

Nationalist Elites, Irish Voters and Irish Political Development: A Comparative Perspective*

TOM GARVIN

University College, Dublin

I INTRODUCTION

IN this essay it is argued that the Irish political system, although it is usually seen as a deviant case among Western polities, is best viewed in a broader comparative perspective—that of decolonialising political systems. In the central sections of this paper an examination is made of the development of the Irish party system and it is concluded that the structure of the system tallies well with common descriptions of the politics of post-colonial states. It is also suggested that the main significant exception to this general statement is afforded by the governmental machine, which has remained intact and centralised rather than becoming decentralised and penetrated by politics in the manner typical of democratic post-colonial countries. In a final section, it is suggested that certain well-known peculiarities of Irish political culture are to be explained with reference to this characteristically Irish divorce between politics and government.

Political scientists have tended to see the party system of the Republic of Ireland as an anomaly among Western party systems. A recent article referred to it as “a problem child in Western European schema” (Urwin and Eliassen, 1975). Leon Epstein, in mentioning Ireland’s lack of a strong socialist party, ascribed this to the country’s oddities: “Ireland can be disregarded because of its size and small industrial base or treated as a special case for historical reasons” (Epstein, 1967, p. 138). This might be seen to constitute a counsel of despair. Ireland is small, but it approaches the Scandinavian countries in size, and is by no means a microstate.

A theme of this paper is that one of the keys to the difficulty in assigning a place to the country in comparative typologies lies in Ireland’s inclusion in the rather narrowly-defined *oecumene* of post-1945 industrialised Western Europe and North America. Ireland is, at best, a fringe member of this group: the country was impoverished in 1922 and still is relatively poor and unindustrialised, it was and is

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subject to unusually complete cultural blanketing by its erstwhile colonial metropole, and is, almost uniquely in Western Europe, a post-colonial successor state.¹ This fact suggests that we should look further than the North Atlantic area in searching for comparisons. Another older tradition slotted Ireland in with the "Old" (i.e. white) Dominions of the British Commonwealth: states descended from colonies settled by citizens of the imperial state and where aboriginal populations had become demographically insignificant or had been killed off. However, Ireland never fitted comfortably into this group either: in Ireland, the aboriginals won, at the price of becoming culturally assimilated to their colonial masters. The eastern European analogy is more promising, and deserves to be investigated. However, only two of the eastern European successor states managed to retain liberal institutions throughout the inter-war period, and all except Greece and Finland had their politics and society "made over" by the USSR after 1945.

What Ireland does have in common with much of the non-Western world is its newness: the Irish state's institutional ancestry is short, and its relationship to the Gaelic Irish state is rather distant and locational rather than organic in character: the modern Republic coincides with the bulk of the pre-1800 Kingdom of Ireland, while asserting its historical legitimacy as the successor state to the Gaelic polity. The ersatz character of this claim to continuity of political tradition (cf., for example, McDunphy, 1945, pp. 3-4) points to an important characteristic of the Irish state: its essential newness. It is a product of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: the modern Irish state is literally pseudo-Gaelic. This curious combination of newness and pseudo-traditionalism is typical of post-colonial third world polities.

Another problem which arises in analysing the Irish case in a comparative context is the problem of definition: "Ireland-as-a-whole" *versus* the Republic of Ireland as our unit of analysis. Irishmen themselves, have long engaged in double-think about Northern Ireland and have tended to switch between *gross-Ireland* and *klein-Ireland* modes of thought. The Irish Constitution of 1937 is similarly ambiguous on this question. Much of the literature on Ireland reflects this ambiguity, and fails to fully recognise the "linked-but-separate" political developments of the Dublin- and Belfast-centred polities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A common misconception, for example, is the assumption that the Irish Civil War of 1922-23 was fought on the issue of partition. The Northern Ireland question was scarcely discussed during the Dáil debate on the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921: the break between the pro- and anti-Treaty elements actually took place on the issue of the formal international status of the new Dublin-centred state, and not on the issue of Ulster's relationship to that state. Thus from the very beginning, Ulster was a side-issue, although a very important one. Politics in the new Southern state centred around symbolic issues such as the constitutional status of the new state *vis-à-vis* Britain and the Empire, and, somewhat later, economic issues such as

1. Other successor states, such as Finland and Iceland, were never submerged institutionally and culturally to anything like the same extent. Cf. Rokkan (1970a), pp. 125-126.

protectionism *versus* free trade. Partition was tacitly recognised by *both* sides as an insoluble problem.² In this essay, we assume an essential separateness between North and South: each successor state has an impact on the internal politics of the other, but these impacts are, even in the pre-1922 period and *a fortiori* in the post-1922 period, essentially “extra-systemic”.

II ELECTORAL POLITICS IN NEW STATES: IRELAND AS AN EXAMPLE

The internal politics of decolonialising and post-colonial new states is often characterised by large-scale mass mobilisation for political purposes either through the social vehicles of electoral political parties or through authoritarian functional substitutes for such parties such as politicised popular armies, single-party movements or religious organisations of various types.

Where free popular elections remain the main vehicle of popular mobilisation a common outcome is the entry of the rural populations into a political arena initially dominated by urban revolutionaries, western political outlooks and relatively cosmopolitan political ideas: the process of decolonialisation involves a “decosmopolitanisation” of domestic politics.

According to S. P. Huntington, (1968, p. 75) this “Green Uprising”, “. . . often takes the form of one segment of the urban elite developing an appeal to or making an alliance with the crucial rural voters . . .”.

The mobilisation of rural and humble support leads to a general ruralisation and traditionalisation of the polity—a retreat from secularist to sacred values and symbols, an attempt to construct an artificial continuity with traditional society and a strengthening of the regime’s legitimacy in the politically vital rural areas at the expense of alienating the more westernised urban groups. Huntington also emphasises a concomitant geographical decentralisation and the dissipation of central administrative authority among regional rural political leaders. This pattern of rural mobilisation and rural support for the government is a common one outside Western Europe—and not unknown even in Western Europe. As Huntington notes, “The support for the governing party . . . comes from the countryside; the support for the opposition comes from the cities”. (*Ibid.*, pp. 435–437).

I would suggest that Ireland offers an intriguing example of this post-colonial ruralisation within Western Europe and that it also deviates from it in a revealing fashion. Between 1918 and 1948, the main lines were laid down of a new political system in nationalist Ireland. The structure of this new polity was to a great extent the product of the encounter during this period of an inexperienced nation-building élite with a recently-enfranchised and mobilised electorate whose concerns and aspirations only partly matched those of the élite.

2. Cf. Heslinga (1962) *passim*. Compare Rokkan’s view of North and South as being essentially inseparable (Rokkan, 1970b).

The revolutionary leaders and the post-revolutionary politicians described themselves as the refounders of an Irish state rather than as the builders of a successor-state to the British *raj*. They, and their apologists, tended to adhere to a political mythology and symbol system which emphasised and asserted continuities between the new state and the half-forgotten pre-British, Gaelic Ireland which had died in the seventeenth century with the destruction of the Gaelic aristocracy. This mythology and symbolism had a very strong hold on the imagination of the revolutionaries, and coloured the official myth and self-image of the new state permanently, if superficially.³

As has already been suggested, the society which the new political élite presided over was unusual among Western European states in another important respect: its political tradition was essentially colonial in character. Its immediate predecessor, the Westminster-directed Dublin government, bequeathed to its post-colonial successor administrative and representative structures which had been the fruit of British reformist and "modernising" policies during the previous half-century: those years saw the laying-down of the main lines of the post-1922 state's civil service, educational system, police force and church-state relationship. The change-over of 1922 was an oddly minimalist one: a sovereign parliament and new symbols were superimposed on a pre-revolutionary structure. It has been cogently argued that the real predecessor of the Irish Free State was the post-medieval *English*, Dublin-centred Kingdom of Ireland, rather than the Gaelic, semi-sacred and mainly symbolic High-Kingship extinguished by the colonists in the twelfth century. It is noteworthy that Ulster was the last part of Ireland to be absorbed by the Dublin Kingdom, and was the first to secede from it. (Cf. Heslinga *op. cit.*).

