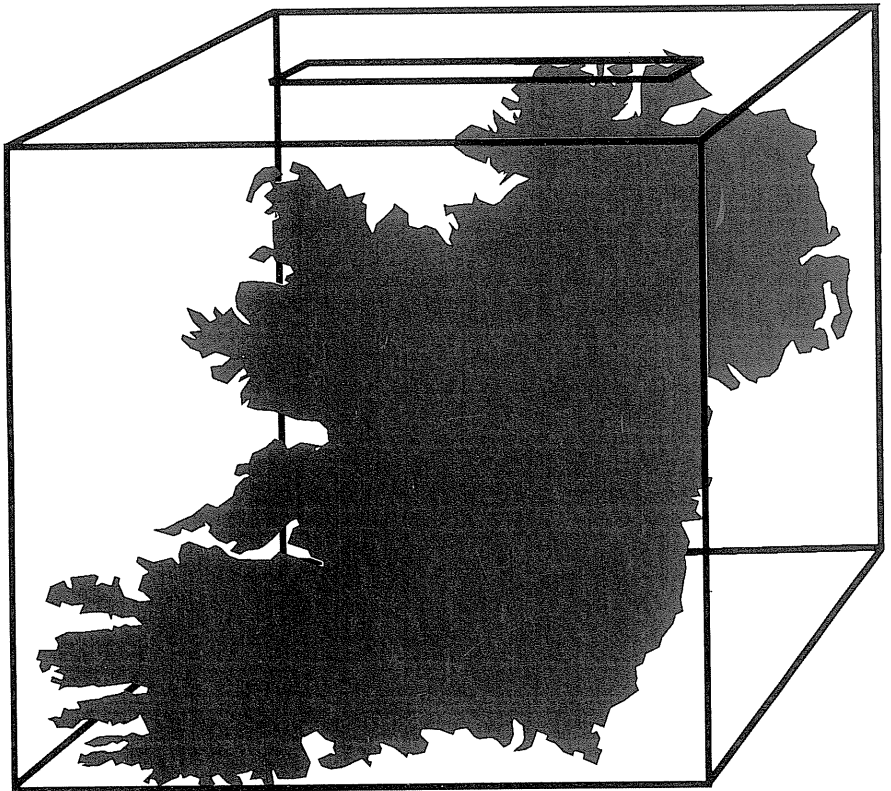


# How Ireland Voted 1989

*Edited by*

Michael Gallagher  
Richard Sinnott



Centre for the Study of Irish Elections  
University College Galway

HOW IRELAND VOTED  
1989

*Edited by*

Michael Gallagher  
Richard Sinnott

Centre for the Study of Irish Elections  
University College Galway

A paperback original  
first published in 1990 by the  
Centre for the Study of Irish Elections  
in association with PSAI Press  
University College Galway

© Centre for the Study of Irish Elections, 1990

ISBN 0-9515731-0-1

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. The book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent or resold or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it was published and without a similar condition being imposed upon the subsequent purchaser.

Cover design and maps by Michael Laver

Page makeup by the  
Centre for the Study of Irish Elections  
University College Galway

Printed by SciPrint, Shannon

## CONTENTS

Introduction		1
1 The campaign	<i>Brian Girvin</i>	5
2 Campaign strategies and media coverage	<i>David M. Farrell</i>	23
3 On the campaign trail	<i>Charlie McCreevy (FF)</i> <i>Ivan Yates (FG)</i> <i>Eithne FitzGerald (Lab)</i> <i>Geraldine Kennedy (PD)</i> <i>Pat McCartan (WP)</i> <i>Trevor Sargent (Greens)</i>	44 48 52 57 61 64
4 The election results and the new Dáil	<i>Michael Gallagher</i>	68
5 How the voters decided	<i>Michael Marsh</i> <i>Richard Sinnott</i>	94
6 The European Parliament election	<i>Patrick Keatinge</i> <i>Michael Marsh</i>	131
7 The Senate election	<i>John Coakley</i>	148
8 The Udarás na Gaeltachta election	<i>Tony Parker</i>	162
9 Forming the government	<i>Brian Farrell</i>	179
10 Coalition and Fianna Fáil	<i>Michael Laver</i> <i>Audrey Arkins</i>	192
11 The Irish party system into the 1990s	<i>Peter Mair</i>	208
Appendix: maps and tables		221
Notes on contributors		229



## Introduction

The editors would like to express their thanks to all those who made this book possible. Pride of place must go to the contributors. The academic contributors delivered high quality typescripts fairly promptly, three of them even meeting the agreed deadline. The six politician contributors brought a note of hard-headed political experience into the book. Three TDs took time off from their important legislative work (and their clinics), and three unsuccessful candidates relived some painful moments. This book is published by the Centre for the Study of Irish Elections at University College Galway, and we would like to thank the President of UCG, Colm O hEocha, for having the enlightenment to make this possible. Finally, Michael Laver has made a major contribution throughout to the project. He was instrumental in arranging its publication, and has subsequently taken on responsibility for many aspects of the production process, and we should like to express our appreciation for his determination that this book should see the light of day, and for his strenuous efforts which have ensured that it has.

Michael Gallagher  
Richard Sinnott

Dublin, January 1990

## 1. The campaign

*Brian Girvin*

### THE OUTGOING GOVERNMENT

When Charles J. Haughey, Taoiseach and leader of the Fianna Fáil party dissolved Dáil Eireann on 25 May 1989, he brought to an end an unprecedented period in Irish politics. Between March 1987 and May 1989 Mr Haughey had led a minority Fianna Fáil administration which was dependent on the support of Fine Gael and the Progressive Democrats, its erstwhile competitors in the electoral arena, to remain in government. This was but one of the many ironies in Irish politics during the 1980s. Alone among Irish political parties, Fianna Fáil had refused to share power, and while it has previously maintained minority administrations, the experience of 1987 to 1989 differed considerably from previous tenures in office. Another irony was the extent to which the Fianna Fáil administration implemented the policies which it had opposed during the 1987 election campaign. During most of that campaign, Fianna Fáil had stressed its traditional commitment to growth, social partnership and strategies to reduce unemployment. Yet by the end of a defensive campaign, Fianna Fáil had effectively accepted the main objectives of the parties to its right.<sup>1</sup>

At the February 1987 election Fianna Fáil had increased its representation from 75 to 81 seats but was still short of an overall majority. Even so, it was strongly placed to form a government, and in contrast to previous elections the balance within the Dáil favoured this outcome. In November 1982 there had been two clear alternatives: a Fianna Fáil government (unlikely in the circumstances), or a Coalition between Fine Gael and Labour (the actual outcome). By February 1987 government formation had become more complex. There was no foundation for an alternative government, as the opposition was now more fragmented than at any time since the 1950s. Even if Fine Gael, the Progressive Democrats and the Labour Party had combined they could not have formed a majority government, and could not have depended on the eight other votes of the Workers' Party and independents to achieve a stable majority. The opposition's fragmentation facilitated Fianna Fáil's formation of a government and contributed to its stability. In particular, relations between Fine Gael

and the Progressive Democrats were not good, while the Labour Party was stressing its independence of the centre-right parties. In theory the government was always at risk, but in practice, adroit manoeuvring permitted Fianna Fáil to dominate the Dáil for over two years.

The arithmetic in the Dáil has to be related, however, to policy. Throughout this period there were different majorities for different issues. The most clearcut consensus concerned fiscal and budgetary policy. Besides the votes of its own deputies, Fianna Fáil could attract those of Fine Gael and usually the Progressive Democrats on these issues. In addition, on questions relating to Northern Ireland or to Anglo-Irish relations, the government could command an overwhelming majority among deputies even when there were doubts among its own supporters as, for example, was the case when extradition was debated. There was also a corporatist/welfarist majority available, comprising the government, the Labour Party, the Workers' Party and some of the independents. As a consequence, privatization, which was advocated by both the Progressive Democrats and Fine Gael, was not seriously entertained during the lifetime of the Dáil.

The key to Fianna Fáil's success lay with its newfound commitment to fiscal probity and its willingness to ruthlessly cut public spending. Between 1977 and 1982 the national debt had almost trebled from £4,200m to £11,700m. Under the 1982-1987 Coalition government, which was nominally committed to restricting borrowing, the national debt had almost doubled again (to £21,600m) by the end of 1986. The exchequer borrowing requirement as a percentage of gross national product stood at 13 per cent by early 1987. Although inflation had declined to 3.8 per cent by 1987 from its double digit high of 1982, most other indicators were negative: economic growth had been slow or stagnant for most of the 1980s, real income fell in most years up to 1987, and there was little growth in gross national product for most of this time. The 1987 budget demonstrated Fianna Fáil's commitment to controlling public spending; it was considerably more deflationary than both the proposals which marked the end of the Fine Gael / Labour Coalition and the later Fine Gael budget estimates which had been criticised by Fianna Fáil during the election.

The severe cuts which were introduced had a serious effect on the public sector and resulted in a substantial rise in unemployment between 1987 and 1989. By June 1989 unemployment stood at over 240,000. This number did not include the significant exodus of young emigrants: estimates for the year ending April 1989 concluded that over 40,000 may have left the country during the previous year. Nevertheless, Fianna Fáil's economic policy was remarkably successful in other areas. Strong economic growth was in evidence after February 1987, in part a reflection of good international

conditions, but also due to Irish industrialists' belief that the government was following policies which contributed to growth and stability. By 1988 inflation was down to two per cent (considerably lower than that of the United Kingdom); for those in work real income and living standards improved in absolute terms and the balance of payments was in surplus. By the time the election was called the exchequer borrowing requirement as a percentage of gross national product stood at six per cent, half of what it had been in 1986, and continued to decline. A further reflection of new found confidence in Ireland's fiscal policy came when the punt was more closely aligned with the European Monetary System and interest rates were no longer linked with those of the United Kingdom. There has now been an unprecedented gap in the British and Irish interest rates for over a year, highlighting the independence of Irish fiscal policy and weakening further the historic link between the two currencies.

