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EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE
Department: of Political and Social Sciences

**THE CONTEMPORARY IRISH PARTY: CAMPAIGN AND
ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS IN A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT**

David M. Farrell

Thesis submitted for assessment with
a view to obtaining the Degree of Doctor of the
European University Institute

Examining jury:

Prof. Jean Blondel (European University Institute)
Prof. Michael Laver (supervisor - Trinity College Dublin)
Prof. Feter Mair (University of Leiden)
Prof. Wolfgang Müller (University of Vienna)
Prof. Richard Sinnott (co-supervisor - University College Dublin)

Florence, November 1993

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For my parents

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION:

THE STUDY OF IRISH PARTY ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

Political parties in Ireland have changed a lot in recent years. Thirty years ago or so it might have been correct to say of Irish parties that they were predominantly local, volunteer machines, lacking any kind of centralised structures. For instance, writing in the late 1950s, Basil Chubb (1959, p. 195) noted of the two largest parties that '[they] have some sort of organisation over virtually the whole country', which, he added, tended to be 'vestigial between elections'. Such a description is no longer valid. The contemporary Irish party which campaigned in the most recent 1992 general election is a very different creature to its predecessor which campaigned in 1957. It has a far more developed organisation: it is better staffed and resourced; it makes use of marketing specialists and their techniques to plan a national strategy.

This thesis seeks to explore the nature of party organisational change in Ireland; the factors which have influenced it; and its consequences. The central

argument is that to understand fully how party organisations have changed, we need to first understand the context in which this change has occurred.

The main goals of the thesis, therefore, are twofold. First, it examines change and development of the environment in which Irish parties operate. To try and provide a complete overview of the Irish political and social 'environment' would be a huge undertaking, and arguably unrealistic. In section 1.1, the argument is made that the key aspect of a party's environment on which to focus is the *electoral environment*. The second goal of the thesis is to examine how the parties have been responding at the electoral level to environmental changes. To do this we look, first, at the electoral level at party campaigning, at how election campaign strategies and tactics have been evolving in response to shifts in the electoral environment. But to look at party election campaigning by itself is to see only part of the picture, for underlying the parties' new campaign styles are changes to their organisational structures which facilitate them. Therefore, the thesis also examines party organisation and its development in recent years.

The focus is on the Irish case; though, where relevant, references are made to comparative examples and debate. The object of the case study method being followed here is to enhance our understanding of politics in a particular system. However - as the comparativist might object - there is the problem of 'generalisability'. We need to be sure that developments in Irish party and electoral politics are not simply developments unique to the Irish case; they should be generalisable to other contexts. To deal with this issue, it is necessary to show that the Irish case is an appropriate one to focus on (see below). But, more to the point, one should say in defence of the case study method, that provided the case is

systematically related to comparative frameworks and comparative findings, it can be used to test prevailing generalisations. Furthermore, such an approach can throw light on problematic aspects of the comparative frameworks and of widely used concepts.¹ In Dogan and Pelassy's words (1990, p. 123): 'a case study may bring to light significant factors and variables neglected in many comparisons. Limiting the analysis to a single country has the advantage of allowing the researcher to study the subject in depth'. At each stage in the development of the argument of this thesis, the analysis starts with an examination of the available comparative literature, drawing a framework into which the case study can be fitted. As such, then, the approach being adopted here could best be described as a comparative-case study.

To set the scene, section 1.2 provides a general introduction to the Irish party system. Particular attention is paid to the issue of whether Ireland is an appropriate case for examination; whether it is a credible example from which we can generalise. After all, in the past and, indeed, even relatively recently, much has been made of the *sui generis* nature of Irish politics. Only a decade ago, in the Preface to his book, R.K. Carty (1981, p. xiii) explained how his: 'attention was drawn to Ireland by footnotes. Over and over again the literature of comparative politics noted simply "except Ireland".' The accuracy of describing Ireland as 'unique' is explored in section 1.2, where the argument is made that Ireland is not such a strange case.

The thesis addresses recent developments in Irish party organisations. A

¹ In terms of Lijphart's (1971) sixfold typology of case study methods, the approach adopted in this thesis can be categorised as somewhere in-between an 'interpretative case study' and a 'theory-confirming case study'. For a spirited defence of the case study approach, see Eckstein (1975).

major rationale for focusing on the contemporary period is that parties and their survival have featured prominently in recent academic debate. The theme of 'party decline', which has predominated in the American literature over the past twenty years or more, has started to attract attention in European circles. We need to know what party decline means. We need some means of addressing the issue of whether European parties are in decline. The issue of party decline is dealt with in section 1.3, in which reference is made to some of the shortcomings in this theme which is primarily American in origin. The section also examines the issue of party organisational change - a theme which is predominantly European - which in recent years has also referred to the vulnerability of parties. Finally, the chapter concludes, in section 1.4 with an outline of the structure of the thesis.

1.1. THE ELECTORAL ENVIRONMENT

There is a very simple reason why this thesis focuses on the electoral environment. It relates to what is the basic role and function of a political party in liberal democratic systems. The principal rationale for political parties is their role in fielding candidates in elections. Sartori (1976, p. 63) expresses this point clearly in his 'minimal definition' of a party.

A party is any political group identified by an official label that presents at elections, and is capable of placing through elections (free or nonfree), candidates for public office.

With this definition, Sartori distinguishes parties from, for instance, pressure groups or parliamentary factions. If electioneering is a principal characteristic of

distinction for parties, then it makes sense to assume that any changes to the process of electioneering itself should have some consequence for the parties, and particularly for how parties operate and organise. We need, therefore, to first have some understanding of what is the electoral environment, or 'electoral process', in which the parties operate.

In basic terms, the electoral environment can be characterised as a process of interaction between three main sets of actors: the parties, the voters, and the media. The parties are seeking to maximise their influence over the political and policy process. More usually than not, they seek to do so by maximising their electoral gains (i.e. winning as many seats as possible), though, obviously, there are always examples of parties which are not vote maximisers.² To achieve their electoral aims, the parties in the electoral environment try to communicate - through whatever means are available - their policies and their favoured images.

The mass media (newspapers and broadcasting) seek to provide coverage of the election. They scrutinise the choices offered by the politicians and parties and they assess what they consider to be the important issues in the election.

The third set of actors, the voters, are trying to make up their minds on who to support and vote for. They provide an audience for all the other communicators. They also provide feedback (e.g. through opinion polls, or to canvassers at the doorstep). This feedback informs the other communicators about the particular wants

² This point is best encapsulated by William Wright's distinction (1971) between 'rational-efficient' and 'party democracy' parties.

and desires of the voters in the election.³

It would be unrealistic to attempt an examination of the operation and development of any one of these sets of actors without at least some consideration of what has been happening to the others. Any change to one has a bearing on the others. The argument presented in this thesis is that it is changes to how both voters and media operate in elections, which have played a key role in affecting changes to how the parties operate. But it would be too simplistic to assume that this is only a one-way process of causality. By adapting their campaign styles and their organisations (as well as through other means, such as the introduction of public funding of parties), the parties have been able to play their role in influencing how the electoral environment has changed.⁴

³ There is a fourth set of actors in the electoral environment, the interest groups, who seek to influence the emphasis politicians put on particular issues. In many ways they constitute a sub-category of each of the other three sets of actors. First, by their operation they act as *media* of communications, stressing particular issues which they feel are pertinent. In this sense, they supplement - albeit not quite so objectively - the role of the media. Second, interest groups represent organised sub-groupings of different members of the *audience* - providing structured feedback for the other actors. Third, the interest groups also supplement the role of the *political parties*: campaigning on behalf of certain candidates; campaigning against others; providing financial support for parties.

⁴ This is consistent with Sartori's (1990) view on the role of parties as intervening variables in the process of social change. See the discussion in chapter 3. In short, then, a central argument of this thesis is that Irish party campaign activities and organisations have been changing in the context of electoral-environmental changes. It needs to be stressed at the outset that this thesis does not attempt an analysis of the process by which the parties have actually recognised these environmental challenges and sought to develop strategies to deal with them. To do so on a systematic basis is ruled out by data limitations. Instead, wherever possible, details are incorporated into the case studies. In any event, it can be argued that the 'why' of party change is at least partially answered by exploring the relationship between environmental change and party change. To attempt anything more precise is beyond the scope of the present study.

1.2. THE IRISH PARTY SYSTEM

Before addressing the question about whether Ireland provides a useful case for examination, it is worthwhile providing some background on the Irish party system. At the time of Irish independence in the early 1920s there were two main political parties: Labour, which was formed in 1912 as essentially a trade union party, following the pattern of Socialist parties elsewhere, and Sinn Féin ('ourselves'), set up in 1905, which by 1918 had become the most significant political force striving for secession from the United Kingdom. Sinn Féin split in two over the Anglo-Irish Treaty, those against the Treaty - seeing it as a sell out to Republicanism. There followed a brief but bloody civil war in 1922-23. In 1926 the more pragmatic elements of the anti-Treaty side dropped their policy of abstention (provoking yet another split in Sinn Féin) and, as the new Fianna Fáil party ('the warriors of destiny'), took their seats in Dáil Éireann (the Irish parliament). By 1932, Fianna Fáil was in office. The pro-Treaty side (Cumann na nGaedheal - 'the club of the Gaels'), which had been in office from 1922-32, merged with other small parties and in 1933 adopted the name, Fine Gael ('family-group of the Gaels'). From the 1930s until relatively recently, the Irish party system consisted almost exclusively of these three parties, Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Labour.⁵

The key player in Irish electoral history has always been Fianna Fáil. Its predominant status since the late 1930s is undoubted and well documented (e.g. Garvin, 1981). Apart from a brief period in 1932 when Labour supported a minority Fianna Fáil administration, Fianna Fáil steadfastly operated on its own whether in government or opposition, until 1989, when it formed a coalition with the

⁵ For an excellent account of this period, see Lee (1989).

Progressive Democrats, followed in 1992 by another coalition this time with Labour. In short, the history of electoral competition in Ireland from the 1930s through until the end of the 1980s was one of Fianna Fáil *versus* 'the rest'.⁶

After a brief period of multi-party activity in the 1950s, the party system in 1957 settled into a two-decennial period of 'two-and-a-half' party competition. Fianna Fáil was in power throughout the 1960s; its 16 consecutive years of rule were not ended until the dramatic electoral victory of the 'National Coalition' of Fine Gael and Labour in 1973. Since 1973 there has been at least one main trend. In every election between then and 1987 the government changed hands. If nothing else, this reflects a growing detachment of Irish voters over the period, something which is explored in detail in chapter 3. By the early 1980s, this growing 'availability' of Irish voters began to have at least two main consequences for electoral politics, the first being the greater frequency of elections (five during the decade as opposed to just two in the 1970s), the second being the rise of new parties.

The first of the 'new' parties to enter the system at the start of the 1980s was not in fact all that new. Coinciding with the outbreak of civil unrest in Northern Ireland, the Sinn Féin party split again in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Official Sinn Féin entered electoral politics, eventually changing its name to the Workers' party (Patterson, 1989). Throughout the 1980s, the party made steady gains (albeit on a tiny base), and by 1987 it appeared to be threatening Labour's position as the

⁶ It has been suggested that, by forming a coalition in 1989, Fianna Fáil has placed itself in a very influential position. Both Laver (Laver and Shepsle, 1992) and Mair (1990; 1992a) have argued that Fianna Fáil could potentially participate in government under almost any election result that is likely to emerge in the medium-term future.

principal party of the Left.

The second party to make a breakthrough in the 1980s, in much more dramatic fashion, was the Progressive Democrats (PDs), winning 14 seats at its first election in 1987. The PDs was a new party which emerged out of a rift within Fianna Fáil (Lyne, 1987). The prominent Fianna Fáil deputy, Desmond O'Malley, an arch rival to the leader Charles Haughey, was expelled from the party in 1985 over policy differences. He acted quickly to take advantage of a strong degree of personal support and an evident dissatisfaction among the general public with 'civil war' politics. In 1986 O'Malley succeeded in enticing a number of national and local politicians from both Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael and between them they set up the PDs. Much as with the Social Democratic party in Britain in the early 1980s, the talk was of 'mould-breaking' and the media were transfixed. Despite the PDs' impressive results in the 1987 election, sceptics warned of the dangers of being overly-excited by overnight success, pointing at the problems new, high-profile parties of the 1940s and 1950s had in their subsequent elections. The scepticism appeared well founded in the light of the electoral performance of the PDs in 1989, when the party's vote plummeted by more than half to just over 5 per cent (a vote which it just about held onto in the subsequent 1992 election).

The third party to emerge was the Green party which, after contesting elections unsuccessfully throughout the mid-1980s, appeared more surprised than most at the success of one of its Dublin candidates in 1989 (Farrell, 1989b; Whiteman, 1990). In 1992 that particular Green politician lost his seat, but the party managed to win another seat elsewhere in the capital.

The most recent development in Irish party politics took place in early 1992,

Table 1.1. The Irish 1992 Election: Votes and Seats

Party	Vote (%)	Change	Seats (#)	Change
Fianna Fáil	39.1	-5.1	68	-9
Fine Gael	24.5	-4.8	45	-10
Labour	19.3	+9.8	33	+18
Progressive Democrats	4.7	-0.8	10	+4
Democratic Left*	2.8	--	4	--
Workers' Party*	0.7	--	0	--
Green Party	1.4	-0.1	1	0
Others	7.6	+2.5	5	0

Notes:

* Workers' Party vote in 1989 was 5%. It won 7 seats.

Source: electoral returns.

when six of the Workers' party's seven TDs (including the party leader) left the party to form a new party, Democratic Left, taking most of the membership with them. (The details of the split are dealt with in chapter 8.) The party held onto four of its seats in the subsequent 1992 election, while the Workers' party was left without any Dáil representation.

Apart from the rise of new parties, the other set of trends to look out for have been those relating to the established parties. Here, in particular, attention has tended to focus on the fortunes of the Labour party, which after a brief flurry of electoral excitement in the late 1960s, set into a pattern of electoral decline, which began to look terminal (Gallagher, 1982; Mair, 1987a). Moreover, as the Labour vote dropped that of the Workers' party made steady gains, contributing to a general fear in Labour that its future was in jeopardy. The 1989 result, which saw the party's vote rise significantly, almost to the level of 1981, was a cause for some relief. Labour's 1992 result was even more dramatic, with the party's vote rising to an all-time high of 19.3 per cent (see Table 1.1).

The electoral trends of the two major parties, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, have been less distinct. The main focus here has been on developments in the 1980s where the fortunes of both parties were closely bound up with their respective leaders, Charles Haughey who - until his replacement in early 1992 by Albert Reynolds - presided over a series of poor electoral performances by Fianna Fáil, and Garret FitzGerald who - as Fine Gael leader from 1977-1987 (the current leader is John Bruton) - was well placed to take advantage of Fianna Fáil's problems and guide his party to unprecedented electoral gains in 1981-1982. Subsequently, the unpopularity of the Fine Gael-Labour government of 1982-87 was to cost Fine Gael

dearly in terms of electoral support and the party has not so far recovered.

Is Ireland an appropriate case for examining electoral and party change? If we were to adopt R. K. Carty's (1981) position that the Irish case is 'unique', we would be hard pressed to make the claim that the Irish case is appropriate. This issue is complex, encompassing a number of different areas of Irish politics and political life. Since the focus of this thesis is on the electoral arena, I propose to assess just this dimension.

The principal reasons for the description of Irish electoral politics as *sui generis* are the weakness of the Left, the relatively high cross-class nature of party support and the inability to easily locate the party system on any of the available comparative models. That the Irish Left is weak is incontrovertible. In the 1992 election, even though the result for the Labour party was an 'unprecedented success', the fact, as Table 1.1 shows, is that the combined vote for left wing parties (Labour, Democratic Left, the Workers' party) totalled less than 23 per cent, 'substantially below that of the combined left in almost every other West European country' (Mair, 1993).

One prominent reason often cited for the absence of a strong left-of-centre party in Ireland is the lack of a social basis to Irish party support, a point first made by the late John Whyte in the 1970s which gained much currency among political scientists throughout the 1970s and early 1980s (Carty, 1981; Whyte, 1974). Related to this was the question of how best to categorise party politics in Ireland in the light of the evident weakness of the class cleavage. Richard Sinnott (1984) makes the persuasive argument that, of the four sets of cleavages proposed by Lipset and Rokkan (1967), the centre-periphery cleavage is the most appropriate for explaining

the basis of party division in Ireland, with Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael being the inheritors of the 1920s civil war divide over the degree of independence granted by the British centre to the Irish periphery.⁷

In the course of the 1980s, there was something of a reinterpretation of the issue of inter-party divisions in Ireland, on two main grounds. First, a close examination of the electoral standpoints of the parties revealed a far more sophisticated set of divisions between them than could be explained by the 'national question'. In a major study of the parties' electoral programmes over time, Peter Mair found that: 'the parties do not appear to emphasise traditional nationalism as a means of attracting the support of those voters who actually choose between the parties. If election programmes do influence voting choice, then they do so on the basis of competing emphases on the economy, on welfare and on the style of government' (Mair, 1987a, p. 204; see also Sinnott, 1986).

Second, an examination of opinion poll data in the 1987 election, which referred to a revised conception of social class, suggested the basis for a possible class alignment in Ireland. The evidence showed that Fine Gael and the PDs were increasingly attracting middle class support, while the support basis of Fianna Fáil - traditionally a 'catch-all' party *par excellence* - was more markedly working class. 'Ireland', the authors concluded, 'is now a party system with some quite distinct

⁷ For an alternative perspective on the application of Lipset and Rokkan's centre-periphery cleavage to the Irish case, see Garvin (1981). Two other comparative party frameworks which have received attention in the Irish literature are those of Jean Blondel (1968) - see Farrell (1970); O'Leary (1979) - and Giovanni Sartori (1976) - see Mair (1979).

social bases' (Laver, et al., 1987, p. 109; see also Laver, 1987).⁸

All this suggests, then, that even if the observation that Irish politics lacked a social basis ever was correct, there are doubts as to its accuracy today. 'In short, despite the early impressions, and perhaps also a little disappointingly, Irish political life [is] proving to be just as normal and mundane as that in a large number of other countries' (Mair, 1992b, p. 384; see also Farrell, 1992a). As such, then, there is no particular reason why Ireland should not be used as a case study for examining the issue of party organisational change.

1.3. PARTIES IN DECLINE?

It was pointed out at the start of the chapter that party organisational change is of particular interest because of apparent indications that parties are 'weakening'; becoming more 'vulnerable'; even, it has been suggested, 'in decline'. Whatever about the merits of such arguments, there can be no doubt that there is a close relationship between the issues of party organisational change and 'party decline'. This section examines the available literature to demonstrate this point.⁹

The theme of American parties in decline has been much researched over the

⁸ It should be noted that in the subsequent 1989 election, there was apparently something of a reversal in this trend, with Fianna Fáil in particular reestablishing its cross-class, catch-all support base. The conclusion was now more muted: 'While there may well be potential in the system for class-based alignment, it did not happen in 1989' (Marsh and Sinnott, 1990, p. 126). The most recent 1992 election saw a further 'blurring' of any cross-class distinctions (Sinnott, forthcoming). However, an important caveat to these analyses of the 1989 and 1992 elections, is that the authors did not have access to the revised social class categories which had been available in 1987.

⁹ Furthermore, party organisational change (whatever its consequences for parties) is closely related to a changing environment of electoral politics (a point which is stressed in the next two chapters).

last twenty years or more. A range of indicators have been used to support the contention that party status in the USA has undergone some fundamental change. One of the earliest of these were the data on party identification which indicated a downward trend from 1964 onwards (Burnham, 1970; Pomper, 1972) as voters became more issue-oriented (Broh, 1973; Crotty and Jacobson, 1980; Kiewiet, 1983) and generally more volatile. Other indicators of party decline have included the increasingly candidate-centred nature of campaigning; lower voter turnout; the greater use of primaries; the declining impact of presidential election voting in congressional contests; the inability of parties to function effectively as instruments for coordinating policy making between the President and Congress (Agranoff, 1976; Crotty and Jacobson, 1980; Eldersveld, 1982; Kirkpatrick, 1978).

By the early 1980s the belief among the *cognoscenti* of American political science was that the days of American parties were numbered. Crotty and Jacobson ended their book length study of *American Parties in Decline* (1980, p. 255) 'on a somber note', writing of how 'a partyless era, with implications still uncertain, may be settling on us'.¹⁰ By the end of the 1980s, American scholars had found evidence to suggest that European parties were also in trouble. Howard Reiter's outwardly sceptical review of 'party decline in the West' ends rather inconclusively with the finding that 'parties are in decline in some places, but not others, and the

¹⁰ It should be noted that in more recent years observers of the American political party scene have viewed the trends less pessimistically. The theme has shifted somewhat from one of party decline to one of party adaptation. American parties may have changed in structure and function but they are still there: 'Just as the smile of the Cheshire cat remained after the cat's disappearance, so American parties have survived the decline of the party organizations' (Ware, 1987, p. 136; see also Ceaser, 1982; Sorauf, 1988). Paul Herrnsen's study (1988) of congressional campaigning in the eighties goes so far as to suggest that American parties have even 'made a comeback' (though see Katz and Kolodny (1991)).

reasons appear to differ from place to place' (Reiter, 1989, p. 344). More conclusively, in the introduction to their major edited volume on the 'failure' of parties, Kay Lawson and Peter Merkl (1988, p. 3) note:

The phenomenon of major party decline, often remarked in the context of the American political system, is becoming increasingly apparent in other political systems as well. All over the world, single-issue movements are forming, special interest groups are assuming party-like status, and minor parties are winning startling overnight victories as hitherto dominant parties lose the confidence of the electorates.

Are European parties following the example of their American counterparts?

For that matter, are American parties actually in decline? There is a tendency in much of the American research to measure the strength or vulnerability of parties by means of outputs: policy performance, electoral support, role in campaigning. When assessing the comparative picture a similar methodology is applied. For instance, Howard Reiter's research is based on measuring electoral support; Lawson and Merkl are concerned primarily with the 'emergence of alternative organizations' to the political parties. What tends to be lacking is detailed study of what goes on inside the 'black box' of party organisations. To incorporate that dimension would require a rephrasing of the question on party decline to one of the need to assess what evidence is there of a *weakening* of party organisations.

It is worthwhile, then, considering what the literature on party organisations has to say about this issue. Here there is a stress on two basic points about party organisations: (1) that they are relatively recent phenomena; and (2) that their structural make-up is not somehow set in stone - party organisations have been subject to quite distinct changes in their brief existence. On this latter point, as we

shall see, the argument in recent years in western Europe has been that parties may indeed be 'weakening', becoming more 'vulnerable'.

It is generally accepted that the development of mass or representative politics is closely bound up with the development of representative government itself. Samuel Huntington (1968) writes of the modern party as the single most important new institution developed for creating a proper functioning political order. In the opening chapter to their edited series of essays on parties and political development, Joseph LaPalombara and Myron Weiner (1966) make much the same point. Their view is that as the political system develops the elite have to develop ways of adequately taking into account the views of the masses in the electorate. There has to be some means by which those who are not members of the political elite can participate in politics. This is where the modern party comes into play. These 'modern forms of party organizations', Max Weber writes (1990, p. 35; first published in 1946), 'are the children of democracy, of mass franchise, of the necessity to woo and organize the masses, and develop the utmost unity of direction and the strictest discipline'.

The very fact that these 'modern party organizations' are such recent phenomena must raise a question as to their permanence. Another reason for raising such a question is the fact that party organisations have gone through several distinct phases of development in their (still) brief existence. Let us deal with each of these changes in turn, starting with the original, pre-modern form of political party.

The pre-modern party was the 'cadre' party - to use Maurice Duverger's (1965) term - the party of 'individual representation' - to use Sigmund Neumann's (1956). This party was essentially a gentleman's club, set up inside parliament as a

means of coordinating votes and standpoints. The party had little need for constituency representation. There was little internal organisation.

It was the process of suffrage extension that was to change everything. The modern party, as Duverger points out, was an invention of the Left. It was set up outside of parliament by trade unionists seeking the representation of their members' interests. These parties were set up by the grassroots and were organised from the bottom up. Duverger refers to them as 'mass' parties primarily because of the attention they gave to having a large membership. This required the development of a coherent organisational structure. Party statutes set out the channels of power and control, with an emphasis on internal democracy and the central role of the party congress in decision-making. Originally a party model associated with socialist parties, it was gradually adopted by the bourgeois parties also.

The hey-day of the mass party was in the years before the second world war. The next big change to party structures dates from the post-war years. The West European political systems, recovering from wartime experiences, had received a shock to their senses; welfare states were being set up (which among other things reduced the social work role of parties); established norms of party allegiance were breaking down. The first to take advantage of the new political climate were the parties on the Right. By the late 1950s, the parties of the Left were beginning to follow suit. A number of authors have focused on this phase. The most influential essay is Kirchheimer's (1990; first published in 1966), redolent with angst at what he sees as the breakdown of ideology across western Europe. With attention firmly focused on the Bad Godesberg conference of the West German SPD, Kirchheimer writes of the rise of the 'catch-all' party as a replacement for the 'party of mass

'¹¹ This new party has abandoned 'attempts at the intellectual and moral
 of the masses', and instead has turned 'more fully to the electoral
 to exchange effectiveness in depth for a wider audience and more
 electoral success' (Kirchheimer, 1990, p. 52). This development,
 argues, is caused by the 'pressure' of social change, it results in a
 of 'nondurable consumer goods,' and it involves the following five

(a) Significant reduction of the party's ideological baggage . . . (b) Further
 of top leadership groups . . . (c) Downgrading of the role of
 individual party member, a role considered an historical relic which may
 the newly built-up catch-all image. (d) Deemphasis of the *classe*
 specific social-class or denominational clientele, in favour of
 voters among the population at large. (e) Securing access to a
 interest groups. (Kirchheimer, 1990, p. 58)

years, there have been several empirical attempts to operationalise
 catch-all thesis. For instance, Alan Zuckerman and Mark Irving
 also Rose and Urwin, 1969) have looked for evidence of the
 catch-all electorates' - concentrating on Kirchheimer's fourth
 reduced emphasis on 'the *classe gardée*'. According to their
 it is implied that the social bases of catch-all parties should be
 analysis of post-war trends in Britain, Sweden and West
 evidence to support this hypothesis.

(1979) bases his examination of Kirchheimer on the premise

Kirchheimer neatly mixes both Duverger's 'mass party' and
 democratic integration' into his title of this generic party type.

that the 'successful' adoption of catch-all strategies by political parties should result in electoral realignments: 'Because catch-all parties are superior instruments of competition, they should win votes from parties which fail to adapt. As a result, party systems should become less fragmented' (Wolinetz, 1979, p. 7). Kirchheimer also fails according to Wolinetz's operationalisation: Wolinetz finds the general post-war tendency has been for European party systems to become increasingly fragmented.

Neither the Zuckerman and Lichbach nor the Wolinetz critiques of Kirchheimer are definitive. Zuckerman and Lichbach's interpretation of Kirchheimer's fourth characteristic as relating to the development of heterogeneous parties attaches far too much precision to what, in fact, is not a precise proposition.¹² Wolinetz's assumption is also quite presumptuous. First, he assumes that party adaptation 'works'; if it does not then his indicator is pretty useless. Second, he does not allow for the possibility that all parties change in similar manner and so the system maintains a certain status quo. As Karl Dittrich (1983, p. 264) has put it, if all parties in the system 'developed a catch-all character, then the result could be just a new equilibrium, so that neither the winning of votes nor a decrease in the index of fractionalization can necessarily be expected to result from such a transformation'. Overall, after a detailed examination of Kirchheimer's thesis. Dittrich concludes that there are many problems involved in trying to test it. Gunnar Sjöblom writes in similar vein:

¹² Karl Dittrich (1983, p. 265) also questions the assumption that catch-all parties should have heterogeneous support bases.

If Kirchheimer's thesis is seen just as a sweeping description of some tendencies it may be said to bring some reasonable and illuminating insights; if it is interpreted in a more literal way it seems to be misleading. (Sjöblom, 1981)

A final point of criticism of the studies testing Kirchheimer is the fact that, like the literature on American party decline, there has been a tendency to focus on the outputs of the parties as a means of assessing the catch-all phenomenon. The inputs have tended to be overlooked. Much the same point has been made by Peter Mair. He suggests that Kirchheimer's work has been subject to 'a curiously partial reading', that the critics 'have tended to emphasise the strictly ideological implications of his argument, and have thereby neglected the arguably more crucial organisational developments which were at the heart of the original thesis' (Mair, 1989a, p. 181).

Recent developments of Kirchheimer's thesis by Angelo Panebianco have taken steps in this direction. Panebianco's analysis explicitly builds on Kirchheimer. Where he differs is in giving much greater attention to the increasing professionalisation of party organisations, a topic which Kirchheimer only deals with implicitly. Panebianco (1988, p. 264) draws a distinction between traditional bureaucrats and the more recently arrived professionals, 'they being more useful to the organization than the traditional party bureaucrats, as the party's gravitational center shifts from the members to the electorate'. This forms the basis for a distinction between two ideal types of parties: the 'mass bureaucratic' party and the 'electoral professional' party. Panebianco provides a useful summary description of the distinction between these two types, as shown in Table 1.2. Let us deal with each of the five characteristic features in turn.

Table 1.2. Panebianco's Model of Party Change

Mass Bureaucratic Parties	Electoral-Professional Parties
central role of the bureaucracy (political-administrative tasks)	central role of the professional (specialized tasks)
<i>membership</i> party, strong vertical organizational ties, appeal to the 'electorate of belonging'	electoral party, weak vertical ties, appeal to the 'opinion electorate'
pre-eminence of internal leaders, collegial leadership	pre-eminence of the public representatives, personalized leadership
financing through membership activities (party cooperatives, trade unions etc.)	financing through interest groups and public funds
stress on ideology, central role of the believers within the organization	stress on issues and leadership, central role of the careerists and representatives of interest groups within the organization

1. A Central Role for Professionals within the Party Organisation.

According to Panebianco (1988, p. 231), this is the 'distinguishing feature of organizational change political parties are currently undergoing'. It is a process of change in the type of people employed by parties, which can be summarised as involving a decline in the traditional machine bureaucracy of the 'mass party' and its steady replacement by new 'professionals' who are either employed in the organisation or recruited on short-term contracts. Panebianco is careful to point to the fact that the precise distinction between the bureaucrats and professionals is 'hazy'; nonetheless, he identifies four specific categories of professionals which, he argues, should predominate if 'Kirchheimer's theory about the transformation of mass parties into catch-all parties is correct' (ibid., p. 235).¹³ First, there are 'party managers', whose central role survives from the time of earlier party models (cadre and mass). Second, there are staff professionals: 'specialists, technicians, whose role grows in importance as decisions become increasingly technical, education becomes more widespread, and . . . interparty competition changes due to the mass media' (ibid., p. 234). Third, and reflecting the close relationship between party and state, there are the 'hidden professionals', who are (p. 234) 'inextricably tied to the expansion of intervention by the state and to its colonization on the part of the parties'. Finally, Panebianco refers to the growing significance of 'semi-professionals', of 'economically independent' (p. 235) professionals who offer their services to the parties. In this category he lists lawyers, university professors and

¹³ Strictly speaking, Panebianco argues that categories three and four are alternatives.

journalists.

II. A Switch from a Membership Party to an Electoral Party with Weak Vertical Ties and which Appeals to the 'Opinion Electorate'.

This characteristic feature has both an internal and an external dimension; the former relating to the role of the party membership, the latter to the role of voters. What is implied, in the first instance, is a decline in the role of the individual member. This point is encapsulated in Kirchheimer's (1990, p. 58) third characteristic of catch-allism: 'downgrading of the role of the individual party member, a role considered an historical relic which may obscure the newly built-up catch-all image'.

As Webb (1992, p. 282) has noted, this feature of party professionalisation is also drawing on a distinction between the 'vote of opinion' and 'vote of belonging', where the party 'directs its campaign strategy largely towards the increasing portion of the electorate that has little, if any, sense of long term attachment to the party'. This is consistent with Kirchheimer's (1990, p. 58) fourth characteristic of catch-allism: 'Deemphasis of the *classe gardée*, specific social class or denominational clientele, in favour of recruiting voters among the population at large'.

III. Preeminence within the Party of the Leadership and the Public Representatives.

This feature has both a general and a specific meaning. It can, first, be treated as akin to Kirchheimer's second characteristic of catch-allism: 'further strengthening of top leadership groups' (1990, p. 58). In this sense, Panebianco is

describing the strengthening of the party leadership generally. This feature has another, more specific function. It is designed to tap tensions between the parties' national executives on the one hand and the party leaders, MPs, and appointed officers at headquarters on the other. Panebianco is writing from a continental European perspective where there tends to be a marked difference within political parties between that part of the organisation representing the membership (the national executive), and that part representing the centre (the parliamentary party and secretariat). According to Panebianco that latter has been becoming more prominent in recent years. In their assessment of comparative trends in party organisations, Katz and Mair (1992) make a similar point, arguing that over the past thirty years:

the balance among the three faces of party organization has been changing, so that the membership organization is becoming less significant and the governing and bureaucratic faces more so. Moreover . . . the bureaucratic face of party has become more professionalized and centralized and more closely integrated with the governing face (Katz and Mair, 1992, p. 9; Katz and Mair (eds), 1992).

IV. A Shift in Party Sources of Funding with Greater Reliance on State and Interest Group Finance.

Not only has the running of parties become more expensive, but the way in which they are financed has also changed. Associated with the decline in the role of the party member has been a shift in the sources of party revenue. Public funding of parties has been an essential requirement for the parties' modernisation efforts: 'for there is no other way to bridge the permanent gap between voluntary giving for

political purposes and established functions of political parties (Nassmacher, 1989, p. 236). According to Alexander (1989), public funding of parties, candidates or elections, is a well established principle across the democratic world. He lists 21 countries which have systems of state subsidy.

In his reference to interest group finance, Panebianco is clearly taking on board Leon Epstein's point (see below) that developments in European political parties are following American trends. This relates to much more than, for instance, the trade union subsidy relied on so heavily by the British Labour party (Pinto-Duschinsky, 1981). Panebianco is describing a move towards the sort of Political Action Committee contributions relied on by American congressional candidates (Katz and Kolodny, 1992; Sabato, 1985).

V. *Shift in Stress from Ideology to Issues; Central Role of Careerists and Representatives of Interest Groups.*

With this rather general list, Panebianco is tapping the remaining two of Kirchheimer's (1990, p. 58) characteristics, namely, the 'drastic reduction of the party's ideological baggage', and 'securing access to a variety of interest groups'.¹⁴ In the first case, Panebianco is referring to the greater emphasis by parties on issues (usually during election campaigns) which are event-specific and salient (Budge and Farlie, 1983). An excessive stress on 'ideology' can limit the ability of a party to adapt to circumstances. In the second case, Panebianco is referring to further changes in party memberships regarding the establishment of ancillary organisations

¹⁴ Exactly what is meant by the 'central role of the careerists' is unclear, particularly as it seems to merely repeat points made under characteristic feature I. On this point, see also Webb, 1992.

which cater for target categories of voters (trade unionists, farmers, women, youth and so on).

The applicability of these five characteristics to the Irish case will be tested in chapter 9 below. At this stage, it is worthwhile summarising what we have seen so far in the party organisation literature. The history of party organisational development has generally been separated into two basic phases: first, the rise of the mass party, coinciding with the birth of liberal democracy; second, in the post-war years, the emergence of the catch-all party. There are two points which are implicit in much of this work. First, there is the underlying assumption that the changes outlined by Kirchheimer/Panebianco somehow represent the end of the process of party development, that from Bad Godesberg onwards the major parties may have been undergoing a gradual metamorphosis, but otherwise little by way of dramatic change.

The implication of this argument is that catch-allism represents the last phase in party development. If anything, the next phase can apparently only be the end of parties. This relates to the second point which is implied by much of the recent literature, that of a distinction which is drawn between notions of 'strong' and 'weak' parties. Duverger distinguishes between the strong, well-organised (mass) parties of Western Europe and their weaker (cadre) counterparts in the USA. Kirchheimer is quick to point out that there are indications of a move in an American direction implicit in his catch-all model.

In his description of the rise of the new 'electoral party' (as opposed to the 'non-electoral party'), Leon Epstein's account (1980; first published in 1967; see also Wright, 1971) places even greater stress on American-European comparisons.

As he puts it:

certain new political techniques tend to substitute for large-scale membership organizations, and . . . these techniques appear further advanced in American society than in the European. The fact that they are also present is nevertheless significant. It means that the theme is not a simple one of Americanization. (Epstein, 1980, p. 223)¹⁵

Party changes in the USA, so the argument goes, have tended to *precede* many of the changes in Europe. Peter Mair and Angelo Panebianco in their respective work have alluded to the possibility that if European parties are not in crisis now they may yet be. Mair argues that in the European context, parties have become increasingly vulnerable (1983; 1989a; 1989b). Panebianco's prediction is of impending 'party crisis' and he suggests: 'In time, the electoral-professional party may turn out to be but a transitory and comparatively short-lived phenomenon' (Panebianco, 1988, p. 273).

Evidence to support these contentions include such *external* indicators as growing voter apathy and even anger, and the rise of new parties and alternatives. But, crucially, there are also indicators which are *internal* to the party. These

¹⁵ Later in the same chapter Epstein elaborates in greater detail on how the American parties appear to be a step or two ahead of their European counterparts: 'Perhaps this seems to stand Duverger's theory of "contagion from the left" wrong-side up. But as Marx said of his conversion of Hegelian idealism to dialectical materialism, what may be done here is to stand Duverger right-side up. European mass-membership organizations, like the old American patronage machines, were only modern and advanced relative to particular circumstances of time and place. They cease to be so when class-conscious movements lose their significance and when there is a broad public to be reached most efficiently through the mass media. Similarly in these circumstances - which after all have obtained for a longer time in the United States than in Europe - the skeletal or cadre-type American party becomes the modern prototype in certain vital respects' (Epstein, 1980, p. 258).

apparently include: a decline in the role of the individual party member; a greater use of professional staff; a growing reliance on state and corporate funding.

The theme of parties in crisis (or potential crisis) is raised again in the concluding chapter. But, before we can get to that, we need to first outline just how parties have been changing: the extent to which party change has been consistent with the Kirchheimer/Panebianco frameworks; the extent to which environmental factors have influenced these developments. A central role of this thesis is to use the Irish case to provide some answers to such questions.

1.4. OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

As we saw earlier, the argument of the thesis can be broken down into two distinct parts:

- (1) an examination of changes to the electoral process (media, voters) in which parties operate;
- (2) an examination of changes to how the parties operate in the electoral process, dealing both with new campaign styles and with party organisational change.

It cannot be denied that the nature of the media has been undergoing great change in recent decades. The introduction of television revolutionised the view voters had of politicians and the means by which politicians communicated with voters. The technological revolution more generally has had profound implications for media coverage of politics whether in the form of a greatly speeded up process of news production, or in the ability of the media to provide a more thorough news

service (e.g. because it is easier to distribute journalists around the country). In themselves, such *structural* developments in the mass media are significant, but even more so have been the changes to media *styles* which have tended to coincide with them. Media organisations now devote more attention to news gathering, requiring the employment of specialised journalists. This greater attention to detail is not exclusively concerned with covering policy issues. As we shall see, there is also a growing interest in the 'game' of electoral politics, in the strategies, tactics and imagery of contemporary campaigning. These changes in the way the media cover elections provide one significant element of greater competition for politicians to deal with. Less and less can they rely on a suppliant press to regurgitate political speeches; more and more must the politicians pay close attention to how they package their electoral 'product'. Chapter 2 considers the evidence on media change. Particular attention is paid to the issue of media electoral coverage. After a summary of the comparative (and primarily American) literature, the Irish case in the 1970s-1980s is assessed by means of a content analysis of newspapers.

Another significant element of greater competition for the parties in the electoral process is provided by changes in the voting habits of the electorate. Twenty or thirty years ago the predominant view, as expressed in the literature on voters, was of electoral stability. Voters were said to be loyal supporters of their respective parties, from the cradle to the grave. As chapter 3 shows, through a review of the comparative studies, there is evidence of an increase in voter 'availability'. The chapter also explores how consistent the Irish case is with international trends. Here there is an assessment of the available studies on the Irish case, in particular those by Peter Mair, Michael Marsh and Richard Sinnott.

The second part of the thesis deals with the political parties. Here we begin with four chapters on party election campaigning. Once again, the comparative evidence is dealt with first. A framework for assessing party campaigning is developed in chapter 4, with detailed reference to American and European examples. This focuses on three key characteristics of the contemporary campaign: the greater attention to preparation and planning and the development of a professional campaign organisation; the greater use of specialist consultants and agencies; the greater attention to the opinions and concerns of a more fickle electorate. This framework is applied to the Irish case over time in the subsequent three chapters.

The line between 'modern' and non-modern campaigning is made clearer in chapter 5, which provides an overview of Irish election campaigning in earlier times. The second part of chapter 5 consists of a case study of the 1977 campaigns of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael. It is the professional campaign mounted rather unexpectedly by Fianna Fáil which was to galvanise Fine Gael into making dramatic changes to its campaign practices, as shown by its 1981 campaign. The 1981 campaign is surveyed in detail in chapter 6.

To complete the picture on how campaigning has changed in Irish elections, chapter 7 examines two specific areas of campaigning throughout the 1980s and into the first part of the 1990s: the use of consultants and agencies; and trends in the use of market research. The chapter also deals with the issue of the rising cost of campaigning.

There is much more to party change than new campaign styles. We also need to examine party organisations generally; at how these have been changing. This is dealt with in chapter 8 by an analysis of party constitutions, accounts, and

membership figures from the early 1960s through to 1990, supplemented with material gathered through personal interviews and correspondence with key party figures. Four areas are highlighted in the chapter. First, there is an examination of staffing. Second, there is an analysis of trends in party membership, assessing the degree to which the individual party member is declining in significance in Irish politics. Third, there is an examination of party structures. Finally, the chapter gives attention to trends in party finance: at the state of party budgets; at sources of party revenue from the state and the private sector.

The thesis concludes, in chapter 9, with an assessment of the nature and role of political parties in contemporary Irish society and the implications of the developments which have been outlined for democratic politics. More specifically, there are two main themes examined in this final chapter. First, there is the theme of what the future holds for political parties in Ireland, placing this in the context of the comparative debate on party organisational change. Second, attention is given to the issue of what effect party organisational change has had on democracy in Ireland.

CHAPTER TWO

THE NEW MEDIA?

A central argument of this thesis is that media coverage of politics has been changing and that this change has had an influence on the way in which political parties operate, particularly in the electoral process. This chapter seeks to show the close relationship between these two developments. There is a rather large, if diverse, literature on this issue. The chapter starts, in section 2.1, with an assessment of the research on media coverage, much of which originates in the USA. Section 2.2 examines the Irish case: reviewing the available evidence and reporting on a content analysis carried out specifically for this study. On the basis of the detailed evidence presented in these first two sections, section 2.3 explores the various sets of explanations which have been, or might be, offered to explain the changes to media coverage. It will be shown that one of these explanations relates specifically to the new campaign styles of the parties, demonstrating the close relationship between both developments.

2.1. CHANGING STYLES OF MEDIA COVERAGE

A typical election news story, whether on television or in a newspaper, can contain any number of elements: an outline of a particular policy issue; a character study of a candidate; news of a campaign scandal or candidate gaffe; a report on crowd reaction to a campaign event; a summary of poll results. American academics have, over the years, given increasing attention to media coverage styles, to an exploration of the elements which predominate in election news stories. A distinction has tended to be drawn between 'substantive' and 'non-substantive' news coverage. While specific definitions of both can vary wildly depending on the study, there is general agreement on the nature of the distinction.

Substantive coverage includes such items as: policy issues, candidate personalities and traits. It is considered substantive because it is trying to examine the 'issues' of the campaign and the 'character' of the candidates. Among the category of non-substantive items, the most common tend to be: stories about campaign events, poll trends, election predictions. These are seen as non-substantive because they are focusing on the campaign itself as the news story; on electoral strategies; on who is winning or losing.

Non-substantive coverage is referred to in a number of different ways by the various authors who have examined it. Among the most common descriptions are: 'horserace and hoopla', 'the competition', 'the contest', 'the campaign', 'horseracist coverage', 'gimmickry', and 'game coverage'. In this chapter 'game coverage' will be used to describe this form of coverage. As we shall see in the following discussion, there is a general belief among American academics that game coverage is on the increase, that over the years it has become ever more prominent as a focus

of the media in their electoral coverage. This section reviews the main US studies and examine both the comparative international evidence, to see whether this is a phenomenon unique to the USA, and the comparative longitudinal evidence, to see whether or not there is a rising trend.

2.1.1. The Evidence of Game Coverage in US Media Electoral Coverage

Probably the first study in this area was an article by Doris Graber on the 1968 US presidential campaign. In her sample of 20 large circulation newspapers Graber found a strong tendency for them to focus on domestic matters, 'which referred to partisan affairs such as the conduct of the campaign and the activities of public officials' (Graber, 1971/72, p. 178). Treatment of such 'partisan affairs' as the candidates' campaign techniques, opinion polls and party conventions, amounted to a little over 21 per cent of total media coverage.

In their agenda-setting study of the same 1968 election McCombs and Shaw (1972, p. 179) made very similar findings, noting that 'a considerable amount of campaign news was not devoted to discussion of the major political issues but rather to analysis of the campaign itself'. They found that 47 per cent of media coverage concentrated on campaign events and analysis. This, they suggested, 'may give pause to those who think of campaign news as being primarily about the issues' (ibid., p. 179).

By the time of the subsequent presidential election, American political scientists had given some thought to the media emphasis on campaign events. Thomas Patterson and Robert McClure produced a book-length analysis of television in the 1972 election which, in large part, examined what they termed the 'horse race

and hoopla' of American network television coverage. They found that during the election, as a network average, 'campaign activity' (e.g. rallies, motorcades, polls, strategies) received nine times greater coverage than the analysis of the candidates' qualifications and almost four times greater than the coverage of the candidates' positions on 'the election's critical issues' (Patterson and McClure, 1976, p. 41).

They concluded that:

Quite clearly, this network's campaign coverage focused on the election as a horse race. The 1972 election itself demanded no such coverage; it was never much of a contest at all. But on network television, the contest theme was carried to the campaign's very end, at the expense of the election's issues and the candidates' qualifications for office. (ibid., p. 46)

Patterson and McClure's study was based only on network television coverage. In a paper published in the same year, John Carey analysed the 1974 American congressional elections with a media sample which included not only the television networks, but also three national magazines and three large circulation newspapers. He also found that campaign events predominated; and this was the case for all the media in his sample. Across all his sample, game coverage averaged 53 per cent of total news coverage of the election (Carey, 1976, p. 54).

The 1976 presidential election coverage was examined in great detail in another book by Thomas Patterson (1980). He categorised media coverage as consisting of *substantive* and *game* elements. The latter included: statements about the candidates' chances for victory, opinion polls, vote projections and delegate counts; reference to candidates' strategies, tactics, finances, organisational strength; references to crowds, the candidates' comings and goings on the campaign trail, their rallies and motorcades. According to Patterson's findings, the game accounted

Table 2.1. Newspaper Coverage of the 1976 US Presidential Election

Themes		(%)
Game	winning and losing	23.67
	strategies and tactics	18.67
	appearances and hoopla	13.33
	(sub-total)	(55.67)
Substance	policy/campaign issues	19.33
	personalities and traits	6.33
	endorsements	5.00
	(sub-total)	(30.67)
Other	(sub-total)	(13.67)

Notes: These figures are an average of Patterson's sample of three newspapers. The figures on network television and *Time* and *Newsweek* coverage have not been included. Note that, in his Table 3.3, when he excludes the primaries and conventions periods and looks only at the 'general election', the figures for game and substance change respectively to 48.33 per cent and 38.00 per cent.

Source: Patterson, 1980, Table 3.1.

for 58 per cent of network coverage, 54 per cent of *Time/Newsweek* coverage, and more than 57 per cent of coverage by two newspapers in his sample of three. Only in one newspaper, *LA Times*, was the game 'as low as 51 per cent' (1980, p. 24).¹

Patterson's average scores for newspaper coverage are given in Table 2.1.² Here we can see just how little of the coverage was devoted to issues (19 per cent of the total). The largest item of game coverage comprised stories on who was winning or losing in the 'race' for the presidency (24 per cent).

Four years later, Michael Robinson and Margaret Sheehan surveyed CBS (television) and UPI (wire) coverage of the 1980 American presidential election. They found that in their 'wire copy and videotape about five of every six campaign stories made some meaningful references to the competition but, by comparison, well over half of the same stories made no mention of issues' (Robinson and Sheehan, 1983, p. 148).

Most recently, media coverage of the 1988 presidential election has been analysed by the 'Markle Commission on the Media and the Electorate' (under the direction of Bruce Buchanan).³ The Commission's main finding was that the 'largest portion of campaign coverage dealt with the election as a competition and the

¹ This suggests that a certain qualification should be attached to Doris Graber's repeated assertions of high levels of inter-media uniformity in electoral coverage (Graber, 1971; 1980; 1983).

² The reason for only including data on newspaper coverage in Table 2.1 is that they provide a useful contrast with the content analysis of Irish newspaper coverage reported on later in the chapter.

³ The John and Mary R. Markle Foundation, established in 1927, promotes projects on mass communications, information technology, and democratic society. This project was directed by Bruce Buchanan. The other members were: James David Barber, John Culver, Joan Konner, Senator Charles Mathias, Eugene Patterson, and Eddie Williams.

personalities of the contestants rather than with the substance of the public agenda' (Markle Commission, 1990).⁴ They analysed 7,000 news stories in 18 news outlets between Labor Day and the election, and found that more than 57 per cent were devoted to the 'horse race' and to conflicts between the candidates.

2.1.2. Is Game Coverage only an American Phenomenon?

On the face of it, the available evidence would suggest that game coverage is a prominent feature of campaigns throughout the developed world. For instance, in Canada, Jeremy Wilson examined the 1979 election campaign coverage. His evidence indicated that Canadian media 'portray election campaigns in roughly the same way as do their American counterparts' (Wilson, 1980/1, p. 59). Commentary on polls, strategies, prospects, 'and other facets of the contest' accounted for over a third of newspaper content and almost half of television news coverage. And, he added:

If anything, these statistics underestimate the pervasiveness of the horse race style. Our analysis does not capture fully the extent to which reports of issue statements are placed in a 'strategic context' by accompanying commentary which cues the audience to respond to the entire item as any other bit of intelligence about campaign tactics. (ibid., p. 60)

In Australia this question has also received some attention. Television coverage of the 1980 federal election was analysed by Stephen Crofts and his colleagues. Their research showed that 18 per cent of news time (excluding advertisements) on the main Sydney evening news was on the election, or on

⁴ On coverage of the 1988 campaign, see also Ansolabehere et al., 1991.

Table 2.2. 'Game' Coverage in the 1979 European Parliament Elections

Country	Game Themes (%)	Other Themes (%)
Italy	36	64
Ireland	36	64
France	30	70
West Germany	29	71
Denmark	28	72
Belgium	25	75
Luxembourg	25	75
United Kingdom	24	76
The Netherlands	16	84

Notes: 'Game' themes are calculated by adding Schulz's two categories of 'elections and campaigning' and 'party political matters'.

Source: Schulz, 1983.

election relevant material. Just 4 per cent of total news was devoted to the issues of the election. By contrast, 14 per cent of total news output (i.e. 76 per cent of election news) was on 'the campaign' (Crofts et al., 1981).

In his analysis of newspaper coverage of the same election, Murray Goot found that:

The amount of space occupied by news items wholly devoted to things other than issues (the polls, profiles of the swinging seats, lists of candidates and their qualities and so on) accounted for nearly one-third of total election coverage in the *Sydney Sun* and over one-quarter of the *Melbourne Herald*, but about one-quarter of the *Age* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* as well. The papers with less coverage of such issues came from the top of the market and the bottom. (Goot, 1983, p. 156).

