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Responses in the west of Ireland to civil rights protest in Northern Ireland, 1968–72

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ABSTRACT. *1968 has become synonymous with the large-scale global protests of that year. International scholarship has increasingly sought to examine instances of these protests in global peripheries, and amongst the most studied examples is Northern Ireland. The growth of civil rights protest in Northern Ireland in the late 1960s, which emerged from long-standing feelings of exclusion amongst the Catholic minority of the predominantly Protestant polity, was influenced by a broader international discourse of protest associated with the long 1968, notably the African-American civil rights movement. Simultaneously, in the west of Ireland, a number of protest groups also emerged in the late 1960s, frustrated at their communities' perceived neglect by the government of the Republic of Ireland. This article will examine the emergence of these protest movements, discussing groups in the Galway Gaeltacht and other peripheral rural areas of Connacht, student activists in University College Galway, and campaigns challenging racism against the Travelling community. It will argue that they were influenced by the global protests associated with the long 1968, most notably by events across the border. For the purpose of the article, the 'west of Ireland' refers to the five Connacht counties of Galway, Roscommon, Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim.*

In recent years, particularly from the late 1990s onwards, scholarly analyses of the international upsurge of protest synonymous with the year 1968 have seen a noted shift. As Chris Reynolds argues in a recent study, scholarship has increasingly sought to contextualise the year's events within a broader period running from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, a turn encapsulated by the use of phases like 'the long 1968' and '*les années* 68'. There have also been growing efforts to emphasise the transnational nature of 1968 and to move away from a disproportionate emphasis on the events in France in the year's protests, with increasing attention given to 1968's influence in peripheral countries on both sides of the Iron Curtain, such as Norway, Switzerland, Belgium, Hungary, Romania and Yugoslavia.[1]

One European periphery where 1968 had a major impact was Northern Ireland. Since the ratification of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 and the fortieth anniversary of the 1968 events in 2008, increasing efforts have been

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[1] Chris Reynolds, *Sous les pavés: Northern Ireland, France, and the European collective memory of 1968* (Oxford, 2014), pp 11–18.

made to place the emergence of the Northern Ireland civil rights movement within the worldwide context of the year.[2] International protest, and in particular the African-American civil rights movement in the United States, gave Catholics and nationalists in Northern Ireland a new discourse of civil rights to convey their opposition to the neglect and discrimination they faced in a polity where they had been excluded historically from power by the unionist and Protestant majority. On 5 October 1968, Northern Ireland took its place in the centre of the 1968 experience. Footage of the Royal Ulster Constabulary's (R.U.C.) unprovoked attack on a poorly attended civil rights march in predominantly nationalist Derry appeared on television news bulletins worldwide alongside events in Vietnam, Czechoslovakia and France. Hence, the day became, as a B.B.C. Northern Ireland documentary commemorating the march's fortieth anniversary termed it, 'the day the Troubles began',[3] and academic studies of the Troubles have widely used the year 1968 as their starting point in discussing the conflict.[4]

Less attention has been paid to 1968's more modest role in fomenting protest in the Republic of Ireland despite some brief acknowledgements by scholars in broader works on the period.[5] The Northern Ireland conflict's considerable impact on the Republic of Ireland has been an understudied area of research, an omission Brian Hanley has partly addressed in his pioneering work on the subject, and this neglect extends to the Northern Ireland civil rights movement's influence on the Republic of Ireland.[6] Northern Ireland's

[2] Brian Dooley, *Black and green: the fight for civil rights in Northern Ireland and Black America* (London, 1998); Simon Prince, 'The global revolt of 1968 and Northern Ireland' in *Hist. Jn.*, xlix, no. 3 (Sept. 2006), pp 851–75; idem, *Northern Ireland's '68: civil rights, global revolt and the origins of the Troubles* (Dublin, 2007); Lorenso Bosi & Simon Prince, 'Writing the sixties into Northern Ireland and Northern Ireland into the sixties' in *The Sixties: A Journal of History, Politics and Culture*, ii, no. 2 (Dec. 2009), pp 145–61; Simon Prince & Geoffrey Warner, *Belfast and Derry in revolt: a new history of the start of the Troubles* (Dublin, 2011); Reynolds, *Sous les pavés*; Simon Prince, 'Do what the Afro-Americans are doing: black power and the start of the Northern Ireland Troubles' in *Journal of Contemporary History*, l, no. 3 (July 2015), pp 1–20.

[3] 'The day the Troubles began' (B.B.C., 2008).

[4] Paul Arthur & Keith Jeffery, *Northern Ireland since 1968* (2nd ed., Oxford, 1996); Paul Bew & Gordon Gillespie, *Northern Ireland: a chronology of the Troubles, 1968–1999* (Dublin, 1999); Cillian McGrattan, *Northern Ireland, 1968–2008: the politics of entrenchment* (Basingstroke, 2010).

[5] Niall Ó Dochartaigh, *From civil rights to armalites: Derry and the birth of the Irish Troubles* (2nd ed., Basingstoke, 2005), p. 48; Jane Helleiner, *Irish Travellers: racism and the politics of culture* (Toronto, 2000), pp 82–3; Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh, 'Languages, literature and culture in Ireland since the war' in J. J. Lee (ed.), *Ireland, 1945–1970* (Dublin, 1979), p. 113; Niamh Hourigan, 'A comparison between the campaigns for Raidió na Gaeltachta and Teilifís na Gaeilge' (Ph.D. thesis, University College Galway, 1998), p. 126; Jerry White, *The radio eye: cinema in the north Atlantic, 1958–1988* (Ontario, 2009), p. 127.

[6] Brian Hanley, '"The south is in the mood for violence": Bloody Sunday 1972' in *History Ireland*, xx, no. 1 (Jan/Feb. 2012), pp 42–4; idem, 'Dublin bombs, 1972' in *History Ireland*, xx, no. 6 (Nov/Dec. 2012), pp 46–7; idem, '"But then they started all this killing": attitudes to the I.R.A. in the Irish Republic since 1969' in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxxviii, no. 151 (May 2013), pp 439–56; idem, '"The forgotten massacre": responses to the Dublin and Monaghan bombings' in *History Ireland*, xxii, no. 3 (May/June 2014), pp 46–9.

civil rights movement had a particularly potent impact on the west of Ireland – itself a periphery of a periphery in the 1968 experience – due to the deep-rooted feelings of marginalisation and neglect which existed amongst several communities in the region. Prince and Bosi have described the Northern Ireland civil rights movement as being indicative of a broader societal 'decline of deference' which occurred in Northern Ireland in the era, instancing increasing scepticism from younger nationalists towards both traditional nationalism and the policies of the Irish government as examples.[7] Although not mentioned in their analysis, the emergence of protest movements in the west of Ireland in the long 1968 are an ideal example of this, with an increased questioning of whether successive Irish governments from 1922 onwards had adequately paid attention to the west.

