

The conflict in Northern Ireland, a

Northern Ireland has been the site of contentious tensions between Catholics and Protestants for hundreds of years, however, simplifying this tension into purely sectarian misses the point.

Although the conflict in Northern Ireland is not simply Catholics and Protestants fighting against one another, the growing divide between these sectarian groups was the primary catalyst for the isolation of violent conflict after 1968.

Since its creation under the Government of Ireland Act in 1920, Northern Ireland was intrinsically different than its neighbour to the south. Unlike the majority of the island, the newly created Northern Ireland had a protestant majority. In fact, the idea of creating a separate version of Ireland was conceived to provide a state with a Protestant majority to offset their minority throughout the island as a whole. This, combined with the deep ties between Irish Nationalism and Catholicism, led to a unique "Northern Irish" identity. This newfound identity was deeply concerned with the connection between the Catholic Church and government in Ireland and thus worked to marry Northern Ireland to Protestantism. It is for this reason that many who support the position of Northern Ireland are known as Protestants while those who support Irish Nationalism are known as Catholics. With this said, the conflict quickly transitioned from religious dogma to political doctrine. It was no longer about accepting the papacy, but instead about accepting a divided Ireland.

Although established to provide a voice for Protestants, the repression of the large Catholic minority in Northern Ireland would set in place the conditions which led to nearly 30 years of violence. It was the mobilization of this Catholic minority under the lens of the Northern Irish Civil Rights Movement that ultimately led to the escalation of tensions in Northern Ireland starting in 1968.

The Irish Civil Rights Movement started with the creation of the Campaign for Social Justice (CSJ) in Tyrone by Dr. Conn and Patricia McCluskey in 1964. The CSJ, believing that discrimination against Catholics had become institutionalized in Northern Ireland, worked tirelessly to assemble and publish data proving this point. In their document, The Plain Truth, they argued that Catholics had been "Hard pressed (sic) for over forty years" and "been denied rights which you accept as a matter of course in Britain". It was these 40 years of oppression that led to "a more assertive middle class than ever before". Unlike Catholic movements in the past, this movement saw both the nationalistic Sinn Féin and IRA as outmoded, ineffectual, and belonging to a past age.

These Catholics support the Nationalist movement since "no Catholics have ever been allowed to be members of the Conservative and Unionist party".

Simply put, the Catholics who, according to the CSJ made up roughly a third of the population, were being denied their basic rights as British citizens in a "very undemocratic way known as gerrymandering". As The Plain Truth puts it "The Conservative and Unionist Government has held continuous office for over forty years" and "have for years returned all twelve members to Westminster" in a way of maintaining control. In Derry, the minority of 10,500 Unionist electors held 12 county seats despite the fact that there were an additional 9,000 Nationalists electors. The situation was even more lopsided in Enniskillen where 27,291 Nationalists held 8 seats compared to 20 seats being held by 24,322 Unionists. As one could imagine, Nationalists were troubled by these numbers, as well as the brazen attempt by Unionists to control who voted and were. In the words of Enniskillen Alderman George Elliott "We are going to see that the right people are put into these houses and we are not making any apology for it."

In light of Protestant oppositi

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LOOK AT LAND REQUIREMENT TO VOTE, BUSINESS OWNERS GETTING AN ADDITIONAL VOTE.


In light of "There has been no attempt to be positive, to encourage the Catholic community to develop the resources which they have in plenty, to make a positive contribution in terms of community service."

Although the CSJ was the first organization established to fight to the rights of Catholic nationalists, they would be overshadowed by the larger and ultimately more influential Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA). NICRA was organized in the Northern Irish capital of Belfast on April 9th, 1967 to end segregation against Catholics in elections, employment, public housing, and other abuses through the Special Powers Act. As is customary with successful political movements, NICRA organised a march from Coalisland to Dungannon to advocate for the civil rights of all in Northern Ireland. Although one could see this is a sectarian march, the organisers were clear in their that this was not a sectarian march. Although it started out as a relatively calm march, the situation quickly escalated when those advocating for civil rights faced off against the Unionist police and counterprotesters led by Ian Paisley at the town of Dungannon. Although this confrontation would end without violence, it was a foreshadowing of what would come.


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
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john hume quote from newspaper, published in 1964, Mckitrick book, pg. 42

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https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Ireland_Civil_Rights_Association

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