Game coverage of elections has also been found in the West European context. Television coverage of the 1979 first European Parliament elections was analysed by Jay Blumler and his colleagues (Blumler and Fox (eds), 1983). As Table 2.2 shows, a significant proportion of television coverage was devoted to examining such non-substantive issues as 'elections and campaigning' and 'party political matters'.⁵

The fact that European Parliament elections are only 'second order', and, as such, 'are considered as less important by many political actors, voters as well as party activists, political leaders, journalists' (Reif, 1985, p. 8), might be said to

⁵ Further analysis of these data by Karen Siune (1983, p. 229) reveals that the 'game' emphasis was more prominent among the journalists than among the politicians: 'In every country except the Netherlands, journalists dealt more often with the election as such than with any other theme. . . This pattern is somewhat reminiscent of the finding of Thomas Patterson (1980) for an American presidential election of relatively high journalistic attention to the campaign "game" in contrast to its more substantive issues'.

affect styles of media coverage. Arguably in a 'first order' election, where there is 'more at stake' (ibid., p. 8), 'game' coverage should figure more prominently.

There have been several studies on media coverage of British general - and, hence, 'first order' - elections. Case studies on media-party relations reveal close attention to style and imagery in media electoral coverage, reflecting greater success at agenda-setting by party strategists (Blumler et al., 1986; Gurevitch and Blumler, 1982; Semetko et al., 1991). In their study of local newspaper coverage of the 1987 election, Bob Franklin and Sandra McTaggart (1989) found only 17 per cent of coverage was on 'gimmickry' (undefined). However, the fact that they were examining local newspapers is significant. Another study by Axford and Madgwick (1987) suggests that 'game' coverage (what they call coverage of 'campaign strategies' and the 'polls') on national television news in the 1987 election accounted for just under 40 per cent of the total.⁶ In another study, again of television coverage of the 1987 election, Miller et al. (1989) also have evidence of game coverage accounting for something approaching 40 per cent of the total.⁷

Most recently, a detailed, comparative examination of media coverage of the 1983 British general election and the 1984 US presidential election found higher levels of game coverage in the US media (Semetko et al., 1991, pp. 138-41, 168).

⁶ This figure was arrived at by calculating the average coverage of these two items over the five weeks in their sample.

⁷ This figure is based on two of their categories: (1) 'campaign progress' (15 per cent) defined as 'primarily assessment of how well each of the parties was doing, how large a lead the Conservatives had over Labour, whether the Alliance challenge was fading and the like'; (2) 'unfocused, etc.' (25 per cent) defined as 'campaign trail items or even manifesto reports that touched on many issues but failed to focus on one'. (Miller et al., 1989, pp. 634-5). Since this latter item contains a mixture of game and substance themes, the figure of 40 per cent is obviously an exaggeration, but by how much we do not know.

This contrast was most striking in the case of television news. Game coverage by the three US networks averaged 16.3 per cent, as against an average of 12.5 per cent for the BBC and ITN.

Apart from the British case, the available evidence on media coverage of individual general elections elsewhere in western Europe is quite sketchy. Research by Müller and Plasser (1992) on the 1990 Austrian election shows the growing prominence of game items in the Austrian media. In their content analysis of three leading newspapers and the daily television news, they find that 'scandals and speculations about future government formations received more attention than substantive issues' (Müller and Plasser, 1992, pp. 33-4).

Philip van Praag jr. has examined media coverage of a number of elections in the Netherlands. In a recent paper he reported on his findings for the 1986 election (van Praag jr., 1990). Television content was divided into three categories: 'politically substantive news', 'campaign ritual' (primarily politicians on the road) and the 'actual election battle' (in opinion polls, comments on the polls, speculation on future government coalitions, etc.). More than half of the television coverage was on substantive news (51 per cent); the rest was predominantly game coverage (32 per cent on campaign ritual and 18 per cent on the actual battle). In his latest assessment of Dutch media coverage of elections, including the 1989 campaign, van Praag jr. concludes that 'the media in the Netherlands have felt strongly inclined in the last fifteen years to focus their attention away from substantial issues' (van Praag jr., 1992, p. 155).

One West European study which provides some direct comparisons with US trends is Gianpietro Mazzoleni's (1987) analysis of newspaper coverage of the 1983

Italian election. Using an adapted form of Patterson's (1980) US research design, Mazzoleni produces findings which are strikingly different from the American case. Patterson had found that in the case of the USA, the 'game' received about twice as much coverage as 'substance'. In Italy the situation was virtually the reverse: 50 per cent of Italian newspaper coverage was on substance; 28 per cent on the game, or 'imagery'. Mazzoleni concludes (1987, p. 96): 'On balance, one can say that the "image" element in press reporting is significant but far from weakening the primacy of its attention to the "issues"'.

In summary, the available evidence suggests that game coverage is a prominent feature of media election coverage in a number of countries. Because the studies use a plethora of methodological approaches it is not possible to draw any firm conclusions as to whether US trends are more prominent than those in other countries. The Italian study by Mazzoleni and the recent British/American study by Holli Semetko and her colleagues tend to suggest that this is the case. Later in this chapter the question is explored in more detail in the Irish case using data drawn from a content analysis which is based on the Patterson study of US elections.

2.1.3. How New is Game Coverage?

The best way to determine whether media coverage styles are changing, whether new styles are developing, is to examine media output across several elections through time. It is striking how, until relatively recently, there is a great sparsity of such longitudinal analyses.

Patterson (1980, p. 28) is quite explicit in his conclusion that game coverage is a new development, yet the evidence on which he can base this conclusion is far

from definitive. It is based simply on comparing his findings with those of a study by Berelson, Lazarsfeld and their colleagues in the 1940s. In *The People's Choice*, the Columbia researchers noted that 'over a third of all discussion centered on the progress of the campaign, on the campaign methods of the two parties, and particularly on speculations about the candidates' chances' (Lazarsfeld et al., 1968, p. 115). In *Voting*, the figure had grown to 40 per cent (Berelson et al., 1954, p. 240). Patterson concludes that 'game' coverage has increased because his findings indicate a greater extent of such coverage styles in the 1970s.

But Patterson is not necessarily using the same categories as Berelson and Lazarsfeld. Furthermore, Lazarsfeld and Berelson's data were not gathered over an equivalent time period as Patterson's, and they examined local media coverage, whereas Patterson examined national/large circulation media.

The first comparative longitudinal study was carried out by Mike Robinson and Margaret Sheehan. They analysed campaign coverage in selected issues of three local newspapers (the *Boston Globe*, the *Columbus Dispatch*, and the *Seattle Times*) in 1940, 1960 and 1980. What they found was 'almost mind-numbing stability' (Robinson and Sheehan, 1983, p. 156). Game coverage predominated to the same extent in all three elections: 'In Campaign '40 in the local press the ratio of "horse race" to policy was five to one; in Campaign '60 the ratio was five to one; in Campaign '80 the ratio was five to one' (ibid., p. 156).

While this finding would seem to go against the stream of assertions that game coverage is on the increase, it is worth emphasising that Robinson and Sheehan were analysing local newspapers. Whether they would have reached the same conclusions in an analysis of national media is open to question. Furthermore,

it has been suggested that, by using the 1940 election as their base, Robinson and Sheehan have not gone back far enough to allow for adequate longitudinal comparison; that 1940 was 'not long enough ago to qualify as the "good old days" of election journalism' (Sigelman and Bullock, 1991, p. 12).

In a recent paper, Lee Sigelman and David Bullock (1991) report on their findings from a more ambitious longitudinal study. They carried out a content analysis of five major metropolitan newspapers across six American presidential elections.⁸ The elections were chosen as representing three periods in the development of the American media: the newspaper era (1888 and 1908); the radio era (1928 and 1948); the television era (1968 and 1988). According to this analysis: horse race coverage was high (averaging about 20 per cent of total news coverage in 1888) in the first period; low in the second (averaging about 8 per cent in 1928); and at its highest in the third period (averaging about 30 per cent in 1988).⁹ The high score in the first period is explained as due to a tendency in nineteenth century American journalism to publish straw polls, and 'election projections of one sort or another' (Sigelman and Bullock, 1991, p. 21). It is the recent growth in game, or horse race coverage - in contrast to Robinson and Sheehan's findings - which is most striking:

Our analysis of presidential election coverage over the last century leaves no doubt about the meteoric rise of the horse race theme during the television era. . . In 1988, between one-third and two-fifths of all paragraphs coded for

⁸ The five newspapers were: the *Atlanta Constitution*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *New York Times*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and the *Washington Post*.

⁹ These figures are taken from a line graph of 'overall coverage patterns' (Sigelman and Bullock, 1991, p. 23).

three of the five newspapers (the *Chicago Tribune*, the *New York Times*, and the *Washington Post*) concerned the horse race aspect of the campaign, marking a major shift toward horse race coverage since the radio era. (ibid., p. 21)

Three main points of conclusion can be drawn from this review of the literature on media electoral coverage. First, a substantial portion of media coverage in the USA examines their election campaigns as 'games'. Second, longitudinal research by Sigelman and Bullock indicates that this game coverage has been on the increase. Third, game coverage appears to be more prominent in the USA than in other countries for which data are available.

In order to address adequately the question of exactly how media coverage has been changing and to what extent such changes are taking place outside of the USA, a content analysis of newspaper coverage of Irish elections through time has been carried out and is reported next.

2.2. MEDIA COVERAGE OF ELECTIONS IN IRELAND

Media coverage of Irish elections has already been examined in work by Francis Xavier Carty and Mary Kelly. Carty has carried out content analyses of newspaper coverage of the 1969, 1977, and 1981 Irish elections. In 1969, his analysis showed how the bulk of newspaper coverage involved the reproduction of party scripts (Carty, 1973).¹⁰ In 1977, Carty found a definite shift away from such

¹⁰ More so in the past than today, parties arrange for teams of specialists to write 'scripts' on particular issues for their candidates (such set ups are referred to as 'script factories'). These scripts are then sent directly to the newspapers which print them as purported statements by the various candidates. In most cases, the relevant candidate never actually sees the script.

passive coverage and towards more active coverage of the parties' campaigns: 'The big change this time was that the papers moved away from a slavish transcription of supplied scripts to a more detailed examination of the constituencies and the candidates as well as commentary on national and local issues' (Carty, n.d., p. 3). He notes that, whereas in 1969 the papers gave between them 10,600 column inches to scripts, by 1977 this figure had dropped by half to 5,400 column inches. The papers now gave much more attention to issues in the campaign. This appears to have been at least partially caused by the first use of opinion polls in 1973-1977. For instance, the *Irish Times* commissioned National Opinion Polls (NOP) to carry out a series of polls during the 1977 election. Like the *Irish Independent/IMS* poll of 1973 - and quite unlike the polls carried out in subsequent elections - the 1977 *Irish Times/NOP* polls concentrated predominantly on issues rather than on such questions as 'who is in the lead?'. Another innovation in 1977 was the constituency profile, i.e. journalistic analysis of an individual constituency, assessing the issues, candidates and trends. Overall, Carty concludes that in 1977 the agenda of debate appears very much to have been set by the media:

the election became more and more [sic] of what the papers rather than the politicians were saying. The papers could nearly be seen to have run their own election campaign. The politicians listened and took the lead instead of giving it. (Carty, n.d., p. 3)

In 1981 Carty found that the coverage of scripts was even less. Instead, more coverage was devoted to:

Table 2.3. Average Total Percentage of Newspaper given to all Election Coverage

Newspaper	1969	1977	1981
Irish Times	18.9	16.7	14.5
Irish Independent	18.7	12.4	16.6
Irish Press	19.2	18.2	19.6
Sunday Independent	22.9	-	21.5
Sunday Press	22.2	-	18.8

Source: Carty, 1981

the personalities of the party leaders, prompted to some extent by the style of their nationwide tours. . . The 1981 coverage featured prominently the nationwide tour of the Taoiseach, Charles Haughey, and the Fine Gael leader, Garret FitzGerald. (Carty, 1981, p. 5)

Carty discusses whether it is the newspapers or the parties which are responsible for this trend. Unlike in 1977 when he argued that the agenda was set by the media, in 1981 the parties appear to have been the agenda setters, staging special events to maximise positive media coverage. Finally, Carty examines whether the amount of coverage has been on the increase since 1969. The evidence, as shown in Table 2.3, suggests quite a static picture. According to Carty the downward trend in *Irish Times* coverage in Table 2.3 is principally because 'they used give more space than the others to speeches' and were therefore more affected by the reduced reliance on the 'script factories' (Carty, 1981, p. 8).

Mary Kelly (1983, 1984) has analysed Irish media coverage of the 1979 European Parliament elections. This was part of the comparative examination of media coverage of the elections in all the European Community countries which was referred to above (Blumler and Fox (eds), 1983). Her findings, summarised in Table 2.4, confirm the general trend suggested by Carty. As Table 2.4 shows, both in the newspapers and on television, game coverage - defined here as coverage of the 'election campaign' and of 'party political matters' - constituted a plurality of total coverage. Furthermore, Kelly notes that 'the emphasis on the actual mechanics of campaigning was also found in other European countries, but not always as pronounced as in Ireland' (Kelly, 1984, p. 103). (See Table 2.2.)

Table 2.4. Percentage Themes Presented in the Irish Media, 1979 European Parliament Elections

Themes		RTÉ	Irish Press	Irish Independent	Irish Times
Game	election campaign	22.8	28.0	24.7	24.5
	party political matters	11.9	6.3	8.7	5.8
	(sub-total)	(40.7)	(34.3)	(33.4)	(30.3)
Substance	European issues	23.7	16.9	13.1	19.0
	economic	19.7	23.1	29.8	23.3
	agriculture	7.3	6.8	5.4	6.0
	energy	1.1	5.8	6.3	5.9
	social and other	7.4	14.3	12.0	15.7
	(sub-total)	(59.2)	(66.9)	(66.6)	(69.9)

Source: Kelly, 1983.

2.2.1. Content Analysis of the 1973 and 1989 Elections

Both Carty's and Kelly's research indicate that media coverage of Irish elections has been changing in a manner similar to that found elsewhere. To examine this issue in more detail, in the light of the comparative findings in the previous section, I have carried out a content analysis of the coverage of two elections, 1973 and 1989, by two daily newspapers, the *Irish Times* and the *Irish Independent*. The 1973 election was chosen for analysis because this was the final election campaign to occur before the change in party election campaign styles in 1977 (see chapter 5). Therefore the 1973 election can be seen as a good indicator of the media environment before the introduction of new campaign techniques. By 1989 - as we shall see in later chapters - the parties had all adopted new campaign techniques.

The *Irish Times* and *Irish Independent* were selected as the media to measure in this analysis.¹¹ The only other daily newspaper available over this period, the *Irish Press*, was not examined for three reasons. First, it was felt that an analysis of two newspapers would be sufficient to control for possible intra-institutional effects on media coverage. Second, over this period the *Irish Press* switched from a broadsheet to a tabloid format with a discernible shift in style of coverage. Third, the *Irish Press* started life as a quintessential party newspaper. It still is in the control of the de Valera family, with an effective majority of its shares (46 per cent) held through an American-based trust administered by members of the family, including the present controlling director, Dr Eamon de Valera. While the paper has undoubtedly sought to present an independent image in recent years, its connections

¹¹ In 1989 the three national newspaper daily circulation figures were as follows: *Irish Independent*, 152,586; *Irish Press* (1990), 60,635; *Irish Times* (1990), 93,187.

with the Fianna Fáil party weakens its ability to appear totally independent (Brady, 1986; Chubb, 1984).

This content analysis was designed to produce a comprehensive set of data for both newspapers in both elections. Accordingly, all 'election relevant' articles for each day of the campaign in both newspapers were coded. The basic unit of measure was the column centimetre. By 'election relevant' articles was meant the following:

1. Any article which deals in whole or in part with the Dáil campaign - especially in relation to all the political parties.
2. Any article which deals with issues and developments that are directly linked to the campaign in any way. An issue which *becomes* relevant to the campaign is coded at that point, not retrospectively.
3. Any article which involves discussions of voters, polls, projections.
4. Articles about campaign strategies, party staffs, families of candidates.
5. Articles about electoral laws/procedures.
6. Any other article construed to be about the candidates, the parties, the issues or the developments of the campaign. The important point is not to read into the articles; they must have a specific relevance to the campaign.

The comparative discussion in the previous section showed how media coverage change was manifested by a thematic shift towards a greater emphasis on the game of elections. Evidence of this in the Irish context can be gathered by examining the themes contained within each newspaper article. Based closely on Patterson's (1980) list of media election themes, a list of seven possible themes was drawn up, according to which each of the articles could be broken down in terms of the amount of column centimetres devoted to each theme. These seven themes can

be grouped trichotomously into 'game' themes, 'substance' themes, and 'others'.

The list is as follows:

GAME

1. *winning and losing:*
includes statements about party and candidate chances, opinion poll results/trends, expert predictions, bets.
2. *strategies and logistics:*
references to party and candidate strategies, tactics, finances, nominations, organisational strength; discussions about tactics of coalition; faction-fighting, candidate differences.
3. *appearances and hoopla:*
references to crowds, candidate comings and goings on the trail, rallies, motorcades, television appearances.

SUBSTANCE

4. *policy issues:*
in turn broken down into fifteen individual items (see Appendix A).
5. *campaign issues:*
issues that develop from campaign incidents, often errors in judgement by candidates (see Appendix A).
6. *personalities and traits:*
focus on personality and leadership traits, backgrounds, workloads.

OTHER

7. *electoral facts:*
laws, procedures, descriptions of constituencies, electorates, voting, calls for people to vote.

Table 2.5. Newspaper Coverage of Irish Elections, 1973 and 1989: 'Game' versus 'Substance'

Themes	Irish Times		Irish Independent	
	1973 (%)	1989 (%)	1973 (%)	1989 (%)
Game				
winning and losing	2.32	9.83	4.83	14.09
strategies and tactics	5.98	14.33	7.45	14.20
appearances and hoopla	3.71	8.00	3.69	13.96
(sub-total)	(12.01)	(32.16)	(15.97)	(42.25)
Substance				
policy issues	59.23	52.00	58.52	40.62
campaign issues	8.53	8.07	6.87	6.29
personalities and traits	16.98	5.79	14.06	9.28
(sub-total)	(84.74)	(65.86)	(79.45)	(56.19)
Other				
	(3.26)	(1.99)	(4.57)	(1.56)

Note: The 'Other' category consists of the theme 'electoral facts'.

Source: Content analysis of both newspapers.

2.2.2. Game Coverage by the Irish Media

Above we saw how, in the efforts to assess game coverage, the various authors have tended to adopt their own idiosyncratic methodological approaches, making direct comparisons between different countries impossible. Furthermore, to date, there has been little if any consideration given to examining *developments* in game coverage, i.e. by examining more than one election in a country. Both issues have been addressed in this analysis, in the first instance, by use of a framework based closely on one used elsewhere (by Thomas Patterson (1980)), and in the second, by giving equal weight in the content analysis to the examination of two separate elections (1973 and 1989).

In Table 2.5 we can see the trends in the Irish case. The evidence is unambiguous. Whichever of the newspapers we examine, there has been a significant increase between 1973 and 1989 in the proportion of newspaper coverage given over to elections as a game. And the extent of the increase is consistent regardless of which of the three sub-categories are examined (winning and losing, strategies and logistics, appearances and hoopla).

While the incidence of media game coverage may not be as high as that found in the USA by Patterson (see Table 2.1), when we look at the breakdowns - and with due regard to likely methodological differences between this study and Patterson's - it is interesting to note the similarity in trends in both countries for the 'strategies and tactics' and 'appearances and hoopla' themes. The major difference between the two cases is accounted for by the theme of 'winning and losing'.

There may be differences in 1989 between the extent of game coverage by the *Irish Independent* (42 per cent) and that by the *Irish Times* (32 per cent), but that

is quite consistent with earlier trends, as shown by the 1973 figures (16 per cent *versus* 12 per cent). The principal point remains, between 1973 and 1989, game coverage of Irish election campaigns by two daily newspapers substantially increased.¹²

One other question to consider, is the degree to which the style of newspaper electoral coverage remains the same or varies during the course of the election campaign. Again it is rather surprising that, in all the literature on media election coverage, so little attention has been given to the possible relationship between the style of media coverage and its location at different stages of the election campaign. In their study of 1980 US campaign coverage, Robinson and Sheehan (1983, p. 148) find that the amount of game coverage does not vary during the campaign period: 'At every level, in every phase, during each and every month, CBS and UPI allocated more newsspace to competition between candidates than to any other aspect of the campaign'.

As is footnoted in Table 2.1, Patterson finds a significantly lower amount of game coverage (48 per cent) in the latter part of the 1976 US presidential elections, i.e. when the primary and convention phases are excluded. The American primaries are bound to increase the competitive element in the earlier part of the campaign calendar. A contrasting picture is revealed in a study of media coverage of the 1987 British election campaign by W. L. Miller and his colleagues. This shows that game

¹² The change in *Irish Times* coverage is confirmed by an earlier analysis of that newspaper's coverage of the 1987 election - where game coverage represented 32 per cent of the total and substance was 66 per cent. (Farrell, 1989a) - and by another analysis of the newspaper's coverage of the 1992 election - where game coverage represented 31 per cent of the total and substance was 66 per cent (Farrell, 1993).

Table 2.6. Media Coverage Styles, 1989: Week-by-Week Breakdowns

Themes	Irish Times			Irish Independent		
	Week I (%)	Week II (%)	Week III (%)	Week I (%)	Week II (%)	Week III (%)
Game	32.51	30.05	33.87	39.88	43.69	42.91
Substance	65.89	69.52	62.34	59.85	54.89	54.24
Other	1.61	0.42	3.79	0.27	1.43	2.85

Source: Content analysis of both newspapers.

coverage appears to increase in the latter weeks of the campaign (Miller et al., 1989, p. 635).

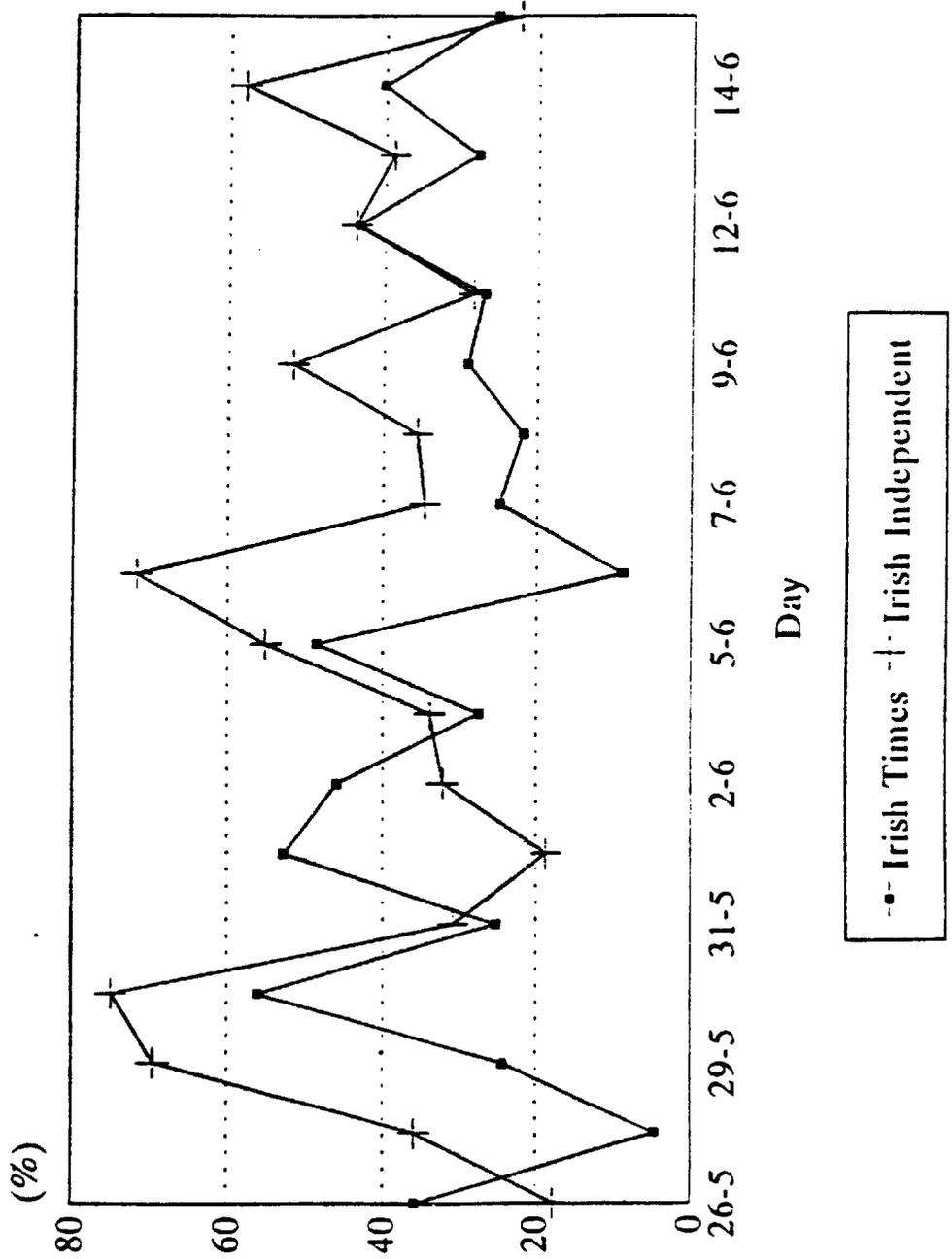
When we look at week-by-week breakdowns, as shown in Table 2.6, the evidence for the Irish case in 1989 is quite ambiguous. Neither newspaper shows a clear trend either for more or less game coverage. The *Irish Times* has a drop in game coverage in the second week; the greatest tendency to focus on the game of campaigning occurs in the final week. By contrast, in the *Irish Independent* the focus on the electoral game is at its greatest during the second week.

Figure 2.1 provides a day-by-day breakdown of the proportion of coverage on the electoral game in both newspapers. The graph is smoothed in Figure 2.2, by taking a moving average of data across three days. It is clear from both these Figures that there is no main trend. The *Irish Times* had a peak in game coverage at the end of the first week, in the last few days of May and early June. This was followed by a decline which continued until the start of the final week. From then on there was an increase to a peak on or around the 12 June. Both of these peaks coincided with the publication by the *Irish Times* of its MRBI opinion polls. The *Irish Independent* had three peaks in its game coverage: the end of May; 6-7 June; the last few days of the campaign. Like the *Irish Times*, these dates coincided with the publication of specially commissioned IMS opinion polls.

2.2.3. Other Aspects of Change in Irish Newspaper Electoral Coverage

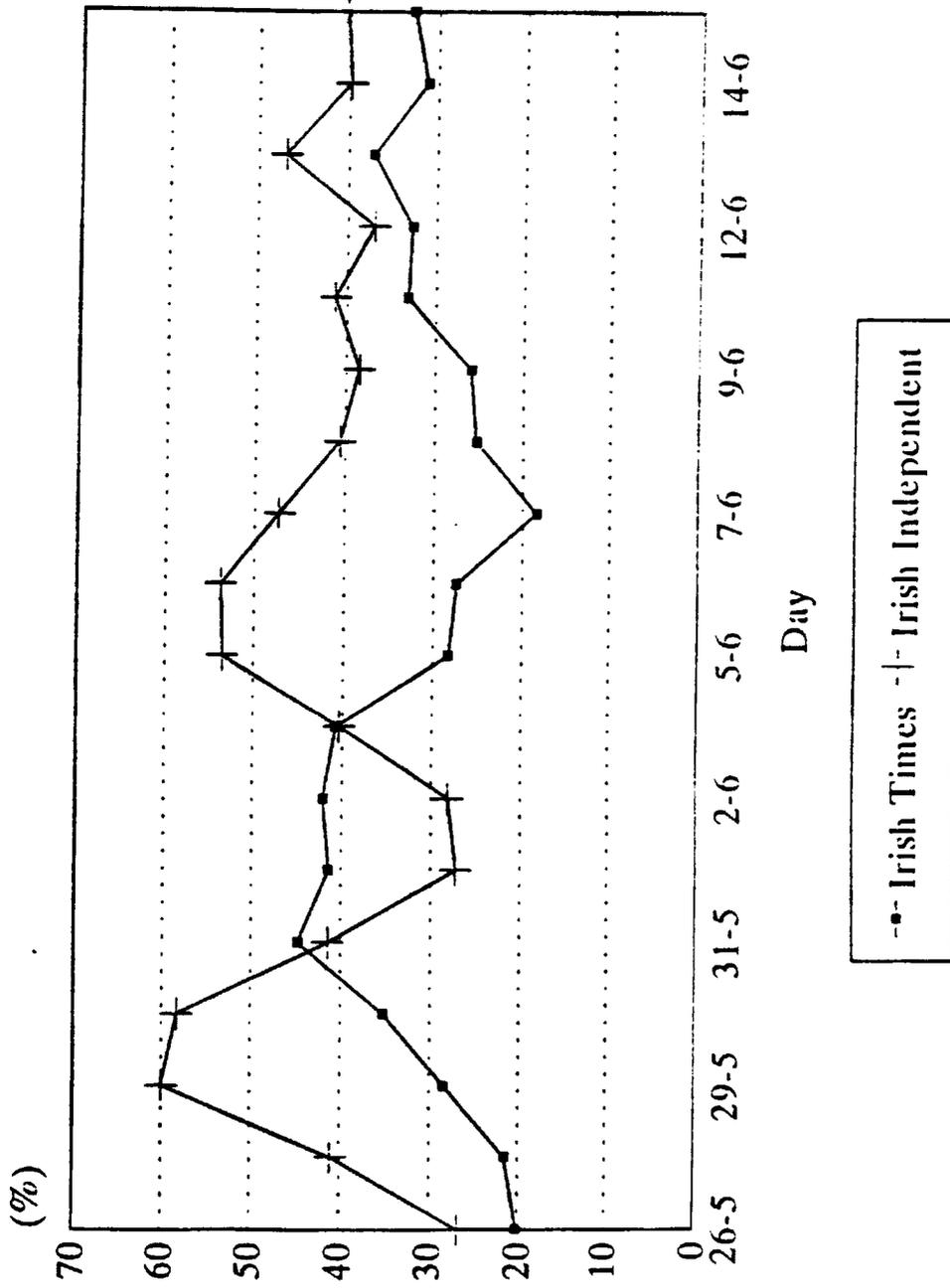
Before leaving this content analysis, it is worthwhile giving some consideration to other possible dimensions of change in newspaper electoral coverage. For instance, what evidence is there of an *increase* in the overall amount

Figure 2.1. Game Coverage Throughout the 1989 Campaign



Source: Content Analysis of both Newspapers

Figure 2.2. Game Coverage Trends in 1989: Moving Average



Source: Content Analysis of both Newspapers

of newspaper coverage of elections? Of the few long term, longitudinal studies of media coverage, only Robinson and Sheehan's (1983) has considered this question.¹³ In their examination of local newspaper coverage of the 1940, 1960 and 1980 US presidential elections, they found a 75 per cent increase in the amount of print coverage:

For every four stories we found in Campaign '40, we found seven in Campaign '80. And despite impressions to the contrary, stories are longer now than they were then. In absolute terms then, the amount of issue coverage has gone up dramatically over the last four decades. (Robinson and Sheehan, 1983, p. 159).

This increase in total media coverage reflects the aspiration of journalists to provide a more thorough inspection of the election, its issues and the campaigning of the politicians. What about the Irish case? As was mentioned earlier, Carty's 1969-1981 data suggest that Irish newspaper coverage has remained quite static, apart that is from a notable reduction in the coverage provided by the *Irish Times*.

Table 2.7 confirms Carty's evidence of a decline in the election coverage of the *Irish Times*, though the difference is small.¹⁴ The *Irish Independent*, by contrast, has increased its coverage - again only slightly - both in absolute terms and as a proportion of total output for the duration of the campaign.

These total figures conceal considerable variation on a day-by-day basis as

¹³ Russonello and Wolf (1979) have examined media coverage of the 1968 and 1976 US presidential elections, finding evidence of a drop in overall coverage.

¹⁴ The reason for the discrepancy between Carty's figures on the proportions of newspaper coverage devoted to earlier elections and the figures here is that Carty's data include measures of such things as photographs, headlines, and advertisements.

Table 2.7. Newspaper Coverage of Irish Elections, 1973 and 1989: Extent of Coverage

	Irish Times		Irish Independent	
	1973	1989	1973	1989
Coverage of Election (Col. Cms.)	13,902	10,777	11,123	12,773
Total Newspaper Coverage (Col. Cms.)	230,144	214,396	207,680	211,116
Proportion of Total on Election (%)	6.04	5.03	5.36	6.05

Source: Content analysis of both newspapers.

the campaign progresses. Greater sense can be made of the extent of coverage by both newspapers in both elections by reference to Figures 2.3 and 2.4, which show the total number of column centimetres devoted to election analysis for each day of the respective campaigns.

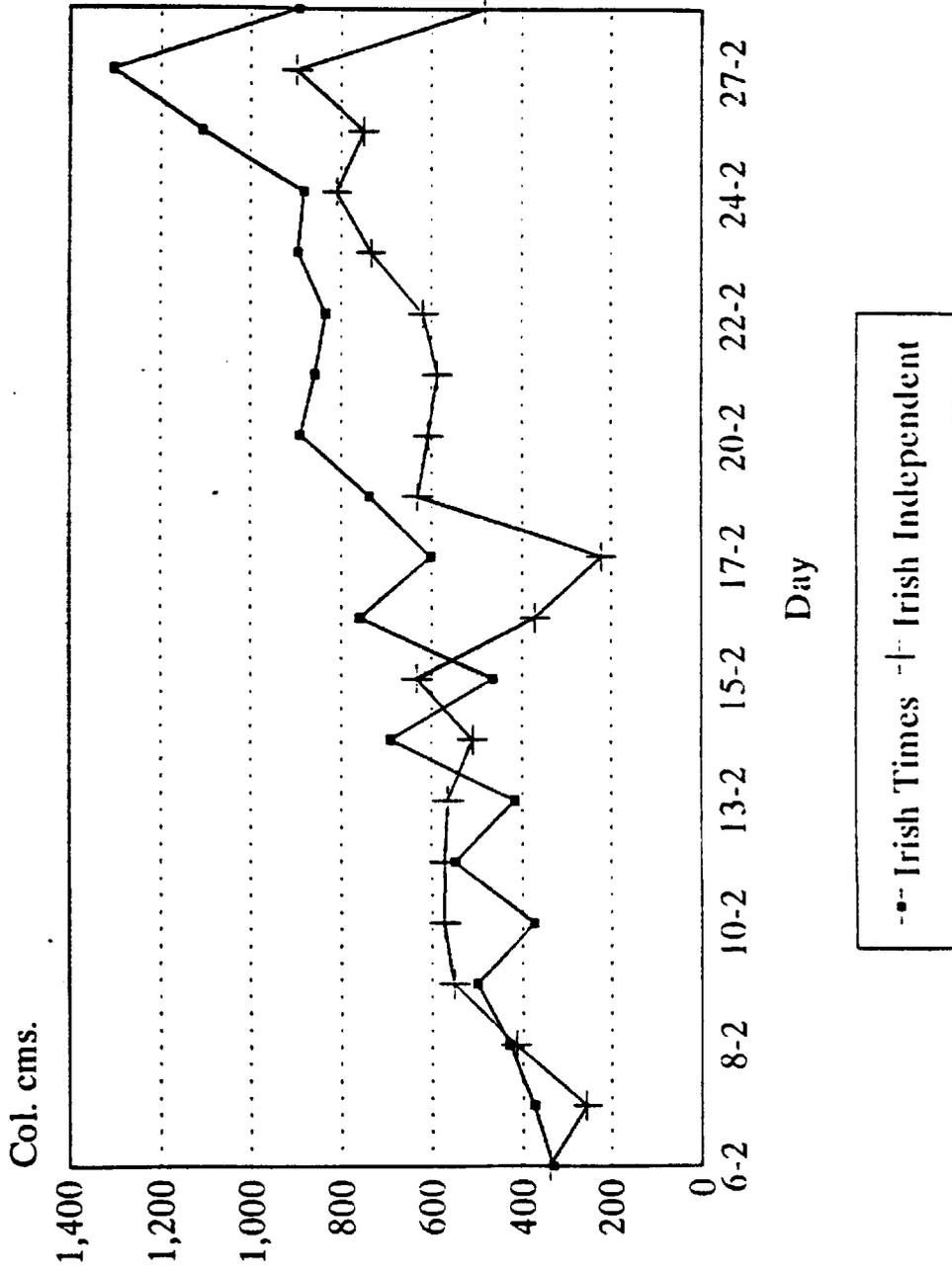
Figure 2.3 shows the clear lead the *Irish Times* has over the *Irish Independent* in 1973, particularly in the second half of the campaign. In Figure 2.4, the 1989 election, the two newspapers are more evenly matched, but the *Irish Independent* has more frequent and larger peaks in its coverage. One point worth noting in both Figures is the degree to which the coverage of both newspapers tended to follow quite similar patterns of peaks and troughs. In 1973 the coverage increased in a gradual, steady motion to a final peak. By contrast, in 1989 there were far more fluctuations between high and low amounts of coverage, with the main peak occurring in the middle to latter part of the campaign.

In conclusion, neither the findings presented here, nor those of Carty on earlier elections, support the contention that media electoral coverage has become more extensive, certainly in the case of recent elections. This is not to deny the distinct possibility that media coverage in the 1970s-1980s is more extensive than in earlier times.

A final matter worth examining is the varying types of news articles on the election.¹⁵ For instance, in *Voting*, Berelson and his colleagues make the point that much of the media coverage of the 1948 US presidential campaign consisted of

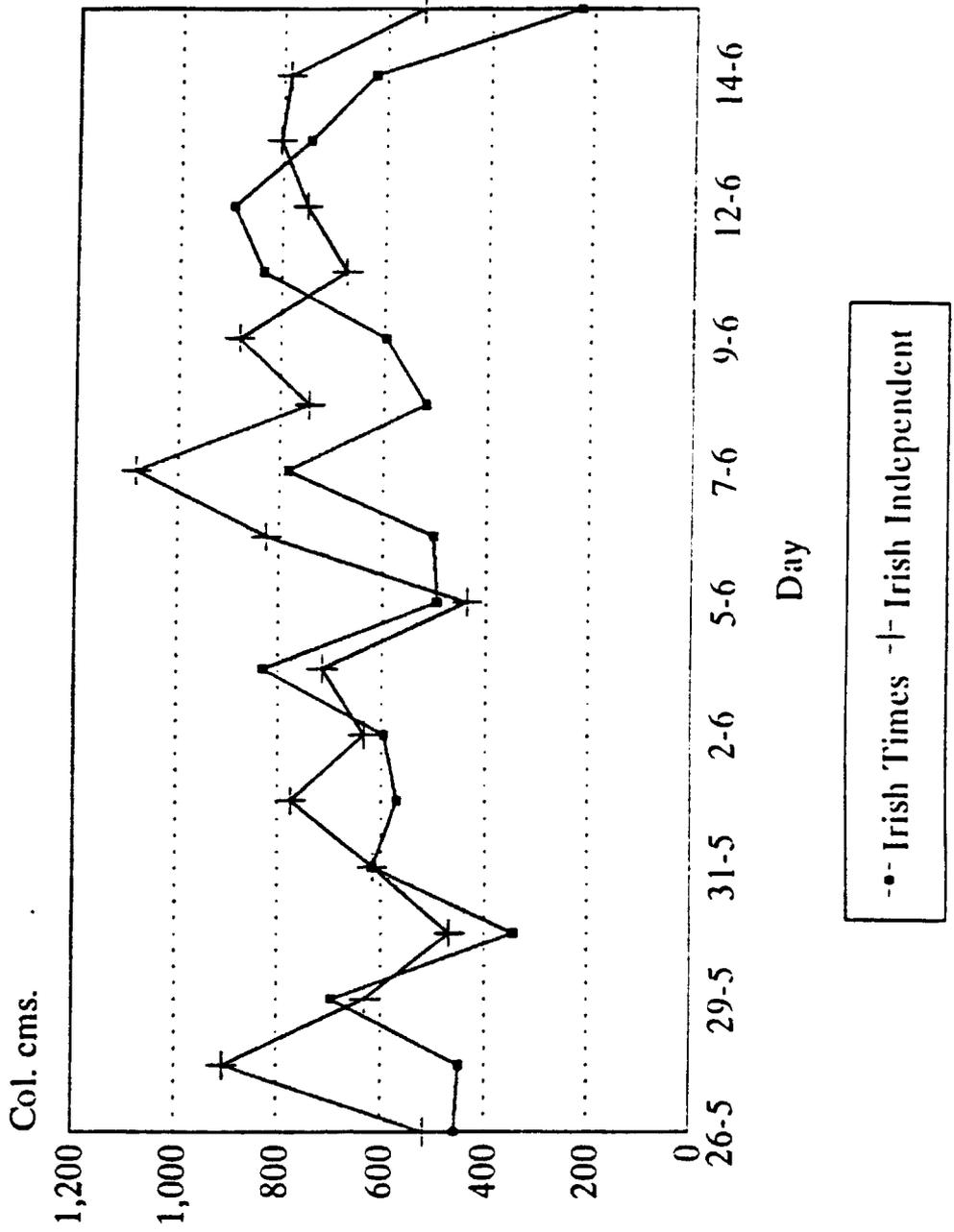
¹⁵ Here I am drawing a distinction between the *types* of news articles and the *themes* contained within them. There can be any number of different themes within the one article: e.g. an opinion poll article tends to focus both on game themes, like 'who is winning', as well as on the main policy issues.

Figure 2.3. Newspaper Coverage of the Irish 1973 Campaign



Source: Content Analysis of both Newspapers

Figure 2.4. Newspaper Coverage of the Irish 1989 Campaign



Source: Content Analysis of both Newspapers

material fed to the newspapers by politicians:

In the local press, newspaper stories on official party speeches, meetings, and statements were more frequent and more prominent than the columns, editorials, and occasional news stories originating from non-party sources; in the sample of items presented for the respondents' recognition in late October, this ratio was about three to one. All the major items (speeches) on the radio were official. Only in the magazines did privately originated items prevail, and they were few. (Berelson et al., 1954, p. 238)

In their longitudinal study, Robinson and Sheehan (1983, pp. 157-8) find some evidence to suggest that, over time, the American media have taken steps to play a more active role in news gathering and dissemination, relying less on political handouts and more on investigative reporting. This fact, they say, does 'nothing for the theory that the media or the local press have become less serious in the age of television'. They conclude that: 'the hard news seemed much less critical of authority in Campaign Yesteryear . . . than in Campaign '80'.¹⁶

To examine this question in the Irish case, the content analysis examined variations in the *types* of election news stories in the two newspapers for both elections.¹⁷ The findings, presented in Table 2.8, suggest some quite dramatic

¹⁶ Holli Semetko and her colleagues (1991, p. 71) refer to the practice of nineteenth-century US journalism, 'where it was more common to publish transcripts of entire political speeches'. By contrast, today's journalists are more inclined 'to paraphrase, summarize, describe (and often interpret) what the candidates are saying'.

¹⁷ When coding the data, each newspaper article was coded in its entirety as one of ten possible types: (1) *party script* or *press releases*; (2) summaries of the parties' *manifestos*; (3) *interviews* either with candidates, their families, or party staffs; (4) *constituency surveys*; (5) *general news articles*; (6) *editorial* or *comment*; (7) *profiles* either of parties, party leaders, or candidates; (8) *specialist news articles*; (9) articles about, or reporting the results of, *opinion polls*; (10) articles on the *campaign trail* of party leaders or other candidates, their *walkabouts*.

Table 2.8. Newspaper Coverage of Irish Elections, 1973 and 1989: Types of Articles

Types of Articles	Irish Times		Irish Independent	
	1973 (%)	1989 (%)	1973 (%)	1989 (%)
party scripts & press releases	33.55	4.50	9.49	0.00
manifesto summaries	0.59	2.43	0.70	0.00
interviews	0.92	0.54	3.25	5.13
constituency surveys	20.80	4.87	15.60	2.72
general news articles	22.28	42.82	39.08	36.86
editorial & comment	4.20	7.21	14.24	14.71
party or candidate profile	3.35	3.28	1.96	3.06
specialist news articles	7.96	16.60	7.69	13.69
opinion poll articles	0.20	5.51	3.59	10.00
the campaign trail	6.15	12.24	4.41	13.82

Source: Content analysis of both newspapers.

changes in newspaper coverage of Irish elections.

As Table 2.8 reveals, as we move from 1973 to 1989, there is a sharp drop in the reliance by both newspapers on party scripts and party press releases, indicative of a growing tendency by Irish media to engage in more active news gathering, and consistent with Carty's findings for earlier elections. This trend towards more active news gathering is also evident in the increase in specialist news and opinion poll articles. Another big area of change is the decline in constituency profiles, which Carty had referred to as an important innovation in electoral coverage in the 1970s. This trend is indicative of a growing focus on the national campaign, as opposed to the individual constituency struggles. One other trend in Table 2.8, which also reflects this nationalisation of news coverage as well as the growing prominence of game coverage, is the greater number of articles reporting opinion poll findings and the campaign trail (totalling 18 per cent of *Irish Times* coverage in 1989 and almost a quarter of *Irish Independent* coverage).¹⁸

In conclusion, this content analysis supports the contention that media coverage of Irish elections has been changing. Our examination of election news content in the *Irish Times* and *Irish Independent* has revealed a marked rise in media focus on elections as a game as we move from the 1973 election to the 1989 election. Despite this increase, however, game coverage does not appear to represent as high a proportion of total news coverage as in the USA (that is, at least, when we draw comparisons with Patterson's 1976 findings). But this discrepancy is consistent

¹⁸ In a study of newspaper coverage of the 1992 election, Brian Trench (1993) found that: '[o]n 10 of the last 17 days . . . at least one paper had a page 1 lead story reporting the results of an opinion poll'.

with findings in the Italian context by Mazzoleni, and in Britain by Semetko and her colleagues. With regard to the other matters dealt with in the content analysis, the total amount of election coverage did not increase across the two elections, but there was an evident shift in the nature of news gathering, as revealed by changes in article types.

The findings of change in the way the media cover elections are significant for our understanding of transformations in the campaign styles of the politicians and the parties. No longer can the parties rely on a deferential press. They face more combative coverage which requires them to pay much closer attention to their campaign message. Furthermore, the politicians now face a set of media that have a different focus or emphasis. Rather than simply regurgitating the statements of the politicians, now the media are also looking more at the actual style of campaigning by the parties. Rather than simply focusing on what is being said, they are also interested in the manner in which it is being said, on the image of the campaign, on questions relating to its success or otherwise as a campaign.

2.3. EXPLANATIONS FOR MEDIA GAME COVERAGE

Why do the media pay so much attention to the game of electioneering? Two possible answers present themselves: (1) because electioneering *is* a game; (2) because it is inherent in the profession of journalism to report on elections in such a manner. Let us explore these answers first before suggesting some alternatives.

The point could simply be made that media game coverage is nothing more than an accurate reflection of the electoral process as a horse race, or a drama, or whatever metaphor one chooses to adopt (Hershey, 1974; Holt and Turner, 1968;

Key, 1964; Nimmo, 1970). Here one focuses on the inherent gladiatorial nature of all elections, where media coverage can be seen as simply an accurate portrayal of the dramaturgy of elections. In a comprehensive examination of political dramaturgy, James Combs has carefully analysed the ways of political campaigns:

Campaigns contain the possibility of political dramaturgy at its best. American campaigns involve the full range of popular political ballyhoo: high-blown rhetoric, colorful partisan dramatics, slick pseudo-events, and mass involvement in the drama. They have been the arena for tragedy, comedy and vaudeville, tense confrontation and deliberate deception, moments of majestic communion of leader and followers, and moments of insanity and despair. A democratic campaign is a rough-and-tumble drama that culminates in a final climax on election night with victory and loss. (Combs, 1980, p. 140)

Concentrating on the principal dramatic dimensions, Combs describes political campaigns as involving elements of ritual. They are divided into scenes which are used under carefully controlled conditions. The candidates are visible, consistent and, above all, heroic. The audience know that the campaign is an act and therefore it has to be good:

The audience participates by deciding which actor in the pre-election play was the most convincing. The drama of the campaign culminates with the entire audience acting as critic of the performances. (ibid., p. 140)

The working style of journalists has been another fruitful area of research into explanations for game coverage. There is an extensive literature on 'news gathering', a large part concentrating upon the influences on journalists which cause them to treat the process of newsgathering as 'a strategic ritual', where: the making

of news conforms to a standardised set of routines which set writing style, structure of argument and ultimately determine what is news (Bantz et al., 1980; Elliott, 1980; Molotch and Lester, 1974; Phillips, 1976; Tuchman, 1972; 1973).

This strategic ritual is evident during the course of an election campaign. Thomas Patterson points out that, in covering elections, 'the press [*viz.* media] relies on metaphors of confrontation in reporting the issues, using words such as clashes, fights, and attacks to describe the candidates' claims' (Patterson, 1980, p. 32; Barber, 1978; Seymour-Ure, 1974). Donald Matthews has found that in the reporting of American presidential campaigns:

The tone and style . . . tend to be set by reporters who specialize in politics all the time . . . Political reporters tend to be fascinated by the process, the mechanics of politics. They are not particularly interested in, or knowledgeable about, policy issues. (1978, pp. 66-7)

During a campaign, key reporters are assigned to follow the principal candidates. Their brief is to provide 'some interesting angles' on the campaign's progress. This ensures a large amount of coverage of the candidates, often at the expense of issues.¹⁹ For the reporter to have a successful assignment s/he has to maximise the number of reports printed or broadcast; following set routines of coverage; reporting on 'exciting events'; matching the output of competitors. In this context, game coverage flourishes (Arterton, 1978a; 1978b; Crouse, 1972).

Peter Clarke and Susan Evans (1983, pp. 48-58) point out how journalists on the campaign trail - seeking to maintain audience interest - search for human-interest

¹⁹ Needless to say, this focus of image and game over issues may also be preferred, and promoted, by the candidates themselves.

angles, elements of competition, and 'something that would indicate a change or contradiction instead of repetition; all else failing, they can report on the way the candidate looks, dresses, and speaks'.

Both the fact that election campaigns are dramatic, exciting events in their own right, and the fact that journalistic rituals tend to produce an emphasis on the game of electioneering cannot be gainsaid. In themselves, they are significant factors behind the prominence of game themes in media electoral coverage. However, neither is sufficient as an explanation for why there has been an *increase* in the extent of game coverage in recent years. To explain that we have to look at three other factors: the growing prominence of opinion polling; the emergence of television; the new campaign styles of the parties.

2.3.1. Opinion Polling

The growth of opinion polling has produced changes in election journalism and therefore may be considered as one possible factor behind the increase in game coverage. Opinion polls represent for journalists the 'objective' fodder for evaluating a party's standing in the race (Crespi, 1980; Ladd, 1980; Patterson, 1980; Robinson and Sheehan, 1983). James Stovall and Jacqueline Solomon see the use of poll results as:

a natural outgrowth of the 'precision journalism' movement and has become a vital component of the picture journalists draw of a political campaign. This use also fits in with a natural tendency on the part of journalists to cover the 'horse race' aspects of a campaign and to ignore the more substantive issues. (Stovall and Solomon, 1984, p. 615)

The series of opinion polls in a general election are comparable to the fences in a steeplechase, where, as Anthony Broh (1980, p. 515) puts it, 'a horse is judged not by its absolute speed or skill but in comparison to the speed of other horses'. Broh has examined the extent to which reporting public opinion polls in the 1976 American presidential election played a part in the tendency of the media to focus on the electoral game. He discerns at least five patterns of poll usage which suit horse race needs. First, polls indicate who is ahead and they help in the making of predictions. Second, there is a selective reporting of the figures by the media. For instance, Broh found that in many cases the media in his sample (television, magazines, and newspapers) simply reported the difference between the candidates without actually giving the percentages of each. He explains that in the case of the *New York Times* this was a policy decision, made in an effort to reduce game coverage, which may ironically have had the opposite effect since reporters then focused on movements in the percentages differences - 'focusing on changes in the position of the horses on the track' (ibid., p. 518).

