

# CHAPTER 3

## CHANGING RELATIONSHIPS: BRITAIN, NORTHERN IRELAND AND IRELAND c1965–85

### UNIT 1

#### 'A Brief but Doomed Era of Hope'? Northern Ireland, 1963–7

#### Introduction: The Emergence and Development of Northern Ireland, 1920–63

Northern Ireland was established by the 1920 Government of Ireland Act. This Act **partitioned** Ireland into two parts:

1. A 26-county Southern Ireland (which after the 1921 Treaty became the Irish Free State).
2. A six-county Northern Ireland.

The first elections for the new Northern Ireland Parliament were held in May 1921 and the Parliament met for the first time the following month.

#### Reactions to the New State

The population of the North reacted to the new arrangements rather differently:

- ◆ Northern **unionists** – who were mostly Protestant – were delighted with the new system. The new state had a substantial Protestant majority and so their control of the government was more or less guaranteed. Indeed in the May 1921 elections unionists won 40 out of the 52 seats available.
- ◆ Northern Ireland's **nationalists** – most of whom were Catholics – were less pleased; they wanted to be part of the rest of Ireland and governed by a parliament in Dublin. As a result of this desire, most unionists felt that nationalists could not be trusted.

#### Violence and Discrimination

In this atmosphere of distrust the number of **sectarian** killings rocketed. The government responded by establishing the Ulster Special

Constabulary and passing the Special Powers Act (1922), which allowed them to arrest and detain suspects without holding a trial. Other political responses to the seeming threat of nationalism included:

- ◆ The abolition of **Proportional Representation** for local elections. This meant that fewer nationalists would be elected to councils.
- ◆ The redrawing of the boundaries of local council areas to ensure that they would be controlled by unionists even where there was a nationalist majority. This was known as **gerrymandering**.
- ◆ Allowing only those who paid **rates** to vote in local elections. For every £10 paid in rates one vote was given, up to a maximum of seven. This usually resulted in extra votes for the wealthy, who tended to be Protestant, and no votes for the poor, who were mostly but not wholly Catholic.

**Discrimination** was also practised against Catholics in other ways:

- ◆ Catholics were given fewer houses than Protestants by the unionist-controlled councils, as ownership of a house gave a vote in local elections.
- ◆ The quality of much Catholic housing was inferior.
- ◆ Catholics were less likely to have a job than Protestants.

#### Developments up to 1963

By and large the situation created in the early 1920s remained unchanged until the 1960s. Northern Ireland played a valuable part in the Allied war effort 1939–45, and in the late 1940s

the **Welfare State** was introduced to improve living conditions.

However, relations with the South (now the **Republic** of Ireland since 1949) remained tense, particularly as Articles 2 and 3 of the South's 1937 **Constitution** laid claim to the whole of the island. Furthermore, an IRA campaign in opposition to the border between 1956 and 1962 reinforced the Government's view that nationalists were untrustworthy. This was despite the fact that the campaign failed due to a lack of nationalist support.

### O'Neill's Policies (i) Economic

#### A New Premier

In March 1963 Lord Brookeborough resigned as Prime Minister of Northern Ireland. His replacement was the Minister of Finance, Captain Terence O'Neill. Evidence suggests that the Unionist Party's MPs wanted Home Affairs Minister Brian Faulkner to succeed Brookeborough; however, at that time the Party's leader was decided by a group of senior party members, not by election. This lack of widespread support within his party would undermine O'Neill throughout his premiership.

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*Terence O'Neill*

#### Improving the Economy

O'Neill's appointment seemed to offer the prospect of change and progress in Northern Ireland. He believed that 'the face of Ulster' had to be transformed if it was to prosper. To achieve

this goal O'Neill promised to introduce 'bold and imaginative measures'.

O'Neill's main concern lay with improving the economy. To this end a number of key economic measures were either proposed or introduced during his time as Prime Minister:

- ◆ An investment of £900 million in the economy;
- ◆ Modernisation of the railway system;
- ◆ Co-operation with the Dublin-based Irish Trades Union Congress, whose support was important for economic development;
- ◆ The establishment of an Economic Council under Brian Faulkner;
- ◆ The creation of a Ministry of Development (including transport and local government) in January 1965 to drive economic revival;
- ◆ The establishment of a new city based upon Lurgan and Portadown, to be called Craigavon;
- ◆ The development of a new university in the market town of Coleraine.