The legitimacy of the new political system was, then, somewhat vulnerable; it was post-British, it was doubtfully Gaelic in its antecedents, it was partitioned, and it was Dublin-based and middle-class in a society which was rural, agrarian, anti-urban and populist in its social and political orientations.

This somewhat schizophrenic political tradition and the flawed legitimacy consequent on it forces the political scientist to cope with the often wide divergence between what the main political actors of the revolutionary period announced themselves to be doing, on the one hand, (resurrecting a Gaelic polity, perhaps) and what they actually seem to have been doing on the other hand (taking control of a democratising and decolonialising political system). What the revolutionary élite saw themselves as doing is perhaps of unusual importance to an understanding of the contemporary Irish Republic because of the unusually long time that élite stayed in control of the new state: up to about 1960, the politicians of 1918 remained in power and stamped their ideas indelibly into the structure of the new state. However, they were not completely in control, and their ideas were resisted, deflected and ignored by large sections of the community. This resistance

3. On the "regaelicisation" paradigm of Irish history, see for example, MacNeill (1919) and Green (1922). For critiques, see Thomson (1967) and O Faolain, (1968).

was often passive, inarticulate and expressed by actions rather than by words: perhaps the most characteristic form it took was the selective vote.

This essay attempts to chart the process by which the political goals of the revolutionary politicians were subjected to a selection process or a reality-testing through the process of electoral politics; in many ways, Ireland offers an excellent example of the encounter between the builder of a political Utopia and the humdrum concerns of a democratic electorate. The essay attempts also to put this Irish experience in a comparative framework.

III ELECTORAL POLITICS IN PRE-INDEPENDENCE IRELAND

The electorate of the post-1922 state was a new one, enfranchised rather abruptly between 1918 and 1923. Table 1 summarises the process by which the franchise was extended to the general population.⁴

Table 1: *The franchise in Ireland, 1832-1926*

Date	1832	1868	1884	1918	1926
Percentage of population enfranchised	1.2	4.2	14.3	44.1	58.1

Sources: Walker (1975), Chubb (1969) p. 331.

Figures for pre-1926 refer to all Ireland.

Before 1918, Irish politics centred obsessively around the issue of the British connection:

In the nineteenth century, the whole passion of Ireland went to the recovery of her political freedom. She literally had no time to think of anything else. (O'Hegarty, 1949, p. 775).

The main cleavage in Irish politics was then, as it still is in Ulster, between those (mainly Protestant) who supported the British connection and those (mainly Catholic) who urged devolution or secession. This polarised cleavage obscured the rather varied composition of each of these groups and prevented the clear political expression of socio-economic or regional differences within each of the ethnic-religious communities. Because of the uneven geographical distribution of the two groups, many areas of the country rarely witnessed a competitive election, unopposed candidatures were common, and each party, Unionist and Nationalist alike, tended to enjoy unchallenged domination in its own area. Thus, over most of the area that was to become the Irish Free State, the politics of the nomination convention held sway and the dominion of local notables, both laymen and clergy, was complete. Electoral politics in pre-independence Ireland tended to be élitist, personalistic and clientelistic to an extreme extent. Divisions within the Nationalist party did, of course, exist, especially during the years after the Parnell split of 1891,

4. For the consequences of the drastic franchise expansion of 1918, see Farrell (1971).

but these divisions never amounted to a regularly competitive party system because of the undemocratic and single-issue character of Irish politics.

The only election before 1918 which witnessed a competitive election between two Catholic nationalist groups was the British general election of 1892, when the Parnellite and anti-Parnellite wings of the Irish Parliamentary party opposed each other in about half of the constituencies in the twenty-six counties of Nationalist Ireland. The issues involved, among other things, the role of the Catholic Church in party politics, and the election results showed a sharp urban-rural division between the two groups: the "anti-clerical" Parnellite support was concentrated in the larger cities and towns, while the anti-Parnellites won crushing victories in the countryside. After this electoral defeat of the Parnellites, the IPP's clerical and localist segments came to dominate the party at the expense of the more urban, "liberal secularist" elements, prefiguring the somewhat similar ruralising and desecularising effect that electoral competition was to have in the independent Irish polity after 1922.

By and large, IPP candidates tended to be returned unopposed. In the election of 1910, in the area which was to become the independent Republic, out of 75 non-university seats, 48 returned unopposed (Nationalist) Irish Parliamentary Party candidates. Some contests did occur, in Munster and in the larger towns, between rival Nationalist factions or between the IPP as a whole and Unionist candidates in constituencies where there were appreciable Protestant populations. The IPP also developed a strong monopoly of the new representative councils introduced in 1898, gathering around it clients dependent on its access to petty patronage. This social hegemony made the IPP's life relatively tranquil and encouraged the atrophy of its organisation and of its sensitivities to popular feeling. It is probable that it would not have had an easy time maintaining its hegemony in a political system with universal suffrage, even if no World War or Dublin Rising had intervened.⁵

The British General Election of 1918 was, therefore, truly the first mass, competitive election that Ireland had ever experienced; as Brian Farrell has pointed out, this fact, combined with the single-seat plurality voting system, ensured a somewhat artificially total victory for Sinn Féin in circumstances of national revolution and mass political mobilisation, and also ensured the destruction of the IPP.⁶

5. See Lyons (1968). Dillon, one of the IPP's more liberal leaders, ascribed his party's defeat in 1918 to Sinn Féin's "superb organisation" and to the IPP's lack of any such organisation at all. He also admits that the IPP had lost touch with the young and with the electors in general (op. cit., p. 458).

On the 1892 election, see Lyons (1951) pp. 133-134. My own analysis of that election is based on figures given in the Dublin *Freeman's Journal* for July 22 and 23, 1892.

6. Farrell (1971). O'Hegarty comments revealingly (O'Hegarty, 1924, p. 31): "The victory of Christmas 1918 was not a victory of conviction, but of emotion. It was a victory occasioned less by any sudden achievement by the majority of a belief in Ireland a nation than by the sudden reaction against various acts of British tyranny . . . Father O'Flanagan (an SF leader) made at the time a (wise and profound) remark . . . 'The people have voted Sinn Féin. What we Sinn Féin leaders have to do now is explain to them what Sinn Féin is'. It is what we did not do."

