13

Stability, Crisis and Change in Post-war Ireland 1945–1973

BRIAN GIRVIN

De Valera's Achievement and Ireland's Post-war Challenges

This chapter focuses on Ireland from 1945 to 1973, a time of continuity and change. Continuity in policy priorities was established around an agrarian, socially conservative society with Ireland lagging far behind small European states like Denmark that had embraced industrialisation and modernisation. Crucially, this period is also one of change, and possibilities, with the advent of more open industrial policies, the ending of protectionism, the emergence of a liberal minority and the opening of foreign and economic policy to membership of the European Economic Community.[1]

By 1945, Irish politics and society had been transformed after nearly four decades of upheaval. This Ireland is independent, nationalist and Catholic: its democracy is reinforced by a stable constitutional order. Post-war Ireland bears the political and institutional hallmark of what Éamon de Valera and Fianna Fáil had achieved since 1932. This achievement was considerable and established the parameters within which politics and social life would operate for the next thirty years. While not all of post-Emergency, Ireland reflected de Valera's achievement, his influence and that of Fianna Fáil was such that it affects how the period is understood and interpreted.[2] De Valera was still at the height of his powers and influence and his government was considering ambitious post-war plans for Ireland. In 1944, Fianna Fáil had returned to office with a clear majority, confirming its position as the dominant party. The

1 I would like to thank Rona Fitzgerald for her incisive comments on an earlier version of this chapter. The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AH/H0050/1) provided funding that facilitated the research for this work. I am responsible for the content and the views expressed.

2 B. Girvin, *From Union to Union: Nationalism, Democracy and Religion in Ireland* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2002), 106–200.

opposition was in disarray and every shade of nationalist opinion applauded de Valera's measured and dignified reply to Winston Churchill's criticism of Irish wartime neutrality in May 1945.[3]

Nor was there a backlash against the government with the ending of the Emergency. De Valera's candidate Seán T. O'Kelly won the presidential election in June and Fianna Fáil maintained its grip on local government on the same occasion. Even more remarkable, Fianna Fáil won three of the five by-elections in December 1945 and convincingly won the Cork Borough by-election in June 1946. In contrast, the Labour Party had split into two parties while Fine Gael lacked all direction and seemed unable to find suitable candidates to run in by-elections.[4] De Valera and Fianna Fáil could be forgiven for believing that their place in government was secure and that their task was to continue the policies and strategies that had proved successful since 1932.

Moreover, after thirteen years in office, the political success of Fianna Fáil had transformed Ireland's political culture, its institutional framework and its relationship to the United Kingdom. Ireland was, as de Valera asserted in 1945, a republic in all but name and its relationship to the Commonwealth was ambiguous.[5] In a comparative context, Irish democracy was consolidated and potential threats from the Blueshirts, the IRA and authoritarian Catholic movements had been defeated.[6] Few democracies had survived the inter-war period intact. This consolidation was secured by the introduction of a new constitution in 1937 that underpinned a notable compromise between democracy, nationalism, Catholicism and liberalism. While Irish democracy could be majoritarian, the Constitution provided a Supreme Court with the potential to constrain parliamentary majorities; a potential that was quickly realised.[7]

3 Elizabeth Bowen, 'Notes on Ireland', June 1945 for a contemporary view, DO/130/65: TNA. There is no satisfactory study of de Valera or Fianna Fáil during the period from 1945 to 1959; See Girvin, *From Union to Union*, 106–200 for a preliminary assessment; T. P. Coogan's *De Valera: Long Fellow, Long Shadow* (London: Hutchinson, 1993) is particularly deficient for this period and is one-sided generally; D. Ferriter, *Judging Dev: A Reassessment of the Life and Legacy of Éamon de Valera* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2007) is even-handed but not comprehensive.

4 N. Puirséil, *The Irish Labour Party 1922–73* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2007), 110–32;' Cumann na nGaedheal/ Fine Gael General Purposes Committee, 14 November 1945 Fine Gael Papers 39/1/2; P39/MIN/4 and Fine Gael Party Meetings 5 December 1945: UCDA.

5 *Debates* Dáil Éireann, 17 July 1945, Vol. 97, cc. 2568–75; Maffey memorandum on meeting with de Valera 26 July 1947, 3 August 1946, DO35/2096: TNA.

6 P. Mair, 'De Valera and Democracy', in T. Garvin, M. Manning and R. Sinnott (eds.), *Dissecting Irish Politics: Essays in Honour of Brian Farrell* (UCD Press, 2004), 31–47; Department of the Taoiseach S.13552, NAI, contains extensive criticism of the Report of the Committee on Vocational Organisation.

7 Government legislation was declared unconstitutional in 1943 and 1946, thus establishing this principle.

Moreover, Fianna Fáil demonstrated that significant change could be promoted through democratic means, even in the face of sustained opposition from Fine Gael and the British government.

Fianna Fáil's ascendancy also had a significant impact on socio-economic policy. Protection was introduced for native Irish industry and a significant expansion followed. Major changes in agriculture altered the balance of production towards tillage and small farms, thus weakening the export-based producers who mostly supported Fine Gael. New social policies were promoted and the state, for the first time, took responsibility for the welfare of significant sections of its citizens. New institutions were established, such as the Central Bank in 1944 and the Industrial Relations Act 1946. The government was now in a better position to influence banking, welfare and labour policy. While Ireland ceased to be a minimalist state it never became a welfare state in the comprehensive fashion that emerged after 1945 in western Europe. Less successful were reforms in health and education which remained under denominational control. Despite this, the ambitious proposals in the Health Act 1947 suggest a willingness to explore new policy avenues even in the face of potential opposition from church authorities and vested interests.[8]

Understandably, de Valera would claim that Fianna Fáil 'had always been a progressive party with a long record of political, economic and social achievements', an emphasis reinforced by party publicity and public speakers.[9] However, it was never a left-wing party and might be compared to the broad coalition reformist parties such as the Roosevelt New Deal Democrats in the United States or to Christian Democratic parties in western Europe after 1945. These parties were 'catch-all' parties with progressive and conservative sections, while appealing to a national electorate. In the Irish case, Fianna Fáil's radicalism was constrained by the proprietorial nature of the society, the dominance of farming in the economy and the influence of conservative vested interests. Consequently, radical interventionist economic policies or expansionist fiscal policies were unlikely to be politically successful, as Seán Lemass discovered in 1945.[10] Notwithstanding this, Fianna Fáil had achieved a

8 S. Carey, *Social Security in Ireland, 1939–1952: The Limits to Solidarity* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2007); B. Girvin, 'The State and Vocational Education 1922–1960', in J. Logan (ed.), *Teachers' Union: The TUI and its Forerunners* (Dublin, 1999), 62–92; E. McKee, 'Church–State Relations and the Development of Irish Health Policy: The Mother-and-Child Scheme, 1943–53', *Irish Historical Studies* 25 (1986), 159–94.