Third, journalists frequently use polls to focus on particular aspects of a population's preferences, for example, what voters think of a candidate's style. While this is 'obviously of crucial importance for a meaningful democratic choice, the horse race metaphor runs the risk of emphasizing beauty - some horses are gorgeous animals - and neglecting differences on issues of substance' (ibid., p. 520). Fourth, the horse race is given extra excitement by using the polls to 'analyze' shifts in the popularity of the candidates. Very often, however, no reference is made to sampling error, and so what is described as a 'significant shift' - e.g. one or two percentage points - could just as easily be due to sampling error. Finally, Broh finds

that the polls provide a useful gloss for analysing certain campaign events. For instance, after an important debate voters are polled to assess who made a better job of jumping that particular 'fence'.

Broh's analysis suggests that opinion polling is a significant factor behind media game coverage of elections. But this is not simply a one-directional relationship. The media, as Irving Crespi demonstrates, have played an important role in the process. According to Crespi there is a 'feedback loop' in operation, where: the requirements of media define what is news, and so determine the findings of the polls, which, in turn, affect the political process, which then become news (Crespi, 1980, p. 446).

Overall, however, we should avoid placing too much emphasis on the part played by opinion polls in promoting 'game' coverage of elections by the media. In their analysis of the 1980 American presidential campaign, Stovall and Solomon (1984) were able to point to the prominence of game themes in stories relating to opinion polls. But, as a whole, only about 15 per cent of the events covered by the media consisted of public opinion polls.

As is evident in Table 2.8, opinion polling took a long time finding acceptance by Irish journalists as an accurate measure of public opinion. This can be illustrated by reference to newspaper articles in 1973 which showed the degree to which Irish journalists were very sceptical about the merits of public opinion polling. In one piece, for instance, the journalist wrote of opinion polling as 'a waste of time and, in general, useless for the purpose for which it is used'. This journalist asked rhetorically: 'what is the point of informing the public of something they will know with absolute certainty in a matter of weeks?'. Furthermore, he stated, 'because of

their doubtful validity, poll predictions are of little importance to politicians'. As for the newspapers which publish the polls, he asked whether 'they could not find something better to inform the public about?'.²⁰ In another front page article, which referred to an *Irish Independent*/IMS poll suggesting strong support for the National Coalition, another journalist warned:

opinion polls can be a dangerous basis for making predictions and the findings do not necessarily mean that the National Coalition is going to win . . . [I]t is not wise for politicians or journalists to place too much confidence in such polls.²¹

This *Irish Independent*/IMS poll had asked respondents to indicate levels of party support, but the newspaper decided not to publish this material, focusing instead on the issue positions of the respondents: 'the idea was not to cause an overnight sensation but rather to provide the electorate with balanced, accurate comment.'²²

Two main arguments were made by the journalists when rationalising why they were against the use of poll predictions. First, attention was drawn to the cases of the 1948 US presidential and 1970 UK general election campaigns when poll predictions were wrong. Second, there was a focus on the peculiarities of the Irish electoral system, though no reason was ever given as to why PR-STV made poll

²⁰ B. Kavanagh, 'The Perils of Election Polls', *Irish Times*, February 23, 1973.

²¹ F. Kilfeather, 'Final Rallies Held by Lynch and Cosgrave', *Irish Times*, February 27, 1973.

²² 'Predictions Difficult Under PR', *Irish Independent*, February 27, 1973.

predictions impossible.²³

This media reluctance to make use of, or support, poll predictions was carried over into the 1977 election campaign where the pollsters were the only observers to predict the correct result. In an essay on media coverage of the 1977 campaign, Brian Farrell observed of the media that they 'remain fundamentally suspicious of survey methods, doubtful of their accuracy, and wary of the reluctance of professional pollsters to predict precise results. Finally they fear the pollster's competition' (Farrell, 1978b, p. 128). The new Fine Gael leader elected in 1977, Garret FitzGerald, heralded a mood of change in relation to the use of poll data when he wrote soon after the election:

The failure of most commentators and politicians to detect the change in mood and to evaluate its political consequences, has been aggravated by what might perhaps be described somewhat paradoxically as a naive cynicism of most people with regard to public opinion polls . . . Perhaps the result of this election will encourage all concerned to take these polls more seriously in the future.²⁴

As Table 2.8 reveals, by 1989 opinion poll coverage had reached a proportion which was comparable to the US figures cited earlier, certainly this was the case for the *Irish Independent* which devoted 10 per cent of its coverage to opinion poll articles. The point remains, however, that this proportion, by itself, is too small to account for the growing prominence of game coverage. We need to

²³ 'Predictions Difficult Under PR', *Irish Independent*, February 27, 1973. Presumably the difficulty which STV was supposed to cause had to do with the translation of predicted votes into predicted seats.

²⁴ *Irish Times*, June 21, 1977. Note that, as in 1973, voting intention figures were not published in the 1977 election.

Table 2.9. The Proportion of Irish Homes with Access to Television

Year	Number of Irish Homes (estimates)	Number of Homes with Single Channel or More	TV Homes as a Proportion of Total Homes (%)
1963	667,000	237,000	35.53
1966	690,000	380,000	55.07
1971	705,000	536,000	76.03
1976	786,000	655,000	83.33
1981	900,000	825,000	91.67
1983	927,000	843,000	90.94

Source: McLoone and MacMahon, 1984, Appendix 2.

consider other possible factors.

2.3.2. The Influence of Television

In Ireland, as elsewhere, television has been an agent of great change (see Farrell (ed.), 1984; McLoone and MacMahon (eds), 1984). Table 2.9 shows how quickly it was made accessible to the bulk of the Irish people after its introduction in the early 1960s. What kind of influence could this have had on the way in which the Irish media cover elections?

Traditionally, academics have stressed the different methods television newsmakers employ in covering election campaigns, in comparison to newspapers. Television is seen as flippant and newspapers as overly biased. As Carter and Greenberg (1965, pp. 29-34) have put it: 'the sins of newspapers are in commission . . . while the sins of television are in omission'. Existing evidence that the television medium lacks depth, is used as an argument for explaining game coverage (Harney and Stone, 1969; Henry, 1981; Mendelsohn and Crespi, 1970; Patterson and McClure, 1976).

This supposed dichotomy between television and newspaper electoral coverage is usually explained by reference to the particular requirements of television which are seen as one or all of four types. First, there are the legal and historical requirements. Television stations are either publicly owned or controlled, or at least are subject to some legal directions (Epstein, 1974; Smith, 1979). Newspapers originated in general as private, often party-based, concerns (Boyce et al., 1978; Koss, 1981). Therefore the freedom enjoyed and the methods of coverage employed by the two media tend to differ. In the case of television, it is argued that

the coverage lacks depth and is constrained by rules of balance (Blumler et al., 1978; Gurevitch and Blumler, 1982; Hall et al., 1976; Smith, 1981).

Second, there are the economic requirements. Edward Jay Epstein - focusing on the American case - suggests that the economics of newspaper and television media have little in common. He argues, for instance, that while newspapers can increase their circulation by 'investing money and man-power in the editorial product' (scoops, investigative reporting, features), television stations instead try to increase 'circulation of their news programs . . . by investing in preceding, non-news programs to build what is called an "audience flow", on the theory that news programs inherit rather than attract the bulk of their audience' (Epstein, 1974, pp. 39-40). Therefore audiences are maintained by concentrating resources on preceding programmes and by avoiding 'unnecessary' detail in news programmes - following Edwin Diamond's (1975, p. 22) suggestion about 'Newton's Law of Inertia': 'a dial set at one station will remain at rest there unless acted upon by a strong force'. (A maxim obviously predating remote controls!)

Third, television has structural requirements. Newspapers can vary the number of pages in any one edition to suit their news requirements; television stations are tied down to tight programme schedules (Epstein, 1974). By the nature of the medium, television cannot allow for viewing flexibility. Readers of newspapers can turn pages at will, television viewers - unless they are prepared to use video recorders - have to watch news programmes in their fixed order (Henry, 1981). Television also has very limited production resources. Events must be known about as early as possible in advance and should preferably be suitable for quick and neat packaging into the minimum of broadcasting time (Altheide and Snow, 1979;

Bicker, 1978; Patterson, 1980).

Finally, there are the audience requirements. Many authors argue on the basis that it is the function of television to entertain first and to inform second, so that: television networks have an audience to sustain and therefore to entertain, so they focus on game coverage (e.g. Patterson and McClure, 1976; Robinson, 1980). According to Epstein, news executives and producers make a number of assumptions about their audience. First, the maintenance of viewing interest requires 'easily recognizable and palpable images, it is more likely to be distracted by unfamiliar or confusing images' (Epstein, 1981, p. 128). Second, the audience finds scenes of 'potential conflict' more interesting than scenes of 'placidity'. Third, it is assumed that viewers have a limited attention span which can be prolonged by action and is sharply reduced by such 'static subjects' as 'talking heads' (ibid., p. 129; Altheide and Snow, 1979; Bicker, 1978).

Overall, the particular legal/historical, economic, structural, and audience requirements of television are given as reasons by the authors referred to above for the greater emphasis on game coverage by television, and conversely for the absence of substance in its coverage. Many of these authors (e.g. Henry, 1981; Mendelsohn and Crespi, 1970; Patterson and McClure, 1976) contrast this with the newspapers, which, they argue, provide more substantive coverage. This argument, however, as we have seen, does not find support in many of the examinations which have been made of media electoral coverage (on this point, see also Sigelman and Bullock, 1991, pp. 8-9). Newspapers' game coverage has generally been found on a par with that of television networks (Carey, 1976; Patterson, 1980; Wilson, 1980/1). Indeed, in the case of the 1980 US presidential election:

If we use policy issues as a test, CBS actually did more issue coverage than the wire (. . . in terms of news space about 5 per cent more - 20 per cent vs. 25 per cent). That statistic alone makes it hard to defend the convenient wisdom that network television news is inherently less interested than print in issues and substance. (Robinson and Sheehan, 1983, p. 151)

Another line of argument is that game tendencies in television coverage have, over time, increased newspaper game coverage - setting a new fashion - thus explaining the above-mentioned correspondence in the coverage of both media (Patterson, 1980; Wilson, 1980/1). According to this argument, therefore, it should be possible to identify changes in the style of newspaper coverage before and after the introduction of television. It is precisely this relationship, between the arrival of television and changes in media electoral coverage, which Sigelman and Bullock sought to prove in their longitudinal analysis. However, as we have seen, the fact that they do not find a linear relationship between time and electoral coverage styles leads them to conclude that it would be an exaggeration to attach too much weight to the role of television. Instead, 'we would argue that it is the new technology of campaign polling rather than the advent of television *per se* that accounts for the re-emergence of the horse race theme in campaign coverage' (Sigelman and Bullock, 1991, p. 25). The problem with such a conclusion is that it ignores the fact that, as we have seen, opinion polling accounts only for a fraction of the total increase in game coverage. In contradiction to Sigelman and Bullock, it would appear more accurate to conclude that television has played at least *some* role in the process of change.

2.3.3. New Campaign Styles

At the core of this point is the fact that, as Colin Seymour-Ure has observed (1974, p. 205), '[t]he national campaign is formed by a continuous interaction between the behaviour of party leaders and managers and that of the mass media'. The media may influence the politicians, but equally the politicians may influence the media. Therefore, while it may be the case (as is argued in this thesis) that changes in media coverage affect the way the parties campaign for elections; to an extent the reverse is also true. In other words, the media focus on the electoral game is, at least partially, a reflection of the fact that the game element of electioneering has become more prominent (see, for example, Arterton, 1978a: 1978b; Balbus, 1975; Carey, 1976; Combs, 1980; Kelley, 1976; Leubsdorf, 1976; Mendelsohn and Crespi, 1970; Mickelson, 1976; Patterson, 1980; Patterson and McClure, 1976; Smith, 1976).

In the Irish context, then, it can be argued that at least some of the growth in media game coverage between 1973 and 1989 can be accounted for by the fact that, over that period, the style of electioneering itself changed.

2.4. CONCLUSION

This chapter has focused on the first of the three main sets of actors in the electoral process, the media. The comparative evidence of change in the way the media cover elections has been supported by the findings on the Irish case which were reported here. The principal conclusion to draw from this chapter is that the media have shown an increasing interest in covering elections as a game, with competitors, their strategies and tactics, trends, winners and losers. In short, it is the

competitive element of electioneering which has featured more prominently in the media.

The function of the following few chapters is to examine whether similar trends - towards a greater interest in, and awareness of, competitiveness in electioneering - are evident in the activities of the other two sets of actors, the voters and the politicians. The first of these is examined next.

CHAPTER THREE

THE NEW VOTERS?

The function of this chapter is to review what has been happening to the second main set of actors in the electoral process, the voters. As we shall see, there have been recent developments in voter behaviour which have a certain congruence with the changes in media electoral coverage examined in the previous chapter. Just as the media changes have indicated growing signs of electoral competitiveness, so have the voters' activities within the electoral process also adapted, with voters ever more prepared to make a choice over what is on offer. The days of the staunch partisan loyalist appear numbered as voters have become 'available' for persuasion and, in a growing number of cases, have become volatile.

This chapter starts, in section 3.1, with a review of the comparative evidence on declining voter stability; how to measure it, and how to try and explain its causes. This is followed, in section 3.2, by an examination of the Irish case, where particular attention is paid to previous research by Michael Marsh and Peter Mair.

3.1. VOLATILITY AND THE AVAILABILITY OF VOTERS

Twenty years ago the catchword was 'voter stability' (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; Rose and Urwin, 1970). Lipset and Rokkan's detailed historical analysis of the socio-political development of political cleavages in western Europe led them to the memorable conclusion: 'the party systems of the 1960s reflect, with few but significant exceptions, the cleavage structures of the 1920s' (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967, p. 50). Almost as memorable was the conclusion drawn by Rose and Urwin from their statistical examination of party alignments in western nations since World War Two (1945-1969): 'the electoral strength of most parties in western nations since the war has changed very little from election to election, from decade to decade, or within the lifespan of a generation' (Rose and Urwin, 1970, p. 295).

Such conclusions as these are no longer applicable. 'Voter volatility' is the new catchword, a phenomenon first showing its presence in western Europe in the 1970s (in the USA a decade earlier, see Nie et al., 1976), and with ever increasing prominence since. Exactly how prominent is voter volatility is a matter of some dispute as measurement is difficult. This section reviews the main arguments, explores possible relationships between volatility and other socio-political changes, and considers the consequences of voter volatility for the electoral process as a whole.

3.1.1. How to Measure Volatility

A common method of measuring volatility is to examine aggregate shifts in vote patterns. One prominent study in this tradition is by Maria Maguire (1983) who updates the earlier Rose and Urwin (1970) study to assess the volatility of West

Table 3.1. Electoral Volatility in Western Europe, 1948-1977

Country	1948-59 (%)	1960-69 (%)	1970-77 (%)	Change 60s-70s (%)
Norway	3.4	5.2	17.1	+11.9
Denmark	5.5	8.9	18.7	+ 9.8
Netherlands	6.3	7.9	12.7	+ 4.8
Luxembourg	14.3	11.4	16.0	+ 4.6
United Kingdom	4.4	5.2	7.9	+ 2.7
Switzerland	1.9	3.7	6.4	+ 2.7
Sweden	4.8	4.3	6.6	+ 2.3
Finland	4.4	6.9	9.1	+ 2.1
Austria	4.1	3.9	3.1	- 0.8
Italy	10.3	8.0	6.8	- 1.2
France	21.8	11.9	10.6	- 1.3
Ireland	10.9	6.8	5.0	- 1.8
West Germany	15.2	9.5	4.9	- 4.6
Belgium	7.9	10.3	5.5	- 4.8
<i>Average</i>	8.2	7.4	9.3	

Source: Pedersen, 1983; Dalton et al., 1984

European political parties. Maguire measures volatility of support for individual parties by calculating the change in the percentage vote obtained by a party between each pair of elections during the period under examination (1960-1979), and then finding the mean change which gives average volatility. Of the 79 parties under consideration, 45 per cent of them have an average volatility of more than 3 per cent, leading Maguire to conclude that 'the period since 1960 has seen a significant departure from previous patterns of electoral persistence' (Maguire, 1983, p. 83).¹

Mogens Pedersen (1983) also gives attention to aggregate volatility, though here the focus is on trends among party systems. Pedersen's index of aggregate electoral volatility is calculated by summing party vote changes in a given party system from one election to the next (ignoring the plus and minus signs) and dividing the total by two.² The higher the index (read as percentages), the greater the aggregate volatility in a party system.

On the face of it, Pedersen's findings are ambivalent. He finds evidence of increasing volatility in seven of the thirteen European countries in his sample; in the other six cases, volatility is apparently decreasing. His findings are reproduced in Table 3.1, which also includes the Luxembourg case - another example of rising volatility.

The general trend is summarised at the bottom of Table 3.1. This shows a

¹ Maguire also finds a tendency for the older, more established (and primarily social-democratic) parties to be most inclined to suffer a decline in their votes. A similar trend is identified by Rose and Mackie who conclude, after a close examination of the evidence which they have gathered: 'the Lipset-Rokkan theory of older parties being more likely to persist is rejected' (Rose and Mackie, 1988, p. 550).

² It is worth noting that this 'Pedersen index' was in fact first used by Douglas Rae (1967).

Table 3.2. Aggregate Electoral Volatility in Western Europe, 1960-1983

1960-64 (%)	1965-69 (%)	1970-74 (%)	1975-79 (%)	(1980-83) (%)
6.5	7.4	8.8	8.3	(9.3)

Note: The percentages were calculated using the Pedersen Index. The sample includes all West European countries except Luxembourg, Spain, Greece and Portugal.

Source: Mair, 1984

high degree of average volatility in the 1950s associated with immediate post-war electoral instability, particularly in West Germany, Italy, and the French Fourth Republic. By the 1960s the average volatility had been reduced to a level of 7.4 per cent. In the 1970s volatility has been increasing again, showing, at 9.3 per cent, greater instability than in the post-war period.³ This recently increasing trend is more apparent in Table 3.2, which shows average electoral volatility in most West European countries in five year periods from 1960 to 1983. Apart from a brief hiccup in 1975-1979, the trend has been steadily incremental.

As the last column in Table 3.1 shows, the average volatility trends disguise the fact that in six cases (Austria, Italy, France, Ireland, West Germany, Belgium) volatility is apparently declining from the 1960s to the 1970s. Two points are worth mentioning about this. First, in some instances, the apparent decline may have particular system-level causes. For instance, the Belgian trend might well be related to the increased fractionalisation of the party system which dates from the latter half of the 1960s (Dewachter, 1987), causing volatility to be higher then. In France, the shock to the political system, resulting from the creation of a new Republic in 1958, undoubtedly caused problems for French parties at a different stage (the 1960s) than most other European countries (the 1970s) (Wilson, 1988).

Second, it is possible that aggregate volatility has been on the increase in some of these countries in more recent years. The trends shown in Table 3.2 suggest this. We explore this point for the Irish case later. In summary, the evidence provided by the Pedersen Index shows that - with a few exceptions - aggregate

³ Dalton et al. (1984) have extended Pedersen's analysis, including the cases of the USA (1960s-70s change, +0.3 per cent), Japan (-1.0 per cent), and Canada (-6.7 per cent).

electoral volatility is on the increase, leading Dalton and his colleagues to write of 'the general decomposition of contemporary party systems' (1984, p. 11).

Both the Pedersen and the Maguire approaches to measuring aggregate electoral volatility share one significant weakness (recognised by both authors), a tendency to underestimate the true figure of underlying, individual volatility. The more unpatterned is the individual volatility (i.e. where the switching of votes between parties cancel each other out), the lower is the score for aggregate volatility. The problem with individual volatility is that it takes more research effort and money to measure (voter recall data in surveys, or preferably panel surveys), and so it is not always readily available. In an essay on West European trends, David Denver (1985, pp. 404-5) has gathered together such individual-level data as is available. He shows conclusively that there is a clear, positive association between the two measures, but that the underlying individual volatility is significantly higher than aggregate measures like the Pedersen Index would suggest.⁴ In short, if we accept Denver's findings, it can be argued that the true level of volatility in western Europe is high, but unpatterned.⁵

⁴ This analysis has recently been extended by Bartolini and Mair, who also examine various probability models. They conclude (1990, p. 34): 'it is clear that in neither the available empirical transition matrices, nor in the two simulations, has a negative association or a lack of association between individual and aggregate volatility been detected. All cases result in a positive association, and in no case has this been less than 0.5. Such a degree of concurrence confirms the basic validity - given a sufficient number of cases - of considering aggregate volatility as one approximate indicator of individual volatility'.

⁵ See also Pedersen (1984) on this point. He writes: 'An increase in individual electoral volatility will probably in most cases result in an increase in the aggregate electoral volatility. . . [I]t is well known that no one-to-one correspondence exists between the two concepts of volatility. But a positive statistical association between them is, however, the most plausible hypothesis that can be stated'.

Another approach to assessing electoral volatility is to examine party identification trends as indicators of what *potential* (or otherwise) there is for a rise in voter volatility. Party identification has been declining for some considerable time in the USA (Reiter, 1989). The European situation has been examined in a comparative context in several recent works. The authors in the Crewe and Denver (1985) volume have examined the trends in thirteen cases, the majority of these European. The findings are summarised in the final chapter by Denver. These show declining party identification in the USA, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, Britain and Scotland, and some weakening in Austria and Italy. In another four cases (Canada, Ireland, West Germany and Australia) there is no evidence of significant change, and in the case of France there has been 'a move towards a stronger partisan alignment rather than dealignment' (Denver, 1985, p. 403).⁶

To some extent these mixed findings on party identification in the Crewe and Denver study probably reflect the fact that surveys vary from one country to the next and so drawing comparative conclusions is problematic. Peter Mair (1984) has used Eurobarometer data to examine party identification trends in European Community countries towards the end of the 1970s (see also Inglehart and Klingemann, 1976). The principal advantage of the Eurobarometer data is that the same question was asked in each country so the results are comparable.⁷ Mair has constructed an index which summarises the trends from 1978 to 1981. These are reproduced in Table 3.3.

⁶ These French trends probably reflect the consolidation by French parties of voter support in the new Fifth Republic (Wilson, 1988).

⁷ On this point, however, see Katz's 'warning note' (1985) on the variations in the form of questioning across language and through time.

Table 3.3. Mair's Index of Party Identification, 1978-1981

Country	1978 (%)	1979 (%)	1980 (%)	1981 (%)	Change 1978-81 (%)
Netherlands	48.6	41.2	39.7	38.2	-10.4
Luxembourg	34.6	37.2	32.5	24.5	-10.1
Belgium	36.0	30.9	25.4	26.0	-10.0
Ireland	38.2	34.6	33.6	28.2	-10.0
Britain	39.9	36.7	37.1	30.1	- 9.8
France	36.2	33.8	27.5	27.5	- 8.7
Denmark	41.0	43.9	41.1	36.5	- 4.5
West Germany	36.0	34.8	38.1	33.1	- 2.9
Italy	47.9	49.2	41.6	46.0	- 1.9
<i>Average</i>	<i>39.8</i>	<i>38.0</i>	<i>35.2</i>	<i>32.2</i>	<i>- 7.6</i>

Note: This index is calculated by multiplying the percentage of those 'very close' to a party by three, those 'fairly close' by two, those 'merely sympathising' by one, those with 'no ties' by zero, summing the results and dividing by three. The results can therefore be read as percentages.

Source: Mair, 1984

The general trend is manifest: party identification has been declining in all cases, and generally quite consistently (an average decline for the period of 7.6 per cent). Mair concludes that 'these data, however inadequate they may be, do show a declining sense of party identification in almost all the European Community countries. . . [T]he "hold" of parties in Western Europe is indeed weakening' (1984, p. 179). This analysis of Eurobarometer trends has recently been updated by Hermann Schmitt who finds (1989, p. 125):

In an overall perspective, the proportion of EC citizens more or less attached to a particular party has been decreasing over the past decade by about ten per cent, from below 70 per cent in the mid-1970s to below 60 per cent in the late 1980s. Accordingly, those not aligned with any party have become more numerous, and today constitute about 40 per cent of the EC electorate.

The two measures of volatility and potential volatility which we have looked at indicate a common trend: i.e. the electorate of today is more 'available' than twenty years ago. Voters are less loyal to parties than was the case when Lipset and Rokkan were writing their classic 'Introduction'. We need to give some consideration to possible explanations for this change.

3.1.2. What Causes Volatility?

Why has voter loyalty been in decline? What are the factors behind the growing availability and volatility of voters? The literature on electoral change tends to divide into two schools, neatly summarised by Dalton and his colleagues (1984, p. 454) as a distinction between a 'social-cleavage' model and a 'functional' model. A principal exponent of the former model is Ronald Inglehart who has devoted a

number of years to researching into social and value change in western democracies. On the basis of the evidence he has gathered on 'post-materialism', he is quite certain in his conclusion that 'during the past few decades there has been a secular decline in social class voting, not only in the United States but throughout the Western world' (Inglehart, 1984, p. 29).⁸ According to this argument, social and value changes are behind the decline in voter loyalty. This is because the voters are more interested in, and aware of, issues and campaign messages; they are more inclined to make up their minds later about which party to support in a given election; they are less inclined to always support the same party from one election to the next.

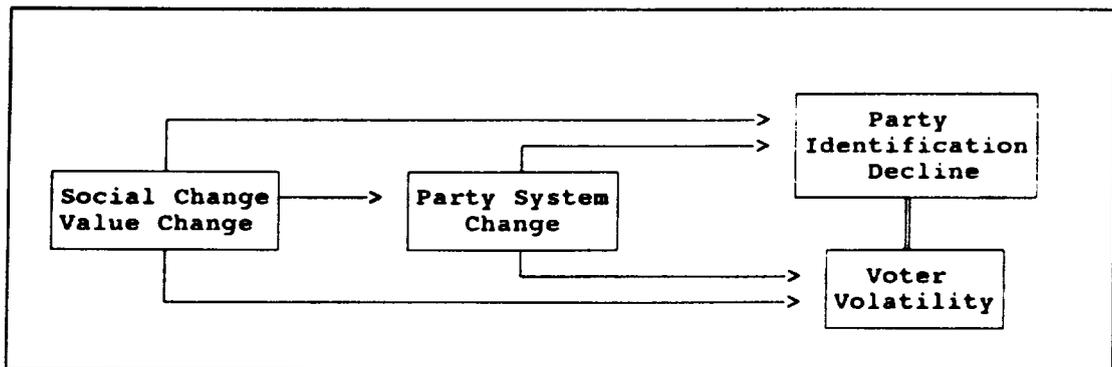
The 'functional' model of electoral change is perhaps most associated with Sartori, who, for a long time, has been complaining of the social determinism in the other approach; of the confusion of what should be 'political sociology' with a 'sociology of politics'. He develops his argument with particular attention to the Lipset-Rokkan cleavage model:

To say that a party system is a response to a given socio-economic environment is to present half of the picture as if it were all. The complete picture requires, instead, a joint effort to assess to what extent parties are dependent variables reflecting social stratification and cleavages and, *vice versa*, to what extent these cleavages reflect the channelling imprint of a structured party system. (Sartori, 1990, p. 178, emphasis added)

This functional model also applies in the case of looking at electoral change, where it is possible to see a role for party system change as an intervening variable

⁸ For an equally certain but polar opposite conclusion regarding trends in class voting in western Europe, see Bartolini and Mair (1990).

Figure 3.1. Causes of Electoral Change



in the process of declining voter loyalty (see Figure 3.1). There are two possible scenarios here. First, party system change can come in the form of the emergence of new parties into the system. There are plenty of examples of where the entry of new parties has caused shifts in vote patterns. Perhaps the most dramatic example of this was the famous Danish 'electoral earthquake' of 1973 (Pedersen, 1987).⁹ The basic idea here is that the arrival of a new party provides a forum for voters, discontented with the established parties, to register their discontent by voting for it. The new party provides the catalyst for change.

A second possible scenario - and one which fits more neatly with this thesis - gives greater attention to the role played by the existing parties in the system. As we shall see later, parties have been adapting their organisations and campaign styles. This adaptation has been caused by a range of factors, such as social change, the rise of new parties, the copying of trends in other parties, and so on. The point is that, by adapting, the parties in turn have an effect on the overall stability of the party system itself: either by attracting new voters, or by losing voters disgruntled at the change, or simply by confusing voters (Bowler, 1990).

In summary, there has been a general decline in the level of voter loyalty to parties as shown both by a downward trend in party identification and by an upward trend in the indicators of voter volatility. In practice, what this means is that voters are more open to campaign stimuli, making up their minds at a later stage in the

⁹ Other examples include the 'mould-breaking' elections of 1983 in the UK and 1987 in Ireland, and, more generally, the emergence of Green parties. The relationship between changes in the number of parties and trends in electoral volatility has been explored more fully by Mogens Pedersen (1983).

election campaign, being more inclined to consider vote switching. In this context, one can talk of a change in the nature of electoral competition. No longer can the parties rely to the same extent on the loyalty of their voters; the parties have to work harder to keep their supporters and attract new voters. In later chapters, we will examine the consequences of this change in voter trends for the parties. We need to first give some further consideration to the development of voter volatility in Ireland.

3.2. ARE IRISH VOTERS MORE VOLATILE?

At a superficial level, the Irish voter appears to have become more volatile since the 1970s. To be sure, no incumbent government has been returned to power in the eight elections held between 1973 and 1992.¹⁰ This is in stark contrast to the mere four changes of government which occurred between 1932 and 1969.

However, we cannot read too much into these statistics. When a more in-depth examination is made of voting trends the change between the two periods appears, *prima facie*, far less significant. The first attempt to assess voter volatility was made by Richard Sinnott (1978) in his examination of the 1977 election. He makes the point that the remarkably high Fianna Fáil vote in 1977 was caused by more than a well-organised campaign. What exactly caused the high vote is difficult to establish categorically, and this is not helped by a serious deficiency in available data.

Ultimately, the reason for the Fianna Fáil vote gains appears to have boiled down to its ability to achieve maximum support on those issues considered most important by

¹⁰ I am classifying the 1989 Fianna Fáil-PD coalition and the 1992 Fianna Fáil-Labour coalition as 'new' governments.

voters: unemployment, inflation and taxation. The poll evidence reveals that 'not only did the voters say economic management was the issue, they followed through and indicated an intention to vote in accordance with this priority' (Sinnott, 1978, p. 59).

Subsequently, it was on the issue of economic management that the Fianna Fáil administration of 1977-1981 would be judged. In an examination of trends after 1977, Sinnott (1987) reveals that, by 1979, the judgement of the voters had gone against the Fianna Fáil government and the party's support started to drop significantly. This, he argues, indicates that the 1977 Fianna Fáil vote 'had been a hiccup rather than a watershed'. He finds little evidence of growing voter volatility in the three subsequent elections of 1981, February 1982 and November 1982: volatility, he writes, is 'more apparent than real' (Sinnott, 1987, p. 63).

Michael Marsh (1985) has carried out a detailed examination of the question of voter volatility in Ireland. While, prophetically enough, not ruling out the potential for significant electoral change in the near future, Marsh's assessment of the situation, writing almost a decade ago, was of an electoral pattern of 'considerable stability' (1985, p. 183). Since this conclusion appears to contradict the argument being presented in this thesis - namely, that there has been a decline in voter loyalty from about the mid-1970s onwards, coinciding with changes in media coverage and party activities - it is necessary to examine Marsh's argument in some detail.

3.2.1. Marsh's Essay on Irish Volatility

Marsh's analysis can be broken down into four main parts. First, he calculates Pedersen's volatility index for Irish elections 1948-1982 which, he writes, suggests that volatility is declining:

At five of the six elections between 1948 and 1965 net volatility was higher than at any of the six subsequent elections and although the index records increasing volatility at the 1973, 1977 and 1981 elections there has been very little change evident in the two elections of 1982. Whether these last two elections broke the trend because they fell so close together remains to be seen. (Marsh, 1985, p. 179)

A close examination of the opinion polls after 1974 reveals 'pronounced' vote fluctuations in the mid-1970s which, Marsh argues, appears to have dissipated by the late 1970s. It is worthwhile quoting his argument at length. He writes:

Since late 1979 neither Fianna Fáil nor Fine Gael-Labour combined have opened up a gap of more than 10 per cent over its rival, a position contrasting with the 20-30 per cent Fianna Fáil lead in 1976-78. There may be many changes cancelling one another out. Pedersen's index, calculated for sets of polls over time, shows volatility rising since 1980, indicating perhaps a general restlessness but with no party or group of parties seeming as attractive as Fianna Fáil made themselves in the mid-1970s. (ibid., p. 179)

While Marsh admits that some argument can be made that Irish voters are volatile, the fact that there has been no 'massive shifts between major parties, or the rapid growth of new parties' (up to 1983) means that 'the case for stability is more easily made'.

What about Marsh's finding of a drop in the Pedersen index in the early 1980s? Peter Mair (1987a, pp. 78-9) points out that it is precisely because of the

Table 3.4. Aggregate Volatility in Ireland, 1948-1992: The Pedersen Index

Year	(%)
1948	13.3
1951	14.1
1954	7.1
1957	11.1
1961	8.9
1965	9.8
1969	2.7
1973	3.3
1977	6.7
1981	8.5
1982 Feb.	4.3
1982 Nov.	3.4
1987	16.1
1989	7.5
1992	12.1

Sources: Gallagher, 1987; 1990; Marsh, 1985; *Irish Times*, 28 November 1992

closeness of the elections in the early 1980s that one would anticipate a greater consistency in voting. By 1987, volatility levels were up again (see Table 3.4).¹¹

As Table 3.4 shows, there has been quite a consistent increase in aggregate volatility since the early 1970s, with the brief exception of the crowded electoral period of the early 1980s. The drop in 1989 can at least be partially explained - like for those in 1982 - as resulting from the short time between the two elections.¹² Furthermore, the 1987 result was swelled by the presence of the PDs as a new party. In his assessment of the 1987 results, Michael Gallagher writes of:

the exceptional nature of the 1987 contest: at least one in every six voters altered their voting behaviour and the net volatility produced was about five times higher than in either of the 1982 elections. In fact, it is necessary to go back to 1943 (when the net volatility figure was 20.3 per cent) to find the last election to show so much change. (Gallagher, 1987, p. 64)

¹¹ Individual volatility also increased in 1987, and even more dramatically. In total some 50 per cent or more of voters switched their votes in 1987 (Bowler and Farrell, 1990; Laver et al., 1987, pp. 109-11). Mair has also examined regional trends in 1987 which indicate that as one moves east, towards more urban areas, volatility increases: 'To the extent that a more volatile and less "party attached" electorate tends to emerge in urban and eastern areas, then the growing demographic bias in favour of these areas would seem to suggest a potential increase in the available electorate as a proportion of the total voting public' (Mair, 1987, p. 80; Gallagher, 1987, pp. 65-6).

¹² The issue of Irish voter volatility has been assessed more recently by Laver and Marsh (1992, pp. 104-5) who note: 'Some argue that the electorate is becoming more volatile and less predictable in its collective decision. Certainly the fluctuations in the pattern of party support were greater in the 1987 and 1989 elections than they had been since the 1940s. Moreover, new parties have emerged in Ireland - something that would be impossible if inherited and unchanging party loyalties determined the votes of everyone in the land'. Another recent, and detailed, assessment of Irish voter volatility by Sinnott (forthcoming) is - with some qualification - generally supportive 'of the thesis that volatility is not a late arrival on the Irish electoral scene but can be traced back some twenty years or more'.

Second, Marsh assesses the evidence of social change in Ireland since 1948, particularly the growing urbanisation of the society and greater educational opportunities. Such changes could provoke partisan dealignment. Marsh first assesses whether these social changes have caused the rise of 'class politics' in Ireland - a vexed issue which has already been much discussed (Carty, 1981; Whyte, 1974; most recently Mair, 1992; see also chapter 1). Not surprisingly, Marsh finds little evidence of growing class politics. There are two problems with his argument here. First, it is arguable that the lack of evidence of class voting may have at least something to do with the shortcomings of the available data: that a more in-depth survey might reveal somewhat different trends (Laver, 1987; Laver et al., 1987). The second and more fundamental problem with Marsh's argument is his assumption that partisan dealignment should take the form of greater class voting. This need not be the case.

Still in the area of social change, Marsh next examines whether variable voting tendencies can be identified in different sectors, i.e. whether individual volatility is rising. The poll evidence indicates that volatility is greatest in the Dublin region, particularly since 1965. In terms of occupational groupings, manual workers are the most volatile. Young and middle-aged voters tend to be more volatile than those aged fifty-five years or older. These tendencies, however, are not consistent: 'variations in recent election results cannot be seen simply in terms of fluctuations in the preference of one particular social group' (Marsh, 1985, p. 187). As was discussed in section 3.1, the fact that patterns of individual volatility may be cancelling each other out, does not preclude the fact that there is volatility. Voters are switching but, because this switching is not all in the same direction, the system

does not 'feel' it. However, the switching is occurring nonetheless, and the parties are more vulnerable.

Third, Marsh considers whether the rise to prominence of certain issues - what he refers to as 'ideological change' - may have affected voting tendencies. As Irish governments - like their counterparts elsewhere - have increasingly placed stress on economic management, they have become increasingly accountable for it. Economic issues have become more and more prominent in Irish elections (Mair, 1987a). So too have 'new' issues (e.g. such 'moral' issues as contraception, abortion and divorce) which, since the 1970s, have been seen to influence younger and more urban voters particularly. But Marsh finds the effects of these issues on voting behaviour to be negligible; that voters in Ireland were not showing much evidence of becoming more issue-oriented. This point was confirmed for the 1987 election by Laver et al. (1987). However, the apparent lack of evidence of issue-voting in 1987 was not what it seemed. When voters were divided up between 'switchers' and 'standpatters' (i.e. between those who switched parties and those who did not), issue effects became more important among the former grouping (Bowler and Farrell, 1990). In the most recent assessment of issue voting by Laver and Marsh (1992, p. 104), it is quite clear that Irish voters are paying more attention to issues: '[The] findings strongly suggest that many (though not necessarily most) Irish voters make explicit choices based on their views about economic policy and performance when they vote, rather than simply affirming a traditional partisan loyalty'.

Fourth, Marsh assesses whether there is evidence of a decline in party identification which may not yet have led to electoral change. Again a lack of adequate data prevents comprehensive analysis. Marsh makes use of Irish Marketing

Surveys (IMS) polls taken in 1976, 1981 and 1982. He finds that levels of 'no' identification are much higher than those found in Britain in the mid-1960s, but 'they seem lower than those of several other European countries' (Marsh, 1985, p. 194). Not only are Irish voters not dealigned, but alignment actually appears to be on the increase.¹³

There is alternative evidence which contradicts this conclusion. In a survey, using Eurobarometer data, of nine European Community countries in the early 1970s, Ireland recorded the lowest level of party identification (Inglehart and Klingemann, 1976). A subsequent examination by Peter Mair, also using Eurobarometer data, showed that of the nine European Community countries in the survey only France, Belgium and Luxembourg had lower levels of party identification than Ireland (Mair, 1984).¹⁴ The most recent examination of Eurobarometer data by Hermann Schmitt places Ireland top of the list on voter dealignment. As Schmitt puts it (1989, p. 134): 'Eurobarometer data suggest that if there is dealignment somewhere in the European Community, it is to be found in

¹³ It could be argued that at least some of this increased alignment is caused by the fact that, in the early 1980s, Fine Gael succeeded in attracting a more stable set of supporters than before. In the past, Fine Gael tended to have its support underestimated in the polls as a lot of the party's supporters had yet to declare themselves (Sinnott, 1978, pp. 44-5). In the early 1980s, largely as a result of the party's organisational improvements, this tendency was much reduced (Sinnott, 1987, pp. 71-2). This, however, was a temporary achievement. By the 1987 election things had reverted to the earlier pattern (Laver et al., 1987, pp. 102-3).

¹⁴ Furthermore, Mair points out that Marsh's IMS data do not take into account the intensity of identification and that there are inconsistencies in the measures used by Marsh because he is reliant on different surveys. These are inconsistencies which do not arise when using Eurobarometer data (Mair, 1987, p. 78). Between 1978 and 1985, the Eurobarometer surveys included standard questions for measuring party identification. In this instance, the trend in Ireland, as Mair shows, is strikingly downward.

Ireland'.¹⁵

Overall, then, pace Marsh, there are a number of reasons for arguing that Irish voters are volatile. Aggregate volatility, as measured by the Pedersen Index, has shown an upward tendency. Moreover, what evidence there is suggests that individual level volatility is higher still, but much of it has managed to cancel itself out. Issue politics has become more prominent in recent elections. Finally, the evidence from three separate studies using Eurobarometer data reveals that Irish party attachment is in decline. In short, one can conclude from all this evidence that the 'hold' of Irish parties over their voters has been weakening, that Irish voters are volatile.

The final questions to be considered in this section are: what is behind the rise in Irish volatility, and at what point did it become significant to electoral politics.

3.2.2. Social Change, Party Change and Irish Voter Volatility

In section 3.1 (and in Figure 3.1), it was suggested that declining voter loyalty has both social and party political antecedents; that the process of social change in combination with party and party system change can affect the 'hold' of parties over their voters. Such an argument can be applied to the Irish experience.

From when exactly to date the start of the process of social change in Ireland may be debateable, but one significant landmark, it is generally accepted, is the start

¹⁵ Schmitt's study includes all Eurobarometers up to 1987. The most recent Eurobarometer surveys of voter attachment (in November 1988 and April 1989) reveal that voter dealignment in Ireland has continued to grow (Farrell, 1992b, Table VII.A.4.i.b).

of national planning at the end of the 1950s (Bew and Patterson, 1982; Bew et al., 1989; Breen et al., 1990). Planning brought with it the industrialisation of society; an accelerated move from the land as people moved into the industrial and service sectors; increased expenditure on education. Concomitantly - and in line with international developments - there was a shift away from protectionism as the country gradually opened up to free trade. This was to culminate in Ireland's accession to European Community membership in 1973 and the economic benefits which were reaped, particularly during the seventies.

As Rottman and O'Connell have pointed out (1982, p. 76), '[t]he demographic consequences of Irish economic expansion were soon evident'. For the first time since the Famine, the population entered into a period of sustained net growth, reflecting declining emigration rates and an acceleration in the rate of natural increase. By the mid-1970s the country was 'suffering' from net immigration on such a scale as to cancel out any apparent benefits from a governmental strategy of job creation. It was only with the debt crisis - the resultant of considerable government over-spending from 1977 onwards - and economic problems of the 1980s that the country was to start entering into another phase of net population decline, with an estimated net emigration in 1981-86 of 75,000 persons, most of them the better educated (Breen et al., 1990, pp. 68-9).

The point is, however, that the overall period of the early-1960s up until the present is characterised as one of dramatic demographic change, evident in two main developments. First, there has been a net growth in population, with, in particular, a major increase in the younger population (causing Ireland to have the highest dependency ratio in Europe), made all the more significant by the 1972 decision to

lower the minimum voting age.¹⁶ Second, there has been a shift in the occupational structure both in terms of a move from agriculture to industry and the tertiary sector, as well as in terms of distinct shifts within the industrial and tertiary sectors (Breen et al., 1990). This has had consequences for the class structure in Ireland.

The argument here is that the effect of both these sets of changes has been seen in the expression of partisan loyalties and the voting habits of the Irish voter. As we have seen the statistical evidence to support this point is limited, not least by the fact that measures of party identification date only from the mid-1970s. Nonetheless, there is a view - expressed by Peter Mair and R. K. Carty in particular - that the process of declining voter loyalty first becomes significant in the first part of the 1970s. It is how the parties react to this which is crucial to a full understanding of the origins of voter volatility in recent Irish elections.

In his examination of Irish parties since the early 1970s, Carty finds evidence of a movement from the situation where Fianna Fáil predominated over the party system to one where, since 1973, it has faced real competition. The cause of the shift, Carty argues, is elite-based: 'This new party system developed because a small group of leading politicians in Fine Gael and Labour wished it to' (Carty, 1988, p. 239). In other words, by agreeing to coalesce in 1973, Fine Gael and Labour helped to end the fractionalisation of opposition to Fianna Fáil and so end 16 years of Fianna Fáil government.

Mair's argument is along the same lines - and he ties in more explicitly the suggestion that, by 1973, voters had become more 'available'. He writes that in the

¹⁶ Sinnott's analysis (1978, pp. 64-5) of the youth vote in 1977 - the first election held after the franchise extension - suggested, at the time, a potential for Labour to gain from the demographic trend.

1970s things changed:

as the coalition alternative emerged with some electoral force, and as affective loyalties declined and the core Fianna Fáil vote proved inadequate to ensure victory. From that point onwards Fianna Fáil felt obliged to compete (Mair, 1987a, p. 89).

Overall, then, one can argue that, by the early-to-mid-1970s, Irish voters had become more 'available', as shown by the steady decline in party identification. In other words, the potential was there for electoral change. Fianna Fáil, having lost the 1973 election, was the first party to make use of this. In the 1977 election it succeeded in attracting many of the available voters. Fine Gael, in turn, made its own adaptations after 1977, so that, by 1981, the party could make strong appeals to available voters. By these actions the main parties had adapted to accommodate change.

3.3. CONCLUSION

Voter loyalty has declined in the years since Lipset and Rokkan wrote their famous essay. Exactly by how much is impossible to gauge, but the fact of its decline cannot be gainsaid. It is evident right across western Europe; it manifests itself in Ireland from the early-to-mid 1970s onwards.

At just around the time when voter volatility increased media coverage of Irish elections was changing, as examined in the previous chapter. (As we shall see, these developments also coincide with party campaign and organisational changes.) It is the contention of this thesis, however, that this is more than mere coincidence. The changes are of a similar nature and occur at around the same time. This is

because they feed off each other. Between them, they reveal an electoral process which has been becoming more competitive. The media provide a more intense and thorough coverage of the parties. Winning the votes of a more volatile electorate requires a more intense and informative campaign from the parties. As we see in the following chapters, the parties have been making adaptations to the way in which they operate in the electoral process which reflect this increased competitiveness.

CHAPTER FOUR

**CONTEMPORARY ELECTION CAMPAIGNING IN A COMPARATIVE
PERSPECTIVE**

The previous two chapters have revealed some striking changes in the electoral process: voters are more inclined to be volatile; the media in elections have been switching focus as their coverage has become more intense. In short, the evidence is consistent with the first main argument of this thesis: the electoral environment in which political parties operate has been changing. This is shown by the comparative trends; the Irish trends suggest that this started to be of significance during the course of the 1970s.

The second main argument of this thesis is that the third set of actors in the electoral process, the political parties, have also been changing, as revealed both by developments in election campaign strategies and tactics and by party organisational adaptation. We start here with the parties' campaigns. It will be shown in the next three chapters that, in Ireland, this trend dates from the 1977 and 1981 general elections. This chapter assesses the comparative evidence.

The academic literature on party election campaigning is rather disparate. Unlike voting or media studies which, as we have seen, have well developed research questions and methodological techniques, campaign studies are still in their relative infancy. Often they are ethnocentric: apart from the tendency to draw comparisons with the USA, rarely do they even mention campaigning in other countries. Nor do campaign studies have methodological approaches in common: each author has his or her own particular way of analysing a campaign. In many cases academics, rather like their journalistic contemporaries, tend to provide little more than a description of the campaign; no great theoretical structure is brought to bear, in part because none seems to be available. Included here are general documentary accounts best epitomised by the classic Nuffield series (most recently Butler and Kavanagh, 1992; also Crewe and Harrop (eds), 1986; 1989; Statera, 1986; Worcester and Harrop (eds), 1982). There are some more general approaches to the study of campaigns. Among them perhaps the best known are by Nimmo (1970) and Agranoff (1976) and, more recently, the various efforts to apply rational and marketing frameworks (Downs, 1957; Farrell and Wortmann, 1987; Kotler, 1975; Lindon, 1976; Mannelli and Cheli, 1986; Mauser, 1983; O'Shaughnessy, 1990; Rose, 1967; Wangen, 1983). It is possible to draw from these various sources the material for assessing campaigning, and, in particular, those aspects of campaign change which can be seen to have had an effect on party organisations.

There would appear to be three major areas in which the contemporary campaign style of parties have affected the operation and structure of parties more generally: (1) the closer attention to campaign preparations and planning; (2) the greater use of consultants and agencies and the techniques of modern

communication; (3) the use of social scientific market research for 'objective' feedback. Each of these developments in the Irish context will be dealt with in later chapters. But first there is a need to elaborate a bit more on their significance with reference to comparative examples. This chapter examines each in turn.

4.1. PREPARATION AND PLANNING

Parties which make minimal and/or last minute preparations for a campaign are destined not to fight it all that effectively. An example of this was the British Labour party in 1983 which did not start to prepare its campaign until a few weeks before the election was announced. As we shall see, another good example was Fine Gael in 1977. For the most part, campaign preparations tend to begin a year or two in advance of the election. There are, of course, plenty of examples of where a party is caught unawares by a snap election (e.g. in the Netherlands in 1989, or Germany in 1990, or Denmark on a regular occurrence). In such cases a well developed campaign organisation can usually compensate in catering for quick preparations. In other words, providing the party already has a professional, experienced campaign organisation in operation, it can cater for sudden, snap elections without the need for detailed planning. The better organised the party, the easier it is to mount a campaign at minimal notice.

Over time, the degree of complexity in organisational structure has changed in response to the need to mount more complex campaigns: it can also be seen to differ across parties. In larger parties there is usually a coherent organisational division into such departments as press and communications, research, strategy and campaign, and possibly also marketing. In smaller parties the organisation may not

be so hierarchically organised; often the work is divided up between different committees (communications, strategy, campaign) made up of fulltime employees, volunteers and occasional external specialists (Bowler and Farrell, 1992c). Today most parties have these various campaigning departments or committees in permanent operation; however, once the election is under way the tendency, for the most part, is for the campaign to be controlled by smaller ad hoc committees, which can be as small as a handful of key strategists. The general trend, then, is for real decision making to graduate towards a smaller group of people at the centre of the party as the campaign proceeds.

How the organisation operates and who is in charge are important questions in and of themselves. In the USA the impression is often given, not least by political consultants, that the politicians have little influence over the design, coordination and control of a campaign. Much like movie directors 'discover' starlets there are now stories of consultants deciding on who they think will be worthwhile marketing as a candidate (Jimmy Carter's former consultant, Pat Cadell, is notorious in this respect, see Luntz, 1988; more generally see Sabato, 1981, pp. 19, 24). In the USA a 'well-managed' campaign is generally seen as one where the candidate leaves decision-making to his/her consultant. As one consultant has put it: 'On a scale of one to one hundred, zero is the level a candidate should be involved in setting his own strategy. Candidates should know very little about the day-to-day affairs of the campaign' (quoted in Luntz, 1988, p. 57; see also Napolitan, 1972, pp. 16-17). In European and Australasian campaigns, for the most part, the tendency appears to be that the politicians remain firmly in control of the campaign organisation (Bowler and Farrell, 1992c). However, there may be exceptions. It is hard to believe that

strategists as senior as Joe Napolitan (who worked on Giscard's 1974 presidential campaign (Chagall, 1981, p. 374; Napolitan, 1972, p. 256; Sabato, 1981, p. 58)) or Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann (who has worked on Kohl's campaigns) do not have significant powers of independent decision-making. It is clear that in the French 1988 presidential campaign, François Mitterand's media advisor, Jacques Ségéala, played a dominant role (Lawson and Ysmal, 1992), as did Peter Hiort for the Danish Liberals in their 1990 campaign (Bille et al., 1992).