#### Success and Failure

It was soon clear that these policies were having a positive impact:

- ◆ A number of multinational firms such as Michelin, DuPont, Goodyear, ICI and Grundig opened factories in Northern Ireland;
- ◆ The construction of a motorway system was begun;
- ◆ An oil refinery was opened in Belfast;
- ◆ A new airport was under development;
- ◆ Links with the Republic of Ireland resulted in the signing of an agreement on the supply of electricity from the South.

In total over 35,000 new jobs were created during the 1960s, but at the same time over 20,000 were lost in the ailing traditional industries such as linen manufacture.

This was not the only bad economic news:

- ◆ Between 1963 and 1969 financial assistance had to be given to shipbuilders Harland and Wolff to keep it afloat.

- ◆ Unemployment averaged between 7% and 8%.
- ◆ Several companies refused government grants to open factories west of the Bann, seeing the area as too remote from their export markets.

This last fact alone had significant implications, not only for unemployment in the West (over 12.5%) but also for feeding allegations of bias in government policy.

**SOURCE A**

It is a new motorway driving deeper into the province. It is a new airport worthy of our position as the busiest air centre in Britain outside London. It is a new hospital in Londonderry – the most modern in the British Isles. It is new laboratories and research facilities at Queen’s to carry us to the frontiers of existing knowledge and beyond. It is replacement of derelict slums by modern housing estates.

*Terence O’Neill sketching out his economic vision in 1963 (Adapted)*

**SOURCE B**

O’Neill wanted greater economic and social equality within Northern Ireland. He believed that a modern, industrialised system could not work properly without the involvement of all its citizens.

*Historian Sabine Wichert writing in her book Northern Ireland Since 1945 (Adapted)*

**QUESTIONS**

1. Give one reason why O’Neill wanted to improve the Northern Ireland economy.
2. Describe two measures taken by O’Neill to improve the economy of Northern Ireland.
3. What weakness did O’Neill face in his position as soon as he became Prime Minister of Northern Ireland?
4. Construct a spider diagram showing the economic policies introduced by O’Neill.
5. Explain what O’Neill hoped to achieve with his economic policies.
6. Construct a table as below:

<i>Economic successes</i>	<i>Economic failures</i>

Using the information on pages 106–7 fill in the table as appropriate. Now look at your results; would you say that O’Neill’s economic policies were a success or a failure? Provide evidence to support your answer.

**EXTENSION ACTIVITY**



Discuss how O’Neill’s method of appointment would always make the achievement of his aims difficult.

**REVISION TIP**



Make sure that you are able to compare O’Neill’s aims with the results of his economic policies, positive and negative.

## O'Neill's Policies (ii) Political

### Political Changes

O'Neill realised that his economic policies would not change Northern Ireland on their own. There would also have to be social and political modernisation within Northern Ireland and improvements in relations with the Republic of Ireland. However, introducing such changes would increase the chances of division within unionism.

### The Hand of Friendship: Dublin

On 14 January 1965 the first face-to-face meeting of Ireland's main leaders since 1925 took place at **Stormont**, when O'Neill met with **Taoiseach** Sean Lemass. That this was the first such meeting in 40 years was an indication of the tensions that had existed between the two parts of the island.

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*O'Neill meeting Lemass at Stormont,  
14 January 1965*

Speaking later on television, O'Neill defended the meeting by arguing that both systems shared 'the same rivers, the same mountains and some of the same problems'.

He himself visited Dublin four weeks later. Both meetings focused on areas of economic co-operation and did not consider political issues. Discussions also took place between northern and southern ministers on issues such as tourism and electrical link-ups.

### The Hand of Friendship: Northern Nationalists

Within Northern Ireland O'Neill held out the hand of friendship to the nationalist community. His policy took a number of forms:

- ◆ Visiting Cardinal William Conway, Archbishop of Armagh and spiritual leader of Ireland's Catholics;
- ◆ Offering official condolences to the Catholic Church on the death of Pope John XXIII in June 1963;
- ◆ Visiting schools run by the Catholic Church;
- ◆ Increasing the financial support provided for Catholic hospitals and schools.

These steps were courageous and were well received by the nationalist community. However, whether in the end O'Neill's reforms would go far enough to satisfy nationalists, or indeed too far in eyes of unionists, remained to be seen.