IV ELITES AND ELECTIONS IN REVOLUTIONARY IRELAND, 1918-23

Sinn Féin, before 1916 a relatively unimportant bourgeois nationalist group, had become by 1919 the umbrella for an increasingly fissiparous and oddly-composed national front. However, the core leadership of Sinn Féin tended to stay with the central members of the group elected so dramatically in 1918, and this group was also the source of the leaderships of the two successor parties to Sinn Féin that were to emerge after independence in 1922. There is plenty of evidence to indicate that the ambitious and somewhat vague goals entertained by these men corresponded less than exactly to the concerns or the expectations of the new electorate. According to the "Democratic Programme" adopted by this group in an apparently casual fashion in 1919, the revolutionary nationalist front was committed to a modernising series of proposals of an ambitious character. As in most Irish nationalist ideology of the time, the goals of the élite were a mixture of reformist modernisation and Gaelic revivalism, little incongruity between the two being seen.⁷

Three years after their assumption of leadership, the revolutionary élite split, but they were to form the founding fathers of the new political system. Like revolutionary leaders elsewhere, they were mainly middle-class, urban, relatively well-educated and quite young. In 1918 33 per cent of Sinn Féin MPs were under 35 years of age, and three-quarters of them were under 45. They were politically experienced in local and clique politics rather than in parliamentary politics. They despised the professional politicians of the IPP: nearly half were not resident in the constituencies which had elected them: they were, so to speak, that relatively rare thing in Irish politics, outsiders elected because of their party label rather than because of their personal local standing (McCracken, 1958, p. 30). They were idealistic, puritanical and austere, intolerant of nepotism and unwilling or unable to distinguish between corruption and pluralistic bargaining.⁸

The guerilla war that was waged against the British between 1919 and 1921 had enormous effects on the Sinn Féin movement. Firstly, it introduced military considerations into what had been intrinsically a political party, and it rallied, or forced, all segments of the population and all social organisations into a position of subservience to, or acquiescence with, the increasingly militaristic leadership of the national movement. The Sinn Féin organisation grew with tremendous rapidity: between the end of 1917 and the end of 1919 its membership doubled, going

7. F. S. L. Lyons (1973), pp. 401-403. Also see J. Lee (1973), pp. 137-168. On the character of the revolutionary élite, See Cohan (1972), *passim*.

8. On the austere, "anti-Tammany" views of the SF élites in government after 1922, see Malone (1929). Both de Valera and Griffith, founding fathers of a Sinn Féin each and of the two major parties of the new polity, concurred in roundly condemning "Tammany politics" and "party methods" in 1922; it seems certain that neither was truly aware of the irony of their situation. See *Dáil Debates*, 1 March 1922, pp. 158 and 161.

For a fuller and rather similar assessment of the SF élites, see Fanning, (1975).

from 66,000 to nearly 120,000. This impressive membership melted away, however, in 1921; the cessation of hostilities appears to have been a signal for many presumably less-interested members to leave politics to others ("I.O.", 1921; Laffan, 1970). It can be presumed that those who stayed on were those who had become most attached to political and military life and who were most committed to one or other version of the separatist ideal. The crumbling of the united front began even before the Anglo-Irish Treaty was signed in December 1921.

The major political cleavage in the new polity dates from January 1922 when the Dáil ratified the Treaty by a narrow majority. However, the split did not become total and irreversible until the election of June, 1922. This decisive election had several significant features: it was the first in which the main lines of the future Irish party system became visible and in which non-nationalist elements appeared in significant numbers as the nationalist front disintegrated.

The Labour Party emerged as a national electoral force for the first time, gaining almost as many first preference votes as the de Valera anti-Treaty wing of Sinn Féin, and a Farmers' Party appeared also. Turnout in the contested constituencies was low—about 61 per cent—and seven points down on 1918. Nineteen constituencies were contested, out of a possible total of 26—a larger proportion than in 1918, when Sinn Féin had won one-third of the 26 county constituencies unopposed. The Proportional Representation by means of the Single Transferable vote electoral system (PR-STV), which encouraged minority groups to compete in the hope of getting a seat, was partially responsible for the unanticipated large number of contests.

The most peculiar feature of the 1922 election was, of course, the electoral "Pact" entered into by the two opposing Sinn Féin factions in an attempt to preserve themselves and their fragile unity in the face of British pressure and also in the face of a not completely sympathetic electorate (MacArdle, 1968, p. 649). The Pact, signed by the leaders of the two factions of the Sinn Féin movement, was an agreement that a joint ticket should be offered to the voters, and that the voters would be asked to rank-order their preferences from the entire list. Even before the election, the Pact began to break down: the pro-Treaty leaders, under British pressure and scenting electoral victory, partially repudiated it and published the text of the new, controversial and British-approved Irish constitution only on the morning of the election. The anti-Treatyites, anticipating electoral defeat and feeling cheated, became increasingly dominated by their militaristic elements.⁹ Full-scale civil war broke out within days of the results becoming known.

9. It is at this point that the terms "Free State" and "Republican" become the labels for the conservative and radical nationalist wings of Sinn Féin. The term "Republican" has survived to become a general term for a national radical in Irish political parlance. So complete is the dominance of nationalist ideology over more cosmopolitan systems of political ideas that even socialists normally refer to their position as a "Republican" one. The term has now effectively been drained of most of its original anti-monarchical significance.

Table 2: *Result of General Election, 1922*

Party	Pro-Treaty SF	Anti-Treaty SF	Labour Party	Farmers	Others	Total	N
Valid votes cast %	38	22	21	8	11	100	621,484

Source: Walker (1975).

Perhaps the most striking feature of the election was the tiny size of the voting electorate—less than half of the total adult population voted, either because of legal disenfranchisement, apathy or intimidation. Certainly, the Republicans appear to have taken the Pact seriously and do not seem to have set up any party organisation of their own—although Republicans were apt, in many areas, to intimidate non-Sinn Féin candidates.¹⁰ Acceptance of the pro-Treaty position is suggested not only by the election results, but also by the brevity and localised character of the civil war which followed. The fact that about 40 per cent of the voters cast their first preferences for non-Sinn Féin candidates is reflective of the less than totally polarised condition of the electorate.

The intervention of the voters in 1922 decided the issue in favour of the Treaty; it took a civil war and a four-year learning process in the political wilderness for the anti-Treatyites to absorb this lesson but once they absorbed it they never were to forget again the value of electoral strength. The result of the 1922 election was confirmed the following year, when it became clear that the voters were willing to accept the Treaty. The mass electorate had deradicalised the system.

V POLITICIANS AND VOTERS IN INDEPENDENT IRELAND

The split of 1922, which was subsequently to form the basis of the main cleavage of the new party system, took place over what was essentially an issue in foreign policy, although few saw it in quite those terms at the time. It was to become a dead issue eventually, as the status of the new state drifted gradually from that of Dominion to that of sovereign Republic during the following 30 years and as domestic issues came to dominate its political life. Even in 1922, however, the Treaty seems to have been an issue which exercised the nationalist élites far more than it did the general population of a country which was now entering an era of economic depression. The intensity with which the élites debated the issue was, of course, rooted in the experiences which they had had in the years of revolutionary struggle. The sudden placing of the leadership of the country in the hands of a whole new generation of young, idealistic and relatively inexperienced men who

10. For examples of electoral intimidation, in each case directed against Farmers' Party candidates, see *Freeman's Journal*, June 7, 1922, pp. 5-6 where instances are reported from Waterford-East Tipperary and from North-West Mayo. In each case the candidate was forced to withdraw from the election. In Monaghan, a Farmers' candidate had to stage a last-moment surprise nomination so as to avoid intimidation.

had, until then, been shut out from participation in ordinary political life would have been likely to have had extravagant results at the best of times. Add to this the romantic warrior cult of Pearse and a savage guerilla war against the British and it becomes surprising how *easily* they made the transition to peace-time politics after 1922. The anti-political and austere character of the nationalist ideology presumably made this transition even more psychologically difficult for them.¹¹

Social-psychological explanations of the split are interesting and important, but more traditional explanations in terms of social interest have some relevance as well. Table 3 cross-tabulates the social backgrounds of those 1918 Sinn Féin MPs surviving politically until 1922 by the sides taken on the Treaty issue. This group formed only about half of the Second Dáil's membership, but was the political core of that assembly and formed its leadership. The result is quite instructive: a detectable if not strong relationship existed between social background and political militancy. However, the preponderance of professional men in the Sinn Féin élite on both sides of the fence is the most conspicuous feature of Table 3.¹²

Table 3: *The Sinn Féin élite: occupational backgrounds of twenty-six county area 1918 MPs, by side chosen in 1922, excluding university MPs and other non-SF MPs.*

Occupation	Pro-Treaty %	Anti-Treaty %
<i>Professions</i> (including lawyers, civil servants, journalists)	59	53
<i>White-collar and other workers</i> (includes three small farmers and one artisan)	6	33
<i>Proprietors</i> (including large farmers)	34	13
*N	32	30

*There are seven missing cases.

