



On 24th August 1968 NICRA's first march was held in County Tyrone.

The march began in Coalisland and ended in Dungannon.

The reason why this was chosen as the location of the first march was to protest at Dungannon Council's decision to allocate one of its council houses in the small village of Caledon to a nineteen-year-old Protestant woman rather than a large Catholic family.



Northern Ireland Prime Minister Terence O'Neill's policies might have been introduced for the right reasons, but by the late 1960s they resulted in creating divisions amongst unionists.

They feared that too much was being given away to nationalists.

At the same time, the hopes raised within nationalism by the changes O'Neill promised were never going to be achieved.

As a result, nationalist frustration grew.

### Growing divisions and frustration

The Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) was formed in early 1967.

The ongoing civil rights campaign in the USA provided the new group with much of its inspiration.

At the same time there were other sources of encouragement in the period following NICRA's establishment, notably the student demonstrations that took place in France during 1968.

What particularly appealed to NICRA's leaders was the American groups' use of non-violent methods of **civil disobedience** as part of its campaign to achieve equality for black people.

Most importantly, by 1967 a series of marches and protests had led the US Congress to pass laws outlawing public discrimination and guaranteeing voting rights.

These successes were widely reported in Europe.

### NICRA Background

### WHAT WERE NICRA TACTICS?



NICRA TACTICS

### 4) NICRA TACTICS

Violence Derry

#### Violence in Londonderry

The Coalisland-Dungannon march passed off peacefully; however things were not quite so peaceful at NICRA's second march, held in Derry on 5th October 1968.

Again the march was organised to draw attention to what NICRA saw as discrimination - in this case Londonderry Corporation's housing policy.

Some of Derry's Protestant population were very unhappy with NICRA's plans and so the city's **Apprentice Boys** announced plans to hold their own demonstration at the same time.

Fearing an outbreak of violence the Stormont Government banned both marches - however NICRA let it be known that it would ignore this ban.

NICRA's march started on Duke Street in Derry's Waterside area.

As it moved up Duke Street towards the Craigavon Bridge - accompanied by four Westminster MPs and an **RTE** camera crew - the protestors were faced by lines of police officers.

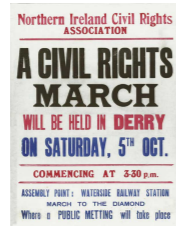
Some of the police were heavy-handed in their efforts to stop the march - their tactics were captured by the RTE television crew and the resulting images were widely seen at home and abroad.

Further NICRA marches made the situation even worse.

Quite often violence resulted.

There were several reasons for this:

- NICRA continued with marches even after they had been banned.
- Some marches went through Protestant areas and this was seen as provocative.
- Counter-demonstrations organised by unionists sometimes came into contact with NICRA's marches.



### 1) NICRA BACKGROUND

Frustration

NICRA Background

### 2) NICRA AIMS

NICRA Aims

#### What were NICRA's aims?

NICRA claimed to be open to both Protestants and Catholics, and also stated that it was not trying to create a united Ireland. Its aims were as follows:

- Achieve one-man one vote (OMOV) for local council elections. If this was introduced, anyone over the age of 18 would be allowed to vote. OMOV would also end the practice of giving multiple votes to business owners.
- Ensure that local councils allocated their houses fairly. At this time only those who paid rates were allowed to vote in local council elections. If councils did not give Catholics houses then they could not vote.
- Stop the practice of **gerrymandering**.
- Ensure that religion was not used as a factor when allocating government jobs.
- End the use of the **Special Powers Act**.
- Disband the **B Specials**.
- Introduce a system that allowed people to report local council violations in any of the above areas.



### 3) REACTIONS TO NICRA

NICRA Reactions

### NICRA: campaign for civil rights



#### NICRA: support and opposition

NICRA received support from different sections of the Northern Ireland public. These included:

- A new generation of Catholics who had been able to attend secondary school free of charge as a result of the introduction of the 11+ examination in 1947.
- Those nationalists who believed that the local Nationalist Party (led by Eddie McAteer) had lost touch with the needs of its people.
- Moderate unionists who believed that Northern Ireland's Catholics were being unfairly treated. These unionists also believed that if NICRA's aims were achieved, there would be no reason for Catholics to want to be part of a united Ireland.
- Other groups and individuals including academics and trades unionists.

#### WHO SUPPORTED NICRA?

Opposition to NICRA came from a large section of the unionist population. They feared that:

- NICRA was nothing more than the **IRA** under a different name.
- NICRA was not interested in equality for everyone in Northern Ireland. Instead it was only looking out for the needs of Catholics. They were also afraid that NICRA's campaign could weaken Protestant control of Northern Ireland, thus leading to a united Ireland.

#### WHO OPPOSED NICRA?

