a process that involved hundreds, then thousands of women, each of whom would read the book, provide feedback to the authors who in turn would incorporate the feedback into future editions so that the process of iteration became self sustaining. A book that was always a work-in-progress. Many readers became contributors. There were few more powerful tools of empowerment.

Nor did the empowerment stop at the borders of the United States. Translations/adaptations have appeared in Italy, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Sweden, the Netherlands, Spain, Russia, Egypt, South Africa, China, Israel, Senegal, Thailand, Armenia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Poland, and in the works are books for Albania, Kenya, Nepal, Turkey, Vietnam, South Korea, India, and a pan Arabic edition for the Palestinian section of Jerusalem.

In "cultural" and "inspired" adaptations, translators locate their text within the cultural, political, and economic context of each country, and re-imagine the book entirely to fit their needs, whether it be an entire book, or a series of smaller pamphlets. Translation, Pincus observes, is "a constant interaction between a text itself, a language, and a culture" — a "delicate affair." And every translation, like *OBOS* itself when it first appeared in the United States in 1970, is a starting point.

And finally, we have the pleasure of printing the lecture Shaun O'Connell, a frequent and always welcome contributor, gave on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of his teaching at the University of Massachusetts Boston. "Important Places," speaks of Boston, New York, and Dublin in O'Connell's personal and literary life. "A sense of place," he writes, "can stop time, hold or recover the moment or the era, lift us out of the limited, personal perspectives and allow us to see anew an altered, refreshed world." But a sense of place "can also become a burden of history, a nightmare from which one is trying to escape." O'Connell invites us into the literary imaginations that have shaped our understanding of the three cities, that have shaped him as literary person and teacher who has enriched the lives of students across two generations, here, in Boston, at our university, challenging their imaginations with an understanding of the special sense of place as they embarked on their own search for *their* places in the world.

Copyright of New England Journal of Public Policy is the property of New England Journal of Public Policy and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.