#### SOURCE A

O'Neill's policies were clearly meant to make Catholics feel more a part of the state. However, in the face of opposition from within the Unionist Party it was difficult to make real changes. Therefore, his attempts at anti-sectarianism remained little more than words.

*Historian Sabine Wichert writing in her book  
Northern Ireland Since 1945 (Adapted)*

## QUESTIONS

1. Name the two Irish leaders who met at Stormont in 1965.
2. Name two actions taken by O'Neill that aimed to improve relations between the communities in Northern Ireland.
3. Construct a spider diagram showing the political policies introduced by O'Neill.
4. What benefits did O'Neill see in holding out the hand of friendship both within Northern Ireland and towards the South?
5. What evidence is there in the text and sources to suggest that O'Neill had no intention of changing the constitutional position of Northern Ireland?

## EXTENSION ACTIVITY



What does the secrecy surrounding the Lemass visit tell us about O'Neill's relationship with his Cabinet?

## REVISION TIP



O'Neill's meetings with Lemass were more about symbol than substance, yet they were still controversial. Make sure you can explain why this was.

## Reactions to O'Neill's Policies, 1963–7

O'Neill's economic and political policies raised a mixture of fear and expectation within Northern Ireland's two communities.

## Unionist Reactions

There was both support and opposition within the unionist community for O'Neill's attempts to change Northern Ireland. The mixed reaction was due to the desire of many moderate unionists for reform and the fear among others of the changes that such reform might bring.

O'Neill's support within the rank and file members of the Unionist Party had never been total. Indeed O'Neill did not even inform his own cabinet colleagues of Sean Lemass's January 1965 visit in advance. This indicated his concerns about their possible reaction and also suggests that the idea for the visit was his alone.

Evidence of the divisions within the Unionist Party over the visit was clear when Brian Faulkner condemned O'Neill's failure to consult his Cabinet. That said, when Lemass's successor as Taoiseach, Jack Lynch, visited Northern Ireland in December 1967 the visit was agreed in cabinet, implying that by then such a visit had become more acceptable to the cabinet.

## The Emergence of Rev Ian Paisley

While there was no widespread hostile public reaction to the visit, there was strong objection from the **Moderator** of the Free Presbyterian Church, Rev Ian Paisley. Apart from



*Ian Paisley (in a light overcoat) leading a protest march against ecumenism*

longstanding Protestant concerns about the influence of the Catholic Church in the Republic, Paisley objected to any links with the South, especially as its constitution laid claim, in Articles 2 and 3, to the whole island of Ireland.

Throughout the rest of the decade Paisley's support grew as many unionists came to fear the implications of O'Neill's new policies and to resent the failure of such policies to improve their own lives. In the short term, however, O'Neill was delighted with the success the Official Unionist Party (OUP) enjoyed in the November 1965 **general election**, a result that seemed to suggest that people were satisfied with his policies.

## Violence and Division

Before long, however, the situation in Northern Ireland deteriorated. Tensions increased in 1966 with the commemorations for the 50th anniversaries of the Easter Rising and the Battle of the Somme, and rioting broke out. Yet this was not the worst of the violence: two Catholics died in May and June 1966, the result of a series of gun attacks by the re-emerging UVF. Shortly after, O'Neill banned the organisation.

As the situation worsened, O'Neill found that support within his own party was weakening. In September 1966 he revealed a plot by OUP **backbenchers** to get rid of him as leader. There were also growing rumours about how much support O'Neill had within his own cabinet. In particular there were doubts about the loyalty of colleagues such as his Deputy Prime Minister, Brian Faulkner, and his Agriculture Minister, Harry West.

By late 1967, therefore, the levels of O'Neill's support within unionism in general and the OUP in particular were dwindling. The ruling party was clearly divided over policy, while opinion polls indicated increasing support within the unionist population for Paisley's policies.

### Nationalist Reactions: Satisfaction and Disappointment

O'Neill's policies received similarly mixed reactions from the nationalist community. Initial support for his policies soon gave way to frustration, as the better future that seemed to have been promised failed to appear. This annoyance was particularly felt among a new generation of Catholics.

At first Catholic leaders, political and religious, reacted warmly to O'Neill's attempts to hold out the hand of friendship. The visit of Lemass to Stormont was followed by the decision of the Nationalist Party to take up the role of **official opposition** in Stormont for the first time in its history.

However, O'Neill's policies also raised expectations, some of which were unlikely to be met given the growing tensions within unionism. There was outrage within nationalist circles at the decision of the Minister of Development, William Craig, to name the new city linking Portadown and Lurgan, Craigavon, after Northern Ireland's first Prime Minister.

