

FUTURELINE

YOUNG
FINE GAEL

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“THE WINTER OF DISCONTENT?”

Will history regard the final months of 1984 as ‘the Winter of Discontent’ or the coming of age of a Government that when first elected seemed to promise so much but in the public’s eyes to date has achieved so little.

Expectations v Reality

Let us cast our minds back to June 1981, when Fine Gael launched its election programme entitled ‘Let the Country Win’. This astonishingly comprehensive Document contained 453 proposals, each promising changes and reforms in 39 different areas. On first reading it seemed that the Document, if implemented, would radically transform each and every one of our lives. The leadership boasted that in excess of one hundred of these proposals could, and would, be implemented at no expense immediately. This would be an unparalleled gesture of good faith to the people.

Fine Gael had the answers for the 80’s. On unemployment, by reducing costs and prices in industry we would make our products more competitive and create permanent new jobs. The Manifesto proclaimed that our tax system was inequitable and that it acted as an inherent disincentive to enterprise. The Document proposed changes which would reverse such an obviously unacceptable situation. A comprehensive economic and social plan would be issued within four months of Fine Gael assuming office. Our Industrial Relations document ‘Working Together’ would be implemented forthwith. Major proposals were made in the areas of Law Reform, Education, Housing and Health, in fact, you name it, the Document had the answer.

After two years and five months of Fine Gael involvement in Government, since the issue of that Manifesto, the manner in which Fine Gael is perceived to have achieved its stated targets and, indeed, the Government’s performance generally, can be gauged by the reaction of the footballing crowds at the recent Soccer International and the recent All-Ireland Football Final to the arrival of An Tánaiste and An Taoiseach respectively. **If this spontaneous outburst of disapproval in any way reflects the public’s perception of this Government, then this Government has lost the support of the people, albeit (hopefully) only temporarily.** Never in the history of the State had a Government a clearer mandate from the people to take radical steps to restore our Public Finances to order and initiate a major programme of social reform. By the Government’s lack of action and by its bungling where it has attempted to act, it has lost that unique opportunity.

Leadership

People are only prepared to make sacrifices when they are offered leadership and when they are shown that it will be to the collective benefit of all in the long run. That leadership has not been forthcoming. In the area of social reform, the Government’s failure is almost total. It has abdicated leadership by delegating to All Party Committees, issues which it should have the political courage to deal with, and in respect of which successive respective Fine Gael Ard Fheiseanna and Labour Conferences have clearly adopted as the policy of our respective Parties. This reluctance to grasp difficult issues and to offer leadership generally is playing into the cynical hands of Fianna Fail, who will exploit our weaknesses with their usual brand of expediency which only has regard to short-term electoral advantage.

For this Government to survive the dark days ahead, Fine Gael, of necessity, will have to trade off certain social issues to ensure the further participation of the Labour Party in this Coalition Government.



Constructive Criticism

In Fine Gael there is an unwritten rule that criticism of the Party while in Government amounts to disloyalty to the point of treason. **Given the failure of Fine Gael to deliver on its promises to its voters to date, the ordinary member has both the right and, in fact, the duty to publicly criticise the Government’s performance and its inadequacies without fear of being called disloyal.** If we, the ordinary members of Fine Gael, wish to have the policies which we so firmly sold in 1981 implemented, we must hound our Government Ministers and our Back Benchers into activity. It is vital for the future of the country that the last months of 1984 be not entitled ‘The Winter of Discontent’ because the only alternative is the return of the Chicago-style Fianna Fail Government under the leadership of C.J. Haughey.

The National Plan is Fine Gael’s and this Government’s last chance. We dare not fail.

“Industrial Relations Co-operation or Confrontation”

In view of many industrial disputes and closure threats throughout the country, concern inevitably arises over the current state of industrial relations in this Island. Added to this the British Miners' Strike, distinguished at times by violence of frightening proportion, must prompt the question as to what has happened to industrial relations in the 1980's. Have the Unions enough - or have they too much power? Do members participate in the running of their Unions or leave the decisions to a few? Should the Army be called in to run essential services if workers are on strike?