Source: See footnote 12 of text.

11. Warner Moss (1933, pp. 19-21), suggests a social-psychological explanation for the vehemence of the anti-Treatyites. The women Sinn Féiners and the IRA male activists were particularly vehemently anti-Treaty. Moss suggests that those who had been socialised into the military aspect of the national movement tended to reject parliamentarism, while those who had had formative experiences in the political aspect tended to accept the Treaty. The women, politically even more inexperienced than the men, products of a male-dominated social system, and temperamentally similar to the contemporaneous suffragettes in Britain, were particularly attracted to emotional and millennial nationalism. See Cumann na mBan, *Report of Annual Convention, October 1921* (mimeo, National Library, Dublin). Most of the delegates came from the Munster counties in which the guerilla war had been most intense.

12. The SF leaders, the IRB leaders, the 1916 leaders and the 1918 MPs were of middle- or upper-class origin, by and large. The intelligentsia were particularly conspicuous. The rank-and-file of the 1916 Volunteers were mostly working-class. No study of the social character of the post-1919 IRA has yet been done. On the 1916 *putsch*, see Larsen and Snoddy (1973). The source for Table 3 is a collection of notes of Patrick O'Keefe in possession of Brian Farrell.

The electorate which these groups encountered in 1922 was, as has been noted, substantially a new one, and obviously far more varied in status than were the Sinn Féin élites. The new state inherited the most thoroughly rural part of the old United Kingdom, and had no control over the only section of Ireland which had experienced significant industrialisation—the North. In 1926 the primary economic sector of the new truncated state accounted for over 52 per cent of those gainfully occupied, although it seems to have accounted for perhaps not much more than 35 per cent of GNP.¹³ The demographic and political importance of the rural electorate far outweighed its purchasing power in economic terms. The most commercialised sector of the agricultural community was the rather localised cattle farming carried on in North Leinster, in the counties near Dublin, with outliers and commercial dependants elsewhere. Dairying, much of it quite commercialised, predominated in central Munster, while in the western province of Connacht, large parts of the Midlands, the counties of Ulster and Western Munster, subsistence, mixed agriculture, sheep and cottage farming predominated. The general impression is of an east-west gradient (Rumpf, 1959), complicated by islands of richer, or poorer, land offering a contrast with the prevailing agricultural farm-types in the particular area. In general, the pattern of larger farms with an employer-employee situation tended to prevail in the east and south, while the family farm, worked by the farmer and his immediate relatives tended to prevail in the west and northwest.

Towns tended to exist to serve these rural communities, and such industries and services as existed were attuned to the requirements of agriculture, an agriculture badly hit by the slump in farm produce prices after 1920. The industrial working class was tiny, and employed in transportation, services and agriculture-connected small-scale industry; its numbers were probably not greater than thirteen per cent of the workforce.¹⁴ Services were an important part of the non-agricultural workforce, accounting for about one-third of the total. In 1926, personal service accounted for nearly ten per cent of the total workforce while direct government employment absorbed only three per cent.

Trade unions were fairly well developed in the early Irish Free State, although membership was seriously depleted during the 1920s because of the trade depression: between 1922 and 1926 the number of unionised workers halved, dropping from nearly 140,000 to just over 77,000.¹⁵ The most significant category was that of transport and communications, mainly presided over by the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (ITGWU), founded by the international

13. Estimate derived from Meenan (1970), pp. 126, 58. GNP estimates for the period are rather unreliable. The assigning of money values to agricultural production in a context in which much of the farming was subsistence in nature is problematical.

14. The positive correspondence between working-class militancy and large factory size has often been documented. See Lipset (1969), p. 237.

15. Figures refer to members of unions registered with the Registrar of Friendly Societies and are underestimates. See *Report of Registrar of Friendly Societies*, Dublin, Stationery Office, 1927, pp. 34-36.

socialist James Larkin, but by this time ideologically "national" and deradicalised. Union militancy in the 1920s weakened with the rancorous division between radicals and moderates of 1923, the intrusion of the "national question" into union affairs, and because of the slump. Dockers and public utilities tended to be particularly strike-prone. In sum, the position of the Labour movement weakened drastically after the foundation of the Free State. Many categories were scarcely unionised at all, and domestic servants, catering workers and agricultural workers were in a particularly weak position. Labour as a political movement reflected the internally divided and weak condition of the working class.

The farming community then, with its natural advantages for electoral purposes of territorial dispersion and large size was the key to political power in the new state. Irish politicians in the 1920s faced a task quite unlike that of their British opposite numbers: that of gaining the favour of a populist, and conservative owner-occupier farming community, a community which still connected nationalism and anti-British politics with the previous generation's drive to abolish landlordism. Irish political leaders faced the problem of persuading such a community to fall in with schemes of modernisation and industrialisation of little obvious or immediate benefit to them, and had simultaneously to shoulder the blame for economic adversity.

VI ELECTIONS AND PARTIES, 1923-44

In the following analysis of electoral politics in post-independence Ireland, two main socioeconomic dimensions of cleavage are posited; (a) *Agrarian class*, containing within it the distinction between landowning farmer and landless labourer as well as the regionally dispersed but also real tension that existed between the small-farm and commercialised large-farm communities and (b) *Centre-periphery*, approximating to, but not identical with, urbanisation, because of the pronounced tendency for governmental, semi-governmental, communications, trade and financial functions to concentrate in the towns, especially, of course, in Dublin. The small, localised and divided character of the specifically urban groups points out the politically decisive character of the rural class groups.¹⁶ Agricultural property valuation and urbanisation rates are used as proxy variables for these cleavage dimensions.

Table 4 gives in summary form the results of the nine general elections held in the state between 1923 and 1944, together with a breakdown by region.¹⁷

16. See Garvin (1974a), for a preliminary statement of this schema.

17. The regions used in this analysis are (i) *Centre*: Dublin City and County, Dun Laoire County Borough; (ii) *East and Midlands*: Rest of Leinster except Louth, and Munster except Clare and Kerry; (iii) *Western Periphery*: Connacht, plus Clare and Kerry and (iv) *Border Periphery*: the Ulster counties, plus Louth. Dublin was the only large city in the state; the line between the East, Midlands and Western Periphery regions corresponds to the line west of which farm size averaged 50 acres or less in 1936. The Border Periphery area was small-farm also, but it has been treated as a separate region because of the presence of significant numbers of Protestants and the distortion of political attitudes which the presence of the frontier with Northern Ireland caused. Electoral statistics are from Walker (1974).