9 De Valera interview with Len Probich, 1952, P150/3060; UCDA: Frank Aiken speech 11 June 1946, P104/1463: UCDA.

10 B. Girvin, *Between Two Worlds: Politics and Economy in Independent Ireland* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1989), 131–68.

wide-ranging consensus due to its political success. Fine Gael recognised that continuity had to be maintained in policy terms and its support for neutrality removed one of the main points of disagreement between the two largest parties. Anti-partitionism remained an unchallenged dogma for nationalists; not only was it pervasive but it provided the emotive content to Irish nationalism's sense of superiority and grievance.[11] By the end of the Emergency, most republicans accepted this consensus and acknowledged the legitimacy of the Irish state. When Clann na Poblachta was established as a radical republican alternative to Fianna Fáil, its leaders insisted that they accepted the existing political system and the constitution.[12] Only the IRA stood outside this consensus and the Department of Justice reported in 1947 that the organisation had all but disintegrated.[13]

However, there were also substantial challenges. Within government, fears were voiced that the state would not be able to absorb the estimated 250,000 Irish citizens who were expected to return from war work in Britain or service in the British armed forces. In the event, these fears were not to be realised. The post-war period was characterised instead by accelerated emigration, especially by young women. Despite various initiatives by successive governments after 1945, policy had no discernible impact on the rate of emigration. Fianna Fáil reintroduced the policy mix that had been successful during the 1930s. However, the relatively low level of growth experienced by the Irish economy during the post-war period was never enough to generate the employment necessary to offset the attraction of emigration. The stable nature of the consensus prevented the introduction of policies or indeed innovative thinking to address these problems. In addition, those who remained in Ireland benefitted from the stability and were usually conservative in the face of change. Nor were the majority sympathetic to the many social problems experienced by the less well-off sections of the society. Those on lower incomes were more likely to die from TB than those on middle or higher incomes. Similarly, research demonstrated that lower-income families were much less likely to include meat, milk or fruit in their diet than middle-income families.[14]

11 Department of External Affairs memorandum for cabinet 26 October 1947 S. 14002A: NAI. Minutes of cabinet meeting 22 January 1947; Bowen, Notes on Ireland, June 1945: TNA.

12 E. MacDermott, *Clann na Poblachta* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1998), 11–12, 19–43; notes by MacEntee for by-elections 20 October 1947 MacEntee Papers, P67/372, P67/374 for Clann na Poblachta correspondence with MacEntee: UCDA.

13 Justice to Taoiseach's office, 15 May 1947, S.137101: NAI.

14 Department of Health memorandum 17 July 1948 S. 12064A: NAI.

This darker side to Ireland is also apparent in the treatment of less advantaged and marginal groups. The fate of unmarried mothers was especially severe in a society that condemned the 'moral failings' of these women, but did little to help them. Many women emigrated rather than give birth in Ireland. Those who remained were treated as second-class citizens whose children could be adopted by American Catholics. There is also evidence of serious neglect. In one case over 50 per cent of the babies born in a state-supported home died in one year. Other cases of neglect include the industrial homes for boys and the Magdalen laundries for young women.[15] Irish society at this time was not inclusive of Jews and Protestants. Indeed, anti-Semitism was popular and found expression in judicial and state policy. Support for denominationalism in health and education exacerbated the distance between Catholics and Protestants, establishing separate social spheres for the different communities. Fianna Fáil TD Erskine Childers expressed his concerns to his colleagues on a number of occasions. He was critical of Archbishop McQuaid's hostility to Trinity College Dublin and to organisations where Catholics and Protestants collaborated. He believed that Catholic teaching was privileged in the state and in the courts, and he feared that Protestants might be discriminated against in public appointments.[16]

By 1948 the implied promise made by Fianna Fáil in 1945 had not been realised. Though the circumstances that affected Ireland between 1945 and 1948 were not always under the government's control, they were held responsible for the consequences. A strike by teachers weakened morale within the party and the severe weather conditions in late 1946 and early 1947 led to the reintroduction of rationing. The Tánaiste Seán Lemass acknowledged that conditions in January 1947 were 'much more serious now than it was at any time during the war'. A supplementary budget in 1947 was poorly received and the devaluation crisis of the same year undermined the electorate's confidence in government. By this time, there was also a challenge to Fianna Fáil. After Clann na Poblachta won two by-elections in October 1947, de Valera called a general election. Despite Fianna Fáil's many accomplishments, as James

15 Report by Stanley Lyons on visit to Britain 4 November 1948 March Papers, MS 8306/8/1: TCD; D. Whelan (ed), *Founded on Fear* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006); 'Home for Unmarried Mothers at Bessboro', Department of External Affairs, P. 99NAI; E. O'Sullivan and I. O'Donnell, *Coercive Confinement in Post-Independence Ireland: Patients, Prisoners and Penitents* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012). And see also the chapters by Earner-Byrne, Cox and Daly in this volume.

16 Childers to MacEntee (no date but from context 1945) P67/269, and Childers to MacEntee 11 February 1948, P67/298 MacEntee Papers; UCDA.

Hogan observed, 'the gratitude of a democratic electorate is notoriously short lived'. This proved to be the case in 1948.[17]

All Change or No Change: The First Inter-party Government 1948–1951

One of the consequences of stability and consensus was that a powerful anti-Fianna Fáil voting block emerged. As differences between all the parties narrowed, the prospect of an alternative government began to emerge. In particular, Fianna Fáil was less likely to receive lower-order vote transfers from other parties and other parties were more inclined to transfer among themselves. This pattern was in evidence at the presidential election in 1945 and again at the by-elections in 1947: it was crucial at the 1948 general election.[18] If de Valera called the 1948 general election as a preventative strike against the rise of Clann na Poblachta, he was only partly successful in stemming the anti-government tide. While it was a close-run election, Fianna Fáil lost. De Valera might have formed a government with support from the National Labour Party, but their TDs recognised that an alternative government was possible and supported the formation of the Inter-Party government, drawing together all five opposition parties and some independents. This outcome was possible because all parties were hostile to Fianna Fáil, and were concerned at the consequences of it remaining in power. It also marked the realignment in Irish politics between Fianna Fáil on one side and everyone else on the other; a pattern that was to continue for the next fifty years. Most remarkably, the gap between the parties on policy issues had narrowed appreciably. It became possible for a conservative party such as Fine Gael to join a government with the republican Clann na Poblachta and agree to a reformist programme. Statesmanship also contributed to this outcome as the Fine Gael leader Richard Mulcahy declined to become Taoiseach due to opposition from Clann na Poblachta. John A. Costello became the consensus candidate for the post when he was sworn in on 18 February 1948.[19]

17 Lemass note for Taoiseach, 1 January 1947, Dept of Trade, 97/9/720: NAI; J. Hogan, *Elections and Representation* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1945), 32: K. C. Kearns, *Ireland's Actic Siege: The Big Freeze of 1947* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2011).

18 M. Gallagher, *Irish Elections 1948–77: Results and Analysis* (London: Routledge, 2009), 31–5, 42.

19 D. McCullagh, *The Reluctant Taoiseach: A Biography of John A. Costello* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2010); D. McCullagh, *A Makeshift Majority: The First Inter-Party Government, 1948–51* (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 1998); McDermott, *Clann na Poblachta* for background to the election and formation of the government.

Fianna Fáil did not adapt well to opposition, believing that the party had been 'cheated' of office. Yet the relative ease with which the Inter-Party government replaced Fianna Fáil reflected the strength of the political system and the robustness of Irish democracy. Costello proved to be an ideal chairman in managing the complex challenges of a coalition government. The new Taoiseach accepted that each cabinet minister would exercise considerable autonomy within the context of the government's overall programme. This worked surprisingly well at first but would bring considerable difficulties later in the life of the government. The new cabinet appeared dynamic when compared to the previous Fianna Fáil government, which seemed tired and out of touch to even its own members.[20] That the government lasted over three years is testament to its success in providing the first real alternative to Fianna Fáil.

