

# Party Solidarity, Exclusivity and Inter-Party Relationships in Ireland, 1922-1977: The Evidence of Transfers

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*Précis:* This paper presents an analysis of the transfer of lower preference votes at Irish general elections between 1922 and 1977, illustrating some features of the main Irish parties and of the changing relationships between them. Evidence is found to support the view that Fianna Fail has always been the best organised party, and it is also suggested that a significant proportion of the electorate is not fully aware of the power afforded to it by the electoral system. The construction of a series of alliances in the 1920s and early 1930s, and their loosening in the late 1930s, is traced.

## I INTRODUCTION

An important aspect of the Irish electoral system, the single transferable vote in multi-member constituencies, is the transferability of votes from candidate to candidate. By numbering candidates in the order of their choice, voters are able to stipulate that their vote, if it is not needed by an elected candidate or if it cannot help to elect an eliminated candidate, be transferred to a less favoured candidate, provided that he is in a position to make use of it.<sup>1</sup> Voters may allocate first and lower preferences to candidates on the basis of their party affiliation, the area of the constituency they come from, the candidates' personalities, or indeed any criterion which is of importance to

1. For a concise description of the electoral system, see Chubb (1974, pp. 349-352).

them. Despite this, the importance of lower preferences is often overlooked and all too frequently the implicit assumption is made that proportionality is simply a function of the percentage of first preference votes and the percentage of seats won by a party. The "vagaries" of the system are sometimes spoken of when what is meant is the exercise by the electorate of its right to cast its votes in a discriminating fashion.

This paper will employ an analysis of the transfer of votes between candidates at Dáil elections from 1922 to 1977 in order to reach some conclusions about the attitudes of supporters of Irish political parties. Examination of the relationship between the source and destination of transferred votes can provide information on three aspects of electoral behaviour. First, by considering the proportion of transfers which remain within a party, internal *party solidarity* can be measured. Secondly, *exclusivity*, or party plumping, can be measured by assessing the willingness of supporters of a party to pass on preferences to other parties. Thirdly, by examining the flow of transfers between specified parties, we can analyse certain *inter-party relationships*.

The assessment below is based on an analysis of all available transfers (i.e., of all counts in each constituency). Consequently, it should be borne in mind that what is being measured is the distribution of votes in the possession of a party at some stage of the count, rather than the disposition of supporters of each party which cannot be precisely measured for a number of reasons. First, in many cases the votes transferred from a candidate of one party do not consist wholly of votes cast originally for that party, having become "contaminated" by transfers from candidates of other parties. Secondly, the destination of lower preferences depends partly on the range of options open; there is no way of telling how many of the votes transferred at any stage would have gone to a candidate already elected or eliminated had he still been able to receive transfers. It is, however, possible to control for the availability of candidates of a particular party. Thirdly, since factors other than party affiliation may influence voters' ranking of candidates, it cannot be assumed that the transfer patterns observed in any particular case are entirely the consequence of voters' feelings about the parties to which the candidates belong. In addition, because official records of the results of pre-1948 elections have been neither published nor preserved, some results have proved impossible to obtain and to include in the analysis. For elections held from 1948 onwards, the official *Election Results and Transfer of Votes*, published by the Stationery Office, Dublin, have been used; one correction has been made in the case of the party affiliation of one candidate in the 1948 election. For the pre-1948 results, provincial newspapers, and occasionally national ones, have been used, and it has been possible to obtain complete results for 270 of the 299 constituencies for the pre-1948 period, a total of 632 out of 661 for the whole 1922–1977 period. The 29 missing

results comprise those of seven constituencies at the 1923 election, four at the June 1927 election, three at the 1932 election, one at the 1938 election, nine at the 1943 election, and five at the 1944 election. However, subject to these qualifications, it is possible to obtain a reasonably accurate indication of the attitudes of supporters of each party.

## II INTERNAL PARTY SOLIDARITY

Internal party solidarity can be measured by considering what proportion of votes remains within the party fold, where it is possible for votes to do so, when a transfer from a candidate of that party is made. It is reasonable to suppose that high solidarity will be associated with a vigorous party organisation. Under any electoral system, a good party organisation needs to ensure that sympathy for the party is manifested in votes. Under the Irish electoral system, this involves not only making sure of first preference votes, but also persuading voters who support the party to "vote the full ticket". Given the range of factors likely to induce a voter to allocate lower preferences on the basis of some consideration other than party, energetic canvassing at the local level is necessary if "leakage" is to be kept to a minimum.

If high solidarity is a sign of a healthy party whose organisation is characterised by efficiency and vitality, low solidarity indicates a weakly organised party whose candidates rely for votes on their own merits as much as on the party's appeal. Candidates of a party of declining strength, uncertain of the appeal of the party label or perhaps even convinced that it has little appeal, will minimise their party affiliation during the course of their campaigns. Consequently, a relatively high proportion of their first preferences are personal votes which cannot be expected to transfer to other candidates of the same party.

The relevant figures are presented in Table 1.<sup>2</sup> Its most outstanding feature is the high retention rate of its transfers by Fianna Fail; on average, when a transfer from a Fianna Fail candidate has been made, over 80 per cent of the transferred votes have gone to other Fianna Fail candidates if any are available to receive transfers. At every election since 1922, the solidarity of voters for Fianna Fail and its precursors has been higher than that of supporters of any other party. Indeed, since the formation of Fianna Fail in 1926, the party's solidarity has only once fallen below 76 per cent. This was in June 1927, and the low figure for this election is caused by the high proportion of Fianna Fail transfers which went to candidates of the Sinn Fein

2. It should be noted that the figures for some of the minor parties — National Labour, Aontacht Eireann, Clann na Talmhan and Clann na Poblachta for post-1948 elections — are derived from a small number of cases.

