

The Dominance of Fianna Fail and the Nature of Political Adaptability in Ireland

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In little more than a decade many aspects of the Irish political environment have begun to be systematically explored. Some areas have been treated more comprehensively than others; the absence of authoritative studies of the two main parties remains a glaring omission. However, as the studies discussed below indicate, it should not be long before these gaps are filled.¹ In particular, the dominance of the Fianna Fail party in the party system is now being examined and explained.²

The Irish political system has been described as a deviant or untypical case within the Western European political context. This has been attributed to its remarkable stability despite extensive brokerage, a proportional representation system, the absence of socio-economic cleavages and the predominantly agricultural nature of the society.³ In contrast, it has been suggested that this difficulty can be resolved if Ireland is placed within a colonial context rather than the traditional liberal democratic framework.⁴ Political divisions in independent Ireland can be best explained in terms of the outcome of the independence struggle. This model, however, does not adequately explain the persistence of parliamentary democracy nor the general stability of the system. One of the main features of ex-colonial states is their instability and the frequent absence of parliamentary democracy. Ireland can possibly be more adequately compared to Finland or the United States rather than Third World

¹ P. Bew and H. Patterson, *Sean Lemass and the making of modern Ireland 1945–1966* (Dublin, Gill & Macmillan, 1982); R. K. Carty, *Party and parish pump* (Waterloo, Ont., Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1981); B. Chubb, *Source book of Irish government* (revised edition) (Dublin, The Institute of Public Administration, 1983); B. Farrell, *Sean Lemass* (Dublin, Gill & Macmillan, 1983); M. Gallagher, *The Irish Labour Party in transition 1957–1982* (Manchester, Manchester University Press with Dublin, Gill & Macmillan, 1982); T. Garvin, *The evolution of Irish nationalist politics* (Dublin, Gill & Macmillan, 1981); J. J. Lee (ed.), *Ireland 1945–1970* (Dublin, Gill & Macmillan, 1979); J. P. O'Carroll and J. A. Murphy (eds), *De Valera and his times* (Cork, Cork University Press, 1983).

² The main political parties in Ireland since 1922 are: Cumann na nGaedheal, the pro-Treaty wing of Sinn Féin, it established the Free State. Fine Gael, the successor to Cumann na nGaedheal—the second largest party in Ireland. Fianna Fail, the constitutional republican party—origin to be found in the anti-Treaty forces which opposed the new state. (Since 1932 the largest party in the state.)

³ Carty, *Party and parish pump*, pp. 1–13, 140–52.

⁴ Garvin, *The evolution of Irish nationalist politics*, pp. xi, 1–2.

regimes.⁵ The main reason for this stability is that Ireland participated directly in the evolution of British democracy during the nineteenth century. The state established in 1922 inherited the institution of the British state and this has been reflected in its constitutional, economic, and legal character. The re-writing of the Irish Constitution in 1937 did not radically affect these continuities, indeed a substantial body of English law continued to be applied in Ireland. Although Ireland retained the right to amend these laws, it rarely chooses to do so.⁶ The Irish independence movement was thus rather narrowly focused on two areas of concern: sovereignty and religion. Although it proved impossible to integrate Ireland fully into the United Kingdom, this was a result of the exclusive nature of Irish nationalism, emphasizing separatism, rather than a lack of integrative power on the part of the United Kingdom state. Given the nature of Irish nationalism, Irish political parties prior to 1922 were anti-system. The multi-national state could not accommodate this phenomenon because, unlike Wales or Scotland, Ireland was not willing to be conciliated.⁷ However, despite the intensity of the secessionist movement the independent state was not wholly different from what had preceded it.

The main political division in the new state was a constitutional rather than a socio-economic one. A substantial minority refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of the new state. Between 1922 and 1926 Sinn Fein, representing the minority, was an anti-system party, remaining outside the parliamentary framework. Although a majority of the electorate supported the new state and ensured its stability, the anti-system nature of the opposition had a potentially de-stabilizing effect on the state. The long term adjustment of the new state to independent status was dependent on the integration of the republican forces into the parliamentary political structure. The emergence of Fianna Fail in 1926 as a distinct party resolved, within a year, the first major challenge facing the state. By this time the Free State had evolved its own institutions and when Fianna Fail entered the Dail, albeit under pressure, this amounted to an acceptance of the state as it existed. This ended the threat to the state and marked a clear break with the anti-system stance of Sinn Fein. It . . . finally and firmly asserted the supremacy of the civil over the military tradition, the constitutional principle over that of physical force, and majority rule over the-people-had-no-right-to-do-wrong assertion'.⁸ Once this was achieved Fianna Fail became locked into the parliamentary system and functioned as a loyal opposition.