Fianna Fáil succeeded in implementing most of its policies because it recognised the delicate nature of its minority status, and because it accepted that on fiscal and monetary policy it could not advocate expansionary measures. Yet what is surprising is how little opposition there was in the Dáil to the policies and their consequences. The left provided the main focus for opposition but, given its size and divisions, could not hope to obstruct government legislation. Obstruction could occur only if all the opposition groups combined against the government. Two factors prevented this. One was the government's sensitivity to the possibility of defeat, as a result of which it rarely introduced legislation which would induce the opposition to combine. More important was the recognition that the government was implementing policies with which a sizeable section of the opposition concurred. After all, the 1987 and 1988 budgets had been passed comfortably with the support of Fine Gael. The consensus on economic policy was given powerful public support in September 1987 when Alan Dukes, the newly-elected leader of Fine Gael, argued that those who accepted the need for cuts had a duty to support the government and not act negatively. It appears clear that while one of Dukes's motives in formulating the so-called Tallaght Strategy was to avoid another election which Fine Gael was not in a position to fight, he was also responding to the belief that action had to be taken to reduce the national debt. With this support the government was unlikely to be defeated on a major issue.

This right wing consensus on fiscal policy was not an example of Thatcherism Irish style. The Thatcherites (Fine Gael and the Progressive Democrats) were outside the Cabinet and were not able to influence the details of government policy. This can be seen in the government's decision to return to national pay bargaining and to reach agree-

The author would like to thank Mr. Jack Jones of the Market Research Bureau of Ireland for supplying him with polling data taken during 1989. Unless otherwise noted all polling references are to MRBI material. The main media source used for the campaign proper and for referencing is the *Irish Times*. Where necessary, this was supplemented by reference to the *Irish Press* and the *Irish Independent*.

- 1 Brian Girvin, "The Campaign", in Michael Laver, Peter Mair and Richard Sinnott (eds), *How Ireland Voted* (Swords: Poolbeg Press, 1987), pp. 9-29, for a discussion of the 1987 campaign.
- 2 Niamh Hardiman, *Pay, Politics and Economic Performance in Ireland, 1970-1987* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), for discussion of corporatism and pay negotiations.
- 3 *Programme for National Recovery* (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1987).
- 4 Thomas Lyne, "The Progressive Democrats" *Irish Political Studies* 2 (1987) pp. 107-114.
- 5 Joe Joyce and Peter Murtagh, *The Boss: Charles J. Haughey in power*. (Swords: Poolbeg Press, 1983), for a discussion of these issues.
- 6 Fine Gael, *Putting the Country First* (Dublin, 30 May 1989). The Progressive Democrats, *Putting the People First.*, (Dublin, June 2 1989).
- 7 The Labour Party, *Now More Than Ever: Labour's Policy Proposals Election '89* (Dublin, June 1989).
- 8 The Green Party, *Manifesto* (Dublin, June 1989). Sinn Féin, *Make Your Vote Count* (Dublin, June 1989).
- 9 Fianna Fáil, *National Recovery: The Next Phase*, (Dublin, 6 June 1989).
- 10 *Irish Times*, 8 June 1989.
- 11 Quoted in the *Irish Times*, 10 June 1989.
- 12 *Irish Times*, 13 June 1989.
- 13 *Irish Times*, 12 June 1989.
- 14 This paragraph is based on assessment of the two *Irish Times* / MRBI election polls taken during the campaign.

## 2. Campaign strategies and media coverage

David M. Farrell

For a number of reasons this was going to be an unusual election. It was unexpected, so preparations were necessarily hurried. It was early: the parties were still paying for the last one. It clashed with the European Parliament election, whose lower priority meant it received far less attention and expenditure. In this chapter we explore the campaigns of the parties, focusing in the first section on the preparations of the parties and on the campaigns themselves. The second section examines new developments in Irish campaign strategies in recent years. In addition, since a major part of modern election campaign strategy revolves around the mass media, the chapter concludes with a brief analysis of media coverage of the election.

### THE CAMPAIGNS OF THE PARTIES

#### Fianna Fáil

Fianna Fáil started preparing for the European elections in October 1988, when an election committee was formed with Máire Geoghegan-Quinn as chair. Among its members were the party's general secretary, Frank Wall, the government press secretary, PJ Mara, Orla Kavanagh (printing and funding) and Martin Larkin (advertising). This committee also served as the basis for a general election committee. Once the general election was called its membership expanded and Geoghegan-Quinn was replaced as chair by Séamus Brennan, the director of elections.<sup>1</sup> By then, the local directors of elections had been appointed.

Quite extensive use was made of market research as the party prepared for the elections. Preparatory polls were commissioned for both the European and the general elections, carried out by the polling agency Behaviour and Attitudes. These were both quantitative polls, which indicated vote trends, and qualitative research (group discussions and detailed questionnaires), which helped to identify themes and give more insight into voter attitudes in general. Constituency polling was also carried out (by the local party organisations), particularly in the marginal constituencies, to guide both candidate selection and vote management strategies. The party ran 115 candidates, seven fewer than in 1987. Only

four candidates were added to those chosen at constituency level. The party had 78 sitting TDs going into the election, and so there were few "vacancies". In the few cases where problems arose, a careful process of consultation was engaged in by the general secretary, who usually managed to find a reasonable consensus. The most difficult constituency was Roscommon, where internal feuding caused concern. The election committee identified eleven marginal constituencies targeted for electoral gains (Dun Laoghaire, Dublin South-East, Dublin South-Central, Dublin North-Central, Dublin North-East, Carlow-Kilkenny, Wexford, Limerick East, Kerry North, Cork North-West, Clare) and two constituencies for possible losses (Sligo-Leitrim and Tipperary South).

It is difficult to tell how much was spent by Fianna Fáil on the election. Newspaper estimates during the election ranged from a low of £1.5 million to a high of £4 million. When asked in a private interview, the party's general secretary would only respond: "There are only three people who know the answer to that question: me, the party's accountant, and the party leader. Anyone else suggesting a figure is only guessing". All that Wall will admit is that more was spent than in 1987 (though he attributes much of this to inflation) and that expenditure increased in the latter half of the campaign. Fianna Fáil is also not prepared to say how many posters and items of election literature it produced during this election. What is apparent is that a large number of billboard and bus-stop advertising sites were booked,<sup>2</sup> and that all the usual merchandising items (such as balloons and T-shirts) were produced. Like the other parties Fianna Fáil left its individual constituency organisations to print their own candidate posters and other constituency literature, with the election committee providing all the necessary artwork. Fianna Fáil used the same agencies as in 1987 for preparing its various communications activities. Saatchi and Saatchi was commissioned to handle the party's extensive advertising campaign,<sup>3</sup> Windmill Lane produced the election broadcasts, and Carr Communications provided exclusive television and radio training programmes for the party's spokespersons both before and during the campaign.

As the party in a government viewed as having been relatively successful, Fianna Fáil was in an ideal position to emulate the approach adopted by the British Conservatives (1983 and 1987) and the American Republicans (1984) in their respective incumbent campaigns. In each of these cases the central theme was "continuity". The parties usually attempted to take the initiative from the beginning of the campaign, spending some time stressing past successes and then presenting attractive new policies suitable for "the next stage" of a successful administration. Leader image was stressed, the respective party leaders being used to per-

sonify the "success" of the administration. At first glance the Fianna Fáil 1989 campaign fitted such a pattern quite well. The party's manifesto was entitled "the next phase", and much of its advertising centred on the same theme. The first part of the manifesto set out the achievements of the party in government and then went on to specify what "the next phase" would entail. Posters, billboards and advertisements stressed leader image, with the phrase "sound leadership, good government". Haughey appeared regularly on television and radio, gave extensive newspaper interviews, and was whisked around the marginals by helicopter, in a cavalcade of cars, or on a "DART Special" (with guest personalities and hired bands). While his constituency touring may have been less than in earlier elections, reflecting his persisting health difficulties, he still figured prominently in the party's overall campaign strategy. Nine major press conferences were held in Dublin hotels, at which the party's policy proposals were spelt out in some detail. During the campaign Fianna Fáil produced no policy documents other than its manifesto. Unlike earlier elections where detailed scripts and press releases were produced, few scripts were handed out and press releases were generally only a few lines long. The party also took advantage of special occasions to attract some extra publicity (such as hiring advertisement space at Lansdowne Road during a World Cup qualifying match).

The Fianna Fáil campaign also had some notable deficiencies. The party may have wanted to take the initiative in the campaign, but it never really succeeded. The manifesto was not prepared when the election was announced and, indeed, was not finally released (after one deferral) until almost two weeks into the three-week campaign. Frustrated journalists were given little material with which to assess the supposed "next phase". Furthermore, the posters and first advertisements were out of synch with the party's focus on policies and leader image, emphasising instead the party's candidates, using the slogan, "Home and Away the Best Team". Once the campaign started Fianna Fáil quickly found itself embroiled in the health issue, a problem compounded by Haughey's gaffe in the final week (see the previous chapter). Some effort was made to meet the issue head on. The party's qualitative research identified the specific aspects of the health issue which were giving voters the greatest concern, and the strategists attempted to come up with appropriate solutions. But with media coverage and public attention so fixed on the health issue the party had grave difficulty in shifting the focus. With support slipping in the polls, the strategists found themselves forced to spend more on advertising and posters to compensate for unfavourable media coverage. It was at this latter stage of the campaign that Fianna Fáil



### 3. On the campaign trail

Charlie McCreevy (Fianna Fáil, Kildare)

Charlie McCreevy was elected to the Dáil in 1977 at his first general election campaign, and has held his seat ever since, heading the poll at the election of February 1982. He is an accountant, and was a member of Kildare County Council from 1979 to 1985. He has been a well-known, and indeed controversial, figure in national politics ever since he began speaking out strongly in the early 1980s against extravagant election promises by all parties.

It was 5.30 pm Monday 12th June 1989, three days to polling, and I was wet, tired and miserable. I was deep in Army territory and not looking forward to canvassing at Orchard Park, Curragh Camp, a scheme of 104 Army houses. "You are just after missing the fun", said a woman at house No. 1.

"What fun?" said I, trying to summon up interest for the umpteenth time in the campaign.

"Oh, did you not know that the Minister for Defence was in the camp this afternoon at the commissioning ceremony and there was a large protest of Army wives?"

"Oh Jesus", said I under my breath "that's all we needed" and offered up a silent prayer for one Michael Noonan.

