

SPEECH OF MRS. MOIRA MARTIN
CO-TREASURER/LONDON BRANCH OF THE N.I.C.R.A.

Irishmen, Irishwomen, friends of the Civil Rights movement. It is a great pleasure and privilege to be here addressing this first National Conference of the N.A.I.J. I bring greetings from the London Region of the N.I.C.R.A.

It is indeed comforting to us and to the people of the six counties of Northeast Ireland to feel the compassion and friendship extended to us by our compatriots who have helped to make this nation great and to feel that they are showing solidarity with us in this final chapter of our unhappy history.

The London Region of the N.I.C.R.A. came into being early this year when a group of people of diverse political thought got together to model themselves on the movement in Northern Ireland and to try to achieve the same unity of thought and purpose and to project the image of a broadly based movement which would appeal to all sections of the Irish Community living in Britain.

There was one very necessary requirement for membership and that was that each member should totally submerge his or her political identity and work under the guidance of the N.I.C.R.A. in Belfast and be completely subordinate to it. It has been said that the divisions in Irish life are accentuated in London and even more deeply accentuated in the U.S. In London this certainly was an aspect that could have stunted our growth at the outset. Right-wing Republicans, Connolly Socialists, G.A.A. Gaelic Leagues sitting round the same table -- impossible -- and yet today, we can boast of and organization unrivalled among Irish societies in Britain.

We preach no political ideology, right, left or center. Our demands are those of the Civil Rights movement. Our objects are: 1. to publicize the aims and purposes of the National Irish Civil Rights Association and to give them complete support. 2. to give the public in London an opportunity to voice their condemnation of the happenings in Northern Ireland and to bring pressure to bear on the government at Westminster towards the enjoyment of Civil Rights by all the people of Northern Ireland.

Most of us exiles who join the Civil Rights movement do so because we see in the establishment of a just society in Northern Ireland a stepping stone to that ideal which so many of us hold dear -- the eventual reunification of our country. We are aware however of the divisive elements at work anxious to frustrate the progress of the Civil Rights movement. We quickly became aware that the reverberation of the divisions outside Ireland were as great a threat to the movement as were our traditional enemies. Instead of engaging in squabbles with the left, we recognized the validity of their contribution and instead of opting out and bringing disrepute to the movement by having it labelled with a Socialist or Republican or Tory tag we ensured that the organization remained broad.

My appeal to you all here today, and I want each of you to take this message back to your respective organizations, that the movement is greater than the individual. Let us sink our differences, let us work together, let us show our solidarity with our compatriots, let us say loudly and often that we seek only the reconciliation of the Irish Protestants and Irish Catholics in the six Northeast counties of Ireland and the establishment of a just society in that unhappy place called Northern Ireland.