Fianna Fail rejected a basically arid anti-system political philosophy and sought to change the state constitutionally. This in itself does not explain its later success. On constitutional issues the difference between Fianna Fail and the government was slight. Electoral competition would therefore be the focus of political action. This of itself forced Fianna Fail to elaborate a radical

⁵ Garvin rejects this point, but cf. S. Rokkan, 'The growth and structure of mass politics in Western Europe: reflections of possible models of explanation', *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 5 (1970), 65-83.

⁶ J. F. O'Connor, 'Article 50 of Bunreacht na hEireann and the unwritten English Constitution of Ireland', in O'Carroll and Murphy, *De Valera and his times*, p. 174.

⁷ Garvin, *The evolution of Irish nationalist politics*, pp. 209, 213-14.

⁸ J. A. Murphy, 'The achievement of Eamon de Valera', in O'Carroll and Murphy, *De Valera and his times*, p. 2.

programme for social change with which to challenge the government and mobilize a national constituency. The party at first drew its support from the republican constituency in western Ireland. To attain power, however, Fianna Fail had to extend its appeal beyond this core constituency, particularly as it was in secular demographic decline.⁹ While it is true that Fianna Fail dominated the western rural constituencies it would be mistaken to view this as an example of a 'periphery dominated centre'.¹⁰ In terms of appeal and policy the party cannot be seen even in 1927 as a strictly rural party. To survive, Fianna Fail had to go beyond the sovereignty issue. Senior politicians, such as Sean Lemass, advocated a developmental strategy which assumed growing industrialization and urbanization. At times both de Valera and Lemass argued that rural interests would have to contribute to the industrial process.¹¹ In addition, social and economic policy, whether progressive or conservative, was framed, when Fianna Fail was in government, by urban politicians.¹² Furthermore, the two most important government departments, Finance and Industry and Commerce, were for different reasons opposed to a rural bias in policy. The rhetoric of small farmer republicanism was strong, but its impact on actual policy was decidedly limited. This is also reflected in the electoral appeal of Fianna Fail. From June 1927, when it first contested elections, its strength in urban centres increased dramatically. In time it consolidated this electoral catchment area. The main reason for its success appears to have been its social programme and its willingness to participate in parliament. This latter factor was of particular importance because it indicates that there was a constituency in urban Ireland favourable to republican values, but which was not attracted by abstention.

By the early 1930s Irish political life had been radicalized by Fianna Fail but, paradoxically, the political system had also stabilized. The growth of Fianna Fail's electoral strength had a polarizing effect on the parties, forcing them to re-align for and against the new party. This process was accelerated during the 1930s when Fianna Fail entered government. Both de Valera and Lemass believed that power should be used to achieve specific policy aims. For them this meant realizing political and economic sovereignty. Politically this was achieved in the 1937 Constitution and in the Declaration of Neutrality in 1939. Lemass forged a link between political and economic sovereignty when he successfully generated rapid industrial growth through the imposition of extensive tariff barriers. These policies demonstrated that independence could be used to achieve realistic material aims.¹³ It was also electorally popular in that industrialization was accompanied by an extension of social welfare which attracted considerable working class support for the party. Indeed, this support was retained even when, at the end of the 1930s, rural support for Fianna Fail slumped. Protection was not an expedient for Irish policymakers; it was a

⁹ P. Mair, 'The autonomy of the political', *Comparative Politics*, 11:4 (1979), p. 452.

¹⁰ Garvin, *The evolution of Irish nationalist politics*, p. 217.

¹¹ Bew and Patterson, *Sean Lemass and the making of modern Ireland 1945-1966*, p. 6, and Farrell, *Sean Lemass*, p. 31.

¹² B. Farrell, 'De Valera: unique dictator or charismatic chairman?', in O'Carroll and Murphy, *De Valera and his times*, p. 44.