I confess to being slightly superstitious - most gamblers have the same complaint - and in my mind the whole campaign had been one long disaster.

To some extent, I would depend on the floating vote, and my performances at elections have generally reflected the swings to and from Fianna Fáil. I needed no one to tell me at any stage of the campaign that we did not have a snowball's chance in hell of getting an overall majority.

Elections bring out selfishness in all candidates of all parties - no matter whether they are backbenchers, ministers, or party leaders. Let no one tell you anything else - when it comes to a campaign, it is everyone for himself, and irrespective of your party going up or down, all you really want to know is are you going to be elected.

The constituency of Kildare is a good microcosm of Irish society. It is no longer solely the home of cattle ranchers and stud farm owners. The popu-

lation is 115,000; there are large new dormitory towns in Celbridge, Leixlip and Maynooth; a large industrial work force, small farmers, big farmers, and every possible problem that one might encounter. As the county is relatively small in area it is possible in a day's canvassing to meet every type of social class and every problem.

In particular it has a large Army influence in the middle of the county. What with the Army Headquarters at the Curragh Camp, a barracks in Kildare and another in Naas, there are few families that do not have - or did not have - an Army association. Thus, long before the general election of 1989, it was obvious to me that the Army pay issue was going to present a big problem.

I have constituency election tallies going back to 1973, and Fianna Fáil has never received less than 50 per cent of the postal vote - which breaks down as 75 per cent army and 25 per cent gardai. Apart from the postal vote analysis, the army vote is reflected in the large towns such as Kildare, Newbridge and Naas, and a myriad of smaller villages near the Curragh.

No Fianna Fáil canvasser in the constituency needed to be told that we were in serious trouble with the army vote. Things were so bad that our director of elections wrote to Fianna Fáil headquarters early in the campaign and told them in no uncertain terms that we were getting a dreadful reception and that the Army had lost all confidence in the Minister. This letter ended up in the national media and caused some embarrassment to the party nationally. How it arrived in public print is one of the lighter aspects of the Kildare campaign. Apparently, a reporter from a local newspaper called to our base in Naas and was shown the letter by a party helper - not knowing its explosive contents. Like any good reporter, he was hardly back in his office before he rang the national dailies.

There was an Army Wives candidate in the constituency, who pulled 6 per cent of the total poll, but even if there had been no such candidate we would still have taken a roasting from the army vote. The resultant election tally shows the postal vote at 12 per cent. Adjusting for the Garda voter content, it means that FF received an army vote in single figures.

It was a total disaster!

No outgoing TD ever really enjoys the campaign. He enjoys the result if he is victorious. That caveat notwithstanding, I confess that the 1989 election was the most pleasant of any previous campaign for me - excluding 1977 which was an absolute joy. Due to my "little difficulties" with Fianna Fáil over the years, I have not enjoyed a very pleasant working relationship with the Fianna Fáil organization in Kildare, and the bulk of that organization in previous elections were - to say the very least - not very enthusiastic or very helpful. However, no such problems existed in

Ivan Yates became the youngest member of the 22nd Dáil when he was first elected for Wexford in 1981 at the age of 21 years and 7 months. He has held his seat at each subsequent election, and is now the only Protestant member of the Dáil. He was chairperson of the Oireachtas Committee on Small Businesses in the 1982-87 Dáil. He was promoted to the Fine Gael front bench in the last Dáil, with responsibility for Health, and was reappointed to this position after the 1989 election.

It takes a combination of a number of factors to become a TD. No single ingredient can ensure success in the complex business of electioneering. The June 1989 election was a particularly short campaign by recent standards and therefore it is vital in organisational terms to be able to swing into action immediately. In Wexford, Fine Gael knew in advance that its three candidates were to be Michael D'Arcy, Avril Doyle and myself. The three of us had been on the Fine Gael ticket at the previous two elections and maintained a high level of support for the party. Therefore our selection convention a few days after the election was called was a formality in selection terms, so much so that the election literature of canvassing cards and posters was printed as soon as the convention concluded that night.

The background to our Wexford campaign was that in the November 1982 election Fine Gael succeeded in obtaining three out of five seats in County Wexford on only 42 per cent of the vote. To achieve 60 per cent of the seats on this level of votes was miraculous. It was achieved in fact by virtue of Labour Party transfers, with the Labour candidate in effect acting as our fourth candidate pushing us in to have three candidates elected. In the subsequent election when the coalition government of Labour and Fine Gael was the outgoing government we all knew in our more honest moments that we could hold only two Fine Gael seats in Wexford. The casualty on that occasion in 1987 was Michael D'Arcy, a former Minister of State and a deputy of ten years' standing. On this occasion the same dilemma was presented to the party: we had three hardworking candidates with just two quotas. The real question therefore was who would be the two candidates elected. Therefore, as in most five-seat constituencies, there were in effect two campaigns to be waged. One to maximise the Fine Gael vote beyond its level of 30 per cent and secondly to secure enough votes to ensure my personal re-election. In this context the first preference vote was vital. In fact I had to fight a third campaign as the Fine Gael Health spokesperson. I spent more time than heretofore in Dublin for regular media programmes on what was to be one of the critical

issues of the campaign, the health service. This national campaigning factor I felt not only to be personally satisfying but also of great benefit to me in the constituency with such a high profile. The successful Labour Party candidate Brendan Howlin TD was also their party spokesperson on Health, and he too obviously found this an added advantage as he topped the poll in Wexford.

In the early days of the campaign there was tension between the three Fine Gael candidates as to an agreement on dividing up the constituency for canvassing purposes. I personally felt that I had to have access to the entire county to be re-elected. This was by virtue of the fact that the Enniscorthy electoral area had always been a Fianna Fáil stronghold, and prior to my election to the Dáil in 1981 there had never previously been a Fine Gael TD from this area. In County Wexford the political geography divides into four electoral districts. There is Gorey in the north, which is predominantly in the heartland of Fine Gael but breaks down sometimes evenly between Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael. Second, the largest populated area of Wexford town and district, which was always a Labour stronghold with Fine Gael support south of the town and consistent Fianna Fáil support across the district. Third, the New Ross district, which was the heartland of Fianna Fáil, as they currently have four out of five county councillors, and fourth the Enniscorthy district. After much negotiation it was agreed that each candidate would have two open days early in the campaign to travel outside of their own personal electoral area. In this context Michael D'Arcy's home area was Gorey, Avril Doyle's was Wexford and my own was Enniscorthy. This in fact was fully honoured by all candidates and there were no subsequent breaches of the Code of Conduct. Personalised literature was allowed by agreement subject to prior vetting by the Director of Elections.

The issues in the campaign in Wexford were microcosms of the national issues. These were unemployment and emigration, the deterioration of the health service, other cutbacks in public service such as education, the high rates of personal taxation and the constant issue of integrity in government. From the outset Fianna Fáil sought to make single-party stability of government the central issue. In the early opinion poll data that Fine Gael had it was obvious that this ranked low in terms of issues the public was concerned about. In relation to the formation of a possible alternative government, Fine Gael had seized the initiative just prior to the calling of the election by arranging a pact with the Progressive Democrat Party. This was beneficial in two ways. Firstly, it prevented attrition throughout the campaign between Fine Gael and the Progressive Democrats as to the correctness of the Tallaght Strategy or other aspects of opposition over the last two years, thereby leaving us free to put all our

level with all the inherent research work and consultation etc - it is all of these factors that build the basis for one's re-election. In the campaign itself it is vital to bring out the vote, re-assure the faithful and make one's best attempt to obtain the maximum level of floating votes. Therefore, one's campaign for re-election to the 27th Dáil is already under way . . .

**Eithne FitzGerald (Labour, Dublin South)**

Eithne FitzGerald first stood for the Dáil in Dublin South in 1981, when she lost her deposit, but she improved her position to finish as runner up when she stood next in November 1982. She was unsuccessful again in 1987 and, despite an increase in her vote, in 1989. She works as a research officer for Threshold, and has been a member of Dublin County Council since 1979.

After the 1987 election which saw a landslide for the PDs in Dublin South, I muttered to friends that if Labour were ever to regain a seat in this area, I'd have to change my name to Anne Colley.

After the 1985 local elections, I'd been selected as the single Labour candidate for the general election, and my former running mate, Frank Buckley, opted to be Director of Elections. After the bruising defeat in 1987, neither of us was overly anxious to take on the role of candidate-apparent. The party only formally held the selection conference a week before the campaign opened.

From the end of April, rumours of an election began to take strong hold. Barry Desmond discounted them - wishful thinking from a Euro-candidate, I thought. He also gave us word of a Fine Gael mini-poll in the constituency - showing Labour at 11 per cent and a slump in the PD vote to their now trailing national average of 6 per cent. Was this more wishful thinking? 11 per cent, with expected transfers from candidates from the smaller parties, would give us a seat!

While a great morale-booster, I felt it was too good to be true. So did some of the other party members, who quietly organised their own mini-survey, issuing sample ballot papers at shopping centres.

Looking at the actual election result, their survey was extraordinarily accurate, except in one crucial respect. The survey showed Séamus Brennan topping the poll with a huge surplus, and correctly predicted the outcome for the other FF candidates, it gave the correct FG share of the vote though at that stage John Kelly seemed to be still in the race, and it correctly predicted a PD slide from 21 per cent to under 9 per cent. It showed Labour at 8 per cent, and a strong Green showing at 7 per cent. If

the poll was accurate, the preferences from the Workers' Party and the Greens would give us a Labour seat. While we knew the Greens would do well, we felt our own strong record in the area on environmental issues and in campaigning against re-zoning scandals, as well as our broader platform on economic and social issues, would keep us ahead. We never seriously contemplated what actually happened - that Labour transfers would elect a Green TD rather than Green transfers electing a Labour TD.

Frank Buckley had said he'd run if I didn't want to, otherwise he'd be Director of Elections. I negotiated leave of absence from my job for the campaign, and was selected unanimously. Frank got stuck into the business of organising a HQ, posters, and literature.

HQ was the old Rathfarnham Credit Union building. It had no light, no water or toilets, and was full of about a hundred old storage heaters; otherwise it was grand, with plenty of parking and next door to a pub. So the campaign began with all the heavies lugging around lumps of storage heater, while a couple of us tried to discuss campaign strategy and to draft literature by the light of a candle.