The star of the new government was the politically untested Minister for Health Noël Browne. With determination, skill and enthusiasm Browne pushed through an ambitious and comprehensive programme to eradicate TB which remained the major health threat to Irish families, especially those on lower incomes. James Dillon proved to be an energetic, if conservative, Minister for Agriculture, effectively representing the farming sector in government and in successful negotiations with the UK in 1948. Patrick McGilligan had served in the Cumann na nGaedheal government of the 1920s and brought his administrative experience to the Department of Finance. He remained cautious, continuing policies from the previous administration. He proved a foil for the more radical interventions by the Minister for External Affairs, Seán MacBride. MacBride had been IRA Chief of Staff and his emergence as a democratic politician demonstrates the strength of Irish democracy and its constitutional framework. He was ambitious to overhaul what he and his party deemed to be the failures of successive Fianna Fáil governments, especially in the areas of economic development and Irish unity.[21]

The new government was also more overtly clerical than its predecessor. At least four members of the Cabinet were members of the Knights of St Columbanus (a secretive Catholic lay organisation). At its first meeting the government promised 'filial loyalty and devotion' to the Pope and one of its parliamentary secretaries subsequently asserted he was a Catholic first and an

20 Childers to MacEntee 11 November 1947 P67/292, MacEntee Papers: UCDA.

21 J. Horgan, *Noël Browne: Passionate Outsider* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2000); M. Manning, *James Dillon: A Biography* (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1999); E. Keane, *Seán MacBride: A Life* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2007).

Irishman second.[22] Policy was generally cautious and continuity was the main feature of the government. However, the decision to establish the Industrial Development Authority in 1949 had far-reaching impacts. The introduction of a separate capital budget, which distinguished between regular budgetary demands and those for investment, was innovative if short-lived.

The decision to repeal the External Relations Act was the most dramatic action taken by the new government, declaring Ireland a republic and taking the state out of the Commonwealth. That was remarkable for a government led by a Fine Gael Taoiseach, but the decision itself was not unexpected: the British Representative (Ambassador) Lord Rugby had already informed London that repeal was likely. The government cast aside de Valera's ambiguity on the question, agreeing that an independent Ireland should be a republic.[23] This decision is persuasive evidence for the consensus in Irish politics. Unlike the changes introduced by Fianna Fáil during the 1930s, it caused little controversy. This was recognised rather grudgingly by Seán MacEntee in the Dáil but was widely welcomed in the nationalist community. The unintended consequence of this action was to bring partition back to the centre of Irish politics. The British government introduced the Ireland Bill, 1949 which provided that the status of Northern Ireland could not be changed 'without the consent of the parliament of Northern Ireland'. The result was consternation within the nationalist community and led to sustained protests to the British government by MacBride. What the government had failed to appreciate was that Irish neutrality, the declaration of the Republic and its decision not to join NATO had distanced the independent state from the United Kingdom and European opinion.[24] The declaration of the Republic copper-fastened partition and in effect confirmed Unionist hegemony in Northern Ireland. British politicians who had at one time voiced sympathy for Irish unification, such as Ernest Bevin, now refused to consider Irish pleas. Sir Basil Brooke, the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, called a snap election in 1949, winning thirty-nine out of the fifty seats. The extension of the welfare state to Northern

22 C. Crowe, R. Fanning, M. Kennedy, D. Keogh, E. O'Halpin and K. O'Malley (eds.), *Documents on Irish Foreign Policy: Volume IX 1948–1951* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2014), 1; Brendan Corish is cited in M. Gallagher, *The Irish Labour Party in Transition 1957–82* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1982), 42.

23 Memorandum by John J. Hearne 'The Kingsmere Conversation' '(The Taoiseach and Prime Minister Mackenzie King)' 9 September 1948, DFA/10/P12/5: NAI. In this conversation Costello explicitly precluded any constitutional connection with the Commonwealth in the future, in *Documents on Irish Foreign Policy* IX, 142–4.

24 The Irish diplomatic record for this controversy is conveniently brought together in *Documents on Irish Foreign Policy Volume IX*, 366–91.

5. Basil Brooke, first Viscount Brookeborough (1888–1973), prime minister of Northern Ireland (1943–63), at home on his country estate, Colebrooke Park, County Fermanagh, ND *c*.1970.

Ireland confirmed Britain's continuing commitment to the province. The income and welfare gap between Northern Ireland and the Republic widened during the 1950s and some Unionists believed that their future had been secured. However, the conflict between nationalists and unionists had not been resolved and stability was short-lived.[25]

By 1950 Ireland was more independent in a formal sense than at any time since 1922 but the cost of that was isolation from developments in Europe and a decline in capacity to influence the British government in diplomatic terms. Britain acknowledged that Ireland had the right to leave the Commonwealth but officials were impervious to Irish demands to change the status quo in Northern Ireland, dismissing Irish complaints as self-inflicted damage to their cause.[26] In addition, delegates to the Council of Europe were dismissive of Irish attempts to use the forum to promote its

25 B. Barton, 'Relations between Westminster and Stormont during the Attlee Premiership', *Irish Political Studies* 7 (1992), 1–20; P. Bew, *Ireland: The Politics of Enmity 1789–2006* (Oxford University Press, 2007), 478–85.

26 'Sir Gilbert Laithwaite to Sir Percival Liesching 16 May 1950, Prem 8/1222 pt 2: TNA.

anti-partitionist position, maintaining that the Council existed to move beyond such narrow concerns.[27]

By the early 1950s independent Ireland was out of step with developments in Europe and uneasy with the changing nature of power that the Cold War had brought. The focus on partition prevented both Fianna Fáil and the Inter-Party government from appreciating the changing balance of global power that US intervention in Europe signalled. This was evident when Ireland addressed American plans for a new strategic and economic order in Europe. The United States remained unsympathetic to Ireland due to its wartime neutrality, and was irritated by persistent attempts to introduce the partition issue into negotiations on the Marshall Plan and NATO. The Taoiseach asserted that Ireland 'wields an influence in the world far in excess of what its mere physical size and the smallness of its population might warrant'.[28] Yet the reality was very different. Not only did Irish politicians and diplomats over-estimate their influence in the United States, Costello and MacBride further annoyed the United States government when they supported a campaign by Irish sympathisers in Congress to amend the Economic Cooperation Act to exclude Britain from further funding as long as partition was continued.[29]

In a comparative context, Ireland was the western European state that was least integrated into the new global order established by the United States. In contrast to Denmark, Ireland was not a member of NATO and did not join any of the multilateral organisations established after 1945.[30] Its relationship with the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation was distant and constrained by the continuing commitment to protectionism. Irish neutrality reinforced this isolationism and its diplomacy concentrated on maintaining the bi-lateral relationship with the United Kingdom. This position was maintained when Fianna Fáil returned to office in 1951, when it refused to ratify the Mutual Security Act with the United States because of Irish neutrality.[31]

27 M. Kennedy and E. O'Halpin, *Ireland and the Council of Europe: From Isolation Towards Integration* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2000), 41–2; 45.

28 Cited in D. Keogh, *Ireland and Europe: 1919–1989* (Cork: Hibernian University Press, 1980), 214; Dáil Debates, 23 July 1948, vol. 112, cc. 1520–21.

29 For a recent detailed assessment of Ireland's involvement in the Marshall Plan, see B. Whelan, 'Ireland, the Marshall Plan and the United States: Cold War Concerns', *Journal of Cold War Studies* 8 (Winter 2006), 63–94.

30 I am grateful to Thorsten B. Olesen, University of Aarhus for identifying the contrasts between Ireland and Denmark during this period.