Taking as case studies civil rights movements in the Galway Gaeltacht and other regions of Connacht, student activism in University College Galway (U.C.G.), and anti-discrimination campaigns amongst the Travelling community, this article will examine the role of the civil rights movement in Northern Ireland in helping to prompt the emergence of activist campaigns in the west of Ireland during the long 1968. It shall argue that the distinct, if frequently overlapping, movements discussed all gained inspiration from the global protest upsurge associated with 1968, with events in Northern Ireland providing their most immediate and potent inspiration. Just as Northern nationalists emulated the discourse of the civil rights movement in the United States to address their own marginalisation by the Northern Irish state, members of these movements saw the civil rights framework embraced by northern nationalists as a means of protesting the historic neglect by the Irish state of their communities.

The Northern Ireland civil rights movement was no homogenous block, however. As Prince and Bosi have put it, it was 'an uneasy and short-lived coalition that brought together nationalist interest groups, liberals, trade unionists, traditionalist and Marxist republicans, Communists, and leftists'.[8] The traditional anti-communism of Irish society had eased somewhat in the 1960s, in large part due to the Catholic church placing a decreased emphasis on the issue after the reforms of the Second Vatican Council.[9] However, such sentiment endured, albeit to a lesser extent, and the article will reveal that the leftist element of the north's civil rights movement, notably the revolutionary socialist and predominantly student People's Democracy (P.D.) organisation, attracted significant suspicion from many in the west when it tried to forge connections with activists in Connacht, in contrast to the more conservative Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (N.I.C.R.A.), which was less divisive.

In addition, the relationship of the republican movement with the case studies discussed in the article will be a recurring theme. After the cessation of the Border Campaign in 1962, both Sinn Féin and the Irish Republican Army (I.R.A.), under the leaderships of Tomás Mac Giolla and Cathal Goulding respectively, moved leftwards and increasingly sought to campaign on social issues, from civil rights protest in Northern Ireland to social agitation in the

[7] Bosi & Prince, 'Writing the sixties into Northern Ireland', p. 146.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Emmet O'Connor, 'Anti-communism in twentieth-century Ireland' in *Twentieth Century Communism*, vi, no. 6, (Mar. 2014), p. 74.

Republic of Ireland. The most prominent example of the latter was the Dublin Housing Action Committee (D.H.A.C.).[10] Its campaigning was mirrored in rural Ireland by republican agitation on issues such as fishing rights and land disputes against large landowners, as well as involvement in some of the campaigns that the case studies in this article will examine, such as Travellers' rights activism and civil rights campaigning in the Gaeltacht.[11] The appointment of Seán Ó Cionnaith, a former D.H.A.C. activist, as Sinn Féin's Connacht organiser in 1968 was an important development in this regard.[12] The I.R.A.'s increasing involvement in political violence in Northern Ireland as the polity imploded after 1968 hindered republican engagement with civil rights issues in the west, however, Ó Cionnaith noting in 1969 that the unfolding northern situation had caused local civil rights agitation to be scaled back.[13]

Matters complicated further in December 1969, when the breakaway Provisional I.R.A. was founded by republicans opposed to the movement's alleged embrace of 'an extreme form of socialism' under Mac Giolla and Goulding, as well as the I.R.A. leadership's decision to support the abandonment of Sinn Féin's traditional abstentionist position towards Oireachtas, Stormont and Westminster elections. The Provisional I.R.A. soon became the dominant republican paramilitary group in Northern Ireland, and Provisional Sinn Féin was founded in January 1970 as its political wing.[14] Meanwhile, Official Sinn Féin and the Official I.R.A., as the old organisations became known, intensified their leftist focus, slowly moving away from political violence. Official Sinn Féin became Sinn Féin the Workers' Party – later simply known as the Workers' Party – and built electoral support in the south on social issues over the following two decades. While Official Sinn Féin's later incarnations were heavily urban-centric, in the period discussed in this article it invested significant effort into rural agitation.[15]

I

In the Republic of Ireland, there was considerable awareness of the discrimination which nationalists endured in Northern Ireland before it became an increasingly important issue in southern politics in the period after October 1968. It was highlighted by works such as Frank Gallagher's 1957 *The indivisible island*, a lengthy and scathing chronicle of discrimination against Catholics in Northern Ireland.[16] Such instances of discrimination were also highlighted regularly in the provincial press in

[10] Brian Hanley & Scott Millar, *The lost revolution: the story of the Official I.R.A. and the Workers' Party* (Dublin, 2010), pp 109–10.
[11] Ibid., pp 236–8.
[12] Ibid., p. 89.
[13] Roy H. W. Johnston, *Century of endeavour: a biographical and autobiographical view of the twentieth century in Ireland* (Dublin, 2003), p. 266.
[14] Seán Swan, *Official Irish republicanism, 1962–1972* (Lulu.com, 2007), pp 320–4; Hanley & Millar, *The lost revolution*, pp 144–8; Matt Treacy, *The I.R.A. 1956–69: rethinking the republic* (Manchester, 2011), pp 152–88.
[15] Hanley & Millar, *The lost revolution*, p. 466.
[16] Frank Gallagher, *The indivisible island: the history of the partition of Ireland* (London, 1957).

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the west of Ireland.[17] Alongside issues of jobs and housing, a key grievance was the gerrymandering of electoral boundaries at local government level, most obviously in Derry, where the city's governing corporation had a Unionist Party majority despite the city being predominantly Catholic and nationalist.[18]

The 1960s saw increased protests against such discrimination in Northern Ireland, influenced from an early stage by African-American civil rights protests in the United States. As early as 1963, protests held by a number of Catholic housewives in Dungannon, County Tyrone, against anti-Catholic discrimination in the local council's allocation of housing, explicitly referred to the black struggle in the United States, protestors holding placards such as 'Racial discrimination in Alabama hits Dungannon' and 'If our religion is against us, ship us to Little Rock'. A newly founded Homeless Citizens' League, formed to campaign on the issue, also organised a march through the town, a development influenced by the American campaigners. The influence of black activists on campaigners in Northern Ireland, while initially 'slow and far from smooth', proved enduring,[19] and the American example was key to the minds of the republicans, communists, trade unionists and others who formed N.I.C.R.A. in January 1967. Despite the role of radicals in initiating the campaign, they soon became marginal, and mainstream nationalists like John Hume and Ivan Cooper became the body's driving force.[20]

Despite these developments, the issue of discrimination against Catholics in Northern Ireland was downplayed after the historic meetings between Northern Ireland's reforming Unionist Party Prime Minister Terence O'Neill and Fianna Fáil Taoiseach Seán Lemass in 1965, which were broadly welcomed by politicians and press in the west of Ireland. Following the meetings, members of local government in Connacht took their own initiatives to create links with northern unionists, imitating the Lemass–O'Neill meetings in miniature. The unionist mayor of Derry's 1967 visit to Galway city saw much emphasis on his appeal to 'forget divisions'. Derry Corporation's discriminatory practices went unmentioned, though sympathy was expressed with the mayor over Stormont's failure to situate Northern Ireland's second university in Derry.[21] Likewise, when the *Connaught Telegraph*, based in Castlebar, County Mayo, covered the town's 1967 twinning visit with Ballymena, County Antrim, a heavily Protestant and unionist town, in a series of articles, the only acknowledgement of anti-Catholic discrimination was O'Neill's off-colour joke at a Stormont reception that Jim Malley, his private secretary of Roscommon and Leitrim ancestry, had 'had to drop the "O" from his surname to get a job up here!'.[22] Ballymena's Protestantism was a crucial factor in Castlebar officials taking an interest in the town. Chamber of Commerce president Michael J. Egan stated that they 'selected Ballymena

[17] *Tuam Herald*, 12 Aug. 1950; *Connacht Tribune*, 1 Dec. 1951; *Western People*, 6 June 1964; *Connaught Telegraph*, 8 Aug. 1964.

