



**TIPPERARY HISTORICAL
JOURNAL 1993**

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ISSN 0791-0655

Clann na Poblachta: its origin and growth

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PART 1*

De Valera's entry into the Dáil in 1927 was "a great turning-point in the history of parliamentary government in Ireland."¹ It helped to shift the focus of national interest away from revolutionary politics towards democratic expression as it existed in the party system. Yet unsettled conditions persisted, and 1932-36 were years of widespread anarchy.

Ostensibly the struggle for power was between de Valera and the Blueshirts, the quasi-fascist strong-arm of the merchants and large farmers, who reacted to what they felt was a limitation on their freedom to export. When the Government called the bluff of General O'Duffy, the Blueshirt leader, it was found that qualities once the mettle of his organisation were now the cause of its demise — respect for property and fear of revolutionary change.²

This phase was also to witness a decline in the resources and potential of the IRA, because of organisational weakness and internal differences. Through its involvement with Fianna Fáil, the IRA hoped to push de Valera into both action against Cumann na nGaedheal (Cosgrave's party) and a clear statement on the North.³ But the underlying ploy, that the IRA would be a major threat to de Valera at the end of Blueshirtism, was faulty.

The IRA failed to anticipate a fall away in numbers and enthusiasm because of both the defeat of the pro-Treatyites in the 1932 election and the widespread popularity of de Valera himself. Also, few foresaw that the national issue would become of secondary importance for many republicans when faced with the threat of international fascism. Frank Ryan, who led the Connolly Column in the Spanish Civil War, was the most famous example of that type.⁴

Blueshirt-bashing did not appeal to all IRA people. Sean MacBride despised it.⁵ A talented few, with the potential to lead the IRA to the left, felt de Valera would outfox the IRA unless a socialist alternative was devised. Unable to win over the executive, Peadar O'Donnell, George Gilmore and Michael Price left to form the 1934 Republican Congress.⁶

Meanwhile, de Valera's popularity continued to grow, encouraged by a judicious mixture of the carrot and the stick, in the form of the Broy Harriers and IRA pensions on one hand and resort to the Military Tribunal on the other.⁷ Also, by winning over the small-holder to Fianna Fáil, he threatened the IRA's traditional power-base.⁸

By 1936 IRA morale was low, its public statements revealing a bitter de Valera fixation.⁹ In four years it had moved from a position of possible dominance to one of introverted insecurity, with a penchant for the gun but little else. Contemporaneously with this slump a trend crucial to the foundation of Clann na Poblachta occurred — the development of a political arm which would participate in constitutional politics on a republican ticket.

First on the stage was Cumann na hÉireann, founded in Barry's Hotel, Dublin, on 7 March 1936.¹⁰ In many ways this was a throw-back to the Sinn Féin party of 1919.¹¹ It would contest elections on an abstentionist ticket, and did so for the municipality of Dublin in June 1936. It

*An edited version of an M.A. thesis, U.C.C., 1981. Part 2, covering the 1948 general election and Clann na Poblachta's participation in Ireland's first coalition government, will appear in the 1994 *Tipperary Historical Journal*. — Editor, THJ.



also conformed to the behavioural patterns of conventional parties. A social programme was devised, which included municipal control of Dublin transport services and coal supplies.

An Poblacht was revived to publicise CE. Donal O'Donnchadha was its editor, a link with the days of the Workers Revolutionary Party and Saor Éire.¹² Sean MacBride and Mary MacSwiney even indulged in some decent middle-class *repartee* with Frank Pakenham and Frank MacDermott in a Mansion House debate on the fashionable topic of republic-versus-empire.¹³ This political normalisation process continued in 1937; MacBride resigned as Chief of Staff of the IRA and Con Lehane also left.¹⁴

A new party, Coras na Poblachta, launched in the Mansion House, Dublin on 2 March 1940, marked a significant change of attitude to the ballot-box. CP took the major step of considering political office. Although heavily defeated in the 1942 municipal elections, Coras also contested the 1943 general election.¹⁵

That same year the first tentative steps were taken towards the foundation of Clann na Poblachta. Paddy McLogan arranged a meeting of 30, who included MacBride, Lehane and O'Donnchadha. His aim was to found an open movement to fight elections on an abstentionist basis, for republicans disheartened by recent events like the Stephen Hayes affair and the failure of the German connection.¹⁶

But the idea was not taken up at once. Clann leaders, as they ultimately became, were content to bide their time. They wanted the new party to have a broad support-base. At one of many meetings in Lehane's office on Ormond Quay the name of the new party was decided on (Lehane's idea), and MacBride chosen as its leader.¹⁷

Foundation: July 1946

When the opportunity eventually came, Clann was already a sturdy nucleus, and a republican party with a mass following was a viable possibility. A policy was worked out and the party inaugurated in Barry's Hotel on 6 July 1946.¹⁸ The labyrinth of Old IRA connections was at Clann's disposal.