There were also continued accusations that O'Neill's economic policies favoured the Protestant East at the expense of the Catholic West. As evidence of this, a number of points were made:

- ◆ With the exception of Derry/Londonderry, all the places earmarked for economic development were in Protestant areas;
- ◆ Unemployment was at a higher level west of the Bann;
- ◆ Northern Ireland's second university was sited in the mainly Protestant town of Coleraine rather than in the mainly nationalist Derry/Londonderry, Northern Ireland's second city. This decision came despite significant cross-community protest from the city;
- ◆ No significant attempts were made to increase Catholic membership of various health and education bodies. This fact alone led the pro-O'Neill *Belfast Telegraph* to argue that a 'nonsense' was being made of attempts at bridge building.

The truth of this assessment seemed to be borne out with the foundation of the Civil Rights movement in 1967.

#### SOURCE A

Some members of the Northern Ireland government did not easily forgive O'Neill's willingness to discuss the visit with senior civil servants without mentioning it in cabinet.

*The views of historian Jonathan Bardon on Lemass's visit to Stormont. From his book A History of Ulster*

#### SOURCE B

Catholics could not be convinced that Craigavon and Coleraine were anything but sectarian decisions, designed to deprive the mainly Catholic West from ever catching up with the mainly Protestant East.

*Irish historian Professor J J Lee, writing in Ireland 1912-1985: Politics and Society (Adapted)*

## QUESTIONS

1. Give one reason why some unionists were unhappy with O'Neill's policies.
2. Give two reasons why not all nationalists were happy with O'Neill's policies.
3. Explain how and why the following groups differed in their initial reaction to O'Neill's policies:
  - ◆ Moderate unionists;
  - ◆ Official Unionist MPs;
  - ◆ Supporters of Rev Ian Paisley.
4. How had the unionist reaction to O'Neill's policies changed by 1967?
5. How did nationalists initially react to O'Neill's policies? Why did this initial nationalist reaction to O'Neill's policies change as time went on?
6. Construct a table as below:

<i>Political successes</i>	<i>Political failures</i>

Using all the information on pages 108 and 110 fill in the table as appropriate. Now look at your results; would you say that O'Neill's political policies were a success or a failure? Provide evidence to support your answer.

7. Construct a table as below:

<i>O'Neill's policies</i>	<i>Unionist reaction</i>	<i>Nationalist reaction</i>

Using all the information on pages 106–110 fill in the table as appropriate. Now look at your results; which of O'Neill's economic and political policies would have been:

- ◆ Most popular
- ◆ Least popular

with each community? Why was this? Provide evidence to support your answer.

### EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Were O'Neill's policies bringing about genuine change in Northern Ireland?

Would it ever have been possible for O'Neill to satisfy both sides in Northern Ireland with his policies?

### REVISION TIP

O'Neill never had the total loyalty of his party. Make sure you can explain how this would have weakened his position as Prime Minister.

## UNIT 2

## Civil Rights to Armalites: Northern Ireland, 1967–9

### The Establishment of NICRA

#### NICRA and the American Influence

The Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) was established at the start of 1967. Two of its main founding members were Ivan Cooper and John Home. There can be little doubt that NICRA took much of its inspiration from the United States. Another of its founder members, Paddy Devlin, later wrote that NICRA was 'inspired by the civil rights campaign to get justice and equality for blacks in the USA'. At the same time there were other sources of encouragement, notably the student demonstrations that had taken place in France the same year.

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*Crowd scene from a NICRA march in Derry/Londonderry*

It was not difficult to see why the American movement would have appeared attractive to reformers in Northern Ireland. Martin Luther King's campaign had employed non-violent methods of **civil disobedience** in an effort to achieve equal opportunities for blacks. By 1967 a series of marches and protests had led the US **Congress** to pass laws outlawing public discrimination and guaranteeing voting rights. These developments were widely reported in Europe.

