

POSITIVE



Some Unionists/ Protestants supported O'Neill's reforms. These could be termed LIBERAL UNIONISTS. They were pragmatic and felt that the best way to defeat nationalism and the calls for a United Ireland was to

- 1) Reach out to Nationalists
- 2) Develop relations with the Republic of Ireland and
- 3) Make Northern Ireland economically and politically inclusive and successful in such a way that Catholics would not want a United Ireland

They felt that discriminating Catholics in jobs and housing and though the voting system and security issues would only alienate them and make them more likely to support a United Ireland and the IRA.

O'Neill had quite a bit of liberal Unionist support in the party and country in the early years especially.

The evidence was the 1965 election which was seen as a test of his new policies. The OUP (his party) did very well achieving 38 out of 52 seats

His next visit to see Taoiseach JACK LYNCH in 1967 was also passed by Cabinet showing support



UNIONISTS



REACTIONS to O'Neill reforms

NATIONALIST



POSITIVE



Many nationalists/ Catholics were initially very supportive of O'Neill's reforms. They felt they were great first steps. They liked the prospect of stronger links with the Republic of Ireland and greater support from the government for Catholic schools and hospitals.

They welcomed gestures like O'Neill meeting Cardinal Conway and offering sympathies on the death of the Pope

To show this support Eddie McAteers NATIONALIST PARTY decided to go to Stormont as an Opposition party. This was an important move as it 'recognised' the state of Northern Ireland and showed some nationalist confidence in the process.



OPPOSITION



Many Unionists also opposed O'Neill and his reforms. Some saw it as weakness and a step towards a United Ireland.



IAN PAISLEY was a vocal critic. He was not in the OUP but was the leader of a growing Protestant church called the Free Presbyterian church. It was very conservative ( did not like change) and opposed any form of relationship with the Republic of Ireland. It viewed this as a foreign country and especially opposed its claim in its constitution to be responsible for all of Ireland. It also pointed out the inclusion of the Catholic Church in the constitution and the temere decree which stated that all children born, even in a mixed marriage should be brought up Catholic. Ian Paisley was a charismatic speaker and worked up a lot of support- especially as civil rights marches began and things didn't go smoothly for O'Neill.

He opposed O'Neill by

- Making speeches against him
- Forming alliances with OUP members opposed to O'Neill
- He even threw snowballs at the Irish Taoiseach's car during a visit to Stormont in 1967!
- He would later challenge O'Neill in his own parliamentary seat and form an opposition party called the DUP in 1970.

SOME MEMBERS OF THE OUP OPPOSED O'NEILL

Many saw him as out of touch as leader. O'Neill was appointed leader. He wasn't elected by his colleagues in the party. They wanted Brian Faulkner. They saw O'Neill as English and aristocratic. Members of the party such as WILLIAM CRAIG, HARRY WEST and BRIAN FAULKNER were critical of O'Neill's policies and leadership. They particularly objected to how O'Neill kept his meeting with Sean Lemass secret. They felt they should have been consulted.



NATIONALIST FRUSTRATION

No nationalists opposed O'Neill's reforms but there were many who were skeptical about them. Many questioned if he could actually achieve what he was promising with lack of full Unionist support in his own party.

Others suggested that the big issues were being overlooked. They pointed to the unfair voting system, discrimination in housing and jobs and the security policy with the special powers act and b specials. These were the real issues they wanted to see addressed.

As time went on nationalists were frustrated by the lack of meaningful progress. O'Neill had raised their hopes with his promises but in reality what was emerging were very Unionist policies which seemed to be targeting rather than helping nationalists;

- 1) The decision to name a new Planned city in Northern Ireland. CRAIGAVON- after the first Unionist Prime Minister
- 2) The decision to place the new UNIVERSITY of ULSTER campus in the mostly Protestant small town of COLERAINE rather than Northern Ireland's second biggest city DERRY/ L'DERRY which happened to be mostly Catholic.
- 3) There were also suggestions that most of the new investment in jobs and factories was going to the mostly Protestant East of Northern Ireland. The unemployment rate in the west was much higher and investment there was much less.