These are just some of the questions which Mallow Young Fine Gael has asked over the past few months as part of a Survey entitled “Industrial Relations - Co-operation or confrontation”.

In the past, discussion in this area has focused mainly on the relationship of Unions and Employer.

We would like to see a similar discussion on the relationship of Unions and Employee.

In the Mallow area we would hope that our survey might provide the opening salvo in this discussion.

The results of the survey are given in percentage figures below, but first we must give a general outline of the facts obtained and the conclusions drawn therefrom.

Among the Union members interviewed the main conclusions drawn from the answers given are as follows:—

- 1 Many Union members take little or no part in the affairs of their Union, 43% never attend Union Meetings, while only 8% always attend. This, however, is a common trend everywhere and is certainly not confined to Ireland.
- 2 The vast majority of important Union decisions are taken by secret ballot (79%) This is a very healthy figure - much better than other countries. It can do much to counteract any possibility of extremists dominating Union policy.
- 3 Most Union members questioned are quite pleased with the work of their Union. On all the points raised - wage negotiation, other negotiations, performance of local and national officials etc - the Unions score very well. The dissatisfaction rate is on average only 20 - 25%. Other questions to be dealt with later show that in some cases the policy of the Unions is not always to the liking of it's members. Against that, however, the members still have a high regard for the work rate and negotiating ability of the Union officials.

The questions answered by both Union and Non-Union members provided the following facts:—

- 1: A large majority believe that-
 - (a) Major Union decisions should be taken by secret ballot.
 - (b) The Government does not take enough action when a strike affecting a large number of people is in progress.
 - (c) The Army should be brought in when essential services are affected by a strike.
- 2: 52% of those questioned would not support the imprisonment of striking workers, no matter what the circumstances are.
- 3: The two main complaints ascertained were -
 - (a) 51% of those questioned thought that strike action was taken too quickly without due regard to negotiation and compromise.
 - (b) Under the present economic climate 55% of people considered that Union policy on wage negotiation and other issued is unrealistic.
- 4: 69% of those questioned believe that Unions have too much power. However, the general satisfaction with the Unions, particularly by Union members, indicates that the Unions are not considered to be abusing this power.

Survey Results

Answers given by Union Members.

Q: Is membership of a Union compulsory where you are employed?

A: Yes - 63%: No - 37%

Q: How regularly do you attend Union Meetings?

A: Always - 8%: Never - 43%

Usually - 21%: Occasionally 28%

Q: Are major decisions taken by secret ballot?

A: Yes - 79%: No - 21%

Q: Please rank you Union on the following points —

	V.Good	Good	Average	Poor	V.Poor
A: Wage Negotiations	19	32	34	11	4
Other Negotiations	12	24	42	16	6
Performance of Local Officials	10	27	27	19	17
Performance of National Officials	12	33	35	12	8

Answers given by both Union and Non-Union Members

Q: Should major decisions in Unions be taken by secret ballot?

A: Yes - 81%: No - 19%

Q: Do you think that strike action takes precedence in Union policy over negotiation and compromise?

A: Yes - 51%: No - 49%

Q: Do you think the Government takes a passive role in relation to strike action affecting large numbers of people?

A: Yes - 75%: No - 25%

Q: Should the Army be brought in when essential services are hit by strike action?

A: Yes - 84%: No - 16%

Q: Would you pass a picket?

A: Official picket - Yes 14%: No - 86%

Unofficial picket - Yes 55%: No - 45%

Q: Is the imprisonment of striking workers justified in any circumstance?

A: Yes - 48%: No - 45%

Q: Do you think that Trade Union policy as regards wage negotiation and other issues are unrealistic at present?

A: Yes - 55%: No - 45%

Q: Are you in favour of National Wage Agreements?

A: National - 60% - Local - 40%

Q: In your view have Trade Unions too much power?

A: Yes - 69%: No - 31%.

A sample of comments made by those interviewed:

“Number of Unions in so small a Country as this is absolutely scandalous”.

“Unrealistic expectations of workers in times of recession should not be encouraged by Unions”.

“Most people would accept a wage freeze if there was in return a price freeze”.

“I feel we should have somebody like Mrs. Thatcher running this little Island of ours for a few years”.