#### NICRA's Aims

Set up as a non-sectarian movement, NICRA did not seek to end partition; rather it hoped to end what it saw as a number of serious abuses in the existing political system. In particular it sought to:

- ◆ Achieve one-man one vote. This would allow a vote to all people over the age of 18. It would also remove the right of business owners to cast multiple votes.
- ◆ Ensure the fair allocation of council houses. At this time the possession of a vote in council elections depended upon being a ratepayer – basically a householder. The fewer the number of Catholics who possessed a property, the fewer the number of Catholics who could vote.
- ◆ End gerrymandering, which was the practice of drawing electoral boundaries in a way that would serve to benefit one community over the other. Perhaps the most infamous example of the practice was in the city of Derry/Londonderry where the unionist-dominated council ruled over a Catholic population of 20,102 compared with a Protestant population of 10,274 (1966 figures from the Report of the Cameron Commission set up by O'Neill's government to investigate the disturbances of 1968).
- ◆ Prevent discrimination in the allocation of government jobs. The Cameron Commission found widespread evidence of favouritism towards Protestants in the allocation of jobs. There was similar evidence of under-representation of Catholics in other areas of government employment, including the senior civil service and the **judiciary**.
- ◆ Remove the operation of the Special Powers Act. Officially known as the Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Act, 1922, this law allowed the government to arrest and detain people without holding a trial to see if they were guilty or not.
- ◆ Disband the B Specials. This group was the sole remnant of the three-pronged Ulster Special Constabulary, which had been established in September 1920 to help fight the IRA during the War of Independence.
- ◆ Establish a formal complaints procedure against local authorities to report breaches in the above areas.

## Support and Reaction

Support for NICRA came from across the community. In particular it came from a new generation of Catholics, the first to have benefited from the introduction of free education in the late 1940s. These Catholics had seen the growing self-confidence of Catholics elsewhere, not least in the US where John F Kennedy had been elected President in 1960. They were also less than happy with the performance of their own Nationalist Party, led by Eddie McAteer, whose only policy seemed to be the ending of partition. However, support for NICRA also came from other groups, including liberal Protestants who sympathised with some of NICRA's demands, communists, academics and trade unionists.

At the same time there was much suspicion about the emerging movement from within the unionist population. Some felt that the movement was nothing more than a front for the IRA, while others believed that it was only interested in Catholic rights.

### SOURCE A

A generation of Catholics brought up on the welfare state, educated to a higher standard than ever before, began to emerge from the late fifties . . . relatively well-educated Catholics felt increasingly bitter at what they believed to be discrimination.

*Irish historian Professor J J Lee, writing in Ireland 1912-1985: Politics and Society (Adapted)*

### SOURCE B

It was all the Catholics this, the Catholics that, living in poverty and us lording it over them. People looked around and said 'What, are they talking about us? With the damp running down the walls and the houses not fit to live in'.

*A Shankill housewife's view of NICRA*

## QUESTIONS

1. Explain where NICRA borrowed some of its tactics and ideas from.
2. Name two of the groups of people who supported the aims of NICRA.
3. What evidence is there to suggest that NICRA was influenced by events in other countries?
4. Why in particular might NICRA have taken inspiration from the civil rights movement in the USA?
5. Construct a spider diagram showing NICRA's main demands.
6. Explain why a new generation of Catholics was emerging at this time and why it was unhappy with its current political leadership.
7. Why did many unionists react negatively to NICRA? Was this a reasonable interpretation? Explain your answer.

## EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Were NICRA's demands justifiable?

## REVISION TIP

Many unionists saw NICRA as a front for republicans. Make sure that you are able to explain how this would have had an impact on unionist attitudes to their demands.

## NICRA's Tactics and O'Neill's Response

### Marching for Houses

The US civil rights movement's tactic of organising peaceful marches to highlight its campaign was first used in Northern Ireland on 24 August 1968. The occasion was a march between the County Tyrone towns of Coalisland and Dungannon. This demonstration took place because of the decision of the Dungannon rural district council to give a council house in the village of Caledon to a 19-year old single Protestant woman. In response to this decision Austin Currie, Nationalist MP for East Tyrone, **squatted** in the house. After he was evicted Currie suggested holding a protest march to highlight the situation. Although the demonstration was prevented by the police from reaching its intended destination of Dungannon town square, an alternative rally was organised at the police barricade and the event passed off without incident.

### Violence in Derry/Londonderry

House allocation was also the issue that led to NICRA's second march. In order to highlight what were seen to be inequalities in Londonderry Corporation's housing policy, a march was organised for 5 October 1968. The march was due to travel from the Waterside to the city centre via the Craigavon Bridge. In response the **Apprentice Boys** threatened to hold a rival march. The Stormont Government responded by banning the holding of any march east of the river Foyle or within the historic city walls. The NICRA march's organisers rejected this ban.