[18] John Whyte, 'How much discrimination was there under the unionist regime, 1921–1968?' in Tom Gallagher & James O'Connell (eds), *Contemporary Irish studies* (Manchester, 1983), pp 1–36.

[19] Prince, *Northern Ireland's '68*, pp 72–4.

[20] Ibid., p. 115.

[21] *Connacht Tribune*, 10 Feb. 1967.

[22] *Connaught Telegraph*, 23 Feb. 1967.

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because the percentage of Catholics in it is only 22%', revealing an interest in building relationships with northern Protestants at the expense of doing so with northern Catholics.[23] This reflects the broader failure of Lemass's successor, Jack Lynch, to engage with that community's concerns, which was unhelpful in the context of the increasing destabilisation of Northern Ireland.[24] The lack of interest in the situation of northern nationalists was criticised in the press elsewhere. Myles Byrne of the *Roscommon Herald*, based in Boyle, County Roscommon – one of two weekly newspapers in the county alongside the *Roscommon Champion*, based in Roscommon town – asserted that 'Since Seán Lemass crossed the border to meet Captain Terence O'Neill at Stormont, we have sung dumb about the Six Counties and the lack of complete democratic freedom there'.[25] Byrne's criticism echoed broader discontent about the Irish government's quiescence on the issue; Dublin, in Ó Dochartaigh's words, 'deliberately [avoided] raising the issue of civil rights with the northern government as part of its "good neighbour policy"' between 1965 and 1968.[26]

Northern Ireland became increasingly important in southern politics after 5 October 1968, when news footage of the R.U.C.'s assault on a civil rights march in Derry attracted international attention. R.T.É., Ireland's national television station, captured and broadcast footage of the R.U.C.'s brutality in images later carried by television stations worldwide, eliciting great sympathy from the population of the Republic towards the civil rights movement.[27] Resolutions condemning the R.U.C. were passed by local authorities across Connacht. Michael Kelly, a member of the Urban District Council in Westport, County Mayo, condemned 'the manner in which police hooligans were let loose to baton innocent people',[28] while Sligo town's mayor, John Fallon, called on Britain to end its 'subsidies' to the R.U.C.[29] Roscommon County Council sent a letter to British Prime Minister Harold Wilson, as well as to the Stormont authorities and the Republic's minister of external affairs. Councillor J. J. Grehan commented that the police violence in Derry 'was worse than what occurred in France and Chicago', drawing an explicit parallel between events in Northern Ireland and the broader international events of 1968.[30] The council later received a letter from Malley informing it that O'Neill had instructed him to return a protest resolution it had sent to Stormont 'as it could not be accepted by the Government of Northern Ireland'.[31]

In addition to R.T.É.'s coverage, the main national dailies and the provincial press alike paid considerable attention to the civil rights campaign in Northern Ireland 'both reflecting and reinforcing public awareness in the Republic'.[32] Coverage emphasised that the crisis in Northern Ireland affected

[23] *Irish Independent*, 12 Dec. 1966.
[24] Michael Kennedy, *Division and consensus: the politics of cross-border relations in Ireland, 1925–1969* (Dublin, 2000), p. 308.
[25] *Roscommon Herald*, 3 Nov. 1967.
[26] Ó Dochartaigh, *From civil rights to armalites*, p. 48.
[27] Ibid, p. 49.
[28] *Connaught Telegraph*, 17 Oct. 1968.
[29] *Sligo Champion*, 11 Oct. 1968.
[30] *Roscommon Herald*, 11 Oct. 1968.
[31] *Connacht Tribune*, 6 Dec. 1968.
[32] Ó Dochartaigh, *From civil rights to armalites*, p. 49.

the island as a whole. As Ó Dochartaigh highlights, the Galway-based *Connacht Tribune*, a leading newspaper both in Galway city and rural Galway along with its twin newspaper, the *Connacht Sentinel*, declared in February 1969 that 'No matter what they might say, they are our fellow countrymen and we are theirs … We are not on the outside looking on in the way the people of other countries look on. What happens there concerns our future as much as it does theirs.'[33] Such coverage demonstrated empathy for northern nationalists, but also tended to betray suspicion of the emergence of a leftist element in the broader civil rights movement in Northern Ireland. Connecting the Derry march with protests in the United States, the continent, and Dublin, the paper had earlier expressed concern about increasing criticisms of police forces worldwide, claiming that allegations of police brutality came from 'lawless elements' and not 'sincere' advocates of civil rights.[34] While broadly sympathetic to the march, the *Roscommon Herald*'s 'Countryman' columnist warned that there were some in Derry who were using the protests to 'advance their own private ends' or wished 'to be wherever there is a row'. Linking the Derry unrest to anti-Vietnam protests in London, the column singled out the British-Pakistani Trotskyist and anti-war activist Tariq Ali, a prominent member of Britain's 1968 protest generation, for condemnation, claiming that a publication he was involved with, *Black Dwarf*, was 'to the draft dodger what the *Protestant Telegraph* is to the follower of Paisley'.[35]

II

The north's civil rights movement also had a radicalising effect in the Gaeltacht, where activists drew comparisons between the oppression of northern nationalists and Gaeltacht residents. Máirtín Ó Cadhain, the famed local writer and veteran socialist republican, asserted that some in the south were 'as much, perhaps more, second class citizens' as northern nationalists, and that 'the whole west coast of Ireland consists of second-class citizens except for a few capitalists'.[36] These concerns found a voice in Gluaiseacht Chearta Sibhialta na Gaeltachta (Gaeltacht Civil Rights Movement, hereafter referred to as G.C.S.G.), a group founded in March 1969 which framed Gaeltacht issues in terms of minority rights rather than cultural nationalism, in contrast to previous Irish-language groups.[37] The civil rights agitation in Northern Ireland gave Gaeltacht activists an opportunity to express their concerns using a new discourse of civil rights.[38] Ironically, the Language Freedom Movement, which opposed compulsory Irish in the education system, also presented itself as a southern analogue of the northern civil rights movement, arguing that the state's Irish-language policy was ostracising minorities. However, many residents in the impoverished Gaeltachtaí felt no

[33] Ibid.
[34] *Connacht Tribune*, 18 Oct. 1968.
[35] *Roscommon Herald*, 25 Oct. 1968.
[36] Aindrias Ó Cathasaigh, *Ag samhlú troda: Máirtín Ó Cadhain, 1905–1970* (Baile Átha Cliath, 2002), p. 272.
[37] Hourigan, 'A comparison', p. 142.
[38] Ibid., p. 139.