Also, because political diversity was then an accepted feature of the republican movement, fringe elements could now join. Noel Hartnett and Capt. Peadar Cowan, who had not been at the first meeting, seem to have joined soon after the foundation. No doubt their empathy with MacBride on legal matters and their attitudes to social justice were useful. Their experience of the political world — Hartnett from Fianna Fáil and Cowan from Labour — was an asset to Clann.¹⁹

By the public Clann was regarded as a new phenomenon in post-1926 republicanism, and became an instant success. By October 1947 it was strong enough to win bye-elections in Dublin and Tipperary, although losing one in Waterford. De Valera chose to regard these victories as a vote of no confidence in his Government, even though he still had a comfortable majority.²⁰ In the 1948 general election Clann put up 93 candidates, second only to Fianna Fáil.²¹ It won over 13 per cent of the first preference vote and ten seats, coming close to success in other areas.²²

Clann became a kind of popular front, drawing into its ranks people who had previously been in other parties. It remained intact because of the prospect of spoils, a common antipathy to Fianna Fáil and the excitement of what was virtually a two-year electoral campaign.

However, there was also a negative side to the new party. This lay in the political legacy Clann wished to champion. Both Cumann Poblachta and Coras had been founded to act as a fillip

to the declining fortunes of the IRA, and for some people Clann would be no different. MacBride admitted the prevalence of that sentiment.

The majority in Clann, however, felt it had a much wider brief. They believed that, as Fianna Fáil had done in 1932, it would usher in a new epoch of renascent republicanism. Accordingly, Clann leaders were depressed by the results of the 1948 election. They considered it a failure.²³

Following close on this disillusionment came the divisive decision of whether or not to enter a coalition government. By a very close majority the Clann executive decided in favour of entry, despite public disaffection by some and private disagreement by others.²⁴ So Clann joined Ireland's first coalition government as a party already deeply divided and, as subsequent events were to show, already in the initial stages of decay.

It was a clash between two groups, who as individuals had made a decision together to advance into constitutional politics, but who became acclimatised at different rates to the demands of that stand. Not alone was the anti-coalition faction against partnership with Fine Gael; they simply did not envisage sharing power with anyone! Clann were in fact deserving of Lemass's well-known description of Fianna Fáil of 1928 as a "slightly constitutional party".

As many as 22 out of a total of 27 on the provisional executive of Clann na Poblachta were active in the IRA at some time in their lives.²⁵ Eight could trace their involvement back to the War of Independence. MacBride, Jim Killeen and Michael Fitzpatrick were in IRA service nearly 20 years.²⁶ Michael Ferguson had been active in the bombings in England in 1939.²⁷ The heyday of militarism was roughly in the 1927-37 period.

The system of control in the IRA was simple. "The convention elects 12 men, who may be of any rank, in open session. . . . These 12 men meet and under the pledge of secrecy elect seven men who will constitute the army council and control the organisation; no one of the seven need be a member of the 12; in this way the names of the army council are protected."²⁸ MacBride, Killeen, Fitzpatrick, O'Donnchadha and Lehane had all been on IRA HQ staff and had probably graduated to the army council.²⁹

In the day-to-day running of the IRA, authority permeated downward from the chief of staff in tandem with GHQ. So, when the same people came to organise themselves politically, they found it difficult to dispense with the habits of a lifetime. Clann bore the hallmarks of IRA methodology.

Structure of Party

Yet by February 1948 the organisational structure of Clann was very like that of Fianna Fáil — then a most unrevolutionary movement. Ruairí Brughá maintains that the Clann arrangement was a copy of Fianna Fáil's.³⁰ Both had a pyramidal infra-structure. The basic unit was the local branch — *cumainn* in F.F. and *craobhanna* in Clann. The next rung was the constituency institution or *comhairle ceanntair*, its purpose being to supervise clubs in its own area.

At annual conventions (*árd-fheiseanna*), national executives and standing committees, F.F. and Clann were identical. But the *comhairle dáil-ceanntair*, which dealt with electoral strategy and finance, was not contained in Clann's July 1946 structure.