Although the crowd that turned up on 5 October was relatively small, it was accompanied by powerful allies in the shape of four Westminster MPs and, even more importantly, an RTE camera crew. That night television pictures beamed across the world showed more clearly than any words the heavy-handed tactics used by the police to break up the rally. It became clear to many on that night that Northern Ireland was on the verge of a crisis that would prove difficult to resolve.

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*The RUC begin to break up the NICRA march, 5 October 1968*

### The Five Point Reform Programme

The situation got worse with further NICRA marches and loyalist counter-demonstrations. As a result O'Neill, Faulkner and Craig were summoned to Westminster on 4 November to meet with the British Labour Prime Minister, Harold Wilson. The outcome of this meeting was the announcement, on 22 November, of a reform programme. The programme included five main proposals, all of which were to be in place by the end of 1971. The proposals were:

- ◆ The allocation of council housing on a points system;
- ◆ The replacement of Londonderry Corporation by a Development Commission;
- ◆ The removal of certain parts of the Special Powers Act;
- ◆ Reforms within local government, including the ending of extra votes for business owners;
- ◆ The appointment of an **ombudsman** to investigate complaints.

### Calm Before the Storm?

Although O'Neill himself later dismissed this package as too timid, at the time it seemed to point the way towards a better future, even if it failed to deliver all of NICRA's demands. However, in the short-term, protests and

counter-protests continued and so, on 9 December, O'Neill appeared on television to hammer home to people the starkness of the position Northern Ireland now found itself in (Source B). In particular he appealed to NICRA's leaders to help to restore calm to the province.

At first his message seemed to have the desired effect and all further street protests were called off. However, the breathing space O'Neill had won would prove to be very short-lived. While he might have managed to calm the civil rights movement, the reforms had caused dismay among the unionist community, who now felt that their position was under threat. Moreover O'Neill faced further opposition from within his own party with Home Affairs Minister William Craig condemning O'Neill's television speech and arguing that the Prime Minister was acting under pressure from the British. Craig was sacked, but even more opposition was appearing on the horizon.

**SOURCE A**

The whole affair was a series of blunders. The violence resulted from inadequate planning and leadership by the organisers of the march, and from stupidity and breakdown of control on the part of the authorities. But the greater share of the blame lies with those who had the greater power – the Minister of Home Affairs and the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

*Extract from an article in the October 1988 edition of current affairs magazine Fortnight commenting on the NICRA march of 30 years earlier*

**SOURCE B**

Ulster stands at the crossroads ... our conduct over the coming days and weeks will decide our future ... I have made it clear that a Northern Ireland based on the interests of any one section rather than upon the interests of all could have no long-term future ... What kind of Ulster do you want? A happy and respected province in good standing with the rest of the United Kingdom? Or a place continually torn apart by riots and demonstrations and regarded by the rest of Britain as a political outcast?

*Terence O'Neill broadcasting on television on 9 December 1968*

**QUESTIONS**

1. Which issue led NICRA to hold its first two marches?
2. How did the Northern Ireland Government react to the events of 5 October 1968?
3. Explain why the issue of housing was so prominent in the earliest NICRA marches.
4. If the Derry/Londonderry march was illegal, why was it that the authorities came out of the events of 5 October worst?
5. Draw up a table as follows:

NICRA demands	Five Point Reform Programme

On the left-hand side list NICRA's demands (see page 112). On the right-hand side match O'Neill's reforms with the appropriate demand. Which of NICRA's demands had not been granted?

6. O'Neill later dismissed his Five Point Reform Package as too timid. Explain why others may not have agreed with him at the time.

## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES



Which had the more significant impact on Northern Ireland politics, NICRA or television?

Why were all of NICRA's demands not granted at the time of the Five Point Reform Programme?

## REVISION TIP



O'Neill thought the Five Point Reform Programme was not enough. Many nationalists would have agreed, but many unionists would have believed that they were too much. Are you able to explain why these reforms led to such different reactions?

## The People's Democracy March

**A More Radical Movement Emerges**

Although NICRA had called for a halt to its campaign of marching its decision was ignored by the recently formed People's Democracy. This group, made up mainly of university students, had emerged out of students' anger at the violence NICRA had faced in October 1968. People's Democracy had developed demands broadly similar to those of NICRA, namely:

- ◆ One man, one vote;
- ◆ Fair boundaries;
- ◆ Houses on need;
- ◆ Jobs on merit;
- ◆ Free speech;
- ◆ Repeal of the Special Powers Act.

