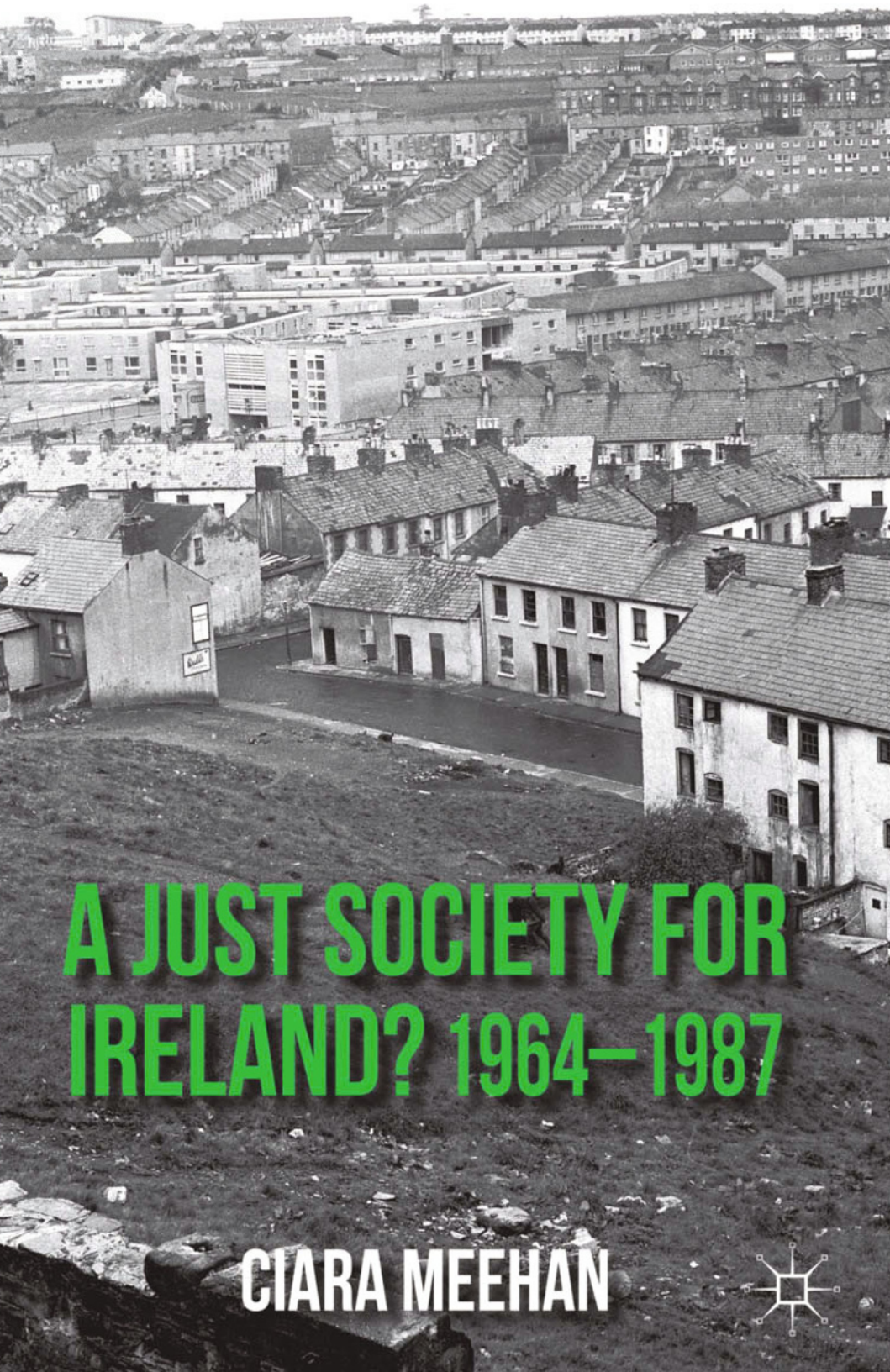




A JUST SOCIETY FOR IRELAND? 1964–1987

CIARA MEEHAN



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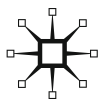
Also by Ciara Meehan

THE COSGRAVE PARTY: A History of Cumann na nGaedheal, 1923–33 (2010)

A Just Society for Ireland? 1964–1987

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University of Hertfordshire

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For Aisling, Cerrie, Pamela and Susan

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Note on Terminology

The terminology current at the time has been retained. For example, the description 'handicapped' rather than 'disabled' is used when citing the policies outlined in *Towards a Just Society*. Likewise, it would be anachronistic to substitute 'single parent' in the place of 'unmarried mother'.