Crucial to a successful campaign is a well-conceived and well-executed campaign focus, or what the marketing literature calls 'product policy'. The political product in an election consists of three distinct elements: party image, leader image, and the manifesto proposals or favoured issues of the party (Farrell and Wortmann, 1987).

Party image includes both the traditional image of the party (for instance as representative of the working class, of Catholic voters, of a specific ethnic minority) and the specific image which a party seeks to promote in a given election. Equally the party's manifesto is designed both to take account of the party's traditional standpoints on certain issues and also to take on board campaign-specific issues (Budge and Farlie, 1983). In both cases the two will not be necessarily the same, and there is considerable scope for conflict. For example in many different systems parties are trying to blend in 'green' themes with older, contradictory roles as protectors of industry or of jobs in smokestack industries. To help convey party image, an increasing part of the packaging of a party is the use of artfully designed logos (the British Conservatives Olympic torch, the European Socialists' red rose)

and appropriate party colours.¹

The other component of 'product policy', leader image, is taken increasingly seriously in today's campaigns. In a survey of national experts covering the most recent campaigns of parties in Austria, Britain, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands and New Zealand (in 1987), the party leader was shown to be the dominant or major campaign theme for all but seven parties (Bowler and Farrell, 1992c).²

Great effort is put into the presentation of leader image. Qualitative surveys are commissioned to discover the strengths and weaknesses of the party's leading candidate and appropriate measures are taken. In the early 1980s Margaret Thatcher is reputed to have had a change of hairstyle and clothes, her teeth capped and to have undergone voice training to reduce the shrill quality of her voice (Cockerell et al., 1984). In the 1970s Spain's Felipe Gonzalez wore an open necked shirt, presenting a youthful image (Graham, 1984). In the 1980s this switched to a tie - and according to some accounts, dyed grey temples - as Gonzalez switched emphasis to a more mature, statesmanlike image.

In designing a campaign focus the party strategists seek to achieve an appropriate balance between the three elements of the political product. Implicitly (sometimes explicitly) a decision is taken to rank order the three. The ranking may change during the course of the campaign, for example a decision to emphasise

¹ In this context, it is worthwhile noting the long established practice in Italy of using party symbols, a phenomenon related to the form of the Italian ballot.

² The exceptions seemed mostly to concern parties of the left. They consisted of the Labour parties of Ireland and New Zealand, the Greens of Austria and Germany, the Swedish People's Party in Finland and the Social-Liberals and Christian People's Party in Denmark.

leader image in the final few days. Where leader image is the predominant focus great effort is made in designing such things as an extensive, dynamic leader's tour (Reagan's 1980 whistle-stop tour of key States). Detailed logistical plans are drawn up with 'advance men' preparing the way for a smooth trip. Where party image is the key focus more effort is spent on the party's logo and colours, greater emphasis is placed on the 'teamwork' of the party leadership. Finally, where the emphasis is on the manifesto or programme of the party one should expect to find proportionately higher expenditure on advertising of policy issues, the printing of issue leaflets or posters, the publishing of 'supplementary' policy leaflets in phases throughout the campaign.

Having determined the product policy, the strategists next make preparations for the communication activities required to 'sell' their product. Among the issues considered here are the timing, pacing and tone of the communication activities. Timing relates to the stages at which issues should be raised, to decisions on where the candidate should go and when. Pacing refers to the speed at which issues are raised, the determination, for instance, of when the campaign should 'peak'. The tone of the campaign involves whether the party should go on the attack, or be defensive, whether it should engage in negative campaigning, or attempt, more positively, to present its own policy proposals.³ In their communication activities the strategists will be seeking to set the campaign agenda: trying to take the initiative and to force both their opponents and the media into a reactive mode. This could

³ It could be that these plans may never come to fruition due to candidate gaffes or other campaign incidents. If that is the case, the degree to which it can successfully adapt to unforeseen situations becomes a measure of the campaign's professionalism.

take the form of introducing 'themes of the day' at morning press conferences. But there are alternative means. A distinction can be drawn between the 'indirect' and 'direct' communication activities of a campaign (Bowler and Farrell, 1992b; Esaiasson, 1991). Indirect communication activities are the means by which the party seeks maximum positive media coverage through public relations activities, personal selling and sales promotion. These typically take the form of press conferences, the leader's tour, special events, photo opportunities and so on. Direct communication activities involve efforts to by-pass the media and communicate directly with voters through the use of advertisements, posters, election broadcasts, election literature and campaign gimmickry. The strategists will be seeking to combine both communication activities in an effort to sell their message effectively.

To summarise, in its election campaign preparations, a party needs a tightly structured, coordinated organisation; it needs to plan its campaign long in advance; it needs to have decision-making powers concentrated at the centre; it needs to decide, well in advance of the campaign, what it proposes to sell - what is its product and how this is to be packaged. For the most part, these needs can be facilitated via an appropriate organisational response (i.e. changing the organisational structure of the party). This is something we explore later. But these needs are also met by the greater use of specialist campaign advisors and new campaign techniques.

4.2. CONSULTANTS, AGENCIES, THE TECHNOLOGY OF COMMUNICATIONS

As Chagall (1981), Sabato (1981) and Luntz (1988) have shown, political consultancy has become big business in the USA. More and more use is made of

specialist communication and marketing agencies to sell the candidate. Agranoff (1976, p. 5) suggests that one factor behind the rise of political consultancy has been the inherent organisational weakness of American political parties, that 'since there was no existing body of party professionals possessing these skills, candidates began to employ professionals from other spheres, thus forming a new breed of political professions'. This has occurred to a lesser extent elsewhere largely because the parties have managed to bring professionals into the machinery as members, as volunteer-advisors, even as fulltime employees. Nevertheless there are prominent examples of the employment of outside agencies to provide expert advice in specialist areas. In practice the American case is not as unique as it may appear. While the majority of American consultants are not exactly supporters of the parties for whose candidates they are working, they tend nonetheless to remain very loyal (Luntz, 1988; Napolitan, 1972; Sabato, 1981).

It is no exaggeration to state that the use of advertising agencies by parties is the norm in campaigning. Of course, there is nothing all that startling about that. Parties have been using advertising agencies for a very long time. The main determinant is sufficient finance. It is when we start to consider other possible functions for specialist agencies or political consultants that the question of 'taste' or, perhaps, ideological preference appears to be more relevant, and the variations which occur not only separate one system from another, they also separate one party from another. For instance, in Denmark the parties generally appear reticent about making full use of the campaign consultancy profession (Bille et al., 1992, p. 79). Similarly Dutch campaigns tend to be rather low-key affairs, quite 'dull' by foreign standards (van Praag, 1992, p. 144). And within different political systems there are

particular parties which, for various reasons, either choose to eschew the use of modern campaign techniques or are forced to by financial circumstance (for example, the Austrian and German Greens in their most recent elections (Boll and Poguntke, 1992; Müller and Plasser, 1992)). These cases show how there are parties which are reluctant to make full use of specialist agencies and consultants, but for all these examples there are many more which show the opposite, that in the contemporary campaign the use of such agencies and consultants is extensive and widespread.

Writing at the start of the 1980s, Sabato saw evidence of political consultancy becoming accepted 'all around the world; the new campaign technology is one of the most highly prized exports of the United States' (Sabato, 1981, p. 61; Luntz, 1988). There are a number of examples of the informal and formal sharing of campaign ideas which goes on all the time from party to party and from country to country. The German CDU's Konrad Adenauer Stiftung is particularly active in this respect. Examples of where agencies and political consultants have been employed abroad include: Jacques Ségéula, Mitterand's advertising advisor, employed by the Austrian SPÖ during its 1990 campaign, while the ÖVP employed an advertising agency used by the German CDU; in 1987 the New Zealand Labour party commissioned polling research from a company used by its Australian counterpart. But most striking of all is the use of Saatchi and Saatchi by parties in a number of countries: the British Conservatives since 1979; the Danish Conservatives in 1990; the Dutch Social Democrats in 1989; the Irish Fianna Fáil party since 1989.⁴

⁴ In early 1992, Saatchi's established a new division specialising in election campaigning, Saatchi and Saatchi Government Communications Worldwide (Farrell, 1993).

More generally, over time there has been the development of an international profession of political consultancy. In 1968 the doyen of political consultants, Joe Napolitan, founded the International Association of Political Consultants and its sister organisation, the American Association of Political Consultants. Members pool their knowledge and experience and discuss various approaches to campaigns all around the world. They meet at annual conferences and newsletters are distributed widely.⁵ Another international organisation which facilitates the exchange of campaign ideas is the World Association of Public Opinion Research which includes such prominent European figures as Robert Worcester and Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann. Jack Jones of Ireland's MRBI is also an active participant.

Consultants and agencies can have any number of roles in campaigns. In some countries an important part of the campaign's distribution activities has traditionally been the door-to-door canvass of the candidates and local activists. In recent years great effort has gone into improving the efficiency of the canvass. Central offices have taken steps to standardise the party's campaign message: providing canvassers with campaign guides, the printing (or provision of artwork and stencils for local printing) of canvass leaflets (often in the form of issue leaflets) and candidate biographies. With recent advances in telecommunications there has been an increasing tendency to make use of direct-mail activities - either for fund raising or for selling campaign messages - and of telephone canvassing. The other side of distribution activities is the attempt to have a well coordinated campaign from the centre to the grassroots. To this end, campaigns generally have as a

⁵ At the 1978 IAPC meeting, for instance, there were consultants from the USA, Germany, Britain, France, and Spain (Chagall, 1981, p. 371; see also Napolitan, 1972, pp. 254-5).

minimum telephone, and increasingly fax and computer, links with all local offices or officers. In recent campaigns German parties have been making use of computer links between headquarters and regional offices. In the 1990 US congressional elections among the 'new tools' being employed were satellite links, CD-ROM data bases of information on voters and video mail (Katz and Kolodny, 1992; more generally see Luntz, 1988).

A principal vehicle of contemporary campaign communication is television. Research on the American case reveals how vital is television and associated technology (such as satellite links) for campaigns (Katz and Kolodny, 1992; Luntz, 1988). In many countries, apart from news and current affairs coverage, parties enjoy free access to broadcasting time in elections. Writing a decade ago, Anthony Smith (1981) showed how paid television advertising was permitted only in Australia, Canada, Japan and the USA. Recently broadcasting deregulation has added at least Germany and Italy to the list. Furthermore, developments in satellite television make it inevitable that parties will attempt to skirt around national regulations and beam campaign 'spots' directly into countries.

More generally there is also the issue of indirect communication via news broadcasting and current affairs. An overview of different national practices reveals a wide range of practices (Bowler and Farrell, 1992c). In some states (most notably the USA, also the Netherlands and Italy) access to television time is potentially unlimited: i.e. there are no restrictions on the amount of coverage devoted to any particular party. Elsewhere - and especially where the state plays a large role in the broadcasting system - some 'fairness' rule operates over access to the airwaves. Most common among such rules is one which allots time proportional to party

strength such as in Ireland, New Zealand and the UK (thereby favouring larger parties). In Finland and Denmark all parties are allowed equal access to television regardless of size or strength.

Overall, the greater use of consultants, agencies and the new technology of communications have between them contributed to significant changes in campaign practices. They have also affected the organisational structure of parties, for instance, by reducing the role of activist-volunteers, by facilitating a greater concentration of power at the centre, and by dramatically increasing organisational and electoral costs. These are the sort of developments we need to examine in later chapters.

One other significant campaign development which warrants close attention is the changing nature of campaign feedback.

4.3. THE USE OF MARKET RESEARCH

Election campaigns are never fought in a vacuum. As was suggested in chapter 1, when describing the electoral process, politicians are interacting with voters in a two-way process where the politicians sell their wares and the citizens (voters) provide feedback. This has always been the basic, characteristic feature of elections. But within this framework there have been developments and perhaps one of the most significant of these has been the means by which politicians collect and assess voter feedback. Traditionally, in the past, politicians referred to their local lieutenants; to political 'hunch', or 'feel'. The professional politician, after all, has always been the one who is 'in touch'. Lately, their ability to 'guess' voter attitudes has been improved by access to more detailed information about voters. The natural

antennae of political instincts is being replaced by objective measures of voter attitudes. The 'professional' politician is less of an artist and more of a scientist.

Probably the first attempt to address the influence of public opinion feedback on party campaigns was by Anthony Downs in his *Economic Theory of Democracy*.

He wrote of the government employing:

as part of its own institutional structure, a group of men whose function is to scatter into the corners of the nation and discover the will of the people. They keep the government's central planning agency informed about what people want so that it can make decisions that will maximise the government's chance of reelection (Downs, 1957, p. 89).

In the context of the time in which Downs was writing it is understandable that he should see this 'group of men', in traditional terms, as largely consisting of canvassers and lobbyists. He discusses the trade-off facing a government between maximising feedback from these sources and an over-decentralisation of its decision-making process through frequent reference to them. Downs is more ambiguous on the question of developments in alternative sources of feedback. At one stage he appears to see a role for more efficient feedback techniques: 'The quantity of decentralization depends upon the technical development of communications. As communication facilities improve, less decentralization is necessary to keep in contact with the popular will' (ibid., p. 90). This 'technical development of communications', however, does not include opinion polls, 'which are expensive and difficult to interpret' (ibid., p. 92).

A decade later Richard Rose made probably the first concerted attempt to apply Downs' deductive model, examining British elections in the 1950s and 1960s.

In his book, *Influencing Voters*, Rose devotes one chapter to examining the politicians' 'assumptions about voters'. He suggests there are three sources from which campaigners obtain information about voters: egoistic, impressionistic and objective. Egoistic information is drawn from 'intuition', or 'naive projection': from 'knowing' what the voters think, or ought to think. Impressionistic sources include such things as canvassers' returns, or media feedback. Objective information is gathered from opinion polls, from sample surveys, which, Rose informs us:

taken on behalf of propaganda clients and media men before and during campaigning can properly be called market research, in so far as the object is, as in commercial advertising, to obtain information about a potential audience, to be used in order to promote a product (Rose, 1967, pp. 153-4).

He continues:

Because market research can provide objective information about the electorate not obtainable from other sources, the attitude of campaigners towards its use can be taken as an important indicator of their general orientation toward rationally acquiring information about the electorate (*ibid.*, p. 154).

Rose has introduced an important criterion here. It is not enough to simply assess campaign rationality on the basis of, say, the number of polls a party commissions; the important point, rather, is what use is made of the polls. For instance, Rose gives an account of the use of market research by the Labour party in the 1964 British general election. Its campaign, *prima facie*, was more rational than that of the Conservatives who had a preference for egoistic and impressionistic sources. But on closer examination, Rose points out that Labour made only limited

use of its market research - for designing its publicity campaign. The manifesto, for example, was written without any reference to opinion poll data. Furthermore, the main purpose for which market research was used by Labour seemed to be as a reinforcer of predispositions. As one senior strategist at the time put it: 'I am only completely convinced by the findings of the Gallup Poll when they confirm my own impression of what the public is thinking' (quoted in Rose, 1967, p. 158). The conclusion to Rose's book - after his examination of the feedback process and other areas of party campaigns - is hardly surprising: 'irrational campaign behaviour is a persisting feature of democratic politics everywhere' (ibid., pp. 246-7).

Since Downs and Rose, increasing attention has been given to the question of 'rational', or 'efficient' campaign strategies. Whether the authors are writing in the area of game theory (e.g. Kessel, 1966; Kramer, 1966; Pool and Abelson, 1961), or marketing theory (e.g. Kotler, 1975; Mauser, 1980), the same basic point is made about the use of feedback, namely: it should preferably be objective rather than subjective in origin, i.e. preference should be given to the use of market research.

A review of recent elections in western Europe, New Zealand and the USA reveals that the most common form of campaign feedback is the quantitative opinion polls of the electorate - nationally or locally (Bowler and Farrell, 1992c). Still very popular among the parties, there is evidence, particularly in the smaller systems, that increasingly the parties are saving money and, rather than commissioning their own polls, rely instead on those available in the media or at most subscribe to publicly available omnibus polls. The most interesting arrangement here is in Finland where

Table 4.1. The Contemporary Election Campaign: A Summary.**Preparation and Planning**

- long term planning [not possible if there is a 'snap' election]; who is involved; what is involved
- campaign organisation; number and types of committees; use of specialists; who is in charge?
- product policy (party, leader, policies); communication activities (direct, indirect)

Consultants and Agencies

- range and types of agencies and consultants
- to what extent are they used?
- financial implications?

Market Research

- range and types
- to what extent is it used (before, during, and after the election)?
- who uses it?

four of the main parties all share the same agency, Finnish Gallup.⁶

Market research techniques have undergone considerable development over the years. The once-off, major quantitative polls have been replaced or supplemented by panel surveys, rolling polls, expert surveys, and qualitative research. The main determinant of whether to poll, and how often, appears to be finance. To the extent that polls are important, then, the larger and better financed parties are more advantaged. Even where state financing is available the smaller parties still run up against financial constraints on the capacity to poll.

Whatever the source of the poll data - either from privately commissioned or public sources - the parties appear responsive to them. It is apparent, for instance, that the New Zealand Labour party (in 1987), the Danish Conservatives (in 1990), several of the Finnish parties (in 1991) and the Dutch CDA (in 1989) all changed their campaigns in light of poll information (Bowler and Farrell, 1992c).

Overall, to assess the use of market research we need to examine such questions as: the amount of use made of market research in campaign preparations; the agency (or agencies) used; the type of market research commissioned (e.g. surveys or focus groups).

4.4. CONCLUSION

Our examination of comparative trends has shown the principal characteristics of the contemporary election campaign, as summarised in Table 4.1. First, the party needs to be prepared for the campaign, with an appropriate

⁶ According to Sabato (1981, p. 30) the US Democrats and Republicans have had similar arrangements. Joe Napolitan (1972, p. 115) is supportive of the idea that politicians should share the services (and costs) of market research agencies.

organisational structure, its product policy determined, and its communication activities ready for action. Second, greater use is made of special consultants and agencies and of the new technologies of communication. Third, closer attention is paid to the views of the voters through the use of increasingly sophisticated techniques of market research.

The timing of these campaign changes has tended to coincide with the media and voter changes outlined in the last two chapters. But this is more than mere coincidence. There clearly is a relationship between the various changes. In particular, it is argued here that the parties are conscious of the growing volatility of voters and of the changing styles of media coverage. For instance, the greater attention given by the parties to style and imagery reflects, in part, the greater interest of the media in game coverage. Likewise, the growing prominence of market research in electioneering reflects, at least partially, what is perceived as a general decline in voter loyalty.

Campaign developments by the parties are bound to have had an impact on their organisational structures. Some pointers to the nature of this impact have already been mentioned in this chapter, for instance, the greater concentration of power in the centre, the declining role of the party member, the growing expense of the headquarters' budget. These, and other, factors are assessed in detail for the Irish case in chapter 8 below. Before that, we need to give further attention to the question of election campaign developments in Ireland. This is the function of the next three chapters.

Chapter 5 starts with a review of election campaign developments in Ireland in the 1950s-1960s. This is followed by a case study of the 1977 campaign, where

we see the stark contrast between the campaign styles of the two main parties. The 1977 campaign marked a turning point. Its immediate consequences were felt most strongly by the Fine Gael party which responded in 1981 with a campaign which attracted much attention as a professional marketing exercise. The 1981 Fine Gael election campaign is examined in chapter 6. Following the framework outlined in this chapter, there is an examination of the party's preparations for the election, its use of agencies and consultants, and its use of market research.

The final chapter on Irish campaign strategies, chapter 7, reviews the main trends in campaign development in Ireland: the growing use of agencies and consultants and the greater attention given to them; the growing reliance by parties on market research.

CHAPTER FIVE

IRISH ELECTION CAMPAIGNING IN THE 1950s-1970s

A central argument of this thesis is that party election campaigning in Ireland has changed in line with the types of developments outlined in the previous chapter, and that this change can be dated from 1977. The significance of this date is that it coincides with the changes to the party electoral environment (media and voters) which were outlined in chapters 2 and 3. To substantiate the point that campaigning changed in 1977, we need to examine campaigning styles in the period before 1977, and we need to focus on changes in the 1977 campaign itself. An overview of campaigning in the earlier decades of the State, provides a useful basis for comparison with campaign developments in the 1970s and 1980s. Subsequent campaign developments in the 1980s and early 1990s are dealt with in chapters 6 and 7.

At the outset, it is worthwhile raising the question 'what has changed?' about campaign styles and strategies over the decades. The point might be made that

campaigning - whether in Ireland or elsewhere - has always been largely the same. The circumstances, fashion and technology may change, but at its basic level the style and tactics by which campaigns are fought remain little changed over the years.

Evidence in support of this point is available from looking at the first campaigns in the new Irish Free State. In the late 1920s, Cumann na nGaedheal (Fine Gael's predecessor) employed the O'Kennedy-Brindley advertising agency (now owned by Saatchi's and employed by Fianna Fáil) to promote its image while in government and during the 1927 campaigns.¹ In a 1929 by-election, O'Kennedy-Brindley designed a glossy pamphlet for distribution. Another one-page leaflet was designed for polling day, copies of which were dropped from an aeroplane.²

Both Fianna Fáil and Cumann na nGaedheal made use of the sort of campaign gimmickry more usually associated with recent campaigns. Badges and flags were distributed; campaign songs were composed; and paint and whitewash for daubing slogans on walls were employed (Moss, 1933, p. 130).³ In the 1932 election, Cumann na nGaedheal distributed a 160-page handbook among the party canvassers, entitled *Fighting Points for Cumann na nGaedheal Speakers and Workers*. In the 1933 election, the party produced a film of the party leader, W. T. Cosgrave, making a campaign speech and this was distributed across the country

¹ On the occasion of President Cosgrave's US visit - the first visit by an Irish executive leader - O'Kennedy-Brindley was commissioned to produce a commemorative book, *With the President in America* (Dublin: O'Kennedy-Brindley, 1928). On the 1927 elections, see O'Kennedy (n.d. [1927?]). Cumann na nGaedheal stopped using O'Kennedy-Brindley in 1932, 'since the headquarters staff was quite capable of doing the work themselves' (Moss, 1933, p. 125).

² NL: LO p117 (107 and 108).

³ On the use of campaign posters in Ireland in the early 1930s, see Keogh, 1983.

(Moss, 1933, p. 193). In another election (not specified) one party fitted an aeroplane with a microphone and flew it around the country calling for votes and providing publicity (McCracken, 1958, p. 85).

On the face of it, then, there would appear to be grounds for arguing that campaigning in recent years has changed little from the styles and strategies of campaigns in the 1920s.⁴ But such a conclusion would be premature. In a number of fundamental ways election campaigns generally have been undergoing great change over the past two or three decades. As was proposed in the previous chapter, this is evident in terms of the degree of preparation and coordination from the centre, in the proliferation of agencies and consultants, and in the growing reliance on market research of voters.

With reference to these three themes, section 5.1 examines the style of party election campaigning in elections during the 1950s and 1960s. Access to the remaining files of the Fine Gael party (mostly lodged in the archive department of University College Dublin; some still held in the basement of party headquarters), provide useful insights into the campaign styles of that party over the period. Where possible, reference is made to the campaign styles of Fianna Fáil; however, unfortunately few records survive. The section concludes with a discussion on Fianna Fáil's approach to campaigning during this period and on the extent to which these may have coincided with Fine Gael trends, or, indeed, even influenced them.

Section 5.2 consists of a case study of the 1977 election campaigns of both

⁴ It is worth noting John A. Murphy's (1969) comments on the Cumman na nGaedheal campaigns of 1927-32. He contrasts the imagination and professionalism of that period with the aloofness and ad hocary of Fine Gael campaigns in the 1940s.

Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, again making use of the three-part framework set out in chapter 4.

5.1. ELECTION CAMPAIGN STYLES 1950s-1960s

The first three parts of this section focus almost exclusively on Fine Gael's campaigning during these decades. Little if any information is available on the Fianna Fáil party. In line with the framework proposed in chapter 4, the following examination is broken down into three parts: campaign preparations, agencies and consultants, and market research. The final part of this section examines the available evidence on Fianna Fáil's approach to campaigning in this period.

5.1.1. Campaign Preparations

Fine Gael campaign planning followed the same basic model across all the elections. On the face of it, there were indications that quite considerable attention was paid to campaign preparations. For each of the elections in this period, there was some sort of backroom standing committee which started meeting from quite an early stage before the expected election. A central feature of the committee's work was liaising with the party's advertising agency.

A closer examination of the evidence reveals, however, a number of shortcomings in the extent to which there were adequate preparations made for an election campaign. For instance, the pre-campaign contacts with the advertising agency, for the most part, appear to have involved discussions on likely costings for the advertising campaign and estimates on the numbers and range of advertisements

Table 5.1. Fine Gael Campaign Plans, 1954 and 1963.

Plan of Campaign, 1954	
[Handwritten across the top] Appeal for funds, workers, etc. for Friday in 3 dailies	
1.	Posters - very urgent - David Allen* (F. J. Mullen)
2.	Newspaper advertising campaign: allocation (no country papers?), dates, sizes (conference with Mr. Padbury and Senator Hayes), illustrations (blocks). Query - Evening Papers. Themes of advertisements. Policy? Specific Item, e.g. Civil Servants.
3.	Election Address in Draft - Monday?
4.	Handbills in Draft. Repeat of existing ones? 120,000 cost of living handbills, also stencils for constituencies, cost: £1 each, i.e. £40.
5.	Points for Speakers (Árd Fheis Digest for General - plus stencilled points).

Notes in the Event of a General Election (18 June 1963)	
1.	Issue a general warning order.
2.	Prepare and issue a schedule of conventions for selection of candidates.
3.	Decide on campaign programme: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Press conferences announcing policy and issues to be put before the people. b. Decide action to be taken regarding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - public meetings and rallies. - television appearances. - use of radio. - President's Tour of the country. c. Finance - collections at Church Gates or House-to-House. General - issue of election collection circular seeking funds all over the country. d. Publicity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advertisements. - leaflets. - specimen election addresses. - posters with general appeal. - David Allen's sites. - CIE sites. - Points for Speakers.

Note:

a David Allen Outdoor Advertising - principal poster contractor in the country

Source: Fine Gael/UCD archives, P39/BF7(p); P39/BF34(l)

to be produced.⁵ It is difficult to see these contacts as strategic in nature: there was little by way of innovation in the development of new advertising techniques; the slogans tended to be similar from one election to the next (e.g. in 1954, 'There is going to be a new government'; in 1965, 'Its time for a change').⁶

Of greater significance is the actual nature of the campaign plans which were drawn up by the standing committee. It is hard to conceive of them in any way as strategic or tactical plans for an election campaign; rather, they tended to take the form of an *aide memoire* of tasks which needed to be fulfilled. Table 5.1 provides two examples of what the party then meant as campaign preparations. As we can see, in 1954, last minute notes were hastily produced to guide the general secretary and his secretary on what had to be set in motion for the campaign. It is clear that these notes were written *after* the election had been announced. By the early 1960s, the party had gone one step further. The notes were no longer produced at the last minute.⁷ However, they still represented little more than a set of guidelines on what had to be done in the event of an election being called. In the next chapter we will see just how stark is the contrast between these notes and the depth of planning engaged in by Fine Gael in 1981.

Another way in which we can see how limited were campaign preparations in the 1950s-1960s is in the plans for the leader's tour. A schedule was drawn up, but

⁵ For example, see the account on publicity preparations in the 1961 election post-mortem by the Fine Gael general secretary on 4 October 1961 (Fine Gael/UCD archives, P39/BF34(a)).

⁶ Fine Gael/UCD archives, P39/BF7; P39/BF8(j)/1.

⁷ It is worth noting that the 1963 plans were retyped verbatim in early 1965 for use in that election (Fine Gael/UCD archives, P39/BF34(l)).

always at the last moment. There was no advance team to go ahead of the leader and pave the way, no entourage to accompany the leader. The preparations consisted of a one-page memo outlining where the leader was to be from one day to the next. This was then circulated to the constituency parties together with a covering letter from the general secretary asking for the necessary arrangements to be made to receive the leader. This was the practice for all the campaigns in the period. For example in the 1961 election, the general secretary, in a letter on 16 September to the party's representative in the Galway constituency, wrote:

This is to inform you that the Standing Committee have arranged that Mr James Dillon [the party leader] will address a meeting in Galway City on Tuesday 26th September at 8 pm. I shall be glad if you will please ensure that all the necessary arrangements will be carried out for the meeting, including the provision of a platform or lorry, an efficient loudspeaker, a Chairman, and a National Flag. It is important to have the meeting advertised locally and to have some kind of slogan-poster on the lorry.⁸

Two days later, the general secretary wrote again, requesting that the local representative meet the party leader at a city centre hotel. He continued: 'We are not sure exactly where the meeting is to be held, so I think the best arrangement would be for you to contact him at the Hotel'.⁹

As this example shows, the party leader was literally on his own on the campaign trail. No campaign bus was provided; there were no advisors; advance planning was minimal and haphazard. Once the leader had set off on his tour of the constituencies, he was not contactable. For example, during the 1965 election, a

⁸ Fine Gael/UCD archives, P39/BF39(c).

⁹ *ibid.*

local strategist wrote to the general secretary seeking information on the route the party leader would take through his area. The general secretary replied: 'I am unable to contact [the party leader] at the moment as he is moving around the country on his tour'.¹⁰

Finally, the limited nature of the party's preparations are revealed by the tendency of party headquarters to leave the constituencies to run their own separate campaigns: there was little by way of central control, little attempt to standardise across the country. Two points are relevant here. First, the number of posters distributed by the Fine Gael headquarters to the constituencies was very small (a mere 84 posters per constituency in 1954, 250 in 1961; in 1965 less than 12,000 leader posters were printed for nationwide distribution).¹¹ In the 1954 election, one constituency organisation wrote to headquarters asking to buy some extra posters. It was unsuccessful. In his reply, the general secretary wrote: 'I am sorry we cannot do more to help you from here, but in the general election everything is decentralised'.¹²

Second, what help the standing committee did provide tended to be in the form of vague guidance to the constituencies on their local publicity; there was no effort at standardisation. For the most part, headquarters gave only rough suggestions about style, which the constituencies were at liberty to ignore. For example, in 1961 the general secretary sent a memo to the local party organisations on 'constituency publicity'. In this he suggested: 'the Election Address (for free

¹⁰ Fine Gael/UCD archives, P39/BF34(k).

¹¹ Fine Gael/UCD archives, P39/BF7(m), P39/BF39(a), P39/BF34(i).

¹² Fine Gael/UCD archives, P39/BF7(f).

post) should consist of a short letter to the Electors from the Candidates; some points from Fine Gael Heads of Policy, selected by yourself, suitable to your constituency; one or two slogans and brief bibliographical notices of each candidate with photograph where possible'.¹³ In another memo during the same campaign, the general secretary provided some advice on poster design: 'All your posters should give in large characters the names of your candidates, your main idea must be to "sell" your candidate to the media'.¹⁴ During the 1969 election, the general secretary wrote to the constituency organisations regarding local postering: 'I enclose herewith a copy of our Fine Gael Will Win poster, a supply of which has already been issued to your constituency. It is suggested that, for designing local posters for use in your constituency, you use the top portion of this poster, and have the candidates names printed underneath, instead of the words "Will Win".'¹⁵

Overall, then, Fine Gael's campaign preparations for elections in the 1950s-1960s (and as we shall see below, also in the 1970s) tended to be last moment, skeletal and uncoordinated. In no way can they be said to have matched the nature of planning and preparation outlined in a comparative sense in chapter 4.

5.1.2. Agencies and Consultants

In his work on political consultants in the American context, Larry Sabato draws a useful distinction between 'generalist' and 'specialist' consultants:

¹³ Fine Gael/UCD archives, P39/BF11(c).

¹⁴ Fine Gael/UCD archives, P39/BF39(a).

¹⁵ Fine Gael headquarters archives, letter by the general secretary to the constituencies, 28 May 1969.

A generalist consultant advises a candidate on most or all phases of his campaign and coordinates most or all of the aspects of the technology employed by the campaign. A specialist consultant concentrates on one or two aspects of the campaign and peddles expertise in one or two technological specialties. While almost all of the early consultants were generalists, most consultants today are specialists (Sabato, 1981, p. 9).

This argument can be more generally applied to an examination of the agencies and specialists employed by parties in most countries. As we shall see here, in the case of Fine Gael it is apparent that there have been a number of phases in the incorporation of consultants and agencies into its electioneering. In the first instance, it had long term arrangements with an advertising agency. The work required of the agency tended to be limited and quite basic. As we move into the 1960s and 1970s there are signs of Fine Gael requiring a more active role from its advertising agency. This can be seen as the stage of what Sabato would call 'general' consultancy, when the advertising agency was being called upon to carry out a wide range of different functions. By the late 1970s and early 1980s, Fine Gael (and Fianna Fáil) had moved into a third phase where more specific advice and services were required from a number of different specialist agencies and consultants.

Irish parties have been using advertising agencies for quite a considerable time. As we saw above, Fine Gael's predecessor, Cumann na nGaedheal, used the O'Kennedy-Brindley agency in the late 1920s. Throughout much of the 1940s and 1950s, Fine Gael employed the services of Padbury's advertising agency.¹⁶ By the end of the 1960s, senior members of the party were stressing their deep disquiet at the quality of the party's advertisements in comparison to 'the high standard of

¹⁶ For background on Padbury's, see Padbury (1945).

material now being used by our opponents'.¹⁷ As one politician put it in a letter to the general secretary about the party's campaign in a recent by-election:

The Election Address was like an Obituary Notice. The Headquarters canvassing cards were delivered weeks late. There were four different types of canvassing cards in circulation. The poster was a failure. . . . At the time that I expressed my displeasure with poor advertising, I was informed that steps would be taken to replace Padbury's with a progressive Advertising Agency. I don't know what has been done in this regard.

This letter and other complaints provoked a reaction from headquarters. Soon after, in a period of organisational review, the party changed agencies, signing a new contract with the Arks agency. This agency made much of its available client services which covered 'advertising, marketing and public relations in all their aspects. We regard it as our duty to assist and advise our clients in the general development of the presentation and sales of their products and in making the best use of their appropriation'.

The party and new agency enjoyed a brief honeymoon period of enthusiastic and close cooperation. In Arks, Fine Gael apparently benefited from 'a very enthusiastic team' whose 'enthusiasm is certainly reflected in the quality of the work they are producing'.¹⁸

It is clear that Arks had a very 'generalist' role to play. Fine Gael set in train

¹⁷ Fine Gael/UCD archives, P39/TC8/7(a). The following discussion is based on material from this source.

¹⁸ Letter from Arks to the Fine Gael general secretary in April 1968.

a process of revising party logos, colours, and printed material.¹⁹ It is evident that Fine Gael was paying close attention to developments in Fianna Fáil advertising.²⁰

Arks were not solely involved in clearing up Fine Gael's printed communications. With the arrival of television - the first 'television campaign' was in 1965 - attention also had to be paid to preparing the party's principal politicians.²¹ Arks were responsible for arranging special training courses, editing the politicians' scripts, dressing them,²² and liaising with RTÉ.²³ It should be

¹⁹ See, for example, the letter from the general secretary to Arks in March 1968: 'The notepaper on which this letter is written has been in use here since the year dot, and I am not satisfied with it. I would be glad if you would get some of your staff to come up with some suggestions for something more modern'. In another letter, a month later, the general secretary wrote: 'I don't think we included with our samples sent to you a copy of the enclosed compliments slip. It stinks'.

²⁰ See the letter from Richie Ryan TD to Arks in April 1968 in which he enclosed samples of Fianna Fáil material and requested that Arks try to come up with similar quality material.

²¹ The Fine Gael archives reveal how seriously the party viewed the introduction of television. As early as 1961 the party's general secretary (together with his counterparts from the other parties) was receiving communications from RTÉ television producers requesting negotiations 'concerning the conditions under which political viewpoints and political personalities will be featured' (Fine Gael/UCD archives, P39/TC6/15(b)). This was to lead to a series of negotiations between party whips and television executives (private interview with a senior RTÉ executive).

²² '(a) The suit should if possible be a medium grey without a pattern rather than a plain black. (b) The shirt should be either cream, light blue or light grey, again without a pattern, and definitely not white. (c) The tie should again be plain, and not of any shiny material such as silk'.

²³ Concomitant with the introduction of television were a number of changes to the relevant legislation by which both it and the radio were to be controlled, namely the *Broadcasting Act*. Under this Act, political parties were given the right to make free election broadcasts and to receive 'objective' coverage by RTÉ. In both cases, the rights of access to parties were proportionate to their Dáil strength. Originally the election broadcasts were allocated only to parties with at least seven TDs. In 1977 this right was extended to include all parties or groups fielding at least seven Dáil candidates. There was also introduced in 1960 a clause, modelled closely on legislation governing the BBC and independent networks in Britain, which allowed

stressed that Arks' role was undoubtedly an activist one. For instance in mid-1968 there was a proposal from RTÉ to abandon election broadcasts before by-elections. Arks wrote a long memo to the Fine Gael general secretary in which they expressed the view:

we feel that this decision has been taken in order to deny the opposition parties the most effective means of communication with the electorate. . . There is no doubt that television is the most effective and persuasive means of communication, and there is no more vital times for its use than before elections. Furthermore, the government in power gets ample opportunity for exposure, so that they have by far the least to lose. . . We are the biggest buyer of time on Telefís Éireann, and have been so each year since the Service began. In fact, half our turnover is now on TV. We are, therefore, regarded as a TV agency, highly competent in this field. Fianna Fáil, of course, are aware of this and it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that they greatly fear the use we will make of it.

Arks were also asked to provide advice on whether and how the party might make use of market research. As we will see below, Arks advised against its usage.

Evidently Arks had a crucial role to play in Fine Gael's first steps towards organisational and communication revival. Much was expected of them, and the strains soon showed. In early 1969 - within only a few months of signing the contract with Fine Gael - Arks decided to end the relationship on the grounds that the 1968 referendum campaign (on the proposal to change the electoral system) had been far too disruptive. The agency took the decision 'that we cannot, in future,

the government to direct RTÉ 'to refrain from broadcasting any particular matter or matters of any particular class' - the infamous 'Section 31'. Gradually over the years, there was to be a tightening of the Section 31 noose, reflecting the outbreak of violence and instability in Northern Ireland. This culminated, in 1976, in a blanket ban on the transmission of interviews with representatives of Sinn Féin, a registered and legally recognised political party. At the time of writing, this blanket ban looks like it is about to be declared unconstitutional by the courts.

handle political advertising for any party'. No amount of persuasion by Fine Gael could get Arks to change their mind. As an alternative, Fine Gael employed the services of Kenny's Advertising for the 1969 election campaign. However, by the time of the 1973 election Fine Gael was again using Arks and was to continue to do so until the 1989 election.²⁴

With the exception of its use of the Market Research Bureau of Ireland (MRBI) for market research from 1973 onwards (discussed below), Fine Gael was not to take steps towards the employment of 'specialist' advice until the 1981 campaign. In summary, then, Fine Gael's use of agencies throughout the 1950s-1960s was very limited - in the same way as was the party's overall campaign preparations.

The final area which needs examination is the party's use of market research. As we shall see, there is evidence that Fine Gael was quite innovative in at least exploring the potential of market research.

5.1.3. Market Research

Polling came late to Irish politics. Politicians and journalists alike were reluctant and slow to make use of market research techniques which were seen as commonplace in the United States and Britain. In Chapter 2, we saw some of the reasons for this, among them the fact that journalists doubted the accuracy and efficacy of opinion polls. One other reason was the fact that, until relatively recently, there was a general lack of available agencies to carry out such research.

²⁴ Precisely why Arks changed its mind is unclear. The Fine Gael archives reveal that Arks were working for the party again in early 1971.

At the start of the 1960s, Gallup - which then had offices in Dublin - appears to have been the only agency available to carry out political opinion polling. The country's two leading indigenous agencies were not set up until a few years into the decade: the Market Research Bureau of Ireland (MRBI) in 1962 and Irish Marketing Surveys (IMS) in 1963. According to John Meagher (1983) of IMS, the first survey of political attitudes was commissioned by the *Irish Press* in July 1961 (no agency name given). This dealt with political attitudes to the question of Ireland's first application for European Community membership. The first poll commissioned by an Irish party was that by Labour (from Gallup) before the 1969 general election (see Whyte, 1974). This was to be the only national poll ever commissioned by Labour on its own. In the 1970s, benefiting from its coalition links with Fine Gael, it shared access to the latter's MRBI polls. Unfortunately it is not possible to adequately assess Fianna Fáil's use of market research. The party refuses to divulge exact details and its agencies have an aversion to answering questions on the subject.

Fine Gael has tended to be more forthcoming. Its records reveal some fascinating insights on the introduction of market research into Irish politics. Not surprisingly, the party relied for a long time on impressionistic and 'egoistic feedback' (i.e. intuition) sources. The 1965 election provides a good example of an attempt by some in the party to move towards more objective data gathering, albeit then still a somewhat amateur exercise. Mid-way through the election the party received a report from Don O'Higgins (brother of Michael O'Higgins TD), which was described as 'our usual mid-campaign survey'. The sample consisted of voters who were selected 'with considerable precision to represent, as far as possible, various sections. . . The reporters are extremely experienced and can spot a

committed party man a mile away'.²⁵ The report, which had a number of recommendations on how the party might alter its campaign to counter a likely Fianna Fáil victory, was immediately dispatched by the general secretary to James Dillon, the party leader. There is no indication that any further attention was paid to its contents.²⁶

It was not until early 1971 that Fine Gael first entertained the idea of commissioning its own market research. In his recent memoirs, Garret FitzGerald writes of how in late 1967 he had been appointed to a Fine Gael electoral strategy committee to examine the party's policies and tactics (FitzGerald, 1991, pp. 77ff.). One key area of discussion was the possibility of merger or alliance with Labour. (This was the period of Fine Gael's social democratic, 'Just Society' policies.) The matter was discussed at some length between both parties at the highest level. After more than a decade in opposition, Fine Gael clearly gave serious thought to the possibility of forming some sort of arrangement with Labour. As we have seen, a few years previously the party had taken on Arks as its new advertising agency. In February 1971, at the request of party leader, Liam Cosgrave, the party's general secretary wrote to Arks asking for advice on whether and how the party might assess public opinion on the matter via market research. Arks replied several days later with a short document entitled 'The Use of Market Research by Fine Gael'. This argued that market research was expensive and, to save money, the party should consider whether it might best be arranged via the party machinery - a curious argument for a professional advertiser to make. The document is more interesting in

²⁵ No further details were given on sampling.

²⁶ Fine Gael/UCD archives, P39/BF34(1).

its suggestion on what form of market research the party should consider, interesting in the sense that this seems to predict the form of market research employed by the party a decade later:

It will be concluded from a reading of the literature that polls as such are not the best tool for providing an answer to the research problem as it is formulated here. A 'motivational' or 'qualitative' study using discursive questioning is probably better suited to obtaining a picture of political attitudes than a quantifiable study using yes/no and limited choice questions. Such a qualitative study would not, because of its discursive method, provide a tidy statistical picture, rather it would explore in depth political attitudes in the way the electorate feels and expresses them.²⁷

Little if any attention appears to have been paid to Arks' suggestions. In 1973 Fine Gael was the second Irish party to commission its own market research, this time from MRBI, an agency which has continued to provide data and advice to the party ever since. Not only did Fine Gael ignore Arks on the issue of who should do the research, it also decided that the commissioned research should be quantitative, rather than the qualitative approach suggested in the 1971 document.

On the face of it, by the early 1970s Fine Gael appears to have gone quite far in switching towards more scientific voter feedback, and in this area the party was certainly ahead of Fianna Fáil. However, as the evidence from the 1977 campaign in section 5.2 will show, the party may have been prepared to commission research, but there are doubts about the extent to which it was prepared to actually make use of it.

²⁷ Fine Gael/UCD archives, P39/TC8/8(j).

To conclude, in the period before 1977, the evidence suggests that campaigning by the Fine Gael party changed little from one election to the next. It was characterised by inadequate preparations and a weak central organisation, by limited use of agencies and no use of consultants. It was only towards the end of the period, that there was any evidence of Fine Gael addressing the issue of improved voter feedback. In short, Fine Gael's election campaigning at this stage bore little resemblance to the sort of campaign styles envisaged in the framework presented in chapter 4.

The question remains, however, whether this approach to campaigning in Ireland in the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s was particular to Fine Gael (and the smaller parties). What about the campaign practices of Fianna Fáil during this period?

5.1.4. Fianna Fáil's Campaign Styles in this Period

So far, we have been focusing primarily on the case of Fine Gael. This is inevitable because of the availability of information about campaigning by that party in the past, and the lack of similar information on the other parties, in particular Fianna Fáil. There is a danger that, when we talk about campaign developments in the 1970s, what we are looking at may be something specific to Fine Gael. The argument that 'nothing has changed' which was raised at the beginning of the chapter may still apply to the case of Fianna Fáil, the party whose organisational arrangements are legendary (Chubb, 1959; Gallagher, 1985; Mair, 1987a; Manning, 1972; Murphy, 1969). In other words, we need to pay some attention to the case of Fianna Fáil. What evidence is there that things really changed in its 1977 campaign?

How do Fianna Fáil's campaigns of earlier decades compare with those of the late 1970s and 1980s? Inevitably, due to the absence of primary data, it is necessary to rely on secondary accounts.

There is good reason for arguing that Fianna Fáil's campaigning has always been better structured and more professional than Fine Gael's. As we saw above, there is evidence that Fine Gael was conscious of developments in Fianna Fáil and was anxious to emulate them. The envy of Fine Gael about the Fianna Fáil party machine is shown quite vividly in the following passage from an internal party newsletter:

Everyone knows the Fianna Fáil party is the most highly organised and carefully dragooned party in the history of Irish politics. The historical explanation for this is that the party was founded by soldiers who had lost a war and created a political instrument to achieve what the military weapon had failed to achieve. Ever since, its discipline has been the envy of those . . . who like the look of tightly organised power. . . Fine Gael has always been a less well-organised party, and - perhaps because of the number of distinguished lawyers who have been prominent in it - represents the freer tradition in Irish politics.²⁸

That Fianna Fáil has always been better organised than Fine Gael cannot be doubted. But the point is what does one mean by 'organisation' in this context? Research by Peter Mair (1987a) demonstrates quite clearly that the emphasis of Fianna Fáil of old (i.e. before the mid-1970s) was always on the grassroots, on the party *cumainn* (branches). This suggests a particular view of organisation; one which stresses depth of national coverage and intricate networks at the local level; one

²⁸ 'Commentary', *National Observer* Vol. 2, No. 1, July 1959. This newsletter was produced between 1958-1960 by a research and information committee inside Fine Gael (see NL: Ir 05 N11 (1-3)).

which eschews a strong role for the centre; an organisation which is 'bottom-up' rather than 'top-down'. As Mair (1987a, p. 116) points out: 'Rather than emphasising organisational centralisation and, perhaps, organisational efficiency, the intention was to have a party presence in as many areas as possible, however small'. This point is revealed nicely by the party's 16-page handbook on the role and activities of cumainn, *Bealach Bua*, which was produced in the early 1930s. It was stressed that 'No Cumann is a fully effective unit of Fianna Fáil unless it is actively undertaking all the functions and duties which are detailed in each section'. The subsequent sections went on to outline the work of the cumainn in every area of party activity from running musical bands, social and educational activities through to raising finance, providing publicity and acting 'as links of a nationwide Intelligence Organisation'. In short, the party was its cumainn; the role of headquarters was minimal; what was envisaged in *Bealach Bua* was a highly decentralised, locally very active party machine.

How this organisational approach operated in practice during a campaign has been analysed by Basil Chubb, writing on the Irish 1957 election. At the outset, Chubb (1959, pp. 188-9) describes Fianna Fáil as 'head and shoulders above its opponents in strength and organisation'. He continues: 'Organised in a manner quite closely resembling the British parties, it faced the election better prepared and equipped than any of its opponents'. However, Chubb (1959, p. 195) goes on to describe a campaign organisational style which placed heavy emphasis on the work of the local party machines who were 'expected . . . to stand on [their] own feet'. The party's 52-page election handbook, *Córas Bua*, stressed that any assistance provided for the constituencies by headquarters would be 'very limited'.

Chubb's paper analyses the central support which was provided in three areas: money, posters and literature, and the leader's tour. In the area of finance, Fianna Fáil was the most generous of all the parties, yet even here the scope of financial support was quite limited. Headquarters guaranteed candidates' deposits and it returned 40 per cent of the annual collection, which were collected by the constituency parties, back to the constituency parties.

Of all the parties, Fianna Fáil headquarters provided the most detailed set of guidelines for the local organisations in its *Córas Bua*. In it there was advice on 'election law, draft appointment forms for the appointment of election personnel, forms of receipt for payments for such things as committee rooms or transport, advice and instructions for the various officers and workers, and other general advice based on experience' (Chubb, 1959, p. 198).

Just as in the case of Fine Gael above, there was little evidence of Fianna Fáil headquarters attempting to standardise the literature produced at the local level. *Córas Bua* merely advised that the constituency publicity 'should be directed solely to matters of local concern. . . The Address should emphasise the main points of Fianna Fáil policy as it affects the constituency'.

Where Fianna Fáil did differ from Fine Gael was in the quantity of propaganda disseminated from the centre. There were regular, large distributions of leaflets and posters.

Its poster distribution was, indeed, enormous. Its main posters were sent out one a week, each week's bearing a different and very general slogan - 'Let's Go Ahead Again', 'Beat the crisis - Let's Get Cracking'. It also issued leaflets and a document in the form of a newspaper entitled 'Let's Go Ahead Again', of which half a million copies were distributed. (Chubb, 1959, p. 199)

Finally, Fianna Fáil's leader's tour bore close similarity to the Fine Gael practice which was described above. As Chubb (1959, p. 200) puts it: 'The ceremony [was] time-honoured, old fashioned, impressive, and even touching'. De Valera, by now almost blind, travelling only with his driver, was met at each location by a 'party guard of honour'. Once again the onus was on the local organisation to make all the necessary arrangements.

Overall, there is no dispute that Fianna Fáil has always had a far better developed organisational structure than Fine Gael. The account of the 1957 campaign by Basil Chubb points to quite a few areas where Fianna Fáil's approach to campaigning was more organised and efficient than Fine Gael's. Not enough material is available to draw firm conclusions. However, one point does stand out clearly and that is the emphasis by Fianna Fáil on the local organisation. Everything was devolved to the grass roots. The implications of this are obvious. Central office had a small role to play in election campaigns; there was little coordination or standardisation; election campaigns were not fought as national campaigns, but rather as a series of, largely autonomous, constituency campaigns.

As was pointed out at the beginning of the chapter, the crucial change in Irish party election campaign styles, in the view of research on this period, occurred in the 1977 election campaign by Fianna Fáil (Carty, 1988; Gallagher, 1985; Mair, 1987a; Penniman (ed.), 1978). The contrast between its approach to campaigning and that of Fine Gael could hardly be more conspicuous.

5.2. CASE STUDY: IRELAND 1977, A CAMPAIGN OF CONTRASTS²⁹

This section focuses on the campaigns of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael. (For more general accounts of the 1977 campaign see Farrell, 1978b; Farrell and Manning, 1978.) The two campaigns are compared in terms of the three-part framework set out in chapter 4, namely: preparations and planning; the use of agencies and consultants; the use of market research. In each case, the discussion begins with the Fianna Fáil campaign.

5.2.1. Preparations and Planning

With the loss of the March 1973 election Fianna Fáil was out of office for the first time in sixteen years. The party's senior politicians, accustomed to ministerial salaries, had to start picking up the threads of alternative careers; morale had been dealt a serious blow; the leadership of Jack Lynch now looked far from impregnable. This was not the first time the party had lost an election after such a long period in government. In 1948, another sixteen year term of Fianna Fáil administration was ended with the formation of the first inter-party government. The scenario was similar: morale was low and the party machinery was in need of reform. The response then was to reorganise (Farrell, 1983, pp. 90 ff.). Similarly, in 1973 Lynch set in motion a process of preparing the party for the next election.

