

**IRISH HISTORY**

# 25

**CHRONOLOGICAL AWARENESS**

- 1958 First Programme for Economic Expansion published
- 1960 AD
- 1961 AD RTÉ's first TV broadcast on New Years' Eve
- 1962 AD
- 1963 AD Terence O'Neill became Prime Minister of Northern Ireland  
President Kennedy visits Ireland
- 1964 AD
- 1965 AD
- 1966 AD 50th Anniversary of 1916 Rising  
Ulster Volunteer Force formed
- 1967 AD Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) formed  
Free secondary education in Republic of Ireland introduced
- 1968 AD RUC stop Civil Rights march in Derry
- 1969 AD Terence O'Neill resigned as PM of Northern Ireland  
Battle of the Bogside in Londonderry (Derry)  
British troops sent to Northern Ireland
- 1970 AD

**THE 1960S**  
*– An Important Decade in Irish History*

LO: 2.12  
The Nature of History: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9, 1.10, 1.11  
CBA1  
CBA2

**You will learn to ...**

- Debate the idea of the 1960s as an important decade in Irish history
- Examine the role of relevant personalities, issues and events
- Explore the Nature of History

**KEY WORDS**

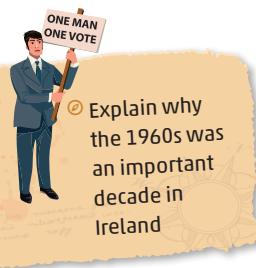
- Economic change
- Social change
- Unemployment
- Modernising
- Discrimination
- Emigration
- Civil rights
- North-south relations

**Why was the 1960s an Important Decade in Ireland?**

The 1960s was a very important decade in Ireland. There were many key events, personalities and issues, which shaped the decade.

ONE MAN ONE VOTE

393



Explain why the 1960s was an important decade in Ireland



Debate the importance of economic changes in Ireland in the 1960s

The 1960s in Ireland were characterised by certain important issues:

- The Republic of Ireland had experienced serious **unemployment** and **emigration** during the 1950s, which contrasted with the prosperity of Europe and Britain. New **economic policies** were brought in to solve these problems.
- Ireland began to open a window to the wider world as prosperity increased during the 1960s. The economic changes led to important **changes in society**.
- Northern Ireland was ruled the same way it had been since 1920, with a unionist majority. Better education for Catholics and the example of the civil rights campaigns in America led to a **civil rights campaign** in Northern Ireland.

## What Important Changes Occurred in Economic Policy in the 1960s?

### Introduction – the 1950s

There was **high unemployment** and **high emigration** in Ireland in the 1950s and the population fell. Government policy was based on protecting home industry by putting taxes on imports (protectionism). Emigration averaged 40,000 a year in that decade, workers' income fell and there were fewer people working. Changes were needed in the way the country was run.



Unemployment march in Dublin in the 1950s

Q

1. Why is this considered a **secondary source**?
2. What are the **strengths** and **weaknesses** of secondary sources?
3. What would the returning immigrant recognise after 30 years?
4. What was 'as common as ever'?
5. Give **one fact** and **one opinion** from this extract. Explain your answers by referring to evidence in the source.

### Q Source

An immigrant returning to the Republic of Ireland in **the late fifties** after thirty years abroad would have had few recognition problems. The country had no television station, although the few homes on the east coast who could afford TV sets picked up programmes from the British stations. Shopping was still the homely experience it always had been, for there were no supermarkets or shopping centres. If he could afford to buy a car – which most people who remained in Ireland could not – the state would not oblige him to undergo any test of his driving proficiency. The ferocious literary and film censorship was as vigilant as it had been when he left. Those most conservative of Irish institutions, the churches, were very much as they had been in 1930 ... Late marriages, large families and high rates of emigration were as common as ever.

*(Fergal Tobin, *The Best of Decades, Ireland in the Nineteen Sixties*, Gill and Co., Dublin, 198)*