Introduction

The 1960s were a period of change in Ireland. Political, economic and social thought was revised as a result of Vatican II, the arrival of television and the potential of EEC (European Economic Community) membership. That decade also marked the passing of the revolutionary generation from political power. This book examines the attempts made by a new generation of political thinkers and activists – the first to be born in an independent Ireland – to bring about transformative change in Irish politics and to reshape society. It focuses largely on the actions of Fine Gael, then Ireland's second largest political party, and, in particular, on two of its major figures: Declan Costello and Garret FitzGerald. It traces the continuities and discontinuities between Costello's Just Society policy document of 1964/65 and FitzGerald's Constitutional Crusade in the 1980s. In exploring the theme of transformation, the agents for external change are also considered: the legislature, judiciary, EEC and various lobby groups. In doing so, this book offers a new interpretation of Irish politics and society over a period of three decades, taking seriously the alternative vision offered by Costello in the 1960s, while also questioning some of the myths that have surrounded the Just Society's formulation, impact and legacy.

Fine Gael is a party with an identity crisis; this book traces its roots. The origins are typically attributed to Garret FitzGerald, his constitutional crusade and his efforts to recreate Fine Gael as a social democratic party in the 1980s. But it is necessary to take a longer view: one that stretches back to the 1960s, to Declan Costello and a growing socially minded wing of the party. In 1964 Costello put before Fine Gael a set of proposals designed to transform the party and which offered a blueprint for a new Ireland through greater state involvement. They represented a significant break with traditional Fine Gael policy – particularly in the area of private enterprise – and caused considerable unease within the party, especially with its rural members. Costello struggled to have his proposals accepted by the parliamentary party in 1964, and even when they were adopted as official policy for the 1965 general election, the leadership was not united behind the initiative.

Benefiting from access to the privately held minute books of the parliamentary party for the 1950s and 1960s, this book explores the internal workings of the party at a critical juncture in its history, and reconstructs the private debate surrounding Costello's proposals. Although the policy had faded away by the 1970s, with the Just Society merely serving as an inspiring slogan or a useful point of reference, the setbacks experienced in the 1960s should not be too strongly over-stated. For the first time, the central role played by Declan Costello in the longer-term transformation of Fine Gael is disclosed. Although he was never party leader and the Just Society effectively remained an un-tested document, he effected change by encouraging a new generation of politicians into the party, most notably Garret FitzGerald, who would go on to play a key role. Furthermore, it was his agenda for change that paved the way for FitzGerald. As Jim O'Keeffe, Fine Gael TD (Teachta Dála; Member of Parliament) for Cork South-West from 1977 until 2011, put it, Costello was a 'John the Baptist as far as Garret was concerned'.¹

When Fine Gael formed the National Coalition with Labour in 1973, it was the first occasion on which the party found itself in government since adopting Costello's proposals. Costello had announced his retirement from politics in 1967, but was convinced to return because of the threat posed by the arms crisis. He was not given a seat at the cabinet table, however, and was instead appointed Attorney General. As a consequence, he did not contribute to policy formulation, although the coalition did implement a number of social progressive measures. The government's legislative agenda also attempted to address issues of private morality, most notably relating to the sale of contraceptives, which had been completely absent from Costello's Just Society document. This reflected a shift away from social justice towards pluralism that would become more significantly pronounced during Garret FitzGerald's time as Taoiseach in the 1980s.

The Constitutional Crusade and, in particular, the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement dominated profiles of Garret FitzGerald following his death in 2011. Reference was also made to his role as a supporter of the Just Society. FitzGerald was not yet a member of the party when Costello formulated his ideas; nonetheless, he had assisted in drafting *Towards a Just Society* for the 1965 election. He recalled of the original eight-point plan: 'They were very much his ideas and not mine; I would have done them a bit differently'.² An article in the *Irish Independent* after FitzGerald's death observed how he made the Just Society document 'mainstream party policy when he assumed the Fine Gael leadership from 1977'.³ FitzGerald himself recorded in his autobiography how he enunciated the principles of Costello's document at the time of his accession to the leadership in 1977. This book challenges the notion that FitzGerald was heir to Costello's mantle in the area of policy. Influenced by his Belfast heritage on his mother's side and later by the tensions in Northern Ireland in the 1960s, FitzGerald was more concerned with creating a pluralist society, an interest articulated in a 1964 *Studies*

article and in his 1972 book *Towards a New Ireland*.⁴ FitzGerald thus had a very different agenda to his colleague, with the result that the Just Society document did not 'define the party for some 20 years', as one commentator suggested.⁵

