



Nationalist reaction

Catholic leaders – both political and religious – were initially supportive of O'Neill's policies.

Shortly after Lemass visited Stormont, the Nationalist Party decided – for the first time ever - to take up the role of **official opposition** in Stormont.

At the same time there were problems with what O'Neill was trying to do.

His policies made nationalists believe that there were going to be more and more reforms.

Since O'Neill did not have total support for his policies within his own party, this was going to be very hard to achieve.

Some of the things that O'Neill did led to a negative reaction, particularly amongst a new generation of Catholic leaders. For example:



O'Neill's Policies: support and opposition

Not surprisingly, O'Neill's policies led to a range of reactions among Northern Ireland's divided population.

Unionist reaction

Within the Unionist community there was both support and opposition to what O'Neill was trying to do:

- There was opposition to Lemass' visit to Stormont in January 1965 from within O'Neill's own **Cabinet**. Minister of Commerce, Brian Faulkner, complained that he knew nothing about what O'Neill was planning.
- Although there was no significant public opposition to Lemass' Stormont visit, there was strong objection from Rev Ian Paisley, the leader of the **Free Presbyterian Church**.

In addition to his concerns about the influence of the Catholic Church in the Republic, Paisley objected to any links with the South, especially as Articles II and III of its constitution laid claim to the whole island of Ireland.

However, when Taoiseach Jack Lynch visited Northern Ireland in December 1967, the visit was agreed in advance by O'Neill's cabinet, implying that by then such a visit had become more acceptable.

REACTIONS- Support and Opposition

Violence and division

Tensions increased in 1966 with the commemorations for the 50th anniversaries of the Easter Rising and the Battle of the Somme.

Rioting broke out.

Then two Catholics died in May and June 1966, the result of a series of gun attacks by the re-emerging **Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF)**.

O'Neill responded by banning the organisation.

As the situation worsened, O'Neill found that his support within his own party was weakening.

In September 1966 he revealed a plot by Ulster Unionist Party backbenchers to remove him as leader.

There were also growing rumours of opposition from Deputy Prime Minister, **Brian Faulkner** and Agriculture Minister, **Harry West**.

By late 1967 O'Neill's support within unionism in general and the Ulster Unionist Party in particular was dwindling.

His party was divided over strategy while opinion polls indicated increasing support within the Unionist population for Paisley's policies.



Some of the things that O'Neill did led to a negative reaction, particularly amongst a new generation of Catholic leaders. For example:

- The decision to name the new town linking Lurgan and Portadown after Northern Ireland's founder, Lord Craigavon, did not go down well
- Northern Ireland's new university was sited in Coleraine (a Protestant town) rather than Londonderry (a Catholic city and the second largest population area within Northern Ireland)
- O'Neill was less than successful in attracting foreign investment to the areas west of the River Bann which was a more nationalist area

In addition, no significant attempts were made to increase Catholic membership of various health and education bodies.



REACTIONS



O'NEILL'S REFORMS AND REACTIONS TO THEM

POLITICAL REFORMS

O'Neill knew that relations between the two communities living in Northern Ireland also had to improve. To encourage better relations he did the following:

- O'Neill met Cardinal William Conway. Cardinal Conway was the Archbishop of Armagh and, therefore, spiritual leader of the country's Catholics
- When Pope John XXIII died in June 1963, O'Neill offered the government's official condolences
- O'Neill began to visit Catholic hospitals and schools
- O'Neill increased the funding that the Northern Ireland government gave to Catholic schools and hospitals



POLITICAL - reaching out to Northern Nationalists



Terence O'Neill became Northern Ireland's Prime Minister in March 1963.

He was seen as more forward thinking than his predecessor, **Lord Brookeborough**, who had been in power for 20 years.

However, right from the start, O'Neill's leadership was weakened as most of his Party's MPs had wanted another minister, **Brian Faulkner**, to get the job.

A weakened position from the start

- Creating a Ministry of Development to drive the economy forward.
- Launching an Economic Council to spearhead economic modernisation.
- Setting up five economic zones to ensure the modernisation of existing industries and to help bring new industries to the province.
- Investing £900 million in the local economy.
- Kickstarting the modernisation of the transport system (road and rail).
- Beginning co-operation with the **Irish Trades Union Congress**.
- Creating the new city of Craigavon.
- Building a new university campus in Coleraine.

O'NEILL'S ECONOMIC POLICIES



Successful policies

There is certainly evidence that O'Neill's economic policies were beginning to work. For example:

- Several international companies - including Michelin, DuPont, Goodyear, ICI and Grundig - built factories in Northern Ireland.
- Work started on the construction of the M1 motorway which would link Belfast and Dungannon.
- An agreement was signed with the Dublin government over the supply of electricity.
- Belfast benefitted from the opening of a new oil refinery.
- Development started on a new airport.

ECONOMIC SUCCESSES

Overall close to 35,000 new jobs were created - however, the economy was still weakened by a number of basic problems:

- Unemployment levels were never lower than 7 per cent
- A lack of work in industries such as linen and shipbuilding meant that over 20,000 jobs were lost
- The government had to give money to shipbuilders Harland and Wolff to keep the company open
- Attracting investment to areas west of the River Bann proved to be more difficult as companies viewed the region as being too far from their export markets to open factories

This last fact alone had significant implications, not only for unemployment in the west (over 12.5 per cent) but also for feeding allegations of **bias** in government policy. This was because the majority of the population in the west was **nationalist**.

UNDERLYING ECONOMIC WEAKNESSES

Relations with the Republic of Ireland

O'Neill knew that improving the economy was not enough to change Northern Ireland. He realised that there would have to be improvements in a number of other areas not least:

- Relations with the Republic of Ireland
- Relations within Northern Ireland

The "Hand of Friendship": Dublin

As a result of their troubled past, the Prime Ministers of the two parts of Ireland had not met since 1925.

This changed in January 1965 when O'Neill met with the **Taoiseach** Sean Lemass at **Stormont**.

The two men discussed issues of common concern, such as the economy whilst their ministerial colleagues discussed issues such as tourism and electrical link-ups..

In December 1967 O'Neill travelled to Dublin to meet Lemass' successor, Jack Lynch.

POLITICAL: Better relations with Republic of Ireland



Terence O'Neill met Sean Lemass as part of his efforts to reform and modernise Northern Ireland