less alienated from the state despite the nominal position of Irish as the south's first language.[39] The Northern Ireland civil rights movement was a stronger influence on G.C.S.G. than Welsh language campaigners; despite the strong similarities with the latter, the former had a far more visceral appeal in an Irish context.[40] G.C.S.G. activists were influenced by both P.D. and N.I.C.R.A., and Official Sinn Féin's Seosamh Ó Cuaig, on his own initiative, pushed for links with P.D., with meetings taking place between activists from the two.[41] While many in G.C.S.G., such as Peadar Mac an Iomaire, had little interest in radical left politics, activists like Ó Cuaig and Belfast-born Desmond Fennell were mindful of events internationally, and were influenced by the rural-backed leftist revolutions in Castro's Cuba and Mao's China respectively.[42] Fennell was interested in Gaeltacht activism not out of nostalgia or romanticism for the region, but because he wished to see radical modernisation, something which also influenced his views on Northern Ireland.[43] In addition, the movement attracted interest from republicans; while the republican movement had not initiated G.C.S.G., the body applied to join Official Sinn Féin's 'National Liberation Front', and Eoin Ó Murchú, an Official Sinn Féin activist, was appointed by the party as a full-time organiser in Connemara. Through Ó Murchú, the Officials also supplied the radio equipment which enabled the setting up of Saor Raidió Chonamara (Radio Free Connemara) in 1970.[44]

Throughout the long 1960s, civil rights figures from Northern Ireland regularly visited the west. For instance, N.I.C.R.A. figures addressed a Galway crowd alongside members of the Civil Rights Association of Washington D.C. in Eyre Square, Galway, in August 1969.[45] This interest was also present on the left of the civil rights movement, particularly as regards the Gaeltacht. Bernadette Devlin studied Irish during her time at Queens' University Belfast and participation in the college's Irish language debating society is highlighted in her early autobiography *The price of my soul* as one of her formative political experiences.[46] After her election as an M.P., she regularly visited Galway city and Connemara, receiving significant local press attention. In Ó Cuaig's view, her visits strengthened G.C.S.G. as they enabled the movement to link Fianna Fáil's hypocritical neglect of both northern nationalists and Gaeltacht residents in the public consciousness, despite the fact that the party historically swathed itself in the rhetoric of both anti-partitionism and language revivalism.[47] Devlin believed that northern nationalists and Gaeltacht residents were equally alienated from the Dublin establishment by class, telling a U.C.D. audience in 1970 that Irish speakers

[39] Jerry White, *The radio eye*, p. 127; Caoimhghin Ó Croidheáin, *Language from below: the Irish language, ideology and power in twentieth-century Ireland* (Berne, 2006), p. 246.
[40] Eira Fon Parry, 'Gluaiseacht Chearta Sibhialta na Gaeltachta and Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymreag: a comparative study' (M.A. thesis, N.U.I., Galway, 2009), p. 63.
[41] Hourigan, 'A comparison', p. 126.
[42] Ibid., p. 150.
[43] White, *The radio eye*, p. 127.
[44] Hanley & Millar, *The lost revolution*, p. 237.
[45] *Connacht Sentinel*, 19 Aug. 1969.
[46] Bernadette Devlin, *The price of my soul* (New York, 1969), p. 76.
[47] Hourigan, 'A comparison', p. 126.

were seen as 'fanatics' despite the language's nominal official status.[48] Her vocal criticism of the Dublin government rankled with Fianna Fáil members in the west. A resolution by Galway's two Provisional Sinn Féin county councillors calling for the release of northern political prisoners in July 1970, supported by Fianna Fáil, failed to include her on its list, a point noted by rival Fine Gael councillors.[49] Jerry White argues that the links between G.C.S.G. and the northern civil rights upsurge 'must have given Jack Lynch pause', especially in the context of his emotive speech in the wake of the unrest in Derry in August 1969.[50]

During Mac an Iomaire's June 1969 general election campaign in Galway West, G.C.S.G. received funding from working-class nationalist areas of Northern Ireland, most notably the Bogside, a large nationalist area in Derry city. He polled respectably, receiving 1,522 first preferences and, interestingly, fared better in Galway city than in the rural Gaeltacht itself.[51] When events in the Bogside became a major news story the following August, violent clashes occurring between residents of the area and R.U.C. members and local loyalists (dubbed the 'Battle of the Bogside'), Carna locals reciprocated the earlier aid by sending goods worth £300 to the area. The aid was delivered to the Bogside personally by a local shopkeeper. Filmmaker Bob Quinn attributed the donation to 'the Gaeltacht people [seeing] an affinity between the Bogside ghetto and their own situation', echoing the linkages inspired by G.C.S.G.[52] Ó Cuaig and others in G.C.S.G. visited Derry during the Battle of the Bogside. Ó Cuaig recalled seeing B-Specials charge at nationalists, and was very impressed by Radio Free Derry, which he felt should have been emulated in Connemara.[53] G.C.S.G. was inspired as a result to set up Saor Raidió Chonamara in April 1970. The station reported on events relevant to the northern Irish civil rights movement, such as Bernadette Devlin's activities in the House of Commons.[54] The station had a lasting impact on Irish-language media, hastening the Irish government's introduction of an Irish-language radio station, Raidió na Gaeltachta; as one activist later told a documentary on G.C.S.G.: 'Without Saor Raidió Chonamara, we wouldn't have Raidió na Gaeltachta, without Raidió na Gaeltachta, we wouldn't have T.G.4.', a reference to Ireland's later Irish language television station, launched in 1996 as Teilifís na Gaeilge and renamed three years later.[55]

In Northern Ireland, there were heightened sectarian-political tensions between the predominantly Protestant and unionist police and predominantly Catholic civil rights protestors.[56] In contrast, G.C.S.G. avoided serious conflict with the authorities, largely due to Gaeltacht Gardaí being sympathetic to their campaign. Local Superintendent Patrick Gallagher tipped them off on a raid on the radio station, allowing them to retrieve equipment.

[48] *Irish Times*, 10 Mar. 1970.
[49] Ibid., 31 July 1970.
[50] White, *The radio eye*, p. 126.
[51] Hourigan, 'A comparison', pp 155–6.
[52] *Irish Times*, 6 Jan. 1971.
[53] 'Splanc Dheireadh na Gaeltachta' (T.G.4, 2000).
[54] *Tuam Herald*, 4 Apr. 1970.
[55] 'Splanc Dheireadh na Gaeltachta' (T.G.4, 2000).
[56] Ronald Weitzer, *Policing under fire: ethnic conflict and police community relations in Northern Ireland* (New York, 1995), p. 61.