## The Republic of Ireland

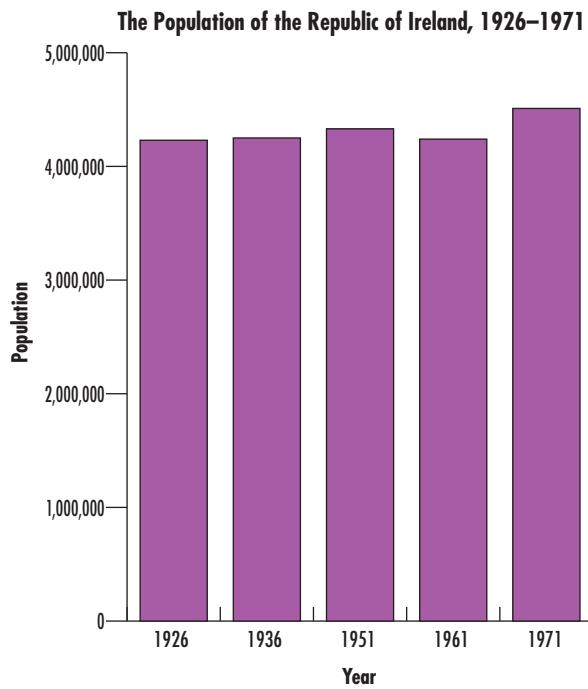
Seán Lemass became Taoiseach in 1959, and he promoted a new economic policy. This was called the **First Programme for Economic Expansion**.

He abolished the old policy of protection because it had failed and instead:

- Encouraged exports
- Gave tax concessions and grants to attract foreign industry to set up factories in Ireland.

This brought British and American companies to Ireland. Employment rose and emigration slowed down. Living standards also rose, as people were better off. The population began to increase from 1961 onwards.

There were other programmes for economic expansion during the 1960s, but these were not as successful. However, the economic changes that occurred in 1960s Ireland were the **basis** for future progress in the country.



## Important changes in education

The system of education also changed. School courses were changed and improved. New schools were built and older ones were refurbished. The Minister for Education, Donogh O'Malley, brought in a scheme for free **secondary education** and free transport, which was introduced in 1967. The first community and comprehensive schools were also built. These combined the academic subjects of the secondary school with the practical subjects of the vocational school. Numbers going to secondary school increased rapidly.

*At the time, about a third – or 17,000 children – who finished primary school were dropping out of education; at 15 years of age fewer than 50 per cent were still in full-time education. By 16, only 36 per cent were still at school.*

*Within a decade of the policy change, participation rates in second-level had doubled.*

*Today, Ireland has one of the highest rates of second-level completion in the EU, with more than 90 per cent of the population completing the Leaving Cert.*

(*The Irish Times*, 14 February 2017)



# Analysing Sources



1. Is Source 1 a **primary** or a **secondary** source?
2. What is meant by an 'era of change'?
3. From your reading of this chapter and the previous chapter, do you agree with the statement?
4. According to this source, what was 'the basic fault in our present educational structure'?
5. What does Donogh O'Malley propose to do to tackle the situation?

EVIDENCE AND SOURCES

NUMERACY

## Q Source 1

What of the future? We are, it must be remembered constantly, living through an era of change. Many of the former assumptions on which we based our lives are being questioned. The world of today and tomorrow would give scant attention to the uneducated and those lacking any qualification.

We will be judged by future generations on what we did for the children of our time. ... There was no difficulty in picking out the basic fault in our present educational structure – and that was the fact that many families could not afford to pay even part of the cost of education for their children. ... Every year some 17,000 of our children who finish their primary school course do not receive any further education. ... I believe that this is a situation which must be tackled with all speed and determination. ... I propose therefore, from the coming school year, beginning in September of next year, to introduce a scheme whereby, up to the completion of the Intermediate Certificate course, the opportunity for free post-primary education will be available to all families.

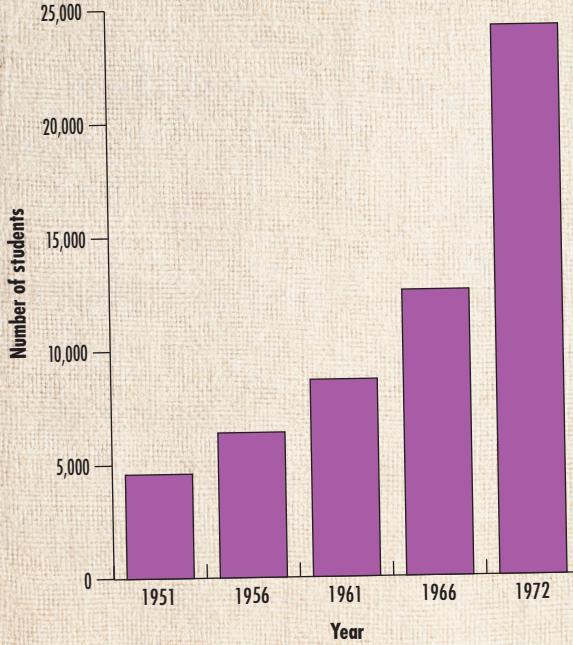
**(Speech by Donogh O'Malley, Minister of Education, *The Irish Times*, 12 September 1966)**



1. What was the **increase** in the numbers of students sitting the Leaving Cert. exam between each of the following: (a) 1951 and 1956 (b) 1956 and 1961 (c) 1961 and 1966 (d) 1966 and 1972?
2. Which time period had the **largest** increase?
3. Based on Source 1, what **reason(s)** would you suggest for the largest change in numbers?
4. How do the changes in school numbers between (a) 1951 and 1961 (b) 1961 and 1972 **compare** with the changes in overall population above?
5. What do you think is the connection between education and economic growth in the country?
6. How do your answers to (4) and (5) help you **understand** the increase in student numbers?
7. Is the graph a **primary** or a **secondary** source?