Shortly after becoming Taoiseach for the first time, FitzGerald set the tone for his government in an interview with Gerald Barry on RTÉ Radio in November 1981. He spoke of how he wanted to 'lead a crusade, a Republican crusade to make this a genuine republic on the principals of Tone and Davis'.⁶ His aim was to create a society acceptable to Northern Unionists, which would eventually lead to reunification. During that interview, the word 'sectarian' was repeated several times as FitzGerald spoke of past legislative developments in the Republic. The Constitutional Crusade was derailed almost immediately, however, when FitzGerald agreed to hold a referendum to insert a ban on abortion into the constitution following intense lobbying from pro-life groups. His agenda was dealt a further blow when, in 1986, his referendum to legalise divorce was defeated. On the occasion of FitzGerald's eightieth birthday, John Bowman asked him if he considered his Constitutional Crusade a success. 'In the long run, yes', was the reply, although he conceded that 'it turned out to be premature'.⁷

FitzGerald has been the focus of several biographies written by journalists, with analysis shaped by newspapers, his own writings and, sometimes, personal recollections. Though drawing on similar sources, this book also benefits from the recently released state papers at the National Archives of Ireland for 1981 and 1982, made available to researchers under the thirty-year rule. They offer historians the first opportunity to examine the official record of the inner-workings of FitzGerald's – and Charles Haughey's – time as Taoiseach. They cast important light on some of the major themes of FitzGerald's administration. Most notably, it becomes apparent that after he declared his Constitutional Crusade, he sought to pull back from his commitment to a pro-life referendum. Various inter-departmental correspondence and letters from the pro-life movement disclose much new information about how the Fianna Fáil government and Fine Gael-Labour coalition both grappled with the sensitive and divisive issue. They also offer an insight into the roots of the divergent opinions on the issue of abortion within Fine Gael that resurfaced in 2012/13.

FitzGerald is popularly recalled as a modernising, progressive figure. Paying tribute following his death, the then president Mary McAleese described him as a 'persuasive voice for progressive reform'.⁸ Though often presented as a liberal politician, recently released state papers, combined with FitzGerald's own writings, reveal that many of his proposals were shaped by conservative thinking. His attitude in favour of legalising divorce, for example, was particularly telling. Divorce would allow the separated to marry again, rather than simply co-habit with their new partner, thus preserving the institution of marriage: a liberal measure conceived within

a conservative framework. Drawing on newly available material, including FitzGerald's own papers shelved at University College Dublin (UCD) Archives, this book seeks to offer a re-assessment of the man considered Fine Gael's most popular leader.

The theme of continuity and change is one touched on in a number of recent publications, including Diarmaid Ferriter's *Transformation of Ireland* and, more particularly, his *Ambiguous Republic* (2012), an extensive and insightful exploration of 1970s Ireland. This book explores this theme over a broader time-frame, from the perspective of both the political elite and ordinary citizens. The manner in which the clash between conservative and liberal viewpoints manifested itself, and the implications this had for policy-making decisions, will be established. In his introduction to the 2008 special edition of *Irish Political Studies* that examines continuity, change and crisis in Ireland from the 1960s, Brian Girvin asked, 'How do we explain these changes, and what impact have they had on social, political and institutional norms and values in Ireland?'⁹ The answers were sought in the actions of policy makers and political institutions. This book attempts to give an identity to 'society'. The transformation of Irish society was both exciting and disquieting. Opinions of the ordinary citizen were gleaned from newspapers and magazines, particularly the letters' pages where the intersection between government policy and everyday life can be identified. There is also extensive correspondence from the public contained in the files of the Department of the Taoiseach and the Fine Gael papers. These give an indication of the extent of approval or disapproval for various policy initiatives, while also offering a commentary on Irish society. They confirm the persistence of traditional values at a time of transformation, and reveal how a conservative generation – like the politicians who represented them – struggled to locate their place in and resisted a changing Ireland.

The internal politics of Fine Gael have scarcely been subject to the rigours of academic research. The only history of the party is Brian Maye's *Fine Gael*, which he acknowledges was written by drawing largely on secondary sources.¹⁰ Declan Costello has been virtually overlooked by academic historians, occasionally mentioned briefly in survey histories.¹¹ This is despite the fact that his proposals represented a significant break with the traditional policy of a party that was inherently conservative, and that the debate he initiated ushered in a fascinating, if tumultuous, phase in Fine Gael's history. The near-silence on his contribution to Irish politics seems peculiar given the extent of the coverage that the Just Society – described by Deaglán de Bréadún as Costello's 'monument'¹² – received at the time of his death in 2011. Although the Just Society was an un-tested policy document produced by a member of the opposition, it is still worthy of consideration for what it reveals about Fine Gael, Irish politics and broader Irish society. While Garret FitzGerald has been the subject of several biographies, the narrative has been shaped largely by his own prolific writings and informed by

contemporary newspapers. This book does not claim to be a complete biography of either Declan Costello or Garret FitzGerald, nor is it intended to be an in-depth history of Fine Gael. However, by examining modern Ireland through the lens of Costello's Just Society and FitzGerald's Constitutional Crusade, and drawing on interviews with key figures, recently released papers and privately held collections, a broader picture of Irish politics and society emerges. As such, this book seeks to supplement and add to the existing historiography.