“Management have too little respect for workers”.

“Negotiators should be sensible and level-headed - not a bully or ignoramus - I have worked for 30 years and experience teaches”.

“Unofficial strikes should not be tolerated”.

“Lower paid workers should get a better deal”.

“Workers need Unions more than ever to-day”.

“Unions must discipline troublemakers”.



EDITORIAL

ARD FHEIS

The Grassroots have their say

The Ard Fheis is the most important event in the Party's calendar. The main objective of the Ard Fheis is communication. It is important that every member of Fine Gael leave the R.D.S. with an understanding of the challenge facing us and a clear grasp of how we intend to meet that challenge. Delegates should leave the R.D.S. renewed and invigorated. They must come away with a firm commitment to progress and change. The format of the Ard Fheis has followed a set pattern for a number of years. The ingredients for a successful Ard Fheis are as follows. First, the debate on Motions, secondly, the election of twelve members of the National Executive and, thirdly, the Party Leader's address. It is timely to consider what we want or need from the Ard Fheis.

First let us take the role of the grassroots, or ordinary members. For many members the Ard Fheis is a unique opportunity to debate policy and to register their opinions and criticisms. What is the status of Motions debated and passed at the Ard Fheis? They are euphemistically described as acting as guidelines for the Parliamentary Party when they formulate Party policy. Do we want to give the members a real say in policy formation? This, of course, would present difficulties. History has shown us that majorities do not always have the monopoly on wisdom. However, a genuine discussion of a Motion and a real response from the Spokesperson/Minister would make the Ard Fheis more worthwhile and more democratic.

This brings us nicely to the role of the Parliamentary Party. Many of our Parliamentary Party throw themselves wholeheartedly into the social aspect of the Ard Fheis, however, the same enthusiasm is not obvious during debates or discussions. The problem with Ministers is how to wean them away from Departmental speeches. Is spontaneity completely out of the question? The studied monotonous response which the Ard Fheis receives from the Spokesperson/Minister seems to rule out any real dialogue. The least the Ard Fheis should expect of our Ministers is a clear and authoritative command of their brief and a real response to the debate.

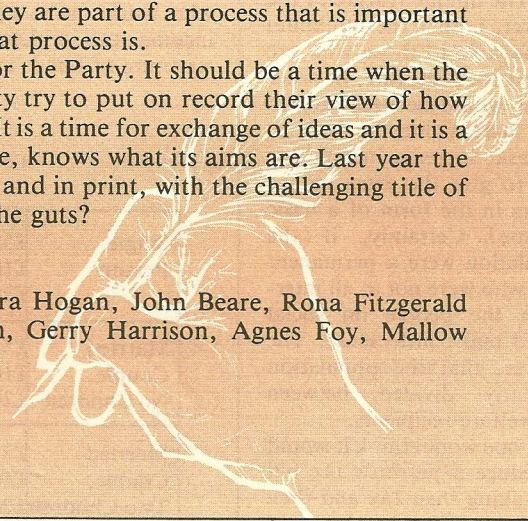
The Ard Fheis also gives us an opportunity to elect the National Executive of the Party. This august body plays a vital role in the Party organisation. Election to the National Executive is a prestigious and important achievement, yet many of the candidates are particularly unsuited to the task. There are technical as well as political skill involved, yet often the candidates have neither. The cynical manipulation of the voting system is looked on as an acceptable feature of political contest. Those who are not enterprising enough, or cynical enough, will be defeated.

The highlight of the Ard Fheis is the Party Leader's address on Saturday evening. Originally this address was to be to the Party members. It was an opportunity for the Party Leader or Taoiseach to thank the members of the organisation for their work over the years, to outline the policy priorities of the Party and to encourage the expansion and development of the organisation along a very definite path. In fact, this has become an address to the Nation. Many members feel that there is ample opportunity during the year for the Taoiseach or Party Leader to address the Nation. The Ard Fheis is an opportunity for the Party Leader to address the Party members directly. It is very important that Party members feel they have a personal stake in the running of the organisation. They need re-assurance, direction and leadership from the Party Leader. They need to feel that they are part of a process that is important and they also need to understand what that process is.