Table 1: *Internal party solidarity, 1922–1977*

<i>Election</i>	<i>Fianna Fail</i>	<i>Fine Gael</i>	<i>Labour</i>	<i>Farmers Party</i>	<i>National League</i>	<i>Centre Party</i>	<i>Clann na Talmhan</i>	<i>National Labour</i>	<i>Clann na Poblachta</i>	<i>Aontacht Eireann</i>	<i>Independents</i>
1922	74.2	74.3	73.5	66.8							35.2
1923	77.3	74.1	59.6	50.4							44.0
1927 (1)	69.6	63.2	62.3	47.6	58.1						19.0
1927 (2)	82.0	75.9	72.1	42.4							18.8
1932	84.5	74.4	60.7								18.9
1933	90.5	80.8	50.4			67.8					2.6
1937	84.3	83.7	58.5								21.4
1938	86.6	82.5	65.7								29.3
1943	76.3	63.8	65.4				60.6				23.0
1944	83.8	62.1	61.3				72.4	46.9			45.3
1948	77.8	73.1	60.0				51.8	54.6	69.0		13.7
1951	85.5	72.7	62.6				75.0		43.2		19.2
1954	82.4	76.9	67.6				68.5		34.2		11.0
1957	81.6	72.6	50.0				59.4				30.2
1961	77.8	69.1	53.0				50.3				21.1
1965	84.7	78.0	76.7								17.7
1969	80.2	78.2	71.8								16.2
1973	85.0	74.5	72.2							46.6	22.4
1977	84.6	72.8	66.7								37.3
<i>Average</i>	81.5	73.8	63.7	51.8	58.1	67.8	62.6	50.7	48.8	46.6	23.5

*Note:* The figures refer to the percentage of transfers from each party which went to other candidates of the same party in situations where at least one candidate of the party was available to receive transfers. In this and Table 2, under "Fianna Fail", the 1922 figure refers to Anti-Treaty Sinn Fein and the 1923 figure to the Republicans; under "Fine Gael", the 1922 figure refers to Pro-Treaty Sinn Fein and the 1923–33 figures to Cumann na nGaedheal.

See text for source of material for this and subsequent tables.

party, to which most Fianna Fail members had belonged until the March 1926 Ard-Fheis or even later (Pyne, 1969, p. 47; cf. p. 14 below) and which was consequently regarded very sympathetically by Fianna Fail. On one occasion, the remarkable figure of 90 per cent was attained.

These very high figures, maintained for a period of over 50 years, almost certainly reflect the organisational superiority of the party. That Fianna Fail is, and always has been, the best organised of the Irish parties is scarcely open to dispute. The point was re-affirmed as recently as the 1977 general election, and the organisational prowess of the Republicans was noted as early as 1924.<sup>3</sup> This may be, after Duverger, partly because the Republican and Fianna Fail organisations were built up from outside parliament, while Cumann na nGaedheal emerged "internally" for a parliamentary grouping (Murphy, 1968, p. 5; Manning, 1972, p. 111), although it must be borne in mind that each built to some extent on the organisation of the pre-Treaty Sinn Fein party. Perhaps most importantly, Fianna Fail was compelled from the first to build a powerful organisation if it was to win Dáil seats. Cumann na nGaedheal could extend its support simply by contacting "influential men" and asking them to help the party (Moss, 1933, p. 54). Labour could and did use the trade unions as the basis of its organisation. Even the Farmers Party had the Farmers Union on which to rely. Fianna Fail had to stand on its own feet from the start, and the impetus which necessity gave to the creation of a strong and vigorous organisation was never lost. While it should not be assumed that the transfer retention rate is affected only by organisational efficiency, the sharp improvement between 1948 and 1951 may be related to the overhaul of the Fianna Fail organisation carried out after the 1948 defeat (Farrell, 1971, pp. 55-57).

Fine Gael's figures, although consistently lower than those of Fianna Fail, are still fairly high with, on average, about three-quarters of its transfers remaining within the party fold where possible. That the party's solidarity has been lower than Fianna Fail's reflects the traditionally casual, amateurish approach which it has always appeared to take towards organisational matters; that it is, nevertheless, reasonably high testifies to the fact that the Fine Gael label is one which has always had meaning for the party's supporters. Three of the party's figures fall well below the average. The low figure for June 1927 may well have been the result of organisational laxity and complacency engendered by Cumann na nGaedheal's five years in office and the apparent absence, given Fianna Fail's continued abstentionism, of any threat to its supremacy in the Dáil. The two low figures for 1943 and 1944,

3. The *Limerick Leader* (30 May, 1924, p. 3), commenting on the result of a by-election in the constituency, argued that because the Republicans' highly efficient electioneering had ensured that all their supporters had come to the polls, almost all of those who had not voted could safely be assumed to have favoured the Cumann na nGaedheal candidate.

on the other hand, are symptomatic of a serious decline in party morale. Between 1938 and 1943 Fine Gael's strength plunged by over 10 per cent, and in 1943 and 1944 only about one in six of the electorate gave a first preference to the party. Confronted by a shrinking pool of Fine Gael votes, the party's candidates placed less emphasis on their party label and more on their own merits and tended to fight individual campaigns instead of giving their running mates the endorsement implicit in the advice to award them a lower preference vote. Some candidates distanced themselves from the party label to the extent of not even mentioning Fine Gael in their election advertisements.<sup>4</sup> During this period Fine Gael was unable to attract, not only voters, but also good candidates. At the 1938 election only one of its 45 TDs was being elected for the first time, and in 1943 there were only two; both of these (Liam Cosgrave and Maurice Dockrell) had strong family reasons for joining Fine Gael. In 1944 the party was able to nominate only 25 candidates who were not outgoing TDs, and only one of these was elected.

The turning point for Fine Gael may have come, not, as is often supposed, after it joined the post-1948 Coalition Government, but between the 1944 and 1948 elections. The internal solidarity of its transfers advanced from 62 per cent to 73 per cent, and further proof that the party label had recovered some of its former appeal during that time is provided by the amount of fresh blood it attracted in 1948. At that election it nominated 60 candidates who were not outgoing TDs and 13 were elected – 12 for the first time – so that practically two-fifths of its 1948 Dáil membership were new TDs. Between 1938 and 1944 the Fine Gael label had not been enough to ensure the election of a candidate not already entrenched and with his own personal following, but the influx of new TDs in 1948 suggests that, despite the fact that Fine Gael's overall percentage vote declined, the purely party vote increased between 1944 and 1948. If this is indeed the case, then Fine Gael's revival pre-dated the 1948 election and was not simply a consequence of Fine Gael's membership of the Inter-Party Government.