1

A New Ireland?

‘What was it all for? The whole thing was a cod’. Michael Moran – the principal male character of John McGahern’s *Amongst Women* – found himself questioning the merits of what the independence struggle (1919–1921) had produced: ‘some of our own jonnies in the top jobs instead of a few Englishmen. More than half of my own family work in England’.¹ Government spending had been hampered in the 1920s by the financial burden of reconstruction following the War of Independence and subsequent Civil War; the Great Depression stalked the 1930s, worsened by the Economic War with Britain, while frugality became the theme of the war years in the early 1940s, and rationing and strict controls remained in place after the world’s theatres of war fell silent. The 1950s are often described as Ireland’s ‘lost decade’,² characterised by high levels of emigration, unemployment and general poverty. These social ills were anathema to what the 1916/1919–21 period had *seemed* to promise and, like McGahern’s Moran, many were left wondering about the value of independence. However, by the late 1950s, an air of confidence, already identifiable among international neighbours who had enjoyed more of the post-war boom, was noticeable as the economy began to show signs of improvement. It seemed that the Irish experience was, perhaps, not that different after all to Eric Hobsbawm’s observation that ‘for 80 per cent of humanity the Middle Ages ended suddenly in the 1950s; or perhaps better still, they were *felt* to end in the 1960s’³ (italicised in text).

However, social development did not keep pace with economic modernisation. Social problems persisted. Roland Burke Savage, editor of *Studies*, laid down the challenge to decide Ireland’s future, asking if the country would drift or if an attempt would be made to shape it according to its needs.⁴ His article prompted several responses, and in following editions of the journal, a discussion about the nature of Irish society emerged. The contributions indicated a growing awareness of a responsibility by the state to enact social and economic change. David Thornley, an intellectual and future member of the Labour Party, advocated, for example, moving beyond debate to solid

action. Parity of standards in education and social welfare with the rest of Western Europe, as he put it, was not a matter for 'ethical debate and budgetary calculation'.⁵ It was in this context that Costello penned his proposals for a Just Society. He made his own contribution to the debate on Ireland's development through the formulation of an eight-point plan, which later developed into the policy document, *Towards a Just Society*. It was written at a time when international expectations about the role of the state were changing. This shift in thinking was confined not just to politicians and policymakers, but significantly it was also acknowledged by the Catholic Church. Such changes, both at an international level, but, more specifically, in Ireland, were made possible by economic transformation, technological advances and a major breakthrough in the hierarchy's thinking resulting from the Second Vatican Council.

Irish social policy: an overview

Irish policymakers were not typically concerned with social policy in the early years of the twentieth century. Political sovereignty was the dominant concern, followed by economic development. In 1919, before independence, the government of the revolutionary Dáil invited Labour Party leader Thomas Johnson to draft a Democratic Programme for economic and social reform. It was adopted at the inaugural meeting of Dáil Éireann on 21 January 1919. The young and the old – the most vulnerable in society – were addressed first. An emphasis was placed on the nation's duty to care for the welfare of children, including the provision of adequate food, clothing, shelter and education. The poor law system was to be substituted with a more sympathetic scheme. The focus then shifted to the utilisation of the country's resources – soil, peat and fisheries – for the benefit of the people. Although some of the radical elements survived, the finished product was stripped of much of the socialist content found in Johnson's original draft.⁶ The interventionist approach certainly ran contrary to the church's view on the role of the state. Furthermore, it has been argued that Labour's socialist thinking might not have garnered sympathy in rural Ireland where a mix of peasant proprietorship and the high prices of the wartime agricultural economy had produced a sense of complacency about social issues.⁷ Additionally, the invitation to draft the programme was widely seen as a sop for Labour standing aside at the 1918 general election, leaving the field open for Sinn Féin in the interest of national solidarity. Neither Sinn Féin nor its pro-Treaty successor in the Free State government, Cumann na nGaedheal, had either the means or the real desire to implement the programme. The cost of reconstruction following the war of independence and civil war had placed a considerable strain on the exchequer. Only after 1926/27 did compensation cease to rank among the top five heaviest charges on the state's expenditure.⁸ As Margaret O'Callaghan succinctly put it, '[Pádraig]