This reorganisation took several stages. First, there were three new appointments. A young accountant, Seamus Brennan, replaced the veteran Thomas Mullins as general secretary. The post of press officer was created - the first on a

²⁹ Apart from the published sources, this section is based on a series of interviews with party strategists. A full list of interviewees is provided in Appendix B. Access was also granted to all remaining Fine Gael files from this period.

fulltime basis for any political party in Ireland - and a former RTÉ journalist, Frank Dunlop, was appointed. The third appointment was that of Esmonde Smyth as the party's research director. The party set up women and youth sections as a means of attracting new voters and more members, and to create the image of a dynamic organisation. A party newspaper was founded for much the same purpose.

Great effort was put into streamlining the organisation, reorganising and opening branches. The general secretary commented later in a private interview:

the important point to realise is that we sought to do a number of things and we sought to market the fact that we were doing so. A critic might say I was involved in superficial activities. A supporter would say I was stirring up the organisation to think, to be open-minded.

This very public reorganisation exercise manifested itself in various ways. For instance, the party newspaper, *Iris Fianna Fáil*, published articles advising activists how to prepare for the election. In one such article, a public relations expert went into great detail on constituency PR, advertising and canvass preparations.³⁰

In mid-1975 an election committee was set up to prepare for an election expected sometime in late 1976 or early 1977. Membership included the party's officers, senior politicians, and people from the marketing and advertising professions. This was a nuts-and-bolts committee. Overall campaign strategy was planned by the party's director of elections, Senator Eoin Ryan, and the general secretary. The manifesto was drawn up separately by senior politicians. Much of the

³⁰ Don Hall in *Iris Fianna Fáil*, No. 8, 1977, p. 4.

election committee's preparations followed ideas from Jimmy Carter's 1976 presidential campaign, which Seamus Brennan was sent over to the United States to observe. The committee met monthly until Christmas 1976 when meetings were held more frequently. By then an election was expected in the late Spring of 1977.

Fianna Fáil's manifesto was drawn up with close attention to its market research, and was ready for publication the day after the election was called.³¹ It was a 47-page glossy document, entitled *Action Plan for National Reconstruction*, which proposed to abolish all domestic rates; to make small cars and motorcycles exempt from road tax; a £1,000 grant for first-time house buyers. Other proposals included an ambitious job creation programme, with special emphasis on the young unemployed; a reduction of inflation through generous tax cuts; and a 'buy-Irish' campaign to reduce imports. To say the least, this was an exciting document. The general secretary commented later in a private interview:

The manifesto was drawn up by the politicians and I, or the others, didn't see it until the day of its release. I don't think it hindered our strategy. . . . [However] when I saw [it] I knew we had almost over-killed. Our preparations had not taken such a manifesto into account.

The general secretary had fixed on the idea of using slogans to encapsulate what the party was trying to say. While he was in the USA he met some people who had worked on John F. Kennedy's 1960 campaign. He went through a selection of slogans that Kennedy's campaign had used and found one which appeared ideally suited to the Irish case, 'Let's Make it your Kind of Country'. This neatly summed

³¹ This was the first time Fianna Fáil produced an election manifesto.

up what seemed to be wrong with the economy, where, between the oil crisis, continuing stagflation, and numerous strikes, the country appeared to have come to a standstill. The message was that Fianna Fáil would set things right.

By the time the election was called, Fianna Fáil strategists had only to fine-tune their arrangements. The itinerary of the leader's tour had been mapped out fully; a detailed and imaginative manifesto was ready for publication the day after the Dail was dissolved; a campaign song had been commissioned entitled 'My Kind of Country,' sung by a well-known Irish pop star; posters and election literature had been printed and distributed; the party's advertising agencies were ready to go; and various gimmickry were ready for distribution (stickers, T-shirts, hats and sunshades).

The Fine Gael campaign preparations were characterised by both confidence and traditionalism. There seemed to be good reason for the former. In 1974, the minister for local government, Jim Tully, had carried out a revision of constituency boundaries with the aim of shortening the odds on good seat-vote ratios in favour of the coalition partners.³² A second reason for governmental complacency was the fact that, despite a consistently bad showing in the published opinion polls, the

³² Tully's plan was to create three-seat constituencies where the coalition parties were strong (with, say, around 50 per cent of the vote) and four-seat constituencies where they were not so strong (say 40 per cent). In the normal course of events this should have maximised their gains. As Sinnott points out (1992, p. 69): 'Since the quota is 25 per cent in a three-seater and 20 per cent in a four-seater, the expected outcome was two out of three (or 67 per cent of the representation) in a three-seater and two out of four (or 50 per cent of the representation) in a four-seater'. Unfortunately for Jim Tully events proved not to be so normal in 1977 and his plan backfired due to a major vote swing to Fianna Fáil. This episode has resulted in a new term for the political lexicon, a 'tullymander', defined by Sinnott (1992) as, 'a gerrymander that has an effect opposite to that intended'.

government had a good record of by-election victories. The general consensus among press and politicians alike was that Fianna Fáil would have a tough job ousting the National Coalition. In the words of one political correspondent, known for his colourful metaphors, a Fianna Fáil victory 'would be the greatest come-back since Lazarus' (quoted in Farrell, 1978b, p. 97).

The fact that Fine Gael was confident helps to explain why so little attention was paid to campaign preparation. Minimal effort was made to prepare for the election. There were no fundraising or membership drives, no organisational reviews; the party remained in a blissful state of stagnation. The only preparations which could be made in the absence of information on the election date was the production of posters and election literature. In line with the practice in earlier elections, an ad hoc standing committee started meeting from April 1977, a few short months before the election. Members included senior politicians and the party's general secretary, J. W. Sanfey.³³

The party's national executive forbade the holding of any nominating conventions until after the Dáil had been dissolved. Ostensibly the intention was to reduce faction fighting by forcing the decisions to be made quickly. More likely the reason was a Machiavellian one. The national executive then consisted primarily of sitting parliamentarians who had a vested interest in minimising intra-party competition in their constituencies by restricting the entry of newcomers. The veto

³³ The standing committee contained both Fine Gael and Labour members. According to one member, it tended to consist of a 'floating population'. Among the members were Richie Ryan (Finance minister), Garret FitzGerald (Foreign minister), Conor Cruise O'Brien (Posts and Telegraph minister), Michael O'Leary (Labour minister), and Jim Dooge (a senior Fine Gael adviser). The press officer, and on occasions, Jack Jones of MRBI also attended meetings.

on selection conventions prevented new candidates from engaging in pre-election canvassing and so their introduction to voters occurred very late in the day.

Throughout early 1977 speculation about an election mounted. Cosgrave did nothing to stop it. Without taking any advice or commissioning any polls, and without any early warning to the party organisation, Cosgrave called the election on 25 May. This was only three days after the party's annual árd fheis. The general secretary had advised strongly against this, pointing out that the party needed time to prepare and that anyway the organisation was jaded after the árd fheis which itself is a huge organisational undertaking. But weightier counsel prevailed: for instance, the parliamentary Labour party were in favour of an early election.³⁴

Lack of organisational preparedness manifested itself in a number of ways. For instance, the leader's tour was arranged in a very ad hoc manner during the campaign. Journalists and the constituency organisations were usually only given one day's warning of the Fine Gael leader's movements. There was no specially-equipped bus, no detailed logistical plans. In time-honoured fashion, the party's general secretary sent a standard memo at very short notice informing local party workers of Cosgrave's impending visit and advising them: 'You should make arrangements to make the maximum use of his visit.'³⁵

The party's manifesto bore the hallmarks of having been produced at great speed. It was released the day after the Fianna Fáil manifesto and there any coincidence between the documents ended. Unlike the glossy Fianna Fáil manifesto,

³⁴ The fact that Labour was represented on the strategy committee gave the party considerable influence over Fine Gael deliberations.

³⁵ Sample letter from Sanfey to local party organisations, Fine Gael headquarters' archives.

the Fine Gael programme was cobbled together on sheets of photocopied paper. The content was not that inviting either, consisting largely of a defence of governmental policies over the previous four years and of a claim that the economy was on the move again. One journalist, commenting on the manner of the manifesto's presentation, wrote that it was: 'as if victory were certain and issues didn't matter. They offered yesterday an economic programme which had not been costed. And they did it with a suave and smiling confidence which was staggering'.³⁶

The lack of Fine Gael organisational preparedness is graphically illustrated in the files of correspondence of the party's general secretary. For instance, five days after the election was called, Sanfey wrote to constituency secretaries asking them to provide details on their requirements for election literature.³⁷ Three days later, in a letter to each constituency director of elections - and where there was not one, to each candidate - Sanfey wrote: 'Constituencies which have not yet done so should immediately inform headquarters of the following: (a) the location and full address of election headquarters with telephone numbers if available; (b) the name and address of the director of elections with the phone number'.³⁸ In a footnote to the letter, Sanfey for the first time informed the local party organisations of the name and location of the party's press officer.

³⁶ Bruce Arnold in the *Irish Independent*, 28 May 1977.

³⁷ Sanfey to each constituency secretary, 30 May 1977 (Fine Gael headquarters' archives).

³⁸ Sanfey to local organisations, 2 June 1977 (Fine Gael headquarters' archives).

5.2.2. Agencies and Consultants

There were three separate advertising agencies employed by Fianna Fáil in 1977. The main target voters identified by the party's market research were women and the youth. The 1970s had seen issues relating to women coming to the fore for the first time in Irish politics (as shown, for instance, by the *McGee Case*³⁹) and the Women's Political Movement had become increasingly active. It was clear that women voters were a target grouping for the picking. The Peter Owens advertising agency were commissioned to design advertisements for this grouping; suitable manifesto proposals were drawn up; and six women were added by the national executive to the list of party candidates.

Targeting the youth vote looked even more promising. As a result of a recent amendment to the constitution, which lowered the voting age to eighteen years, there was a swelling in the numbers of first-time voters: 25 per cent of the electorate were voting for the first time. Fianna Fáil commissioned the Des O'Meara advertising agency to concentrate on this specific grouping. Its advertising was limited to evening papers, the *Sunday World*, and a pop magazine, *Starlight*.

The principle issues indicated by the market research were economic, particularly those relating to unemployment and inflation. It was these issues that the manifesto honed in on and that advertisements dealt most with. The party's principle advertising agency, O'Kennedy-Brindley, was commissioned to concentrate on economic issues.

The Fianna Fáil strategists organised television training for frontbench

³⁹ Where a women successfully challenged the constitutionality of the government's ban on importing contraceptives.

spokespersons, sending them on courses in Carr Communications, Ireland's leading communications training school. This was in direct response to the evident growing importance of television as a medium of political communication.⁴⁰

The flagship of the Fianna Fáil campaign was the leader's tour. On the face of it, this was nothing new to Irish electioneering. However, this was a tour coordinated and executed like none before; 'planned down to the last reverend mother'.⁴¹ It was decided that Lynch should tour almost all constituencies (covering more than 4,000 miles) in a specially converted bus, ostentatiously referred to as the 'Mobile Media and Communications Unit'. The bus was specially converted by Modern Display Artists to contain a radio-telephone link with party headquarters, a 'telefacsimile unit', a photocopier, a toilet, a public address system, and a demountable election platform.⁴²

As in earlier elections, Fine Gael placed heavy reliance on its sole advertising agency, Arks. In the lead-up to the election, representatives of the party's standing committee held a series of discussions with the Arks contact. By the time the election was called, posters and election literature were at an advanced stage of preparation. The principal Arks contact at that time has spoken in a private interview of how disorganised the Fine Gael campaign was. He received little guidance and there was evidence of personal disagreements over strategy between senior

⁴⁰ Much attention was also given to improving the organisation of árd fheiseanna. In 1974, for the first time, designers and professional people were brought in to improve on design and appearance, to promote a professional image.

⁴¹ R. Mulcahy in *Hibernia*, 27 May 1977, p. 4.

⁴² P. Mair in *Hibernia*, 24 June 1977, p. 5; also Corr (1977, p. 4).

representatives of the party.

With the exception of Arks and MRBI (for market research), Fine Gael made use of no other agencies in the 1977 election. The contrast with Fianna Fáil as regards the use of specialist consultants was even more stark, Fine Gael continuing to make use of senior politicians and amateur volunteers. For instance, the minister for Finance, Richie Ryan, was appointed Fine Gael's director of elections. This was a curious choice. Ryan had a busy government department to run and a vulnerable constituency to defend. He was unlikely to have much time for this new rôle as director of elections.

The day the election was called a young university economist, Moore McDowell, telephoned the Fine Gael headquarters and volunteered to help in the campaign. The following day he was interrupted during a game of squash and invited in to meet Cosgrave who gave him a choice of two jobs, either to co-ordinate the leader's tour or to handle press relations. McDowell opted for the former job as he had no experience of press relations. But a day or two later the party contacted him again and asked him to be the press officer. He was given an empty room in Leinster House, where he had to wait several days for a telephone to be installed and to receive an assistant.

5.2.3. Market Research

Irish Marketing Surveys was commissioned by Fianna Fáil to carry out market research in the run-up to the election. These polls indicated target issues, voters, and the party's strong selling points. On the latter, the party leader emerged as vital. At an early stage in their preparations, the strategists decided to 'push Jack

Lynch right up front, to market him aggressively as a potential commodity'.⁴³ To this end, posters and advertisements were designed to focus on Lynch; letter-headed newspaper was printed with Lynch's photograph reproduced on it.

Fine Gael's first private poll was taken one day after Cosgrave called the election. Nine days later the managing director of MRBI presented the findings to a startled gathering of party strategists. The poll predicted a Fianna Fáil landslide: Fianna Fáil had 58 per cent of the vote; Fine Gael 25 per cent; Labour 10 per cent.⁴⁴ The findings of the poll were kept quiet so as not to dampen morale, and there was still a belief that the 'Tullymarder' would make all the difference. A bullish confidence was maintained. Two days after the findings of the first poll were known, the party's director of election sent a memo to the local party organisations stating:

We have always known that our opponents would mount a massive campaign against us, but the signs are that victory can be ours. . . . Our opponents have mounted such a campaign at the beginning that they appear to be running out of steam. Nevertheless we must be on guard against their ability to put on an extra burst of activity in the closing days of the campaign.⁴⁵

Both Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael made use of market research during the

⁴³ *Hibernia*, 24 June 1977, p. 4.

⁴⁴ In later polls the coalition was seen to close the gap, but the Fianna Fáil lead appeared unassailable (Smith, 1985, pp. 139 ff.).

⁴⁵ Ryan to each constituency director of elections, 6 June 1977 (Fine Gael headquarters' archives).

campaign.⁴⁶ Fianna Fáil strategists appeared better able to react to the findings of their polls. For example, at a midpoint in the election, the party's market research indicated that Fianna Fáil had low credibility on the issues of social welfare and law and order. In response, two series of advertisements were produced: two by Peter Owens on social welfare, and one by O'Kennedy-Brindley on security, 'Boot Boys Rule OK'. These advertisements appeared within days of the market research findings. The director of election commented afterwards: 'This is the area where market research was of particular value. It enabled us to isolate the current issues and to react to them' (Corr, 1977, p. 5).

Fine Gael's advertising gave every impression of following whims rather than research recommendations. The emphasis was on continuity: 'Ireland is now back on the road to steady economic recovery. The good work should not be interrupted'. Slogans tended to be long-winded: 'Now you've got a good government. Keep it'; 'Keep the winning team. Let the good work continue'. This last full-page advertisement, which appeared in the newspapers on the final weekend of the election, featured photographs of all the Fine Gael ministers and a large photograph of Cosgrave. It ignored the fact that neither the ministers nor Cosgrave were scoring well in the opinion polls, that these were not the areas to lay stress on (Farrell, 1978b, p. 118).

As the campaign progressed, bad co-ordination and signs of panic began to manifest themselves in the Fine Gael camp. Fine Gael strategists realised at an early stage that Fianna Fáil was on to a winner with its attractive manifesto. It was

⁴⁶ It is not clear how many polls were commissioned by Fianna Fáil. Fine Gael ordered two national polls and one Dublin poll from MRBI.

decided that every effort should be put into attacking it on the basis of bad costings and what were seen as unrealistic proposals. The Fine Gael strategists were determined that nothing should distract attention from this. However, inevitably there were differences of opinion. A senior cabinet minister and member of the Labour party, Conor Cruise O'Brien, raised the issue of Northern Ireland and whether Fianna Fáil were to be trusted on security. The Fine Gael director of elections was furious and was convinced that this seriously jeopardized the Fine Gael campaign by shifting media attention away from the Fianna Fáil manifesto and onto security which, according to the polls, was not an issue (Smith, 1985, pp. 141-2).

The division appeared to be wider, however. In the last week of the campaign several senior government politicians again raised security and Northern Ireland. If anything these attacks were futile. The polls indicated little interest among voters in the issue, and Fianna Fáil had no difficulty shaking off the attacks (Farrell and Manning, 1978, p. 150). Fine Gael had no more success attacking the Fianna Fáil manifesto. Its criticisms that the manifesto had not been properly costed looked thin when it was pointed out that neither was Fine Gael's. In general Fianna Fáil appeared to have a ready answer for most of the Fine Gael criticisms.

5.3. CONCLUSION

This chapter has focused on Irish campaigning in earlier decades, the intention being to provide a basis for comparison with campaigning in more recent decades. We have seen how, for the most part, campaigning by Irish parties (Fine Gael in particular) in the 1950s-1960s bore little resemblance to the framework of contemporary campaigning set out in chapter 4. It was not until 1977 that there was

any real evidence of a shift towards more professional campaign practices. The 1977 election provides an excellent case study of the two extremes in campaigning: the well organised and the poorly organised campaign. The basic irony in this election was that the party responsible for its timing was least prepared for it. Plans had not been drawn up; there were no strategy committees apart from the standing committee of senior politicians; the organisation was exhausted after its annual *árd fheis* just days before the election announcement. Fine Gael may have employed many of the paraphernalia familiar today in campaigning, but these were not used effectively. The party's first opinion poll was not commissioned until after the election was announced. Its results and the results of subsequent polls appear to have been largely ignored by the party hierarchy. The advertising agency was given little time to draw up a professional publicity campaign, was provided with little (and apparently conflicting) advice, and produced as a result advertisements which, if anything, tended to promote the party's weakest features. No other specialist agencies or consultants were employed.

In stark contrast, Fianna Fáil mounted a campaign so professional that it was to influence the style and method of campaigning from then on. There were at least three basic features to the party's successful campaign: long term preparation and planning backed up by market research; close attention to campaign organisation aided by the extensive use of agencies (including three advertising agencies and a TV-training agency) and campaign specialists (such as professional press and research officers); well prepared and carefully chosen themes and images, again using market research, and their presentation to the 'modern' media of mass communications. In short, the campaign approach of Fianna Fáil in 1977 was in line

with the framework proposed in chapter 4.

To demonstrate both that this was not a one-off change and that it was not unique to that party, we need to give some attention to subsequent campaign styles. Accordingly, the next chapter consists of a detailed case study of the Fine Gael 1981 campaign - a campaign which considerably built upon, and developed, the trends set by Fianna Fáil in 1977.

This discussion is followed, in chapter 7, by a general assessment of campaign trends throughout the 1980s and into the early 1990s.

CHAPTER SIX

THE FINE GAEL CAMPAIGN OF 1981: A CASE STUDY

In chapter 4 it was proposed that there were three principal elements of change in party electioneering which warranted examination: (1) the nature of the party's preparations for the campaign; (2) the consultants and agencies employed throughout; (3) the commissioning and use of market research. We saw in the last chapter how there were shortcomings in all of these areas in the campaigns of the 1950s and 1960s (particularly those of Fine Gael). As recently as 1977, the Fine Gael campaign style had changed little from the earlier patterns. By contrast, in 1977 Fianna Fáil made great strides towards campaign professionalisation.

In this chapter, we see how, in 1981, it was the turn of Fine Gael to address the issue of campaign professionalism. The 1981 Fine Gael campaign is a landmark in Irish electoral politics, setting the trend for campaigns ever since.

As before, this chapter examines the Fine Gael campaign in terms of each of the three elements of campaigning which were isolated in chapter 4: preparations,

agencies, and market research.¹

6.1. CAMPAIGN PREPARATIONS

The last chapter revealed a number of shortcomings in Fine Gael's preparations for elections in the 1950s-1970s. The central organisation was weak and uncoordinated; the vast bulk of campaign decision-making and expenditure was devolved to the constituencies and branches; there was little attempt to standardise the election material; the little national strategic planning engaged in was late and rushed. How does Fine Gael in 1981 compare with this record?

The attention given to campaign preparations is a crucial factor in the degree of professionalisation of a party's campaign. As we saw in Chapter 4, when examining the comparative evidence, there are three main themes which fall under the rubric of campaign preparations.

- I There is the question of how long before the campaign the party began its preparations, and who was involved? Here we are interested in the nature and complexity of the committee structure, which, as we saw in Chapter 4, tends to graduate to a smaller, more cohesive structure as the election draws near.
- II We need to examine the party's product policy and communication activities: which aspects did it intend to market (the leader, party image, party

¹ This chapter is a substantially revised version of Farrell (1986). Apart from the published sources, it is based on access to Fine Gael's files for the period and on a series of interviews with the main party strategists. A full list of the interviewees is presented in Appendix B.

policies); what preparations were made for its communication activities (direct and indirect); to what extent did the communication activities match the product policy?

III There is the question of who is in charge: the politicians or the backroom strategists. In European campaigns - as compared to the USA - the politicians still seem to call the shots; however, as we saw in Chapter 4, the political consultants and strategists are playing a more and more prominent role.

6.1.1. When did the Preparations Begin and Who was Involved?

A few weeks after the 1977 election, Fine Gael elected a new leader, Garret FitzGerald, who immediately started a major re-organisation of the party on three fronts: the development of policies, organisational reform, and the modernisation of communications. This chapter examines the latter. (Party organisational reform is dealt with in Chapter 8 below.)

Almost immediately on his accession to party leadership FitzGerald made two important appointments: Peter Prendergast, a marketing specialist, was appointed as party general secretary; and Ted Nealon, a well-known television reporter who had been head of the government information service during the previous coalition administration, was appointed the party's press and public relations secretary. Nealon was primarily responsible for modernising the party's communication capabilities in time for the next general election. He gathered together a group of

friends working in media and marketing,² and made immediate arrangements to test a more coordinated, professional campaign style during the next national campaign, the European Parliament election.

By 1979, Fine Gael was a noticeably different organisation. In the European election of that year the party's national vote rose by almost three per cent, and by even more in Dublin and Leinster. Fine Gael strategists attributed the result to improved campaigning techniques. Perhaps the most notable feature of the Euro campaign was the leader's national tour. FitzGerald travelled in a bus throughout the country, hosting up to 40 press conferences in half as many days. The tour represented, for one strategist, a substantial press, public relations, and 'popular' success: 'there, in all its embroidery was the visible image of the party carried to the four corners of the country'; it 'inspired confidence'; it was 'Mount Street brought to the people'.³

A confidential post-mortem identified the utility of the 'apparatus of the tour' in terms of the next general election. The media interest in supposed, but non-existent, telephone links and bar facilities in the bus was especially noted. The report recommended the installation of such facilities; the author reasoned, 'these external trappings . . . provide a symbolism of power which, *ipso facto*, to the electorate are [sic] translated in terms of trust and confidence'. Detailed recommendations were made on telecommunication facilities, the organisation of press conferences and advance planning. On the latter, the report recommended that a schedule be written

² In a private interview, Nealon described these people as 'media people', 'politically aware people', and 'the country element'.

³ *European Election Campaign, May 1979: Report and Analysis* (Dublin: Fine Gael, 1979). The following discussion is from this source.

to outline time-and-mile details. As a supplement, it proposed that a minutely detailed action plan should be produced, containing complete information on all stopping locations. This report was the basis of much of Fine Gael's preparations for the 1981 general election.

A communications committee was set up by Ted Nealon in January 1980. This was designed to operate in conjunction with a strategy committee, under Peter Prendergast, and there was some overlap in the membership of the two committees. While the aim of the strategy committee was to improve on Fine Gael's organisational and general preparations, the communications committee was specially involved in drawing up plans to market the party, its manifesto and its leadership. The membership of the communications committee included people with skills in publicity, public relations, advertising, marketing and the media. A confidential record of the first meeting defined its function as 'the production and implementation of a plan of action to maximise the projection of Fine Gael as an alternative government in the context of the next general election'.⁴

The committee was divided up into at least five ad hoc sub-committees, concentrating on advertising, party political broadcasts, the leader's tour, campaign gimmickry, and election literature. Throughout 1980, the sub-committees were preoccupied with the development of a communications framework for the subsequent election. This framework was submitted to the strategy committee in August 1980 and was accepted in full.

In February 1981, as the likely election date drew near, the committee structure was simplified and streamlined into a single election committee, which had

⁴ *Election Publicity Programme* (Dublin: Fine Gael, 1980).

overall responsibility for all aspects of the final campaign preparations, and which was in charge throughout the campaign itself. In effect, this was an inner committee of both the strategy and communications committees, and was referred to as a 'hard core board of directors'.

In summary, Fine Gael's organisational preparations for the 1981 campaign began well in advance; they in fact dated from the moment the new leader was elected in 1977. In the first instance, a complex series of committees and sub-committees were set up to oversee the party's reorganisation, policy reviews and general campaign preparations. As the election date neared, the committee structure was simplified with all the key strategists forming a single election committee.

6.1.2. Product Policy and Communication Activities

From quite an early stage in its preparations - as revealed in the communications committee's August 1980 report - it was clear that the party's product policy would focus on two key aspects: a detailed manifesto and the popular party leader. The communication activities (direct and indirect) were prepared accordingly.

It was envisaged that the indirect communication activities would focus most of all on FitzGerald. To this end, the committee drew up plans for a comprehensive leader's tour. The committee proposed that this would be:

the most important single feature influencing the success or otherwise of the promotional aspect of the election campaign. Because of the likelihood of a presidential-style campaign, the leader's tour will this time attract media attention, and set the tone of media reaction to the party's progress to an

even greater extent than in the past three general elections.⁵

The work of the sub-committee responsible for the leader's tour can be examined in terms of four themes: transport, staffing, telecommunications, and press and public relations. First, regarding the organisation of transport, the sub-committee repeated the recommendations of the European campaign post mortem, examined all available transport facilities and in particular proposed to hire a special train that would 'produce dramatic effect, generate good news coverage, stimulate public interest, galvanise party workers, and project a forward-looking dynamic image'.⁶ This 'dramatic start-up', lasting 36 hours, would be followed by a nationwide tour by bus, using a helicopter and cars as back-ups.⁷ Second, in relation to staffing, the sub-committee proposed two separate appointments: a Tour Manager and a Press and Public Relations Manager. The possibility of having uniformed outriders who could double as couriers, and of having six uniformed youths on the bus to distribute literature and 'cut a hoopla dash' was also considered. Third, the sub-committee proposed that radio telephones might be feasible within a 35 mile radius of Dublin. Finally, they argued that press conferences needed to be restricted in length and time and ought to be held first thing in the morning. The public relations aspect would be facilitated by the use of three advance men who would leapfrog each other from location to location and who

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ *General Election Constituency Tour by Party Leader* (Dublin: Fine Gael, 1980).

⁷ The hiring of the train was kept secret until the very last moment. Strategic plans for the campaign referred to it as a 'special project'.

would be responsible for preparing sites for the leader's subsequent visit. The success of the tour would depend on good linkages between constituency and national organisations. At the local end, the sub-committee proposed the appointment of constituency PROs, each responsible for preparing the constituency and for acting both as press officer and as a source of feedback to the press centre in Mount Street, which would be fully equipped and staffed eighteen hours a day.

With regard to direct communication activities, the August report detailed preparations for postering, election literature, press advertisements and merchandising or gimmicky items. There were reservations about the value of posters but the committee was persuaded that appearances had to be maintained and aimed to maximise their impact in terms of style, timing and location.

The party's advertising campaign was controlled by another sub-committee of the communications committee. This sub-committee identified the central objective: to reassure existing supporters and to attract new ones. In the absence of information on the manifesto (see below), the style of the campaign and the state of the economy at election time, the strategists could not produce comprehensive advertising plans and so concentrated instead on technical details.

The committee made a number of recommendations on direct communication activities, all of which were implemented before the end of 1980. A national director of postering was appointed and constituency PROs made responsible for local postering. They were to organise workers and billboard sites and be ready to act immediately on plans laid down by the national director as soon as the election was

called.⁸ Another sub-committee made specific proposals on election literature.⁹

Finally, a sub-committee was set up to examine what the committee termed 'special advertising' - campaign gimmicks and handouts. While admitting that such items are 'irrelevant to the serious issues of the election', the committee nonetheless saw a valuable role for them: 'they can prove very effective in portraying to the voters an active, dynamic organisation out to win. They can also prove welcome morale boosters to the party activists engaged in the hard slog of electioneering'.¹⁰

6.1.3. Who was in Charge?

It is clear that the development of an elaborate committee structure indicated the degree to which professional campaign strategists and agencies were increasingly

⁸ Provisionally the committee proposed that 137,000 leader's and 205,000 candidates' posters should be printed. They planned to print and distribute the leader's posters to the constituencies by September 1980. Should the Fianna Fáil leader have called a sudden election, however, they had a contingency plan to print and distribute the posters within 48 hours. Around this time Fine Gael launched a mid-term poster campaign against the government. One strategist pointed out in a private interview how they were influenced by the success the British Conservatives had with such a campaign. More practically, the party was able to take advantage of the availability of cheap poster space as a result of a ban on outdoor cigarette advertising (Byrne, 1981).

⁹ Artwork for canvassing cards and election addresses, with a choice of colours, was to be distributed to all constituencies which would arrange local printing. A special edition of the party newspaper, *The National Democrat*, would be printed and available 24 hours after the declaration of the election. They would also produce a guide for canvassers, a special leaflet on prices, and a weekly campaign news sheet.

¹⁰ *Election Publicity Programme (op.cit.)*. The committee considered, among other items, a balloon or airship, umbrellas, T-shirts, paper caps, car sunvisors, bumper stickers, and a jigsaw. They also examined the possibility of making such items available on a more permanent basis in order to build a 'corporate party identity'. Finally, it was proposed to commission a party song which would provide background promotional music at all party events.

being used in Irish election campaigns. However, this should not be taken to mean that the strategists were fully in control of events. On the contrary, in key areas of decision-making, the politicians remained firmly in charge. This was most notable over the design of Fine Gael's manifesto, which was written in close secrecy by the party leader and close advisors (Farrell, 1986). This caused problems for the election committee when the manifesto was finally revealed. For instance, a large part of its advertising plans had to be jettisoned once the complicated Fine Gael tax proposals became known (see below).

The comparative trends, summarised in chapter 4, show that Fine Gael was not exceptional in preventing the strategists from having a free rein. But, as we see later, this fact that the politicians remained the final arbiters on campaign decision-making is crucial for explaining the selective use by the party of its market research.

Overall, Fine Gael's preparations for the 1981 campaign bear little relationship to the approach followed in its election campaigns of the 1950s-1970s. In line with the comparative picture set out in chapter 4, the preparations started well in advance; they involved a complex committee structure; product policy and communication activities were determined long before polling day.

6.2. THE USE OF AGENCIES

In chapter 5, a distinction was drawn between the use of generalist and specialist consultancy. There we saw that while Fine Gael may have made steps to professionalise its advertisements and election material in the 1960s, this was attempted with the use of just one advertising agency, very much in the generalist

mode. In 1981 the picture was very different.

We have already seen that a number of key staff appointments were made by the party in the run up to the 1981 campaign. Together with the greater use of specialist volunteers from the media and marketing areas, these new appointments contributed to a general professionalisation of the organisation in time for the election.

The party also made far greater use of specialist agencies than ever before. To groom the principal politicians and, in particular, the party leader, Public Relations of Ireland (PRI) were commissioned to provide specialist advice. Their services were especially important in preparing for television appearances, and in this, their advice was supplemented by that of an experienced television producer and some of the politicians were also sent on preparatory courses at Carr Communications. PRI were also responsible for arranging the party's election broadcasts. Among the other specialists employed by the party in 1981 were a financial adviser for fundraising activities and a merchandiser for drawing up ideas and acquiring campaign gimmickry. As we shall see in the next section, the party made far more use of market research, commissioning research from two separate companies.

Finally, three advertising agencies were employed: Arks to handle the general campaign; Adsell to take care of specialist target areas; and Brian Cronin's to handle the Dublin campaign. The rationale for employing more than one agency was subsequently explained by one strategist in terms of the large number of different targets, the desire to improve efficiency by an element of competition and because agencies 'are lost in the electoral market . . . They're used to long-term,

often annual, plans - nothing so fluid as an election campaign'.¹¹

Adsell advertising agency was also given responsibility for designing the party's posters. For the candidates' posters the main objective was to achieve uniformity. A standardised format was created and distributed, leaving local organisations responsible for printing. To meet its brief for a 'strong, dynamic and distinctive' poster of the leader, Adsell selected from numerous photographs of FitzGerald a picture that underwent detailed touching up in London to remove a small bump from one shoulder and some facial wrinkles. Drafts were examined, the constituencies consulted, posters from campaigns in ten other countries scrutinised and sample posters tested surreptitiously late at night. The poster finally chosen had a colour photograph of FitzGerald with the slogan 'Garret for Taoiseach' on top and a new Fine Gael logo underneath, both texts aligned upwards from left to right to give the poster 'a dynamic effect'.

6.3. MARKET RESEARCH

In chapter 4 it was pointed out that it was not enough to simply look for evidence of what and how many polls were *commissioned* by a party: we need to also assess what *use* was actually made of the market research. We saw in the previous chapter how Fine Gael preceded Fianna Fáil in the move towards commissioning market research. However, as the 1977 campaign revealed clearly, it was Fianna Fáil which was the first to show signs of actually making use of the survey results to guide campaign strategies. Another point from chapter 5 worth

¹¹ As we saw in Chapter 5, Fianna Fáil was already using three advertising agencies in 1977.

reminding ourselves of, was the 1971 memo from Arks which advised Fine Gael to make use of qualitative research. That advice was ignored then. As we can see in this chapter, it was finally to be followed a decade later.

Fine Gael commissioned research from both the MRBI and from Irish Consumer Research (ICR) for the 1981 campaign. For the most part, the MRBI quantitative polls were used primarily for organisational preparations, in particular local vote management, and nomination strategies. We saw in chapter 4 that there has been an increasing tendency for parties to save on the expense of large scale polling and instead to make use of the data published by the newspapers.¹² Fine Gael commissioned only one pre-election national poll from MRBI.¹³ The bulk of MRBI's work for the party involved constituency polling in targeted marginal constituencies (in total there were six such polls in 1981). As such then, the MRBI data were primarily fed into the deliberations of the party's strategy committee. By contrast, the ICR material was used primarily by the communications committee, and in particular by Shane Molloy, the member of the communications committee responsible for advertising (private interview). In short, then, the ICR research played a far more significant role than the MRBI data in the preparation of the party's communications activities. As one strategist put it, when asked to explain why there was a preference for qualitative research: 'During a campaign, we really are not concerned with how people plan to vote; we're more interested in the

¹² According to the Fine Gael general secretary at that time, one of the main functions of the MRBI national poll was for 'party morale', by providing an indication of how well the party was doing, but also, more subliminally, by adding to the feeling that the organisation was being run more professionally.

¹³ *Electorate Attitudes on National Economic and Political Issues: Market Research Survey Report* (MRBI, 1981).

qualitative end' (private interview). Another strategist commented: 'This sort of research proved more practical, far more revealing. Its all about "why"' (private interview).

This tendency to rely more on qualitative data is consistent with comparative trends, as shown in chapter 4. The ICR research, therefore, warrants most attention here. There were, however, occasions when the party strategists made use of MRBI data to guide their communication strategies. Where this occurs we need to make some reference to the MRBI data.

Strictly speaking, it is not accurate to refer to such qualitative research as 'scientific'. It has been called 'pop-psychology' by one Fine Gael strategist. The ICR research did not entail representative sampling. It was designed to give no more than a taste of the political climate; but it was an 'objective' taste. The methodological technique involved eight discussion groups with 8-10 people in each.¹⁴ While it may be difficult to refer to the ICR research as 'scientific', nevertheless, it is still consistent with Richard Rose's (1967) definition of 'objective' feedback, as set out in chapter 4.¹⁵

6.3.1. The Use of Market Research to Guide Campaign Preparations

The party commissioned ICR to carry out some qualitative market research in

¹⁴ ICR sought to get samples from all socioeconomic backgrounds and age groups. The groups were also broken down into gender types and party affiliations.

¹⁵ According to Rose (1967, pp. 153-4), feedback is 'objective' where 'the object is, as in commercial advertising, to obtain information about a potential audience, to be used in order to promote a product'.

January-February 1981.¹⁶ Dealing first with election issues and the likely content of the party's manifesto, the ICR report uncovered a number of interesting points, perhaps the most significant of which was that the electorate tended not to blame the government for the economic crisis.¹⁷ 'People constantly allude to the concept of "world recession" as the principal cause of trouble; this is often linked with the increases in oil prices, which is taken to affect the cost of living generally'. The report pointed to the fact that people actually felt the Fianna Fáil administration were not being hard enough on them.

Underlying the various discussions aimed at assessing the mood of the people at this time there might be detected the suggestions that the people of the country had received too much, too quickly and too easily . . . It was several times suggested that we have tended to abandon the idea of 'earning our living' and that a change in attitude is much needed throughout the country.

Fine Gael also made use of quantitative market research as part of its campaign preparations. The Market Research Bureau of Ireland (MRBI) was commissioned to carry out a survey in March of 1981.¹⁸ A primary objective of the survey was to assess transfer patterns through an application of a simulated ballot paper technique. More generally, the survey aimed at assessing in detail 'current attitudes of the electorate to a number of national, economic, political and leadership issues'. Without going into detail here, it is worth pointing out some degree of

¹⁶ *Political Attitudes in Early 1981* (ICR, 1981).

¹⁷ It is worth noting that the British Conservatives' market research in 1983 had similar findings (Butler and Kavanagh, 1984).

¹⁸ This was based on an unweighted quota sample of 596 respondents, a weighted N of 794.

Table 6.1. Percentage agreeing or disagreeing with the statement: 'The people of this country will have to make sacrifices to get over the country's problems'.

Strongly agree	45%
Agree	43%
Disagree	5%
Strongly disagree	2%
No opinion/don't know	5%

Source: MRBI, 1981

similarity between the MRBI findings and those of the earlier qualitative research. This is most obvious in relation to the apparent acceptance of the need for austerity. Respondents were asked to record the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statement: 'the people of this country will have to make sacrifices to get over the country's problems'. The results, in Table 6.1, speak for themselves.

There was evidence in the ICR research of two potentially significant target groups: youth and farmers. The report noted that an important potential source of support would be among the 'more idealistic' younger voters. Youth also appeared a likely target because young and old discussants alike were of the view that the youth vote was more fluid and less tied down by traditional party identification patterns. Related to this was the finding that young married couples were experiencing acute problems in obtaining mortgages. Farmers were seen as an important target largely because the party would lose little by directing specific policies at them:

Another matter of concern to voters is the present state of the country's agriculture . . . It is most notable that it is not merely that farmers complain, but that people in general express concern about the farmers' present difficulties.¹⁹

Three other significant findings worth mentioning were that: the discussants considered Fianna Fáil by far the more professional party; they were tired of election promises; and they attached great importance to election manifestos. The report concluded with three main recommendations. First, the researchers suggested

¹⁹ This apparent sense of goodwill to farmers was attributed by the report, to 'a primitive sense of identification with the land . . . [as] an essential source of survival and well-being'.

that Fine Gael's optimum strategy in the campaign would 'lie in presenting a prospect of government which in broad terms could be described as austere and idealistic'. Such a strategy, the report reasoned, would attract votes both in general and in particular from younger floating voters. Second, the report recommended that a 'leading theme' in the campaign should be the restoration of agricultural prosperity. Third the report suggested that Fine Gael should maintain that it was aiming for a majority in its own right; to talk of coalition would lose them support.

Apart from isolating policy areas suitable for the party's manifesto, the research also focused on that other part of the party's proposed product policy, the leader. The ICR report described FitzGerald's image as follows: 'He is regarded as able and respected for his normal qualities - in contrast to Haughey, he is regarded as honest and genuine, not self-seeking but dedicated to the good of the country'. Subsequent research, however, qualified this. One of the psychologists involved pointed out later that Haughey was seen by some discussants as a 'doer' and FitzGerald as 'inept, intellectual'. More specifically, there was evidence that many people thought FitzGerald, while being a nice man, talked too much.

Overall then, the qualitative research suggested that the party had a lot of scope for campaigning on two main areas of product policy: the manifesto and the party leader. Of the two, the attention seemed most fixed on the former, particularly as the research indicated a number of niches in the market into which the party could easily slot itself. The extent to which the strategists did manage to follow the market research recommendations is revealed by an examination of Fine Gael's communication preparations.

In January 1981, the Fine Gael strategists prepared a communications brief

for the Arks advertising agency on the probable content of the press advertising campaign. Detailed discussions followed, and the main target areas had been agreed upon by April. It was decided that the advertising should concentrate on three main areas: advertisements for the mass audiences focusing on the party; advertisements focusing on FitzGerald; and advertisements focusing on youth and farmers, the target groupings recommended by the market research. (A third target, the Dublin vote, was subsequently included.)²⁰

On leader image, and with particular reference to the ICR recommendations, Fine Gael ran a series of advertisements during the campaign which has pictures of FitzGerald listening to women, to youth, to farmers and so on with the slogan 'Garret listens'. FitzGerald was carefully groomed with a new haircut, closer attention to dress, and on television occasions his glasses were apparently taped to his ears to prevent him appearing too 'donnish'. (He had a habit of removing his glasses to emphasise points.) He was urged to exorcise all but the most essential of statistics and to slow down his speaking speed.

As we saw above, the ICR report made three main recommendations on policy: (1) Fine Gael should promote an image of being both 'austere and idealistic'; (2) it should focus on the restoration of agricultural prosperity as a key electoral theme; (3) the party should talk of electoral victory outright, rather than of any

²⁰ Adsell was given responsibility for the youth campaign. The agency produced a set of proposals. The target grouping was the 18-30 year old age group, and in its report, Adsell concentrated on the 21-24 year olds as a representative sample. They recommended that some 50 advertisements should be produced, at an estimated cost of £47,500, and that another £2,500 should be spent on pirate radio spots. They expected that: 'this campaign will achieve 96 per cent coverage of the 21-24 age group with an average opportunity to see of almost 14 times' (*Fine Gael 1981 Youth Campaign* Adsell, 1981).

possible coalition arrangements.

The Fine Gael manifesto suggested idealism in its title 'Let the Country Win', but its overriding theme was one of austerity (see O'Byrnes, 1986; O'Malley, 1987). The document stressed that Ireland was living beyond its means; that the country was in serious economic difficulties; that all this had to change in order to build 'firm foundations' for the future. Considerable emphasis was placed on the reduction of the national debt over four years, on the reduction of prices and costs through an 18-month anti-inflation programme, on tax cuts and selective spending, and on the improvement of economic efficiency as a means of increasing employment.

'Idealism' came in the form of a number of key proposals on spouses and youth. The main plank of the Fine Gael manifesto was a radical reform of the tax structure. Though complex, it caught the voters' attention favourably, including as it did such novel schemes as a proposal to provide a payment of £9.60 a week for stay-at-home spouses.²¹ A special section on youth proposed such things as policies to encourage employment; improvement of education facilities; tax relief for house purchases and rented accommodation.

In line with the second recommendation of the ICR researchers, farmers also received special attention. As O'Byrnes (1986, p. 86) notes in his assessment of the

²¹ This payment would entail half the married person's tax credit (£500) being paid directly to the spouse. This scheme would coincide with an increased child benefit allowance, and a proposal to pay all welfare dependency allowances to the dependent spouse. In a private interview, one strategist commented later on the £9.60 package: 'This is a classic example of repackaging a product. It started rather vaguely as a proposal of about £500 per annum to women. I don't really know who was responsible for the idea to make it £9.60 a week. I think we all reached the same conclusion. It probably came from the advertising agency asking us to clarify what it meant'.

campaign, Fine Gael 'was taking no chances with the farming vote this time'. Policy proposals included an interest subsidy, the abolition of rates (under certain specified conditions), and various fertiliser and silage grants.

On the question of possible coalition with Labour - relating to ICR's third recommendation - Fine Gael remained ambivalent. In a speech introducing the manifesto, FitzGerald declared: 'we shall be the largest party in the next Dáil'. Yet in the same breath he went on to encourage inter-party vote transfers between Fine Gael and Labour and he permitted the thought that Fine Gael might require support from other quarters in the Dáil after the election:

[W]e shall welcome support from those in any quarter of Dáil Éireann who will accept the key elements of our Programme to reestablish the economic health of our country and to achieve social justice - though we shall never, for the sake of office, betray the principles underlying this Programme.²²

FitzGerald's treatment of the coalition question is a good example of where Fine Gael strategists backed up their qualitative research with quantitative poll data. ICR's qualitative research proposed the exorcising of any reference to coalition, but the MRBI data suggested an alternative strategy. In a position paper, written just before the election, the party's director of elections, Seán O'Leary, addressed the market research findings about coalition.²³ The party's MRBI poll indicated that - providing there were strong inter-party transfers - a Fine Gael/Labour coalition had a good chance of winning. However, in line with ICR's findings, the MRBI poll

²² Speech by FitzGerald, 22 May, 1981.

²³ Fine Gael headquarters archives, n.d. [May 1981?].

also showed that coalition was unpopular. Furthermore, the greatest policy differences between Fine Gael and Labour were over taxation: conflict between the two parties was inevitable. O'Leary realised it was most unlikely that a deal could be struck with Labour to get it to soften its attack on Fine Gael's taxation proposals. What he advised, instead, was that Fine Gael should attempt to switch the attention of the electorate away from the parties and towards the leaders:

We must use the confidence which [FitzGerald] engenders to underwrite the fear of those who are willing to support us but who do not want a coalition government. . . . We [must make clear our willingness to] cooperate with other parties if necessary who accept our policy or who are willing to back us on the basis of that policy in preference to supporting Fianna Fáil. The dominant position of Fine Gael as the largest party must be reflected in any such alliance and Garret FitzGerald [will personally guarantee] that he will go into opposition rather than compromise on Fine Gael policy.

This strategic advice of O'Leary's is a good example of the effective use of market research. The ICR researchers had noted the unpopularity of coalition and the popularity of FitzGerald; but they had not thought to marry the two. It was O'Leary's use of MRBI data which led to this route being followed.

Overall, in terms of leader image and policy proposals, Fine Gael's campaign preparations closely matched the findings of the market research. To what extent was this mere coincidence? The strategists involved in packaging leader and party images have said in private interviews that close attention was paid to market research findings. But they had no influence over the manifesto proposals, a large section of which was written by FitzGerald and one economic advisor. While many of the policy proposals do appear to have matched the recommendations of the ICR report, it should be noted that these only constituted a small proportion of the overall

manifesto proposals. (The document was 70 pages long.) There is reason, therefore, for believing that the 'feedback' being employed by Fine Gael was not solely that provided by the ICR researchers. As the campaign progressed, this was to become more obvious.

6.3.2. The Use of Market Research during the Campaign

ICR were commissioned to carry out another survey during the second week of the election campaign, to assess 'the current position', election issues, and attitudes towards the campaign. The researchers tested on their panels Fianna Fáil advertisements and campaign claims. Fianna Fáil was said to be glossing over its failures in government. For instance, its claim to have created 80,000 new jobs during its term of office was found, at the very least, puzzling.²⁴ Some argued that Fianna Fáil was trying to suggest that the unemployment situation was not as bad as it was. The Fine Gael manifesto was generally found confusing. Respondents noted the proposals to alter the tax system, but they did not really understand them.

Unemployment and inflation were seen as the major issues, but, as the researchers had already found, it was not expected that any of the parties could do anything about these problems. Northern Ireland was not, *prima facie*, seen as an issue. The respondents were interested enough to talk about it, but little was said

²⁴ There was no national census in 1976 (due to budgetary cutbacks). As a result it was not possible to accurately assess population movements over the period. In 1977 it was suddenly discovered that there had been a high degree of immigration in the immediately preceding years. Fianna Fáil exploited this information to claim success in its job creation programme, claiming that large numbers of the immigrants had found jobs (see Walsh, 1981).

about the H-Blocks hunger strikes.²⁵ As for the individual party proposals, the general overriding comment was where would the money come from. The respondents recognised that government borrowing was too high. One respondent commented: 'I don't see how any of the parties can give away anything'.²⁶

Fianna Fáil was still considered to have the professional edge on campaigning, but Fine Gael's strategic preparations had paid some dividends. Respondents felt that the party had gone some way towards catching up with the Fianna Fáil machine:

[T]here was a slight tendency to consider that Fianna Fáil were or would be the more domineering and powerful campaigners. The perception of how Fine Gael would campaign was also somewhere along these lines - they too have T-shirts, a record and are out there looking for votes. This attitude is something of a change from that found in our previous study when a number wondered if Fine Gael were really interested in winning an election.

Fine Gael was catching up in terms of party image, but how was it doing on leader image? The ICR researchers noted that party leaders were playing a 'major role' in the campaign. Haughey came across as more professional and more experienced, but some respondents still found it difficult to trust him. FitzGerald was seen as sincere, though not as having the same experience as Haughey. He was advised to appear 'cool and reasonable'; 'he must speak in terms of single pounds rather than millions of pounds. He should speak slowly and appear confident.

²⁵ This election was called right in the middle of the hunger strike crisis (O'Malley, 1990). H-Block prisoners were fielded as candidates, two of them winning seats. H-Blocks protesters were very vocal (and physical) throughout the election campaign (Penniman and Farrell (eds), 1987).

²⁶ *Election 1981: Group Discussions* (ICR, 1981).

groomed and assured'. It was clear that already the party's strategists had some success in 'selling' FitzGerald. Respondents referred to his good record as foreign minister in the 1970s.

As before, the report concluded with a number of recommendations, a few of which are worth dwelling on. First, regarding the party's campaign, the various advertising slogans were tested on the respondents who found them appropriate. The party was encouraged to emphasise (and clarify) its tax proposals, particularly the £9.60 offer to stay-at-home spouses. Second, the ICR researchers warned that 'in time the Fianna Fáil stressing of 80,000 more jobs during their term of office will become credible if repeated often enough'. Fine Gael was advised to lay some emphasis on job creation proposals. Third, FitzGerald was warned to tread carefully on Northern Ireland:

The situation in Northern Ireland has been referred to frequently by Fianna Fáil in the campaign. Fine Gael would not want to be seen as apathetic in this area despite the claims of voters' disinterest in the subject. . . . It would be advisable for FitzGerald to stress his anxiety and concern about the situation. Possibly he should state that he will seek an immediate meeting with Thatcher after his election.

The report repeated the earlier finding that coalition was not popular with the voters; that Fine Gael should emphasise its intention to become the largest party in the Dáil. The researchers advised:

The party should adopt an assured stance; they should adamantly convey their confidence of gaining enough seats to become the largest party. . . . It is necessary to get the conviction and credibility right. It seems that the media is [sic] giving Fine Gael credit for a greatly improved campaign and this along with the improved rating in opinion polls, should boost the morale of

candidates and canvassers.

When the researchers said 'conviction' they meant it!

Has Garret FitzGerald his acceptance speech written? He should carry it around with him as proof of his own personal conviction. . . . Garret FitzGerald should convey a pleased, confident bearing at the prospect of being the next Taoiseach - there should be no hesitation or qualifications about this - this is what he wants.