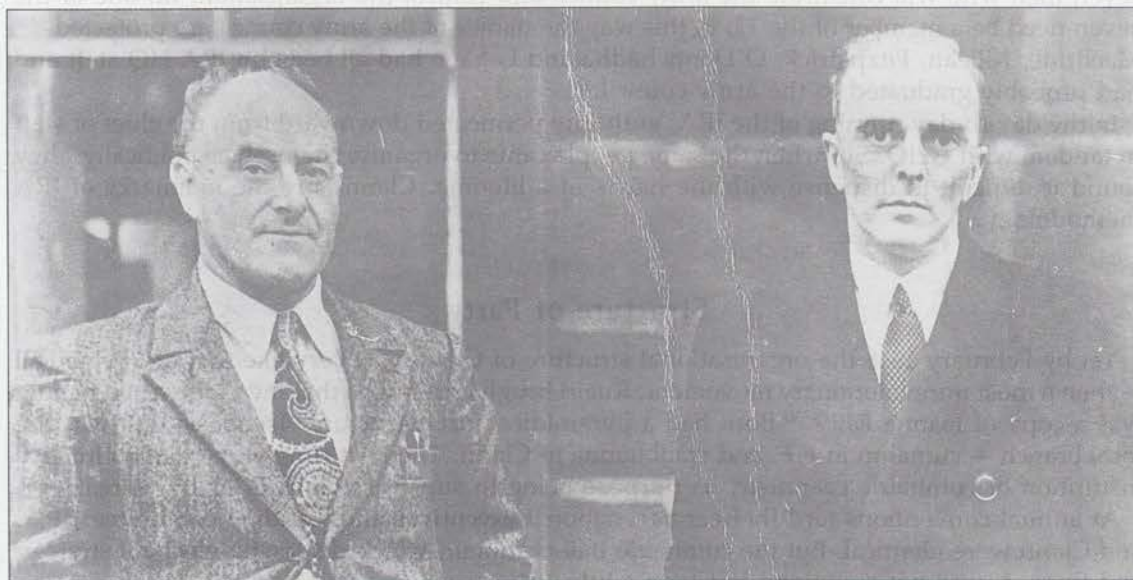
Con Lehane claimed that the similarity between Clann and F.F. existed because both modelled themselves on Sinn Féin of 1922.³¹ There was no difference in approach between the 1922 Sinn Féin campaign plan and Clann's in July 1946.³² It seems that Clann's founding fathers even drew solace from the fact that their organisation was in direct line from its Sinn Féin prototype. But because each claimed the laurel of republicanism, relations between the two parties were always tense, and particularly acrimonious during the 1948 general election campaign.

Sean MacBride, although the leader, did not occupy a position on either the executive or the standing committee.³³ This stance was justified publicly by saying that he wished to act as a guardian of honest values within his own party, implying that others, especially Fianna Fáil, had failed to do so. While this dovetailed with another Clann aspiration, to end the era of "boss politics" associated with de Valera, it also suited the personal cult always present in the IRA.

As for MacBride, once he began to adopt a rightist position in terms of the IRA, possibly as early as 1931/32 after Saor Éire had failed, and also because of an increasing lack of talent in the IRA due to resignations, imprisonments and deaths, his prestige increased greatly. Many former IRA men believed he was essential to republicans in their hour of need. At the meeting to decide on a leader MacBride had proposed The O'Rahilly (junior), opting for the back benches himself. But so strong was his position that this idea got short shrift.³⁴

MacBride took up a position in the new party similar to that of chief of staff in the IRA — a commander removed from his subordinates while still dependent on them, but always in charge. His power over the executive seems to have been considerable. His own particular fetishes, for example, afforestation and retrieval of the sterling assets, received prominence in Clann policy. MacBride claimed that Fianna Fáil's failure to implement these two measures was his real reason for splitting with de Valera.³⁵

The kind of relationship which existed between leader and executive probably suited all concerned; the provisional executive was in no obvious hurry to dissolve itself and introduce change through the democratisation of the local branches. It remained in office until Clann's first ard-fheis on 30 November 1947, a 17-month settling-in period, compared to the seven-month life-span of Fianna Fáil's 1926 provisional executive.³⁶



*Paddy Kinane T.D. and Sean MacBride T.D. outside Leinster House
after their victories in the 1947 bye-elections*

The IRA impact on Clann also had a political and ideological dimension. Fourteen members of the provisional executive had been in at least one of the groups Saor Éire, Republican Congress,

Cumann Poblachta and Coras. It seems that there were qualities shared by all these which can be discerned in Clann — qualities endemic to conspiratorial republicanism.