## Q Source 2

**Number of Students Taking the Leaving Certificate, 1951–72**





## SEÁN LEMASS – PROFILE

- Involved in 1916 Rising, War of Independence and Civil War
- Minister for Industry and Commerce in 1930s
- Minister for Supplies during World War II
- Introduced the **First Programme for Economic Expansion** – very successful
- Elected Taoiseach when Eamon de Valera got elected as President of Ireland
- Introduced the Second Programme for Economic Expansion but this was not as successful
- Met Terence O'Neill, Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, on two occasions
- He resigned as Taoiseach in 1966



## What Important Social Changes Occurred?

The 1960s were the 'Swinging Sixties' in contrast to the depressed fifties.

People were **better off** in Ireland in the 1960s. There were many changes in the way people lived. The first shopping centres were built. These encouraged weekly rather than daily shopping, and they undermined the local grocery shop. More tourists came to the country, and more Irish people holidayed abroad, and these changes **opened up the country** to the wider world.

The Catholic Church brought in many reforms after Vatican II, the major church council (see p. 381). The Latin Mass was changed to the **vernacular** (English or Irish), the priest faced the people, there was greater **lay participation** in church services, folk masses were introduced and there were better relations with other religions (ecumenism).



The changes to the Mass in the Catholic Church – old rites (right) and new rites (left)



Debate the importance of social changes in Ireland in the 1960s

**Teilifís Éireann** (later RTÉ) was set up and television brought in new ideas to the country (1961). In programmes like *The Late Late Show* and *7 Days* many topics in Irish society were opened up for discussion and investigation. '*The critical achievement of Irish television in the 1960s [was that it] forced us to look at ourselves new.*' (Tobin)

When John F. Kennedy, President of the United States, came to Ireland in 1963, he said:

*'You have modernised your economy, harnessed your rivers, diversified your industry, liberalised your trade, electrified your farms, accelerated your rate of growth and improved the living standards of your people.'*



Irish racehorse Arkle, winner of three consecutive Cheltenham Gold Cups from 1964 to 1966



Gay Byrne presenting *The Late Late Show*

President Kennedy's visit to Ireland – meeting his relations in Wexford



### DID YOU KNOW?

1966 was the 50th anniversary of the 1916 Rising. In advance of the celebration, a group of IRA men blew up the Nelson Monument in the centre of O'Connell Street, Dublin.

# What Important Changes Occurred in Entertainment in the 1960s in Ireland?

## Cinema and television

Cinema continued to be popular up to the 1960s, when television led to its decline. This was one of the consequences of the setting up of RTÉ. Sports programmes and soap operas attracted audiences, as did programmes such as *The Late Late Show*, on which controversial topics were discussed. It was easier and cheaper to stay at home watching television rather than going to the cinema.

## Traditional music

There was a boom in Irish traditional music in the 1960s, which became popular with a new generation. Seán Ó Riada and his Ceoltóirí Cualainn modernised the sound of Irish traditional music. Ó Riada wrote the score for *Mise Éire* (1959), a documentary on the 1916 Rising and its aftermath, which was played by an orchestra. As part of the revival of Irish music, there was also a **ballad boom**. Here groups such as The Dubliners and the Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem brought Irish folk songs to a wider audience. The continuing popularity of Irish traditional music **owes much to changes made in the 1960s**.



Seán Ó Riada contributed to a revival of Irish traditional music



The Dubliners popularised many Irish folk songs



The 1960s was also the showband era, where Irish showbands played to huge audiences in dance halls across the country



# What Changes made the 1960s Important in Northern Ireland?

A new Prime Minister, Terence O'Neill, took over in Northern Ireland in 1963. The North's traditional industries – shipbuilding, aircraft manufacture and linen – were in serious decline. He said his main goals were '*to make Northern Ireland economically stronger and prosperous ... and to build bridges between the two traditions in our community.*'

In **industry**, the O'Neill government attracted new industries to the North – Ford, Goodyear and Imperial Chemicals. These industries were mostly located in the Protestant, eastern part of Ulster.