¹³ M. A. G. O Tuathaigh, 'De Valera and sovereignty: a note on the pedigree of a political idea', in O'Carroll and Murphy, *De Valera and his times*, pp. 62-73.

matter of principle, committing the state to extensive intervention in the economy and re-ordering its relationships with the outside world, particularly Britain. Fianna Fail changed the context of political discourse by its success in government. The fundamental issues were those dictated by Fianna Fail, and success was judged in relation to these issues.¹⁴ The explicitly bourgeois nature of the Cumann na nGaedheal government was replaced by a commitment to egalitarianism and welfare. The fragmented nature of the party system in the 1920s was replaced by a left–right dichotomy in the 1930s, with Fianna Fail and the Labour Party opposing all other parties. This dichotomy was underlined when Fianna Fail won 52 per cent of the vote in 1938. This forced all other parties, including the Labour Party, to recognize the predominant position of Fianna Fail as the governing party and led, over the next ten years, to a recognition that this dominance could be broken only if an alternative government coalition were available. Fianna Fail itself was also transformed. In meeting the challenge of being in government and the depression, the party had successfully presented itself as a dynamic force in politics, retaining its rural base, but transforming itself into a national and modernizing government.

The dynamic nature of Fianna Fail and its commitment to radical policies should not obscure the basic similarities between the Irish and other liberal democratic polities. Despite these, de Valera has sometimes been isolated as the charismatic figure, mobilizing a mass populist party to achieve developmental ends. According to this view, Ireland can be compared to less developed states such as Portugal or Turkey where the state is weak and where the political élites seek to acquire legitimacy. In this situation, 'an extraordinary source of authority must be created and for this the normal processes of democracy are usually inadequate'.¹⁵ However, the reasons for the emergence of a charismatic leader in Ireland were not particularly apparent. The commitment to democracy was strong; Fianna Fail's decision to enter the Dail was a further confirmation of this. In turn, Fianna Fail replaced the Cumann na nGaedheal government in an orderly fashion, having presented itself as an alternative government. It is doubtful whether Fianna Fail would have been successful if its commitment to democracy had been in question. De Valera certainly had a commanding presence within his party, but his style of leadership was not charismatic. The party leadership was a collective body in the normal democratic fashion, with de Valera frequently officiating as a referee.¹⁶

The Second World War disrupted, but did not terminate, the tendencies which had emerged during the 1930s. Political and economic survival was the dominant concern of the Fianna Fail government until 1945. In this they were successful, a success which reinforced their prestige as a national party. Fianna Fail's political predominance was also enhanced when, despite fluctuations in its vote, the margin between Fianna Fail and its nearest rival widened between 1938 and 1944. Despite the war, the basic policy instruments remained in place. Lemass, who organized the Irish economy throughout, was certainly radicalized by the war, and the Beveridge Report had a considerable influence

¹⁴ O Tuathaigh, 'De Valera and sovereignty', p. 71.

¹⁵ J. P. O'Carroll, 'Eamon de Valera, charisma and political development', in O'Carroll and Murphy, *De Valera and his times*, p. 19.

¹⁶ Farrell, 'De Valera: unique dictator or charismatic chairman?', p. 39.

upon him. It is, however, premature to conclude from this that, '... Fianna Fail was being pushed into a range of new policies and options', or that Lemass was already re-evaluating the efficacy of protection.¹⁷

It is also doubtful whether the origins of a managed economy can be located during these years.¹⁸ Whatever policies were considered during the war, few were translated into policy thereafter. Between 1945 and 1947 Lemass reintroduced most of the tariffs which had been in place during the 1930s. He did experiment with the possibility of increased state intervention, but these proposals were vigorously opposed by the business community and his more orthodox colleagues. These policies did not amount to a radical departure for Lemass; he was attempting to use alternative methods to achieve the basic aims of an autarchic economy. Although some of these policies had radical implications, they did not break with the conceptual framework which underlay protectionism.

This element of continuity was reinforced at the general political level by a growing conservatism within the party and by a certain inertia in the institutions.¹⁹ Lemass was also unwilling to impair economic sovereignty by becoming involved in the movement for European union. The post-war challenges, particularly the emergence of the United States, did not lead to a change in Irish policy. Although sympathetic to the United States, Irish policy continued to be dictated by the joint concern for economic and political sovereignty. Plans for a multi-lateral trading system endangered Ireland's special relationship with the United Kingdom. During trade negotiations in 1947 and 1948 the Irish delegation sought to maintain this position. The British proved willing to compromise with Ireland on the essential issues, and recognized the independence of Ireland in these negotiations.²⁰ The major obstacle to an agreement came not from Britain but from the United States. The outcome of the discussions attests to the view that relations between the two states were now at a post-imperialist stage. Ireland functioned as an independent if weak actor, mobilizing all its diplomatic resources to achieve a specific end during these negotiations. The United Kingdom deployed limited resources because its major concern was not with the subordination of Ireland economically but with its empire and with its dealings with the United States.²¹ Despite the strong commitment to autarchy evident throughout the early post-war period, economic concerns became more pressing for all the parties, unemployment remained high, while rural depopulation and emigration continued unabated. The implications of this were not seriously considered until the economic crisis of the 1950s forced a re-evaluation of the economic basis of independence.²²

For Fianna Fail, the decade after the war was fraught with difficulties. Throughout this period economic obstacles challenged the achievements of the

¹⁷ Farrell, *Sean Lemass*, pp. 68, 65; Bew and Patterson, *Sean Lemass and the making of modern Ireland 1945-1966*, pp. 19-20.