What evidence was there that the strategists paid much attention to ICR's recommendations? The newspaper advertisements and television election broadcasts concentrated on promoting a dynamic image of a confident leader. Close attention was paid to explaining the Fine Gael tax proposals. To this extent, ICR's recommendations were being followed.²⁷

An examination of FitzGerald's campaign speeches - each of which he wrote himself (private interview) - suggests that again he and his close advisers had their own views on what he should talk about. This is not to say that his speeches did not reflect the concerns which the ICR researchers found among their respondents. Quite the contrary. On 3 June, FitzGerald told the unemployed that he had 'a message': 'complacency about jobs must be driven from the corridors of power'. He also went into detail on the tax proposals, adding: 'we are going to get it right for the

²⁷ It should be noted, however, that a report submitted to the post-campaign meeting of the election committee was critical of the election broadcasts: '[T]oo much time may have been spent on image building and not enough on information. This may have been because the general outline of the party political was decided in advance and we could not respond flexibly enough when it became clear that information about our programme was a major issue'. (Fine Gael headquarters archives, 20 June, 1981).

housewife too'. On 5 June he made a major speech on Northern Ireland in which he stressed: 'As soon as I am elected, I shall. . . convey to Mrs Thatcher that her present attitude risks alienating an entire community in Northern Ireland'. He made other speeches to the target groupings which ICR had identified before the campaign: on 6 June he told the farmers that their needs and the needs of the nation were 'one and the same'; on 8 June he elaborated on Fine Gael's youth policies.

But these were not the only points made by FitzGerald in his speeches. Furthermore, he ignored ICR advice on quite a few matters. In his speeches he did not place great emphasis on the tax proposals. He explained them, but he did not dwell on them. He may have spoken on unemployment, but his attacks on Fianna Fáil's claim to have provided 80,000 jobs were quite muted. The ICR researchers had advised him not to appear complacent on Northern Ireland, yet he went ahead and gave only one speech on the matter, towards the end of the campaign - which was the way he had originally intended treating it (private interview). Whatever the ICR researchers may have had to say about attitudes towards coalition, FitzGerald continued to speak favourably of it. On 4 June, he said he was 'prepared to discuss with the Labour party the formation of a strong alternative government on the basis of our Programme'. He repeatedly advised supporters to transfer their votes to Labour candidates. Finally, the strategists did not have much success in the grooming of their leader. RTÉ organised a series of panel discussions between the party leaders and senior journalists. The general consensus was that Haughey won the all important beauty contest:

Dr FitzGerald . . . appeared less at ease . . . His allotted time for persuading the electorate to vote Fine Gael was taken up almost entirely with arguments

about the economy, conducted in the language of economists. He was probably unintelligible to the majority of viewers.²⁸

6.3.3. Post Mortem

To what extent did Fine Gael make use of its market research feedback during the 1981 campaign? According to the psychologist most involved in ICR's research, the fact that the company was used several times during the campaign - and in subsequent elections - suggests that the research did play an important role (private interview).²⁹ This begs the question 'for whom?'. Shane Molloy, the strategist involved in designing Fine Gael's newspaper advertising campaign, claims to have made great use of the advice provided by ICR; however, he points out that he was on the second rank of Fine Gael's coterie of advisers (private interview). He was not a member of the election committee, which was where the overall strategic decisions were made. The evidence suggests that Molloy may have been somewhat exceptional in his use of the ICR material. In a post-campaign meeting of the election committee, which assessed the campaign's strengths and weaknesses, lack of adequate feedback figured prominently as a weakness in at least three areas.³⁰ The post mortem on the advertising campaign - which, remember, was where there was greatest use of ICR data - noted that 'there was virtually no feedback on the campaign, just comments'. A similar point was made in relation to publicity

²⁸ *Irish Times*, 9 June, 1981.

²⁹ In November 1981 ICR were commissioned to carry out another survey to assess attitudes towards the campaign overall, and to measure voters' feelings about the new coalition government.

³⁰ Fine Gael headquarters archives, 20 June 1981.

material:

Communication with the constituencies was good - the problem was that the people with whom we were communicating were not the people who were in a good position to provide an assessment of what was happening. We worked with constituency directors of elections and PROs and in both instances these people were too involved in the campaign to be objective.

Finally, the extreme secrecy attached to the party's manifesto meant that particular policy proposals could not be tested on voters. The popularity - or otherwise - of particular items (such as the £9.60 payment to spouses) was only discovered as the campaign progressed.

In brief, then, there was a role for market research in the 1981 Fine Gael campaign, but it was a limited role. The research was used as a general guide by campaign strategists, it did not rule how the campaign was fought.

6.4. CONCLUSION

For the most part, the Fine Gael 1981 campaign fits easily into the outline set out in chapter 4. The party was well prepared for the election, with an elaborate committee structure, and detailed planning of the party's campaign themes and messages. There was widespread use of professional volunteers from media and marketing, backed up with key staffing appointments at headquarters. A number of specialist agencies were employed, including: three advertising agencies, two market research companies, and a public relations firm. Finally, the strategists placed a lot of emphasis on market research feedback. This was fed into the party's campaign preparations, and, in a more limited sense, into the campaign itself.

This campaign marked a landmark. For the first time in its history, Fine Gael fought an election campaign which was at least as professional as Fianna Fáil's, if not more so (O'Byrnes, 1986; Penniman and Farrell (eds), 1987). This approach to campaigning was to influence campaign styles by all parties in Ireland ever since (Farrell, 1987; 1990; 1993). As suggested in chapter 4, this campaign marks a shift in focus by the parties, with more attention being paid to imagery and marketing; a more competitive approach to campaigning which reflects more intense media coverage (chapter 2) as well as a more fickle electorate (chapter 3).

It needs to be stressed that this campaign was not a one-off; it was not some short-term fad, after which the parties would somehow revert to earlier patterns. To demonstrate this point, the next chapter examines more generally the nature of campaign developments over the course of the 1980s.

CHAPTER SEVEN

IRISH ELECTION CAMPAIGNING IN THE 1980s-1990s

The 1981 campaign case study in the previous chapter showed clearly how far Irish campaigning had developed from earlier decades. In order to demonstrate that this campaign was not a one-off, the function of this chapter is to deal with campaign trends since 1981. It would be far too cumbersome and repetitive an exercise to write a series of case studies on each of the five elections between 1982-1992.¹ In particular, the fact that four of the elections (February and November 1982; 1989 and 1992) were snap elections, held so soon after other elections (1981, 1987 and 1989 respectively), meant that little actually changed from one election to the next: the circumstances and issues were similar; the personnel and agencies remained largely the same.

To illustrate this point, one need only refer to the area of campaign

¹ The 1987, 1989 and 1992 campaigns have already been dealt with in some detail in Farrell, 1987; 1990; 1993.

preparations. By definition, little by way of detailed preparations was possible for the four snap elections. They were unexpected and therefore the parties tended to fall back on established procedures, committee structures and personnel. Even in the case of the 1987 election - where there was time for adequate planning and preparations - the routine was very familiar. This was particularly striking for Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and the PDs. Just like Fine Gael in 1981, all three parties had the equivalent of strategy and communications committees which did the basic groundwork before merging into an election committee on the eve of the campaign. In the case of the PDs, the committees had exactly the same name.²

The alternative to a series of campaign case studies is to examine the main areas of campaign development over the period. For the most part, this can be done with reference to the three-part framework on campaigning which has been followed throughout this part of the thesis. The one area of exception to this relates to the first part of the framework, on campaign preparations. As was pointed out in the previous paragraph, for most of the elections in this period there was little scope for preparations due to the fact that the elections were so sudden.

Accordingly, this chapter assesses two main areas of campaigning: the use (and growing expense) of agencies and consultants (section 7.1); and the growing reliance on market research (section 7.2). The chapter concludes, in section 7.3, with a discussion on the findings of this part of the thesis (chapters 4-7 inclusive), which has been dealing with party campaigning.

² The PDs' press officer, Stephen O'Byrnes, had been a newspaper journalist just prior to the foundation of the new party in 1985. Only a few months earlier, O'Byrnes had researched a book on Fine Gael, *Hiding Behind a Face*. Much of what he learned when researching this was applied in practice by the PDs in 1986-87.

Table 7.1. Estimated Campaign Expenditure (£s), by Party: Constant Prices.*

Year	Fianna Fáil	Fine Gael	Labour	Progressive Democrats	Workers' Party
1961	na	na	10,680	--	--
1965	na	55,793	7,330	--	--
1969	na	na	na	--	--
1973	na	na	na	--	na
1977	562,965	353,864	96,923	--	na
1981	2,224,833	1,093,876	172,903	--	na
Feb82	1,187,209	791,473	94,977	--	na
Nov82	554,031	474,884	94,977	--	na
1987	1,168,815	935,052	195,759	466,320	93,505
1989 ^b	2,748,549	659,652	98,948	241,872	153,919
1992	1,300,000	290,000	150,000	240,000	30,000 ^c

Notes:

- a Few accurate figures are available as the parties have no obligation to divulge their campaign expenditures. In some cases the party's annual accounts provide a figure. In all other cases I have relied on rough figures provided by the parties or else on journalistic estimates. These figures in current prices are available in Farrell (1992b, Table VII.E.6.i; 1993). In this Table, they are standardised to take account of cost of living increases over time, using the average annual index (based on the Consumer Price Index) provided by the CSO (series to base of August 1953=100). This means that all the entries are directly comparable with 1992.
- b The 1989 general election was held on the same day as the Euro election. As a result, the parties' campaign expenditures relate to both elections.
- c Expenditure by Democratic Left.

Sources: party accounts; Farrell, 1978b; Farrell, 1987; 1990; 1993; Kenny & Keane, 1987; O'Byrnes, 1986; O'Malley, 1987; Consumer Price Section, Central Statistics Office (CSO), Dublin.

7.1. THE USE OF AGENCIES AND CONSULTANTS

Agencies and consultants have had a greatly increased role to play in Irish elections. There has been a distinct shift towards campaigning as a marketing exercise. One implication of this is likely to be a declining role for volunteers in Irish elections.

It is neither terribly interesting, nor indeed actually possible to quantify the growth in the use of agencies and consultants in Irish elections over time. What is more useful is to try and gather information on the types of expertise involved, the extent of their influence, and the extent to which they can be said to be replacing or supplementing the functions more traditionally provided by party activists. This section examines the question, first, by an assessment of the extent to which these specialists have become a central feature of campaign expenditure, and second, by a discussion on the attention given by the media to the greater reliance by Irish parties on campaign specialists, in itself an indicator of their growing influence.

7.1.1. Expenditure on Agencies and Consultants

Campaigning has become very expensive.³ As we see in Table 7.1 - where

³ From 1923 until 1963 there were limitations (much like today in Britain) on how much candidates could spend at the constituency level during election campaigns. Under *The Prevention of Electoral Abuses Act* (1923), a candidate in a borough constituency was restricted to spending a maximum of four (old)pence per elector; in a county constituency the maximum was set at 5 pence. Where two or more candidates campaigned as a team they were each allowed to spend one-and-a-half times the maximum for a single candidate. Chubb (1959) estimates that in 1957 a single candidate in the smallest borough constituency was restricted to £470, while in the biggest county the limit was £1,360. In the new 1963 *Electoral Act*, this financial limitation was abolished. In the report of the *Dáil Joint Committee on the Electoral Law* (Government publications, T.184 (Pr.6363), 1960-1), which

the figures have been adjusted to take account of cost of living increases over time - the parties' campaign expenditures in the 1960s (Fine Gael at £56,000; Labour at £10,000 or less) were dwarfed by the hundreds of thousands of pounds being spent by all parties in the 1980s-1990s. Table 7.1 also confirms the 1981 election as an important turning point for all parties. Compared with estimated expenditure in 1977 (and again using constant prices), Labour doubled its spending in 1981; Fine Gael's expenditure tripled; Fianna Fail's increased by a factor of four. That the figures subsequently dropped, in all cases, in both 1982 elections is only to be expected, first, because party coffers were empty and, second, because the elections occurred so soon after the 1981 campaign meaning that the parties did not need to spend so much on marketing.

The 1987 figures are more reflective of the amount parties tend to spend in contemporary election campaigns. In the cases of Fine Gael and Labour, the 1987 figures compare favourably with those for 1981. Once again, in 1989 there is a drop in expenditure (except for Fianna Fáil and the Workers' party), reflecting the fact it occurred so soon after the 1987 election. The dramatic increase in the Fianna Fáil

recommended the abolition of campaign expenditure controls, it was stressed (p. 49) that the law limiting electoral expenses assumed that 'an election is simply a collection of constituency campaigns', and that 'the relevant expenditure is confined to a few weeks before polling day'. The law may not attempt to - nor, the Committee believed, could it - limit the electoral expenses of the parties. The Committee recommended the abolition of the restriction, arguing the following (p. 51): 'The idea of limiting the expenses which a candidate may incur at a parliamentary election originated in the nineteenth century. The assumptions on which the limitations are based are not now valid. With the spread of literacy and the mass media of communication it is no longer true to say that an election is a series of isolated constituency campaigns, nor are the fortunes of any party determined, to the extent that the limitations on expenditure imply, in the few weeks before polling day when the limitations come into force'. (On the Dáil debate, see in particular DD Vol. 200, 20 February-14 March 1963, col.448-50; DD Vol. 201, 20 March-4 April 1963, col.522ff. See also Casey, 1977.)

Table 7.2. Fine Gael Campaign Expenditure, 1966 Presidential Campaign and 1981 General Election: Percentage Breakdowns.

Category	1966 ^a	1981 ^b
Posters	18.4%	5.1%
Advertising	27.8%	60.6%
Literature	37.4%	4.5%
Merchandising	0.2%	10.8%
Staff	1.6%	1.9%
Communications (general)	6.9%	2.5%
HQ Budget Internal	4.2%	4.4%
Tour	3.5%	10.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

Notes:

- a I have not included here the category 'transfer of subscriptions to Presidential account' (£1,070).
- b These are proposed expenditures drawn up (in March 1981) for a May election. In the election post-mortem Fine Gael strategists were happy to report that they had not had any major budgetary overrun. These estimates can therefore be taken as an accurate indicator of the actual expenditure by the party in the June campaign.

Sources: Fine Gael, *1st Draft Work Book, February 1968: Feasibility Study and Plan* (confidential internal document); Fine Gael headquarters' files, 10 March 1981.

figure reflects the degree to which the party leader (Charles Haughey) was desperate for a good electoral result. By 1992, the financial indulgences of the two big parties had come home to roost (see the discussion on party indebtedness in the next chapter). Only Labour was in a position to maintain its usual expenditure levels in 1992.

There can be little doubt that one significant reason for the rising cost of campaigning as we move into the 1980s has been the greater use made by parties of specialist services provided by agencies and consultants. Once again it is Fine Gael which provides the best evidence on this. In its 1966 presidential election campaign, the party spent, in 1989 prices, the equivalent of £82,600 on advertisements. By the general election of 1969 its advertising expenditure had risen to a 1989 equivalent of £126,600. In 1981 it budgeted for an expenditure of £327,200 (in 1989 prices). This increased in 1987 to an equivalent of £365,700. By 1989, Fine Gael was spending just short of £480,000 on its advertising campaign. In that same election Fianna Fáil's advertising campaign cost a staggering £979,000.

Table 7.2 provides more concrete evidence of the growing cost of agencies to Irish campaigning, by a comparison of Fine Gael's expenditure on its 1966 presidential campaign and its budgeted expenditure for the 1981 general election.⁴ While clearly a general election and a presidential election are not directly comparable, the fact that in 1966 Fine Gael fought seriously to win (and almost did), makes it a useful basis for comparing professionalism across the decades. Furthermore, being a presidential election, the focus on centralised campaign tactics

⁴ These are the only two sets of campaign accounts I have been able to get a hold of.

was bound to be all the greater than for general elections at that time.

The difference in expenditure patterns across the two elections is striking. The proportion of expenditure on advertising in 1966 was less than one third the 1981 figure. Virtually nothing was spent on merchandising, or gimmickry, in 1966. And the campaign tour - *the* central feature of a presidential campaign - accounted for one third of the proportion spent in 1981. Some of the other items provide clues to the possible consequences for party organisations of these changes, clues which we return to in chapter 8. For instance, expenditure on posters in 1981, at 5 per cent of the total, had dropped to virtually a quarter of the 1966 figure. More dramatically, expenditure on campaign literature (leaflets, election addresses, newsletters) was an eighth of the 1966 figure. These trends are perhaps indicative of a relative decline in the role of the constituency activists *vis-a-vis* central party campaign strategies.⁵

So far we have been focusing on Fine Gael campaign expenditure. What of the other parties? All political parties tend to be extremely reluctant to divulge details of their campaign expenditure, at most generally providing only rounded estimates. In recent years, however, more accurate data on advertising expenditure have been made available by Advertising Statistics Ireland Ltd which monitors the amount of advertisements in various media and produces reliable estimates of likely

⁵ The most recent breakdowns on campaign expenditure are consistent with these trends. Fine Gael claims to have spent in the following proportions in 1992: advertising (including election broadcasts and cinema spots) 76.5 per cent; literature (including artwork for the leader posters, some Dublin posters, and leaflets in the marginals) 12 per cent; administration 5.5 per cent; leader's tour 4 per cent; research 2 per cent. The advertising budget was broken down, in turn, into the following proportions: press and cinema advertisements 50 per cent; media production 38 per cent; posters and literature 10 per cent; referendum broadcasts 2 per cent.

Table 7.3. Party Expenditure on Advertising, 1987-1992

	Constant Prices (£100)			Market Share (%)			£ per vote		
	1987	1989	1992	1987	1989	1992	1987	1989	1992
Fianna Fáil	7,118	10,761	3,600	47.8	58.8	64.3	0.78	1.34	0.56
Fine Gael	4,020	5,263	1,560	27.0	28.8	27.9	0.71	0.99	0.37
Labour	1,162	648	240	7.8	3.5	4.3	0.87	0.38	0.07
PDs	2,583	1,633	200	17.4	8.9	3.6	1.05	1.63	0.25
	% of expenditure going to national press			% of expenditure going to regional press			% of expenditure going to consumer press		
	1987	1989	1992	1987	1989	1992	1987	1989	1992
Fianna Fáil	53.5	71.9	61.4	23.7	16.5	32.8	5.6	1.2	1.7
Fine Gael	61.4	66.4	69.2	22.2	17.2	30.1	1.7	0.0	0.6
Labour ^a	32.0	59.1	33.3	13.6	15.3	66.7	4.5	0.0	0.0
PDs ^b	54.9	22.6	40.0	20.3	20.2	55.0	3.5	2.5	5.0

Notes

These estimates assume that the parties paid full costs. VAT and production costs are excluded. The 1992 figures do not include outdoor/poster expenditure which ASI estimates totalled £30,000 (£25,180 in 1987; £27,630 in 1989.) The media breakdowns do not include 'outdoor' advertising in 1987/1989, or 'transport' in 1992. Constant prices are based on the CSO's average annual index (series to base of August 1953 = 100).

^a Labour spent 50 per cent of its budget in 1987 on outdoor advertisements.

^b The PDs spent 55 per cent of their budget in 1989 on outdoor advertisements.

Sources: Advertising Statistics Ireland Ltd., official returns; Central Statistics Office.

expenditure. The figures for the 1987, 1989 and 1992 elections are reproduced in Table 7.3.

It is clear from Table 7.3 that while Fine Gael advertising expenditure is far higher than that of the PDs or Labour, all three parties are dwarfed by Fianna Fáil which in the 1992 election spent two-thirds of the total amount of money spent on political advertisements by all four parties. Advertising expenditure by all parties (particularly the larger ones) dropped sharply in 1992, reflecting the serious financial constraints all faced. A better sense can be gained by examining the second set of figures in Table 7.3, which reveals in 1992 a sharp increase, across the board, in the proportion of total advertising placed in regional newspapers. In other words, the drop in advertising in 1992 occurred in the national and consumer press (magazines), which is paid for by the national party organisations. For the most part it is the local party organisations which pay for regional press advertisements.⁶

7.1.2. The 'National Handlers'

The changes in campaign techniques in the 1980s did not go unnoticed. A series of newspaper and magazine articles were written in the mid-1980s focusing on the role of what were called 'the national handlers'.⁷ One journalist - granted access to Fine Gael files by the handlers - even produced a book length study of the role of

⁶ An 'impact analysis' by ASI reveals that in 1992 twice as many advertisements were placed in regional newspapers as in national newspapers.

⁷ See for example: Gerald Barry, 'The Professional: Profile, Peter Prendergast', *Sunday Tribune*, 18 March 1984; Vincent Browne, 'How the Whiz-Kids sold us a Taoiseach', *Magill*, December 1982; Vincent Browne, 'The National Handlers', *Sunday Tribune*, 9 September 1984; Olivia O'Leary, 'The Heartless Professional', *Magill*, 4 April 1985; Olivia O'Leary, 'How to Handle a Taoiseach', *Magill*, 16 May, 1985.

the handlers and their skills in Fine Gael's electoral successes of the early 1980s (O'Byrnes, 1986). The distinct impression was given that this was a phenomenon unique to Fine Gael. As one journalist put it: 'The handlers. . . are election creatures, and almost exclusively a Fine Gael phenomenon'.⁸ The reality, of course, was that Fianna Fáil had just as much recourse to national handlers as did Fine Gael, but its variety tended to adopt Trappist-like silence when approached by journalists.

The prominent media attention to campaign strategists did not go down well in Fine Gael political circles, not helped by some statements attributed to the handlers such as, for example: 'We brought a no-win, no-hope party to power'.⁹ In the latter part of the 1980s the party took steps to exorcise itself of some of the wilder elements from among its strategists.¹⁰ One Fine Gael backbencher is quoted as saying: 'These people are very good professionals and they have done valuable work, but it is time to call a halt to their gallop because some people are beginning to think they run the country'.¹¹ In the subsequent 1987 election there was a noticeable decline in the use of campaign strategists overall, an absence seen by some as a constraint which did not help (private interviews).

⁸ Olivia O'Leary, 'How to Handle a Taoiseach', *Magill*, 16 May 1985.

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ Of course, the clamp down on the handlers did not go unnoticed in the media. See, for example: Denis Coughlin, 'Good-News Taoiseach Slips Handlers', *Irish Times*, 26 March, 1986; 'Handlers Dismantled', *Sunday Tribune*, 30 June 1985. See also O'Byrnes (1986, pp. 277-93). It was around this time that I suddenly faced difficulties in obtaining interviews or information from Fine Gael strategists. According to one of them - speaking in hushed tones over the telephone - they had been instructed to 'cool it'.

¹¹ 'Handlers Dismantled', *Sunday Tribune*, 30 June 1985.

Despite these problems, the prominent role of campaign strategists and the use of specialist agencies had become a commonplace feature of electioneering by the end of the 1980s. All the parties now make use of such expertise. Indeed, arguably in the 1989 campaign it was the Workers' party which was most effective in this regard. In particular, the selling of the party leader, Prionsias de Rossa, received plaudits all round from among the campaign fraternity (Farrell, 1990). One of the most prominent examples of the use of campaign specialists in recent years was undoubtedly the presidential campaign of the Labour candidate, Mary Robinson in 1990 (Finlay, 1990; O'Reilly, 1991).¹²

This section has traced the increasing role of agencies and consultants in Irish election campaigns. Their presence and actions have made a lot of difference to the style of campaigning, its expense, and its coverage by the media. They have also had implications for the internal dynamics of party organisations. This is a theme we return to in Chapter 8.

7.2. THE USE OF MARKET RESEARCH BY IRISH PARTIES

As we have seen in chapter 5, market research was first used by Irish parties at the end of the 1960s and early 1970s. Indeed, Fianna Fáil's first use of market research was to come as late as 1977, the year in which the party made dramatic

¹² One of the principal handlers behind Robinson's campaign, Eoghan Harris, has followed quite a circuitous route through the parties. By occupation, a respected television producer, Harris was a long-standing member of the Workers' party, and was a key figure in its campaigns throughout the 1980s. He left the party in 1990, disillusioned with the leadership, and offered his services to Robinson, who was the Labour party's candidate. Subsequently, throughout 1991, he was employed by the new Fine Gael leader, John Bruton, for advice on image and marketing.

strides in professionalising its campaign. Table 7.4 provides an overview of trends in the use of market research by Irish parties over the past two decades.¹³

There are a number of interesting trends revealed in Table 7.4. First, we can see the steady growth in the use of market research, as shown by a number of indicators. As we move down through the years it is clear that there are more and more surveys being commissioned, and by more than just two parties. In 1986 the new Progressive Democratic party commissioned a poll from IMS (apparently no longer used by Fianna Fáil) which was crucial in the design of its strategy for the 1987 campaign (Farrell, 1987).

New agencies also came on the scene over the period, providing a wider choice and range of services. These included Irish Consumer Research (ICR) (founded in 1964; apparently defunct by 1992) and Behaviour and Attitudes (B&A) (formed in 1985). A key factor determining whether and when a party shifted to a new agency appears to have been the movement of personnel from one agency to another. Fianna Fáil appears to have followed its principal contacts from IMS to B&A in the mid-eighties. Fine Gael started to take qualitative research from ICR in 1981. When one of ICR's executives left the company in late 1981, Fine Gael continued to commission research from her until about 1986 when - after some (unspecified) disagreements over research for the 1986 divorce referendum - the party switched to a new agency, the name of which has not so far been revealed.

¹³ It has to be stressed that the summary provided in Table 7.4 can be seen, at best, as merely a good indicator, or estimate, of the true picture. Fianna Fáil and its agencies are reluctant to give any more than the vaguest of answers to queries for information. In recent elections this tendency has spread to Fine Gael's representatives. Much of the material from 1986 onwards is based on answers given by party strategists and so are liable to be either exaggerations or under-estimates depending on the tendency of the individual answering.

Table 7.4. Market Research by Irish Parties, 1969-1989.

Year	Company	Client	Subject
1969	Gallup	Labour	1 national poll
1973	MRBI	FG	3 national polls
1977	IMS	FF	1+ national poll
	MRBI	FG	1 national, 1 Dublin and 7 constituency polls
	MRBI	FG	1 post-election national poll
1979	MRBI	FG	6 by-election constituency polls
	MRBI	FG	6 Euro election polls
1980	MRBI	FG	1 national and 1 by-election constituency poll
	IMS	FF	2 national polls
1981	MRBI	FG	1 national and 6 constituency polls
	ICR	FG	3 qualitative reports
	IMS	FF	3 national polls ^a
1982	MRBI	FG	(Feb) 14 constituency polls
	MRBI	FG	(Nov) 7 constituency polls
1984	MRBI	FG	7 Euro election polls
1986	IMS	PDs	1 national poll
	B&A	FF	1 qualitative report
	na	FG	1 qualitative report
1987	MRBI	FG	1 national and a number of constituency polls ^b
	na	FG	1+ qualitative report
	B&A	FF	1+ qualitative report
1989	B&A	FF	3 national and 1 Euro polls ^c
	B&A	FF	daily 'rolling poll'
	na	FG	2+ qualitative reports
	MRBI	FG	A number of constituency polls ^d

Abbreviations and Notes to Table 7.4:

B&A Behaviour and Attitudes
ICR Irish Consumer Research
IMS Irish Marketing Surveys
MRBI Market Research Bureau of Ireland
na not available

- a** Fianna Fáil was apparently also using qualitative research as early as 1981. A confidential file accidentally misplaced in Peter Owens' (one of the party's advertising agencies) scrapbook of party advertisements gives details of a schedule for six post mortem group discussions which appears to have been commissioned from Owens' by the party.
- b** Fine Gael polled 'a large proportion' of its 25 marginals. In some constituencies there were several polls (1 constituency was polled 4 times).
- c** Fianna Fáil's constituency organisations are responsible for carrying out any polls they require. These are often quite amateur and not very scientific.
- d** Due to financial constraints Fine Gael did far less constituency polling than in 1987.

Sources: Jones, 1986; Meagher, 1983; private interviews

Two other sets of developments revealed by Table 7.4 relate to each of the two main parties. As we saw in the last chapter, Fine Gael (unintentionally) came round to some of the views expressed in the Arks 1971 memo. After 1981, the party tended to make less and less use of quantitative national polls. For instance, apparently only one such poll was commissioned in 1987, and none in 1989. There are at least three reasons for this. First, they are very expensive, estimated in 1989 to cost about £15,000 each (Nally, 1989). The party faced severe financial constraints in the late 1980s, requiring cutbacks across the board (Farrell, 1990). Second, it was felt that the party did not have great need for them. There was already a large body of data available in newspaper polls, and the managing director of MRBI (which provides polls for the *Irish Times*) volunteers his advice on public poll trends for the party. Third, the party's strategists had come to recognise the strengths and weaknesses of scientific polling and formed a conclusion on where best to utilise it, given limited resources. As a result, in the latter part of the 1980s, the party switched towards alternative forms of (quasi?) social-scientific feedback, using qualitative research to test themes and slogans for the communication campaign, and quantitative constituency polls for vote management strategies.

The information on polling by Fianna Fáil is more patchy, nevertheless it evidences a number of differences from Fine Gael. First, Fianna Fáil appears to have suffered less from monetary constraints allowing the party to continue making large use of national quantitative polls and, in the 1989 election, to commission daily tracking polls, estimated to have cost the party £50,000 (Nally, 1989). These consisted of small daily samples of voters (100-200) which were aggregated after five days to produce a large running sample, a representative overview of feedback

over the period. From then on the survey became a 'rolling poll': as a new sample was added to the total, a sample from the beginning of the period was removed. With such a system, Fianna Fáil was able to track voter attitudes throughout the campaign.

Second, Fianna Fáil appears to attach far less importance to constituency polling. According to party officers, it was left to local constituency organisations to arrange and pay for any, and as much, constituency polling as required. Very often these tended to be organised by the constituency parties themselves and therefore their reliability was questionable. If nothing else, this suggests that Fianna Fáil attached less importance than Fine Gael to vote management strategies, or at least to the efficacy of local polling in guiding such strategies. Where Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael have been alike is in their increased reliance on qualitative research.

In summary, from 1969-89 polling by both main parties was on the increase, as was its contribution to the parties' over-burdened campaign budgets. This was to come to a crunch in 1992 when the use of market research was drastically cutback.¹⁴ This perhaps explains why there was some sympathy in all the parties for the proposal in the early 1990s to ban the commissioning and publishing of polls in the last week of an election. Both major parties stood to save a lot of money by a ban; the minor parties, which cannot afford such polling, would also have gained. With few exceptions among the politicians, the only people who tended to express

¹⁴ As a result of financial constraints faced by all the parties in 1992, little use was made of market research. There were no national polls, nor were there any rolling polls. Fianna Fáil's and Fine Gael's advertising agencies carried out some focus groups research on behalf of their clients; MRBI did a few constituency surveys for Fine Gael. One innovation in 1992 was the use of 'Freefone' and 'Freepost' facilities by the PDs to get some telephone and survey feedback - albeit with a skewed sample (Farrell, 1993).

relief at the decision to drop this proposal in March 1992 were academics and journalists.¹⁵

7.3. CONCLUSION

In chapter 1 it was suggested that, in response to changes in voting habits and media electoral coverage, the parties' campaign styles would also alter as parties sought to professionalise the marketing of their wares in elections. Chapters 4-7 have been concerned with examining this proposition. A framework for assessing campaigning was set out in chapter 4. This was used to compare the campaign styles of parties in the 1950s-1970s (chapter 5) with the more professional campaign styles of Irish parties in recent years (chapters 6 and 7). In short, the available evidence supports the argument that the parties' campaigns have changed to suit the new electoral climate. The more competitive environment engendered by voter volatility and media game coverage has met with an appropriate response from the parties.

The development of new campaign styles by the parties cannot have taken place without some organisational consequences. The next chapter is concerned with assessing organisational developments by Irish parties in recent years. The argument here is that many of the organisational changes which have occurred have been necessary to facilitate the campaign changes discussed in chapters 4-7.

¹⁵ For details on the debate about banning polls see D. Coughlin, 'TDs to back election week ban on opinion polls', *Irish Times*, 7 June, 1991; Editorial, 'Dilution of Democracy', *Irish Times*, 7 June, 1991; M. Cummins, 'Proposed polls ban "outrageous"', *Irish Times*, 7 February, 1992; M. Cummins, 'Polling "razzmatazz" defended as boost to voter turn-out', *Irish Times*, 28 February, 1992; M. Muire Tynan, 'Pre-election polls not to be banned', *Irish Times*, 5 March, 1992. For academic debate about the banning of polls see Bowler and Farrell (1992c), Laver (1988).

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE CONSEQUENCES FOR PARTY ORGANISATIONS OF A CHANGED ENVIRONMENT

This thesis started with the proposition that parties have been undergoing a process of change in recent years. It was suggested that a principal feature behind this was shifts in the electoral environment which required an appropriate response from the parties. The first part of the thesis (chapters 2-3) dealt with electoral environment changes in terms of voter volatility and media electoral coverage. The thesis (chapters 4-7) next examined the response of parties at the electoral level to these environmental changes. This chapter is based on the argument that to focus on party campaign changes is to see only part of the picture. Underlying the parties new campaign styles are changes to their organisational structures which facilitate them.

In principle there have been four main areas in which the new campaign styles of the parties can be seen to have affected their organisations. Inevitably there is some overlap between them, and they are being presented in no particular order. First, there has been a process of professionalisation, characterised in particular by

the employment of agencies and specialist consultants. It is possible that this has coincided with new staffing arrangements - such as the employment of specialised staff - and with less use by the parties of volunteer staffing during elections. In short, the first organisational change which needs examination is in the area of party staffing.

Second, it can be argued that the fact that campaigning has become more centralised means that there is less exclusive reliance on activist volunteers. Greater use is made of the new technologies of communication (as well as of professional techniques of feedback). In general, parties can be characterised as having switched focus from being inward-looking to being more outward-looking: i.e. more attention is given to electoral concerns (vote maximisation) and proportionally less to strictly organisational concerns (internal democracy). Overall, a second organisational change worth exploring relates to trends in party membership.

Third, it would seem likely that there have been changes to party structures. New campaign styles require more centralised organisations. There has been a 'nationalisation' of campaign strategy (Mair, 1987b), with greater coordination from the centre. It is worth examining whether this has required amendments to party rule books, to give headquarters greater control over the organisation.

Finally, there are bound to have been changes in the area of party finance. Campaigns are more expensive than before. At the same time, the new technologies being employed have facilitated new, more professional fund raising methods, while the parties have started looking for alternative sources of funding.

It is the purpose of this chapter to assess party organisational trends in Ireland in these four areas (sections 8.1 to 8.4), making use of membership records,

party accounts, party constitutions and interviews with party officials.¹

8.1. STAFFING

In his description of the 'electoral-professional' party, Panebianco is quite specific on the central importance of party personnel. As he puts it:

In the new type of party a much more important role is played by professionals (the so-called experts, technicians with special knowledge), they being more useful to the organization than the traditional party bureaucrats, as the party's gravitational center shifts from the members to the electorate. (Panebianco, 1988, p. 264)

Panebianco is writing of qualitative changes; of new roles for party staff in a more technocratic world. He says nothing about what quantitative changes to expect. One could argue that, if anything, we should expect to see a drop in overall staff sizes. There would be two reasons for this. First, the mass-bureaucratic parties, by their nature, were characterised by a large membership which required the services of a large staff. By contrast, the modern electoral-professional party, which concentrates primarily on communicating with the national electorate through the electronic media, hardly needs so many personnel. Second - and a related point - today's parties may have need for experts to carry out new functions, but these do not have to require any particular increases in staff. It is possible to buy in expertise

¹ For details on the organisational structures of Irish parties generally, see Gallagher (1985); Laver and Marsh (1992); Mair (1987a). Much of the material used in this chapter originated in research carried out on Irish party organisational change 1960-1990, funded by a National Science Foundation Grant SES-8818439 (see Farrell, 1992b). The main sources are party constitutions, financial and membership records, and correspondence and interviews with party officials. A full listing is provided in the Bibliography.

Table 8.1. Number of Paid Staff by Party (five-year averages)^a

	Fianna Fáil	Fine Gael ^b	Labour	Progressive Democrats
1960-64	na ^c	8	3	--
1965-69	6 ^d	10	3	--
1970-74	8 ^e	12	5	--
1975-79	14 ^f	16	4	--
1980-84 ^g	20	17	6	--
1985-89	26	25	9	11 ^h

Notes:

- a These are employees working for the party either at its headquarters, or else in the Dáil (e.g. the press office or the leader's office). Unless otherwise indicated, the entries are five-year averages based on information provided by the parties and by the department of Finance. In the case of the latter, an average is taken for the election years of 1987 and 1989 which saw changes in staff allocations to the parties due to government changes. This Table does not include the staff trends for the smaller parties. In 1989 the Worker's party had a Dublin staff of 7 (with another 2 in Belfast); the Green party had an office manager (paid for out of the salary of the party's sole TD).
- b Other employees which are not included are (in various years): a caretaker/cleaner, a driver, a messenger/printer, occasional clerical staff, and collectors/organisers. The latter numbered about 3-5 from 1960-1974. In the 1970s they were whittled down and by 1987 they were no longer used. Some were paid out of central funds, other worked on commission.
- c Correspondence with a former, very senior officer reveals that the average staff size for 1954-1957 was about 11 employees, 5 of whom were secretarial.
- d This is the figure for 1966, given in Mair (1987a). The fact of it seeming so small could be due to it not including all secretarial staff. For instance, as pointed out in the previous note, of the party's 1954-57 staff of 11, 5 were secretaries.
- e This is the figure for 1973, given in Mair (1987a).
- f This is the figure for 1977, provided by a former very senior party officer in private correspondence. Note that Mair's (1987a) estimate for that year is 10.
- g A new scheme of extra secretarial assistance paid for by the department of Finance was introduced in late 1981.
- h Three-year average (1987-1989).

Sources: Department of Finance; private correspondence with politicians; Mair (1987a); the parties.

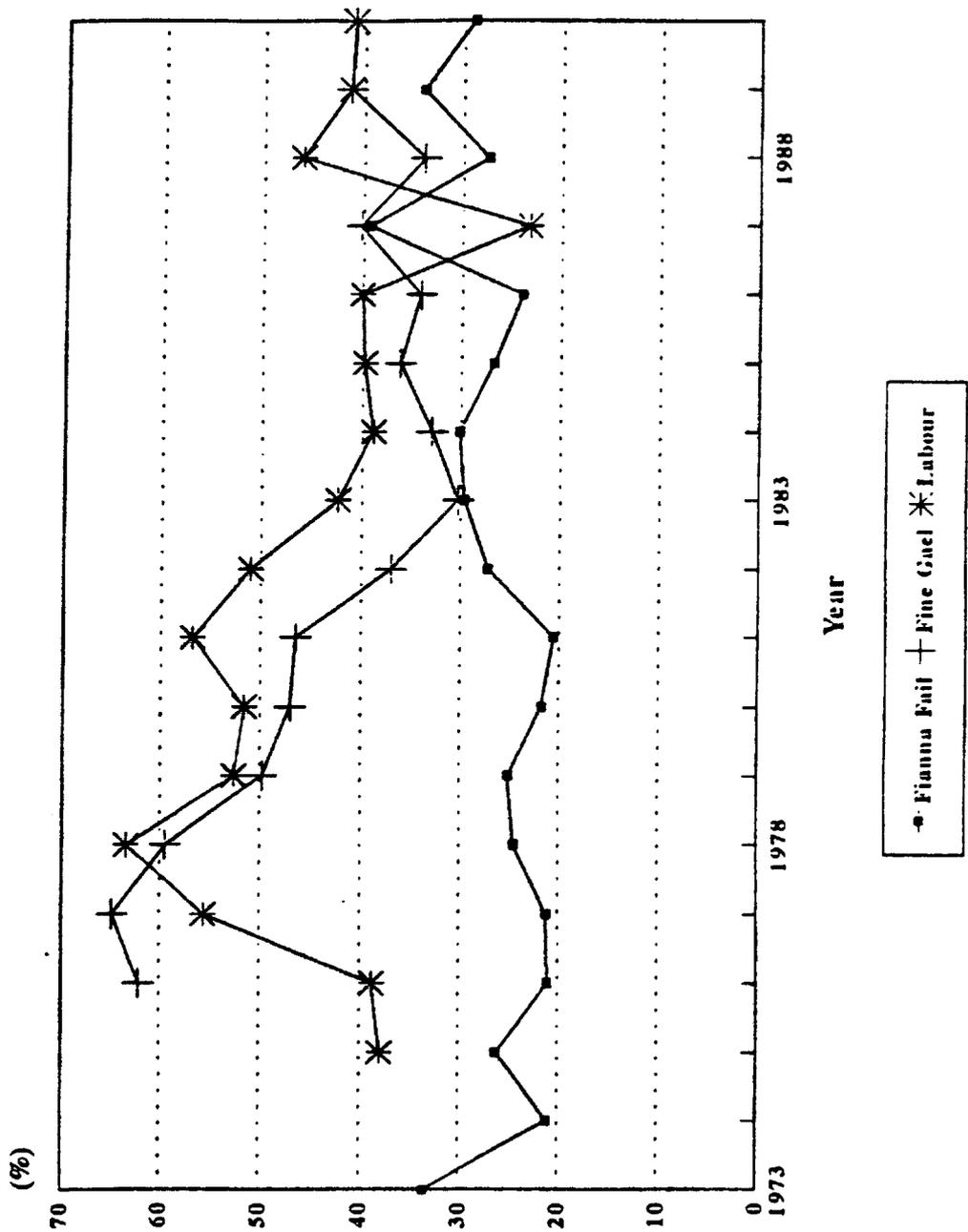
on short term contracts. As we have seen in Chapter 7, this is what has indeed been happening; the parties have been commissioning work from specialist agencies and consultants.

Such arguments suggesting staff reductions may have a general theoretical relevance, but there are good reasons for doubting their application to the Irish case.² In a political system where localism prevails, where it is presence and work in the constituency that counts, it is only to be expected that the scope for a large central apparatus will be relatively restricted. This fact is confirmed in Table 8.1. Throughout the 1960s, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael office staffs were always in single figures. Labour has always had a tiny staff, with never more than about four employees in its head office.

Typically each party had a general secretary served by a number of secretaries in head office and supplemented by a skeleton parliamentary staff at Leinster House. In the 1970s and 1980s staff numbers in the two larger parties gradually expanded to a maximum of about 25 or 26 employees. Following Mair (1987a, p. 108), one could argue that this increase 'is one of the most evident features of organisational growth' in the big parties; however, what is even more significant is the reliance of the parties on state support to finance these new appointments (see below). The exact breakdown of who is paid by whom cannot be determined, but clearly the bulk of the salaries are paid for by the state. The fact that Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael have tended to have comparable figures throughout the period is likely due to the fact that for much of the time Fianna Fáil has been in

² A comparative assessment of staff trends in West European parties over the past thirty years, reveals that Irish parties have had the fastest proportionate growth (Farrell and Webb, 1992).

Figure 8.1. Party Expenditure on Salaries



Source: Supplied by the Parties

government and therefore has benefited from more direct access to the civil service apparatus.

Figure 8.1 gives some idea of what proportion of party expenditure is given over to staff salaries over time. The Figure plots salaries as a proportion of total expenditure for the three main parties.³ Its purpose is to provide an indication of trends in the respective parties' salary bills. Obviously some of the trends have other causes, such as fluctuations in total party expenditure, or the increase in state funding of parties. The latter point is particularly important in late 1981 when the state introduced a new scheme to provide parties with support to employ administrative assistants (see below). While taking note of these qualifications, the trends plotted in the Figure provide a useful guide to party expenditure on staffing.

According to Figure 8.1, Fianna Fáil has always had the lowest pay bill of the three parties. This is consistent with the expectation that smaller parties have to give over proportionally more to finance their administration; that there are economies of scale. It also is consistent with the fact that, as the party most regularly in government, Fianna Fáil has had greatest access to the services of state employees.⁴ Arguably this had consequences for the party in the form of a relatively

³ The Worker's party provided only rough breakdowns which suggest trends similar to those in Labour. The PDs' proportions were as follows: 1986, 22 per cent; 1987, 16 per cent; 1988, 25 per cent; 1989, 12 per cent; 1990, 20 per cent. It is not possible to read much into these figures. As a new party which enjoyed sudden electoral success in 1987, followed by a collapsed vote in 1989, there were sharp fluctuations in its financial status.

⁴ We can test this proposition by comparing the proportions when Fianna Fáil was in government with those when it was in opposition. For the most part, the trends are in the expected direction. In the period of opposition from 1973-76, the proportion averaged 25.6 per cent. This dropped in the next period (1977-80, when the party was in government) to an average of 23.2 per cent. In 1981-86 (a period when Fianna Fáil was mostly in opposition), the proportion rose again to an average

underdeveloped organisational structure. As we saw in Table 8.1, Fine Gael has tended to have a slightly larger staff than Fianna Fáil.

Fine Gael and Labour have had a strikingly similar downward trend since 1981, reflecting the increased tendency for the state to pick up the pay bills of the parties. One possible explanation for the steadier trend in Fianna Fáil is that the party's pay bill was already so low, it is hard to see how it could be further reduced.

The bulk of party-paid staff are clerical employees. Limited use is made of higher level professional specialists or administrators. To some extent this probably reflects a general reluctance to allow the professionals to 'take over'. But it also reflects - as we saw in Chapter 7 - a tendency for Irish parties to buy in outside expertise as required, most notably during elections.

With the exception of the tiny Green party, all the parties have a general secretary who formally is appointed by the national executive, but essentially is chosen by the party leader. Ostensibly in control of the administration of the party day-to-day, the degree to which the general secretary can actually operate independently of his/her political leaders is open to question. One need only refer to recent occurrences in Fine Gael, where the party went through three general secretaries in as many years, to see evidence of the potential vulnerability of incumbents at that top post.⁵ The three established parties also have assistant general

of 26.4 per cent. It is only in the most recent period (1987-90, another period of government) when the proportion is not in the expected direction, rising to an average of 32.5 per cent. This figure is being driven up by high wage bills in the 1987 and 1989 election years.

⁵ Another example of the vulnerability of general secretaries was just before the 1992 general election, when the PDs sacked its general secretary.

secretaries, providing for continuity in the event of a sudden change.

Most parties also employ press officers. Fianna Fáil was the first to use one, in 1973; Fine Gael followed suit in late 1977. The press officer is usually paid for out of state funds, except in the case of the smaller parties which do not qualify. The PDs and the Workers' party have at various stages fallen into this latter category. Between 1987-1989 the PDs had more than seven TDs and therefore it received money towards paying for its director of publicity and policy.⁶ Between 1989-1992 - with only six TDs - it lost this budget and its press officer was supported out of party funds. However, by virtue of it being in a coalition government during that period it benefited from the convention of also having an assistant government press officer (its former press officer, Stephen O'Byrnes). From 1989 until early 1992 (when the party split), the Workers' party was in receipt of state funding.⁷ However, throughout the 1980s, its press officer was at least partially paid for by the state, the party benefiting from the informal nature of state-aided appointments.⁸ In the mid-1980s the parties (Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and

⁶ As we shall see below, to qualify for state funding, parties are expected to have at least seven TDs.

⁷ The background to the split of the Workers' party and the creation of Democratic Left is dealt with in section 8.4. Since most of the data on party organisational change which are used in this chapter relate to the period 1960-1990, I will not be referring to the organisational structure of the Workers' party after the split; nor, for that matter, will I be dealing with the Democratic Left.

⁸ No one seems to be able to remember why the pay of the Workers' party press officer was subsidised by the state. The practice of supporting party press offices by the state dates from 1981, just as the Workers' party entered the Dáil for the first time. Furthermore, the party's three TDs played an important role in supporting the Fianna Fáil minority administration of 1982 (B. Farrell, 1987). It is possible that, in the light of this, the party was looked on sympathetically in its request for some state support.

Labour first; the Workers' party in 1989) started to employ youth/education officers to oversee their new youth ancillaries. These positions were funded by the department of Education.

Apart from the general secretaries, press and youth officers, the parties make little use of senior employees. Fianna Fáil has a national organiser - as did the old Workers' party;⁹ from time to time the two biggest parties employ research directors. The remaining appointments tend to be at the lower end of the scale, including printers, computer operators, couriers, secretaries, assistants, and receptionists. These constitute the bulk of the appointments by Irish parties.

In virtually all cases the employees are based at the centre, usually party headquarters, but also at the press office in Leinster House. Only the Workers' party and Fine Gael appear to have made use of employees at the regional level. For the Workers' party this is understandable in the light of the party's all-Ireland coverage. Before the 1992 split, it had two full-time staff members working in its Belfast office. Fine Gael has on occasions come closest to operating the British-type system of election agents, having in the 1960s and 1970s roving organisers/collectors working in the constituencies, but paid for and controlled by party headquarters.¹⁰

Overall, there has been a consistent growth in the numbers of staff employed by the two big parties. A significant factor behind this is the role of the state in

⁹ The Workers' party national organiser remained with the party after the 1992 split, but died, after a short illness, a few months later.

¹⁰ In some cases these collectors worked on commission. The records of correspondence between the party's general secretary and these organisers, lodged in the party's archival collection at University College Dublin, are most revealing about the weakness and inadequacy of the party organisation in the sixties (see Mair, 1987a).

providing financial support (see below). We can see a quantitative change in the area of staffing; but there has not been an equivalent qualitative shift. With the exception of press and research officers, the parties have not made any great strides towards bringing in more specialised personnel. Instead - as chapter 7 showed - the practice has been to buy in expertise as required during elections.

As we saw in chapter 1, Panebianco (1988) refers to several other forms of staff professionalisation. In particular, he stresses the increase in 'hidden professionals', reflecting the general expansion of state funding of parties (see below), an expansion which, it should be remembered, has been implemented by the parties (in government) themselves. This expansion has manifested itself both in terms of the growing number of employees serving the parliamentary party and in the increased use of political and personal advisors by cabinet ministers. A series of parliamentary questions in 1988 and 1989 elicited the information that 122 civil servants were working on ministers' constituency matters; and a further 196 civil servants were working in the ministers' 'private offices'. Gallagher and Komito (1992, p. 146) estimate that each minister had 'an average of ten civil servants, paid for by the taxpayers, to assist in his or her constituency and political work'. More recently there has been a shift towards a *cabinet* system, where ministers, rely less on the resources of the civil service and instead employ teams of personal staff as programme managers, special advisers, personal assistants and personal secretaries. For instance, the new coalition government, elected in 1992, has appointed a total of 135 such staff, at a cost of £3 million. According to one journalist, this amounts to 'the biggest political staff, outside of the permanent civil service, in the history of

the State'.¹¹

Until the mid-1970s the parliamentary parties had to rely exclusively on the skeleton services provided by party headquarters; the individual parliamentarians had no secretarial assistance. In 1975 a new secretarial assistance scheme was introduced for non-office holding TDs. Initially the ratio was one secretarial assistant for each ten TDs. This figure was gradually increased, until by 1982 each TD had his/her own secretarial assistant. A similar scheme was introduced for Senators in 1981, and by 1985 the scheme had been extended so that each three Senators now shared a secretary between them. We can see just how dramatic was this development of parliamentary staff by looking at the ratio of total headquarters' staff (for the three established parties) to parliamentary staff. In 1975 this was 1:0.35. By 1989 it had jumped to 1:2.3 (Farrell, 1992b, Table VII.C.1).

8.2. PARTY MEMBERSHIP

In recent years much effort has been spent on trying to gather cross-national time series on party memberships (Bartolini, 1983; Beyme, 1985; Katz, 1990; Katz and Mair (eds), 1992; Katz, Mair *et al.*, 1992). According to the thesis of 'party decline', party membership is one of the principal indicators of survival or decline. It is suggested that any evidence of a decline in party membership reflects a general weakening of party organisations (e.g. Bille, 1991; Selle and Svåsand, 1991). By contrast, an alternative perspective on membership trends - the one followed in this thesis - is to suggest that, depending on the direction (whether increasing or

¹¹ G. Kennedy, 'FF and Labour appoint biggest staff in history of the State', *Irish Times*, 20 February 1993.

decreasing), they reflect particular organisational developments. For instance, a drop in membership over time may be due to a reduced need of the parties for membership income (due to access to alternative sources), or, perhaps, a reduced reliance on activists for canvassing in elections.