The evidence from by-elections suggests that the change in the party's mentality took place in 1946 or 1947. Of the six by-elections held in 1944 and 1945, Fine Gael contested only two and found great difficulty in attracting candidates (Whyte, 1971, pp. 112–113), but it contested all four held in 1946 and 1947. It may be that the resignation of a parliamentary secretary in 1946 after allegations of impropriety, as well as the Locke's distillery dispute of 1947, put new life into many of those opposed to Fianna Fail. There was, in any case, a desire for change in the aftermath of the Second World War and a general air of dissatisfaction with the Government, which had a rather jaded appearance after so long in office. If Labour had not been split,

4. See, for example, the advertisement of Michael Og McFadden in the *Donegal Democrat*, 19 June, 1943, p. 2.

it would have been well placed to articulate this feeling, but as things stood two other parties were the main beneficiaries. Clann na Poblachta appealed to those who wanted a more radical approach to social and economic matters and to the North, while Fine Gael, it might well be suggested, appealed to those who had no strong objection to Fianna Fail's policies, but wanted to see someone else implementing them.

Another marked rise in the solidarity of the party's voters took place between 1961 and 1965, an improvement which may be linked to increased attention to party organisation. The party's national organiser at the 1965 and 1969 elections, Gerard Sweetman, made strenuous efforts to put muscle into the party's organisation,<sup>5</sup> although his rather dictatorial approach and his position on the right wing of the party meant that his attempts met with some resistance. The slight falling away in 1973 and 1977 is probably due to the coalition arrangement with Labour; some Fine Gael voters tended to give a lower preference to a Labour candidate, especially if he seemed likely to be in particular need of it or if, for example, he came from their part of the constituency, rather than to another Fine Gael candidate.

Labour's ability to retain its transfers has been lower than that of the two major parties, with about two-thirds of its transfers going to other Labour candidates where possible. In the past most Labour TDs, especially in rural areas, have had to rely for their election on a sizeable personal vote, and personalised campaigns inevitably lead to a reduction in consistent party voting. The most notable change between elections occurred between 1961 and 1965 and was due mainly to the resurgence in the party's fortunes which took place during that period and, in particular, to the new leadership's attempts to change the party from a loosely linked band of individuals into a genuinely cohesive party. The improvement was maintained at the next two elections, partly because of the expansion of the party's organisational capacity in the late 1960s, although the figure dropped in 1977 when internal disputes in a number of constituencies weakened solidarity.

As would be expected, the figures for the minor parties are generally lower than those for the three main parties. Every minor party has tended to become weaker as it grows older, and Table 1 shows that, for most of these parties, the solidarity manifested in the first election they contested was not subsequently equalled. A few minor parties, however — the Centre Party, the Farmers Party, and Clann na Poblachta in their first elections — have achieved transfer rates as high as Labour's average figure. It is worth noting that the high figure for Clann na Poblachta refutes the suggestion that the party's low index of proportionality — it won 13.3 per cent of the votes,

5. On one occasion he accused Fine Gael of having been too gentlemanly in the past and maintained that "when you are dealing with a crowd of thugs like Fianna Fail, you can't afford to keep to the rules" (*Irish Times*, 19 October, 1964, p. 1).

but only 6.8 per cent of the contested seats — was due to a lack of solid party voting by its supporters. The real reason for the party's disproportionately low share of the seats was that in many constituencies its support, although good, was just short of that required to win a seat. In 24 out of the 40 constituencies, its first preferences amounted to between 0.5 and 0.9 quotas; it won a seat in only six of these constituencies. It suffered the further handicap that, because its candidates were almost all new to public life, they did not attract cross-party preferences on personal grounds as did established TDs of the other parties.

Clann na Talmhan voters twice displayed more internal solidarity than both Fine Gael and Labour voters, and this party's figures did not fall away as its strength declined. The reason for this is that its votes in 1951 and 1954, although low overall, were not scattered thinly over a number of constituencies like those of most minor parties. They were, instead, concentrated in just a few areas, in which the party label still retained considerable meaning. In 1951, for example, Clann na Talmhan contested only four constituencies, but it won at least one seat in each, had a plurality of votes in one, and won six seats altogether.

Finally, the figures for Independents are presented, not because Independent candidates in any way constitute a party, but because, by virtue of the heterogeneity of candidates who have stood as Independents, the "solidarity" pattern displayed resembles the pattern which could be expected if party labels counted for nothing. In this sense, Independents' solidarity constitutes a yardstick against which the parties' performances can be measured, and it is apparent that even the most loosely organised parties have generally been able to retain at least twice as high a proportion of transfers as the Independents' average.

### III EXCLUSIVITY

The extent of "plumping" for a party can be measured by considering the willingness of supporters of that party to pass on transfers to candidates of other parties when their own party cannot make use of them. In other words, when there are no candidates of the party in question available to receive transfers, what proportion of transfers goes to other parties and what proportion becomes non-transferable because no further preferences have been marked? It should be noted that the electoral system does not make party plumping a sensible strategy because lower preferences are taken into consideration only when all the candidates for whom higher preferences were marked do not need them or cannot use them. In other words, under