¹⁸ R. J. Raymond, 'De Valera, Lemass and Irish economic development: 1933-1948', in O'Carroll and Murphy, *De Valera and his times*, pp. 117, 120-1.

¹⁹ Farrell, *Sean Lemass*, p. 63.

²⁰ Bew and Patterson, *Sean Lemass and the making of modern Ireland 1945-1966*, pp. 38-47.

²¹ A. O. Hirschmann, *Essays in trespassing* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 27, 28.

²² Farrell, *Sean Lemass*, pp. 92-7 and Bew and Patterson, *Sean Lemass and the making of modern Ireland 1945-1966*, pp. 94-117.

1930s. The international environment was far more complex and proved more difficult to manipulate. Furthermore, in 1948 Fianna Fail was replaced in office by an Inter-Party government comprising all the other parties in the Dail. Loss of office was a psychological shock to Fianna Fail, long used to being in power. This shock was compounded by the new government remaining in office for three years and returning to power again in 1954. Politically this decade was a period of instability, reflecting deep dissatisfaction among the electorate with the deteriorating state of the economy. The first Inter-Party government set out to capture some of the political forces aligned with Fianna Fail. Despite some innovation in policy-making, the economic strategy of the new government presupposed the continued dominance of protection. Some Keynesian devices were adopted to expand the economy, but once balance of payments difficulties occurred, there was a return to fiscal orthodoxy. The deflationary consequences of this latter strategy were to continue right up to the end of the 1950s without effective challenge. Even Lemass appears to have been at a loss. Despite his radical reputation he was constrained by the acceptance of the protectionist paradigm. There was a general unwillingness to challenge the paradigm even though it was apparent that the economy was not functioning effectively. As in the physical sciences, policy-makers were loath to abandon a paradigm which had proved successful. Instead they sought to amend it without breaking with its essential framework. In addition, a policy will normally only be jettisoned if an alternative paradigm is available. It is surprising that Lemass, with his knowledge of the Irish economy, was unable to break with the traditional approach. It is an indication that Lemass was far less pragmatic than is usually claimed. Indeed, when he returned to office in 1951, his policies retained the basic protectionist stamp. His lack of initiative during this period has been explained by the state of his health.²³ However, the indecision which characterized his department between 1951 and 1954 was due more probably to the absence of an alternative policy. This impasse allowed conservative policy-makers to assert their dominance and to eclipse the Department of Industry and Commerce. The policies of the conservatives exacerbated the state of the economy and contributed further to the crisis of the mid-1950s.²⁴ The crux for policy-makers was that protectionism had reached the limits of the home market and without an increase in exports, which was not forthcoming, the industrial sector had begun to stagnate. The defeat of Fianna Fail once again in 1954 motivated Lemass to re-think his approach to policy. He perceived that there was a danger to Fianna Fail's electoral base if a solution to Ireland's economic difficulties was not found. As the recession deepened, there were also those who doubted the continuing validity of Ireland's sovereignty. Between 1954 and 1957 Lemass undertook to break with the basic protectionist structure. Despite Lemass's elaboration of expansionist programmes in 1955 and 1957, Fianna Fail did not appear to have had a clear policy in these matters when it returned to office in 1957. However, it is clear that Lemass was already committed to—export-led growth, to facilitating foreign capital to locate in Ireland, and to the partial dismantling of Ireland's tariffs. In 1957 Lemass was probably the most important politician in Fianna Fail, and he was to succeed as

²³ Farrell, *Sean Lemass*, p. 85.

²⁴ Bew and Patterson, *Sean Lemass and the making of modern Ireland 1945–1966*, pp. 60–93.

head of government in 1959. In 1958 Lemass encouraged the formulation of a plan for economic revival, which was based on the extensive memorandum produced by the Secretary of the Department of Finance.²⁵ During the early 1960s, under Lemass's influence, Ireland moved rapidly in the direction of free trade, eventually seeking membership of the Common Market.