The Ard Fheis is a very important event for the Party. It should be a time when the dynamic and forceful members of the Party try to put on record their view of how Ireland should be developing in the 1980's. It is a time for exchange of ideas and it is a time for re-assurance that the Party, as one, knows what its aims are. Last year the history of the Party was prepared on video and in print, with the challenging title of 'The Courage to Succeed'. Have we got the guts?

Editorial Board:

Michael O'Dowd, Chris O'Malley, Elenora Hogan, John Beare, Rona Fitzgerald
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TAX REFORM: A RADICAL ANSWER

A Minimum Income System The Facts & Figures

All Branches of Young Fine Gael should by now have received printed copies of 'A Restless Society'. This document was adopted by our last National Conference as the basis for a comprehensive debate on our Party's basic political principles.

The single-most important proposal contained in the document is the concept of a 'minimum income system'. In this article figures are put forward to illustrate how such a system would work, and to show that it is feasible even in the present economic climate. The figures advanced are, of course, all variable and the shape of the proposal may change as the debate within Young Fine Gael progresses. The balance between the figures for taxation, spending cuts, and the level of the minimum income, is open to infinite change.

"Social Welfare Mentality"

What is the basic point of it? Firstly, it is a fundamental attack on the 'social welfare' mentality, or to put it another way, on the patronising attitude towards the 'deserving poor'. The reasoning behind the proposed system is that a minimum disposable income should be adopted by our society as a basic right to which all our citizens should be entitled. A market system is a creative and dynamic system but to work to best effect everyone must be in a position to become involved. Without a basic income no one can even begin to compete in any system.

This basic income, it is proposed, would replace the entire range of income support schemes currently provided by our social welfare system. The unique feature of the proposal, however, is that the minimum income is also payable to those who are earning - at exactly the same rate. In order to finance this it would be necessary to correspondingly increase income tax.

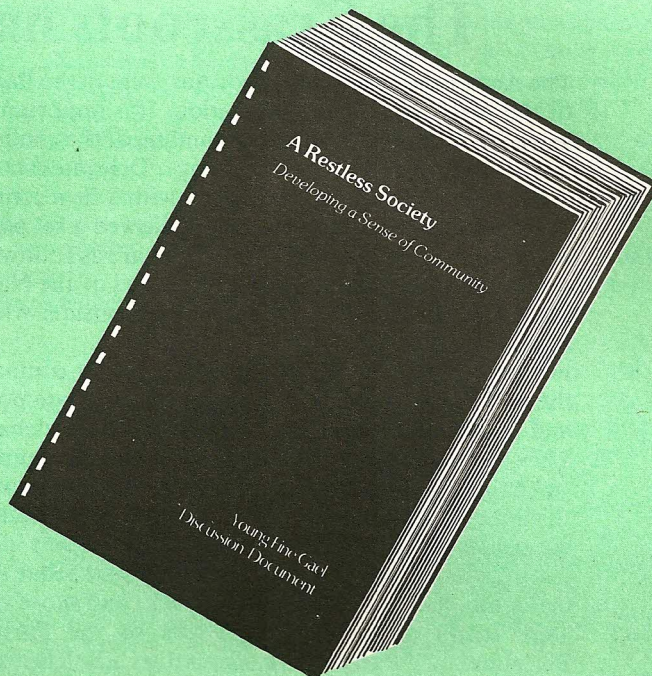
Why, you may ask, increase income tax simply in order to give the extra money back to taxpayers in the form of a basic minimum income? Certainly, if the tax-paying population were a permanent block of people, who were not at all interchangeable with the people on social welfare, it would make little sense. The fact is, of course, that the population cannot be neatly divided between tax-payers and welfare recipients.

On the fact of it, one would think it would be simpler to reduce a person's tax bill instead of first taking their tax and then giving some of it back. The efforts to avoid

such a seemingly wasteful procedure - while at the same time trying to protect the living standards of the least well-off - have led to a bureaucratic system which is almost obscenely complicated. It is due to this effort that we have a complicated income tax structure with varying bands, reliefs, and allowances, each capable of changing with income from week to week, and often involving retrospective transactions. It is due to this effort that we have a complicated profusion of welfare schemes, trying, but never completely succeeding, to help all those most in need.