Table 4: *Irish voting patterns, by region, 1923-44*

Election Year	Total	Centre	East and midlands	Western periphery	Border periphery
	%	%	%	%	%
1. Turnout					
1923	58.7	60.0	60.3	55.4	60.0
1927 (1)	66.5	65.5	67.7	64.2	65.0
1927 (2)	67.9	67.3	69.1	66.8	65.7
1932	75.4	70.3	76.8	74.8	76.9
1933	80.6	80.0	82.7	79.4	80.6
1937	74.6	69.6	78.1	71.3	76.7
1938	75.7	67.2	79.3	73.9	80.1
1943	73.3	68.3	75.8	72.5	74.7
1944	68.5	64.0	70.8	67.0	71.4
2. <i>Republicans/Fianna Fáil</i>					
1923	27.4	17.2	25.1	39.3	23.2
1927 (1)	26.1	24.3	24.2	32.8	26.9
1927 (2)	35.2	26.6	33.0	45.2	33.5
1932	44.5	34.1	43.4	55.0	40.3
1933	49.7	43.4	50.3	61.1	50.3
1937	45.2	41.3	41.5	52.6	50.2
1938	51.9	49.4	48.3	61.4	51.4
1943	41.9	45.1	39.8	42.8	42.8
1944	48.9	52.1	45.7	51.0	52.3
3. <i>Cumann na nGael/Fine Gael</i>					
1923	38.9	50.3	33.3	42.1	39.0
1927 (1)	27.4	30.8	22.4	34.2	25.6
1927 (2)	38.7	47.8	34.8	41.2	35.0
1932	35.3	38.9	34.9	36.4	29.2
1933	30.5	40.4	28.8	30.7	22.5
1937	34.8	30.0	36.9	34.8	34.0
1938	33.3	33.9	35.0	31.6	28.7
1943	23.1	26.0	26.0	18.0	18.1
1944	20.5	26.3	21.9	16.8	12.0
4. <i>Labour/National Labour</i>					
1923	11.9	4.6	19.1	6.2	6.9
1927 (1)	13.6	10.3	21.5	6.5	5.1
1927 (2)	10.4	11.7	15.6	4.4	2.5
1932	9.3	8.1	14.3	4.0	3.4
1933	6.4	4.8	11.0	2.3	0.0
1937	11.2	10.2	18.2	4.3	0.0
1938	10.9	9.4	15.8	4.8	5.0
1943	16.1	16.4	21.5	10.7	11.3
1944	11.5	12.2	16.4	5.6	2.7

Table 4 (Contd.)

Election Year	Total	Centre	East and midlands	Western periphery	Border periphery
	%	%	%	%	%
<i>5. Farmers' Party/Centre Party/Independent Farmers</i>					
1923	12.2	1.4	16.4	8.9	17.3
1927 (1)	10.1	0.0	15.3	7.4	10.7
1927 (2)	6.5	0.0	10.2	4.5	6.3
1932	3.1	0.0	4.5	2.0	4.6
1933	9.2	1.2	14.2	5.9	8.3
1937	1.0	0.0	0.8	2.6	0.0
1938	0.5	0.0	0.0	2.1	0.0
<i>6. Clann na Talmhan/Independent Farmers</i>					
1943	11.7	0.6	9.7	23.3	2.0
1944	11.7	0.0	9.9	23.0	14.4
<i>7. Other Parties/Independent Protestants/Independents</i>					
1923	9.5	26.5	6.2	3.6	13.5
1927 (1)	22.7	34.6	16.5	19.0	31.8
1927 (2)	9.2	13.9	6.5	4.7	22.7
1932	7.9	18.9	2.9	2.6	22.5
1933	4.3	10.2	0.7	0.0	18.9
1937	7.8	18.4	2.7	5.8	15.8
1938	3.3	7.5	0.9	0.0	14.9
1943	7.3	11.8	4.4	3.9	16.2
1944	7.4	9.4	6.1	3.6	18.6

Notes:

- (i) Under (7) are listed the June 1927 Sinn Féin vote in Dublin, IPP survivors and ex-Unionists.
(ii) Most candidates classified as "Farmers" in 1943 and 1944 were effectively Clann na Talmhan.
(iii) For definition of the regions used in this analysis and the source of the electoral statistics see footnote 17 of the text.

I. TURNOUT

The first notable feature of this electorate was its inexperience; no real tradition of mass voting existed, and the period between 1918 and 1933 witnessed a rapid and permanent rise in turnout levels. Valid votes cast in 1922 totalled 621,484, in 1923, 1,053,768 and climbed steadily to a record 1,386,558 in 1933. Thereafter turnout declined, but even in the dull election of 1944 did not fall to the levels of the 1920s.

Turnout, then, can be thought of as an indicator of popular levels of political mobilisation and interest, and reflects the success of the various political groups in articulating and aggregating the interests of large segments of the population. Table 4 indicates that turnout was relatively high in Dublin and the east in 1923,

although not very high, the national average being only 58.7 per cent.¹⁸ This situation did not last as political tranquility was restored. By 1932, Dublin was surpassed by the rural regions of the state, a situation which has persisted to the present day. The "Eastern" region, which contains the relatively prosperous commercial and farming heartlands of the provinces of Leinster and Munster, showed the highest turnout rates, the west being slightly, and Dublin significantly lower. Turnout rates correlated noticeably with the large-farm vote, and with high property valuations. It is, however, necessary to distinguish between the entry of new voters into the electorate over time and regional variations in turnout rates within one election: as Table 5 indicates, the new electors of the 1920s tended to be poor and non-urban. This period witnessed the electoral mobilisation of the small-farm communities, the rural proletariat and, to a lesser extent, the poorer classes of the towns: as already noted, urban turnout rates fell noticeably behind rural rates during this period.

Table 5: *Correlations of farm valuation and urbanisation with turnout increase, 1923-33*

	Turnout increase 1923-33
High Farm Valuation	-.43
High Urbanisation	-.46
N	22

Source: See footnote 18 of text.

2. FIANNA FÁIL

The anti-Treaty group retained the name Sinn Féin and contested the election of 1923. Its lack-lustre electoral performance and its abstentionist programme contributed to its rapid decline after 1923. Its reconstitution as Fianna Fáil under the leadership of Eamon de Valera, and that party's development into the dominant political force in the state is the political success story of the period, and the decisive event in the political history of the new state. In 1923 the party was based mainly in, and articulated the political views of, the depressed western rural communities (cf. Table 4). It had, at this stage, less appeal to the eastern agricultural or urban communities.

18. Like the 1922 election, the 1923 election was held under semi-wartime conditions. The anti-Treatyite director of elections complained continually of harassment by the Free State authorities. See *Irish Independent*, August 11, 1923, p. 5. On 16 August, de Valera was arrested at an election meeting in Clare and jailed. Farmers' candidates again came under pressure, mainly from Republicans, to stand down. See *Irish Independent*, August 17, 1923, p. 9. For a full analysis of the 1923 election, see Pyne (1970). Because of incompatibilities between constituency boundaries Athlone-Longford was omitted from the 1937-44 correlation analysis.

For Tables 5-9, the election figures are derived from Walker (1974). Figures on farm valuation and urbanisation are derived from the Statistical Abstracts for the appropriate years, using figures from the censuses nearest to the dates of the elections analysed. N's vary because the number of constituencies contested by the parties varied, because of the electoral redistribution of 1935, and in particular, because amalgamation of data up to county or even two-county level was often required.