From the foundation in 1926 of Fianna Fáil and during the 1930s Saor Eire, the Republican Congress and Cumann Poblachta had been hostile to de Valera and his party. As a further stage in this progression, Clann was founded to oust Fianna Fáil and revenge the "betrayal" of 1926, as well as F.F.'s apparent rise to power over the imprisonment (and sometimes the deaths) of former comrades.³⁷

Clann regularly spoke of the undemocratic and tyrannical ways of Fianna Fáil. Rumours of racketeering during a time of severe shortages and inflation were usually blamed on the Government. When the controversy over the sale of Locke's Distillery blew up in October 1947, Clann were quick to snipe at Fianna Fáil.³⁸ Then Fianna Fáil began to use the red smear extensively through the medium of Sean MacEntee.³⁹ The upshot of this was that the 1948 general election campaign in Dublin was extremely bitter.

Clann wanted to revamp the entire political system. Parish councils would be given statutory powers; there would be less centralisation and bureaucracy; TDs would have no function but the legislative one.⁴⁰ Clann also wanted to uplift the spirit and morale of the entire nation. The party's organisation was to be a vital cog in this development. It was intended that the party would have a magnetic effect, especially on the young, to whom a fresh start would be offered away from the cul-de-sac of Civil War-influenced party politics.

In contrast, preference in the IRA had been for the politics of disorder. Saor Eire seemed to move with neo-Marxian intent.⁴¹ It sought to re-organise the fishing industry into co-operatives and to get public control of banking and credit. Coras also ran along anarchistic lines. Séamus O'Donovan, who master-minded the plan for the bombing of installations in Britain in 1939, is said to have designed Coras's blue-print.⁴²

1946 Teachers' Strike

Clann na Poblachta, however, made no seditious threats. On the contrary, it wanted to acquire quickly an image of respectability. It involved itself in the two popular-based causes which arose after the war, the national teachers strike and the movement for control of food prices.

Although the second of these was a tame affair, the first lent itself to subversion. Clann, both as a forceful opposition and a child of antagonism, took the opportunity of associating with it, true to its ideological republican pedigree.

The bitter teachers strike continued from 20 March 1946 to 28 October 1946 and was limited to Dublin only, other INTO branches financing the campaign.⁴³ On reviving a 1939 wage claim, the teachers received harsh treatment from Tomás O Deirg, the Minister for Education, and from de Valera indifference. The Government would not hear of arbitration, although this had been advocated in other areas and the Labour Court had just been set up that year. The Minister refused a mediation offer from Archbishop McQuaid, and the INTO turned the strike into a *cause célèbre*. It captured the public imagination.

Although only two of the founder-members of Clann (Richard Batterberry and Fionán Breathnach) were national teachers, many others were friendly with teachers, the Teachers Club being their social meeting-place.⁴⁴ Teacher grievances may even been a reason for founding Clann, and once founded the party became the political avenue through which teachers guided their opposition to Fianna Fáil.

Four out of eleven members of the INTO strike administrative committee were actively associated with Clann. One, Charlie Sheehan, became in February 1948 a Clann candidate in Carlow-Kilkenny.⁴⁵ On the strike committee, the most active body, were four Clann members — Brehony, Roycroft, Skinnider and Costello. In November 1947 Roycroft was elected to Clann's first national executive, and Skinnider was on a later executive.

Con Lehane believed that Clann members gave a finesse to the INTO strike organisation that it would otherwise have lacked.⁴⁶ This could explain in F.F.'s harsh treatment of the teachers. In helping to bolster the hawkish thinking of the INTO rank-and-file, and with just enough members on INTO committees to ensure that their views could not easily be ignored, Clann had some influence on that body in late 1946.

Under normal conditions no political party would shed more than a quarter of its founder-members within 17 months of its inception without some trauma. Yet this happened to Clann. Eight out of the original 28 seem to have left the party — Tom Burke, Una Bean Ní Staic (Austin Stack's widow), Simon Donnelly, Sean Fitzpatrick, Seamus MacGiobúin, Patrick Moclair, Brendan O'Carroll and Diarmuid O'Riordan. None of these was named on the national executive, went for election in 1948 or was either nominee or supporter at the hustings.

Burke, Donnelly and Fitzpatrick may have resigned for health reasons.⁴⁷ Mrs. de Staic died during that period.⁴⁸ The rest appear to have left without rancour. None felt the need to write to the papers, as often happens when internal political wranglings occur. It is more likely that party politics was simply not their *metier* and that all concerned, being accustomed to waywardness in the republican movement, accepted these departures!

Politics in the Making

Clann was, however, narrow-minded in some ways, parts of its economic programme being at least anglophobic. This outlook received an unexpected airing in Minority Report No. III of the 1938 Banking Commission. This document, seen by many (especially in the republican movement) as a milestone in enlightened thinking, in many ways complemented much of de Valera's self-sufficiency theories.