Table 2: *Exclusivity, 1922-1977*

<i>Election</i>	<i>Fianna Fine</i>		<i>Farmers National Sinn</i>			<i>Centre Clann na National Clann na</i>		<i>Aontacht</i>		<i>Independents</i>				
	<i>Fail</i>	<i>Gael</i>	<i>Labour</i>	<i>Party</i>	<i>League</i>	<i>Fein</i>	<i>IWL</i>	<i>Party</i>	<i>Talmhan</i>		<i>Labour</i>	<i>Poblachta</i>	<i>NPD</i>	<i>Eireann</i>
1922	25.5	8.6	0	41.5										14.0
1923	65.3	38.1	29.5	56.3										20.9
1927 (1)	42.1	29.3	30.7	28.2	20.9	9.5								21.4
1927 (2)	33.3	40.1	25.1	12.2	33.6		12.0							17.7
1932	67.5	42.0	17.4	11.7										18.8
1933	15.3	48.6	11.1					23.4						8.9
1937	47.0	60.1	12.7											15.0
1938	26.8	36.5	20.1											13.3
1943	68.2	26.8	36.6						47.5					24.4
1944	51.7	21.0	26.2						26.8	34.5				16.2
1948	53.9	25.2	21.8						25.3	11.2	39.4			21.1
1951	64.0	28.4	26.6						4.8		14.1			16.4
1954	56.2	29.5	25.5						9.8		22.1			12.4
1957	64.8	32.6	16.4			31.0			0		8.3			20.6
1961	67.2	50.0	11.1			30.7			22.8		22.0	10.0		21.2
1965	47.4	41.4	12.7								34.5			19.6
1969	54.2	52.3	47.2											23.8
1973	48.7	49.2	14.7			27.2							20.1	22.4
1977	32.4	46.4	25.7			25.2								22.9
<i>Average</i>	49.0	37.2	21.6	30.0	27.2	24.7	12.0	23.4	19.6	22.8	23.4	10.0	20.1	18.5

*Note:* The figures refer to the percentage of transfers from each party which became non-transferable upon transfer in situations in which no other candidates of the same party were available to receive transfers.

the STV system, unlike the superficially similar Borda system,<sup>6</sup> a voter cannot reduce the chances of his most favoured candidate(s) by listing further preferences.

This would suggest that only a small number of votes is likely to become non-transferable when a transfer is made from the last continuing candidate of a party. As Table 2 shows, though, exclusivity varies from party to party. While for Labour, most minor parties and Independents the figure is about a fifth, over a third of Fine Gael transfers become non-transferable when they cannot go to another Fine Gael candidate, and almost a half of Fianna Fail votes become non-transferable rather than go to a non-Fianna Fail candidate. In fact, the figures for some parties, particularly Fine Gael and Labour, conceal the true extent of their exclusivity because of the transfer arrangements into which they have sometimes entered as part of a coalition agreement. For example, in the case of Fine Gael in 1977, only 5.0 per cent of its transfers became non-transferable when other Fine Gael candidates were available to receive transfers and 17.4 per cent became non-transferable when no Fine Gael candidates were available but a Labour candidate was, but a massive 80.3 per cent became non-transferable when there were no candidates from either coalition party available. The same pattern occurs for Labour in 1977 and for both Fine Gael and Labour at the elections of the inter-party era in the 1950s and in 1973.

Why is it that such a high proportion of transfers, particularly from the larger parties, become non-transferable in these circumstances?<sup>7</sup> One possibility is that strong supporters of one party, having done all they can to secure the election of the candidates of their own party, are simply indifferent as to which other candidates are elected. Alternatively, to list no further preferences may be a way of demonstrating a general contempt for all the candidates not of the favoured party, since to give a next preference to one as opposed to another is to acknowledge that some of these candidates are not as bad as the others and that virtue does not lie exclusively with their own party.

There may be some truth in these suggestions, but the most probable explanation is simply that, despite the general assumption to the contrary, a

6. Under the Borda system, a voter orders the candidates according to his own preferences as under the STV system, but when the count is made, no transfers are made. Specified values are given to each preference — for example, two to a first preference, one to a second preference, a half to a third preference, and so on — and a grand total for each candidate is calculated. Under this system, a voter can best help his most favoured candidate by giving him his first preference and listing no further preferences.

7. Sacks (1976, p. 146) reports that 66.5 per cent of ballots in Donegal North-East at the 1969 general election contained preferences for one party only. It seems that many Maltese voters, too, list preferences for only one party (see Lakeman, 1974, p. 159).

sizeable proportion of the Irish electorate do not fully understand the electoral system. Although the small number of spoiled votes shows clearly that almost all voters know how to cast a valid vote, it does appear that many voters are unaware that they can give further preferences without in any way damaging their favoured party. It may seem to them, in the words of Mair and Laver (1975, p. 492), that "the party whose electors 'vote the ticket' and then stop will be at an advantage relative to the party whose supporters give a complete set of orderings for all candidates, for it will be receiving that which it is not giving, i.e., lower preference votes". Regrettably, this misconception is sometimes perpetuated by "advice" to voters given by commentators at general elections.

In fact, supporters of a party are best advised to use their votes fully and to list preferences for all candidates in such a way as to confer the greatest advantage on their own party. For example, at the 1933 general election, the *Irish Press* (24 January, p. 6) urged Fianna Fail supporters to vote first for all the Fianna Fail candidates and to give their next preferences to the Labour Party. After that, they were told, preferences should go to Independents, then to the Centre Party, and then the Cumann na nGaedheal candidates should be listed in such a way as to embarrass the Cumann na nGaedheal party (for example, by giving its weakest candidates the highest preferences). This advice seems to have been heeded by at least some of the party's supporters and is partly responsible for the very low proportion of non-transferable votes from Fianna Fail in 1933. The low number of non-transferables originating with the party at this election was due to only a minor extent to Fianna Fail's arrangement with Labour (see below). When other Fianna Fail candidates were available to receive transfers, only 1.6 per cent of Fianna Fail votes became non-transferable; when no Fianna Fail candidates were available but a Labour candidate was, 2.9 per cent became non-transferable; and even when there were neither Fianna Fail nor Labour candidates available, only 28.3 per cent became non-transferable. One of its desirable consequences, from Fianna Fail's point of view, was to cause Ernest Blythe, a former Cumann na nGaedheal minister, to lose his seat in Monaghan to a Protestant Independent who won fewer first preferences than Blythe, but was elected on transfers from Fianna Fail.