31 B. Girvin, 'Ireland and the Marshall Plan: A Cargo Cult in the North Atlantic?', in R. T. Griffiths (ed.), *Explorations in OEEC History* (Paris: OECD, 1997), 61–72.

Church, State and the Birth of Liberal Ireland

The Inter-Party government is best remembered for the controversy over the 'Mother and Child' scheme that led to Noël Browne's resignation from the Cabinet in 1951. The scheme would have provided free medical care for a mother and her child without a means test until the child reached the age of 16. Browne then published his correspondence with the Catholic hierarchy, providing for the first time an insight into the complex and opaque relationship between church and state in Ireland. Seán O'Faolain's pithy comment 'The Dáil proposes; Maynooth disposes' may have exaggerated the position, but the *Irish Times* in an editorial made a similar claim. The American writer, Paul Blanshard, acknowledged after a visit to Ireland that while Irish 'political democracy is genuine' it is also 'a clerical state' where an unofficial church–state alliance existed leading to 'ecclesiastical dictatorship and political democracy' living side by side.[32] Blanshard's assessment may seem one-dimensional but he also identified important features of church–state relations. Conflict was never the main feature of the relationship between church and state, as was the case in other Catholic states. A more realistic case can be made for a high degree of consensus among these actors, considerable collusion between them and occasional conflict. Most of the conflicts were managed within the collusive/cooperative sphere, but occasionally came into the open as with the 'Mother and Child' crisis. Even then the Taoiseach John A. Costello complained:

> All these matters should have been, and ought to have been, dealt with calmly, in quiet and in council, without the public becoming aware of the matter. The public never ought to have become aware of the matter.

At times too, there were demarcation disputes over dominance in specific spheres, as demonstrated in the continuing unease over the vocational education sector.[33] More specifically, it was considered appropriate to ask Archbishop McQuaid to seek a settlement in a transport strike in 1951. Likewise when legal adoption was introduced, despite their misgivings the hierarchy was deeply involved in the details of the proposed legislation.[34]

32 The editorial appeared in *Irish Times* 12 April 1951; P. Blanshard, *Catholic Power in Ireland* (London: Derek Verschoyle, 1954), 27–35, 289–319; S. O'Faolain, 'The Dáil and the Bishops', *The Bell*, 17 (June 1951), 6–7.

33 *Dáil Debates*, Vol. 125, no. 5, c.784; Girvin, 'The State and Vocational Education 1922–1960', 62–92.

34 The standard study of these issues remains J. H. Whyte, *Church and State in Modern Ireland 1923–1979*, 2nd edn., 1980; D. Ó Corráin, *Rendering to God and Caesar: The Irish*

In fact, the Catholic Church was not simply another interest group. During the 1950s it retained its position as the most important institution in civil society. It reached deep into the social fabric of urban and rural society with a direct and daily connection to the lives of most Irish people.[35] During a visit to Ireland in 1945 Elizabeth Bowen observed that:

> The parish priest has complete control of the civic life of any village or small town. Any entertainment must be organised with his approval and, if well seen, generally receives his help.

Just over fifteen years later an American Jesuit concluded his research on Catholicism in Dublin by observing how pervasive the social influence of the Catholic Church was. Other sources both friendly and hostile share these views.[36] Additionally, there is little or no evidence for organised anti-clericalism of the kind found in other predominantly Catholic states in Europe at the same time. Furthermore, public expressions of religious faith were widespread and non-coercive. Questions need to be asked about church power; how and in what way did the Catholic Church influence the legislative programme of successive governments during this period. Did the hierarchy have undue influence over legislation in certain matters and what were the consequences?

The 'Mother and Child' controversy provides an insight into a question that the hierarchy insisted was a matter of faith and morals. The Taoiseach told Browne that it was for the hierarchy and not the minister 'to say whether or not the scheme contained anything contrary to Catholic moral teaching'.[37] However the question cannot simply be reduced to a clash between church and state. A majority of the cabinet was uneasy with the direction of policy. James Dillon had already gone to court to object to Fianna Fáil's legislation. The Taoiseach and Fine Gael were closer to the medical profession than to Browne. They also provided support for the Irish Medical Association in its

Churches and the Two States in Ireland, 1949–73 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006).

35 Over 21,000 priests and nuns were registered by the census in 1961.

36 Bowen, 'Notes on Ireland', 18 June 1945; Bruce Francis Biever, *Religion, Culture, and Values: A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Motivational Factors in Native Irish and American Irish Catholicism* (New York: Arno Press, 1976); the book is based on Biever's 1965 PhD dissertation; J. Blanchard, *The Church in Contemporary Ireland* (Dublin: Clonmore & Reynolds, 1963).

37 Costello to Browne 22 March 1951; this and other correspondence are collected in C. Cullen and M. Ó hÓgartaigh (eds.), *His Grace is Displeased: Selected Correspondence of John Charles McQuaid* (Dublin: Merrion, 2013), 92–3.

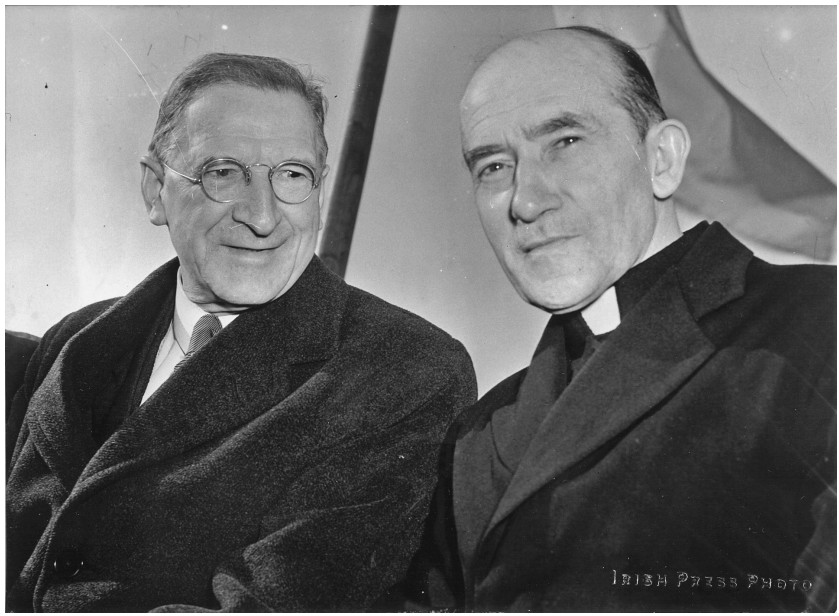
opposition to Browne's plans. Moreover, Browne acted ineptly at times in his dealings with the hierarchy, his colleagues and the IMA.[38]

It is important not to underestimate the clash between church and state; the hierarchy objected on theological grounds to the extension of state responsibility into an area of policy deemed inappropriate.[39] Its intervention undermined the policy objectives established by the Department of Health, which Browne hoped to implement. That the stance of the hierarchy was crucial can be appreciated by the alacrity with which the cabinet acknowledged its right to adjudicate. Seán MacBride told his colleagues that 'we must therefore accept the views of the Hierarchy in this matter'. He added:

> It is, of course, impossible for us to ignore the views of the Hierarchy. Even if, as Catholics, we were prepared to take the responsibility of disregarding their views, which I do not think we can do, it would be politically impossible to do so.[40]