New Income Tax System

What is proposed here is a single flat rate of income tax, on **all** income, which is paid to **all** citizens. Each of these two elements is thus the simplest imaginable, and yet the combination of the two achieves two basic aims, firstly, to ensure a minimum income level for **everybody**, and secondly, to apply what works out as a progressive system of income tax without any complicated structure of bands and allowances.



The minimum income proposed is as follows:

To be paid to all citizens over 21 years - £2,000 each.

To be paid to all citizens between 16 and 21 years - £1,000 each.

To be paid on behalf of all children under 16 years - £500 each.

Over two thirds of these payments would be made to income earners or their families. To pay for this it would be necessary to have a flat rate of tax on all personal income of 60%. To see the effect of this in practice, below are offered some examples:

N.B. P.R.S.I. is not included; it is presumed that under this system the Youth Employment Levy has been abolished.

The marginal rate of taxation today for a large number of people is 65%, that is to say, any further income they earn is taxed at the rate of 65%. Under the proposed system the marginal rate would be 60% for everyone.

	Gross Pay	Tax	Minimum Income	Total Income After Tax	% Change
Single Person	£5,000	— £3,000	+ £2,000	£4,000	— 20%
	£10,000	— £6,000	+ £2,000	£6,000	— 40%
	£20,000	— £12,000	+ £2,000	£10,000	— 50%
Married Couple, No Children	£5,000	— £3,000	+ £4,000	£6,000	+ 20%
	£10,000	— £6,000	+ £4,000	£8,000	— 20%
	£20,000	— £12,000	+ £4,000	£12,000	— 40%
Married Couple, Two Children	£5,000	— £3,000	+ £5,000	£7,000	+ 40%
	£10,000	— £6,000	+ £5,000	£9,000	— 10%
	£20,000	— £12,000	+ £5,000	£13,000	— 35%

TAX REFORM: A RADICAL ANSWER

Those who are not earning would also receive the basic income. A married couple with two children, with no other source of income, for example, would receive £5,000. If either were to take on work, they could do so without this income of £5,000 being in any way affected (unlike the present position with welfare benefits). Therefore, they will never find their income is in danger of actually dropping if one of them starts work. Similarly, someone who wished to undertake a training or educational course could do so without his or her basic income being cut off.

This income would, therefore, replace unemployment assistance, old age pensions, and other income support schemes designed to help those who are not earning. Pay-related benefit, and other social insurance schemes would pay benefits over and above the basic income; these extra benefits would be paid for from the almost £1 billion estimated from P.R.S.I. for next year. Social insurance, as a system paying extra benefits, should operate as a strictly self-financing system.

Where do we get the money

Can we afford such a Minimum Income System? Yes, we can, because it is essentially a re-organisation of the present taxation and welfare systems. Below is the approximate cost of such a system, together with details of how it would be funded. The biggest single amount of the latter is the extra yield from income tax under the uniform 60% rate. The figure has been arrived at by calculating 60% of the estimated Gross Actual Income for 1985, and subtracting from that the estimated income tax yield for next year at current rates.

The money to fund the Minimum Income system, to be raised in an imaginary 1985 Budget, (all other taxes and spending presumed to remain on similar lines to the 1984 Budget), would be obtained through a combination of tax increases and spending cuts as follows:

Increase in income tax yield through application of uniform 60% rate: £3,279m.
 Increase in capital taxation: £190m.
 Elimination of Social Welfare benefits: £1,352m.
 Miscellaneous subsidy cuts: £155m.
 £4,975m.

The money thus obtained through tax increases and spending cuts in a hypothetical 1985 Budget could then be distributed as follows:

It might be noted here that a couple of thousand civil servants could be released from the Department of Social Welfare under such a simplified system, and transferred to the Revenue Commissioners to help combat tax evasion. The scope for Social Welfare fraud under this system would be virtually nil.