Yet, after ruminating on it for a long time, he rejected it in favour of the "steady-as-she-goes" policy of the Majority Report. MacBride in contrast enshrined it (if in diluted form) as the centre-piece of Clann's policies.⁴⁹ Essentially the thesis of the Minority Report was that the link with sterling should be broken because the Bank of England was not favourable to the Irish economy.

The report advocated the printing of Irish currency, which would become the instrument of an Irish monetary authority. This would issue money according to the need to create employment on such public schemes as afforestation, land reclamation and rural housing. The vital factor was to have money circulating to increase spending power, which in turn would lead to increased prosperity.

Clann accepted the report's over-all premiss, but toned it down substantially. Instead of breaking the link with sterling, it would repatriate the sterling assets, then virtually redundant in foreign investments because of the sharp fall in purchasing power. It would not nationalise the banks; instead, the sterling holdings would be put at the government's disposal to finance welfare work.⁵⁰

In itself this policy was not radical. Yet it backfired. The idea of breaking the link with sterling and setting up an independent Irish economy was already current in the IRA, Saor Eire and Coras na Poblachta. Fianna Fáil were also able to ridicule Clann for its quasi-corporatist schemes,

forcing Clann to deny strongly any fascist tendencies in the party.⁵¹ This mishandling of its fiscal policies probably caused a scare among the better-off sections of the electorate and ultimately had an effect at the ballot-box, probably in the lack of transfers to the party.⁵²

In 1939 de Valera pursued a policy of neutrality, both as the logical culmination of his stand at the League of Nations as well as an expression of a majority desire for peace. Neutrality had a settling effect on Ireland's lifestyle. In the political system all parties were united, and the internecine struggle of the Civil War years obtruded less on their actions.

Tipperary Star

VOL. 40, No. 44.
THURLES, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 1947. PRICE—THREEPENCE.

TELEGRAMS—"STAR" THURLES
TELEPHONE—"THURLES 9"
REGISTERED AT THE G.P.O. AS A NEWSPAPER.

Exciting Finish In Tipperary By-Election

SECOND PREFERENCES SWING ISSUE AGAINST F.F. CANDIDATE

**Great Personal Victory For Mr. P.
Kinane (Clann Na Poblachta)**

MR. PATRICK KINANE, farmer and merchant, Cappanaleigh, Upperchurch, Clann na Poblachta candidate in the Tipperary By-Election caused by the death of Mr. W. F. O'Donnell, T.D. (Clann na Talmhan), was elected, after the fourth count, by 23,865 votes to 21,647 for his nearest rival, Mr. Sean Hayes (Fianna Fail). The other candidates, who were eliminated, were:—Col. Jerry Ryan (Fine Gael), Mr. D. O'Sullivan, M.C.C. (Lab.), and Mr. M. F. Fitzgerald, M.C.C. (Clann na Talmhan).

However, during this period a quiet revolution of foreign origin was slowly occurring that was to have a profound effect on the nature of the party struggle from 1947 on. This was the revolution of the welfare state.

The war, together with Keynesian economics, brought about a radical change in official attitudes in Britain. Keynes in his *General Theory* (published in 1936) advocated a modified form of state intervention through liberal borrowing and equally liberal expenditure, to turn those who were redundant back into spenders to unlock the economy. It worked.

From 1942 Sir William Beveridge's momentous social document, *A Plan for Social Security*, helped to alter irretrievably the relationship between the individual and the State in Britain. Even though the report was not implemented until the return of a Labour government in 1945, it was an embarrassment to all Irish politicians. First, Britain at a time of national crisis had shown the courage to contemplate such plans when Ireland in peaceful conditions did not. Secondly, it was feared that Beveridge's ideas would aggravate the already swollen divide between North and South, or even encourage emigration to Britain.

Hierarchy Speaks Up

Here it was, however, the Catholic hierarchy's social teaching that dominated.⁵³ Lest something like Beveridge would happen in Ireland, the bishops opposed state intervention, and

this attitude was strengthened by the papal encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, whose effect on Irish society cannot be over-emphasised.⁵⁴ It reinforced the already strong grip the Church had on its people. It had strongly motivated de Valera's 1933 Constitution.⁵⁴ It accounted for the vocationalism of the Fine Gael intellectuals of 1934. It even helped to convert Marxist sympathisers in the IRA.

By the mid-1940s the institutional intentions of the hierarchy were much more overt. Two documents of the time became vital in church-state relations — the Report of the Commission on Vocational Organisation and Bishop Dignan's *Social Security*, a scheme for national health insurance. Both had a great effect on the role of opposition parties from 1946 to 1948.