Nor did the issue end there. Fianna Fáil reintroduced a modified version of Browne's scheme when it returned to office in 1951. This led to acrimonious exchanges between the government and the hierarchy. The eventual compromise was reached with considerable difficulty. While the controversy did not become public knowledge, the hierarchy advised the government that 'it be understood that their acceptance of the amendments is not to be construed as a positive approval of the bill' as the legislation was not in accordance with the Catholic ideal.[41] McQuaid subsequently told the Papal Nuncio that the government had accepted some changes, 'but the Hierarchy has never approved the Act. It may be said that the crookedness of the measure was made sufficiently straight to avoid further condemnation'. McQuaid criticised Lemass and James Ryan who negotiated with the hierarchy on de Valera's behalf, as they maintained the autonomy of the state in the face of this pressure. He complained that the two Ministers were 'mentally incapable of grasping the principles, and the application of the principles, in this Health measure', adding that Lemass 'has been chiefly responsible for the very noteworthy socialisation of our country'. McQuaid linked his criticism of the Health Act with a more general view that this and other measures introduced by de Valera's government 'have tended to emphasise the trend

38 Horgan, *Noël Browne*, 59–159.
39 Staunton to Costello 10 October 1950 in Cullen and Ó hÓgartaigh, *His Grace is Displeased*, 88–90.
40 Note by MacBride for cabinet 6 April 1951. S. 14997D, NAI.
41 Archbishop of Cashel to de Valera May 1953. AB8/8/Gov. Box 4. McQuaid Papers, DDA.



6. Éamon de Valera (1882–1975), revolutionary, politician and president of Ireland in jovial mood with the Catholic archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid (1895–1973). ND c. 1960.

towards excessive State intervention, and, I would add, a latent anticlericalism that fears the influence of the Church and will always seek to eliminate that influence from public life'.[42]

Fianna Fáil proved to be successful in defending the state in the face of clerical criticism without becoming overtly anti-clerical, while Fine Gael was more sympathetic to the hierarchy's position. Yet there were limits here as well. When the rule of law was challenged by the Bishop of Killaloe in a case where a priest and some lay men assaulted two Jehovah's Witnesses, Costello quickly reminded the Bishop that if people took the law into their own hands 'not only would the public peace be threatened but the true interest of religion and morality would inevitably suffer'.[43] Ireland in the 1950s could be illiberal and majoritarian, but it was never theocratic. The Catholic Church was

42 McQuaid to Albert Levame, Papal Nuncio, 14 April 1956: AB8/B/XVII/678, McQuaid Papers: DDA.

43 Rodgers to Costello 27 July 1956; Costello to Rodgers, 14 August 1956; Costello to McQuaid 14 August 1956 with McQuaid note dated 16 August 1956. AB8/B/XVIII Government Box 1. McQuaid Papers: DDA.

powerful but not invincible. At a mass level, public opinion by the early 1960s had not changed much; it was intolerant towards other religions and conformist in respect of church teaching. In political terms a significant majority refused to acknowledge that there could be a conflict between church and state. However, if such a conflict occurred over 80 per cent agreed that the church was to be preferred over the state because the former was divinely inspired whereas the state was a man-made institution and therefore fallible.[44]

Notwithstanding this, the 1950s is also the decade when Irish liberalism appears as a coherent movement. Its origins lie in *The Bell* edited by Seán O'Faolain and the foundation of the Irish Association for Civil Liberties in 1948. The campaign against censorship was a key focus for many of these activists but so too was involvement in *Tuairim* established in 1954 by graduates of UCD. Senator Owen Sheehy Skeffington provided continuous public opposition to tyrannies big and small throughout this period.[45] The mobilisation in support of Noël Browne at the 1951 general election was another expression of this, as was liberal Catholic and Protestant opposition to the 1957 boycott of the Protestant community by their Catholic neighbours in Fethard-on-Sea. This case clearly distinguished an intolerant strain in Catholicism from a more moderate one, best expressed by Donal Barrington, a Fianna Fáil supporter and founding member of *Tuairim*, who unequivocally condemned the boycott before a large Catholic audience.[46] By the early 1960s the climate of opinion in Ireland was beginning to change in subtle ways. A new and better-educated generation was exploring possibilities in a world then just emerging.

A Crisis at the Heart of Traditional Ireland: the 1950s

Seán Lemass warned in 1947 that 'we must not approach these post-war problems with a pre-war mentality'.[47] However, successive post-war governments failed to adequately address Ireland's developmental challenges. While

44 These data are a summary of Biever, *Religion, Culture and Values*, Table 7, 311

45 'Irish Association for Civil Liberties' contains correspondence with Costello who originally agreed to be a sponsor but withdrew this when he became Taoiseach 97/9/48: Dept. of the Taoiseach: NAI; Archbishop McQuaid kept a close watch on the association – see XXI/59A/1–5: McQuaid papers, DDA. T. Finn, *Tuairim, Intellectual Debate and Policy Formulation: Rethinking Ireland, 1954–1975* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012).

46 Owen Sheehy Skeffington Papers, Fethard-on-Sea file Ms 40,515/8: NLI.

47 Note by Lemass for de Valera 10 January 1947 with additional material prepared by Industry and Commerce, DT: 97/9/720; NAI: Lemass speech to Federation of Irish Manufacturers 11 February 1947, P150/2736: UCDA; Girvin, *From Union to Union*, 147–67.

industry continued to generate employment throughout the 1950s, there was a decline of 100,000 employed by 1960, mostly in agriculture. The economy had received a short-term stimulus between 1949 and 1951 but this was not sustained. Balance of payments difficulties led to deflationary budgets and for most of the 1950s growth and productivity were unimpressive. Elsewhere in Europe, Marshall Plan funding provided a welcome stimulus and was accompanied by the elaboration and implementation of comprehensive long-term policies to meet the new economic challenges that states faced. This is the decade when Ireland fell well behind northern Europe. Per capita income fell from 80 per cent of the western European average in 1950 to 63 per cent by 1960, a ratio that was to be maintained into the 1990s. Emigration soared, the population declined to its lowest level since independence and income and living standards were now far behind European levels. Moreover, while most of western Europe experienced full employment, spectacular growth and unprecedented income and consumption, Ireland experienced a recession by mid-decade that lasted into the 1960s.[48]

The origins of this crisis are complex but three factors can be identified. The first is the failure of agriculture to sustain growth, output and productivity. The land could no longer provide the means to employ those born in rural Ireland and without jobs elsewhere they emigrated. The second was policy continuity. Successive Irish governments maintained existing policies in place fearing that any change would lead to an even greater loss of employment. Finally, Ireland remained aloof from Europe, free trade and the innovative institutional arrangements associated with multilateralism and interdependency. In sharp contrast to other small European states such as Norway, Denmark or Austria, Ireland did not benefit from participation in the European Recovery Programme or the stimulus provided by American funding. Agriculture received most of what investment there was, yet there was no discernible impact on agricultural productivity or output. There was a short-lived construction boom and increased consumption during this period but this was followed by a decade of stagnancy.[49]

The political and social consequences were considerable. Ireland was now more often compared to peripheral European states rather than to the northern core. The secretary of the Department of Finance, T. K. Whitaker

48 B. Girvin, 'Did Ireland Benefit from the Marshall Plan?: Choice, Strategy and the National Interest in Comparative Context', in T. Geiger and M. Kennedy (eds.), *Ireland, Europe and the Marshall Plan* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), 182–220.