A party which fails to advise its supporters to use their lower preferences sensibly is liable to harm itself. At the 1977 general election, for example, Fianna Fail voters in Waterford had it within their power to decide whether the last seat should go to a Fine Gael or a Sinn Fein candidate. However, of a final Fianna Fail transfer of over 4,000 votes, 7.8 per cent went to the Fine Gael candidate, 13.6 per cent went to Sinn Fein, and the remaining 78.6 per cent showed no further preference, allowing the Fine Gael candidate to retain his seat by default. Had the overall strengths of Fianna Fail and the National

Coalition been closer, this extra seat for the latter could have been important.

Perhaps the outstanding failure to make good use of lower preferences was that of Labour in 1969. Almost half of the party's votes became non-transferable when there was no other Labour candidate available to receive transfers and, as a consequence, Labour had no power in the 1969-73 Dáil. If Labour voters had given their lower preferences to Fine Gael — purely as a tactical measure and not as part of a coalition agreement — Fine Gael would have won six additional seats at the expense of Fianna Fail, in Dublin South-West, Leix-Offaly, Longford-Westmeath, Louth, Roscommon-Leitrim and Sligo-Leitrim. If this had happened, Fianna Fail would not have won an overall majority of seats, and Labour would have held the balance of power, its expressed aim throughout the campaign. Failure to advise its supporters to give their lower preferences to non-Fianna Fail candidates in 1969 must be regarded as a tactical mistake on Labour's part.

In general, as Table 2 shows, supporters of smaller parties, including even the "anti-system" Sinn Fein, have not confined their preferences exclusively to candidates of their most favoured party to the same extent as supporters of the major parties. The reason for this is not difficult to identify. Those casting a first preference for a minor party candidate know that the chances of his being elected are small and that the vote will be "wasted" unless it lists further preferences. On the other hand, a voter who starts by listing all the Fianna Fail candidates, for example, can feel confident that his vote will contribute directly to the election of a candidate even if it contains no further preferences.

#### IV INTER-PARTY RELATIONSHIPS

Examination of the rate at which transfers pass between two parties can reveal something of the relationship between them. However, it is not enough simply to measure the total number of transfers passing from one party to another. When other candidates of the party from which the transfer is made are available, for example, one would not expect many transfers to go to another party, no matter how warm the relationship between them. On the other hand, if the circumstances in which the passage of transfers is to be examined are specified too narrowly, few cases will be available for analysis.

The following approach will be adopted in this section. When the relationship between two parties is to be examined, the question to be considered is: when there are no candidates, of the party from which the transfer is made, available to receive such transfers, but at least one candidate of the other party is available, what proportion of the transfers go to this party and what proportion go elsewhere? When we wish to ask how the supporters of one party feel about a number of other parties, the question con-

sidered is: when there are no candidates, of the party from which the transfer is made, available to receive such transfers, but at least one candidate of each of the other parties is available, what proportion of the transfers go to each of these parties and what proportion go elsewhere?<sup>8</sup>

Figures showing the passage of transfers between parties for which there are reasons to expect a close relationship between 1922 and 1938 are presented in Table 3. In 1922, it is clear that the "Pact" between the two wings of Sinn Fein was generally observed as regards transfers and that most supporters

Table 3: *Inter-party transferring, 1922-1938*

<i>Election</i>	<i>Transfers from</i>	<i>Transfers to</i>	<i>Percentage of transfers whose destination was</i>		
			<i>Party in previous column</i>	<i>Others</i>	<i>Non-transferable</i>
1922	A-T SF	P-T SF	70.8	3.7	25.5
	P-T SF	A-T SF	68.3	23.1	8.6
1923	Farmers	CG	49.0	22.0	29.1
1927 (1)	FF	Labour	25.0	29.7	45.4
	Labour	FF	24.1	58.3	17.7
	FF	SF	60.4	17.0	22.7
	SF	FF	68.3	22.2	9.5
	CG	Farmers	43.7	38.5	17.8
	Farmers	CG	38.3	34.1	27.6
1927 (2)	FF	Labour	57.9	13.0	29.1
	Labour	FF	47.2	33.4	19.4
	CG	Farmers	83.1	16.9	0
	Farmers	CG	52.2	38.8	9.1
1932	FF	Labour	33.8	13.3	52.9
	Labour	FF	48.6	34.0	17.4
	CG	Farmers	96.6	3.4	0
	Farmers	CG	50.6	45.5	3.9
1933	FF	Labour	91.7	5.4	2.9
	Labour	FF	72.7	16.2	11.1
	CG	CP	73.1	9.0	17.9
	CP	CG	77.8	15.9	6.4
1937	FF	Labour	42.0	14.4	43.6
	Labour	FF	59.2	28.1	12.7
1938	FF	Labour	38.3	39.9	21.8
	Labour	FF	37.1	40.6	22.3

*Note:* The figures refer to the percentage of transfers from the party in the first column in situations in which no candidates of this party were available to receive transfers, but at least one candidate of the party in the second column was available to receive transfers.

8. The stipulation that there should not be available any other candidates of the party from which the transfer is made ensures that attention is focused as far as possible on the lower preferences of those who first vote solidly for their most favoured party.

of one wing gave their lower preferences to the other.<sup>9</sup> After the civil war, however, this alliance was dead and transfers between Cumann na nGaedhael and the Republicans in 1923 were at the very low level one would expect for two parties on opposite sides of the political fence. Over the next ten years, a new alignment arose with Cumann na nGaedheal and the Farmers Party on one side and Fianna Fail and Labour on the other.