The Vocational Commission report, with Bishop Browne of Galway as its chairman, which attacked Fianna Fáil as a highly centralised and bureaucratic government, advocated parish guilds of 200 to 400 families as the basic territorial unit of the countryside, with parish councils of 10 to 12 people leading each guild. It also sought the reorganisation of agriculture and education by means of councils, which would act as advisers to Ministers.⁵⁵

Clann swallowed the Commission's proposals hook, line and sinker. It particularly favoured the idea of the parish guilds. But the Dignan report was even more vital to Clann. They could not have got a more popular forerunner, one so harmonious to the ideas which were transferred from the republican movement to the new party. Also, Dr. Dignan had a republican pedigree, and when the Government (in the person of Seán MacEntee, Minister for Health and Social Welfare) failed to re-appoint him as National Health Insurance chairman, Clann at once took up his case.⁵⁶

Very importantly, in terms of the self-righteous national spirit in Clann, what the Bishop advocated was much more than a social welfare measure. Believing that his proposals would have difficulty in materialising, he wanted men of vision and courage to see them through, clearly implying that these were not to be found in Fianna Fáil! Dignan's was a brave and idealistic, but for its time, a controversial document. Placed in the forefront of Clann's policy, together with selected material from the Vocational Commission report, it became another reason for the head-to-head confrontation between Clann na Poblachta and Fianna Fáil.

F.F. Loses Support

In the two years 1946 and 1947, just before and after the foundation of Clann, those responsible for starting the new party were lucky in that large sections of Irish society, for either economic or cultural reasons, found it necessary to re-examine their political needs and to alter their political responses. Because of the prolonged hardships of the Emergency years, the long-term trend towards emigration increased.⁵⁷ One result of this was that before leaving the country many from the rural areas made long stays in the cities, especially Dublin.

As a result, there was a potential loss of support for Fianna Fáil in the West, a traditional area where it had been strong. Secondly, the pressure on employment and the sudden rise in industrial wages left many in the middle class in Dublin disillusioned by the Government. Seán Ó Faoláin in *The Bell* gave expression to one aspect of this trend. So did the language revival movement, which, dissatisfied with the lack of progress, began a veritable explosion of re-organisation. It was then that *Comhar* and *Inniu* and *Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge* all began.

For different reasons too the existing parties found themselves under attack. The 1945 presidential election, when the independent candidate Dr. Patrick McCartan (later to join Clann) did surprisingly well, showed how deep dissatisfaction with the Government was. The split

in the Labour movement, another in Clann na Talmhan and a feud in Fine Gael between its leader General Mulcahy and Dr. Tom O'Higgins, all occurred around this time. So did the sensational resignation of the promising Fianna Fáil politician, Dr. Con Ward, and the Locke Tribunal, in which the prominent F.F. Senator Bill Quirke of Tipperary got caught up.

In these circumstances Sean MacBride seemed to many to be an ideal new political party boss. With an impeccable national (including IRA) background, he was young, a successful lawyer (especially defending political prisoners) and lived a modest life-style, being even shy about participating in public life. Furthermore, on his first executive he gathered a wide variety of talented men and women and attracted into Clann two experienced politicians in the persons of Capt. Peadar Cowan and Noel Hartnett.

MacBride's Dublin Victory

With the historic three bye-elections of 1947 Clann na Poblachta made its first major breakthrough. The new party contested all three constituencies and in two, Dublin county and Tipperary, captured the seats, losing in Waterford.

The Dublin County constituency was primarily composed of the administrative county, but also included Dun Laoire and urban areas like Crumlin, Kimmage, Terenure and Rathfarnham. In socio-economic terms it divided into four distinct areas — rural Dublin, coastal Dublin, old aristocratic Dun Laoire and new suburban Dublin.

The striking feature of rural Dublin was the diversity of its agriculture, one-fifth of the county (near the Wicklow mountains) being of only limited potential. Dublin farmers had been badly hit by weather in 1946 and 1947, but many got high profits in the city market, and the price per gallon of milk was 2p better than in Cork.

The county's almost 4,000 male farm workers had a high cost of living, their wages of £3.00 and working week of 55 hours preventing any kind of social life.⁵⁹ But at least they were not idle, as were almost 23,000 of the remaining rural population over 14 at the time of the 1946 census.⁶⁰

The coastal towns were more prosperous than the non-farming sector of rural Dublin. Skerries was the only one with a higher percentage of unemployed than in rural areas.⁶¹ Skerries and Malahide had a substantial number of people in residences of more than five rooms; in fact, both towns attracted well-off retired types.