49 B. Girvin, 'Economic Policy, Continuity and Crisis in de Valera's Ireland 1945–61', *Irish Economic and Social History* XXXVIII (2011), 36–53.

emphasised the threat to Irish sovereignty: 'after 35 years of native government can it be, they are asking, that economic independence achieved with such sacrifice must wither away?' The German writer Heinrich Böll recounts entire families simply deserting their homes, leaving the electricity on and the milk on the door step. By 1959 in Dublin, nearly 1,500 council tenancies had been surrendered to the corporation, four times the number from earlier in the decade. The sense of desperation is also reflected in the view offered by James Dillon in 1957:

> I think we have to face the fact that we will never be rich in this country … we are primarily an agricultural economy whose material resources consist of 12 million acres of arable land and the people who live in it. That will never provide in terms of money and goods the same standard of living as is available in the great industrial economies.[50]

It is arguable that Ireland was left behind by its conservatism, its isolationism and its failure to challenge existing vested interests in industry and agriculture. These were influential but there was a deeper problem. Irish policy makers could not design policies that would simultaneously integrate Ireland into the global market while protecting existing employment. Most European states achieved this by the mid-1950s, but Ireland was still searching for a means to do so in 1960.

Throughout the 1950s Irish policy makers resisted free trade and did not welcome the emergence of the European Economic Community or the European Free Trade Agreement. When the British actively promoted EFTA there was a real fear that Irish interests would be seriously undermined. The Irish government appealed to both organisations for special treatment, wishing to benefit from any future arrangements without incurring any 'obligations or responsibilities'. Not surprisingly, neither organisation was prepared to consider this nor was the UK prepared to support the Irish case.[51] Ireland remained outside the active centre of European trade, unwilling to see opportunity for the state in becoming involved in any of these ambitious schemes. Irish reluctance to engage with European integration and free trade dominated government concerns right up to July 1961 when the UK decision to

50 Manning, *James Dillon*, 315; H. Böll, *Irish Journal* (Evanston, Illinois: Marlboro Press/Northwestern, 1998) original German edn. 1957, 52.

51 'Note on the proposal for a "Free Trade Area" embracing the countries of the OEEC which may wish to join' October 1965; Meeting in Taoiseach's office 11 November 1956: DT S. 15281/A; NAI; 'Aide Mémoire for governments of the Six and Seven' 26 June 1959, S. 15281R; Aide mémoire for Commonwealth Relations Office, 19 September 1959 S. 15281S: NAI

apply for membership of the EEC forced the Irish government to do the same.[52]

Though successive governments were cautious in respect of free trade and Europe, there were some important changes in policy and attitude in response to the crisis. A more open attitude to foreign capital emerged by mid-decade. In 1958 Lemass introduced the Industrial Development (Encouragement of External Investment) Act as a conscious attempt to attract foreign capital to Ireland. Export Tax relief had been introduced in 1956 and the IDA was actively promoting Ireland as a destination for export industry.[53] Despite this, Ireland did not attract significant foreign direct investment until the 1960s, when the domestic policy environment proved more attractive. The secretary of the Department of Finance, T. K. Whitaker, played a decisive role in promoting free trade within the civil service and his influence is detectable when the government decided to publish his study *Economic Development* as an official document, an unprecedented departure from traditional practice. While there is some dispute about the economic impact of *Economic Development* it is rightly seen as promoting a decisive shift in policy direction. This was followed by *The First Programme for Economic Development* which for the first time sought to provide an element of planning to the developmental process.

Lemass and the Management of Change 1959–1966

Ireland remained in crisis when Lemass succeeded de Valera in July 1959. While change was limited, the educated public, sections of the civil service and some politicians recognised that if Ireland was to survive as a sovereign state decisive action was required.[54] Lemass has been described as 'pragmatic', 'idealistic' and 'business like' in his approach to politics. He quickly adopted a more conciliatory attitude to Britain in respect of Northern Ireland, recognising that the empty rhetoric of anti-partitionism had little appeal outside his own party. Lemass was anxious to engage with Unionism and unionists in ways that would have been unthinkable for de Valera. His openness is much in evidence when he made a conciliatory first move by

52 B. Girvin, 'The Treaty of Rome and Ireland's Developmental Dilemma', in M. Gehler (ed.), *From Common Market to European Union Building. 50 Years of the Rome Treaties 1957–2007* (Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 2009), 573–95.

53 F. Barry, 'Foreign Investment and the Politics of Export Profits Relief 1956', *Irish Economic and Social History* XXXVIII (2011), 54–72.

54 G. Murphy, *In Search of the Promised Land: The Politics of Post-War Ireland* (Cork: Mercier, 2009).

7. Terence O'Neill (1914–90), prime minister of Northern Ireland, 1963–69.

travelling to Northern Ireland in January 1965 to meet the Unionist Prime Minister Captain Terence O'Neill. While never an iconoclast, Lemass was often sceptical about received opinion, allowing him the political opportunity to modify, but not transform, de Valera's legacy. He remained a nationalist and a partisan politician.[55]

The major challenge remained the economy. By 1961 Ireland's population had fallen to 2.8 million and a significant gap had opened up between Ireland and Europe in income and living standards. Lemass conceded as much: 'it was only after the war, when the rest of Europe went so rapidly ahead in economic expansion and we began to fall behind – and we have not yet succeeded in catching up'.[56] However, he also recognised that the solution to Ireland's

55 J. Horgan, *Seán Lemass: The Enigmatic Patriot* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1997), 189–326 provides a positive evaluation of Lemass's period as Taoiseach; B. Evans, *Seán Lemass: Democratic Dictator* (Cork: The Collins Press, 2011), 207–65 is more critical but adds little to Lemass as Taoiseach.

56 Speech published in *Gleas: A Monthly Bulletin Issued by Fianna Fáil* 47 (Nollaig, 1959); Dáil Debates, 15 April 1964, Vol. 208, cc. 1768–1791.

difficulties was not deflation or lower living standards but sustained growth and expansion. The record for the period 1959 to 1966 suggests some success, but considerable obstacles remained. The economy performed better during the early 1960s than at any time during the 1950s. The *First Programme for Economic Expansion* was not the main contributor to this. The most likely explanations are increased expenditure by the Irish state and favourable conditions in the United Kingdom and Europe.[57] Lemass actively supported policies that would expand the economy, even when these were criticised as inefficient by the Department of Finance officials and fiscal conservatives. Increased public expenditure played a decisive role in this process along with the acceptance of a Keynesian perspective on economic policy. Lemass may have exaggerated the extent to which 'national policy should take a shift to the left' but he could claim by 1964 that confidence had been restored with more dynamism in the economy. He rejected the traditional view 'that governments should stand aside and allow economic and social forces to have free play and to work themselves out' arguing that coordination and planning were necessary ingredients of a modern economy.[58]

This change is evident during the downturn of 1965 to 1966. Unemployment was at its highest level since the 1950s. To prevent recession, the government applied active counter-cyclical measures to promote growth and stimulate the economy. In addition, the outline of a new economic policy was formulated. Ireland was becoming an industrial economy: employment creation, productivity and exports were now dependent on this sector. Foreign companies attracted to Ireland by generous incentives contributed most to this expansion. Consequently the IDA was reorganised and given additional authority to promote Ireland as an attractive location for foreign investment. The state however continued to play an important role in stimulating the economy through its budgetary strategy, promoting the coordination of interest groups and establishing new corporatist agencies such as the National Industrial Economic Council.