There can be little doubt that the economic success of the 1960s justified the radical shift in policy. But what is surprising is how little opposition there was from vested interests to the changes. It is doubtful whether the protectionist interests ever had a veto over policy, but the economic disasters of the 1950s had in any case weakened their influence.²⁶ Lemass's move away from the protectionist paradigm was due to his appreciation that native Irish industry was inefficient and could not create the conditions for export-led growth. In the absence of a dynamic industrial sector, the only real alternative was that of inviting multi-national companies to Ireland on favourable terms. In effect, the absence of opposition was due to the weak power base of industry, which owed its existence to the support which the state had given to it. By the end of the 1960s the traditional industrial bourgeoisie had been discarded as a dynamic force and replaced by the multi-national companies. The other possible source of opposition was the trade union movement, which had traditionally supported protectionist policies. This opposition never became manifest, partly because the trade unions had been weakened by the recession, but mainly because the trade union leadership accepted that the new policies were increasing employment and personal income. Lemass's achievement was an impressive one in economic terms. But it also had its political impact. Fianna Fail retained its traditional working class and business support, and expanded its electoral appeal to new sections of society. Its predominance was confirmed electorally with impressive victories in 1965 and 1969.

Lemass not only presided over two fundamental policy shifts during his lifetime, but on each occasion created the basis for an electoral coalition which ensured Fianna Fail's dominance over the political process. The decision to move from protectionism to free trade has been explained in a number of ways. It is frequently seen as an expression of Lemass's basic pragmatism; others see it as the triumph of the will, proof that individuals do matter and their actions or inaction can determine a society's future.²⁷ Marxists invoke the logic of capitalism to explain these changes: that is, the particular policies followed were those which successfully underwrote bourgeois hegemony.²⁸ It is possible to be sceptical about the pragmatic argument without embracing that of the logic of capitalism. Lemass was far more doctrinaire than this allows, yet the Marxist approach does not adequately explain the changes. There is a danger in the Marxist approach of reducing all political action to economics. That deterministic argument requires, in the case of Ireland, further proof. The main motivation during the crisis was political, and economic change was taken to be

²⁵ The civil servant was T. K. Whitaker who broke with departmental tradition in this area and had a strong influence over policy-making during the 1960s.

²⁶ Bew and Patterson, *Sean Lemass and the making of modern Ireland 1945–1966*, pp. 76–7.

²⁷ Farrell, *Sean Lemass*, p. 124, and J. J. Lee, 'Sean Lemass', in J. J. Lee, *Ireland 1945–1970*, p. 24.

²⁸ Bew and Patterson, *Sean Lemass and the making of modern Ireland 1945–1966*, pp. 116 and 145–90.

a means to achieve an end. For Lemass, securing the state and the party was of primary importance. At a subjective level, the main actors in the process did not believe that they were aiding capitalism or furthering the class struggle, but overcoming a specific crisis. Unless one believes that individuals' actions are determined by forces largely outside their control, then their own reasons for acting must be taken seriously. That Ireland integrated into the international economy and remained a market economy does not undermine this. The only alternative model available was the socialist command economy, which was neither politically nor economically attractive. It is also necessary to explain the weakening of the national bourgeoisie and the rapid increase in power and influence by the trade union movement. During the economic expansion of the 1960s, the trade union movement sought and received access to the state institutions and influence over policy formation. This is normally dismissed by Marxists as incorporation or subordination; corporatist structures are frequently dismissed as threats to the working class.²⁹ This ignores the different relationships between government and labour which may result from the way in which power is mobilized within a specific capitalist society. Furthermore, it reduces politics to a relatively unimportant status within capitalist structures. Alternatively it is possible that democratic societies need to evolve structures to accommodate the various interests within the state. The accommodation of labour as a 'corporate partner' can be a reflection of its power as much as a form of domination.³⁰ In Ireland, industrialization allowed the trade unions to increase their membership rapidly. Given the nature of state intervention the importance of the unions had to be eventually recognized.³¹ In addition, Fianna Fail was a coalition of interests; the party would be mistaken if it had engaged in policies detrimental to its working class base. Although not a socialist party, Fianna Fail had sought close relationships with the trade union movement, and the success of these policies is reflected in the large number of trade unionists who vote for that party. It is difficult to explain this in terms of domination, unless it is believed that only socialist parties can represent working class interests. An explanation for the change of policies in the 1950s has to be sought at the political level. It would appear that in Ireland, politics has a large degree of autonomy from the economy when policy is being formulated.