The table suggests that these alliances grew only gradually during the 1920s and the early 1930s. In 1923 there was a moderately high transfer from the Farmers Party to Cumann na nGaedheal when other Farmers Party candidates were not available, but there was no noticeable relationship in the other direction and there was no particular tendency for Labour's transfers to pass to Republicans or for Republican transfers to go to Labour. At the June 1927 election Fianna Fail's lower preferences tended to go to Sinn Fein where possible and vice versa, but, this apart, there were no indications that voters of any party felt a closeness to any other party. The vote of confidence debate of August 1927, however, in which Fianna Fail and Labour, together with the National League, attempted to oust the Cumann na nGaedheal Government, which was supported by the Farmers Party and Independents, polarised Irish politics. At the September 1927 election, supporters of Fianna Fail generally gave lower preferences to Labour and vice versa, and a slightly greater degree of solidarity was apparent between Cumann na nGaedheal and the Farmers Party. One consequence was that Labour won a seat in Donegal for the first and only time with the aid of a 63.6 per cent transfer from Fianna Fail.

Between 1927 and 1932 the Cumann na nGaedheal-Farmers Party alliance remained strong, not surprisingly since it was cemented by a Dáil arrangement which amounted almost to a coalition and under which a Farmers Party TD was given a parliamentary secretaryship. The relatively low figure for transfers from the Farmers Party to Cumann na nGaedheal in 1932 is indicative, not of coolness towards Cumann na nGaedheal, but simply of an erosion of organised Farmers Party support. The party nominated only seven candidates and as the personal component of their support grew larger in relation to the party component, the tendency of lower preferences to follow party lines inevitably diminished. The bonds between Fianna Fail and Labour did weaken noticeably, perhaps because of Labour's vote against Fianna Fail's nomination of de Valera as President of the Executive Council in 1930<sup>10</sup> and because the tacit alliance between Fianna Fail and Jim Larkin's dissident Labour group (see below) had created some animosity between the parties.

9. For a fuller analysis of voting patterns at this election, see Gallagher (forthcoming).

10. See *Dáil Debates* 34:284-294, 2 April, 1930. The situation arose because the Government resigned after a defeat on a private member's bill.

The change of government in 1932, however, brought the polarisation to a new pitch, especially since Labour gave its support to the Fianna Fail minority Government. As Table 3 shows, at the 1933 election there was a very high degree of solidarity between Fianna Fail and Labour, on the one hand, and between Cumann na nGaedheal and the Centre Party, on the other.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, supporters of parties other than Cumann na nGaedheal gave lower preferences to their allies when their own party candidates were not available, more solidly than they had to their own party's candidates (cf. Table 1). The very high level of intra-party transfers well illustrates the way in which, to use Garvin's (1977, p. 177) term, politics had become "pillared" around the two major parties.

By 1937 the situation had changed somewhat. Cumann na nGaedheal and its allies had merged to form Fine Gael. The relationship between the other two parties, on the other hand, was less close than it had been in 1933; Labour was not impressed by Fianna Fail's record in office and Fianna Fail, with a majority in the Dáil, had less need of Labour's support. Nevertheless, it was still warm — a majority of Labour's lower preferences went to Fianna Fail where possible and more than two-fifths of Fianna Fail's lower preferences went to Labour.

By 1938 the *entente* was over. Fianna Fail took note of the fact that Labour had voted against it on the motion on civil service arbitration, defeat on which had prompted the Government to call the 1938 election. Labour was offended by what it claimed was a smear campaign waged against it during the election by Fianna Fail, in consequence of which it refused to support the re-nomination of de Valera when the Dáil re-assembled.<sup>12</sup> As Table 3 shows, there was no evidence at all of a special relationship between the parties in 1938. More lower preferences from each party went to Fine Gael and Independents than to the other party, even in situations in which that party had at least one candidate available to receive transfers. By 1938 there were no alliances among the three parties. Each was operating independently; it remained to be seen whether any new alliances would be formed and, if so, which parties would be involved.

These new alliances came about as a result of the Inter-Party Government which was formed after the 1948 election. It is difficult, however, to test or to demonstrate the closeness of a group of parties by an analysis of transfers. It is certainly the case that, in 1948 and at the three subsequent elections, more transfers from each coalition party went to the other coalition parties

11. The Centre Party, although it had some original features, was in many areas little more than a revitalised Farmers Party, and it seems to have inherited most of the farmers' support (cf. Gallagher, 1976, p. 53).

12. See William Norton's speech in *Dáil Debates* 72:24, 30 June, 1938.

than went to Fianna Fail, but this is almost inevitable given the large number of coalition parties. In 1948 there were no strong exchanges of transfers between any two parties. It is worth noting, however, that transfers at electoral contests between the 1944 and 1948 general elections gave a pointer to the emergence of a new mood of unity among Fianna Fail's opponents. In the 1945 Presidential election, upon the elimination of the Independent Patrick McCartan who was supported by Labour, Clann na Talmhan and some Independents, 55.4 per cent of his transfers went to the Fine Gael candidate and only 12.8 per cent went to the Fianna Fail candidate. The emergence of Clann na Poblachta gave new impetus to the belief that an alternative government could be constructed. Three by-elections were held in October 1947 and Clann candidates won two with the aid of transfers from the two main opposition parties. Over half of Labour's transfers went to

Table 4: *Transferring between Fine Gael and Labour, 1948-1977*

Election	Transfers from	Transfers to	Percentage of transfers whose destination was		Others	Non-transferable
			Party in previous column	Other coalition parties		
1948	FG	Labour	37.4	14.4	21.5	26.7
	Labour	FG	24.4	31.4	24.6	19.6
1951	FG	Labour	53.5	0	28.1	18.4
	Labour	FG	41.0	4.9	31.7	22.4
1954	FG	Labour	46.1	21.6	14.7	17.6
	Labour	FG	47.8	6.5	22.8	22.9
1957	FG	Labour	70.0	0	13.9	16.1
	Labour	FG	37.3	2.0	45.8	14.8
1961	FG	Labour	21.5	—	31.9	46.5
	Labour	FG	34.1	—	54.7	11.1
1965	FG	Labour	55.0	—	14.6	30.4
	Labour	FG	52.7	—	34.6	12.7
1969	FG	Labour	33.4	—	17.9	48.7
	Labour	FG	34.5	—	18.8	46.6
1973	FG	Labour	70.9	—	8.4	20.7
	Labour	FG	71.9	—	13.4	14.7
1977	FG	Labour	72.3	—	10.3	17.4
	Labour	FG	58.8	—	26.0	15.2

Notes: (1) The figures refer to the percentage of transfers from the party in the first column in situations in which no candidates of this party were available to receive transfers, but at least one candidate of the party in the second column was available to receive transfers.