However, Ó Cuaig felt that were it not for Gallagher's influence, the Gardaí would have baton-charged several Chearta Sibhialta na Gaeltachta marches,[57] a conclusion supported by the fact that a demonstration G.C.S.G. participated in outside Dublin's G.P.O. to oppose the closure of a Gaeltacht school in County Kerry was baton-charged unprovoked, with activist Michael Davitt recalling, 'It was like we were in central Belfast with the way people were beaten off the streets'.[58] G.C.S.G.'s association with republicanism and civil rights increasingly hindered the organisation as the Troubles erupted, however, with nationalist ideology and civil rights discourses becoming more divisive in the south, a fact discussed in further detail below.[59] Fennell also became more active in the Dáil Chonnacht movement, decreasing his involvement with civil rights activism. The Dáil Chonnacht movement was influenced by Provisional Sinn Féin's Éire Nua programme, which advocated devolved regional assemblies for each of Ireland's four provinces within the context of a united Ireland.[60]

The increased attention the north's civil rights movement attracted after the 5 October 1968 march served to spark similar campaigns in other regions of the west, which, while not as significant as G.C.S.G., merit study as they further emphasise how the discourse of civil rights in Northern Ireland was taken up by activists in the west of Ireland. Shortly after the October 1968 march in Derry, the Sligo Civil Rights Association was formed by members of Sinn Féin, Labour and the Connolly Youth Movement, a body linked to the communist Irish Workers' Party. The association, which was concerned with both northern civil rights issues and local concerns surrounding 'housing conditions, unemployment, bad wages and conditions', claimed to the Sligo town-based *Sligo Champion* that its posters were torn down by Gardaí.[61] The authorities also clamped down on the association's fundraising activities. Justice Barry of Sligo district court stated that he felt two activists from the group brought before him, Declan Bree and Frank Kelly, were no different than 'itinerants going around begging without a licence'.[62] Members of the group were on the platform at a civil rights rally in Derry on 26 October, along with civil rights supporters from Mayo.[63] The Sligo group was linked to the Dublin Housing Action Campaign, a Sinn Féin and D.H.A.C. speaker telling a Collooney, County Sligo meeting that Fianna Fáil were the 'Unionist Party of the 26 Counties';[64] republicans compared the two parties as it reinforced their argument that both states were artificial partitionist creations.[65] Echoing Sinn Féin's split at the year's end, the association became increasingly disjointed due to left/right divisions, however. At an August 1969 rally, some in the crowd who called for the 'communist' starry plough to be removed from

[57] Hourigan, 'A comparison', pp 180–1.
[58] 'Splanc Dheireadh na Gaeltachta' (T.G.4, 2000).
[59] Hourigan, 'A comparison', p. 186.
[60] Ibid., p. 179.
[61] *Sligo Champion*, 25 Oct. 1968.
[62] Ibid., 11 July. 1969.
[63] Ibid., 25 Oct. 1968.
[64] Ibid., 1 Nov. 1968.
[65] Liam Cullinane, '"A happy blend"? Irish republicanism, political violence and social agitation, 1962–1969' in *Saothar: Journal of the Irish Labour History Society*, no. 35 (2010), pp 57–8.

the platform were heckled as 'Paisleyites' by the speakers, while an individual who attempted to burn a union flag was heckled with the assertion 'it's the sash you should be burning'.[66]

As Carrick-on-Shannon's *Leitrim Observer* reported, Labour Party and Sinn Féin activists also formed the Leitrim Civil Rights Association. The group protested against Leitrim's proposed division between two parliamentary constituencies, as well as government neglect and lack of employment in the county. It called for the introduction of publicly owned industries, used protest marches and acts of civil disobedience as tactics and was explicitly modelled after the northern civil rights campaign.[67] Veteran Leitrim republican John Joe McGirl told attendees at rallies at Mohill and Drumshanbo that they 'were in the same sorry plight as their oppressed brethren of Derry', who 'had proven to us all that civilian demonstrations had great power'.[68] Future Provisional Sinn Féin founders Ruairí Ó Brádaigh and McGirl spoke alongside Labour activists like Ballinamore's Con Gallogly, who declared that the I.R.A.'s 'gallant' 1956–62 campaign had been 'harassed and branded by the vested interests'.[69] A later Roscommon Civil Rights Association appears to have been largely aligned with the Provisionals and concerned with northern issues, with 100 activists protesting in Roscommon town in January 1973 at the imprisonment of Provisional Sinn Féin President Ruairí Ó Brádaigh.[70]

Civil rights campaigns also emerged in County Mayo due to the influence of the Northern Ireland civil rights movement. The county had a unique link with the northern movement, as Ivan Cooper, a prominent Derry N.I.C.R.A. member of Protestant background, had strong connections with the county. Cooper, a trained shirt-maker, had found it impossible to gain employment in mid-1960s Derry due to his political activism, and sought employment in Hughes's shirt factory in Westport. He was hired as a manager, with owner Pádraig Hughes assuring him 'I don't care what you are', assuaging Cooper's fears that his northern Protestant background would make it difficult to find work in the south.[71] Cooper's time in Westport was crucial to his political journey away from unionism towards support for civil rights and a united Ireland. After his election as a Stormont M.P., he wrote to Westport's *Mayo News* recalling that 'The two and a half years which I spent in Westport influenced my thinking more than any other period in my life', informing readers 'I will be doing my utmost via Parliament to relate my experiences to the people of the Republic'.[72] Cooper kept the links he had cultivated with Mayo alive throughout his time as an M.P. in the early 1970s. Later returning to Westport in November 1971, he warned against the belief that the south could insulate itself from the conflict.[73] Visiting Claremorris to thank locals for helping displaced northern Catholics in 1971, he advocated that the south's constitution be amended to better accommodate northern Protestants, and

[66] *Sligo Champion*, 29 Aug. 1969.
[67] *Leitrim Observer*, 14 Dec. 1968.
[68] Ibid., 28 Dec. 1968.
[69] Ibid., 15 Mar. 1969.
[70] *Roscommon Champion*, 2 Feb. 1973.
[71] *Connaught Telegraph*, 5 Jan. 2005.
[72] Ibid., 15 Mar. 1969.
[73] Ibid., 4 Nov. 1971.

again warned that 'civil war' in the north 'would not stop at Newry nor Derry, but would spill over all Ireland'.[74]

Inspired by the Northern Ireland civil rights movement, a number of civil rights groups were set up in the county. On Achill Island, an Achill Human Rights Committee was formed to campaign against perceived government neglect of the area. The group complained that Jack Lynch had ignored their call for a meeting with the government on local issues in Achill. It pointedly noted that he 'had since had time to call and preside at a cabinet meeting in order to discuss 6-county developments with members of the northern civil rights movement', revealing an interesting tension between the committee and northern activists.[75] An Erris Civil Rights campaign was also formed in the environs of the Rossport area of north Mayo. As in Connemara, the residual Irish-speaking presence in the community was an important part of the campaign, Pádraig Ó Sé, a local schoolteacher, noting that 'it is my conviction that the Irish language and the advancement of this area to the point of it being the Fíor Ghaeltacht is primarily dependent on the economic welfare of the area'. The campaign was prompted by deep frustration with government neglect of the area; the local roads had become so abysmal that the school bus service from Rossport to more isolated areas of the peninsula was under threat and the community was also facing the prospect of losing other basic amenities such as travelling shops. The group appears to have avoided holding marches, perhaps mindful of the Garda violence their Galway and Kerry contemporaries had faced in Dublin as well as the increasing opposition civil rights activists faced in Northern Ireland. Instead, the campaign focused on the non-payment of car tax, rates, and Land Commission rent.[76]