To conclude, here is a summary of the advantages of such a radically different system:

1. The stigma of being a social welfare recipient - a second-class citizen in many eyes - would be eliminated, as the minimum income would be payable to every citizen as a matter of course.
2. The artificial obstacles to easy movement in and out of employment would be removed; the unemployed could take on any kind of work without fearing a drop in income if they report it.

3. There would be more breathing space available for those seeking re-training, educational qualifications, or to start their own business.
4. Housewives not earning would have an economic independence such as most have never known.
5. The bureaucracy and confusion of the present taxation and welfare systems would be vastly simplified - this is of major importance in itself, for it gives citizens more confidence that they know where they stand.
6. The uniform income would cover many people, such as the homeless, who for various reasons are neglected under the present system; on the other hand there would be no scope for excessive benefit to be gained by those who are simply clever at manipulating the system.

In short, the proposed minimum income system would be simpler, more flexible and truly comprehensive.



Tallaght Young Fine Gael Sponsored Walk

Age	Rate of Income	No. of Recipients (approx)	Cost
Over 21	£2,000	2,000,000	£4,000m.
16 - 21	£1,000	250,000	£250m.
Under 16	£500	1,250,000	£725m.
			£4,975m.

Wets meet Revolutionaries (Don't shoot I've got a cold)

'Why listen to others? False speech is most
Accursed, so false it cannot even know
That it is false, as the poor commonplace
liar does.

....Come, Buff, lets butcher Rhetoric
to-night.

That blasphemous scandalous
Mis-birth of Nature'

Cromwell. Brendan Kennelly.

August 7th, 1984 was in terms of rhetoric, (the yawning, tedious variety), a red letter day for me. I was invited to represent Young Fine Gael at the Labour Youth Summer Camp and to participate in a debate on the future for Irish Youth.

An interesting motion, you will no doubt agree, but the encounter with Labour Youth, was not.

Oscar Wilde claimed that 'it is absurd to divide people into good or bad. People are either charming or tedious'. Without reservation I would categorise Labour Youth as tedious.

In point of fact, they never addressed the Motion.

They offered their own rather colourful history of the Fine Gael Party. They referred to capitalistic oppressors. Made ominous references to the Revolution, where us oppressors would get our dues, but shield away from specifics, like the time and venue of the same revolution, which I, myself, found annoying as I would like to have my best suit back from the cleaners for the occasion!

Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of human nature is its variety, - the inherent ability of mankind to develop individual and diverse perspectives, to see what is, what is not, and what might be. For this reason dialogue is important. Dialogue is essential in order to affirm one's own convictions, or perhaps adopt new ones. While it would be simple to adopt an accusative stance and castigate Labour Youth for indulging in mindless, futile and simplistic rhetoric that would serve to ignore our own short-comings.

Can we, in Young Fine Gael, be validly accused of representing the ideology of wet and confused liberalism. What do we think, why do we think it, or perhaps, do we think at all?

It has been suggested that politics is a profession for which no preparation is thought necessary. The reality is otherwise. In all things success depends on previous preparation and without such preparation there is sure to be failure. Are

we clear about our own attitudes? Can we in Young Fine Gael write down our reasons in black and white? Do we recognise that we may have limited spheres of competence? Above all can we identify our limitations. We cannot be critical of others if we ourselves function haphazardly, making meaningless comment on matters on which we are not authorities. There is little use in grumbling discontentment and dissatisfaction if we, the grumblers, cannot offer a practical and viable alternative, a feasible solution. Let us in Young Fine Gael not delude ourselves. We are an autonomous unit, influence is not Government. If we are to make an impact we must be professional. If we are to be what we were intended to be we must show that we are conscious, we are aware. We must show that we are deliberate thinkers, not sloppy opinionators.

To date we have articulated social reforms: This is our forte: Here we express our desire for change. The Constitutional ban on dissolution of marriage should be lifted. The availability of contraceptives be broadened. To be aware is to be conscious. To be conscious is to perceive. To perceive is to comprehend the complexity of problems and, therefore, the possibility of solutions. Certainly we have effectively highlighted the problems, but is this sufficient. What of our draft Bill on Illegitimacy. Should we not take it off the shelf, review it, revise it if necessary. Should we not clarify, at this point, our views on the rights of the natural father regarding an illegitimate child, the extend of an illegitimate child's rights of inheritance under the present Constitutional framework. If we are to be professional it is of the utmost importance that we put to paper in black and white what precisely it is that we seek.

