

farming disputes which cause feuding in rural communities that go on for generations; and the English/Welsh issue.

By the end of the project, the ripples of interest had turned into a swell, with a great deal of potential for new mediation services on the ground. At this point, the Quakers gave a 'local peace work grant' to enable my work as fieldworker to continue until May 1994.

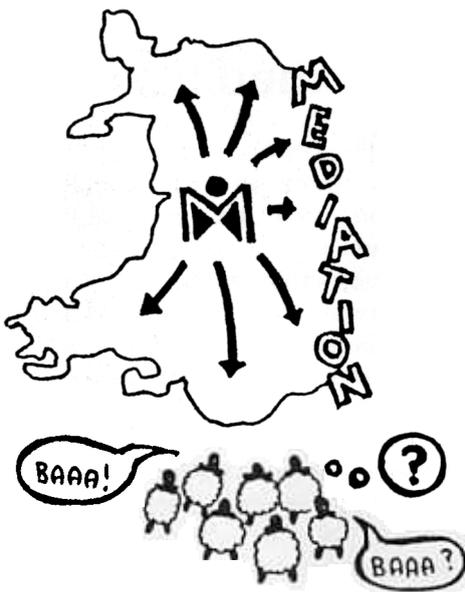
Funding for one year has now been found and Mediation Mid Wales was launched on 6 July. This is a community mediation service with a strand of schools work. By the time this article is printed, hopefully, a coordinator will have been appointed and 18 volunteers will have begun their training - planned as two intensive weekend training courses. The 'doors will open' for mediations in January 1995.

In south Wales, the steering committee is investigating possible sources of funding for its service, which will hopefully emerge in the not too distant future.

That leaves north Wales. . . so, if anyone out there is interested. . . contact me!

Thanks, Gulbenkian. . . for putting Wales on the mediation map!

LYNDA WILLIAMS



Drawings by Rosemary Gamsa

On the following four pages we present reports from some of the workshop sessions at MEDIATION UK's recent annual conference held 20-22 June at the Hayes Conference Centre, Derbyshire.

Service contracts - risks and opportunities

ABOUT half of those at John Crawley's workshop had experience of service contracts and most of them of service contracts for mediation services.

John described a service contract broadly as defining the service, and crucially, the relationships. He passed round examples of draft contracts.

The group brainstormed the risks and opportunities. Under 'risks' they listed: extra administration, less autonomy, someone else's agenda, problems with purchaser, unequal partnership, unequal rights, unable to deliver. In the 'opportunities' column they had: more precise, know what aims are, national agreement standards may develop, secure funding, funding may encourage other funding, credibility.

John was encouraging about the strength of mediation services in negotiating a fair contract - the purchasers will not know as much about mediation as we do.

We then considered the key elements in a service contract:

1 What constitutes a case: we should ensure this is not judged only by successful agreements. It may include many elements such as enquiries, self referrals, referrals to other agencies, receipt of names and addresses or perhaps some work begun. Issues to consider include reopening old cases and when they are considered as separate cases; what you do if one case involves many separate households, etc.

2 What is success? It may include (a) the number of cases dealt with in a year (the average seems to be 200-250 for metropolitan/urban authorities; 30 for rural districts, (b) customers not coming back, (c) customer satisfaction (there was a lengthy discussion about follow-

up without going over old wounds - John feels it is essential and suggests it should be agreed by the parties),

(d) purchasers may agree to record the savings in staff time.

3 Access to the scheme might include:

- hours of work (outside and inside office hours)
- telephone access
- John's idea of 'link' people as an alternative to Neighbourhood Watch
- translation
- provision for those who can't read

4 Reporting back on cases to purchaser:

- it must not breach confidentiality (but can be fed back with agreement of parties) and it must be impartial
- was there a face-to-face meeting?
- was there an agreement?

5 Monitoring. Usually purchasers only want what we wish to collect ourselves. This includes:

- ethnicity
- age
- location (eg ward)
- number of volunteers
- publicity/presentations
- matching volunteers to cases
- time limits
- tenure (purchaser should be encouraged to fund private tenants and owners etc, as well as council tenants)

The workshop ended with people thanking John for a very useful presentation. About two-thirds of the participants had not changed their view on what service agreements might mean for the future of mediation, no-one felt they might be more risky, and about one-third thought they were more of an opportunity than a risk.

- TONY BAKER
Priority Estates Project