(2) "Other coalition parties" refers to Clann na Poblachta, Clann na Talmhan and National Labour in 1948; Clann na Poblachta and Clann na Talmhan in 1951 and 1954; and Clann na Talmhan in 1957.

Clann na Poblachta. More remarkably, since Fine Gael and Clann na Poblachta seemed to be at opposite ends of the political spectrum, practically half (47.7 per cent) of Fine Gael's transfers passed to the Clann, with only 14.7 per cent going to Fianna Fail and the rest becoming non-transferable.

Although five parties had entered the first coalition, by 1957 Fine Gael and Labour were the only coalition parties of any significance. Table 4 traces the relationship between these two parties between 1948 and 1977. There were no signs of any closeness in 1948, as would be expected, but the flow of transfers between the two parties was higher at the next two elections. Even so, the figures are a long way short of the peaks of the 1970s and do not suggest anything more than moderate enthusiasm for the Inter-Party Governments of the 1950s. The figures for 1957 confirm the view that, while Fine Gael supporters were prepared for a further coalition, Labour voters were not keen on the idea.

For thirteen years after the 1954–57 Coalition Government came to an end, Labour remained strongly opposed to the idea of any further coalitions. In 1961, not surprisingly, only a small proportion of Labour lower preferences went to Fine Gael and vice versa. The 1965 figures, however, are surprisingly high; in fact, there was more solidarity between the parties at the 1965 election than there had been at any of the inter-party elections of the 1950s. The conclusion must be that Labour voters, perhaps impressed by Fine Gael's "Just Society" programme, were not in complete agreement with their party's refusal to consider a coalition — it was during this campaign that the Labour leader made his famous "Tullamore speech" — and that the majority of them would not have objected if another Labour-Fine Gael coalition had been formed after the election.

At the 1969 election, however, the anti-coalition sentiments expressed by the leaderships of both parties seem to have been in harmony with the feelings of party supporters. At this election, of course, Labour adopted a strongly socialist programme and criticised both of "the two conservative parties", and several senior Fine Gael figures ruled out the prospect of a coalition with a party as far to the left as Labour. In other words, as the transfer pattern confirms, the 1969 election was contested by three completely independent parties, each of which felt itself fundamentally opposed to the other two. The large number of transfers from each party becoming non-transferable, rather than going to another party, emphasises this point.

The coalition arrangement between the two parties in 1973 was generally observed by their supporters; about 70 per cent of the supporters of each gave their next preference to the other when no candidate of their own party was available, figures almost as high as those for the internal solidarity of each party. Fine Gael's figure remained at the same level in 1977, but there was a noticeable drop in the proportion of Labour transfers going to Fine

Gael, reflecting some dissatisfaction in the Labour ranks with the coalition experience.

So far, we have considered the passage of transfers between selected pairs of parties. It will also be of interest to examine the behaviour of supporters of parties, particularly newly-formed parties, whose relationship to other parties is not clear. In this section, we shall examine the attitude towards the established parties of five such parties: the Irish Workers' League in September 1927, Clann na Talmhan in 1943, 1944 and 1948, National Labour in 1944 and 1948, Clann na Poblachta in 1948, and Sinn Fein in 1973 and 1977.

The Irish Workers' League was established by Jim Larkin and his brother in 1923 and nominated three candidates at the September 1927 election. The group owed its formation to Larkin's disputes with the Labour Party and with the ITGWU leadership, which might suggest that its supporters tended to give their lower preferences to Labour. On the other hand, it enjoyed good relations with Fianna Fail (Mitchell, 1974, pp. 274–76). As Table 5 shows, IWL voters favoured Fianna Fail, which in fact received over a half of all IWL transfers, a pattern which helps to explain why the activities of the IWL produced some antagonism between Labour and Fianna Fail.

Clann na Talmhan, which was formed in 1938, drew its strength from a feeling of discontent with both major parties among small farmers, especially in the West (see the quotations in Garvin, 1977, p. 181). The table shows that at the first general election it contested, in 1943, its supporters gave two and a half times as many lower preferences to Fine Gael as to Fianna Fail when both parties had candidates available to receive transfers. Their antipathy towards Fianna Fail can be assumed to have derived from the fact that it seemed to bear a greater share of the responsibility for their problems since it had been in government for the previous eleven years. However, they were not greatly impressed by Fine Gael either, and a plurality of their votes became non-transferable when there were no more Clann na Talmhan candidates available to receive transfers. This disdain towards the established parties did not last. Once in the Dáil, Clann na Talmhan was unable to keep maintaining that the major parties were equally bad, since the logic of parliamentary politics forced it repeatedly into the anti-Government lobbies alongside Fine Gael. In 1944, Fine Gael received almost six times as many of its transfers as Fianna Fail in situations where both parties were able to receive transfers, and a very small proportion became non-transferable. The position was similar in 1948, except that a larger proportion went to other parties, particularly to Clann na Poblachta.