For over 50 years Fianna Fail has dominated Irish politics. Its success has been due to its dynamic nature and its ability, on a number of occasions, to secure resolution to crises. This is also its weakness. It has convinced a considerable section of the electorate that it is the only party that can give governmental stability and economic growth. This means that some of its support is based on instrumentalist grounds rather than on loyalty. For these reasons the party received its largest majority ever in 1977, but the failure to match performance to promise may account for the difficulties which the party has experienced since 1979. Fianna Fail's success has prevented the growth of a strong socialist party in Ireland. In the 1930s and the 1960s the party won the electoral support of a large section of the working class. One of the conse-

²⁹ Bew and Patterson, *Sean Lemass and the making of modern Ireland 1945-1966*, pp. 188 ff.

³⁰ J. Stephens, *The Transition From Capitalism to Socialism* (London, Macmillan, 1979), p. 123.

³¹ Farrell, *Sean Lemass*, p. 121.

quences of this is that while Ireland has a large organized labour movement, it has a small Labour party. One explanation for this is that the consolidation of the party system preceded industrialization and urbanization, and this pre-empted the emergence of a strong working-class party. But this can only occur if the existing political parties are flexible enough to represent the interests of the new strata. To date, Fianna Fail's greater adaptability has underwritten its claim to be *the* party of the working class, while the Labour party can only be considered *a* party of the working class. During the 1960s, it was believed by the Labour party that this hold over the working class by Fianna Fail would be broken as a result of socio-economic change.³² As the Labour party moved to the left, it assumed that the two major parties would converge into a single party of the right, leaving it to represent the forces of the left. The Labour party analysis was flawed basically.³³ The main party to derive electoral benefit from economic expansion was Fianna Fail, because its policies were believed to have generated affluence by the electorate. Furthermore, neither Fianna Fail nor Fine Gael remained static; both adapted rather well to the changes and proved far more resilient than socialists believed.³⁴ Notwithstanding its move to the left, the Labour party was not a united party. After the 1969 election—the result of which was a shock to the party—political strategy was revised and a decision taken to enter a coalition with Fine Gael to oust Fianna Fail.³⁵ This strategy has been successful in replacing Fianna Fail, but one consequence of it has been the weakening of the Labour party as an urban party. There are two reasons for the change in strategy. The traditional element in the Labour party, now in effective control, is more interested in power at government level than in creating the conditions for the growth of the party. The second factor involves the logic of electoral competition: if Fianna Fail is to be challenged, a coalition appears to be the only method of achieving this. However, the Labour party has never thought through the tactics of coalition when a socialist party is a junior partner.³⁶ As a result, the Labour party is now in danger of being marginalized in Irish politics. Its senior partner in government has been increasing its vote, and attracting many professional and liberal voters. Fianna Fail retains a strong grip on its working-class constituency, which the Labour party cannot penetrate. To compound this, small parties to the left of the Labour party are now attracting the committed socialist voter and activist. Political developments since the 1960s confirm the view that there is no direct relationship between socio-economic change and political change. Political change there has been, but it has not worked to the advantage of the Labour party. Rather, Fine Gael—once to the right of the two other parties—appears to have made the most considerable advances since the 1970s.

The studies reviewed here are to be welcomed for the comprehensive account they give of the complexity and structure of the Irish political system. Some details and conclusions may not be accepted, but it is from the analytical and

³² Gallagher, *The Irish Labour Party*, pp. 49–85.

³³ Gallagher, *The Irish Labour Party*, pp. 44–6, 156, 163.

³⁴ P. Mair, 'Adaptation and control: towards an understanding of party and party system change', in H. Daalder and P. Mair (eds), *Western European party systems* (Beverly Hills, Sage, 1983), pp. 407, 417.

³⁵ Gallagher, *The Irish Labour Party*, pp. 83–7.

³⁶ Gallagher, *The Irish Labour Party*, pp. 260–2.

empirical context that has been established that future studies must begin. The studies are important for another reason, in that they open up the political parties to close scrutiny. It is now possible to establish how policy was formed, the main architects of policy, and the way in which popular support was generated for them. Finally, now that Ireland is once again experiencing a severe economic depression, these works remind us that in Ireland, successful policy-making in the economic field makes an important contribution to the electoral fortunes of the party in power. As such, the success or failure of policies currently being implemented will have an important impact on the future of the Irish political structure.

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