

Background

- Started in **1967**
- **Non Sectarian** organisation set up to **achieve equality for all** (civil rights) regardless of religion, in Northern Ireland
- It was **not a Nationalist organisation** and **did not** campaign for a united Ireland.
- It was made up of many **Catholics** who were **inspired** by movements around the world like student protests and civil rights protests in the US. They were also unhappy about the **Nationalist party** in NI which seemed to concentrate in the sole issue of a united Ireland.
- There were also **moderate protestants** like **Ivan Cooper** who wanted genuine equality in Northern Ireland. Some felt improving life would mean less of a threat of a united Ireland.
- There was also considerable student, left wing and communist support.



US CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

This was perhaps the greatest influence for NICRA.

The US Civil Rights movement was led by Martin Luther King Junior and based on non violence, civil disobedience and trying to win change and equality peacefully based on the justice of their actions, which by their nature highlighted the inequality in the United States.

NICRA borrowed many of their tactics including:

- Peaceful Marches
- Music - We shall Overcome
- Publicity - the use of the press to highlight issues and injustices.
- Civil disobedience.
- Use of Placards and Banners.



By the late 1960's it seemed as if these protests were winning with major civil rights legislation being passed- protest had paid off

ELECTION OF PRESIDENT KENNEDY IN USA

This was a major influence on the Civil rights movement.

JFK was the first Catholic President in the USA 🇺🇸 (Remember how strong the influence of WASPs were there)

He was also from Irish American heritage and visited Ireland. This inspired many Catholics in N. Ireland and encourage them to get involved in politics.



GLOBAL DEMONSTRATIONS

Across the world there were other global demonstrations taking place. Mostly involving young people.

PARIS - Students demonstrated

ANTI VIETNAM PROTESTS These took place across the globe.

PRAGUE SPRING

These were demonstrations against Communist rule

TELEVISION

By the 1960s many people had television in their houses. This meant people in Belfast, Northern Ireland could see what was going on in Birmingham, Alabama. They could see Civil rights in America, the student protests in France or anti Vietnam protests. This inspired many.

WELFARE STATE

Ironically, some of the motivation for Civil rights came from mainland Britain.

The Welfare state provided free education for all from 1949. Thus allowed many Catholics in particular a much greater chance of third level education. If you do your maths you will find that those first people to benefit from this will be young adults by 1968/69

The British Labour Party was also in power by the late 1960's. They were seen to be much more sympathetic to nationalists in Northern Ireland

BACKGROUND

DISCRIMINATION IN N. IRELAND

GLOBAL INFLUENCES

WHY WAS NICRA SET UP in 1967?



1) VOTES

Catholics felt **discriminated** against in voting. Protestants had an in built majority in N.Ireland. They made up **65%** of the population so would always have a Unionist winner. This was called **MAJORITY RULE**

Wealth meant votes. More votes were also allocated for wealthier voters / business owners. They could claim up to **7 votes** if they paid more taxes. As most **businesses** were run by Protestants this gave them a lot more votes.

2) GERRYMANDERING

In areas of Northern Ireland the electoral boundaries were **unfairly manipulated** so that Unionists would always win power. Therefore in **Derry City**, a mostly catholic city, the electoral boundaries were drawn in such a way that the unionists maintained a majority!

3) HOUSING

In the 1960's most housing was allocated by the **councils**. As many of these were unionist controlled the allocation tended to be unfairly given to mostly Protestants. Catholic families were left in **poor overcrowded housing**. Protestant councils were aware that a house meant a vote in local elections. They therefore arranged to accommodate Protestants first. Nationalist controlled. Councils did the same for Catholics but there were fewer of them.

4) JOBS

Job **discrimination** was also widespread in N. Ireland. Most **business** owners tended to be Protestant and the council jobs were also allocated to mainly Protestants. **Unemployment** was **very high** in mostly catholic areas especially west of the river Bann. It could be twice as high in these areas.

5) SECURITY

The police in N.Ireland were the **RUC**. They were almost entirely Protestant and weren't trusted by many Catholics. They were supported by the part time **B Specials** who were mostly staunch protestants

The **SPECIAL POWERS ACT** allowed the police to **arrest without trial**. Many Catholics felt this power was abused by the police