We were able to recycle posters and cards from the previous election but we needed interim canvass literature until the main print order was ready. I dropped a text into my printer neighbour at two in the morning the night the election was called, and by lunchtime the next day we were ready.

John was away for the first few days of the campaign, so in addition to campaigning, I had to organise dinners, iron blouses, and find the children's socks, jobs normally the prerogative of the candidate's spouse.

Frank Buckley, a man who once won an election in a suit he bought at a sale of work for a fiver, was very insistent that the candidate be Well Turned Out. No open-toed sandals in the sweltering heat of June, respectable shoes (I went through two pairs in three weeks), always stockings, a good summer suit, and a red rose instead of the prize-cow rosette. My navy and mustard cotton suit was thought to sail dangerously close to the PD colours. Respectability paid off at one level - someone mistook me for a Fine Gael candidate - but did it jeopardise those precious Green votes?

The door to door canvass was our main method of campaigning. Every morning, my sister Barbara, myself, and any other members or supporters who were available, assembled for a cup of tea in one of our houses at ten o'clock, and headed out on the knocker at about 10.30. Then a stop of an hour for lunch, a whizz round to assemble the afternoon shift, knock off at half five to go home and make and/or eat dinner, then off again from seven to nine thirty.

lutely frosty. The electorate as well as the canvassers were suffering from battle fatigue. "Not another bloody election leaflet!"

Everyone hates polling day, the twelve-hour stint of competing canvassers jostling the voters outside polling stations, the jockeying for position with canvassers and posters. One of the advantages of being the candidate is that you escape being rooted in the one spot for twelve hours, because it is customary to drive around from one polling station to another to greet your party workers stuck on that thankless job, and to shake hands with the presiding officers and polling clerks. My sister Bríd drove me around, transferring the roofrack with the "Vote Eithne FitzGerald Labour" box on it from our beat up Renault 4 to her somewhat newer car. Our posters were doing very little jockeying, the van with them having been stolen from outside HQ the night before.

Next day, the brothers did the tallies ("A Product of Starry Plough Software"). At 12 they rang to say the result would be 2 FF, 2 FG, and an amazed Roger Garland would take the other seat, on our transfers. So close!

Could we have taken the seat? Would a better local or national campaign have made the difference?

In 1987, in spite of vigorous pre-election canvassing, and a hard fought local campaign, the Labour vote halved. Straight from an unpopular coalition government, we lost votes heavily among our traditional supporters, mainly to Fianna Fáil, while in middle class areas, the PD "Pay less tax/we're different" message went down a treat. In the 1989 election, the focus of the national campaign on a key Labour issue, the health cuts, brought our core support back. A well fought local campaign helped. But then, the Greens won a seat with a skeleton campaign.

That little extra, either locally or nationally, could have made the difference - more pre-election canvassing, more television coverage for the Party or us locally, more attention to turnout in areas of known support, more vigorous pursuit of No. 1s from tactical voters voting Green, or of 2s rather than 3s from the Workers' Party.

The Labour organisation in Dublin South is more invigorated, more experienced, and larger, than it was on May 25th. And fairly sure we'll regain John Horgan's Labour seat the next time.

Geraldine Kennedy (Progressive Democrats, Dun Laoghaire)

Geraldine Kennedy had not stood at any election before winning a seat for the PDs in Dun Laoghaire in 1987. Before entering politics she had been a political correspondent, with the Sunday Tribune and the Sunday Press, and in 1987 she won damages in court for illegal tapping of her phone in 1982. From 1987 to 1989, when she lost her seat, she was PD spokesperson on Foreign Affairs and Northern Ireland.

Dun Laoghaire has always been a unique constituency. Besides being the most middle-class in the country with a large Protestant population, it has always polled contrary to the national trend. It voted against the Pro-Life Amendment and for the divorce referendum in the mid-1980s. It was, accordingly, one of the few constituencies to swing to Fianna Fáil - by a massive 6.4 per cent - in the 1989 general election.

As a candidate and outgoing Deputy, I did not foresee this swing before or during the election campaign. The cool reception I received outside the polling stations on June 15, particularly at the Progressive Democrat strongholds of Foxrock and Dalkey - where people whom I recognised as being positive when I canvassed them did their utmost to avoid eye contact - was the first inkling I had that something could have gone terribly wrong.

Unlike two of my Dublin colleagues, Michael McDowell in Dublin South-East and Pat O'Malley in Dublin West, who anticipated going into the election that they would have serious difficulties, I was surprised that I was not re-elected. Based on opinion polls conducted by the PDs in Dun Laoghaire and reliable intelligence of the polls of other parties, I expected to have a high first preference vote. I was surprised, therefore, to lose my seat and saddened to come out with only a half quota on the first count.

I consider that I went into the campaign as well prepared as any other candidate in Dun Laoghaire, and certainly more prepared than I was in my first election in 1987. The Taoiseach, Mr Haughey, had given due warning of his intention to call the election since his return from Japan in late April. By mid May, it seemed certain to me that the die was cast. The party nationally and in Dun Laoghaire acted accordingly.

An emergency meeting of the national executive of the Progressive Democrats was held in the week preceding the calling of the election to prepare for the campaign. A national director of elections was appointed and the constituencies were asked to prepare for conventions. It was decided, because of the party's standing of 5-6 per cent in national opinion polls over the previous months, that there would be one candidate only in

2. Despite the antipathy to Charles Haughey at the doors - expressed as vehemently as in 1987 - Dun Laoghaire bucked the national trend and swung 6.4 per cent to Fianna Fáil because a perception of instability was generated by the leaders of Fine Gael and the Progressive Democrats in the last couple of days of the campaign. They declared at the beginning of the last week that they would not vote for Mr Haughey as Taoiseach. This, in my view, frightened the business belt in Dun Laoghaire and allowed Charlie Haughey to claim, in his eve of poll message, that the choice was between stable government and multi-party chaos. It was then known from the opinion polls that the parties of the left were going to do well in the election.

3. The accidental choice of Senator Brian Hillery turned out to be the right candidate to win the elusive second seat for Fianna Fáil in the constituency. He was nominated a full week after the campaign had started because the local Fianna Fáil organisation revolted over the proposed imposition of Kieran Mulvey, general secretary of the Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland and former Workers' Party activist. Mr Hillery, in contrast, was a Fianna Fáil "nice guy", he had lived in Foxrock for years and sent his children to St. Brigid's School, and both he and his wife were well known in the community. His candidature damaged me in the PD heartland of Foxrock where the PD vote in some boxes at one of the biggest polling stations, St. Brigid's, dropped from 50 per cent in 1987 to about 20 per cent in 1989.

4. The national campaign run by the PDs was another factor. It was not sufficiently responsive to the climate emerging from the opinion polls and the canvass. In my view, the negative, anti-government issues were over-emphasised to the detriment of the positive contribution of the PDs to the creation of consensus politics. The national campaign was affected by the fact that the newer party deputies were not included or involved in fronting the campaign.

Despite my defeat, however, I have no recriminations. I don't believe that I could, or would, have done anything any differently at constituency or national level during my time in the Dáil in order to get re-elected. I held clinics. I received a volume of constituency work, mainly by post or phone, on a par with Bobby Molloy. I attended most functions to which I was invited in Dun Laoghaire.

If I had known that I would have come out of the campaign with half-a-quota, would I have run a different campaign?

With hindsight, I don't believe that a different campaign would have got me re-elected. However, some members of the PD organisation in Dun Laoghaire do think so. They consider that, strategically, we should have saturated Foxrock, Brian Hillery's base; that we should have paced our-

selves better to peak at the end of the campaign; that we should have done leaflet drops in the constituency saying that I was in deep trouble; and that we should have plastered the place with more posters.

#### **Pat McCartan (Workers' Party, Dublin North-East)**

Pat McCartan first stood for the Dáil in Dublin North-East in 1981, losing his deposit, but by the time of his third campaign in November 1982, he had strengthened his position and finished as runner-up, less than 900 votes short of a seat. He was elected narrowly for the first time in 1987, just 235 votes ahead of Seán Haughey (the son of the Taoiseach), and his seat was widely regarded as marginal at the start of the 1989 campaign. He is a solicitor and has been a member of Dublin Corporation since 1985.

The June election in Dublin North-East presented a huge challenge to the Workers' Party. It was a snap election, a manoeuvre which favours parties of big financial resources - money at hand to spend quickly. It was an election interposed in a slowly building European campaign. But it was also the election and opportunity for the Haughey dynasty to settle the score of an impudent defeat of the youngest scion in the February 1987 campaign. We were facing into defending a seat won by a very narrow majority. Those hunting believed that the hare was an easy target and blood was in the air for the earliest stages of the chase. The Workers' Party seat was a seat to be targeted; if Pat McCartan could be knocked from the race then the fourth seat could settle the score for Haughey and Fianna Fáil, providing them with a valuable addition to their aspiration of an overall majority. For Fine Gael it could herald the return to the Dáil of Maurice Manning, and even the Labour Party had hopes of staying ahead of the Workers' Party in a scramble for the last seat.

This was the first election the Party fought to defend and so retain a seat. Obviously this required a different tactic and approach on the canvass. The big question the Party had to answer was whether the voters in the constituency perceived us as a political presence worth keeping. We would get a clear verdict on the previous two years' performance. It is a question often feared to be asked - what do people really think? A question most people can avoid if they want, for a political party it is the unavoidable question posed at each election. The anguish is all the more marked for those who are seeking out, or being presented with, the answer for the first time. All of these factors produced the inevitable panic once it was declared that June 15th would be a general and European poll day.

This election also introduced, in Dublin at least, a new dimension - a campaign of press conferences. This involved two and sometimes more visits a week to a city centre hotel and the presentation of a policy document or reaction to the issues of the past week's campaign. No doubt these conferences will be a permanent feature of future campaigns. They proved a useful contact with an otherwise remote head office team. The presence of the Party President in all our campaigns also drew head office organisers closer to the general election contest. As much as North-East was a marginal for the pundits, it was a crucial seat to retain for the Workers' Party. Nothing was left to chance or fortune.