Disillusionment, or worse, apathy, are perhaps the key notes of the Organisation at present. Perhaps this is so, because it is to some extent the fashionable frame of mind to adopt. Is it the fault of the National Executive of Young Fine Gael that this has come to pass? Is it perhaps Government performance? Maybe, just maybe, it is due to our own individual inadequacies.

'What is truth?' said jesting Pilate; and would not stay for an answer'.

Francis Bacon Essays: of Truth

The International Affairs Committee

This article is the beginning of a series of articles on the work of our Policy Committees.

Until the accession of Ireland to the European Community and apart from the formative years of the State and the Second World War, foreign affairs or foreign policy was not a major political issue in Irish domestic politics.

Membership of the European Community has changed this somewhat because of our inevitable involvement in the affairs of the Community and the fact that we now contribute for the formulation of European Foreign Policy insofar as a united policy can be said to exist.

Following the establishment of Young Fine Gael, there came into being the International Affairs Committee. With Fine Gael's involvement with the Christian Democrats it was perhaps inevitable that we would have to establish some sort of structure to enable Young Fine Gael to take its place at the many conferences, seminars, etc., that are part and parcel of our association with the Christian Democrats.

It must be emphasised, however, that the International Affairs Committee is much more than a vehicle for enabling us to participate in the E.U.Y.C.D. and the various other European groups. The Committee primarily exists to encourage Young Fine Gael to interest themselves in international issues which, in an ever shrinking and even more interdependent world, influence our lives and those of our fellow Europeans to a greater and greater extent. As a logical consequence of this is the question of what Young Fine Gael consider should be our Party's and, when in Government, this country's foreign policy.

Being an island off the European mainland with a larger and somewhat more powerful neighbour in between has led to a rather insular attitude to the rest of the world. Like the British we have had to face the fact that there is life beyond Calais and that what we usually call the Continent (although we are a part of it) is inhabited by people who, while displaying their own particular culture (or peculiarities, depending on one's view) are people very much like ourselves and who share our basic desires for a better, more equitable and more peaceful world. At least that is what they tell us, and by and large it is very true. It sometimes appears to an island race like ourselves that after centuries of conflict these foreigners have finally settled down and, although they still drive on the wrong side of the road, an increasing number of them actually speak English.

While the foregoing comments might seem amusing they are perhaps an exaggerated version of what many people think.

The aim of the International Affairs Committee is to try and educate our members in the area of foreign affairs and to impress on our own and future generations how much our future and that of our fellow Europeans, and included for that matter, Africans, Asians, Americans, etc., is bound together and that collectively, as the inhabitants of the globe, we must learn to live together in peace and harmony. Great injustice still exists in the world today and it is up to this generation and succeeding ones, to try and eliminate such problems and not just to consider our own ills to exclusion of all other peoples on the earth.

Martin Lynch

Interviews

An Taoiseach

Dr. Garret FitzGerald

The Taoiseach has given an exclusive interview to Martin Lynch. Due to pressure of space we have to hold over the second half of the interview until the next edition.

M. Lynch: 'Young Fine Gael had an influence on the Party's policy when we were in opposition. Now what useful purpose do you see Young Fine Gael having in this area - are there, for instance, certain policy areas where Young Fine Gael could usefully campaign to help prepare the public attitude for Government legislation?

An Taoiseach: 'Well, I have always been reticent to give advice or to try to influence Young Fine Gael, it is not for me to tell Young Fine Gael what it should be doing, but, generally, a Party in Government is preoccupied with immediate tasks of Government. To have a group within the Party which has time, is not burdened with Constituency work, is useful in raising policy issues, to discuss the long-term evolution of the Party policy.

M. Lynch: 'Won't any policy statement by Young Fine Gael be seen as criticism of your Government?

An Taoiseach: 'Of course that could be a problem if on some issue on which the Government had a policy and Young Fine Gael started going in the opposite direction, but that does not tend to happen, because Fine Gael knows the general direction it wants to go. The idea of having Young Fine Gael was that it could express the views of the younger generation, which are always going to be greater than can be achieved. I would not discourage criticism at all, I must say that criticism from Young Fine Gael has always been responsible and constructive.