Apart from the large number of unemployed females there (60 per cent of that sex over 14), Dun Laoire had a comfortable lifestyle.⁶² The area had a higher proportion of employment acquired through formal education than the rest of the county. At the other end of the social scale stood the south-western suburbs of the city. Virtually all their inhabitants had come from inner city slum areas.⁶³ Families of five to seven were quite common.

In such a non-class-based, pro-personality and conservative undercurrent constituency, neither Eamonn Rooney for Fine Gael nor Sean Dunne for Labour stood any chance against Thomas Mullins for F.F. or Sean MacBride for Clann. Rooney was a farmer from Lusk in North Co. Dublin, Dunne a rural workers trade unionist from Co. Wicklow.

Mullins, born in New York, had been through the War of Independence but became temporarily estranged from F.F. through sympathy with Saor Éire. He and MacBride had been together on the *Irish Press*, and Mullins was now general secretary of F.F.

Fianna Fáil's electoral strategy seems to have been to make voters doubt MacBride. They suggested that he had never broken with the IRA, had been pro-German during the war and



too busy as a lawyer to join the Defence Forces.⁶⁴ Clann's approach was more sophisticated, but on the eve of polling day it indulged in its own brand of mud-slinging.

Only 53.8 per cent of the register turned out to vote, the lowest of the three by-elections. MacBride's first preferences reflected better organisation. His 16,000 votes were 28 per cent of the poll, and only 200 behind Mullins. F.F.'s total fell by almost 49 per cent (over 15,000) from 1944, and Labour doubled its vote to over 10,000.

MacBride's appeal was clearly a personal one. He received five times more of Labour's second preferences than did Fine Gael. Then, when the F.G. man was eliminated, MacBride swept ahead. Of Rooney's 15,300 papers, 4,600 did not transfer. Of the remaining 10,600, MacBride got 7,800 and easily passed the quota to defeat Mullins by a massive 9,432 votes.⁶⁵

Paddy Kinane's Win

The Tipperary constituency was, of course, quite different in every respect from Dublin county. The commonest size of farm was 50 to 100 acres, most of these given over to cattle. But, as one moved northwards away from the Golden Vale, the emphasis changed to dairying plus beef or mixed farming. In the north unemployment was only 4 per cent.

Moreover, compulsory tillage had hit the dry stock northern belt. The county's total of prosecutions on this score was the second highest in Munster.⁶⁶ Compulsory tillage interfered with the dairy farmer in the south to a lesser extent, but with indifferent milk prices he too was dissatisfied with his lot also.⁶⁷

However, no political commentator foresaw any upset for the Government in Tipperary. Its candidate Sean Hayes, a veteran of the War of Independence, was a republican from the south, while Fine Gael's Col. Jerry Ryan's appeal was mostly in the north; both were former T.D.s. Labour and Clann na Talmhan had no chance of a seat, except possibly in a general election.

Clann's man, Paddy Kinane of Upperchurch, was the dark horse; but few expected him to win. Yet they ignored his wide appeal. He had a solid support in the north; he too had been prominent in 1919-22; he had been in both GAA and Gaelic League. In hindsight he was an ideal candidate, and his party ran a good campaign, with a former Fine Gael solicitor J. J. Timoney as election agent giving Clann the best of both worlds.

The result was little short of sensational. Kinane's first preferences, 11,471, were over one-fifth of the total valid poll, second to Hayes's 17,169 and ahead of Fine Gael's 11,341. The remaining stages of the count revealed widespread disillusionment with Fianna Fáil, with Kinane getting transfers all along the line. He ended up with over 23,000 to Hayes's 21,000, neither reaching the quota.

The Government party's first preference total fell from over 31,000 in 1944 to just over 17,000.⁶⁸ As the *Tipperary Star* put it a week later: "It is in fact true to say — and members of Clann na Poblachta freely admit it — that Paddy Kinane was worth more to Clann than Clann to Paddy Kinane."⁶⁹

Waterford was the least representative of the three by-elections. The county had a long history of conservatism, as shown by its loyalty to the Redmond family and its slow growth of support for Fianna Fáil. Despite Labour's support in the Dungarvan area and Clann na Talmhan's gain of a seat in 1944, only the two big parties really counted here.

In some respects F.F. should have been at a disadvantage. For instance, unemployment was high in all four major towns of the county, and the Government party suffered an initial setback when its first choice as candidate was rejected by party headquarters.⁷⁰ On the other hand,

Clann telescoped all its work into the final fortnight and its candidate, although with a good GAA record, had no previous administrative experience.