The most decisive policy change made by Lemass in this period was the decision to apply for membership of the EEC in 1961. He had been reluctant to act independently of the United Kingdom, but once the UK applied, the Irish became enthusiastic Europeans. This was crucial as the European Commission was sceptical about the Irish application because of the less

57 A. Bielenberg and R. Ryan, *An Economic History of Ireland since Independence* (London: Routledge, 2013), 19–22.

58 *Dáil Debates* Eireann, 15 April 1964, 208, cc.1769–71; 24 April 1963 202, c.305.

developed nature of the Irish economy when compared to the other applicants. De Gaulle's veto over Britain's application and, by extension, over Ireland's provided an opportunity to demonstrate both Ireland's commitment to Europe and its capacity for membership. Foreign policy was now redirected and given a strong European focus. Ireland joined a number of multilateral organisations and successfully negotiated a free trade agreement with the UK in 1965. This agreement was a public expression of Ireland's willingness to dismantle the protectionist system that had been in place since 1932.[59]

Compared to de Valera, Lemass was a moderniser. The economy, employment and emigration were the main focus of government attention between 1959 and 1966. Educational change was driven by the recognition that Ireland had fallen well behind European norms. The introduction of 'free' education and other reforms maintained Fianna Fáil's claim to be progressive, though the changes rarely challenged established interests. More radical was the decision to establish the Commission on Higher Education in 1960 whose report in 1967 contributed to the overhaul of third level education.[60] This in turn had long-term social and economic consequences. There is also a notable shift of emphasis among the political and educational elite. Ireland was no longer isolationist. The state actively engaged with Europe and with the United Nations. Furthermore, the trade union movement, the business sector and the civil service were professionalised and proved open to the influence of modernisation in other European states and in the UK. The Irish public also engaged with developments in other parts of the world largely through the advent of an Irish television service. A new generation of Catholic clergy was influenced by the decolonisation of the 1950s and by the new thinking coming from the Vatican Council. During this time the Irish anti-apartheid movement drew considerable support, determining the nature of the debate over the South African regime. Barriers to new ideas were weakened by the availability of British television in part of the state and through British newspapers. The reform of the censorship system in 1967 contributed to this growing openness.[61]

Lemass was pivotal to this process, though he also sought to secure Fianna Fáil's political dominance and manage the emergence of a new generation of

59 M. J. Geary, *An Inconvenient Wait: Ireland's Quest for Membership of the EEC, 1957–73* (Dublin: Institute for Public Administration, 2009), 53–80.

60 J. Walsh, *The Politics of Expansion: The Transformation of Educational Policy in the Republic of Ireland, 1957–72* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 62–168.

61 See the essays in B. Girvin and G. Murphy (eds.), *The Lemass Era* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2005); K. O'Sullivan, *Ireland, Africa and the End of Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), 35–82.

politicians, many of whom he promoted. Always the partisan politician, he wanted to maintain Fianna Fáil's dominance in the party system. Fianna Fáil lost seats at the 1961 election but returned to power by default as there was no real alternative. The 1965 election was probably the last of Ireland's traditional elections but Lemass's success here was more decisive in the absence of a possible coalition.[62] He did more than this, however: he also encouraged civil servants, politicians and the public to think creatively about the future of Ireland. He advised Supreme Court judges to learn from the activism of the Supreme Court in the United States. The German novelist Heinrich Böll noted with some disquiet the considerable change that had occurred since his previous trips in the 1950s. By 1964, Archbishop McQuaid was expressing concern about the changing mood of Ireland, even telling fellow clerics that 'anti-clericalism is evident in the Irish character'. He considered it to be similar to the French variety 'in hardness of intelligence and in irony of criticism of authority'.[63]

Lemass had also begun to re-appraise his position on church and state. He moved cautiously at first, withdrawing support for locating the National Library in the grounds of Trinity College following objections by McQuaid. Lemass was also deeply influenced by the discussions and documents at the Vatican Council, as were Brendan Corish and Declan Costello. In 1964 he effectively criticised the conservative nature of the Catholic Church in Ireland, and in 1965 asked the Minister for Justice to explore the possibility that the Council's Decree on Religious Liberty would permit changes in the constitutional position on divorce (though these would only be applied to non-Catholics). Brian Lenihan initiated discussions with the Chancellor of the Dublin Dioceses who, speaking for the archbishop, rejected any moves in a more liberal direction. Lemass's response to this was significant. During a major speech in 1966 he announced the formation of an informal Oireachtas Committee on the Constitution which he tasked with reviewing its operation and offering recommendations for change. When Lemass retired in November 1966, he joined the committee and played a central role in its subsequent deliberations. The *Report*, published in 1967, reflected Lemass's input on a number of controversial issues including suggested revisions to articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution laying claim to Northern

62 Vivion de Valera to Lemass 22 November 1961, Fianna Fáil Papers, P176FF/79: UCDA forwarding details of an opinion poll on the election; Horgan, *Seán Lemass*, 206–10.

63 Committee on the Public Image of the Church, meeting in Archbishop's House, 24 January 1964, McQuaid Papers: DDA.

Ireland, and an amendment to permit non-Catholics to remarry if their religion permitted this.[64]

Change, Controversy and Crisis 1966–1973

Jack Lynch became leader of Fianna Fáil at a time of accelerating social change. His position in the party was never secure.[65] Prominent republicans like Charles J. Haughey and Neil Blaney were never reconciled to his leadership. Cautious and conservative, he was impervious to pressure for reform. For example he was dismissive of efforts to change the status of women and ignored the growing demands for reform of the law on contraception. The Commission on the Status of Women, established in 1970, was a result of feminist mobilisation and support from Charles Haughey and Patrick Hillery rather than any change of view on Lynch's part.[66] He was also faced with rising expectations within Irish society: farmers, trade unionists and the middle classes insisted that they should share in the benefits of expansion and growth. Radical left-wing politics made its presence felt and Marxist and leftist republicanism had a public presence for the first time in a generation. Furthermore the Labour Party moved to the left and adopted a party programme that was both radical and independent. Though much less radical, Fine Gael was also attempting to widen its appeal to the new middle class on a reformist agenda. Lynch's conservatism was in evidence when the Oireachtas Committee published its report on the Constitution. He ignored all the recommendations and instead called a referendum to abolish proportional representation, which the Committee had expressly not offered an opinion on. The government's decision was a humiliation for Lemass and it undermined any possibility of consensus on change which had also been Lemass's aim. Lynch adopted a partisan approach that suited his party and united the opposition against the proposed change. The referendum campaign was acrimonious and the government's proposal was decisively rejected in October 1968.

In contrast to other societies in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Ireland remained conservative at a mass level. The Pope's condemnation of

64 B. Girvin, 'Lemass's Brainchild: The 1966 Informal Committee on the Constitution and Change in Ireland, 1966–1973', *Irish Historical Studies* 38 (2013), 406–21.

65 D. Keogh, *Jack Lynch: A Biography* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2008); J. Walsh, *Patrick Hillery: The Official Biography* (Dublin: New Island, 2008) provide extensive discussion of the period from the perspective of two key figures.

