

# A STATE APART

## Task Sheet 1

### Programme 2

### THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

1. Examine the list of reasons for Civil Rights protests in Northern Ireland and complete the tasks below:

#### REASONS FOR CIVIL RIGHTS PROTEST

- Since 1920, Northern Ireland had a permanent Unionist majority
  - Catholics had not recognised the Government of Northern Ireland as a proper Government
  - Since the 1920s and 1930s, Catholics found it more difficult than Protestants to find jobs
  - Gerrymandering of election boundaries ensured Unionist control of Councils
  - The allocation of housing was based on an unfair system
  - Many businessmen had more than one vote in elections
  - Television showed pictures of protest from around the world
  - The Civil Rights Movement in the USA had been campaigning during the 1960s
  - More young Catholics were attending university than ever before
  - Prime Minister O'Neill had been encouraging reform in Northern Ireland
- a) List the above reasons under the appropriate headings below:  
**Economic**  
**Political**  
**Social**  
**Religious**
  - b) Which of the reasons would you consider to be:
2. Write an explanation outlining why people came out onto the streets demanding Civil Rights.
  3. Why do you think many Protestants were opposed to the Civil Rights Movement?
  4. Why did some Protestants join the Civil Rights Movement?
  5. a) Explain how violence increased in 1969.  
b) Do you think that this was the outcome Civil Rights leaders had wanted?

**CIVIL RIGHTS – MYTH AND REALITY**

Often in history, people make simple comments about a movement or a period which can become myths. In this worksheet, we will examine two views often held about the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) using evidence to establish whether or not these are myths or reality.

**VIEW NUMBER ONE: NICRA organised all the protests in 1968 and 1969**

Source A                      The Organisation of NICRA

NICRA had an executive committee of thirteen; a regional council of 240 members; and local civil rights committees. The regional council was made up from delegates who were to pass on the decisions of the executive committee to the ordinary members.

Source B                      An historian's view, 1992

The Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association was formed in Belfast on 29<sup>th</sup> January 1967... the Association made very little impact. This organisation was by no means as all-embracing as its title suggested or as it, briefly, later became.  
(Jonathan Bardon, A History of Ulster, 1992)

Source C                      An article in Fortnight Magazine, October 1988

NICRA often played no major role in the main demonstrations... In the crucial Derry march on October 5<sup>th</sup>, the role of NICRA was almost non-existent. Thus, only indirect links existed between NICRA and the protest movement on the streets. It was local committees that organised the bulk of the marches and protests.

1. Select evidence from the sources which proves that NICRA was not in control of all civil rights protests.
2. Sources B and C were both written long after the events of the 1960s. Explain whether you think this makes them more reliable or less reliable.

**VIEW NUMBER TWO: NICRA was controlled by the IRA**

In the 1960s, many people in the Unionist community believed that the IRA was really behind the Civil Rights Movement and that the real objective was not to win civil rights but to overthrow the state of Northern Ireland.

Source A William Craig, a Unionist Minister, speaking to a rally in 1968

This Civil Rights movement is completely bogus (false); it has two aspects. You have, on the one side, a lot of misguided, ill-informed radicals; on the other side, you have a Republican movement who are seeking an opportunity to undermine this country. The IRA use civil unrest as an opportunity to resume the campaign of violence.

(William Craig was the Minister of Home Affairs who banned the October march in Derry. He was also a critic of O'Neill's reforms.)

Source B The Cameron Commission – a British Enquiry into events in 1968 and 1969

We have investigated this matter with particular care. While there is evidence that members of the IRA are active in the organisation, there is no sign that they are in any sense in a position to control or direct policy of the Civil Rights Association.

Source C Fortnight Magazine, 1988

Throughout most of the 1960s, the very existence of the IRA was in doubt. In August 1969, the 'Battle of the Bogside' was fought by local teenagers; and in Belfast, almost no IRA resistance was recorded. The IRA 'threat' failed to materialise. Many individual republicans were caught up in the Civil Rights Movement but there is no evidence of organised IRA involvement.

(Fortnight is a magazine which is an independent review for Northern Ireland.)

1. Look at Source A.
  - a) Do you think the views of William Craig are fact or opinion?
  - b) What sort of audience do you think William Craig was addressing in his speech?
  - c) For what reasons might he want his audience to feel that the IRA were behind the demand for civil rights?
  
2. Look at Sources B and C. In what ways do these sources disagree with Craig's view of IRA involvement in Civil Rights?

3. Compare all three sources.

Do you think Sources B and C provide more reliable evidence of IRA involvement than William Craig's speech? In your answer, think about:

- Who produced each source
- The type of audience for whom the sources were intended
- When the sources were written

4. If William Craig's speech is based only on his opinions, does that mean it is useless as evidence of this period in history?

**'INTERPRETING THE EVIDENCE' – October 5<sup>th</sup>, 1968**

The film footage of the RUC batoning Civil Rights marchers in Derry on October 5<sup>th</sup>, 1968 was shown on television screens around the world.

Film can be interpreted in many ways depending on:

- a) how it is cut or edited;
- b) the commentary that is used with the film.

Look carefully at the section of the programme which shows this famous piece of film.

1. In a group, choose one of the following viewpoints and write a short commentary to explain events shown in the film.

- A Civil Rights marcher
- A young RUC officer
- A visiting journalist

Consider also which sections of the film you might edit-out and explain your reasons.

Discuss each other's commentaries and edits.

2. Sources A and B are the views of two people who were involved with the October 5<sup>th</sup> march. Look at each source and answer the questions below.

Source A William Craig, Minister of Home Affairs in 1968 (Belfast Telegraph, 30<sup>th</sup> September 1993)

I thought the way the police acted was fair enough. I would have intensified it. The police had no alternative but to draw their batons. On BBC, I saw a marcher using a placard to hit a policeman, but the incident was only shown once. When we asked for all the film, the BBC said there had been an accident and we had to fall back on RTE. I was furious.

Source B Paddy Doherty, one of the marchers (Belfast Telegraph, 30<sup>th</sup> September 1993)

The police just batoned their way through the crowd. Over one hundred people were injured. It was obvious their main aim was not to disperse the crowd... No, they were intent on retribution and I am sure they were doing so on instructions. But the important thing was that, amid all this, the TV cameras continued to roll and, for the first time, the world could see what was happening in Northern Ireland.

1. In what ways do the two sources differ in their opinions about:
  - a) the role of the police?
  - b) the role of television?
2. Why do the authors have such different opinions about the October 5<sup>th</sup> march?
3. Write an explanation, giving as many reasons as you can, outlining why there might be different accounts of the same events.