It seems the new party realised it had no chance of getting the seat, and it is believed that it canvassed support for Labour to try to eat into F.F.'s vote. Eventually Ormonde, the Government man, won without reaching the quota, but both F.F. and F.G. suffered heavy falls in their first preferences compared to 1944 — 39 per cent for Finna Fáil and 23 per cent for Fine Gael. Clann had to be satisfied with a mere 8½ per cent of the poll.⁷¹

FOOTNOTES

1. T. D. Williams in *The Years of the Great Test* (Cork & Dublin, 1978), p. 175.
2. D. Thornley in *ibid.*, pp. 47, 52.
3. G. Gilmore: *The Irish Republican Congress* (New York, 1935), p. 14.
4. M. O'Riordan: *The Connolly Column* (Dublin, 1979), pp. 55-71.
5. Coogan, T. P.: *The IRA* (London, 1970), p. 73.
6. Gilmore, pp. 8-11.
7. J. Bowyer Bell: *The Secret Army* (Dublin, 1979), pp. 111 and 118.
8. Rumpf & Hepburn: *Nationalism & Socialism in Twentieth-Century Ireland* (Liverpool, 1977), p. 98.
9. *An Poblacht*, 13.6.1936.
10. Coogan, p. 86.
11. J. J. Horgan, in *Round Table*, June 1936.
12. Coogan, p. 90.
13. *Irish Times* (hereafter 'IT'), 6 April 1936.
14. Bell, p. 146.
15. *Cork Examiner* (hereafter 'CE'), 24 June 1943.
16. M. de Burca (profile of Con Lehane), in *Hibernia*, 12 April 1979.
17. Information from C. Lehane, 22 July 1980.
18. IT, 8 July 1946.
19. See n. 17.
20. CE, 1 November 1947.
21. O'Leary, C.: *Irish Elections 1918-1977* (Dublin, 1979), p. 39.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 103.
23. Member of Kinane family in RTE's History of Clann na Poblachta P310/75 film archives, 5 November 1976.
24. *Hibernia*, 26 April 1979, and *Irish Press* (hereafter 'IP'), 18 February 1948.
25. Information from Sean MacBride, 2 January 1981.
26. Coogan, p. 42.
27. IT, 8 July 1946.
28. Peadar O'Donnell: *There Will Be Another Day* (Dublin, 1963), p. 114.
29. Bell, p. 146.
30. Information from Ruairi Brugha, 12 July 1980.
31. Information from Con Lehane, 22 July 1980.
32. Sinn Féin Constitution (Dublin, 1922?).
33. See n. 25.
34. See n. 31.
35. Sean MacBride on RTE 28 April 1980 (A1315, sound archives).
36. Earl of Longford and T. P. O'Neill; *Eamonn de Valera* (London, 1975), pp. 245, 248.
37. M. McInerney in IT, 17 October 1968.
38. IT, 27 October 1947.
39. IP, 18 October 1947.
40. CE, 8 January 1948.
41. *An Poblacht*, 10 October 1931.
42. Bell, p. 196.
43. T. J. O'Connell; *History of INTO* (Dublin, n.d.), pp. 216 and 230.
44. *Our Nation*, 14 September 1946, and *The Clann*, 18 January 1948.
45. *The Clann*, 8 February 1948.
46. See n. 31.
47. See n. 25.
48. Information from Pádraig Ó Nualláin, 12 February 1981.
49. *Irish Independent* (hereafter 'I.I.'), 31 January 1948.



50. See n. 35, and CE, 19 August 1946.
51. CE, 1 December 1947.
52. J. J. Horgan in *Round Table*, March 1948.
53. J. H. Whyte: *Church & State in Modern Ireland* (New Jersey, 1980), pp. 96-119.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 67.
55. R. Charles in *Theology Today* (Cork, 1970), p. 50.
56. Report on Vocational Organisation, pp. 335 & 339-350.
57. Whyte, pp. 109-112.
58. G. Quinn in *Ireland & the War Years & After* (Dublin, 1969), p. 124.
59. Act No. 5 of 1935.
60. 1946 Census, p. 44.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 125.
62. *Ibid.*, pp. 124 and 125.
63. *Ibid.*, p. 125.
64. M. Craft in *Studies*, Spring 1971, pp. 68 and 71.
65. IP, 21 October 1947.
66. Dáil Éireann Results of Election, and CE, 6 February 1948.
67. Dáil Debates, 22 January 1947.
68. IT Annual Review 1947, p. 51.
69. See n. 66.
70. CE, 7 October 1947.
71. See n. 66.

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