III

Student protest in the north, alongside student protest movements internationally during 1968, also served to radicalise University College Galway (U.C.G.) students. A writer in the student publication *Unity* noted in 1970 how, over the previous two years, 'new swearwords began to sully [a student's] vocabulary. Paris, Burntollet, Vietnam, Bogside, Chicago … U.C.G. was wrenched into the twentieth century'.[77] The student movement attracted U.C.G. interest immediately after 5 October 1968, with Liam Morris, president of U.C.G.'s Student Representative Council, stating that students there backed the marchers' cause fully as 'students in present day society have not only the privilege but indeed the responsibility to discover and cure the faults of their society and even if, where necessary, to attempt to change the structure of their society'.[78] A Political Discussion Society survey found that the north's civil rights movement was the global event which most 'stirred' U.C.G. students after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.[79] The university's Literary and Debating Society was also a forum for discussing northern issues. The South

[74] Ibid., 11 Nov. 1971.
[75] Ibid., 2 May. 1969.
[76] Ibid., 21 Nov. 1970.
[77] *Unity*, 15 Apr. 1970.
[78] *Connacht Tribune*, 11 Oct. 1968.
[79] *Unity*, 5 Dec. 1969.

Armagh M.P. Paddy O'Hanlon debated with Eamonn McCann, a crucial figure in the organisation of the 5 October 1968 march and a prominent northern leftist close to P.D., as well as a liberal unionist from Queen's, John Gillen, at a Literary and Debating Society event in U.C.G. in October 1969. Gillen claimed that N.I.C.R.A. was sectarian as it used I.R.A. stewards and allegedly ignored a British Army 'assault' on the Shankill Road. O'Hanlon criticised southerners for allegedly wanting a 'Catholic ascendancy' in Ireland; claiming they were 'brainwashed' on the north, he urged the audience to try and understand the 'Paisleyite' perspective.[80]

Unlike previous northern anti-partition movements which 'looked to the south for succour', P.D. was happy to excoriate the Dublin government and encourage radicalism in the twenty-six counties, in the hope that it would give them southern support and distance them from the Dublin government in the eyes of northern Protestants.[81] At the Union of Students in Ireland's (U.S.I.) 1969 Congress, held in Salthill, Galway, Allan McKelvey and Fred Taggart of P.D. burned both an order blocking a P.D. march through Belfast and Fianna Fáil's 'dictatorial and fascist' criminal justice bill, to delegate cheers. The U.S.I. claimed that the bill was modelled on the north's Public Order Act and asserted that it would allow unionists to dismiss Dublin's criticisms of the north's handling of civil rights marches as hypocritical.[82]

P.D. built links with U.C.G. leftists, a move which divided the university's student body in April 1969. When U.C.G.'s Social Action Movement rejected a plan to organise a protest march from Galway to Dublin, conceived to occur simultaneously with a P.D. march from Belfast to Dublin, the decision proved unpopular with many students. Much of its membership, including founding members Frank Flannery and John Jennings, resigned, and around 250 students subsequently founded the Western Civil Rights Movement at a meeting in U.C.G.'s Latin Hall 'aided and abetted by Bernadette Devlin and Eamonn McCann, who have had previous experience in matters of this kind on the other side of the border', as the *Connacht Tribune* reported. The group proceeded to organise the joint march with P.D. in order to highlight unemployment, poor housing, emigration, the decline of the Gaeltacht and discrimination against the Travelling community.[83] After a rally in Eyre Square, which was addressed by movement organisers and Michael D. Higgins, then a Labour Party activist and an unsuccessful candidate in the Galway West constituency in the 1969 general election, his first electoral effort,[84] a group of thirty marched to Dublin, holding open meetings in the towns of Athenry and Ballinasloe in County Galway.[85] Relations between the two groups soured during the marches, however, after P.D. activist Cyril Toman presented two books to a customs post on the border, J. P. Dunleavy's *The ginger man* and Edna O'Brien's *The girl with green eyes*. Toman's act was designed to protest against the south's censorship laws, though only the latter book had been banned.[86] The stunt antagonised the Galway marchers, and

[80] *Connacht Tribune*, 24 Oct. 1969; *Tuam Herald*, 1 Nov. 1969.
[81] Paul Arthur, *The People's Democracy, 1968–73* (Belfast, 1974), pp 80–1.
[82] *Connacht Sentinel*, 14 Jan. 1969.
[83] *Connacht Tribune*, 4 Apr. 1969.
[84] *Connacht Sentinel*, 8 Apr. 1969.
[85] *Irish Press*, 4 Apr. 1969.
[86] Arthur, *The People's Democracy*, pp 53–4.

Flannery, Jennings and two other activists refused to complete the march as a result, claiming that participants from the 'Defence of the West' group and the sole G.C.S.G. representative endorsed their decision. In a statement, they claimed that P.D. were 'apparently only interested in proving to the Protestants of Northern Ireland that they were non-sectarian' and had used the civil rights movement in the west of Ireland 'unscrupulously for their own ends'.[87] The remaining Galway marchers held a joint rally with P.D. and Dublin leftists which attracted 2,000, where they heard Eamonn McCann state that 'the most meaningful way in which the civil rights movement in the Six Counties can be supported is by the evocation of a similar movement here in the Republic'.[88] G.C.S.G. activists later claimed that, despite their friendly relationship with P.D., the group discouraged them from engaging seriously with the march as it wished to focus on its own issues.[89]

Reaction to the march from the provincial press in the west of Ireland was derisory. The *Tuam Herald*, a paper whose readership was largely drawn from the north Galway town, mocked it as the 'rather puerile posturings by the spoiled children of the affluent society', asserting that it 'created an intellectual partition. If the boys (and the girls) of the north's P.D. have nothing more serious to concern them than the banning or unbanning of Edna O'Brien's literary simperings ... then we suggest they have little to offer here'. The paper also claimed that the marchers 'know as little about what they term the south as we know about them', and expressed concern that it damaged 'serious' civil rights activists by exposing the cause to ridicule.[90] While the *Sligo Champion* claimed it did not want to 'stir anything comparable to the post-World War II McCarthyism in America', it shared the *Tuam Herald*'s stance, warning that 'socialists, even anarchists' had participated in the march, and that P.D. were a 'base menace'.[91] But its position would be challenged, with Leo Kemmit, a Sligo-born socialist in England, asserting in a letter that 'forcing political groups underground' would only postpone 'Irish freedom'.[92] A pseudonymous letter-writer to the *Connacht Tribune* asked what P.D. were 'really after in coming down here to Galway … I go with them in a lot of defined aims but not into vague paths shrouded in cloudy words'.[93]

P.D. later held a seventy-strong cross-border march between the villages of Kinlough, County Leitrim and Beleek, County Fermanagh to highlight unemployment in the border region, with young members of both Official and Provisional Sinn Féin participating. The march passed without incident but received comparatively little media attention.[94] P.D. also held a public meeting with Sligo's Connolly Youth Movement branch.[95] The group voted to set up a Galway branch but the resolution was never implemented, though links with U.C.G. leftists would continue. Galway leftists picketed Corrib Fisheries Ltd simultaneously alongside a P.D. picket of the Toome Eel

[87] *Irish Independent*, 8 Apr. 1969.
[88] 'Splanc Dheireadh na Gaeltachta' (T.G.4, 2000).
[89] Hourigan, 'A comparison', p. 179.
[90] *Tuam Herald*, 12 Apr. 1969.
[91] *Sligo Champion*, 11 Apr. 1969.
[92] Ibid., 23 May. 1969.
[93] *Connacht Tribune*, 4 Apr. 1969.
[94] Arthur, *The People's Democracy*, p. 83.
[95] Ibid., p. 73.