There are some similarities between the IWL and the National Labour Party. Each arose out of a dispute within the trade union movement, with hostility between William O'Brien and James Larkin playing a central role. In

Table 5: *Transfers from minor parties, 1927-1977*

<i>Election</i>	<i>Transfer from</i>	<i>Parties always available to receive transfers</i>	<i>Percentage of transfers received by each group</i>	
1927 (2)	IWL	FF, Labour	FF	52.8
			Labour	14.0
			Others	21.1
			N-T	12.0
1943	C na T	FF, FG	FF	12.9
			FG	31.7
			Others	12.8
			N-T	42.6
1944	C na T	FF, FG	FF	12.4
			FG	73.7
			Others	5.5
			N-T	8.4
1948	C na T	FF, FG	FF	12.3
			FG	42.4
			Others	26.1
			N-T	19.2
1944	Nat Lab	FF, Labour	FF	25.7
			Labour	12.7
			Others	48.8
			N-T	12.8
1948	Nat Lab	FF, Labour	FF	20.7
			Labour	33.6
			Others	33.6
			N T	12.1
1948	C na P	FF, FG	FF	11.9
			FG	23.2
			Others	32.9
			N-T	32.0
1948	C na P	FF, FG, Labour	FF	10.0
			FG	18.1
			Labour	39.5
			Others	10.3
1973	SF	FF, FG	N-T	22.2
			FF	17.2
			FG	31.5
			Others	25.1
1977	SF	FF, FG	N-T	26.1
			FF	33.1
			FG	16.8
			Others	24.9
			N-T	25.2

each case, the Labour Party suspected Fianna Fail collusion with the break-away group. The chief differences were that National Labour, unlike the IWL, stood to the right of Labour and that William O'Brien and the ITGWU, the central core of the Labour Party in the 1920s, were outside the official fold in the 1940s. As in the case of the IWL, a high rate of transfers to either Fianna Fail or Labour could be hypothesised. Unfortunately, the number of cases available for analysis is very small. The available evidence suggests that National Labour voters may have preferred Fianna Fail to Labour in 1944 and preferred Labour in 1948, but neither relationship is close and, in fact, it is difficult to find any consistent pattern in the flow of National Labour lower preferences. The low level of transfers to Labour, though, and the even lower rate of transfers from Labour to National Labour shows that it is a mistake to assume that votes cast for National Labour candidates can be treated simply as "Labour" votes. National Labour and the Irish Labour Party were, for the six-year period of the former's existence, two separate and distinct parties.

Clann na Poblachta erupted onto the political scene in the late 1940s and nominated 93 candidates at the 1948 election. It drew its support from many sources — ex-IRA members who resented Fianna Fail's treatment of that organisation, INTO members politicised by the Government's attitude towards the teachers' strike, and, in general, those for whom the established parties lacked appeal. The strong republican element in the party's outlook might suggest that most of its lower preferences would go to Fianna Fail, while its vague radicalism and the sense of grievance at social issues which had given it some of its initial momentum would suggest a high transfer to Labour. Since Fine Gael seemed both very conservative and pro-Commonwealth, a very low transfer to that party would be expected.

As Table 5 shows, this expectation is not fulfilled. When both Fianna Fail and Fine Gael candidates were available to receive transfers from the Clann, almost twice as many went to Fine Gael as to Fianna Fail, a figure which is very surprising even though it must be qualified by the observation that about two-thirds of the transfers went to neither of these parties. When the analysis is confined to situations in which each of the three main parties had candidates available to receive transfers, a clear plurality favoured Labour. The most obvious explanation of these patterns is that, whatever the reservations of Clann na Poblachta supporters towards Fine Gael and Labour may have been, the strength of their hostility to the Fianna Fail Government transcended all other factors.

Voters for the most recent incarnation of Sinn Fein — in 1976 the party changed its name to "Sinn Fein, the Workers' Party" — favoured the coalition in 1973, but in 1977 their lower preferences were divided evenly

between the outgoing Government and Fianna Fail.<sup>13</sup> In 1973, when both Fianna Fail and Fine Gael candidates were available to receive transfers, nearly twice as many went to Fine Gael as to Fianna Fail, but this position was reversed in 1977. When candidates of each of the three main parties were available, Labour received a plurality of the transfers at each election.

## V CONCLUSION

An analysis of transfer patterns produces important information on the history and evolution of the Irish party system. In Section II of the paper it was shown that Fianna Fail has always had more success than other parties in inducing its supporters to vote solidly for the party candidates, a finding attributed to its superior organisation. The solidarity of the other main parties has fluctuated, being weakest when their appeal was lowest and improving in the 1960s when attempts were made to tighten the organisations. If the suggested relationship between organisational efficiency and the solidarity of transfers is a valid one, then, given the apparent determination of Fine Gael under its new leader to overhaul the party's organisation, it can be expected that, unless there is another coalition arrangement with Labour, Fine Gael's solidarity at the next election will be very close to that of Fianna Fail. Some minor parties have occasionally achieved high solidarity figures, though these have usually fallen away when the parties' national strength declines and they become little more than a grouping of independents campaigning only nominally on a party label.

In Section III it was found that the proportion of voters who "plump" for one party is higher than might be expected. It was suggested that this is because many voters are not fully aware of the power afforded to them by the electoral system and that they fail to use this power to the full out of a mistaken fear that, by doing so, they might harm their most favoured party. It was pointed out that, on the contrary, the failure of a party's supporters to use the ballot paper fully is liable to work against that party's interests.

By an examination of the passage of transfers between parties, evidence of mutual warmth between the supporters of certain parties at certain elections was discovered. Throughout the 1920s, a system of alliances was built up, slowly at first, with Cumann na nGaedheal and the Farmers Party on one side and Fianna Fail and Labour on the other. This polarisation became most intense in 1933 when the solidarity between the parties on each side of the divide was so high that the 1933 election can almost be regarded as having been contested by just two parties, Cumann na nGaedheal-Centre Party on one side and Fianna Fail-Labour Party on the other. Whereas the for-

13. Transfers from Sinn Fein in 1957 and 1961 tended to go, depending on the availability of candidates, to Clann na Poblachta, Labour, Fianna Fail and Fine Gael in that order.

mer alliance was soon consummated in a complete merger, the latter weakened; vestigial traces remained in 1937, but the alliance had disappeared by 1938. A new alliance, between Fine Gael and Labour, arose after the 1948 election, although it did not attain the closeness in the 1950s which it was to reach in the 1970s.

This analysis of transfer patterns has shown that lower preferences are very valuable academically since they illustrate several aspects of Irish parties and their relationships with each other. It has not, however, asked whether the value of transfers is more than academic — that is, whether the transfer of lower preferences has had a decisive impact on election results. This question, the importance of the transferability of votes as a feature of the Irish electoral system, may be answered at a later stage.

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