Unhappy with the limited nature of O'Neill's Five Point Reform Programme, People's Democracy announced that they were holding a march between Belfast and Derry/Londonderry, from 1 to 4 January 1969. The march was condemned by NICRA and nationalist leaders, who feared its impact on an already tense situation.

**Ambush at Burntollet**

The condemnations were ignored and the demonstration began on schedule. Much of the march was to go through Protestant areas, forcing the police to enforce different routes to avoid confrontation. However, on the third day confrontation took place: the marchers were the target of a violent ambush at Burntollet Bridge, an attack that the police seemed to do little to deflect. Later on the same night tensions were further raised in Derry/Londonderry when police rampaged through nationalist areas of the city. Such events did little to endear the RUC to members of the nationalist community.

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*People's Democracy marchers come under attack at Burntollet, 4 January 1969*

**SOURCE A**

The march would be the acid test of the government's intentions. Either [it] would face up to the extreme right of its own Unionist Party and protect the march ... or it would be exposed as impotent in the face of sectarian thuggery, and Westminster would be forced to intervene, re-opening the whole Irish question for the first time in 50 years.

*The aims of the People's Democracy march according to Michael Farrell, a People's Democracy leader*

**SOURCE B**

A number of policemen were guilty of misconduct which involved assault and battery, malicious damage to property . . . and the use of provocative, sectarian and political slogans.

*An extract from the Cameron Report into disturbances in Northern Ireland, published on 12 September 1969*

**QUESTIONS**

1. Who formed the People's Democracy group?
2. Explain what happened at Burntollet Bridge.
3. What were the origins of the People's Democracy movement?
4. Using the information in the text explain:
  - ◆ The reasons for the People's Democracy march.
  - ◆ Why People's Democracy was not prepared to stop marching if NICRA were.
  - ◆ Why People's Democracy decided to take a route that went through mainly Protestant areas.
5. Explain why the events of January 1969 might be seen as having been disastrous for the police.
6. Professor Joe Lee believes that the aim of the march was to increase tension. Do you believe People's Democracy was successful in achieving its aim? Provide evidence to support your answer.

**REVISION TIP** 

You must be clear about the differences between People's Democracy and NICRA.

**People's Democracy: Reactions and Resignations****Reactions to Burntollet**

NICRA responded to the events in the Northwest by starting to march again. The first march was held in Newry and again violence resulted. In response, O'Neill established the Cameron Commission to investigate the increasing violence. This led two cabinet members, one of whom was Brian Faulkner, to resign from the Government. Faulkner argued that O'Neill was not strong enough to control the situation.



*Brian Faulkner*

Worryingly Faulkner's opinion of O'Neill seemed to be gaining support within the OUP, with 12 MPs calling for his resignation on 30 January 1969. Instead O'Neill called a general election, which he termed the 'crossroads election', in an attempt to prove that public opinion was behind his efforts to modernise Northern Ireland.

**The 'Crossroads Election'**

The election took place on 24 February 1969. Unfortunately the result was not what O'Neill had wanted:

- ◆ There was a reduction in unionist support and divisions of loyalty among the unionist MPs elected;
- ◆ There was also little or no evidence of the hoped for support from Catholic voters;
- ◆ O'Neill, who had never before had to face a challenger in his own Bannside constituency, only polled 1400 votes more than his opponent, Ian Paisley.

O'Neill struggled on for another two months, but with his party now hopelessly divided and with a further deterioration in the political situation caused by increasing violence and confrontation, he resigned on 28 April 1969. As luck would have it, the final nail in his coffin was a series of bombings, which at the time appeared to be the work of the IRA but which were actually carried out by loyalists in an attempt to force O'Neill to go. Writing later in his Autobiography, O'Neill reflected that the bombs 'quite literally blew me out of office'.

### A New Leader

In the resulting leadership election O'Neill was succeeded by his cousin, Major James Chichester-Clark. Chichester-Clark had resigned from the government less than a week earlier in protest at O'Neill's decision to introduce one-man-one-vote in time for the next council elections. Then Chichester-Clark had argued that the timing of the measure was wrong; now he declared he would continue with O'Neill's reform programme.



James Chichester-Clark

### SOURCE A

I have tried to break the chains of ancient hatreds. I have been unable to realise (achieve) during my period of office all that I had sought to achieve.