O'Neill also tried to improve **relations with Catholics**. He took over from a Prime Minister before him, Lord Brookeborough, who '*never crossed the border (with the South), never visited a Catholic school, and never received or sought a civic reception from a Catholic town.*'

- In contrast, O'Neill met the Catholic Cardinal Conway, Archbishop of Armagh
- He visited **Catholic schools**.

However, one of his decisions was to build a **new university** in Coleraine, a mainly Protestant town, rather than Derry/Londonderry, a mainly Catholic city.



## PROFILE – TERENCE O’NEILL

- Became Prime Minister of Northern Ireland in 1963
- Attracted foreign industry to Northern Ireland
- Worked to improve relations with Catholics/nationalists
- Met Taoiseach Seán Lemass (1965) and Jack Lynch (1967)
- Opposed by extreme unionists, led by Rev. Ian Paisley
- Brought in some reforms to Northern Ireland
- Resigned as Prime Minister in 1969



## Why were the 1960s important for North-South relations?

There were also changes in the South, where Lemass changed government policy in relation to Northern Ireland. He believed that the best way to end the partition between the North and the South was to make Southern Ireland more prosperous. He met Terence O'Neill, Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, in Belfast and in Dublin in 1965. These were the first official meetings between the leaders of the two states since partition in 1920. However, by the end of the 1960s relations had worsened between North and South as the Troubles began (see Ch. 26).

## Why were the 1960s important for relations between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland?

Tensions began to grow in Northern Ireland. More extreme unionists were worried about O'Neill's efforts to improve relations with Catholics. The **Ulster Volunteer Force** (UVF) was formed in 1966, and a number of Catholics were killed. Rev. Ian Paisley, leader of the Free Presbyterian Church, was one of those very critical of O'Neill's efforts to improve relations with Catholics.

Catholics were also disappointed with O'Neill – they thought he should be bringing in more reforms. Catholics were still discriminated against in several areas.

### Discrimination against Catholics in Northern Ireland

- The property qualification for voting in local elections meant that only property owners could vote – this favoured Protestants
- There was **gerrymandering** in constituencies so that unionists controlled councils in nationalist majority areas
- The allocation of houses by local councils favoured Protestants
- The allocation of jobs in the civil service and local councils favoured Protestants

### The importance of Civil Rights

The disappointment of Catholics and nationalists led to the formation of the **Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association** (NICRA) in 1967. This was inspired by the civil rights movement in America. NICRA made the following demands:

- 'One man, one vote' in local elections
- An end to gerrymandering
- An end to discrimination in jobs and housing.

There were **marches** and **rioting** in Derry and Belfast. In October 1968, a civil rights march in Derry was stopped by the RUC. The television cameras captured the brutal treatment of its leaders by the police. This shocked people in the rest of Ireland and Britain.

The British government forced O'Neill and his government to bring in **reforms** in housing and local elections. However, this did not stop the demonstrations. O'Neill had to face opposition from extreme unionists, led by Ian Paisley, who demanded that he should not give in to Catholics. O'Neill was forced to **resign** in 1969 when he lost the support of his own party. The conflicts between nationalists and unionists got more serious, and developed into the **Troubles** from the end of 1969 onwards (see p. 403).

## ► Preparing for CBA1

**A project related to an aspect of the history of your locality or place (or personal/family history)**

### LOCAL PROJECTS FROM 1960S IRELAND

- Development of industry in the 1960s in your locality
- What your local newspaper said about developments in the 1960s in Ireland
- Changes in your local Catholic Church
- Interviews with local people concerning changes in the 1960s
- President Kennedy's visit to your locality
- Changes to local post-primary schools

Your  
locality can  
include your  
county

## ► Preparing for CBA2

**A project on the life and experience of a person of historical interest**

### PERSONS OF HISTORICAL INTEREST IN IRELAND OF THE 1960S

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Seán Lemass</li> <li>● Declan Costello</li> <li>● Michael O'Hehir</li> <li>● Edna O'Brien</li> <li>● Seán Ó Riada</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● T. K. Whitaker</li> <li>● Cardinal Conway</li> <li>● Feargal Quinn</li> <li>● Frances Condell</li> <li>● Bridie Gallagher</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Archbishop McQuaid</li> <li>● Gay Byrne</li> <li>● Mick O'Connell</li> <li>● Monica Sheridan</li> <li>● Maureen Potter</li> </ul> |
|---|---|--|

HISTORICAL  
INVESTIGATION

### Focus Task



- Investigate the RTÉ Archives on the 1960s. What is your impression of the 1960s from a selection of the stories in the RTÉ Archives?