M. Lynch: 'At a more personal level you have always seemed to enjoy promoting and provoking new ideas - now as Taoiseach you are more constrained. Do you regret these necessary inhibitions of public life?

An Taoiseach: 'Oh yes, but being in politics at all one starts with inhibitions, but the constraints of Opposition are much less than of Government. Of course you cannot have it both ways, as Taoiseach you cannot throw out ideas as you can as leader of the Opposition.

M. Lynch: 'Taoiseach, Fine Gael is now a broadly based, catch-all Party. You are largely responsible for the broadening of



the Party but do you not occasionally think that you might have been more successful in having your personal ideas implemented had you started with a less broadly based, diverse political group?

An Taoiseach: 'Fine Gael, as a Party, for the last 20 years, has had a broad spectrum of views. The Just Society proponents were in the Party when I joined and I certainly participated fully in that tradition. I have had an opportunity as leader to broaden the Party in that direction, so we now have a Party that has a different centre of gravity. We still have the support of our traditional supporters and, indeed, many peoples' views have evolved over time, and we have gathered new support'. We now have a solid basis between Fine Gael and Labour representing different strands of liberal and democratic traditions. We have the basis for progressive government which was difficult to discern 20 years ago. It is always easy to take the soft option, to surround yourself with a small number of colleagues and enjoy the luxury of discussions without achieving anything'.

M. Lynch: 'The Labour Party has spoken of having a base line - some members of Young Fine Gael feel very close to theirs - do you have a personal base line - a target - a series of legislative successes which your failure to implement would convince you that you should no longer lead the Party, no longer give so much of your time to public life?

An Taoiseach: 'Well, it does not work like that. In our case we are proceeding with a legislative programme which will soon be coming through the pipe line at a rapid rate. The problem of the next session will be finding the time for all the legislation. I do not see many problems with legislation in what you call the social area, unlike the financial area. The financial constraints on us have been appalling. Steering the country safely through has been a delicate, often frustrating, exercise. The National Plan will spell out areas of Government expenditure for three years. In a sense the shape of the next three Budgets will be determined and most of that turgid and debilitating work will be done for the next three years. Then the Government can turn its full attention to the legislative programme and make the system not only

more just, more equitable, more liberal, but, also, more efficient'.

M. Lynch: 'You have given an important role to professional P.R. people within the Party. Now some journalists like to portray them to as latter day Rasputins, blaming them for Government shortcomings. Has this surprised you?

An Taoiseach: 'Well it is largely a myth. Fianna Fail decided that the way to discredit this Government was to invent the myth of the so-called 'national handlers', to say that we as a Government were only concerned with P.R., when the fact is the we, as a Government, have made mistakes in the P.R. area. We have concentrated on Government rather than P.R. which is the exact opposite of what people are saying about us'.

M. Lynch: 'Many people joined, and worked for, Fine Gael believing that the Party would try to introduce a new pluralist Constitution, to help not only the situation in Northern Ireland, but because of what you called sectarianism in the South. Do you now agree with Charlie Haughey that we should do nothing with our Constitution until we are at the negotiating table with Unionists about the future of Northern Ireland?

An Taoiseach: 'When I decided to initiate the Forum to consider the shape of future political structures on this island, it was clear that it would be politically difficult, politically impossible, for opposition parties to participate, if we were to discuss change to be made here to achieve these political structures accordingly. I took the decision and made it clear in public that the Forum would not discuss the means to the end of achieving these changes in this part of Ireland. The Irish Government awaits with interest a clear and studied response from the British Government'.

M. Lynch: 'Is it not optimistic to expect consensus politics on Northern Ireland when the *raison d'être* for both major political parties has so often been different approaches on this issue?

An Taoiseach: 'You may regard it as optimistic, and you may turn out to be right, but my job is to ensure nothing is done that could be used as an excuse by anybody for not considering positively any concrete proposals that might emerge from the Forum Report.

