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# THE PRESSURE GROUPS

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### The CCDC

The CCDC (Central Citizens Defence Committee) was formed in 1969 behind the Falls Road barricades, thrown up after the worst violence Belfast had yet seen. It eventually represented sixteen separate ghetto areas. Its chairman was Tom Conaty, a local business man. Other members were Paddy Devlin, MP, SDLP, and Jim Sullivan who had previously been interned. Meetings were usually held in Leeson Street.

The members negotiated with the Army as required and had many tense interviews with it. They also saw Mr James Callaghan when he visited Belfast, at a time when the British authorities were trying to gain control of the 'no-go' areas.

On 18 November 1970 the CCDC inserted a full-page advertisement in the *Irish News* entitled 'Stop! Stop! Stop!'. We welcomed this effort because we considered that published statements were too few on the minority's side. Rarely had any group sat down and gathered their facts together and set them out clearly. The piece drew attention to the fact that large numbers of people had opted out of their responsibilities with an 'I'm alright Jack' attitude. It went on to regret the slowness of the reforms and 'an obvious unwillingness on the part of most Unionists to reform'. It called for 'restraint and non-violence, for vigilance and intelligence'.

The point of view of the stonethrower was explained thus:

As he saw it, there were guilty men in the RUC. This was well known to the Prime Minister and Sir Arthur Young [the Chief Constable]. The Press reports of the Scarman Tribunal discredited a different senior officer every day.

Sir Arthur Young was forced to go. He sees no evidence whatsoever that the RUC will ever be purged of guilty men.

The youth with a stone has ample evidence to convince him that there is discrimination by the police in bringing charges in the magistrates' courts. He could quote examples: After a football crowd had stoned, knocked down and kicked two policemen in Corn Market in August two football fans were arrested. They were charged with being drunk and disorderly. In evidence one policeman said that he was lucky to escape with his life. They were fined £10 and £12 respectively [These were Protestants]. The crowd proceeded to Unity Flats, where there was a confrontation in the course of which two young men [Catholics] were arrested for allegedly throwing stones; they were charged with disorderly behaviour, which at the time carried a mandatory six months jail sentence.

The advertisement went on to declaim: 'Violence is out. Stones, bottles, guns and bombs are out.'

It made a modulated and restrained appeal to the Republicans to stop the violence, since family life and living conditions were deteriorating under so-called protectors. Finally there was an appeal—'Organise your street, men and women, to prevent riots.'

The group was regarded as middle of the road. That this was a reasonable estimate can be inferred from the reaction of the two extremes, Unionists and Republicans, to the 'Stop! Stop! Stop!' insertion. The Republicans issued a long condemnatory statement accusing them of 'trying to sabotage the struggle for freedom'.

The fact that the group itemised some reasons why conditions had depreciated to the level they had was too much for the Unionist side. Major Chichester-Clark issued a statement in which he declared that there were misleading claims in it. 'I utterly reject', he said, 'that Unionism is injustice. The CCDC statement was "incredibly biased, ignorant or tendentious".'

Mr Roy Bradford, MP, said that it was a 'poisonous and slanderous political pamphlet of the most Republican kind'. Mr Brian Faulkner said that 'When they stripped away the

outworn propaganda and the biased anti-government clichés which the CCDC contained, what is revealed is a state of affairs which we knew to exist but which had hitherto been hotly denied by the sort of people who now frankly proclaim it.' Unionist reaction to what was a reasonable statement shows just how standards of social justice had sunk in Northern Ireland. 'Stop! Stop! Stop!' was later issued as a booklet having wide circulation. The Campaign mailed it to all our supporters, to politicians and the newspapers outside the country.

When the residents of Unity Flats were accused of having 'a massive ammunition and arms hoard' in a basement of the flats, the CCDC pointed out that there were no basements in the flats. They suggested, with conviction, because of their inside information, that the arms found were planted there.

They further procured an apology from the army for the unprovoked use of water cannon on women flat dwellers. In March 1971 the CCDC strongly condemned the sectarian and anti-Catholic songs by Linfield football supporters passing the flats and the repeated one-sided searches of the flats by the Army.