The eventual result was very gratifying and has proved a major boost to party morale and expectations for the future of north Dublin. There is no doubt that with continued effort from our party members and continued tactical efforts from Fianna Fáil, the Workers' Party can only go forward in Dublin North-East. 1989 has been a good year so far - thanks Charlie (and Seán)!

#### Trevor Sargent (Green Party / Comhaontas Glas, Dublin North)

**Trevor Sargent first stood for the Dáil in 1987, when he lost his deposit. He had also lost his deposit when standing at the Dublin County Council elections in 1985. In 1989 he again stood for the Dáil (in Dublin North) and simultaneously ran for the Greens in the European Parliament election campaign, doing considerably better than expected in both contests. He is a school headmaster in Balbriggan.**

Looking back over my candidature in the European and later on in the general election campaigns, I can recall six months of late nights, rushed meals, an accumulating overdraft and torn loyalties between the demands of my job on the one hand and the campaign trail on the other.

Back in December 1988, three Greens were being proposed as Dublin candidates, Máire Mullarney of Dublin South-East Greens, Roger Garland of Dublin South Greens and myself from the Fingal Greens. Other good people such as John Gormley were being mentioned, but in the end the selection decision was made by consensus at an open meeting of Dublin Greens in Buswell's Hotel.

Many Greens at that time expected we might double our last Euro vote to something over 10,000. The actual first preference result of 37,317 was certainly not foreseen. Of all the independent analysts, *Alpha* (27 April 1989) was closest in predicting a growth in Green support in Ireland, draw-

ing a comparison with France where April elections had increased the strength of "les Verts" from 300 council seats to 1,400.

From January to May, Green party groups throughout the country were preoccupied with Euro campaigns. Seán English was working hard for Leinster, and Greens in Munster were campaigning for Independent Joe Noonan. In Dublin, the announcement of a general election scuttled many Euro-election plans. Finance (always on a wing and a prayer anyway) was now diverted to general election campaigns. However, the groundwork done from January to May was not wasted. Seven Green constituency groups had held public meetings at which I had been a guest speaker. These meetings were intended to be launch pads for the Euro-campaigns in these areas, especially in areas where Greens had not been politically active. As these groups were already campaigning when the general election was called, they immediately took to the second campaign like ducks to water. As a result, all Dublin constituencies (except for Dublin North-Central whose Green group opted to concentrate on the Euro-campaign) stood Green Party candidates in the general election.

Meanwhile, in Dublin North, the Fingal Greens' selection of a candidate for the Dáil was not easy. I was asked to stand, but objected to having to contest two elections. A number of members, including myself, proposed Eithne O'Connell, group secretary, as a potentially excellent candidate, but she declined. The nomination kept coming back to me. No alternative could be found and we had no money to print new leaflets. We knew that the Euro-campaign was bound to lose media attention as a result of the more "newsworthy" general election campaigns. Therefore, to keep up the Green Party/Comhaontas Glas profile in Dublin North, I had no choice but to straddle the two campaigns. No one at any stage expected me to take one seat, never mind two, so accusations of a dual mandate were always slightly tongue in cheek. Anyway, I had pledged in writing that if elected, I would only accept from my income a national average wage, the surplus to be spent protecting the environment.

On the question of campaigning technique, very little premeditated planning was involved really. Once I had been publicly announced as Dublin Euro-candidate on 19 January, invitations and letters began to arrive at my home. The letters were often in the form of questionnaires asking where the Greens stood in relation to issues such as travellers' halting sites, Nicaragua, Nuclear Free Zone, a new road being built, development aid, "the Birmingham six", hare coursing, bull fighting, the National Plan and community enterprise projects... to name but a few of the concerns about which people wrote. The invitations, however, set the agenda, by and large, for the way I spent my evenings in the following months. Various groups were requesting me as a candidate to attend various meet-

## 4. The election results and the new Dáil

Michael Gallagher

In 1987, the election results had been dramatic but the composition of the government predictable. In 1989 the sting was in the tail: the election results showed a settling back towards a pre-1987 normality, and it was the government formation process which produced the shocks.

The 1987 election had produced a whole string of superlatives. Each of the traditional three main parties had plunged to its lowest level of support for several decades; the PDs had made the strongest general election debut of any party for nearly 40 years. The overall volatility displayed by voters was greater than at any election since 1943. In comparison, the 1989 outcome seems rather tame. Fine Gael and Labour both regained some of the ground they had lost, though Fianna Fáil gained no votes and lost seats. The PDs were unable to maintain their 1987 position, and it was left to the Workers' Party and the Greens to provide some of the main talking points of the election.

### GAINS AND LOSSES

The concept of "volatility" is conventionally defined in terms of the percentage of voters who switch their vote from one election to the next, and so it is measured by simply adding up the percentage gains of the parties which gained votes from the previous general election<sup>1</sup>. By this measure, volatility at the 1987 election had been 16.1 per cent, compared with less than 4 per cent at both 1982 elections. In 1989, volatility was lower, registering at 7.5 per cent. While this is higher than at the 1982 elections, it is not exceptional, as higher figures were recorded for volatility between the elections of 1973 and 1977 (7.7 per cent) and between those of 1977 and 1981 (8.4 per cent). This suggests a certain settling down after the upheaval of 1987. Similarly, only 19 seats changed hands in 18 constituencies (there were two changes in Dun Laoghaire), compared with 30 in 26 constituencies in 1987 (see Table 4.1).

As always, the aggregate figure conceals greater movements in constituencies around the country. The average volatility per constituency was 12.4 per cent, a more realistic assessment than the figure in the

previous paragraph of the minimum number of voters who must have changed their vote from 1987. As in 1987, volatility was highest in Dublin (an average of 14.5 per cent in each constituency) and lowest in Connacht-Ulster (11.0 per cent). The most volatile constituency was Dublin South-West (19.5 per cent), followed by Cork South-Central and Mayo West, with volatility lowest in Laois-Offaly (4.8 per cent), followed by Cavan-Monaghan and Mayo East.

Table 4.1: Seats changing hands at 1989 election

FF	Gains (2)	Dublin NC (FG), Dun Laoghaire (PD)
	Losses (6)	Dublin N (Lab), Dublin SW (WP), Longford-Westmeath (FG), Roscommon (Ind), Sligo-Leitrim (FG), Tipperary S (Lab)
RG	Gains (7)	Carlow-Kilkenny (PD), Dublin Cen (PD), Dublin SE (PD), Dublin W (PD), Limerick W (PD), Longford-Westmeath (FF), Sligo-Leitrim (FF)
	Losses (3)	Cork NC (Lab), Dublin NC (FF), Kerry S (Lab)
Lab	Gains (5)	Cork NC (FG), Dublin N (FF), Kerry S (FG), Tipperary S (FF), Waterford (PD)
	Losses (2)	Dublin SC (WP), Dun Laoghaire (WP)
PDs	Gains (0)	
	Losses (8)	Carlow-Kilkenny (FG), Dublin Cen (FG), Dublin S (Greens), Dublin SE (FG), Dublin W (FG), Dun Laoghaire (FF), Limerick W (FG), Waterford (Lab)
WP	Gains (3)	Dublin SC (Lab), Dublin SW (FF), Dun Laoghaire (Lab)
	Losses (0)	
Oths	Gains (2)	Dublin S (PD), Roscommon (FF)
	Losses (0)	

Note: the party in brackets indicates from whom the seat was gained or to whom it was lost.

One striking aspect of the election was the sizeable drop in turnout (see Table 4.2), defined here as valid votes as a proportion of the electorate. At a mere 67.7 per cent, this was the lowest turnout since the same figure was recorded in September 1927. From 76.0 per cent in 1969, turnout dropped at each of the next five elections, rose fractionally in 1987, but has now resumed its decline. It fell from the 1987 level in every

## 5. How the voters decided

Michael Marsh and Richard Sinnott

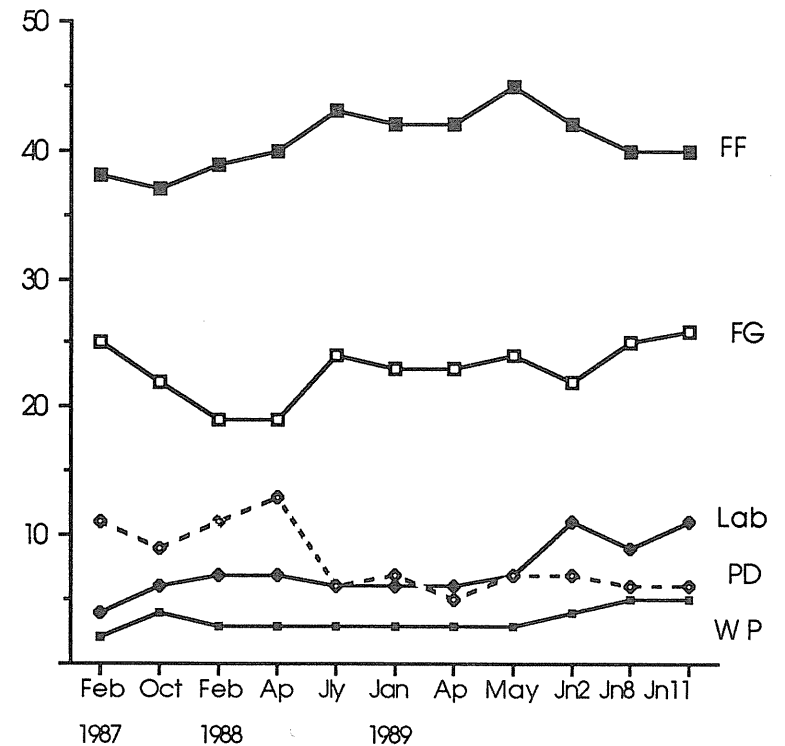
The previous chapter looked at what the voters decided. When we move on to try to explain how and why people decided to vote as they did, a whole set of questions about the attitudes and behaviour of the voters presents itself. When, precisely, did the Fianna Fáil push for a majority falter? Was the calling of the election a gamble or a reasonable calculation that went wrong? What effect did the decision to call the election have on the reputation of the man who made it, and what role did his reputation play in the subsequent campaign? Was the health issue as dominant as it seemed? If so, what was the effect on party support? Given the increased vote for the left, was there any ideological coherence beneath the campaign issues? In chapter 3 we read graphic personal accounts of the trials and tribulations of campaigning - how did the efforts of these six candidates and of hundreds of others influence voters' decisions? How many people switched their vote in 1989? Were the gains and losses of the parties class-based? If so, have they brought us any nearer the much-discussed realignment of Irish politics along class lines? This chapter marshals the opinion poll evidence on these matters, beginning with developments in patterns of support for the various parties between 1987 and 1989.