Company in County Antrim, as the two companies shared a director. The conditions of Lough Neagh fishermen were a key focus of P.D. agitation.[96] Michael D. Higgins, in his capacity as a member of the U.C.G. Labour Party, visited Derry to meet with Devlin and McCann in August 1969,[97] and the branch sold P.D. Christmas cards to fundraise for the dependants of P.D. internees in late 1971.[98] Labour's policy on Northern Ireland was later cited as one of several reasons which prompted the resignation of thirty-five members from the branch, some of whom set up a branch of the Socialist Workers' Movement in Galway.[99]

IV

The northern civil rights movement also had a strong impact on the Travelling community in the west. When 'steel helmeted soldiers' were called to Athlone's St. Mel's Terrace in 1971, near the Roscommon border, the situation was seen by some as 'a sinister overspill from the northern ghetto'. Troops were called in at the request of the Gardaí after an initial Garda raid on the estate was repelled by Traveller youths, prompting unrest; 300 settled locals armed with cudgels 'played an active part in quelling the riots'. In an explicit reference to civil rights movements internationally, young Travellers sang 'we shall overcome', an anthem of the African-American civil rights movement in the United States which had been appropriated by the Northern Ireland civil rights movement. They also constructed a makeshift barricade to keep police and the anti-Traveller crowd out, showing, in the *Sunday Independent*'s view, that 'the techniques of Belfast and Derry [had] been studied and absorbed' by the youth.[100]

Elsewhere in the west of Ireland, events in the north helped prompt the formation of the Galway Itinerant Settlement Committee, a group which sought to ensure Travellers were settled into broader society. Galway City Council's discriminatory attitude toward Travellers grew worse in the 1960s, as it attempted to force the community to camp outside city boundaries, while numerous applications from Traveller families for housing were left outstanding.[101] The city became notorious for anti-Traveller vigilante violence, with the term 'Rahoonery' becoming a byword for opposition to Traveller housing across Ireland, as the Rahoon area of the city saw some particularly ugly incidents.[102] Comparisons were drawn between the treatment of Catholics in the north and the treatment of Travellers in Galway alongside international examples of racial intolerance of the era, with an Ennis-based Traveller activist commenting of anti-Traveller incidents in Rahoon that 'the Irishman decries segregation in Alabama, Rhodesia and the north, but condones them at home',[103] while a letter writer to the *Tribune* commented

[96] Ibid., p. 91.
[97] *Connacht Tribune*, 22 Aug. 1969.
[98] *Unity*, 14 Dec. 1971.
[99] *Connacht Sentinel*, 1 Feb. 1972.
[100] *Sunday Independent*, 19 Dec. 1971.
[101] Helleiner, *Irish Travellers*, pp 81–3.
[102] Aoife Bhreatnach, *Becoming conspicuous: Irish Travellers, society and the state, 1922–1970* (Dublin, 2006), p. 141.
[103] *Irish Press*, 30 Oct. 1968.

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on the city council's failure to provide housing to Travellers: 'let us hope that what happened in Derry will not happen here'.[104] An attack by a hurley-wielding mob on a group of Rahoon Travellers in August 1969 dominated newspaper headlines locally alongside the Battle of the Bogside, which occurred around the same time. Pro-Traveller activists drew comparisons between the attack and the northern unrest, with Paul O'Donovan of the committee stating that it was the 'Bogside all over again, as a mob attacked defenceless people, while the police stood by'.[105] Seán Ó Cionnaith accused the Gardaí of being 'as guilty of crime against the people as the obnoxious sectarian Special Constabulary of the Six Counties' for their failure to protect the Travellers.[106]

While the *Tribune* condemned the assault on the Traveller camp, 'if not for their own sake then for the sake of the children', it sought to avoid comparisons with the civil rights movement in Northern Ireland and criticised O'Donovan's statement, stating in an editorial: 'This was not the case, as in Derry, of a harmless unoffending people being attacked. The itinerants bring filth wherever they go; they bring fear to many people and they cause damage to the property of others.'[107] The editorial was typical of the *Tribune*'s broader stance towards Travellers in the 1960s, which involved issuing pleas of 'sympathy' that nonetheless echoed 'decades of anti-Traveller discourse'.[108] Victor Bewley, a Dublin pro-Traveller activist, criticised the *Tribune*'s sister paper, the *Connacht Sentinel*, for reporting prominently on local reaction to the Battle of the Bogside while initially ignoring the Rahoon assault.[109] Other newspapers contained more forthright criticism of the attack. Columnist Tom Duddy noted in the *Tuam Herald* that while Galwegians were eager to help displaced northern Catholics, 'and some of us were even prepared to go in fighting', there was a reluctance to acknowledge discrimination towards the Travelling community locally.[110] A *Roscommon Herald* editorial made the same point: 'We were prepared to go in to Derry with our troops to save the people of the Bogside; we are not able to save a bunch of itinerants in Galway.'[111] Galway Corporation was criticised by Bewley when it fundraised for northern Catholics; referring to the Rahoon violence, he argued it should first get its own house in order and focus on 'Galway people living in a state of fear'.[112]

Later intimidation of Annie Furey, a Traveller who moved to Shantalla in 1970, attracted the attention of Britain's *Observer* and *Guardian* newspapers, which noted her assertion that the intolerance of the Shantalla locals was worse than that of northern Protestants toward northern Catholics,[113] and that local republicans offered her 'protection' from intimidation.[114] The issue

[104] *Connacht Tribune*, 7 Feb. 1969.
[105] *Connacht Sentinel*, 26 Aug. 1969.
[106] *Tuam Herald*, 6 Sept. 1969.
[107] *Connacht Tribune*, 5 Sept. 1969.
[108] Helleiner, *Irish Travellers*, pp 104–5.
[109] *Connacht Tribune*, 5 Sept. 1969.
[110] *Tuam Herald*, 13 Sept. 1969.
[111] *Roscommon Herald*, 12 Sept. 1969.
[112] *Irish Press*, 30 Aug. 1969.
[113] *The Observer*, 6 Sept. 1970.
[114] *The Guardian*, 8 Sept. 1970.