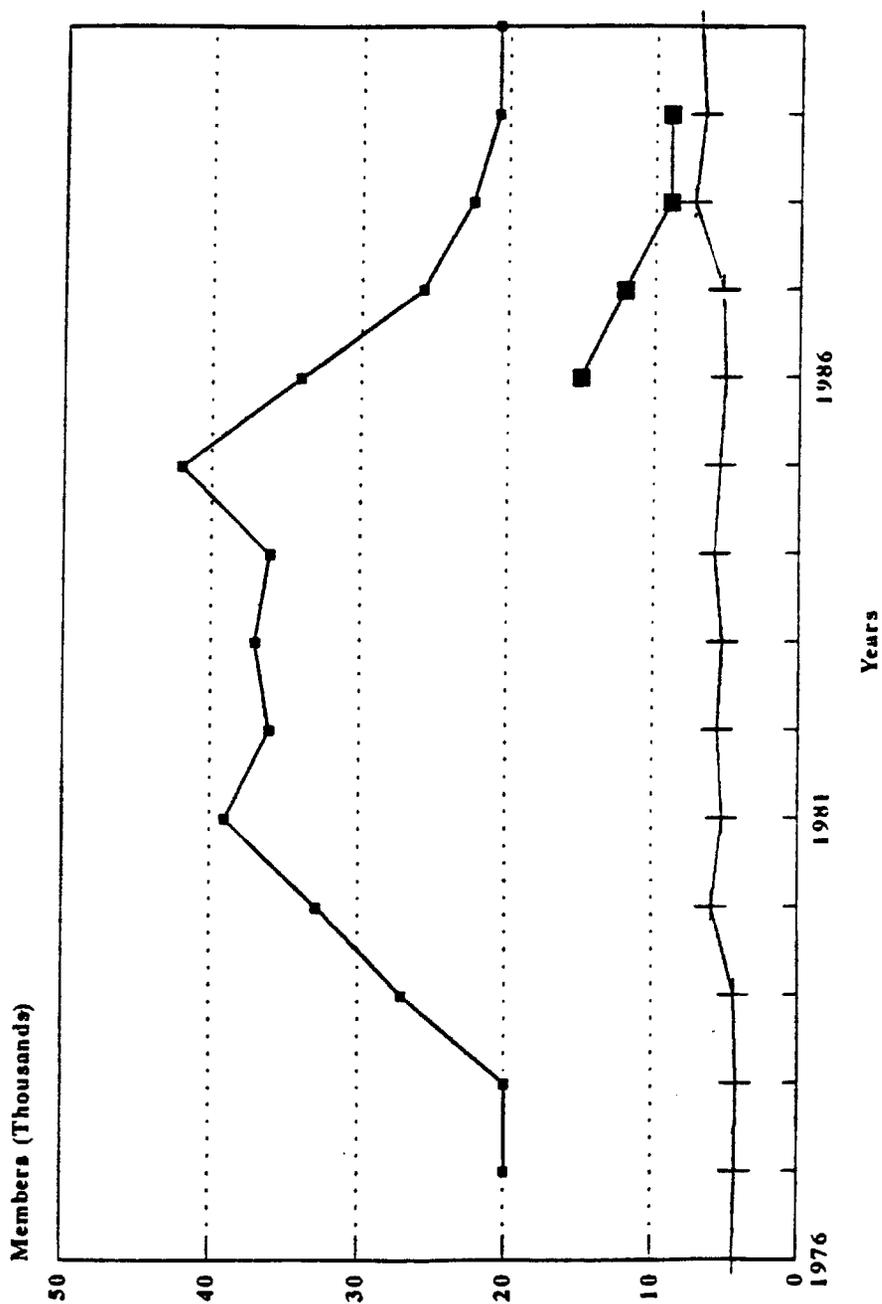
The evidence, in chapters 5-7, of the increased use of consultants and agencies and their services in Irish elections, suggests that there should be an effect on the parties' membership levels. As we shall see, this has tended to coincide with a switch from a heavy reliance on membership dues towards alternative sources of finance. On this point specifically, Hans Daalder argues that '[t]o the extent that parties become less dependent on membership income, this factor may cause elites to be less interested and concerned with membership activities and sensitivities' (Daalder, 1986, p. 59).

In the Irish case, it is useful to look both at trends in party membership as well as trends in the numbers of branches. One main reason for this is the simple fact that there are no credible membership figures available for Fianna Fáil, and this despite the best efforts of its senior administrators in recent years to introduce centralised membership lists. From time to time estimates are bandied about, but the general secretary doubts their accuracy (private interview).¹²

This lack of information is perhaps understandable when we remember the history of the party's foundation and its early years. It was Eamonn de Valera's

¹² In the absence of estimates on average branch sizes in Fianna Fáil, it is not even possible to produce some overall 'guesstimates' of membership trends over time. In recent years, the party has provided estimates to *Irish Political Studies*, but these are not figures the party's administrators are prepared to stand over. 1986, 80,000; 1987, 89,000; 1988, 89,000; 1989, 89,000; 1990, 75,000; 1991, 75,000; 1992, 75,000.

Figure 8.2. Party Membership



■ Fine Gael + Labour ● Progressive Democrats

Source: Supplied by the Parties

clear intention that Fianna Fáil should be more than just another party; he envisaged it as a *movement* representing the Irish people (Garvin, 1981). Consistent with this view, the party does not even charge a membership fee. All that is required of its members is that they follow the party rules (Farrell, 1992b, Table VII.B.2.c). (More on this later.) It is only to be expected, then, that the party's membership is particularly fluid; recruitment to the party is entirely at the discretion of the local *cumann*. The problem of how to account for Fianna Fáil membership is compounded by the existence of 'associate' membership for those who do not want formal membership but wish to contribute in some way (usually financially).

Fortunately for our purposes, all the other parties have membership figures.¹³ The trends for individual members of the larger parties (excluding Labour's corporate members) are shown in Figure 8.2.¹⁴ It is striking how Labour's membership continued to rise (albeit a shallow trend) even though for much of the period the party's vote was in steady decline. Of course, the Labour party, like its British counterpart, also has a corporate membership which today is made up of twelve of the most powerful unions in the country. This affiliated membership dwarfs the individual membership by a ratio of more than 25:1. The unions have the right of attending and voting at the party's national conference.

¹³ In most cases, total figures were provided by the parties. In the case of the Labour party, I was allowed to collate the total figures myself from the party's membership cards. For standardised figures on Irish party membership trends over time, see Katz, Mair *et al.*, 1992, p. 342.

¹⁴ It is worth noting that the trend for both the Workers' party and the Green party is steadily upwards, reflecting the gradual electoral inroads both parties made during the course of the 1980s (see Farrell, 1992b, Table VII.B.1.aef). Both the Fine Gael and Labour figures include ancillary members. The PDs did not establish any ancillary organisations until the early 1990s.

They also provide the party with financial support.¹⁵ In 1989, for instance, trade union contributions amounted to £26,829, representing just over 8 per cent of the party's total income.¹⁶

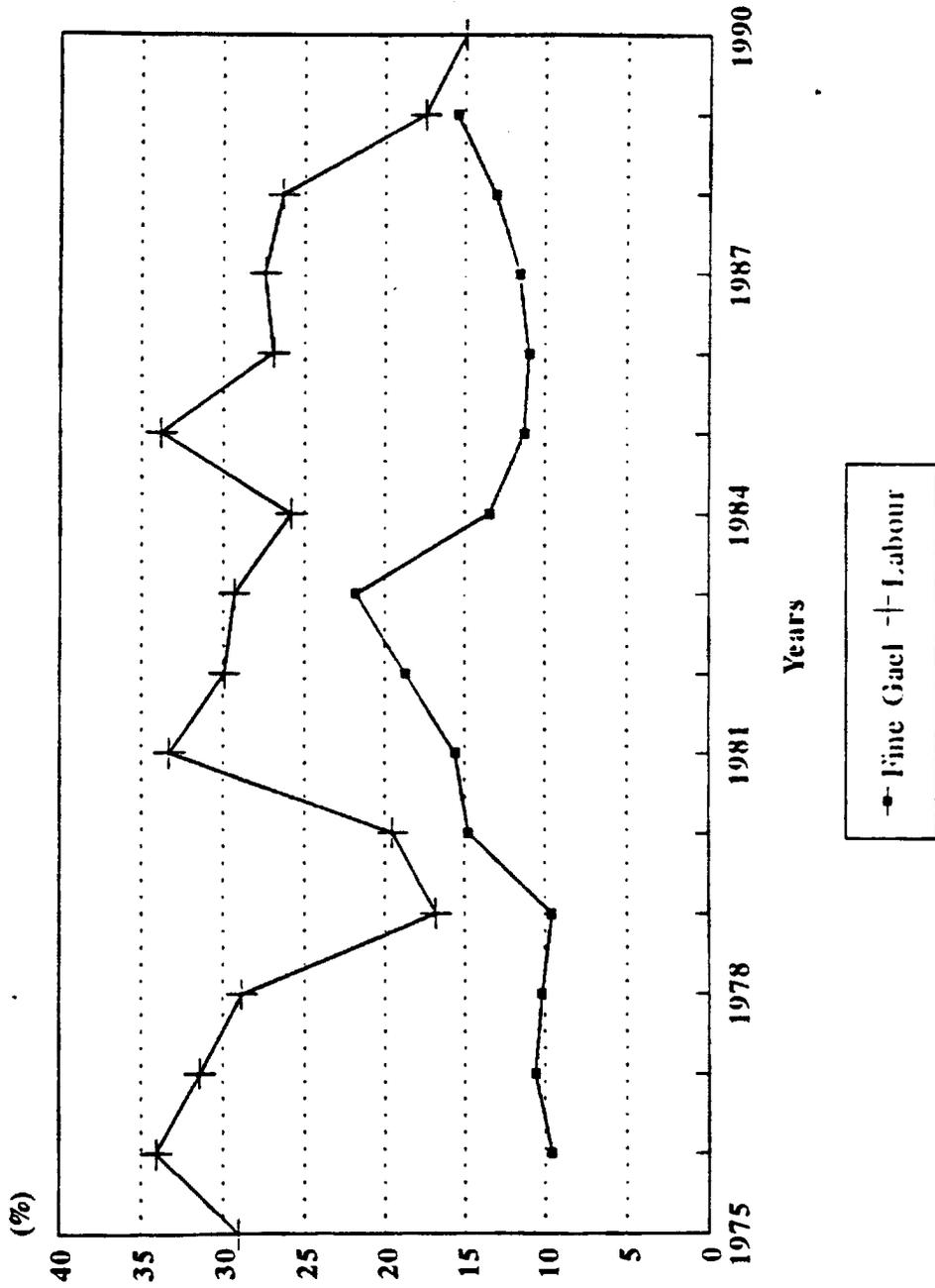
The Fine Gael membership trend is far more dramatic. The party's big growth period was during the late 1970s. This was as a direct result of organisational changes which were being pushed through by the new leader, Garret FitzGerald. Traditionally, a party seeking to breathe new life into its organisation starts with a membership drive. Interestingly the Fine Gael peak in 1985-86 coincides with the high point in membership for the Progressive Democrats. In both parties there is a sharp decline for the remainder of the period, with Fine Gael membership in 1990 equal to its mid-1970s figure. To some extent this drop in Fine Gael's membership can be explained as due to a fall in organisational morale as the coalition government became more and more unpopular, ultimately losing power in 1987. But there is more to the trend than that. Following Daalder, one could argue that another reason for the drop was due to a decline in the role for an active membership in an increasingly professional organisation. The party had developed other, more centralised forms of fund raising, and the organisation in general was run more from headquarters (see below).

Another way of examining membership trends is to assess the importance of

¹⁵ To a large degree this is at the discretion of the union involved. It is the union which decides how many of its members it wishes to affiliate (determining how many votes it will have at national conference) and therefore how much money it is prepared to contribute to Labour funds.

¹⁶ Trade unions provide other means of support, such as sponsoring parliamentary candidates or running supportive newspaper advertisements during elections.

Figure 8.3. Party Membership Income



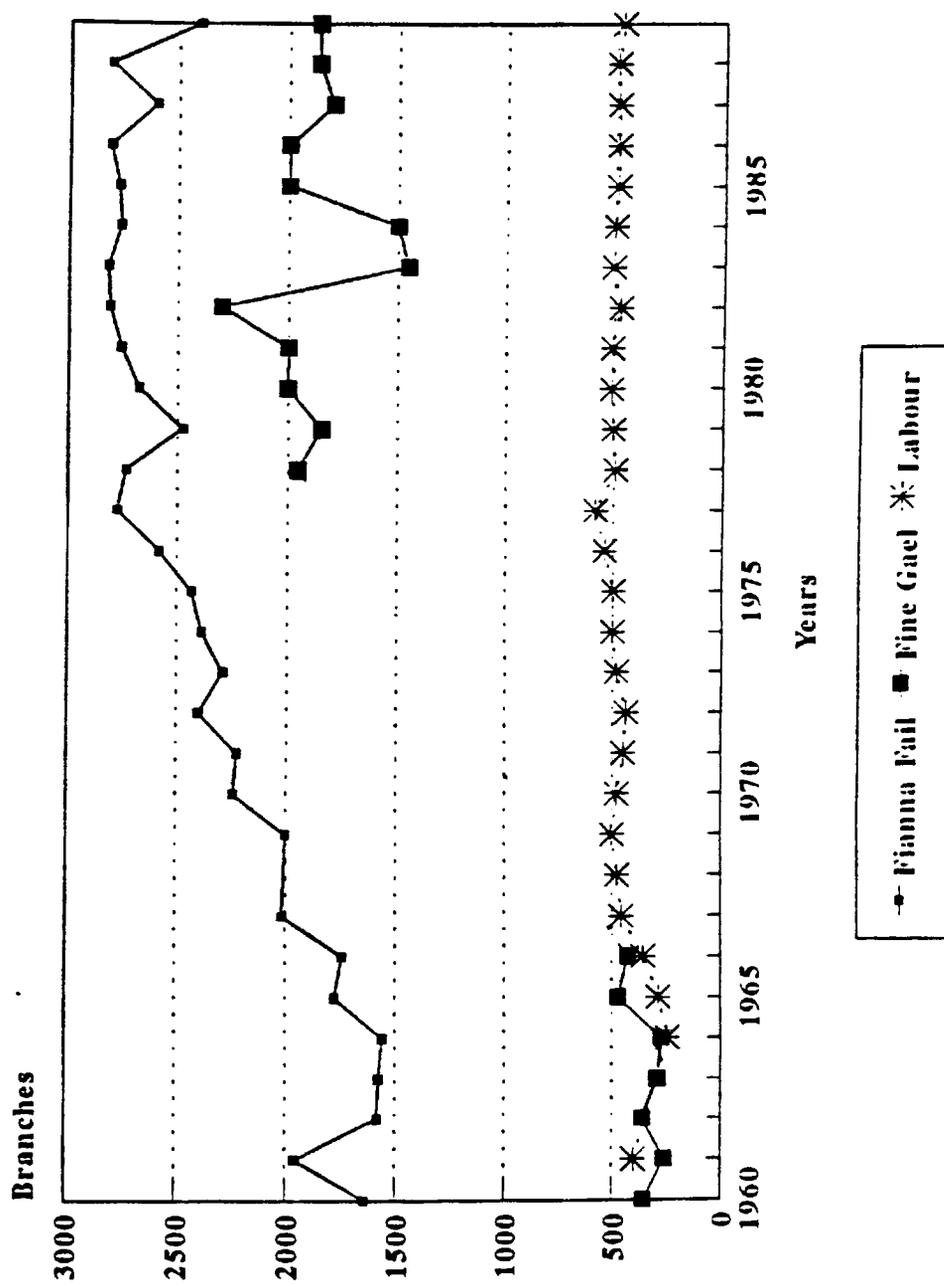
Source: Party Accounts

party membership dues to total party income. Figure 8.3 plots the proportion of Fine Gael and Labour income which is made up of membership dues and branch and constituency levies from the mid-1970s onwards.¹⁷ The purpose behind this is to try and answer the question how much does the party depend on local sources of revenue as opposed to corporate funding, national collections, fund raising drives and so on. One would expect a greater dependency on branch and constituency income among traditional parties and among parties of the left who tend to eschew corporate contacts. A greater dependency on corporate and other centralised sources of funding could be construed as an indicator of growing professionalism in fund raising. (Corporate funding of Irish parties is dealt with in section 8.4.) As expected, Labour has a far higher reliance than Fine Gael on local sources of revenue. In both parties, however, there is evidence of a downward trend. This dates from 1983 in Fine Gael and from the mid-1980s in Labour. The slight upward movement in the Fine Gael trend towards the end of the decade reflects the party's fund raising difficulties after an unpopular spell in government: this drives up the proportion. The basic point, however, is that the overall trend is downwards from the early-1980s onwards.

Figure 8.4 gives details on the numbers of party branches for Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael (though note the gap in the time series from 1967-76), and Labour. Once again we see that Fine Gael's big growth period was in the late 1970s. Whereas in the 1960s its branch network was on a par with the much smaller Labour party, by the early 1980s, for a brief period, Fine Gael had almost managed to establish as

¹⁷ Fianna Fáil does not provide a breakdown of its income. The Workers' party has provided estimates of how its income breaks down which suggest a far higher reliance than other parties on membership dues.

Figure 8.4. Party Branches



Source: Supplied by the Parties

many branches as Fianna Fáil. Needless to say the Fianna Fáil figures are likely to include a number of paper branches, because there is little headquarters can do effectively to police the situation. Since 1981 the trends for the two large parties have shown a divergence, Fine Gael branch numbers have been in decline. Initially this probably reflected the closure of paper branches; headquarters had a missionary zeal in trying to rid the organisation of these. By the end of the 1980s, however, this continued drop included the loss of active branches. Fianna Fáil also had a slight drop in the numbers of cumainn at the end of the decade. Labour's trend is very gradually downwards. In his analysis of the evidence up until the mid-1980s, Mair (1987a, p. 106) remarks on how '[i]t is. . . interesting to note the decline in the number of Labour branches. . . despite the reported increase in individual membership of the party'. An examination of the party's membership cards reveals that much of this is due to the closure of some branches (for non-payment of registration dues) and the merger of others. In other words, the organisation was being gradually streamlined.

All parties face the problem of a large 'ghost' membership caused by the existence of paper branches. In the case of the PDs this simply means the party lacks an accurate, up-to-date register of its membership; letters are still circulated to former members. In the case of the three established parties the problem has been around for far longer and has had more serious consequences (Mair, 1987a, pp. 118ff.). Paper branches are indicative of a more general organisational malaise. This can have a number of consequences: central headquarters do not receive all the subscriptions due to them and so suffer financially; more seriously, sitting TDs, acting as local 'barons', create little fiefdoms for themselves, preventing the

emergence of new blood and reducing the chance of the party being able to win new seats. It was not possible for party headquarters to deal with this problem until such time as they had set up central registers of members (achieved both by Fine Gael and Labour in the latter half of the 1970s), and until the party constitutions had been amended to give greater policing powers to the head offices.

As part of its move in the late 1970s to deal with the problem of paper branches and a generally debilitated party organisation, Fine Gael changed the rules governing subscriptions, introducing a new clause in the 1978 constitution allowing the national executive to determine what proportion of membership subscriptions would be paid to national headquarters. At the same time branch subscriptions to headquarters were also increased, up from £5 in the late 1970s to £30 by 1988. Similar changes were made by the Labour Party at around the same time (see Horgan, 1986; Mair, 1987a).¹⁸

Hidden in the global membership figures are changes in the nature and organisation of the party membership which, of themselves, reflect a shift towards professionalisation. Seeking to target selected groups more effectively, parties have established ancillary organisations. Depending on the individual, a person may be a member of the party via his/her membership of such an ancillary organisation. The Irish parties started to establish such organisations from the late 1970s onwards, an important factor behind the overall rise in membership figures at that stage. Fianna

¹⁸ Of all the parties, Fine Gael's reforms have gone the furthest in dealing with the problem of paper branches. Since 1978 the party's 'model rules' for candidate selection have removed 'the incentive for aspirants to create a plethora of inactive "paper branches", packed with their own supporters, around their home base' (Gallagher, 1988, p. 121; Mair, 1987a; O'Byrnes, 1986). This is because, under the new rules, the amount of delegates which a branch sends to the selection convention is based on the number of electors in the area, not on the size of the branch.

Fáil was the first to take this step. In the mid-1970s, under Jack Lynch's leadership, the party made a great play for the youth vote. A conference for young members was held in 1975; young voters were targeted in the 1977 election. In 1978 *Coiste Ógra* Fianna Fáil was formally established with, by the end of the year, a reported membership of 5,600 (Mair, 1987a). In 1981 the party set up a national women's committee and in 1984 it organised its first national women's conference.¹⁹

Fine Gael's ancillary organisations - all sending representatives to the national executive - were established at the end of the 1970s (the National Council of Youth Branches; the Trade Union Group; the Council of Local Representatives) and early 1980s (the National Agricultural Advisory Group; the Women's Group). Of these only Young Fine Gael has attracted any kind of mass membership, reaching a high point of 6,000 members in the mid-1980s. It has since dropped sharply, ending up at just 700 members in 1990. The other four ancillary organisations have a much smaller membership. The Trade Union Group is confined to urban constituencies, the Agricultural Advisory Group to rural constituencies. The Council of Local Representatives was set up to coordinate the activities of the party's local government representatives and is therefore countrywide. The Women's Group was established to act as a consultative body liaising with the party's women TDs and ministers.

Labour also introduced a series of ancillary organisations in the 1970s and 1980s: Labour Youth, the Labour Women's National Council and the Group of Affiliated Trade Unions, all of which elect representatives to the party's general

¹⁹ *Coiste Ógra* is first mentioned in the party's 1983 constitution. As yet there is no reference to the women's conference.

council. In 1990 Labour Youth and the Women's Section amounted altogether to some 4,000 members according to available estimates. In the early 1980s much attention was given to the evident infiltration of Labour Youth by the Militant Tendency (Horgan, 1986; Mair, 1987a). The leadership took action to deal with this: appointing a new youth officer with a brief to 'clean up' the organisation; closing down branches; amending the constitution to ban Militant from the party.²⁰

This section has been concerned with examining what evidence there is of membership becoming less significant within contemporary Irish party organisations. In common with comparative European trends (Katz, Mair *et al.*, 1992), the total number of people involved in Irish parties appears to be in decline. For the most part (in Fianna Fáil and Labour), this is occurring at the end of the 1980s; in Fine Gael there is a more distinct trend which starts in the early 1980s. We also looked at evidence on the *role* of Irish party members, with particular attention to membership income. The data revealed how the proportion of total party income made up of membership dues has been in decline from the first part of the 1980s onwards. Finally, this section has shown how the role of party membership has been affected by the growing tendency of the party leadership to target voters in elections. This has resulted in an increasing number of the members joining organisations ancillary

²⁰ The PDs in 1991 started moves to set up a youth organisation with linkages to the main party. The Workers' party introduced a youth section in 1989. The Workers' Party Youth was set up with its own elaborate organisation operating quite distinctly from the parent organisation. In fact the Workers' party youth organisation is the only one in all the parties to have a status independent of the parent organisation; in all other cases the youth section is a parallel rather than an independent organisation. In the Workers' party the only areas of linkage between the main party and the youth section are the right of the latter to send (non-voting) delegates at branch level to the relevant constituency councils and the right for the national executive to send representatives to the national executive of the youth section (in the case of other parties this relationship is reversed).

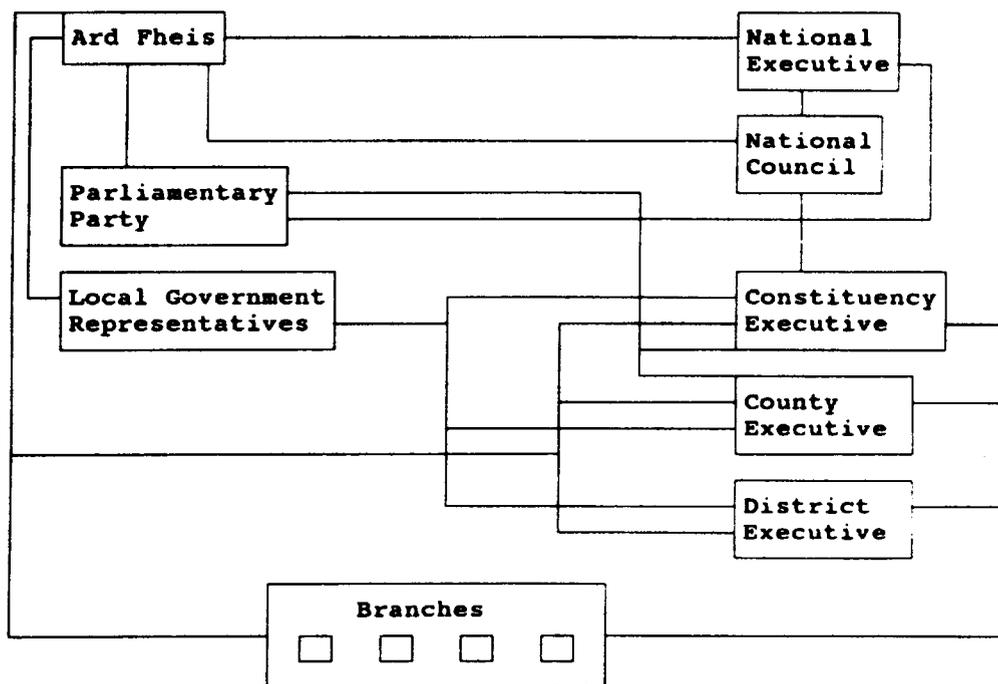


Figure 8.5. Organisational Structure of Fine Gael, 1970

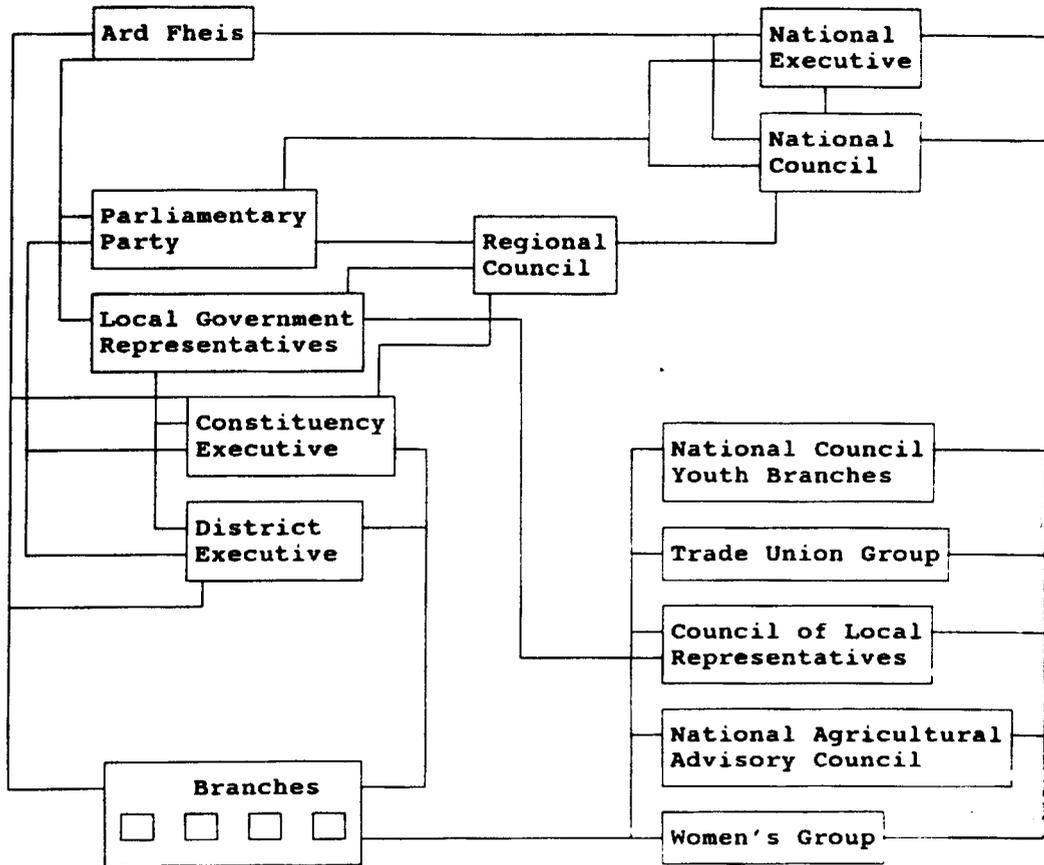


Figure 8.6. Organisational Structure of Fine Gael, 1990

to the main party organisation.

8.3. PARTY STRUCTURES

The nationalisation of campaigning has required changes to the structure of party organisations. This can be seen in at least two areas. First, the organisation has tended to become more complex in form - reflecting the greater demarcation of responsibilities and the closer targeting of voters. Second, there have been changes to the party rules giving the centre greater control over the organisation as a whole.

To illustrate the growing complexity of Irish party organisations, Figures 8.5 and 8.6 provide a comparison of the Fine Gael organisational structure in 1970 and again in 1990.²¹ The most significant development in Figure 8.6 is the shift from a purely *geographic* delineation of responsibilities (such as into county and constituency executives), as revealed by the creation of a series of *functional* units within the party. These were established to cater for the various ancillary organisations (such as women or youth). They also play an important role in the targeting of policies and initiatives for selected voters. The other main development in Figure 8.6 is the creation of regional councils. These play a significant role in European Parliament elections, each regional council being responsible for one of the four Euro constituencies (Dublin, rest of Leinster, Connacht-Ulster, Munster).

The other facet of structural change which we need to examine relates to the distribution of power within the organisation. The argument could be made that, over time, little has changed. We can see this by examining the division of power

²¹ Fine Gael's organisational structure was even simpler before 1970, when it had neither a national executive nor a county executive (Farrell, 1992b, Tables VII.D.1.a-f).

between the national executive and the national conference. In theory, decision-making power in most parties is vested in the national conference. On the face of it, this would appear to be the situation in Irish parties. The party constitutions generally refer to the national conference as the 'supreme governing and legislative body' of the party. By contrast, the national executive is usually given the sorts of executive functions one would expect to find in any governmental system. Its functions generally include: the right to amend party rules, subject to ratification by the subsequent party conference; the power to interpret the rules (particularly important in areas of ambiguity); its role as administrator and manager of party affairs.

The constitutions may stress the role and power of the party conference, but to what extent is this really the case? The party conference meets just once a year (once every two years for Labour), for just two days (in recent years this has in some cases been whittled down to a one day affair).²² It is convened by the national executive, and the agenda is drawn up by the national executive (or by one of its committees) which is also responsible for vetting branch motions. While it is possible - if rare - for a vote on a particular motion to go against the leadership, it is not necessarily the case that such a decision will be subsequently followed or implemented by the leadership.

In some cases the national executive has even greater formal powers than the party conference. This is particularly the case with the Workers' party and, before 1970, with Fine Gael. In these cases, for instance, decisions on the ideological

²² Denis Coghlan, 'Fine Gael to replace annual ard-fheis', *Irish Times*, 25 February 1991; Denis Coghlan, 'FF ard-fheis trimmed back to one day', *Irish Times*, 18 November 1991.

direction of the party, and on amendments to the party constitution are decided by the executive, not by the conference. This was one of the issues of contention at the centre of the recent disagreements within the Workers' party which was to provoke its 1992 split. The Fianna Fáil *árd comhairle* also has the potential to use similar powers. The party's successive constitutions have always had the clause that 'in exceptional and unforeseen circumstance', the national executive has apparently unlimited power to alter, amend, or ignore *árd* theis decisions.

In summary, then, it is clear that national executives have always had an influential role within parties. Indeed, in some cases power is even more concentrated. The Workers' party, true to its 'democratic centralist' tendencies, has always had an organisation superior to its national executive, which could best be described as a politburo.²³ Known originally as the *coisde seasta*, in 1983 its work was divided up between two executive committees: the executive management committee and the supremely influential executive political committee. The latter carries out the party's executive functions in-between meetings of the national executive. The party conference has no say over its membership or its activities.²⁴

At this juncture, it is worthwhile addressing an argument made by Panebianco regarding party leadership. In chapter 1 it was pointed out that the third characteristic feature of Panebianco's 'electoral-professional' party model focuses on the growing strength of the parliamentary party within the organisation. Similarly,

²³ Before 1970, Fine Gael had a 'standing committee', which was appointed by and from the ranks of the national council. It appears to have played a similar role to that of the Workers' party's *coisde seasta*.

²⁴ It is worth mentioning in this context that, in 1991, the Labour party established an executive committee which has an overall coordinating role.

Katz and Mair (1992) have argued that the party's 'governing face' (i.e. the parliamentary party) has been becoming more significant within the party organisation as a whole. This point has a relevance in most European contexts where there tends to be two power houses within parties: the parliamentary party and the organisational centre (i.e. the national executive and the secretariat). Therefore the relations over time between these two warrants attention. In the Irish context (and the British - see Webb, 1992), however, things are quite different. An examination of party constitutions over time suggests, *prima facie*, that the national executive is the main power house within the parties. In reality, this is only partially true. For instance, without exception, there is hardly any mention of the parliamentary party in any of the parties' constitutions (Farrell, 1992b, Tables VII.D.7.a-f), indicating the degree of independence it enjoys within the organisation. In other words, there are no controls over its operation. Another point worth dwelling on is that, in fact, it is generally quite difficult to separate these two 'faces' in the Irish context. Their memberships overlap quite considerably. Depending on how one calculates it, about one quarter of Fianna Fáil's *árd comhairle* is made up of parliamentary party members. In Labour the figure is close to a third; while in Fine Gael it is approaching about one half (Farrell, 1992b, Tables VII.D.2.b-d). It is the parliamentary party leadership which appoints and controls headquarters' staff; draws up policies and manifestos; speaks on behalf of the party. The relationship between the national executive and the parliamentary party tends to be harmonious and cooperative. Therefore, pace Panebianco, it is not a case of the power of the parliamentary party increasing; the power has always been there.

Overall, then, there is no disputing the fact that the centre of influence in

Irish parties has always been the parliamentary party leadership and the national executive. Having said that, it is also the case that a distinguishing feature of Irish party organisation is decentralisation - appropriate in a localist political culture and consistent with the STV electoral system. Politicians have tended to enjoy considerable autonomy in their constituencies; candidate selection was always decided by the constituency organisations; party members could come and go, with few restrictions on their activities and little call on their time. It is these sorts of areas that the party leaderships have had to deal with in their efforts to centralise the party organisations. The remainder of this section assesses this point in two specific areas: candidate selection, and rules on the obligation of members.

8.3.1. The Role of the Centre in Candidate Selection

Candidate selection is of particular significance to the issue of power distribution within parties. Over the years there have been developments in this area which are indicative of a general trend of increasing power at the centre (Farrell, 1992b, Tables VII.D.5.a-f; Gallagher, 1988). These developments have been central to the parties' efforts to develop vote management strategies. A feature of the nationalisation of campaign strategies has been the attempt by headquarters to maximise the efficiency of the party's votes; trying to win as many seats as possible in each constituency. In the first instance - as we have seen - this has required the closure of paper branches so as to limit the ability of sitting TDs to block the emergence of new candidates. The central organisations have also sought to play a more effective role in candidate selection: trying to ensure a good geographical spread in candidates so as to maximise the gains possible under STV (Farrell, 1985:

Sinnott, 1992). The developments in candidate selection have occurred at two levels: reforms of party rules on selection; and a growing tendency for the parties to make use of existing rules. Let us deal with each in turn, starting with rule changes.

Over the years Fianna Fáil has made no changes to its rules on candidate selection. Reflecting the party's long held electoral dominance, its central organisation has always had available to it all the powers necessary to control the nomination process. The party's 1953 constitution sets down five main roles for the *árd comhairle* in candidate selection, and these have remained unchanged ever since. The *árd comhairle* fixes the number of candidates per constituency; appoints the convention chairmen; ratifies or rejects the candidates nominated by the conventions; imposes any extra candidates it deems necessary; and can take the right of decision-making on candidate selection out of the hands of a constituency organisation altogether.

Fine Gael has made the most dramatic changes over the years to its rules on candidate selection. In 1963, Fine Gael's national executive only had the power to determine the numbers of candidates each constituency should field. Constitutional amendments were required in 1970 (to appoint convention chairs; to ratify candidates; to impose extra candidates), and again in 1978 (to make arrangements for alternative selection systems in some constituencies) to provide the party's national executive with similar powers to those enjoyed by Fianna Fáil's *árd comhairle*. In 1982 Fine Gael went one step further in giving its national executive the power to request that nominating conventions take geographical considerations into account; a reflection of the increased effort being given to vote management strategies. For the most part, the powers granted to the PDs' national executive over

candidate selection in the party's first (1986) constitution are very similar to those of Fine Gael's national executive.

The Labour party constitution has no rules on candidate selection. Instead, these are listed in a note, which apparently dates from the early 1960s. A recent copy of this paper - provided by the party in 1991 - suggests that Labour's general council has for some time enjoyed similar powers to those of Fianna Fáil's national executive. The two areas of exception are that Labour's general council cannot fix the number of candidates, nor can it take overall control of the process away from a constituency organisation. It is not possible to accurately assess the degree to which there have been changes made over time to the Labour party rules on candidate selection; no records are available. However, according to Gallagher (1988, p. 123), it was not until 1984 that a rule was first introduced allowing the centre (specifically the party leader and party chair) to add candidates to a constituency slate.²⁵ Apart from Gallagher's account, there are no records available of when the rules on candidate selection have changed in the Labour party. The important point of note, however, is that this set of rules has been drawn up by the party's national executive and can be changed by it at will. In other words, there are basically no constitutional limits to the powers over candidate selection of Labour's general council.²⁶

²⁵ In the same year, there was also a first attempt to set a quota for women candidates in the 1985 local elections (Gallagher, 1988, p. 123).

²⁶ The Workers' party rules have remained unchanged since its 1973 constitution. On paper, the *árd comhairle* has the power only to ratify the choice of candidates made by the constituency organisations. The Workers' party constitution has an additional requirement that a prospective candidate must have been an active party member of two years standing. However, the democratic centralist nature of the party organisation ensures that, in reality, the party leadership have a predominant role in candidate selection. At the outset, the Green party had no rules on candidate selection, reflecting both its emphasis on decentralism as well as the

To summarise, an examination of changes to the party rules suggests a rather mixed trend. There have been considerable rule changes made by Fine Gael, a few by Labour, and none by Fianna Fáil. But party rule changes reveal only part of the picture. After all, the changes which have been made by Fine Gael and Labour had the effect of giving their respective national executives the sort of powers which Fianna Fáil's *árd comhairle* has always enjoyed.

Another way of examining developments in candidate selection is to look at the extent to which national executives actually make use of the powers available to them. One rule which the national executives of all the main parties share (though in Fine Gael, only since 1970 and in Labour since 1984) is that of adding candidates. This has important applications for vote management strategies, when the party is trying to field an ideal number of candidates to maximise the efficiency of its vote-to-seat ratio. Gallagher reveals (1988, p. 122) that Fianna Fáil has made ready use of this instrument since 1977, adding 16 candidate to constituency lists in that election, three in the November 1982 election, and eight in the 1987 election. In the 1989 election, four candidates were imposed on constituencies by Fianna Fáil's *árd comhairle* (Farrell, 1990, pp. 23-4). In 1992 the *árd comhairle* added on candidates in 10 constituencies (Farrell, 1993). The increased interest of the centre in the candidate selection process was underlined by the creation in the mid-1980s of two separate committees. The job of the National Organising Committee has been to clean-up the party's network of *cumann*, region by region (starting in 1984 with

reality that, as a new party, it wanted to encourage candidates to come forward and therefore no rules were put in the way of prospective candidates. In 1989, in the light of the election of the first Green party TD, the rules on candidate selection were changed giving the party's Council (equivalent to a national executive) the right to reject proposed candidates.

what was known as 'Operation Dublin').²⁷ Separate from this, the Constituencies Committee - chaired by the party leader - has been established to head-hunt prospective candidates; to identify and focus resources on marginal constituencies; and to liaise with the relevant constituency organisations. This committee plays a crucial role in the party's efforts at vote-management.

Fine Gael's national executive has gone even further than Fianna Fáil's in its involvement in candidate selection. A key feature of FitzGerald's organisational reforms in the late 1970s addressed the issue of candidate selection, and ever since the head office has played an active role both in adding candidates (eight in November 1982, four in 1989) and in targeting candidates for vote management strategies (Gallagher, 1988, pp. 122-3; Mair, 1987a). In the latter case - as we have seen - a key instrument used by headquarters to placate any constituency fears is constituency polling commissioned by the centre. The Fine Gael national executive has been especially active in attracting public figures into the party as prominent candidates in marginal constituencies (such as in the fielding of Austin Currie - a prominent Catholic civil rights campaigner from Northern Ireland - in a Dublin constituency in the 1989 election (Farrell, 1990, pp. 26-7)).

As we have seen, the Labour party made a rule change in 1984, giving the centre the power to add candidates. In the 1989 election, headquarters interfered in four constituencies. In its preparations for the 1992 campaign, Labour headquarters paid very close attention to the selection of 'appropriate' candidates (Farrell, 1993). The PDs' national executive made considerable use of its power to impose

²⁷ It is notable how the decline in the number of party branches dates from around this time (Figure 8.4).

candidates in the party's first election of 1987. This was justified on the grounds that, as a new party, it was too early for good local candidates to have emerged (Gallagher, 1988, pp. 123-4). By contrast, in the 1989 and 1992 elections, there was little interference by the centre in the selection of PD candidates (Farrell, 1990, pp. 30-1).

Overall, changes in rules relating to candidate selection, as well as developments in the application of existing rules, have meant that while the Irish candidate selection process can still be summarised as one of 'constituency-level selection, with national supervision and influence' (Gallagher, 1988, p. 125), the degree of national influence has undoubtedly been on the increase. As Michael Gallagher has put it in his recent assessment:

[A]lthough many of the formidable paper powers of the national executive lie dormant, it is clear that national headquarters in all parties, especially Fine Gael, are taking a closer interest in candidate selection, believing that this will bring electoral dividends. They are increasingly active at what might be termed the 'pre-selection' stage, to try to smooth the path for bright local prospects and to persuade local organizations to select them. While the national executives hardly ever veto candidates, they quite often add names to the panel selected locally. (Gallagher, 1988, p. 125)

8.3.2. The Obligations of Party Members

When examining the obligations of party members, a distinction can be drawn between an open and relaxed policy, and one which is more closed and rule-bound.²⁸ It might be argued that in a modernising party organisation - where the

²⁸ It is worth pointing out that another area of distinction in membership commitment is between those parties which do not charge an individual membership fee (Fianna Fáil and the Green party) and those which do (the rest). Furthermore, the Workers' party is separated from the pack by the actual amount of subscription it

leadership are seeking to eschew a large and active membership - if anything, there should be decreasing attention to rules governing the membership. However, this ignores the fact that the leadership would want to have some control over the membership: to better coordinate tactics; to keep recalcitrants in line.

An examination of all the parties' constitutions reveals that there are four main areas of rules relating to control over the party membership. Most common of all is some form of loyalty clause which is generally a requirement that members support only the party's candidates, and do not do anything 'unbecoming a member of the organisation' (Fianna Fáil 1953 Constitution). There are variants on this, but the basic idea is that the party requires a degree of loyalty from their members. With the singular exception of the PDs, all parties have rules along these lines in their constitutions. Fianna Fáil, Labour and the Workers' party all introduced them in the 1950s, with later amendments to tighten them up in the 1970s and 1980s. Fine Gael first introduced such a rule in 1987.

Another set of rules are clearly designed to prevent the practice of membership packing, for instance the sudden accession of large numbers of new members to help swing a vote. In 1989 the Green party introduced a six-month probation clause into its rules. Fianna Fáil has had a clause since 1980 which prevents a new member from voting immediately on joining; the individual has to wait until the subsequent meeting. Of all the parties, the Workers' party has gone furthest in requiring new members to pass through a probationary initiation period

expects from its members. Whereas Fine Gael, the PDs and Labour expect subscriptions which amount, at today's prices, to a maximum of the order of £4-6 per annum, the Workers' party charges a maximum weekly rate of fifty pence (£26 per annum). In all cases there are reduced charges available for old age pensioners, housewives, unemployed and students.

before receiving full membership rights. According to rules set originally in 1957 (updated in 1973), new members have a six-month period in which they have no voting rights. They have to attend special classes at the end of which they must show they have an understanding of party policy.

A third set of party rules require an active role from party members. In other words it is not enough to simply pay membership dues; the member must show a commitment through his/her volunteer work for the party. As can be expected, the Workers' party stresses this function in a 1973 rule (updated in 1983), contributing to a problem in the late 1980s of 'membership burnout' (Dunphy and Hopkins, 1992; Meade, 1990). Fianna Fáil is so far the only other party to have a similar requirement, since 1980, requiring members to help in such activities as the national collection and to attend some branch meetings (or else lose AGM voting rights).

Finally, the Workers' party has a rule which is central to its democratic centralist form of organisation. Since 1973 it has been a requirement of all members that they follow orders: 'While accepting that differences of opinion can exist in relation to formulation of policy or in deciding on strategic or tactical activities, the existence of factions or individuals that oppose or refrain from engaging in activities decided upon by the movement shall not be allowed' (Workers' party 1973 Constitution).

As can be expected in a democratic-centralist organisation, the Workers' party has the most extensive set of rules on the obligations of its members. The PDs have the most open policy on membership obligations. All it requires is that no person can be a member of more than one branch at any one time (PDs 1986 Constitution). This open policy is consistent with a party model which places little

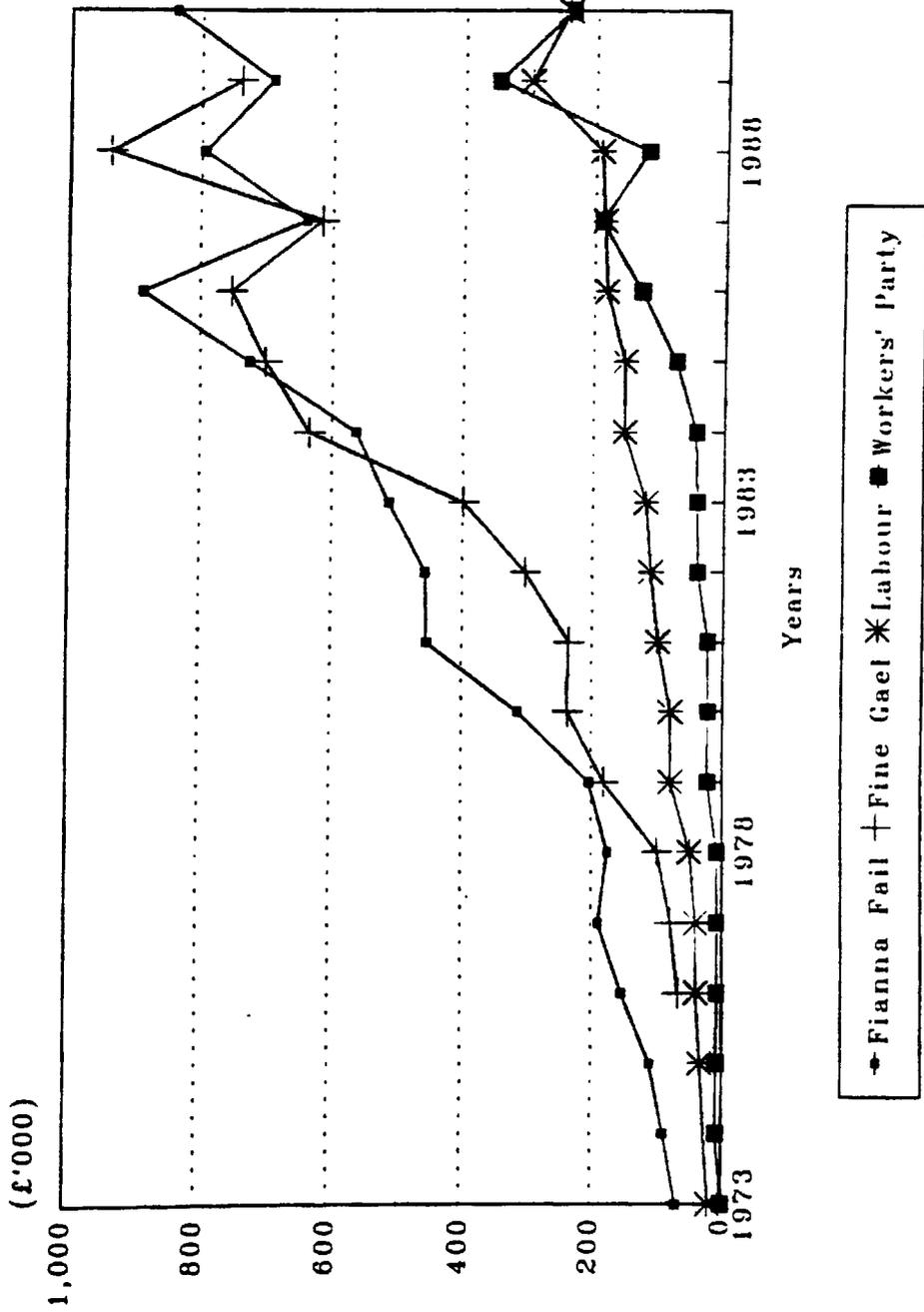
stress on a mass membership; as evidenced, for instance, by considerable fluidity in membership numbers (see above). It is also to be expected in such a new party (established in 1985) where, from the beginning, attention was paid primarily to centralised management and marketing. In short, the PDs can be treated as something of an exception to the general trend. And it is what has been happening to the other parties over the past number of years that is of primary interest. All the other parties have been taking steps to introduce tighter controls over their members. This is a process which started in the 1950s and intensified in the 1970s and 1980s.

In summary, there is evidence of changes to party organisational structures in a number of areas. First, the structure has become more complex. We saw this in the case of Fine Gael; the same applies to each of the other parties (Farrell, 1992b, Tables VII.D.1.a-f). Second, there has been a shift in the distribution of power within party organisations. The tendency - as revealed in the areas of candidate selection and rules governing members' obligations - has been one of a growing concentration of power at the centre.

8.4. PARTY FINANCE

It was suggested at the start of this chapter that the growing expense of campaigning has had implications for the state of party finances. Tied in with this is Panebianco's point that one of the elements of party professionalisation has been in the area of sources of financial revenue. Specifically, we should expect to see parties relying more on state funding as well as on new, alternative sources of private funding (as opposed to an exclusive reliance on membership dues). This section starts, in sub-section 8.4.1, with a review of the state of party finances in Ireland.

Figure 8.7. Party Income



Source: Party accounts

This is followed by an examination of private sources of party funding (sub-section 8.4.2) and of the debate about public funding of Irish parties (sub-section 8.4.3).

8.4.1. The State of Party Finances

Trends in total party income are shown in Figure 8.7. The main trend of interest here is the dramatic growth in income for both Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael as compared to the more modest growth rates for Labour and the Workers' party. Throughout the 1970s there is little separating all four parties. From the early 1980s onwards the divergence is striking. The other trend to note is how by the end of the 1980s Fine Gael income surpasses that of Fianna Fáil, while the Workers' party income exceeds that of Labour.