De Valera seceded from Sinn Féin—bringing most of the party and its electors with him—and founded Fianna Fáil in 1926.¹⁹ Fianna Fáil formed its first government in 1932 and continued to form the governments, with some intervals in the 1950s, for half a century. Perhaps partly because of this phenomenal success, the party's leadership remained unchanged until the 1960s, and the official ideological goals of the party, first announced in 1926, remain unchanged (Fianna Fáil, 1972).

This populist, autarkic and anti-urban programme reflected well the mass support for the party at this time, as it reflected well the thinking of de Valera, himself a westerner in social background (see Table 6). It did not, however, fully reflect the thinking of many of his cabinet, but they remained subordinate to him until the 1950s.

Table 6: *Correlations of farm valuation and urbanisation with Fianna Fáil vote**, 1923-44

	1923	1927 (1)	1927 (2)	1932	1933	1937	1938	1943	1944
High farm valuation	-.56	-.51	-.57	-.42	-.65	-.39	-.63	-.03	-.06
High urbanisation	-.41	-.41	-.49	-.60	-.48	-.31	-.42	-.08	-.04

N in each case=22

*Includes Sinn Féin Vote, 1923.

Source: See footnote 18 of text.

The fossilisation of the official goals of Fianna Fáil continued throughout a period in which the Irish state urbanised and even industrialised in a slow, conservative and modest way, and in which the western small-farm society, romanticised by the official populist ideology, fell into decay and to an extent parted political company with Fianna Fáil. Table 6 summarises the evolution of Fianna Fáil during the period; initially the party of the poor and the non-urban, by 1943, Fianna Fáil's voter support was spread evenly across the whole country, and in that year its support in Dublin equalled its national average support for the first time (Table 4). The disappearance of regionalism in Fianna Fáil's electoral support was accompanied by the rise of a new party of peripheral agrarian protest, Clann na Talmhan. The partial loss of its original western base was probably an advantage to Fianna Fáil, as the party was able to dissociate itself from sterile western protest politics, and to accommodate itself to a greater diversity of interests. Furthermore, Clann na Talmhan damaged Fine Gael even more than it did Fianna Fáil. Besides

19. The Gaelic words *Fianna Fáil* are usually translated "Warriors of Destiny". They actually form a poetic phrase meaning "Irish Army", and the name was a shrewd choice, being one of the official titles of the (Rebel) Irish Volunteers. The FF symbol, inherited from the Volunteers, still adorns the cap-badge of every Irish soldier. The name asserted the political continuity of de Valera's new party with the militant republican tradition of the IRA and its predecessors. The term "Fianna" also has nineteenth-century Fenian echoes and, more distantly, evokes pre-British Ireland of the heroic Celtic period.

impressive electoral inroads on Dublin, Fianna Fáil was able, during this period, to improve its position in the eastern heartland and in the Border areas as well. Electorally, then, Fianna Fáil lost its pristine agrarian-populist character as early as 1943, a development presaged in 1937 by a weakening in the party's farmer support. It is notable however that Fianna Fáil's apparent inroads on Fine Gael were not all that great: Labour suffered more than did the other parties from the electoral appeal of de Valera's party.

There seems to have been little relationship or exchange of voters between the two major nationalist parties, but rather each exchanged voters, shared social groups, and competed electorally with the minor groups, indicating a "pillaring" of support around each of the successor parties to Sinn Féin, each of the pillars being more remote from each other than either was to the "sectional" or socio-economic parties.

Fianna Fáil appears to have successfully absorbed much of the rural and urban working-class support of the Labour Party, a support attracted by Fianna Fáil's aggressive and assertive stance on the national question and its welfarist and protectionist policies. These voters were also probably disillusioned by the chronic and rancorous divisions within the Labour movement. Once in government, of course, Fianna Fáil was able to add the material benefits of government to its attractions, and attach a greater variety of groups to it than could be attracted by the non-material attractions of nationalist ideology. Fianna Fáil also seems to have attracted much of the medium-sized farm vote, the farming community having become somewhat radicalised by the depression.²⁰ Also, Fianna Fáil appears to have benefited particularly from the entry of new voters into the political system. In general, Fianna Fáil managed to harness the traditional peripheralism of Ireland within the British Isles as well as the peripheralist populism of the Irish West.

3. CUMANN NA nGAEL/FINE GAEL

The pro-Treaty wing of Sinn Féin was, at élite level, of higher social status and more socially segmented in character than was the anti-Treaty group. It also tended to gather to itself socioeconomic interest groups of an established type, in a way that the anti-Treatyites could not and, presumably, would not. Cumann na nGael, as it was renamed in 1923, never had the almost-military, unified and disciplined character of de Valera's party, partly because it contained more chiefs and fewer Indians. It was very much more an alliance of sub-coalitions, whose members differed considerably among themselves, and it was less capable of dominating the ancillary ex-unionist and big-farm groups with which it was allied.

20. In 1932-33, in Longford, a Fianna Fáil catchcry was *we took the Lad down from the counter*. The "Lad" was the cured US bacon which, in the unprotected economy of the pre-1932 period, was able to undersell Irish bacon even in Irish farming areas. Electoral propaganda in 1932 heavily stressed economic, welfarist and nationalist policies, in the case of Fianna Fáil, and economic and security issues in the case of Cumann na nGael. On Fianna Fáil in general, cf. my analysis cited in note 16 above. On the ultimately cross-class support base of Fianna Fáil, cf. Whyte (1974). On Cumann na nGael's acceptance of defeat, almost unique in post-colonial circumstances, see Munger (1974).

At the core of Cumann na nGael was the "Griffithian" Sinn Féin tradition, conservative, bourgeois nationalist in tone, and scientific in the Victorian and rationalistic sense of the term. It also contained a less narrow and inhibited strand, centred on Collins, a group which might best be styled "Pro-Treaty Republican", which viewed the Anglo-Irish Treaty, realistically enough, in an opportunistic light as a stepping-stone toward the full realisation of the goals of the pre-Treaty military and political campaigns. This group, however, became politically eclipsed because of the death of Collins in the civil war and through the involvement of some of its members in the Army mutiny of 1924 and the subsequent desertion of politics for business of its most dynamic figures. One can speculate that the loss of this "forward" group may have helped to propel Cumann na nGael into the arms of the narrow big-farm and older bourgeois groupings which counted on it to shield them from the "wild men" of de Valera's party. Certainly, the Cumann na nGael government's political sensitivity weakened, to the extent that it seems to have had a death-wish in the period 1931-32.

The sub-coalitional, "mosaic" character of the party is reflected in the distribution of its vote. Stronger in Dublin, Cork and emigration-drained north Connacht, it had a tacit vote-sharing agreement with various farming and independent candidates; unlike the early Fianna Fáil or the Labour Party, it had no pronouncedly unified regional/class centre of gravity (Table 7), despite the city-based, centrist character of its leadership. The weak or negative correlations with the big-farm group may be due to its electoral pact with the Farmers' Party. Its urban character is similarly buried by its ability to attract a general anti-de Valera vote in north Connacht and elsewhere.

Table 7: *Correlations of farm valuation and urbanisation with Cumann na nGael/Fine Gael Vote, 1923-44*

	1923	1927 (1)	1927 (2)	1932	1933	1937	1938	1943	1944
High farm valuation	-.19	-.41	-.13	.17	.16	-.14	.11	.24	.01
High urbanisation	.01	-.17	.07	.28	.43	.00	.17	.37	.09

N in each case=22.

Source: See footnote 18 of text.