### PATTERNS OF PARTY SUPPORT 1987-89

At first sight, the trends in party support revealed in the polls<sup>1</sup> taken between 1987 and the calling of the election in May 1989 seem simple: by July 1988, Fianna Fáil had moved into a reasonably comfortable electoral position with 43 per cent of the declared vote (see Figure 5.1). The improvement in Fianna Fáil support appears to have coincided with the collapse of the PDs between April and July of 1988; (as one would expect, Figure 5.1 suggests that Fine Gael also benefited substantially from that collapse). Fianna Fáil's strong position was then more or less maintained over the course of the following eleven months and even improved slightly in the early days of the election campaign as, with the calling of the election, some of the "don't knows" came off the fence. On this evidence, it might

seem that Fianna Fáil went to the country in May 1989 with a reasonable chance of achieving its objective, even if not as a certain winner. However, if we look below the surface at the movements in support for the parties among different social classes over the two year period, a more complicated picture emerges, one which suggests that Fianna Fáil's basis for going to the country was much less secure than appeared at first sight.

Figure 5.1 Trends in party support 1987-1989



Part of the problem was that, based on past experience in the 1980s, Fianna Fáil knew it was very unlikely to gain an overall majority with less than 46 per cent of the vote. Any significant slippage below this would put paid to its hopes. This was ominous, because the trends in the class composition of Fianna Fáil support in the period 1987-89 were marked by considerable instability and therefore indicated very real potential for just such slippage.



19 It should be emphasised that this discussion of class and voting is based only on the standard market research measure of social class. Recent discussions have suggested that, for the purposes of analysing political behaviour, this may not be the most appropriate way to measure it, and have proposed an alternative. The analysis of class and voting in *How Ireland Voted 1987* (see footnote 2 above) was able to apply such a revised measure at least partially, because the *Irish Times* / MRBI polls specifically included questions designed for this purpose (see Laver et al, "Patterns of party support", pp. 97-112). Unfortunately, these questions were not repeated in 1989, and the analysis here is confined to the traditional market research categorisation.

## 6. The European Parliament election

*Patrick Keatinge and Michael Marsh*

Unlike the two preceding European Parliament elections, that of 1989 took place against the background of rising expectations for integration in western Europe. The policy-making reforms of the Single European Act (SEA) which came into force in 1987, combined with the agreements "to complete the internal market and to establish a five year budgetary commitment" which followed in 1988, seemed to herald a more constructive atmosphere in the European Community than at any time since Ireland had become a member.

The broader international environment was also propitious. The stock market crisis of October 1987 had been overcome, and that great constant of the last forty-odd years, the cold war, seemed to be in the throes of dissolution. At any rate the superpowers had become sufficiently relaxed to take the implications of EC integration more seriously; American fear of commercial rivalry with "fortress Europe" was matched by Gorbachev's rhetoric of the "common European home". The attraction of integration was felt even more directly by the EFTA countries, and particularly by Austria, on the verge of a formal application for EC membership.

This new departure for the brave new world of 1992 was not without its counter-reformation, led by Margaret Thatcher. In September 1988, in a much referred to speech in Bruges, the British prime minister had assumed the mantle of a latter-day de Gaulle, championing the nation-state against the presumptions of an overambitious president of the EC Commission, Jacques Delors. "Europe" threatened to become a matter of high politics, after years of interminable squabbling over a minuscule budget.

The government's presentation of Ireland's European policy reflected the euphoric rather than the problematic aspects of these developments.<sup>1</sup> On coming to power in March 1987, Mr Haughey very swiftly cast aside the doubts aired by Fianna Fáil during the previous administration. None of the Dáil parties seemed altogether at ease with the high politics that emerged during the referendum campaign on the SEA two months later, though in the end they obtained what was for most of them the right answer, albeit from less than half of a bewildered electorate. By the middle of 1988 this aberrant event was a dim memory as the public awareness campaign for the 1992 deadline was launched, and in the autumn a new "special relationship" was established between the government and the EC Commission. By this stage it was clear that EC member-

ship, through an increase in the structural funds promised by Brussels, was being presented as a central element in the government's overall economic strategy. The National Development Plan 1989-1993, published just two and a half months before the election, indicated how and where these additional resources were to be spent, some compensation perhaps for the much harsher side of recent economic policy.<sup>2</sup>

Fine Gael and the Progressive Democrats could do little but smile wanly at this bravura performance, since their own enthusiasm for "Europe" matched the government's. At best the National Development Plan could be attacked for its form and particularly its failure to take account of specific regional consultation. Both these parties showed some signs of looking at the long-term implications of a revived European Community, including the eventual compatibility of Irish neutrality with an evolving political union.<sup>3</sup>

On the left the Labour Party's divisions on the EC, so evident during the drawn-out ratification of the SEA, had been eased with the removal of the burdens of government. For the Workers' Party there was a major change in policy. In 1987 it had been the only Dáil party to side with Raymond Crotty's anti-SEA campaign, but its new leader, Proinsias De Rossa, proclaimed the party's European vocation at the Ard Fheis on 8 April 1989. Thus the Dáil's consensus on EC membership, which had looked somewhat shopworn in the previous European election was revitalised and extended. If there was to be a radical critique of EC integration or Ireland's participation in it, it would have to come from parties outside the Dáil, such as the Green Party or Sinn Féin, or from independent voices, such as Raymond Crotty.

#### THE MANIFESTOES

However, that is not to say that a quantum leap had occurred in the Europeanisation of the Irish political system between 1987 and 1989. A comparison between the manifestoes published by those Irish parties possessing formal links with European Parliament party groups and the latter's composite programmes illustrates the limits of integration in this regard.<sup>4</sup> Even allowing for differences between national interests and electoral strategies, as well for a necessary simplification of an untidy listing of uneasy compromises, it is noticeable that the national manifestoes are effectively purged of potentially awkward questions relating to the pace and direction of political integration itself.

The most topical issue of the "high politics" of the Community's development was undoubtedly that of Economic and Monetary Union (EMU),

with the publication of the Delors report of the Community's central bankers on 17 April, but this was perhaps too topical - and almost certainly too technical - to receive more than a passing reference at either level of manifesto. No such excuse could be offered for the rather patchy treatment accorded to the European Parliament's claim for greater powers in Community policy-making, which naturally took a central place in most of the party groups' programmes. Fianna Fáil's French Gaullist partners in the European Democratic Alliance (EDA) are among the least enthusiastic on this score, but the controversial implications of their position were hardly reflected in the Irish party's bland recital of the existing powers of the Strasbourg assembly. Fine Gael ignored what was clearly a priority for their counterparts in the European People's Party (EPP). Thus it was left to the two smaller parties, the Progressive Democrats and Labour, to present the matter as a real issue. The former, though as yet holding no seat in the European Parliament, pressed for more powers; as did their associated group, the European Liberal Democratic and Reform Parties (ELDR), while the Labour Party also endorsed the Socialist Group's emphasis on the need for more democratic control.

One of the most telling indicators of Irish sensitivities about a contradiction between national sovereignty and an evolving political union is the issue of neutrality. Here too the inconvenient questions about a possible extension of the EC into the field of defence were heavily laundered in the national party manifestoes. Fianna Fáil, ignoring its associates' flirtation with Atlanticism and their advocacy of the military alliance within NATO, the Western European Union (WEU), sang the praises of Ireland's neutrality at some length; with its eyes firmly fixed on the (immutable?) present, it asserted that there was no pressure to make a defence commitment. Fine Gael's manifesto referred to the EPP's strong emphasis on "security" as if it were concerned solely with police activities to combat drugs and terrorism. The PDs had persuaded the European Liberals to "recognise" that Ireland was militarily neutral, but their national manifesto confusingly combined a call for debate on the issue - a hint of change - with a reference to Ireland being a precedent for the admission of other neutrals being admitted to the Community. The Labour Party, having extracted a similar "recognition" of Ireland's special position, warned of concessions being made by some of their rivals and listed objectives to be pursued by an independent foreign policy within the process of foreign policy consultation, European Political Cooperation.

There was little sign, therefore, in the national manifestoes that the Irish parties were envisaging an explicit commitment to the development of political integration that went beyond the level already achieved in

## 7. The Senate election

*John Coakley*

The clearly secondary role of the Senate in the Irish legislative and governmental process ensures that Senate elections are always overshadowed by elections to the Dáil. Unlike Ireland's first Senate (1922-1936), whose life-span was independent of that of the Dáil, the electoral schedule of the present Senate is closely tied to that of the lower house. The Constitution provides for a general election to the Senate within 90 days of a dissolution of the Dáil, and the fact that the Senate election follows the Dáil election after so short a lapse encourages a perception of the Senate election as a mere coda in a single electoral process.

In addition to possessing inferior powers to the Dáil, the Senate is considerably smaller, with only 60 members, as opposed to 166 in the other chamber. In 1989, it was the prolonged delay in the nomination of the Taoiseach's 11 appointees to the Senate that attracted greatest interest, principally out of public curiosity about the manner in which the Fianna Fáil - Progressive Democrat pact would be implemented in this domain. The election of the other 49 senators attracted, as usual, little interest, justifying once again the label "silent election".<sup>1</sup>

In this chapter we will analyse the 1989 Senate election, compare the results with those of the 1987 election, and comment on certain aspects of the Senate electoral process which have attracted criticism. The constitutional and legal framework within which the election took place has already been the subject of extensive analysis and so will be touched on only briefly; similarly, those aspects of the electoral process (such as the mechanics of the count and management of the campaign) which show little variation from election to election and which have also been analysed elsewhere will receive little emphasis.<sup>2</sup>

The makeup of the three components of the Senate - the vocational panels, which account for 43 members, the universities, which contribute another six, and the Taoiseach's 11 nominees - will first be examined in turn. Two more general questions regarding Senate elections will then be addressed. The first relates to the extent to which the Senate has failed to become a genuinely "vocational" chamber. The second has to do with the Senate's alleged role as ante-chamber to the Dáil: the extent to which it serves as a training ground for new, hopeful Dáil candidates or as a consolation prize for old, defeated ones.