Unlike other groups the CCDC was prepared in mid-summer 1971 to condemn a booby-trap attempt against the British Army, and it appealed to Republicans as Christians and Irishmen to end their campaign of violence, but when, at the year's end, Army General Tuzo appealed to the Catholics of Belfast to end violence, the group pointed out that General Tuzo was the man who had advised in the past 'Lean hard on Catholics'. The CCDC suggested that it was too much to expect the Catholics to hand over Republicans to the authorities when there was misconduct by troops.

In its role as spokesman for the people, the group pointed out that the spate of violence causing eight deaths in early 1971 in the Clonard area was due to the persistent one-sided searching by the Army and police. This had united the whole community against the troops. The group made a strong attack on Mr Faulkner because of his attitude to Catholics: 'His arrogance and condescension are staggering,' they stated, again asserting their chief role of 'keeping the peace on the streets'. They continued to deal with refugees and the results of intimidation. An indication of the atmosphere prevailing in

Belfast at the time is given in the CCDC advertisement in the *Irish News* on 24 March 1973. It was advice to Catholics on how to attempt to provide against sectarian assassinations. 'Do not open the door of the house after dark; do not stand in groups talking; avoid going out after dark'. People were advised to vary the route to their place of work, not to accept lifts or give lifts in their cars. 'Be careful,' the advertisement said, 'if an incident on the road causes you to slow down. Make sure your taxi is a genuine one. Watch out for prowling vans or cars. If an attempt is made to force you into a car cause a commotion.' Small wonder there was great respect and admiration for the members of the CCDC.

### **Derry Citizens Action Committee**

This was a sixteen membership committee. The chairman was Ivan Cooper, John Hume was vice chairman. The group was made up of older and more conservative people than the local group of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights committee. In the beginning it had one Unionist committee member who soon resigned.

At first its members specialised in sit-downs in the street. I remember in the very early days before NICRA was established, John Hume, an earnest young man feeling his careful way, came to see Patricia who, even at that time, was a veteran of street marching. 'What am I to do?' he asked. 'Sit down', we suggested, and so he did, and very effective it was. Indeed I have always held that if we could have mobilised all or nearly all of the community in massive sit-downs for all the world to see, the battle for rights could have been won by this method alone. Unfortunately, the Irish psyche is such that this did not appeal. More active, perhaps, even violent, methods, were more attractive.

In November 1965 at a time when marches were banned, the Citizens Action Committee held a very large one from Waterside Station. The marchers were held up by police in Carlisle Square. With considerable sagacity and great restraint they broke up and went in small groups to the Diamond where a successful meeting was held without incident.

### **The New Ulster Movement**

The initiative of this group came from a highly principled man, a convert to the Society of Friends named Brian W.

Walker. It was founded in February 1969 as a political catalyst to promote a united community based on equality and justice. The chairman was Brian Walker, the vice chairman, Brian McGuigan, a Belfast solicitor, who for years had been active in social concerns in the city. The secretary was Patricia Morrow. The NUM did not claim to be a political body but a movement aiming to liberalise Northern politics by supporting 'liberal minded' candidates in parliamentary and local government elections. It supported the O'Neill candidates in the 1969 general election. One of its aims was to break the link between the Orange Order and the Unionists. Brian Walker spoke out forcefully on 1 December 1970 when he called on the Attorney General to prosecute the Paisleyite Unionist MP, the Rev. William Beattie, under the Incitement to Religious Hatred Act.

The NUM took a very strong line against Rev. Ian Paisley's anti-Catholic pronouncements. It issued a pamphlet exposing the gross sectarianism of his *Protestant Telegraph*, quoting many extracts from that 'newspaper'. In June 1971 the group was agitating for a reform of Stormont, but by November of that year it had gone further in a proposal that Stormont be suspended for three years, and be replaced by a commission, with an advisory council in which all political parties were to be represented. They also wanted the Government of Ireland Act, 1920 to be updated. These appeals were supported by the South Tyrone Parliamentary Association, an affiliate of the NUM. The NUM has always claimed that the Alliance Party was its brainchild, and as soon as the Alliance organisation was complete three members were added to its Executive to join the two NILP and the two Unionists already there.

After Brian Walker left Ireland to direct the Oxfam organisation, we heard no more of the NUM.