The party's support declined gradually from 40 per cent of the electorate in 1923 to a mere 20 per cent in 1944. Its absolute size did not, however, decay noticeably until the war years: its vote in 1923 was 410,721, in 1933 it was 422,495, in 1938 it was 428,633 but in 1943 it declined to 307,490 and in 1944 to 249,329. It was apparently defeated in 1932-33 not because it lost political support, but rather because it failed to gain extra support. Its loss of voters in 1943-44 seems to have

benefited Clann na Talmhan (see Table 7, above). Fianna Fáil's relative unity, efficiency and voter-directness, combined with the apparent inability of the Fine Gael leadership to respond to a wide public opinion seem to have been the root cause of its decline. The prisoner of conservative veto groups, it lost the ideological political centre to Fianna Fáil in the early 1930s.

4. THE LABOUR PARTY

Irish Labour was never an urban party as far as voter support was concerned but rather a rural one, and its support was concentrated in the Eastern/Midland region throughout the period (Table 4), the area of commercialised farming and agriculture-dependent towns. The depoliticisation of the Dublin working-class during the period has already been suggested. Turnout was low, trade union membership was unimpressive, and "anti-political" brokerage candidates like "Alfie" Byrne dominated working-class electoral politics in Dublin.²¹

Labour suffered also from financial difficulties with the decay of the unions. Unlike the nationalist parties, it could not rely on contributions from business or from Irish-Americans.²² Its attitude on the national question was uneasy, and it tended to retreat into interest-group politics. It was not until the wartime elections that Labour made any headway in Dublin, and those inroads were to be negated in a disastrous split echoing that of 1923 which was, in part, a split between "socialist" and "nationalist" tendencies. Table 8 summarises the character of Labour's electoral support.

The strong positive correlations with farm valuation indicate the closeness of the relationship the Labour vote had to the landless workforce in commercial agriculture. It is only in 1927 and 1943 that the party shows any slight affinity with urbanisation.

Table 8: *Correlations of high farm valuation and urbanisation with Labour Party vote, 1923-44*

	1923	1927 (1)	1927 (2)	1932	1933	1937	1938	1943	1944
High farm valuation	·61	·60	·68	·60	·24	·46	·57	·66	·26
Urbanisation	·09	·11	·31	·10	—·02	·04	·11	·35	—·22
N=	21	20	16	17	15	14	19	22	14

Source: See footnote 18 of text.

Labour's failure to become more than a persistent third party in the system has often been discussed. Farrell (1969) suggests that the decision to abstain in 1918 left Labour with no place in the loyalties of the new electorate; most explanations

21. "Alfie" Byrne, elected in North Dublin working-class constituencies throughout the period and mayor of Dublin from 1930 to 1939, virtually founded a political dynasty on an "anti-political" non-party platform.

22. This suggestion is Peter Mair's.

mention Labour's equivocal stance on the national issue. Whatever the explanation, it is inconceivable that Labour could ever have become a major party, given the tiny character of the Irish working class and its rural, nationalist, Catholic, cultural ethos. The Irish Labour élite was secularist, internationalist, "All-Ireland" and British in outlook and, in many cases, origin: it was difficult even for the twenty-six county Labour movement to stay united and not split between secular-socialist and national-pragmatic wings. The Labour Party, it must be remembered, was very much a product of the pre-partition political system. The Larkin-O'Brien split of 1923, echoing similar splits elsewhere in Europe during the period after the Russian Revolution, bifurcated the Irish Labour movement. As I have already noted, a similar nationalist-internationalist split nearly wrecked the Labour Party in 1943, and contributed to the Party's failure to take the initiative in Dublin after its successes of 1943.²³ It could be argued that the Labour élite was not sufficiently parochial in its thinking, and failed to adapt to the post-1922 situation, but rather relapsed into the somewhat hyperfabian strategy of waiting for the country to mature sufficiently to match Labour's policies.

5. THE FARMERS' PARTIES

The Irish farming community, as has already been noted, was at the centre of the political realignments which took place during the period, and the farm vote supplies a particularly good insight into the concerns of much of the electorate during the period. While not being itself politically creative, the Farmers' Party of 1922-33 came to fill a stabilising and conservatising role in the system, supporting the Cumann na nGael government loyally. The farm community did not, however, behave politically as a monolithic body, most farmers voting for one or other of the two nationalist parties. Furthermore, the two farming parties, that of 1922-33 and the Clann na Talmhan of the 1940s, had distinct leaderships, ideologies and support. As the market for agricultural produce declined during the period, and government agricultural policy changed, so did the political reaction of the farming community.²⁴ Government policy toward agriculture evolved during this period. Cumann na nGael's unapologetic favouring of commercial, export-oriented agriculture, a kind of Irish wager on the strong, was replaced under Fianna Fáil by encouragement of tillage, protection of the smaller agricultural producers by guaranteeing them unchallenged access to at least the home market, and a general national-populist encouragement of mixed farming so as to increase national self-sufficiency and improve the lot of the small to medium farmer. An

23. For a partisan account of the 1943 Labour split, see "Official Statement Relating to the Disaffiliation from the Labour Party of the ITGWU", Labour Party leaflet, 1944, in National Library, Dublin, which accused the ITGWU (the "national" union) of Fianna Fáil links and of unenthusiastic lip service to political Labourism. The leaflet also reflected Labour's fear of a "red smear".

24. It should be noted here that the (Fianna Fáil) government's redrawing of the constituencies in 1935 significantly weakened the electoral prospects of the more marginal Farmers' Party candidates in subsequent elections.

economic war with Britain seriously damaged the cattle trade between 1933 and 1938. The large farmers in many eastern and south-eastern areas reacted violently, the reaction taking on a fascist guise for a time. Electorally, however, they were very weak, and were separated politically and even geographically from the smaller producers, content enough with the agricultural protectionism of the de Valera government. From Cumann na nGael's point of view, the political commitment to large-scale commercial agriculture, whatever its economic rationality, was a liability as far as elections were concerned.

During the war years, however, economic pressures on farmers generally and in particular on the family farms of the western areas grew and emigration to the British war industries from the west was very considerable. The growing concern of government policy with the needs of the cities, the decline of Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil's close connection with the new business class arising out of the post-1932 protected Irish industrial system was reflected in a new western, peripherally-based agrarian populist movement, Clann na Talmhan.²⁵ Perhaps the "peripheral-protest" tone of the new party is best indicated by some quotations from the election speeches of its leader, as he articulated particularly clearly the "peripheral", anti-political, anti-city, anti-bureaucratic and anti-business ethos of much of the west during the period.

The only issue in the coming election (of 1943) is, to whom does this country belong—to the workers and producers or to the classes (*sic*), the civil servants, the Jews, the Freemasons, and the money grabbers?²⁶

And a few months later,

I represent the birth of a new generation of sons and daughters of the soil of Ireland who are as determined to drive from power the politicians—a greater curse than landlordism—as were their grandfathers to drive out the landlords.²⁷

Clann's policy included fixity of tenure for tenant farmers, tillage subsidies, derating of small farms, old age pensions at 65 and the abolition of ministerial pensions.²⁸ When it is considered that at this time the wartime boom was drawing off the younger generation to Britain, the somewhat archaic character of the programme, its appeal to older age-groups, and its static economic thinking become clearer. Most western farmers who supported Clann in 1943 seem to have formed earlier a Western support-base for Cumann na nGael/Fine Gael and may be directly connected with western support for the old IPP going back to the time of Parnell. Table 4 clearly shows the western peripheral character of the party in 1943 and 1944. Clann na Talmhan was to persist into the 1950s and, its nati-centrist populism rather muted, was to enter into political power in the 1950s

25. The name means "Children of the Land".

26. *Connacht Tribune*, January 16, 1943, p. 3. Direct speech restored.