The election of the 43 members from the five so-called vocational panels has the largest impact on the composition of the Senate. Candidates may be nominated either by four members of the Oireachtas (none of whom may propose more than one candidate) or by a nominating body registered with the Clerk of the Senate as being entitled to make such nominations. The electorate consists of the members of all county and county borough councils, all newly-elected Dáil deputies and all outgoing senators, but no elector may vote in respect of more than one qualification.

This rather cumbersome procedure was ostensibly designed to ensure that the Senate would be "vocational" in character: that it would contrast with a Dáil dominated by political parties by representing instead certain sectoral interests. Thus, the nomination of candidates was opened to external, non-political bodies (such as the Royal Irish Academy, the Central Fisheries Board, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and the Licensed Vintners Association, to name only a few selected at random). Furthermore, the electoral rules stipulate that the "nominating body subpanels", as the lists of candidates proposed by these bodies are known, are entitled to certain minimum representation in the Senate itself. On the five-member Cultural and Educational panel, at least two of those elected must have been proposed by nominating bodies; on the seven-member Administrative panel and the nine-member Industrial and Commercial panel, the minimum is three; and on the two 11-member panels, the Agricultural and Labour ones, at least four of the elected senators must have been proposed by nominating bodies. In the case of each panel, the position of candidates nominated by members of the Oireachtas is protected by the same minimum representation requirements. This means that, of the 43 panel seats, a minimum of 16 must go to nominating body nominees and another 16 to Oireachtas nominees; the remaining 11 may come from either group.

The composition of the electorate has the effect, however, of negating the idea of vocational representation. Since Dáil deputies, outgoing senators and county councillors are almost all active party politicians, the Senate elections have a highly political flavour. Each member of the electoral college receives five ballot papers, one for each of the five panels. Even though the ballot paper for each panel does not explicitly indicate candidates' party affiliations, and voting is by secret postal ballot, a highly partisan outcome is ensured by the "guidance" offered by the parties to their members of the electorate.

The 1989 election exemplified again the dominance of party politics in Irish public life. The Senate nominating bodies put forward a total of 71 validly-nominated candidates, five fewer than in 1987. As usual, these

## 8. The Udarás na Gaeltachta Election

Tony Parker

In some parts of the Republic of Ireland, three elections were held on 15 June 1989. These were the Gaeltacht areas, the officially designated areas of Irish speakers, who voted not only in the general and European Parliament elections but also for seven members of the Udarás na Gaeltachta authority. The election has been referred to in the media as the "Forgotten Election"<sup>1</sup>, since it was overshadowed throughout much of the country by the two larger-scale elections. However, to the people in the Gaeltacht areas, the Udarás na Gaeltachta authority plays an important role in economic and social development.

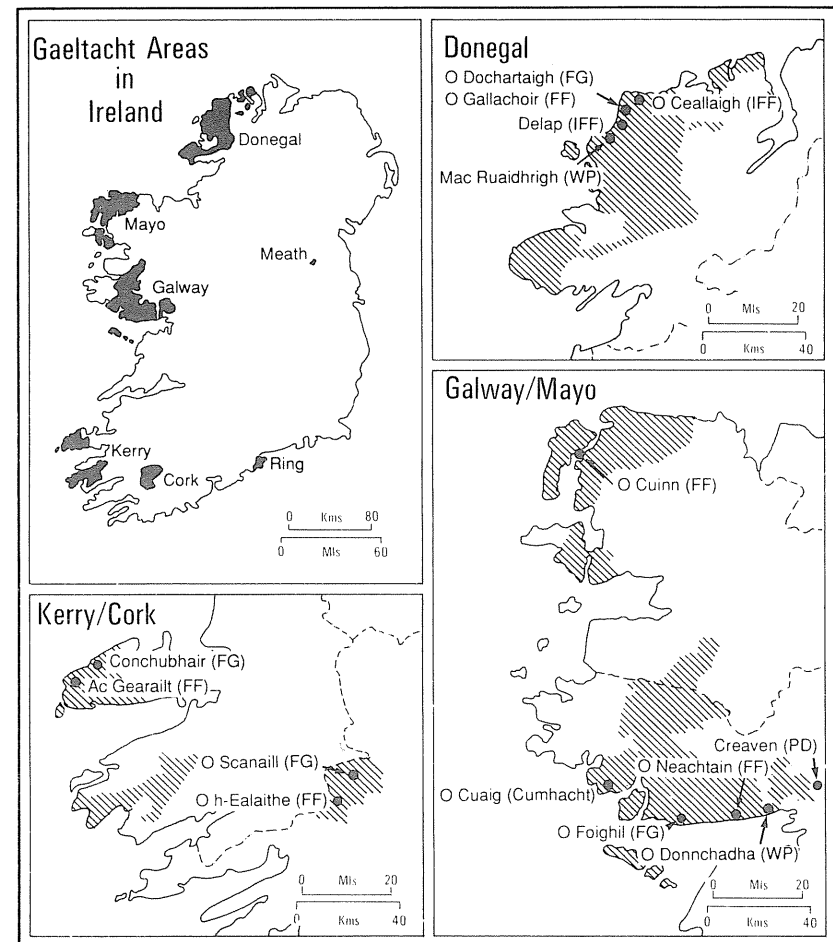
The Gaeltacht areas are officially-designated districts where the Irish language is used in day to day affairs by the vast majority of the population. They are largely concentrated along the western seaboard, in some of the most economically, socially and physically disadvantaged parts of the country. The largest Gaeltacht areas are in Galway, Mayo and Donegal with smaller ones in Kerry, Cork, Waterford (Ring) and Meath (Figure 8.1).

### THE UDARAS NA GAELTACHTA AUTHORITY

From 1957 to 1980 infrastructural development in the Gaeltacht was the responsibility not only of national and local government but also of Gaeltarra Éireann, a specific Gaeltacht authority. In 1980 Udarás na Gaeltachta took over from Gaeltarra Éireann, acquiring responsibility for managing various industries and encouraging new ones, and the power to acquire land, premises and plant. The Udarás has a wider role than its predecessor in that it was established to "encourage the preservation and extension of the use of Irish in the Gaeltachta and to promote the economic, social, cultural, linguistic and physical development of the Gaeltacht"<sup>2</sup>. It has been suggested therefore that the Udarás legislation gave the authority "development agency status with a mission to preserve and extend Irish as a spoken language"<sup>3</sup>. While the more extensive powers have differentiated the Udarás from Gaeltarra, a further major distinction is that a majority - seven - of the thirteen members of the board of Udarás na Gaeltachta are elected by residents of the Gaeltacht (the

other six are appointed by the Minister for the Gaeltacht). This means that residents of the Gaeltacht areas have had an input into the selection of local representatives to look after their needs and ensure that their area obtains its share of the benefits that the Udarás can provide.

Figure 8.1: Udarás na Gaeltachta constituencies and candidates, 1989



## 9. Forming the government

Brian Farrell

The ostensible occasion of the 1989 general election was a parliamentary defeat on the issue of funding for AIDS patients. It was the sixth occasion that the 25th Dáil had challenged the minority Fianna Fáil government. Scarcely a crisis, it escalated- or drifted - into a decision to seek a fresh mandate. Charles Haughey and his colleagues argued in the course of the campaign that only a single-party majority government could provide the stable and enduring administration required for Ireland as it headed into the 1990s.

For the fifth time in a decade, the voters refused to oblige; Fianna Fáil's total of Dáil seats was reduced by four. Far from resolving an allegedly unmanageable problem of parliamentary uncertainty and government instability, the election results imposed new burdens on a system already showing signs of fragility. Immediately after the election there was no single-party majority; there was no viable alternative in sight. Neither a plausible minority single-party government nor a likely agreed coalition was available. The only consensus - among politicians, public and commentators alike - was that a new election would not resolve the impasse.

Yet this was a situation that was not only predictable, but had been predicted. Following three general elections of 1981-1982, it was noted:

Present electoral arrangements and the narrow ideological and social cleavage between the major parties suggest that variations of the coalition and minority models are more likely in the future. The intervention of independent and smaller-party deputies in close parliamentary divisions and the continuing local and pressure-group influence point to the need for more definite procedures (perhaps drawing on the European experience of coalition formation) and possibly for more time (between dissolution and the summoning of a new Dáil) to permit government formation. In particular, it seems likely that Fianna Fáil will be forced to reconsider its traditional opposition to coalition.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, after the 1987 election, there could be no doubt that "government formation is no longer a neat ceremonial function following on, in some clear cut and predictable liturgical sequence, from the declaration of the results".<sup>2</sup> What was manifest in the late 1980s had been fore-

seen by percipient politicians from the inception of the new Irish state system. Kevin O'Higgins, Minister for Home Affairs, told the Dáil in 1922 that, because of proportional representation, small groups rather than large political parties would dominate the Dáil. As a result "you will not have the thing that is most needed in Ireland for many a long year - you will not have a strong or stable government. You will have frequent changes in Government, and no continuity of policy in your Departments. You will have a state of affairs pretty much like what you had in Italy or France."<sup>3</sup>

The solution proposed at that time was a marked departure from the Westminster-style single-party government and envisaged a small core Cabinet bound by collective responsibility but supplemented with 'extern' ministers. That proposal was only partially implemented; in practice the few "extern" ministers appointed were all party men and indistinguishable from Cabinet ministers.<sup>4</sup> The Westminster model, including two large "majority-bent" parties, was firmly in place by the late 1920s.