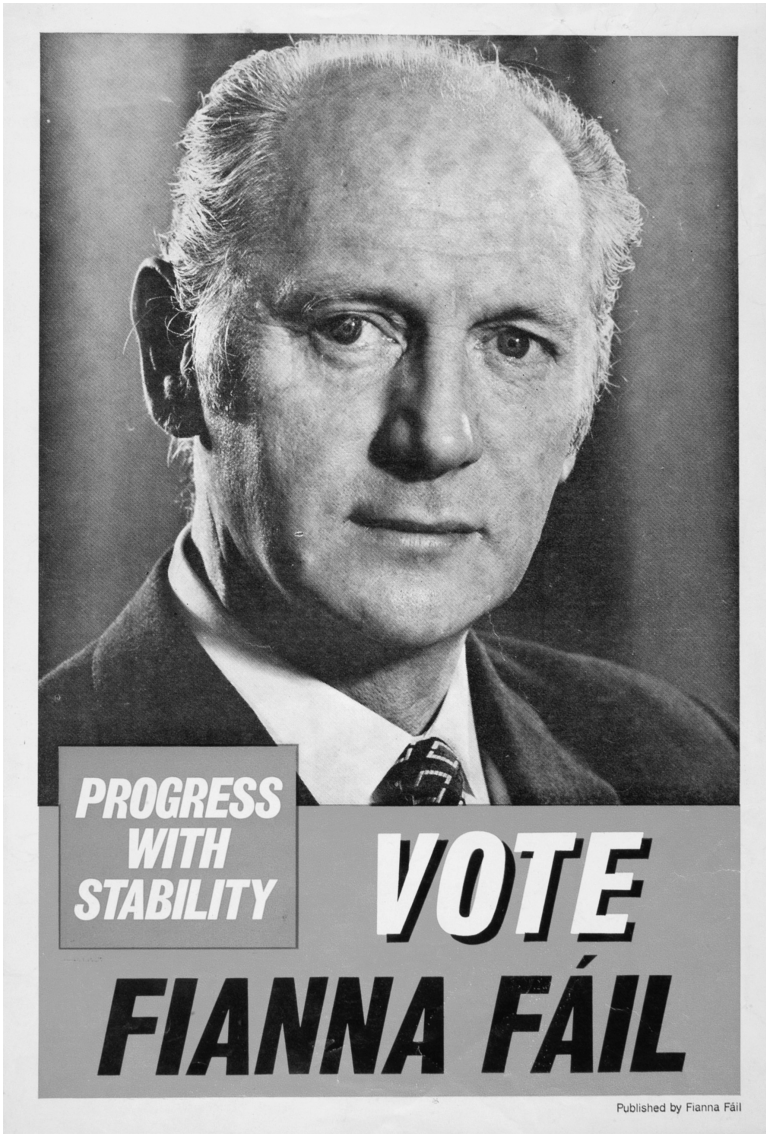
66 For Lynch's correspondence with women's groups see, DT. S.7985B: NAI; B. Girvin, 'Contraception, Moral Panic and Social Change in Ireland, 1969–79', *Irish Political Studies* 23 (2008), 555–76.

contraception in Humanae Vitae was welcomed by many but in unprecedented fashion openly criticised by others. The Labour Party adopted a policy of reform in the area and the first family planning clinic was opened in Dublin in 1969. Support for change had its limits. A majority of those interviewed in the early 1970s continued to support prohibition on contraception. The forces of conservatism clashed openly with those seeking reform at the 1969 general election. The conservatives won decisively. Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil increased their seats in the Dáil, but while their vote increased Labour had a net loss of four seats. Fianna Fáil mounted a defensive campaign, stressing their achievements while criticising the Labour Party's socialism. The implication in some speeches was that socialism was anti-national and un-Irish. It is difficult to assess the impact of this 'red-scare' but what is clear is that Fianna Fáil benefitted from the divisions between Labour and Fine Gael over coalition. The incumbents also benefitted from its partisan re-configuration of the electoral constituencies, which were re-drawn to its advantage. As a consequence, Fianna Fáil maintained its dominance in the political system, extending its electoral appeal throughout the country. It now attracted the most support from every social category and from every region. It also attracted a higher percentage of working-class trade union support than the socialist Labour Party.[67]

This election consolidated Lynch's position as leader but it did not address the divisions within the party. The collapse of order in Northern Ireland in August 1969 provided the opportunity for critics to challenge Lynch's authority and leadership. Lynch along with his moderate colleagues attempted to manage the crisis without aggravating it, but this proved impossible. Lynch proved to be indecisive, losing control of his cabinet and policy towards Northern Ireland as a result. During 1969 and 1970 the actions of Haughey and Blaney challenged not only Lynch's leadership but the security of the state by negotiating with members of the IRA and seeking to import arms to be used in Northern Ireland. More generally, some members of Fianna Fáil considered the crisis an opportunity to secure the unity of Ireland, a key party doctrine. Lynch's hesitance exacerbated the crisis and he remained reluctant to act against Haughey and Blaney.[68] However, he was forced to dismiss them when Liam Cosgrave, the leader of the opposition threatened to reveal

67 J. H. Whyte, 'Ireland: Politics Without Social Bases', in R. Rose (ed.), *Electoral Behaviour: A Comparative Handbook* (New York: Free Press, 1974), 619–52.

68 Keogh, *Jack Lynch*, 163–287; Walsh, *Patrick Hillery*, 203–90; E. O'Halpin, '"A Greek Authoritarian Phase"? The Irish Army and the Irish Crisis, 1969–70', *Irish Political Studies* 23 (2008) 475–90.



8. Election poster urging support for Jack Lynch (1917–99), Taoiseach 1966–79.

information he had obtained in relation to the importation of arms. This led to a crisis in the party exacerbated by the decision to prosecute Haughey and others involved in the importation of arms. Lynch was further challenged when the prosecution collapsed but he successfully reasserted his authority at

a subsequent party meeting. Despite this he also weakened his own position by agreeing to endorse Haughey as a candidate at a future election.[69]

As the security situation deteriorated in Northern Ireland, opinion in the Republic divided on how to respond. Fine Gael and the Labour Party pursued a conciliatory policy while remaining critical of Unionism and the British government. Fianna Fáil did not endorse violence in the north, but attitudes within the party tended to remain militant even while the government was pursuing an anti-IRA security policy. The crisis also had an unintended consequence in that it provided a focus for cooperation between Fine Gael and the Labour Party. Labour had reversed its anti-coalition position in October 1970. Members were concerned at the revelations about the importation of arms and the breakdown of Cabinet responsibility in 1969 and 1970. However, this did not guarantee an agreement between the two parties and Lynch seized the opportunity in February 1973 to call a general election. To Fianna Fáil's surprise, Fine Gael and Labour agreed a programme of government that they presented to the electorate, providing for the first time in nearly twenty years a realistic alternative to Fianna Fáil in government.[70]

By this time Ireland had successfully negotiated membership of the EEC, assuming membership on 1 January 1973. This dramatic change also prompted changes in the constitution for the first time. The third amendment provided the constitutional basis for EEC membership, a requirement because of the implications of membership for Irish sovereignty. A further amendment was required to lower the voting age to 18. Under pressure from the opposition, Lynch agreed to include a constitutional referendum on the special position of the Catholic Church. Article 44 was removed in December 1972. A more subtle change was apparent by 1973. This involved a reconfiguration of political alignment within the party system. By 1973 Fianna Fáil had become the conservative party in Ireland, increasingly reluctant to support change in the Constitution, in respect of Northern Ireland or on moral issues. By this time Fine Gael and the Labour Party had adopted a progressive programme, involving reconciliation in Northern Ireland, changes to the constitution and some social reform. As yet the differences between the two sides were not wide but as new issues appeared the confrontation between conservative and progressive became a defining feature of Irish politics and public life.

69 Frank Aiken was a fierce critic of this decision and reluctantly agreed not to publicly criticise it, F. Aiken Jnr, 'Preface', in B. Evans and S. Kelly (eds.), *Frank Aiken: Nationalist and Internationalist* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2014), xv–xx; B. Rice, ' "Hawks Turn to Doves": The Response of the Post-Revolutionary Generation to the "New" Troubles in Ireland, 1969–1971', *Irish Political Studies* 30 (2015), 238–54.

70 C. Meehan, *A Just Society for Ireland: 1964–1987* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 83–99.