27. *Connacht Tribune*, April 10, 1943, p. 3. Direct speech restored.

28. *Connacht Tribune*, May 29, 1943, p. 2.

in the Inter-Party governments. In the true tradition of peripheral protest movements, it took votes from both nationalist parties, but probably proportionately more from Fine Gael than from Fianna Fáil—a governing party whose official ideology was already anti-urban and peripheralist as we have seen.

Table 9 summarises the evolution of the separate farm vote from the cattle-ranch vote of the 1920s to the peripheral-populist small- and medium-farm vote of the 1940s.

Table 9: *Correlations of high farm valuation and urbanisation with farm vote, 1923-44*

	1923	1927 (1)	1927 (2)	1932	1933	1943	1944
High farm valuation	.23	.50	.35	-.43	-.03	-.44	-.65
Urbanisation	-.23	.18	.11	-.27	-.43	-.55	-.49
N=	22	19	14	8	18	16	15

Notes: 1937 and 1938 omitted, as farm vote was very low, 1943 and 1944 figures refer to Clann na Talmhan alone and exclude independent farmers.

Source: See footnote 18 of text.

VII DISCUSSION

This paper has outlined post-independence electoral politics in Ireland in terms of a scheme developed by Samuel Huntington, and argues that electoral alignments tally well with that scheme. However, it is significant that the Irish case deviates from Huntington's sketch in two important ways. First, the administrative apparatus of the civil service was *not* decentralised after the "ruralising election" of 1932 despite considerable pressure, and second, the ruling "ruralising" party successfully colonised the capital city electorally within ten years of gaining power.²⁹

The administrative reforms presided over by both the Cumann na nGael and the Fianna Fáil governments had consequences contrary to those suggested by Huntington as being characteristic of ruralising politics. The effects of the reforms were rather to *increase* control by the civil servants of the central ministerial departments until by the 1950s central control permeated the whole local apparatus. A related effect of the reforms was to introduce a bureaucratised county manager system which was somewhat prefectorial in character and to impose it on the "Anglo-Saxon" representative council system, further increasing the power of the cabinet and of the civil servants at the expense of the local politicians. Until the 1960s the main modernising agencies in Ireland were the civil service

29. On the civil service, see Chubb (1969), pp. 269-294.

together with the other state agencies which attempted to supply social and economic infrastructure in a context in which the private sector was very underdeveloped. The rather elegant Irish solution to the problems raised by political ruralisation was to hive off the local administrative apparatus from the local political structures and impose a rather non-responsive, sealed-off, austere and centralised bureaucratic apparatus on electoral local government. A similar separation was effected at national level. The result, it could be argued, was the preservation of orderly and honest bureaucratic government at the price of trivialising electoral politics at local and national level.

The historical and sociological reasons why this was possible are not completely clear, but some explanations can be suggested. The Sinn Féin nationalist élites were themselves "anti-party-political", to use the Irish phrase: bargaining politics was, to them, a rather dirty game, and to be associated with the despised "time-servers" of the IPP and the "Castle Catholics" of the pre-1918 era. One contemporary observer remarked "... every member of the committee (which drafted the constitution of the Irish Free State) had personal and often painful experience of the party machine in Ireland" (Malone, 1929, p. 363).

Among other factors which should be mentioned is the para-military character of Fianna Fáil, whose military "national-movement" self-image scarcely faded until the 1960s: Fianna Fáil's leaders' experiences as officers of the guerilla movement served as an important process of socialisation into politics.³⁰ Again, Irish local civic identity, as distinct from Irish localist outlook, may have been too weak to harbour strong anti-centrist regional patriotism. The "shireing" carried out by the English administration in Dublin and completed in the seventeenth century remained rather artificial and imposed until, in the late nineteenth century, the Gaelic Athletic Association organised county-based teams for its national hurling and football championships. Again, the particularistic quality of Irish political culture has been well documented. Another related point is the relatively benign experience of bureaucratic government which Ireland had had in the generation before independence, and the lack of any great social distance between the new civil servants and the general public. As we have seen, this did not prevent anti-centrist protest movements emerging.

VIII CONCLUSION

It has been the argument of this paper that rural class and centre-periphery tensions in a context of nationalist decolonialisation, of a separatist nationbuilding élite and of mass political mobilisation have been at the root of the party system and political structure set up in Ireland after 1922. If Irish politics are maverick to Western Europe, this is perhaps because of the completeness of the country's

30. Cohan, *op. cit.*, *passim*. On Fianna Fáil's self-image, see Garvin (1974b), pp. 192-196.

colonial status and the intensity of the decolonialisation campaign, resulting in a partial symbolic retraditionalisation and ruralisation of the polity after independence. Certainly, it took a generation after independence not only for the scars left by independence to heal, but also for the political thinking engendered by the electoral politics following that divorce to be seen as obsolete. As has happened elsewhere, the structures outlasted the ideas that formed them.

As far as the nationalist élite was concerned, it suffered at the hands of both the British *raj* and of the Irish voter. Its radicals—of both right and left—were trimmed from it by the British Army's execution squads in 1916. In 1917–18, the élite was politicised and attenuated by the inclusion of non-IRB elements, and in 1922, the "politicians" defeated the "militants" by means of a general election and a State-financed regular army. After 1922 the despised institution of competitive party politics continued to separate the politicians from the visionaries, the instrumental in ideology from the consummatory in ideology. Eventually, the governing ex-gunmen of Fianna Fáil were to destroy the IRA, which persisted after 1926 in its challenge to the Dublin régime. By 1945 this "new" IRA was wrecked, never to revive: post-1945 IRAs have been essentially aimed at Ulster, not at Dublin, despite their distaste for that régime (Bell, 1972, p. 279).

General elections can scarcely have had a more deradicalising impact than they did in post-1918 Ireland: the bargaining, incrementalist and particularist political style, anti-metropolitan ethos and welfarist policies encouraged by the mainly rural electorate gradually blunted the initial polarisation of the political élite groups, until by 1945 the issues of 1922 had been rendered almost meaningless. Electoral politics, because of the divorce of "politics" from policy formation, evolved toward trivial, parish-pump issues and an all-pervading "brokerage" style, while bureaucratic administration, shielded from politics, tended to be more and more divorced from public political life. How this "depoliticised" administrative system was maintained and expanded despite—or perhaps because of—the populist style of Irish political life, is, perhaps, the central question of Irish political development. It provides a major contrast with the politicisation of the administrative machine common in many ex-colonial countries (Riggs, 1963). What is less clear is whether such a separation of political and administrative processes is always benign in its effects; it could be argued that an extreme separation results in non-responsive and rigid administration on the one hand, and political passivity and cynicism on the other. Anthropologists have noted that, while Irish bureaucratic government is relatively impersonal and honest, Irish local politicians attempt sometimes to suggest that it is otherwise, and to give the impression that they have the power to bend the bureaucracy's rules, thus encouraging the persistence of a particularistic political culture cheek-by-jowl with a universalistic governmental service and a certain *incivisme* (Chubb, 1963; Bax, 1973; Sacks, 1973). If this picture is even substantially accurate, *incivisme* and an administered society are, in part, the price the Irish have paid for a centralised and honest if unadventurous administration, free from an extensive "spoils system" method of allocating political power and public benefits.

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