The problem of securing stable government formation remained. During the 1937 debate on the new constitution there was an illuminating exchange between two men destined to lead Irish governments. Proposing an amendment to the draft constitution that would retain proportional representation but not specify the single transferable vote mode, John A. Costello argued "We always understood that the real defect under any system of proportional representation, and particularly the system of the single transferable vote, was that it led, in circumstances where there are no big economic issues before the country, to a large number of small Parties being returned making for instability in government."<sup>5</sup> De Valera opposed the amendment and concluded his observations on the issue with the remark: "I am honestly afraid of the temptation there might be to political Parties to start manoeuvring with various systems of proportional representation for purely Party purposes."<sup>6</sup>

More than twenty years later, in 1959, de Valera came back to the stability problem and, as an attempted parting-gift to the party he had founded, combined his own campaign for the presidency with a constitutional referendum to substitute a simple majority system for STV. It was rejected.

In the following decade the all-party Oireachtas Committee on the Constitution again addressed the problem of reconciling popular representation and governmental stability.<sup>7</sup> Arguments for and against electoral reform were canvassed. Another referendum followed, containing two proposals. One, following on the decision in the O'Donovan case<sup>8</sup>, would allow a "tolerance" in the ratio of seats to votes; the other involved sub-

## 10. Coalition and Fianna Fáil

*Michael Laver and Audrey Arkins*

In most of Western Europe, coalition government is the rule rather than the exception. Government formation in Ireland, on the other hand, has generally involved a straightforward process of deciding whether the cabinet that runs the country will contain only Fianna Fáil ministers or whether it will be a coalition of Fianna Fáil's opponents.<sup>1</sup> Since the beginning of the 1980s, however, the situation seems to have been changing inexorably as single party majority government has moved ever further from Fianna Fáil's grasp. Wheeling and dealing between politicians over who will get into the cabinet has become a routine post-election spectacle. Yet the very idea of coalition remains anathema to many within Fianna Fáil, who associate it historically with electoral defeat, followed by an opportunistic liaison between an ideological odd couple of Fianna Fáil's old enemies, Fine Gael and Labour.

After generations of disparaging the very concept of coalition, Fianna Fáil changed tack in 1989. The party of single party government gave cabinet seats to Dessie O'Malley and Bobby Molloy, former Fianna Fáil dissidents who had jumped ship. O'Malley had founded, and Molloy had been a key early sponsor of, a rival party, the Progressive Democrats (PDs). The intervention of the PDs in the 1987 and 1989 elections was almost certainly the crucial factor that robbed Fianna Fáil of a parliamentary majority. Even so, Charles Haughey, despite controlling only a minority of seats in the previous Dáil, had faced down the opposition for two years. Each time he was challenged, he had gone eyeball to eyeball with his enemies, daring them to call an election and suffer the consequences. The question that intrigued everyone with an interest in Irish politics in the aftermath of the 1989 election, therefore, was: "Could Haughey have done it again? Could he have faced down the opposition one more time?"

Before we can settle the matter of whether Haughey could indeed have hung tough, we must first understand how Fianna Fáil has been able to get away with refusing to do coalition deals for so long. This has to do with the fact that quite often, while Fianna Fáil has lacked a majority, it has been able to govern alone because it has faced an opposition that was deeply divided over policy. In such cases, of course, the party's lack of a majority leaves it open to blackmail by opposition parties which might hold the balance of power and which might attempt to extort major

concessions, even seats at the cabinet table, on this basis. Traditional Fianna Fáil strategy has therefore been based on the dictum that, if party leaders once give in to such demands, and particularly if they ever agree to share cabinet seats with other parties in order to get into office, then the party will not be credible when it attempts to take a tough line with its opponents on a future occasion when the party might well be better placed to govern alone. On this logic, it could be better for Fianna Fáil to go into opposition for a limited period, maintaining the credibility of its bargaining posture and in this way increasing its long-term chances of returning to power as a single party government, rather than to give in to demands for coalition.

If the logic of Fianna Fáil's traditional coalition veto has been based on the party's willingness and ability to face down a divided opposition, what changed in 1989? Was the opposition less divided? Was Fianna Fáil for some reason less willing to face them down? Or did party leaders simply make a tactical error? In this chapter, we set out to answer these questions in two ways. We analyse Fianna Fáil's bargaining position using techniques that are applied to the analysis of coalition bargaining in most of the rest of western Europe. We then assess how well this analysis fits with the events surrounding the historic formation of the Fianna Fáil-PD coalition in 1989.

### COULD FIANNA FAIL HAVE GOVERNED ALONE? THE THEORY

The formation of government coalitions in Western Europe is a matter much analysed by political scientists, who have made considerable progress on this question over the past twenty years or so. One of the main things that they have been concerned with in recent times is the phenomenon of minority government. These governments are really rather common in Western Europe, comprising about 40 per cent of all administrations.<sup>2</sup> Many minority governments, furthermore, are quite stable, further evidence that minority government is not some weird deviation, a perversion of the democratic process, but a normal state of affairs.

One of the main ways to make sense of minority government is to take party policy seriously. If policy is what excites politicians, then a minority administration may be able to govern if it faces a divided opposition made up of parties whose policies differ more from each other than they do from the policies of the government. The opposition parties then cannot defeat the government, even if they have the votes to do so, because they cannot agree upon an alternative. Taking the legislature as a whole, this means that there is no alternative preferred by a majority of legisla-

## 11. The Irish party system into the 1990s

Peter Mair

One of the more frequent reactions to the outcome of the 1989 Dáil election was that it reflected a further drift towards "European-style" politics in Ireland, whose political system has long been regarded by political scientists as one of the oddities of the European scene. Irish parties appeared to bear little or no relation to the mainstream political families which pervaded the neighbouring political systems; Irish political divides were inextricably bound up with the *sui generis* conflict deriving from the civil war. Of late, however, doubt has begun to be cast upon this traditional perspective and, to judge from the more immediate reactions, the 1989 election has been seen to confirm a new direction.

Signs of a new dynamic in Irish politics were not hard to find. The survival of the Progressive Democrats, who represented the most evident symptom of the challenge to civil war moulds, seemed to indicate the seriousness of the impetus for change. The marginal success of the Greens was also cited, as was the revival of Labour fortunes and the continued growth of the Workers' Party. Even the relatively lengthy and somewhat fraught process of government formation was seen as an indicator of a shift towards a European motif. One familiar adage states that government formation in European countries is determined not by the outcome of elections but rather by the results of negotiations between the political parties, and this now seems to apply to the Irish case as closely as it has done for some time in countries such as Belgium, Denmark and the Netherlands. Indeed, it is probably even more appropriate in the contemporary Irish case since, ironically, it was the two parties which suffered most at the hands of the electorate, Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats, which emerged holding the spoils of office, while those which gained seats - Fine Gael, Labour and the Workers' Party - continued to languish in opposition.

Now that the dust has settled, however, and the initial excitement caused by the confounding of Fianna Fáil and the growth in support for the left has died down, it is worth looking more closely at the extent to which the 1989 outcome has resulted in a shift in the nature of the party system in general, and in a drift towards a more European-style politics in particular.

When dealing with any party system it is necessary to distinguish between the policy concerns of the various parties, on the one hand, and the actual configuration of the party system itself, on the other. To put it another way, it is necessary to distinguish *what parties do* from *what parties are*.

The first aspect deals with the issues which parties choose to emphasize, the policy appeals which they enunciate, and the positions which they adopt on a day-to-day basis. As such, it is likely to be strongly conditioned by the various social and economic problems confronting the society which is to be governed. The second aspect relates much more to the historical identity of the parties, reflecting the conflicts and divides which prevailed when the party system was consolidated, and the traditions and beliefs which still continue to inform the various party strategies. It is this which determines whether we continue to find Christian parties, Socialist or Communist parties, Nationalist or Liberal parties, or whatever. The different historical roots of party systems create the essential diversity among contemporary European party systems, whereas the broad policy concerns of the parties tend to produce a more uniform pattern.

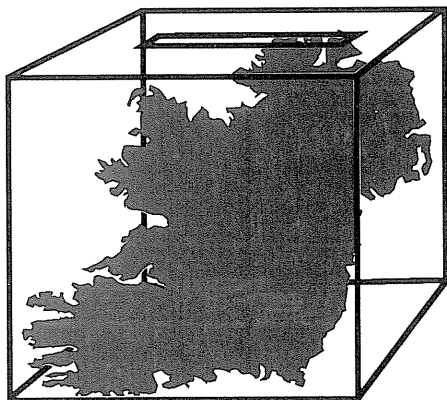
Once this distinction is accepted then it is clear that, considering *what parties do*, Ireland is quite close to the European pattern. But this is far from a recent phenomenon. Indeed, for much of the postwar period, and in particular from the 1960s onwards, the policy concerns of the Irish parties have reflected a range of options which is effectively identical to that of their European neighbours. As with virtually every other European country in the postwar period, Irish parties and governments have been primarily concerned with the problems of economic growth, employment and social welfare. As elsewhere, debates on economic policy have revolved around the extent to which growth and employment should be fostered by active public sector involvement or by giving a free hand to the market. As elsewhere, debates on welfare have concerned the proportion of state spending which should be devoted to social expenditure and, more generally, the extent to which the quest for social justice should be balanced against the disincentives to initiative produced by high taxation. As elsewhere, albeit in a somewhat belated fashion, Ireland has also tended to follow a cycle which is now familiar to most of our European neighbours, which saw immediate postwar austerity replaced by major increases in government expenditure and then, more recently, by a withdrawal of the state and a greater reliance on weakly regulated private markets. In these terms at least, Ireland has never been particularly dis-

# HOW IRELAND VOTED 1989

The 1989 election provoked some of the most dramatic political developments in recent Irish history. Things will never be quite the same since Fianna Fáil, for the first time in history, agreed to go into a coalition with another party. Quite simply, the range of possible governments is now very much bigger than it was when the main purpose of Irish elections was to decide whether the country would be run by Fianna Fáil or by its opponents.

HOW IRELAND VOTED 1989 analyzes the events and forces that shaped this landmark Irish election. It brings together political scientists and practising politicians to tell the story of the campaign, the issues, the voting and the bargaining that made the 1989 election so important and fascinating. And it also looks at the European, Seanad and Udarás na Gaeltachta elections that took place about the same time.

Timely and authoritative, HOW IRELAND VOTED 1989 is the definitive account of the 1989 election.



Centre for the Study of  
Irish Elections

University College  
Galway

ISBN 0-9515731-0-1

£7.95