

Protestants & the civil rights movement

A Protestant housewife, speaking in 1969.

It was all 'the Catholics this and the Catholics that', (with them) living in poverty and us lording it over them. People looked around and said, 'What, are they talking about - us? With the damp running down the walls and our houses not fit to live in.'

Ian Paisley speaking in January 1969.

The civil rights people don't believe in civil rights at all, they're just a bunch of republican rebels, that's what they are. Let's be very clear about this, they have no time for law and order, they have no time for this country and they mean to destroy this country, and we mean to see that this country will not be destroyed.

Speaking in the early 1990s, Edna Hanson, a resident of a housing estate in a Protestant area of Belfast, looks back at the Troubles and explains to an interviewer what she believes in and why she continues to support Ian Paisley.

I'm telling you exactly how I feel, and I'm not ashamed to do so: I'm for the Royal Family and the Union Jack, I'm a true Orange Loyalist, I always have been and I'm not ashamed of it.

All my uncles were in the war, fighting for the British, and so was my father. My grandparents too, they were upright religious people who wanted to lead good Christian lives. I was brought up to believe that the Twelfth of July was the greatest day in our calendar, when we always paraded with bands and flags and drums and Union Jacks, to celebrate king Billy's defeat of king James at the battle of the Boyne. He made sure for ever afterwards that we were not going to be under Catholic domination, so just tell me, what is wrong with that? The proudest day in our history, and yet now when we want to celebrate it by having parades and showing how proud of it we are, people say we're being provocative.

I love Mr Paisley because he stands up for all us Protestant people and our rights. He says to the British Government what needs to be said, he's not frightened of them and he speaks for all ordinary working-class people like me. He says, and he's right, that Catholics are always trying to interfere in Ulster affairs, and it needs to be said.. .

Oh yes, if necessary we'll sacrifice our lives. And others'? Well, what do you think? Don't misjudge the heart of Ulster men and women: we can't be frightened and we won't give in.

Witness to History. The Troubles in Northern Ireland by Tony Allan, Heinemann, 0-43227-067-3, p. 29

In July 1970 Ian Paisley addresses fellow unionists after a parade celebrating the Protestant victory at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, almost three centuries earlier. The Union Jack waves beside him.