There is little point in looking at the expenditure figures, for they reveal a similar pattern of growth and they tend to imply that party finances are pretty much in balance. What they do not tell us is what exactly is the state of play of the parties' overall finances. With the singular exception of the Labour party, the annual accounts published by the parties list only their annual revenue and expenses; no details are provided about the state of the parties' balance sheets, about their surpluses or deficits. In short, the parties reveal only what they want to, and for the most part, this is very little indeed. For instance, Fianna Fáil refuses to divulge its income figures; instead, the accounts simply record how much money was handed over by the party's trustees to headquarters in the given year. The Workers' party does not publish its accounts. When approached for figures, the initial response was that it had no records from previous years. Eventually total income and expenditure figures were provided, and after subsequent badgering, the party provided rough

Table 8.2. Party Indebtedness in the 1990s (Estimates)

Party	Estimates of Debt (£'000)	# Members ^a	Debt/Member (£)
Fianna Fáil	3,000	75,000	40.00
Fine Gael	1,000-1,300	25,000	40.00-52.00
Labour	60-70	7,400	8.11-9.46
Progressive Democrats	50-87	7,000	7.14-12.51
Workers' party	300-500	2,800	107.14-178.57

Note:

- a Membership figures/estimates provided by the parties for *Irish Political Studies*.

Sources: *Irish Political Studies*, Vol. 7, 1992, p. 163; Joe Carroll, 'PDs fate bound to that of coalition', *Irish Times*, 10 May 1990; Joe Carroll, 'Cleaning up the politicians' act', *Irish Times*, 25 February 1991; Maol Muire Tynan, 'Dooney likely to take WP seat', *Irish Times*, 14 September 1991; Denis Coghlan, 'FF ard-fheis trimmed back to one day', *Irish Times*, 18 November 1991; Maol Muire Tynan, 'Bruton seen by party members as the man with a million ideas', *Irish Times*, 20 November 1991; Maol Muire Tynan, 'Debts brought party close to bankruptcy', *Irish Times*, 4 January, 1992; Maol Muire Tynan, 'FF report urges party change', *Irish Times*, 10 January 1992; Deaglán de Bréadún, 'Debt problem faces new FF leader', *Irish Times*, 31 January 1992; Deaglán de Bréadún, 'Fianna Fail rewrites its basic aims', *Irish Times*, 29 February 1992; 'FF debt campaign', *Irish Times*, 10 April 1992; Maol Muire Tynan, 'Unbandaging the wounds', *Irish Times*, 25 May 1992; G. Kennedy, 'Pennywise Politicians Cherish their Top Secret', *Irish Times*, 7 August 1992; G. Kennedy, 'Fianna Fáil's debt rises to highest level of £3m', *Irish Times*, 4 February 1993.

percentage breakdowns for these totals. Similarly the Green party was only able to provide a list of figures for given years. Fine Gael, the PDs and Labour publish what purport to be full accounts, though it is only Labour which provides what are apparently complete figures on annual trends as well as the party's on-going balance. This gap in our information makes it difficult to adequately assess the true state of Irish party finances. It also adds fuel to the speculation about the sources of party revenue.

The financial solvency of the parties has received increasing attention in recent years, reflecting both the fact that the parties have growing problems with their finances as well as more intensive probing by newspaper journalists. As can be expected, estimates vary, sometimes quite wildly. Nonetheless, it is possible to draw some general conclusions on how the parties compare with each other.

The parties most affected by financial problems have been Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, and the Workers' party. As shown by the journalistic estimates in Table 8.2, only Labour and the PDs appear to have been successful in keeping control of their debts, in the former case giving the party leader greater freedom to focus on organisational reform and expansion, without 'having to watch his back'.²⁹ The debt problems faced by the country's two largest parties are far more serious; however, even these are dwarfed by the Workers' party debt which is estimated at ranging between £107-178 per member.

In the cases of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, the response has been to trim the sails and reorganise, with a shortening of the annual árd fheis and steps being taken

²⁹ D. Coghlan, 'Cautious leader now free to look forward instead of having to watch his back', *Irish Times*, 18 February 1991.

to reform the party organisation. Organisational reform may not be so new to Fine Gael - as shown, for instance, by the practices of the three most recent leaders, Garret FitzGerald, Alan Dukes and John Bruton; but it is to Fianna Fáil. In 1991 a special commission was established by Charles Haughey to examine the state of the party organisation, in part an attempt to stave off internal criticism for consistently bad election results. Its report to his successor, Albert Reynolds, in early 1992 recommended, among other things, steps to tighten up membership and branch lists, with more effective policing of subscriptions - a reform which the outgoing general secretary had long been calling for; general organisational reform; a new fund raising drive; and the consideration of extending state funding of parties.³⁰

Fine Gael has also been taking steps to reorganise. Under its new leader, John Bruton, the party has cutback on spending; instituted a membership drive; tried to involve as many TDs as possible in special policy committees.³¹ Not all the reforms have been successful, as shown most vividly by the failed attempt to 'stand down' the party's 41 constituency organisers and public relations officers in an effort to 'generate a vigorous election machine' in time for the 1992 winter general election.³² The constituency parties were not happy with this proposed move to interfere in their affairs: the national executive motion was defeated at the 1992 árd fheis.

³⁰ Maol Muire Tynan, 'FF report urges party change', *Irish Times*, 10 January 1992; John Walshe, 'Report urges changes in FF', *Irish Times*, 28 February 1992; 'FF debt campaign', *Irish Times*, 10 April 1992.

³¹ Denis Coghlan, 'One-man band seeks winning tune', *Irish Times*, 20 November 1991; Maol Muire Tynan, 'Bruton seen by party members as the man with a million ideas', *Irish Times*, 20 November 1991.

³² 'Fine Gael shape-up', *Irish Times*, 7 May 1992.

The debt problems faced by the Workers' party have been far more serious than any of the other parties; they have also attracted the most attention. In October 1991 a *Sunday Times* article claimed that, in early 1989, the party was in receipt of £28,206 sterling from the Soviet Communist party.³³ There followed an extensive internal inquiry by the party, which included investigations in Moscow.³⁴ Strong denials were made by the party leadership. However, the repercussions of this were considerable. Claims were made that the party still had links with the Official IRA. Its secrecy and democratic centralist organisational structure were anathema to liberal media circles. The party began to suffer electorally, its vote dropping in the 1991 local elections - the first drop in its vote since its rise to prominence during the 1980s. Concomitant with these problems was the growing party debt which during the course of 1991 began to reach crisis proportions. One journalist, writing in early 1992, described the situation as follows:

Financial woes almost forced the Workers' Party into bankruptcy at one point last year and it still confronts debts of £500,000. Further losses are believed to have accumulated at a rate of £6,000 per month until last autumn at least, when the situation is said to have been brought somewhat under control.³⁵

³³ Sean Mac Connell, 'WP denies Soviet cash deal', *Irish Times*, 26 October 1991. Subsequently it was revealed that the party had sought £1 million from the CPSU in 1986, in part to cover a shortfall caused by the party stopping its 'special activities'. There followed intense media speculation that special activities referred to bank raids and the like (see various articles in *Irish Times*, 26, 27 October 1992; J. Carroll, 'Two Former WP Leaders Deny £1m Letter Plea', *Irish Times*, 28 October 1992).

³⁴ Seamus Martin and Joe Carroll, 'WP internal inquiry likely on new claims of Soviet funding', *Irish Times*, 28 November 1991; Maol Muire Tynan, 'WP may extend inquiry to Moscow', *Irish Times*, 31 December 1991.

³⁵ Maol Muire Tynan, 'Debts brought party close to bankruptcy', *Irish Times*, 4 January 1992.

Through such measures as staff redundancies, and the party's TDs accepting personal indemnity for significant proportions of the debt, the situation was stabilised. But the problem remained. The party leader, Prionsias de Rossa sought to introduce more general organisational reform; he also wanted to sell off party headquarters in Dublin and Belfast. In 1991, he was successful in pushing through some reforms to party policy; however, his attempt to radically reform the party constitution, primarily aimed at removing the last vestiges of democratic centralism, were narrowly defeated at a special delegate conference in January 1992, and a few weeks later he led six of the party's seven TDs and the bulk of the membership out of the party and established the new Democratic Left party. It is not entirely clear what has happened to the Workers' party debt in the light of this schism.³⁶

The main conclusion to be drawn is that, by the 1980s, party politics in Ireland had become very expensive. All parties face increasing financial difficulties, some acutely. It is in this light that the role of corporate funding of parties becomes very significant.

8.4.2. Private Funding of Parties

Of particular interest to politicians from the smaller, left-of-centre parties is the extent to which parties on the right-of-centre have been in receipt of funds from

³⁶ Reading between the lines of journalistic speculation it appears that much of the debt has remained with the remaining rump of the Workers' party (see Maol Muire Tynan's three articles: 'De Rossa may face leadership challenge', *Irish Times*, 3 March 1992; 'Party to campaign for new constitution', *Irish Times*, 30 March 1992; 'Unbandaging the wounds', *Irish Times*, 25 May 1992).

the private sector.³⁷ This was a major item during the 1989 general election campaign, when journalists speculated on the possible links between politicians - especially Fianna Fáil politicians - and big business (Farrell, 1990). In particular there were claims made by opposition politicians of political payoffs in the agricultural sector. Fianna Fáil strenuously denied such links. The ability to continue such denials came under threat when, after the collapse of the Goodman empire in late 1991, a high level public enquiry (referred to as the beef tribunal) was set up to examine allegations of corruption, a part of which related to the possible involvement of senior Fianna Fáil politicians.

During the course of the beef tribunal, it was revealed that businessmen have been sending contributions to political parties.³⁸ According to the figures provided by the parties, Fianna Fáil between 1982-1991 was in receipt of some £374,700 from businesses in the agricultural sector, £175,700 of which came from the Goodman group. In the more recent period of 1987-1991, corporate contributions from the agricultural sector to Fianna Fáil amounted to £297,000, the bulk of this

³⁷ In the last twenty or thirty years - and to an increasing extent - both Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael have paid attention to corporate sources of finance. In the 1960s, Fianna Fáil ran an 'elitist fund raising' organisation known as Taca (Walsh, 1986, pp. 84-5). In the 1970s Fine Gael organised its corporate fund raising activities through a special functional branch, known as 'capital branch' (Mair, 1987a). In the 1980s, Fianna Fáil went another step in founding a fund raising organisation in the USA. In private interviews, Fine Gael strategists were quick to dismiss this as a failure.

³⁸ This discussion is based on articles in the *Irish Times* on the following dates: 27 June 1992; 3 July 1992; 7 August 1992; 16 and 17 September 1992; 28 October 1992. Note that the following totals are of contributions to the party organisations. The amount given to individual politicians cannot be quantified. As a result of the publication of details on corporate contributions to the parties, some companies have decided to stop making such payments (see 'Amounts Paid to Parties Revealed', *Irish Times* 13 May 1993).

being provided by just three companies (including Goodman). This represented the equivalent of about 10 per cent of total party income during this period. In the same period, 1987-1991, the agricultural business contributions to Fine Gael totalled £138,550, of which £63,000 was provided by Goodman. This represented an equivalent of about 7 per cent of total party income during the period. The PDs gave figures for 1986-1991, totalling £45,000, or the equivalent of about 3 per cent of total party income. Goodman contributed at least £20,000 to that total. Labour and the Workers' party denied receiving any corporate finance from the agricultural sector.³⁹

It is worth stressing that, while the quantity of contributions from agricultural businesses to the three right-of-centre parties is large, we have no way of knowing just how large are the contributions from companies in other sectors. Until such time as parties are made to disclose the sources of their income, this is likely to remain shrouded in secrecy.

8.4.3. Public Funding of Parties

In his study of public funding of parties in Austria, Italy, Sweden and West Germany, Nassmacher (1989) found that in each case public subsidies were introduced because the parties were unable to meet organisational costs with revenue from members and donors. He identifies three overlapping stages in the

³⁹ Recently it was revealed, that, for some time, Labour has been in receipt of corporate donations to fund election campaigning. In 1987 the party received £2,000. This rose to £50,000 in 1989 and again to £70,000 in 1992. Despite this reliance on corporate finance, Labour is still proposing compulsory disclosure by political parties and candidates of all such contributions (*Irish Times*, 12 December 1992).

implementation of public subsidies. First, (1954-1974), in the 'stage of experimentation', governments made tentative steps towards introducing subsidies. In the second 'stage of enlargement' (1967-1982), there was an extension in the scope and an increase in the amount of the subsidies. Most recently, the 'stage of adjustment' (1974-1982) has mainly involved the institutionalisation of the subsidy system to take account of inflation trends.

In short, the evidence from the comparative studies is of an increasingly extensive system of public funding of parties across the democratic world. Ireland is not included in Alexander's list of 21 countries where there is some form of state subsidy of parties, candidates, or election campaigns. Indeed, there has been a general impression that Irish parties are not subsidised by the state. In recent years there has been much debate in Ireland as to whether a scheme of state aid should be introduced as perhaps one means of introducing controls over company donations.⁴⁰ To an extent those calling for state aid - many of them leading politicians - have been somewhat disingenuous: Irish parties already receive substantial financial support from the state. The parties receive five main categories of state financial aid. First, there are the allowances which have always been provided for TDs and Senators. There are two main categories involved: the provision of free telephone

⁴⁰ For a recent example, see Garret FitzGerald, 'Let the State fund political parties and eliminate danger of influence', *Irish Times*, 11 July 1992. The proponents of this argument would do well to examine more closely the instances of financial corruption which have been evident in the USA and Germany, both prominent examples of systems which provide public funding. The new coalition government, elected 1992, has made a commitment to introducing public funding (Jim Cusack, 'Secrecy on Earnings may End', *Irish Times*, January 8 1993).

and postal facilities and office equipment;⁴¹ and travel and overnight expenses for TDs and Senators.⁴² Second, since, 1975, money is provided for the employment of a secretary for each non-office holding TD and roughly each three non-office holding Senators.⁴³ Third, since 1981 the Department of Finance has provided money to the *parties* (as opposed to individual *TDs* and *Senators*) for the employment of secretaries and assistants for general administrative and research purposes.⁴⁴ Fourth, under the rules of the Oireachtas grant - introduced under the *Ministerial and Parliamentary Offices Act, 1938* - a party which fielded candidates

⁴¹ Traditionally the state has provided the means for equipping TDs' Dáil offices with desks, typewriters and so on. In recent years this was extended to the constituency offices, and all non-office holding TDs have been provided with personal computers which have had installed a custom-built data base designed to help TDs with their constituency work. Altogether the state spent some £600,000 on the pcs. On the implications of the increased use of pcs in Irish politics, see Seán Whelan, 'Hard sell politics', *Magill*, March 1990.

⁴² Note that here I am not including the members' salaries which are officially referred to as an 'allowance'. Prior to 1960, it was treated as an allowance and was therefore not subject to tax. Since then the bulk of it has been treated as a taxable salary with a certain amount (in 1987 this was £6,901 for TDs and £3,810 for Senators) set aside as expenses. In its 1987 report the *Review Body on Higher Remuneration in the Public Sector* recommended that this practice be ended and that a clear distinction should be drawn between salary and expenses. At the end of 1991 it was announced that this recommendation would be followed ('Ahern details new allowances for deputies', *Irish Times*, 18 December 1991).

⁴³ This money was first made available to TDs in 1975, when one secretarial assistant was provided for each ten non-office holding TDs. This ratio was gradually changed as follows: 1978, 1:7; 1980, 1:3; 1981, 1:2; 1982, 1:1. The senator's secretarial assistance scheme was first introduced in 1981, with a ratio of 1:5. In 1985 the ratio was reduced to 1:3. These secretaries are formally employed by the State and therefore have civil service status. In a recent statement on this scheme, the minister for Finance estimated that it cost the exchequer annually about £300,000 ('Funding for Parties outlined', *Irish Times*, 28 May 1992).

⁴⁴ Initially 17 posts of administrators and administrative assistants were created. In 1987 the number was increased to 26. In 1989 the number was again increased to 32.

Table 8.3. Total State Subvention to Irish Parties (£s).

Year	Allowances ^a	Oireachtas Grant ^b	Education Officer Scheme ^c	Total
1960	59,000	4,500	--	63,500
1961	59,000	4,500	--	63,500
1962	62,000	4,500	--	66,500
1963	75,500	4,500	--	80,000
1964	88,500	5,040	--	93,540
1965	88,500	5,040	--	93,540
1966	83,500	5,040	--	88,540
1967	90,000	5,040	--	95,040
1968	95,500	15,000	--	110,500
1969	105,000	15,000	--	120,000
1970	115,000	15,000	--	130,000
1971	138,900	15,000	--	153,900
1972	187,000	15,000	--	202,000
1973	187,000	35,000	--	222,000
1974	167,140	38,523	--	205,663
1975	248,300	50,169	--	298,469
1976	301,000	55,164	--	356,164
1977	334,100	61,937	--	396,037
1978	416,000	75,998	--	491,998
1979	506,000	85,498	--	591,498
1980	718,210	86,499	--	804,709
1981	910,800	209,026	--	1,119,826
1982	1,504,100	246,746	--	1,750,846
1983	1,843,600	238,446	--	2,082,046
1984	2,595,000	253,702	--	2,848,702
1985	2,754,000	265,930	28,000	3,047,930
1986	3,102,000	275,257	28,000	3,405,257
1987	3,106,000	313,546	28,000	3,447,546
1988	3,289,000	366,635	28,000	3,683,635
1989	3,597,000	414,035	28,000	4,039,035

Notes to Table 8.3.

- a These do not include members' salaries. They consist of TDs' and Senators' overnight expenses; and of the money given over to TDs' and Senators' secretarial assistance.
- b These estimates have been calculated on the basis of figures provided by the department of Finance (see Farrell, 1992b, Table VII.E.3).
- c These estimates are based on the assumption that Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, Labour and the Workers' party have all been eligible for the full allowance since its establishment. The PDs had yet to set up a youth organisation.

Sources: official returns; departments of Finance and Education: *Estimates for Public Service (Abridged Version)*, Dublin: Government Publications (1960-1991).

as a recognised party in a general election and succeeded in having at least seven deputies elected to the Dáil is entitled to receive further state funding from the Department of Finance.⁴⁵ This money can be used entirely at the relevant party's discretion. Fifth, since 1985 parties receive financial aid from the department of Education to employ Youth Officers.⁴⁶

Most of these categories of state funding are itemised in the government's yearly estimates or can be gathered from the relevant departments. However, it is not possible to calculate the individual amounts to each of the parties as in most cases global estimates only are provided.

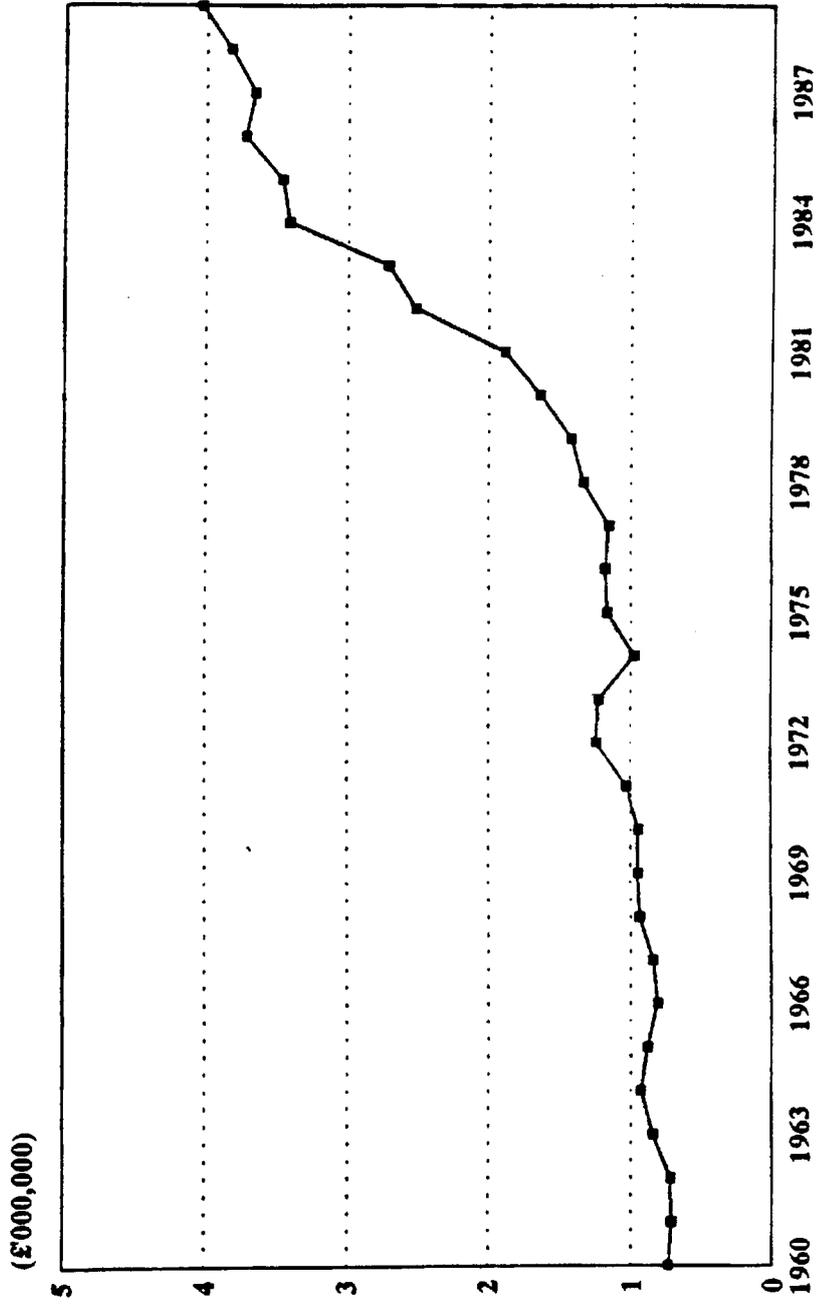
Table 8.3 provides figures on the public funding of Irish parties over the past thirty years. These suggest a very different picture to that being drawn by the proponents of the need-to-'introduce'-state-funding of Irish parties. Not only are Irish parties already receiving state aid (either the parties or the individual TDs and Senators) but they actually receive a substantial amount of state funding. In 1989, for instance, the combined total incomes of all the political parties amounted to £2,721,306. In that same year, as Table 8.3 shows, an estimated £4 million was provided by the state for parties and their representatives.

To take account of cost of living increases over time, I have standardised the

⁴⁵ This money was available only to opposition parties until 1973 when it was extended also to government parties. The money is paid over to the parliamentary party leaders for them to deal with as they wish.

⁴⁶ This scheme was announced in October 1984. A maximum sum of £7,000 per annum (or 60 per cent of the total cost) is made available for the employment of party youth education officers. To be eligible a party must be registered, represented in the Dáil, and must show evidence of developing youth participation in its organisation.

Figure 8.8. State Subvention to Irish Parties (Constant Prices)



Sources: Table 8.3; Central Statistics Office

figures in the last column of Table 8.3.⁴⁷ The trend is shown in Figure 8.8. This confirms that the amount of money provided by the state has been steadily increasing since the beginning of the time series in 1960. As we move into the 1980s the rate of increase accelerates, suggesting that Ireland has, perhaps, entered into Nassmacher's (1989) second stage of enlargement in the amount of public funding of parties.

Even when we exclude from the totals the allowances granted to individual *politicians* and look only at the amount received by the *party organisations*, the proportions are still very high. As Table 8.4 shows, on average over time, public funding of Irish parties has represented an equivalent of 20 per cent, or one-fifth, of the combined total incomes of the parties.

Of all the sources of public funding, it is the Oireachtas grant which appears most like conventional state funding practices in other countries. There are no formal rules governing its allocation; merely a lump sum of money which is divided up between the recipient parties roughly according to the following formula (both for government and opposition):

where there is 1 (government or opposition) party:

it receives the total sum

where there are 2 parties:

roughly a 2/3:1/3 division between the larger and smaller parties

where there are 3 or more parties:

1/2 to the largest party; the remainder is divided by the number of smaller parties involved

⁴⁷ The figures have been standardised to take account of cost of living increases up until 1989. I have used the average annual index (based on the Consumer Price Index) provided by the Central Statistics Office (Dublin) (series to base of August 1953 = 100).

Table 8.4. State Funding as a Proportion of Total Party Income

Year	Total Party Income ^a	Oireachtas & Education Grants ^b	Income/Grants (%)
1976	262,751	55,164	21.00
1977	309,849	61,937	20.00
1978	325,419	75,998	23.35
1979	466,532	85,498	18.33
1980	634,079	86,499	13.64
1981	792,259	209,026	26.38
1982	872,731	246,746	28.27
1983	1,031,835	238,446	23.11
1984	1,350,038	253,702	18.79
1985	1,579,305	286,930	18.17
1986	1,821,871	296,257	16.26
1987	2,017,012	334,546	16.59
1988	2,187,614	387,635	17.72
1989	2,702,856	442,035	16.35

Notes:

- a This is the total income of Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Labour since 1976 (the first year Fine Gael published its accounts); the PDs since 1987 (when it first qualified for the Oireachtas grant); the Workers' party in 1989 (when it first qualified for the Oireachtas grant).
- b This column only includes that money which the state provides the *party organisations* as opposed to individual *politicians*: i.e. the Oireachtas grant (1976-1989); Education Officer Scheme (Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Labour since 1985; Workers party in 1989).

Sources: Departments of Finance and Education; official returns.

The total amount of money involved is a fixed annual sum which increases automatically with each annual public pay round. The allocation rules are ad hoc and subject to alteration. Take the situation over the course of 1987, for instance. As Table 8.5 shows, the annual increase was determined at the start of May. This was followed by a general election one month later which saw a change of government (Fianna Fáil won office) and the emergence of the PDs as the third largest party in the State (14 TDs), overtaking Labour (12 TDs). Instead of the usual pattern of just two opposition qualifying for the Oireachtas grant there were now three, reducing the amount that Fine Gael and Labour would usually have enjoyed. This explains why there was a new allocation of money in June which took account of the situation. The significant point, however, is that, as shown by the figures (comparing the final two columns), the June increase simply dealt with the specific problem of how to divide up the cake between three opposition parties; there were no similar increases to the other possible categories. In short, since 1987 the total amount of Oireachtas grant paid to parties by the state now varies depending on how many parties are involved.

Developments in party finance have been in line with expectations. First, the parties - to varying degrees - all face debt problems, reflecting the growing expense of politics in general, and campaigning in particular. Second, the parties (especially those on the centre-right) rely more on corporate contributions to fund their activities. As we saw in section 8.2, this has coincided with a general decline in the proportion of party income originating from membership dues. Third, contrary to the general view, Irish parties are in receipt of public funding which on average

Table 8.5. Allocation Rules for the Oireachtas Grant in 1987 (£s)

		January- April	May	June- December
<i>To Government Party/Parties</i>				
1 government party		81,005	82,625	82,625
2 government parties	greater	56,703	57,837	57,837
	lesser	24,302	24,788	24,788
3+ government parties	greatest	40,503	41,313	41,313
	remainder	40,503/#	41,313/#	41,313/#
<i>To Opposition Party/Parties</i>				
1 opposition party		202,511	206,561	206,561
2 opposition parties	greater	160,831	164,048	164,048
	lesser	79,826	81,423	81,423
3+ opposition parties	greatest	101,255	103,280	118,280
	remainder	101,255/#	103,280/#	133,280/#

Source: Department of Finance

represents one-fifth of total party income. Furthermore, the allocation of this funding tends to be rather informal in nature, not subject to the sort of rigorous controls found in other countries (Alexander, 1989).

8.5. CONCLUSION

How have party organisations in Ireland been changing? To what extent have the environmental factors, discussed earlier in the thesis, been responsible for party organisational change? In a recent assessment of Irish party organisations, Laver and Marsh conclude that:

Some of the trends that we have identified in Ireland can be found elsewhere. Falling membership, centrally directed campaigns and financial difficulties characterise parties in many countries. In many ways, indeed, the structure of Irish parties is essentially quite modern. . . Over the last few decades . . . it has become clear in Europe that the era of the mass party is over. All parties, whatever their origins, are coming to resemble one another in their central concern with fighting and winning legislative elections (Laver & Marsh, 1992, p. 101).

This chapter confirms their findings. We have seen four main areas of party organisational change in Ireland, four areas which indicate a process of organisational professionalisation. In each case, the area of change reflects an attempt by the party to adapt to changes in the electoral environment.

First, as predicted, there has been a sharp rise in staff numbers at the centre of the parties, particularly in Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael. There have also been changes in the nature of the personnel employed: proportionately less secretaries and more managers and professionals. That the changes in this area have not been as dramatic as might be expected for a large part is due to the greater tendency for

parties to commission specialist short-term advice externally from agencies and consultants, as we saw in chapter 7. Traditionally, Fine Gael and Labour spend proportionally far more on their wage bills than Fianna Fáil. Extensions in the application of state funding have greatly reduced that differential, and by the end of the period, the proportions are quite similar.

Second, there have been distinct shifts in party memberships. After a sharp rise in Fine Gael's membership during the late 1970s - as the party organisation was revitalised under a new leader - the numbers dropped equally sharply throughout the 1980s. Labour had a steady, gradual rise for much of the period, but there was a small drop, for the first time, at the end of the 1980s. Fianna Fáil's branch numbers also showed evidence of decreasing in number towards the end of the period. An examination of membership dues as a proportion of overall income suggested that they have been declining in importance since the mid-1980s, reflecting the switch by parties to fund raising from other sources, and the greater reliance of parties on state funding. The other major development during this period has been the growth in the number and range of ancillary organisations, reflecting the attempt by parties to target voters more effectively.

Third, the structures of parties have been changing. Party organisation in Ireland is far more complex than ever before. Reflecting the 'nationalisation' of campaign strategy, there is evidence of a growing concentration of power at the centre. In this chapter we examined this question in two areas: the selection of Dáil candidates, and the rules on membership obligations.

Finally, and most controversially, we saw how politics has become big business. The administration of party organisations (generally, and in particular

during elections) has become very expensive. This has had three effects:

- (1) All the parties face a growing debt problem, making them increasingly dependent on the banking sector (Laver and Marsh, 1992, p. 96);
- (2) There is a greater tendency for parties (especially those on the right-of-centre) to rely on (undisclosed) corporate funding, leaving them open to undue influence;
- (3) Public funding has become increasingly important to the parties. So far the various systems of state support have tended to operate in a rather informal manner (though this could change in the near future). In effect, public funding Irish-style has been introduced through the back door and does not have the sort of controls over its applications which is usually associated with such schemes (Alexander, 1989).

How can we best describe the contemporary Irish party? What kind of future role can be mapped out for it? More generally, what are the consequences of these changes for the nature of democracy itself? These questions are the subject for the final, concluding chapter.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION

THE CONTEMPORARY IRISH PARTY

The case study approach adopted in this thesis has allowed us to examine in detail recent changes in Irish parties. The point was made at the outset that one of the main advantages of case studies - particularly the comparative-case study approach adopted here - is that they may bring to light significant factors neglected in the comparative approach; they may also help to clarify and embellish points alluded to in comparative studies. These issues are dealt with in this final chapter.

The thesis has argued that over the past twenty or thirty years, and in line with international trends, Irish parties have been undergoing change at both the organisational and the electoral levels. Furthermore, it has been stressed that these developments have occurred in a context of general change in the electoral environment.

9.1. CHANGING MEDIA AND VOTERS

Party change has not been occurring in a vacuum. The thesis set out to show that coincident with the electoral and organisational developments within the parties there have been changes among the other two sets of actors in the electoral environment: the media and the voters. Media change was assessed by an examination of styles of electoral coverage. It was shown how overtime there has been a growing propensity for the media to cover the 'game' over the 'substance' of elections. There is decreasing emphasis on the elections *per se* and more on electioneering, on party strategies, on campaign events and hoopla, on winners and losers. In short, the trend is away from substance and towards style. Rather than analysing what the politicians are saying, there is an increasing tendency to assess how they are saying it. This trend has reached a point in the USA where by now the bulk of media electoral coverage is on the game, rather than on substance. The skimpier evidence on European trends suggests a move in the same direction, but, so far, substance remains predominant. This study has shown that Ireland fits in well with the European trends. The comparison of newspaper coverage of the 1973 and 1989 elections revealed a significant increase in game coverage which was akin to trends in Britain and Italy. The thesis explored the possible reasons for increased game coverage, among them: the arrival of television; the growing use of public opinion polls; and the changing campaign styles of the parties. The latter cannot be underestimated. It is not simply the case that the media are, for instance, more interested in the style of presentations by the politicians; the politicians themselves are also more interested in style.

If the fact of media change can help to explain the way in which the parties

change, the fact of voter change can help to explain *why* they felt the need to change in the first place. This thesis has traced the main findings of recent studies on voter trends which - regardless of the measures adopted, and with few exceptions - indicate how there has been a noticeable detachment of voters from parties. To an extent this has had social antecedents, but, again, we saw how the political parties themselves (to an extent inadvertently) have also played a role in this; raising the competitive stakes either through campaign changes or by the creation of new parties. This greater competitiveness is manifested in the growing 'availability' of voters; in the greater propensity of voters to make up their minds later in campaigns; in a greater inclination to possibly switch parties.

The Irish case reveals evidence of voter availability from the early to mid-1970s, coinciding with Fianna Fáil's defeat in the 1973 election and its strategic response which played a role in its dramatic electoral victory in 1977. The impression of Irish voter detachment which these large vote swings suggested, is supported by party identification figures showing a growing availability from the mid-1970s onwards.

9.2. CHANGING PARTY CAMPAIGNS

The thesis next dealt with Irish political parties, the third main set of actors in the electoral environment. The basic starting point here was that, if there has been a growth in competitiveness in the electoral environment, then we should expect to see an appropriate response from the parties. It was suggested, from an examination of the comparative literature, that three main factors are evident in the contemporary party election campaign: attention to preparation and planning; the use of consultants

and agencies; a greater reliance on market research methods of feedback. The Irish case was assessed across different time periods, starting with the 1950s-1960s. There was little evidence of any of these factors in the campaigns of either of the main parties in this period. Campaign developments since then - dealing first with the 1977 and 1981 campaigns and then more generally with campaigns since - were more in line with the three-part framework summarised in Table 4.1. First, the parties draw up long-term campaign plans involving a central campaign committee, polling to test the market, and the production of numerous policy documents. Where there are limitations on any of this, it has generally been because of the large number of 'snap' elections over the past decade. The parties have also improved on their campaign organisations, coordinating far more of the campaign from the centre. A major feature of the campaign is the centrally-coordinated leader's tour. Campaign literature and advertising are printed, or at least designed, at the centre. Themes and slogans are drawn up by headquarters for use by the local organisations.

Second, greater use is made of specialist consultants and agencies and of the new technologies of communication. Headquarters' staff are supplemented for the duration by marketing specialists and former journalists. The parties employ the services of advertising agencies (often several), public relations specialists and marketing firms. By the mid-1980s, a new term had entered the Irish political lexicon, 'the national handlers'. The specialist consultants and agencies had started to receive close attention by political journalists, much to the chagrin of the politicians who were not happy about being portrayed as puppets on a string. The increased use of agencies and consultants have had significant financial implications. As we saw, there has been a dramatic increase in the amount spent by parties over

the period.

Third, closer attention is paid to the views of the voters through the use of increasingly sophisticated techniques of market research. Market research was first used by Irish parties at the end of the 1960s and early 1970s. Indeed, Fianna Fáil's first use of market research was not until 1977. From then on there has been an increasing tendency by the two larger parties to rely on market research as a guide to drawing up campaign themes and slogans; as a means of segmenting the voter market; and to facilitate constituency vote management strategies. Various types of research have been employed: one-off national opinion polls; constituency surveys; small sample rolling polls; focus groups.

9.3. THE IMPLICATIONS FOR PARTY ORGANISATIONS

Concomitant with the changes in Irish parties at the electoral level, there have also been changes at the organisational level. Panebianco's model of party professionalisation - which was dealt with in chapter 1 - suggested a series of five major changes in party organisations. We are now in a position to assess their application to the Irish case.

1. A Central Role for Professionals.

This development has manifested itself in two main ways. First, there has been a growing tendency for Irish parties, particularly the larger ones, to employ professional staff at their headquarters (primarily for management and organisation, press, marketing, and research). These employees are more than the machine bureaucrats of old. They tend to come from a marketing or press background, in

many cases having worked before in the private sector, and in a number of cases not having been closely associated with the party prior to appointment. These represent what Panebianco calls the managers and the staff professionals. Their work is supplemented during election campaigns by buying in, on short term contracts, the services of campaign specialists. These are distinguished from staff professionals both by the fact that they are on short-term contracts and by the fact that they often treat the contract as literally just 'another job', i.e. this does not imply that they have any particular loyalty for, or even affinity with, the party in question. A recent, rather exotic, example of this was the appointment by Fine Gael in 1990-1 of a public relations specialist (Eoghan Harris) who before then had worked for the Workers' party (of which he was a long standing member) and for the 1990 presidential campaign of the Labour party candidate, Mary Robinson. This category of professional (which is particularly significant in the US context) is worth incorporating into Panebianco's framework. Second - and something else which Panebianco tends to overlook - the parties make more use of the specialist work of a number of different agencies. Among the services provided by such agencies are: advertising, marketing, public relations, and market research. Again, there is no reason to expect that these agencies have any particular views as to which party they work for. For instance, during the early 1980s the media training agency, Carr Communications, worked at the same time for both Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael.

Panebianco refers to two further categories of professional which, he suggests, should be on the increase: the 'hidden professionals', and the 'semi-professionals'. As we have seen, hidden professionals have become more prominent in Irish politics, as revealed by the secretarial assistance scheme for

parliamentarians, and more dramatically by the growth in ministerial *cabinet*. Whether these developments can be treated as part of the process of *party* professionalisation is a moot point. By helping the elected politicians to be less dependent on the party organisations, these appointments contribute, if anything, to a process of 'stratarchy', where the parliamentary parties become increasingly autonomous from the rest of the party organisation. This does nothing to help the overall coherence of the organisation.

Panebianco's inclusion of 'semi-professionals' as part of the move towards professionalisation is curious. If anything, one would expect to find these part-timers - lawyers, journalists, university lecturers - in the traditional, mass party, their essentially amateur role being replaced, or at least supplemented by the influx of professional staff as the party modernises. Certainly in the Irish context that has always been a role for the semi-professionals (particularly in the area of speech writing during elections), a role which has remained important.

II. From a Membership Party to an Electoral Party.

As we have seen, there is evidence in recent years that Irish party membership is in decline. More significantly there is evidence that the parties rely proportionally less on membership income. And in their election campaigns there is a declining role for activist members in campaigning - outside of local constituency duties - as parties make more and more use of the services of specialist agencies at the centre.

As was pointed out in chapter 1, there is also an external dimension to this characteristic relating to the role of voters, where the parties place more effort into

chasing floating and undecided voters. Again the developments in Irish election strategy, outlined in this thesis, are consistent with this. The best example of this is in how the parties make greater use of market research to guide them on voter needs and to segment the market of voters. Particular categories of voters are targeted for particular campaigns, depending on circumstances.

III. Preeminence of the Leadership and the MPs.

If we adopt the specific meaning of this characteristic, relating to the strengthening of the *parliamentary* leadership, the Irish case does not fit so well. (To an extent this is also true of the British case, see Webb, 1992.) Unlike the common model in European parties of distinguishing between the national executive leadership and the parliamentary leadership - as two separate centres of power; in Ireland (with the partial exception of Labour which has a party/parliamentary leader and an organisational chair) there is no such distinction. Essentially there is only one party leader and s/he is in control of the entire organisation.

This third characteristic can be viewed in a more general light, however; as one describing the strengthening of the party leadership generally. In this sense the Irish case fits very well. We have seen this in the way in which party structures have been altered to give the centre greater control over the membership and over candidate selection. This development is also evident at the electoral level, particularly in the growing prominence of presidentialism in Irish electioneering.

IV. Greater Reliance on State and Interest Group Finance.

This characteristic feature of party professionalisation was shown to be

partially true in the Irish case. Interest group finance (as shown, for instance, in the USA by the role of Political Action Committees) has not become a significant source of revenue for Irish parties. Only the Labour party makes use of this resource; however, as we saw, trade union contributions to party coffers are not large. But the funding of parties has changed quite dramatically in other ways in recent years. Irish parties - particularly those on the right-of-centre - have become more and more reliant on corporate sources of finance. There has also been a steady rise in various sources of public funding. If proposed reforms go through, we could be about to see a dramatic increase in state funding of Irish parties in the 1990s.

V. *From Ideology to Issues; Central Role of Interest Groups.*

As was suggested in chapter 1, this last category comprises a rather general list of 'leftovers', and is somewhat repetitive of the previous categories. Furthermore, it is not particularly easy to operationalise the shift from ideology to issues. One has an impression that parties are focusing more on 'issues', but how can this be differentiated from 'ideology'? There is one area where this last characteristic feature can be seen to fit well: in the increasing attention to interest groups as shown by the establishment in all parties of ancillary organisations throughout the late 1970s and 1980s. However, one could argue that this development should be incorporated into characteristic II, which focuses on party membership trends generally.

On the whole, with the exception of characteristic V, the changes which Irish parties have undergone over the past three decades or so have been consistent with

Panebianco's framework of party professionalisation. It is possible, therefore, to refer to Irish parties as 'electoral-professional'.

9.4. PARTY VULNERABILITY: THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE IRISH CASE

As we saw in chapter 1, there is a tendency to view party organisational change as a process of 'professionalisation' which starts sometime in the post-war years and which - following an American trend - ends up with the decline, or 'increasing vulnerability', of parties. We need to address this issue in the light of this thesis. While there may be some dispute as to whether parties are in 'crisis', there appears to be general agreement that perhaps parties are more vulnerable than before, that, '[i]n time, the electoral-professional party may turn out to be but a transitory and comparatively short-lived phenomenon' (Panebianco, 1988, p. 273). On the face of it, there are good reasons for the belief that the contemporary parties may face an uncertain future; reasons which are both endogenous and exogenous to the parties. According to Panebianco, the former is represented by the problem of 'deinstitutionalization', and the latter, by 'marginalization'.

The issue of institutionalisation, as Panebianco describes it, relates to the strength of a party organisation: 'Mass bureaucratic parties were strong institutions. Electoral-professional parties are weak ones. The transition from one to the other thus involves deinstitutionalization'. And, he continues, '[t]he historical epoch of strong parties/strong institutions (the mass parties analyzed by Weber and Duverger) seems to be drawing to a close' (Panebianco, 1988, p. 267). As we saw in chapter 1, this issue is also given some attention by authors like Duverger and Epstein in their respective attempts at distinguishing American and European parties, the

former being less institutionalised than the latter. It is Epstein, in particular, who argues that American trends may be pre-dating prospective European trends.

Are contemporary Irish parties weak institutions? They have been losing members, some at faster rates than others. They have had increasing difficulties in balancing their budgets: evidence that their revenue raising abilities have not kept pace with their spending needs. In short, the contemporary Irish parties do face problems which can be related to the issue of the party as an 'institution'.

However, there are other examples of developments within party organisations which, if anything, are more suggestive of institutionalisation than of deinstitutionalisation. The organisational structure has become more complex, as shown both by the growth of committees and the establishment of new institutions (such as the functional units set up to administer ancillary organisations). Party constitutions have been amended to give the centre a greater coordinating role over the organisation as a whole. More staff are being employed to run the party organisations. Furthermore, there are greater numbers of professional staff being employed (particularly by the larger parties) than ever before. The parties make much greater use of specialised agencies and consultants, particularly during elections, but also for other organisational tasks such as the party's *árd fheis*. In the context of these sorts of changes, it is hard to see how one can conclude that parties are undergoing a process of *de*institutionalisation.

According to Panebianco (1988, p. 268), the process of 'marginalization' involves a reduction and eventual loss by parties of their integrative/expressive function; of their ability to 'create' and 'preserve' voters' 'collective identities through ideology'. Interest groups become more significant as alternative sources. In

turn, as the established parties face a crisis of legitimacy, this process feeds into a tendency towards alternative and protest politics, the rise of new parties, and increased alienation and apathy.

There is some comparative evidence of apparent party marginalisation. For instance, the entry of green parties into a number of west European systems in the 1980s was seen by many academics as an indicator of voter alienation from established parties (Müller-Rommel, 1989). For that matter, the general increase in voter volatility and the influx of various other new parties also suggested that voters were becoming increasingly turned off by the established parties. But how significant really is all this? New parties may come, but they can also go. This was shown most vividly in the most recent German Bundestag elections when the Green party lost all its seats in the western part of Germany. For the most part, there is little evidence of new parties having more than minor effect on the political system; the established parties still remain in government, and in charge. Certainly this has been the case in Ireland.

Another comparative example of party marginalisation is shown by the tendency of candidates in some European countries to make use of organisations other than the party to run their individual campaigns, indicative of the sort of candidate-centred campaigning which is prominent in the USA. Much like the American political action committees, there has been a growing use of 'supporter groups' by candidates in Finnish and Austrian elections, and of *comités de soutien* by French presidential candidates. These groups provide organisational and financial backing for their individual candidates and in this respect can be seen to contribute to a weakening of the role of the parties. However, these are the only examples

there are of such groups in western Europe. It might, indeed, have been expected that Irish candidates would have had recourse to such groups. Given the emphasis on localism and the high degree of intra-party competition promoted by the electoral system, an individual candidate could benefit from access to such a personalised campaign organisation. But, so far, none has emerged.

In short, there are difficulties in trying to find evidence in Ireland of the processes of 'institutionalization' and 'marginalization' which Panebianco suggested would trouble the contemporary parties. In this sense, then, one could be led to the conclusion that parties, so far, have not shown signs of being vulnerable. However, there is one area where problems have emerged which show no signs of abating: party finance. As has been stressed in this thesis, the contemporary Irish party has become an expensive organisation to run. The parties have all faced growing debt problems - which some have managed better than others to keep under control. The state funding which exists, though more extensive than widely assumed, has not been sufficient to meet the parties' increased costs. This has coincided with a growing reliance of parties (particularly those on the right-of-centre) on corporate funding, which has not been matched by any moves towards greater accountability, leaving the parties open to charges of corruption. In such a situation, especially if allowed to continue, voter cynicism can breed.

Party change is not one-off; party organisations are constantly evolving. We have seen in this thesis how the change has occurred, gradually, over the past twenty years or so. This has had significant financial implications. As the process of change continues, so will the parties' financial problems. The immediate future is likely to see a move toward extensive state funding of parties and their activities. This,

together with the growing disquiet over the parties' financial secrecy, will put questions of legitimacy onto the political agenda. So far there has not been much evidence to suggest that the parties will be able to address this adequately. Evidently this is not a situation unique to the Irish case, as shown most vividly by the current scandals in Italy and Japan as well as by the on-going debate about party finance in Britain. Future research on parties will need to focus on the financial implications of party change. It will need to pay closer attention to the issue of popular support for parties as parties - to the question of how much the citizens are ultimately prepared to pay for them.

9.5. PARTY ADAPTATION AND IRISH DEMOCRACY

Finally, we need to consider what kind of effect, if any, the changes in party organisations and their style of operation during elections have had on Irish democracy. On the negative side, it might be argued that, as a result of new methods of political marketing, voters have been exposed to techniques of propaganda which serve to confuse (and even fool?) them; that, if anything, politics has become more obscure, and politicians more out of touch. Concomitant with this, the parties have become more closed as organisations. There is a reduced emphasis on mass membership. What members there are, find themselves exposed to greater control by the centre and have a reduced role in decision-making (as revealed, for example, by the decline in the party conference). There is even a diminished role for the *active* members, those people who traditionally have been central to the successful running of Irish party organisations. This function is gradually being usurped by professional strategists, specialist agencies and consultants, and the

modern media of communications. In every sense, therefore, the citizen is being forced into playing a passive role in politics. There is less encouragement than before to play an active role in the political process; those who happen to be party members are under tighter control; voters are fed a diet of slick advertisements and campaign slogans and on that basis alone are supposed to play their role in the democratic process.

But party organisational and campaign developments can also be seen in a positive light. What evidence really is there that voters are more duped today than before? There is more to political marketing than the designing of slick posters and attractive sound bites. Parties have a message to get across. Close attention is paid to drawing up detailed policies specific to a campaign and much of the effort put into campaigning is spent on trying to get the policies across to voters in as efficient a manner as possible. One of the principal functions of market research is to get a clear idea of what the voters are looking for. In short, the professional party election campaign can be viewed as an attempt by a party to present itself, its leader and its policies in as clear a manner as possible, and to project an image and policies which are consistent with the current aspirations of its voters.¹

The membership trends which have been identified may, indeed, be reflective of a change in emphasis within the parties; but there could also be wider, societal causes. For instance, greater education levels; the rise of the professional classes; changes in aspirations together with new forms of access to political action (e.g. interest groups); all these factors are occurring regardless of whatever developments

¹ Of course, whether a party actually *delivers* on its promises once elected is quite another thing (see Laver and Budge (eds), 1992; Rallings, 1987).

there may be internal to the parties. In this sense, then, any reduction in the size of party memberships may be due to the voters not to the parties. And any changes to the rules and practices on party membership within the parties, may simply be reflecting the reality of wider societal change.

To conclude, the role of political parties in society has changed in a manner which reflects a new role for citizens in the democratic process. It is a role which depends less on established party organisations and more on alternative forms of political expression. This does not (so far, at any rate) suggest any problems for the democratic process, but it does imply possible future problems for parties.

APPENDIX A

Content Analysis of Irish Newspapers, 1973 and 1989

Policy Issues Coded

policy issues general
 agriculture, forestry, fisheries
 industry
 employment, unemployment, emigration
 inflation
 taxation
 state finances
 stable government, coalition (usually negative references to coalition)
 health, social welfare, poverty
 moral issues
 Northern Ireland, Anglo-Irish relations
 law and order, security
 environment
 trade unions, national agreement, corporatism, pay
 Dáil reform

Campaign Issues

1973	Denial of Vote for under twenty-ones; controversy over Fianna Fáil's sudden reversal on rates.
1989	Constitutional case on constituency boundaries; Haughey 'taking advantage' of Euro elections; Iraqi beef insurance: 'dual mandates'; attempt to block Army wives.

APPENDIX B

Interviews with Campaign Strategists

1977 Campaign

Fianna Fáil

Seamus Brennan, general secretary

Peter Owens, Peter Owens advertising agency

Fine Gael

J. W. Sanfey, general secretary

Moore McDowell, press officer

a representative from the Arks advertising agency (anonymous)

Jack Jones, Market Research Bureau of Ireland

1981 Campaign

Fianna Fáil

Senator Eoin Ryan, Director of Elections

P.J. Mara, press officer

Peter Owens, Owens' Advertising

Blayne Rice, Owens' Advertising

Fine Gael

Garret FitzGerald, party leader

Peter Prendergast, general secretary

Ted Nealon, press officer

Jack Jones, MRBI

Eamonn O'Flaherty, Arks

Dermot Larkin, Adsell

Bill O'Herlihy, Public Relations Ireland

a representative (anonymous) of Irish Consumer Research

Enda Marron, party strategist

Shane Molloy, party strategist

1987 Campaign*Fianna Fáil*

Frank Wall, general secretary

P.J. Mara, press officer

Sinead Gorby, press office

Fine Gael

Garret FitzGerald, party leader

Finbar Fitzpatrick, general secretary

Peter White, press officer

Mary Downes, press office

Shane Molloy, party strategist

Jack Jones, MRBI

PDs

Pat Cox, general secretary

Stephen O'Byrnes, policy and press director

1989 Campaign*Fianna Fáil*

Frank Wall, general secretary

Seamus Brennan, Director of Elections

Sinead Gorby, press officer

Fionnuala O'Kelly, Assistant Government Press Secretary

Fine Gael

Edward O'Reilly, general secretary

Peter White, press officer

Shane Molloy, party strategist

Jack Jones, MRBI

PDs

Stephen O'Byrnes, policy and press director

Ray Gordon, press office

Paul MacKay, party strategist

1992 Campaign*Fianna Fáil*

Noel Whelan, assistant national organiser

Martin Mackin, research and information officer

Niamh O'Connor, press officer

Stephen Hilton, Saatchi and Saatchi

Fine Gael

Ivan Doherty, general secretary

Peter White, press officer

Shane Molloy, party strategist

PDs

Michael Parker, general secretary

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