was raised in the Northern Irish parliament during a debate on Traveller housing, when Paddy O'Hanlon noted that the incident was indicative of the intolerance which Travellers faced: 'A southern newspaper said that if this incident had happened in the Shankill then newspapers in the south would have made the welkin ring with protests of discrimination. Yet many newspapers in the south also passed the buck in regards to it because if affected society in the Republic'.[115] Conversely, some unionists used the attacks in Galway to justify their own opposition to the granting of Traveller housing. William Kirk, a member of Omagh Rural Council, noted in a debate on the issue in December 1970 that 'there was a case in Galway where a gipsy family was housed and the local people did not want it'.[116] In contrast, the incident was also used by other unionists to paint southerners as intolerant, spokesman Sammy Smyth of the loyalist paramilitary Ulster Defence Association (with no trace of irony) using 'Rahoonery' to dismiss the south as a 'socially sick society' at a Galway conference in 1974. He erroneously claimed that Annie Furey had been 'burned out' of her home.[117] Tensions between Traveller and settled communities remained an enduring issue in Galway, as a 1986 attack on a Traveller encampment in the city highlighted.[118]

V

The radicalisation which the north's politics engendered in people in the west of Ireland was at its most acute during the period of the long 1968. The apex was the immediate aftermath of the Bloody Sunday atrocity in Derry, where thirteen unarmed marchers at a N.I.C.R.A. rally were killed after members of the Parachute Regiment opened fire. Another marcher would later die in hospital. The killings caused furore across the Republic, prompting widespread protest marches amidst outbursts of nationalist emotion. Numerous rallies attracting thousands of people occurred in cities, towns and villages, in the west of Ireland as across the country. There was also much criticism of the killings on a local government level, much of it displaying an ambiguous attitude towards the violence of the I.R.A. Indicative is the comment of Fianna Fáil T.D. Ray MacSharry, a member of Sligo Borough Council, stating that 'If there are so many people in [the north] who do not want to be part of the south, they should make up their minds. We do not want to bomb them into submission, but if we have to bomb them out, we will do so'. Similar comments were made by others on the council,[119] as well as local government figures elsewhere in Connacht and the south.[120] After Bloody Sunday, the *Sligo Champion* felt that public opinion in the south was 'in the mood for violence ... Moderate opinion has suffered a crippling blow. There is a growing feeling that the only language Britain understands is through a gun

[115] *Hansard N.I. (Commons)*, lxxvii, 1443 (19 Nov. 1970).
[116] *Ulster Herald*, 12 Dec. 1970.
[117] *Connacht Tribune*, 1 Nov. 1974.
[118] Helleiner, *Irish Travellers*, p. 83.
[119] *Sligo Champion*, 4 Feb. 1972.
[120] *Leitrim Observer*, 5 Feb. 1972; Hanley, '"But then they started all this killing"', p. 443.

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barrel ... If the government is to avoid a state of anarchy, the fury of its people will have to be placated in some way through political action'.[121]

However, this moment was fleeting. As Ivan Cooper later recalled, the event was crucial in denting the momentum of the civil rights movement and accelerating recent violence: 'I believe that the thing that destroyed the Civil Rights movement was Bloody Sunday, people were coming up to me and saying "fuck your non-violence Cooper, we're now backing the gun", and they did'.[122] Hanley argues that the increasing violence of the Provisional I.R.A.'s campaign was vital in causing southerners to recoil from the northern conflict, noting that 'By mid-1972, others were discerning a change in mood. Fears that the violence was "coming down here" was prevalent'.[123] Eamonn McCann had earlier reached the same conclusion, observing that Bloody Sunday's biggest impact on the south was to 'reconcile it to partition'.[124] Indicative is the response of one letter-writer to the *Connacht Tribune* in July 1972. Referring to the Provisional I.R.A.'s notorious Bloody Friday series of bombings across Belfast, which killed nine people earlier in the same month, the author commented: 'People generally are not so interested in the deaths of these people as they were of the Derry people. Perhaps the day of mourning was more to show disgust at the British Army than to remember the dead people?'[125] Loyalist attacks in the twenty-six counties, such as the 1976 Ulster Freedom Fighters' bombing of a hotel in Salthill, Galway city, also caused southerners to recoil. Although the bombing's impact – a swift evacuation meant there were no injuries – was comparatively trivial when contrasted with the Ulster Volunteer Force's horrifying bombings of Dublin and Monaghan two years before, which caused numerous fatalities and injuries, it nonetheless caused considerable alarm on a local level. The *Galway Advertiser*, an increasingly prominent local newspaper since its founding in 1970, editorialised alarmingly that 'Galway is vulnerable and further attacks cannot be ruled out,' capturing local fears.[126]

To be sure, some southerners remained consistently engaged with northern events, and the 1980–1 hunger strikes in particular prompted a great deal of nationalist sentiment and popular mobilisation, including in the west of Ireland, with hunger striker Joe McDonnell only narrowly failing to win a seat in the Sligo–Leitrim constituency in 1981.[127] Sligo had a particularly diverse and active group of anti-H-Block activists, with councillor Declan Bree of the Sligo/Leitrim Independent Socialist Organisation, a Sligo Civil Rights Association veteran, being an important figure in this regard.[128] One authoritative recent study claims that, in the north, the 'Smash H-Block' protests were 'arguably larger than the civil rights movement of the 1960s'.[129] However, despite their wide basis, these protests were divisive in ways the civil

[121] *Sligo Champion*, 4 Feb. 1972.
[122] Reynolds, *Sous les pavés*, p. 170.
[123] Hanley, '"The south is in the mood for violence"', p. 44.
[124] Eamonn McCann, *War and peace in Northern Ireland* (Dublin, 1998), p. 209.
[125] *Connacht Tribune*, 28 July 1972.
[126] *Galway Advertiser*, 15 July 1976.
[127] *Sligo Champion*, 19 July 1981.
[128] Ibid.
[129] F. Stuart Ross, *Smashing H-Block, the rise and fall of the popular campaign against criminalisation, 1976–1982* (Liverpool, 2011), p. 3.

rights demonstrations a decade before were not, and their long-term impact was dulled as a result.

Writing twenty-five years after the events of 5 October 1968, in 1993, Eamonn McCann observed that northern civil rights figures such Bernadette McAliskey and himself were now much more marginal in the south, and there was a 'widening distance between the concerns of northerners and the consciousness of the south', in contrast to the heyday of the civil rights movement. He attributed the perceived apathy towards northern nationalists on the part of southern working class people to the fact that important social movements in the south – such as the upsurge of pro-choice activism in the wake of the X-Case, and the movement for Travellers' rights – could not be obviously related to injustice in Northern Ireland.[130] Gerry Adams's statement in 1983 that 'you can't get support in Ballymun because of doors being kicked in by the Brits in Ballymurphy' equally applied to Ballinasloe and Belmullet.[131] However, political changes in Northern Ireland, amidst the international tumult of the late 1960s, were crucial in exporting a civil rights discourse to the west of Ireland which had a lasting effect on the region, giving communities a model of political protest to follow. These groups connected the alienation northern nationalists felt from Stormont to the alienation impoverished and marginalised communities in the west felt from the centralised government in Dublin, thus being the inverse of McCann's and Adams's later observations. While an overly metropolitan view of the history of Irish politics post-1922 has led to the connections between these movements not receiving the attention they merit, this article had illustrated that, for activists in the west of Ireland, Northern Ireland's own 1968 moment was a crucial part of their political formation.

[130] Eamonn McCann, *War and an Irish town* (3rd ed., London, 1993), pp 3–4.
[131] Hanley, '"But then they started all this killing"', p. 454.

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