*Terence O'Neill, speaking on television, 28 April 1969*

### SOURCE B

As the Party would never stand for change, I was really reduced to trying to improve relations between North and South; and in the North itself between the two sections of the community. In this respect I think I can truthfully say that I succeeded. During the period between 1965 and 1968 the Catholics came to realise that I was interested in their welfare. While the South began to take an interest in the North.

*Terence O'Neill writing in his Autobiography*

### SOURCE C

Despite his mould-breaking gestures of conciliation, O'Neill eventually created intense frustration within the minority by his inability to deliver thoroughgoing reform, while more and more loyalists were convinced that he was conceding too much and turned against him.

*The views of historian Jonathan Bardon from his book A History of Ulster*

## QUESTIONS

1. Who won the 1969 General Election in Northern Ireland?
2. Who replaced O'Neill as Prime Minister of Northern Ireland?
3. Using the information in the text, explain why O'Neill felt he had no choice but to resign as Prime Minister in April 1969.
4. Construct a timeline showing the main times and issues of division 1963–9.
5. O'Neill admitted his failure in various interviews. Using all that you have learnt about O'Neill so far, explain whether you believe that his premiership was either a success or a failure. Provide reasons for your answer.

## EXTENSION ACTIVITY

'O'Neill only had himself to blame for his downfall.' How far do you agree?

## REVISION TIP

A number of factors played an important part in O'Neill's decision to resign. You need to be clear how each of these led to his resignation.

## Summary of Key Issue One

The period 1963–9 was dominated by:

- ◆ The economic and political policies introduced by Terence O'Neill to modernise Northern Ireland;
- ◆ The positive and negative reactions to these policies by both unionist and nationalist communities.

In particular the latter years of the period witnessed the emergence of the civil rights movement in both moderate (NICRA) and more extreme (PD) versions. This too resulted in a range of reactions from politicians, the police and the general public.

Ultimately O'Neill was forced from office because of his inability to deal with the divisions within his own party over his policies or with the increasing tensions developing between the two communities over the issue of civil rights.

## Sample of CCEA Examination on Key Issue One

### FOUNDATION LEVEL

**This question is about Northern Ireland in the 1960s.**

(a) Below is a list of names associated with events in Northern Ireland in the 1960s:

Terence O'Neill	John Hume	Ian Paisley	Eddie McAteer	Michael Farrell
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Following the example below, match each name to the correct description:

DESCRIPTION	NAME	
1 A leader of the People's Democracy.	MICHAEL FARRELL	
2 Outspoken critic of O'Neill's reforms.	_____	
3 Prime Minister of Northern Ireland in 1968.	_____	
4 A Civil Rights leader in the 1960s.	_____	
5 Leader of the Nationalist Party in the 1960s.	_____	[4]
(i) Give <b>one</b> reason why Prime Minister O'Neill wanted to improve relations with the Republic of Ireland.		[2]
(ii) Describe <b>two</b> actions by Prime Minister O'Neill to improve relations with the Republic of Ireland.		[4]
(c) Choose <b>ONE</b> of the following:		
<b>EITHER</b> The Civil Rights Movement.		
<b>OR</b> O'Neill's Policies for Economic Development		
<b>The Civil Rights Movement</b>		
(i) Explain why this Movement was started.		[6]
(ii) How did nationalists and the Unionist government of Northern Ireland respond to this movement in the years 1968–69?		[9]
<b>OR</b>		
<b>O'Neill's Policies for Economic Development</b>		
(b) (i) What were the problems in Northern Ireland in 1965?		[6]
(ii) How did O'Neill try to improve economic conditions?		[9]

### HIGHER LEVEL

**This question is about Northern Ireland in the 1960s.**

- (a) (i) Write down two actions taken by Prime Minister O'Neill to improve relations with the Republic of Ireland.
- (ii) Write down two measures taken by Prime Minister O'Neill to improve economic development in Northern Ireland. [4]
- (b) (i) How did Nationalists respond to O'Neill's five point programme of reform of November 1968?
- (ii) How did Unionists respond to Prime Minister O'Neill's five point programme of reform of November 1968? [9]
- (c) The Northern Ireland Civil Rights Movement was formed in 1967.
- (i) Explain why the Civil Rights Movement was formed. [6]
- (ii) Why there were outbreaks of violence following its emergence? [6]