Pearse's clarity of vision was a luxury the nation could no longer afford'.⁹ Furthermore, in the early years of the Free State, the government was concerned with state and identity building and the achievement of democratic stability.¹⁰ The Catholic Church also influenced policymakers. When viewed in the context of what these early statesmen were attempting to achieve, this was inevitable. As Ronan Fanning put it, with the island partitioned and a full republic unattainable, 'Catholicism, always central to so much of Irish nationalist ideology, took on an additional significance in the search for national identity'.¹¹ This meant that, in a state guided by the conservative principles of the pre-Vatican II Catholic Church, developments in social policy would be limited in scope.

Pope Pius XI expressed the view in his 1931 encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* that, 'Of its very nature the true aim of all social activity should be to help individual members of the social body, but never to destroy or absorb them'.¹² This principal of subsidiarity favoured the individual or local community groups and opposed centralisation and state responsibility for the provision of social services. It was penned in the context of the growth of communism, the rise of fascism and the emergence of the totalitarian state in continental Europe,¹³ and it proved very influential in Ireland. It meant that the 1930s saw little development in the area of social policy, although this had been the case in the 1920s, also. Both Cumann na nGaedheal and Fianna Fáil implemented housing policies, although the latter was considerably more active. De Valera's government also introduced the Unemployment Assistance Act in 1933, widows and orphans pensions in 1935 and children's allowance in 1944. His government prepared a Health Act in 1947, but lost power at the general election the following February and the responsibility for implementing it fell to the new Minister for Health in the first inter-party government, Dr Noel Browne. His scheme to introduce a comprehensive health service for mothers and children up to the age of sixteen never came to fruition, however, as it was blocked by the combined power of the Catholic hierarchy and the Irish Medical Association.¹⁴ When Fianna Fáil returned to power, a scaled-back version was introduced in 1951. The episode offers an interesting commentary on social policy formulation: the spectacular failure of Browne's programme and the power of those who opposed it served as a strong warning to politicians who might otherwise have considered radical reform. Arguably, the most important development in social policy in the 1950s was the Social Welfare Act, 1952, introduced by Fianna Fáil's Dr James Ryan. The act gave birth to the social welfare system in Ireland. It consolidated and introduced benefits such as disability and maternity benefits, and it laid the foundation for future social welfare benefits.¹⁵

The 1960s, which saw the waning of the anti-interventionist ethos, witnessed an expansion of social policy, particularly in the area of education with the introduction of free post-primary education and the Local

Authority (Higher Education Grant) Act, 1968, which opened up third-level opportunities. Change was made possible by social and religious transformation and by the emergence of a new generation within the political establishment. However, as discussed in later chapters, the demand for change tended to come from society itself rather than from the political elite.

‘An economic slum’

In addition to the multitude of localised factors, the West’s recovery following the Second World War was largely stimulated by the Marshall Plan, outlined by US Secretary of State, George Marshall, in an address at Harvard University on 5 June 1947. By the time that the programme was wound up in 1952, the US had spent \$13 billion, a figure that exceeded all of the country’s previous overseas aid programmes combined.¹⁶ Between 1948 and 1950, France, the Netherlands, Austria, Italy, Greece and West Germany recovered. In addition to the financial gain, there were also psychological benefits. As Tony Judt put it, ‘one might almost say that the Marshall Plan helped Europeans feel better about themselves’.¹⁷ Ireland’s recovery between 1945 and 1950 was the weakest of all the European economies, except for Spain.¹⁸ While Ireland initially experienced post-war prosperity, the boom was not sustained to the degree enjoyed by her western neighbours, and by the 1950s, the benefits had receded. The financial support received through the Marshall Plan was largely earmarked for agriculture in the belief that Ireland’s future lay in farming.¹⁹ Ireland had failed to maximise opportunities in the expanding European economy and was thus locked out of the affluence that accompanied it. The country went into relative decline compared to similar states in Western Europe,²⁰ prompting *The Irish Times* to report that Ireland was ‘falling behind’.²¹ In contrast to Britain’s figure of twenty-one per cent and Continental Europe’s of forty per cent, Irish national income grew by only eight per cent between 1949 and 1956.²² 1956 was a year of economic crisis. Gerard Sweetman, Minister for Finance in the second inter-party government (1954–57), believed that Ireland’s economic independence was at stake, such was the depth of the crisis.²³ He was not alone. As Tom Garvin has noted in his study of Irish newspaper coverage of the 1950s, papers such as the *Standard* also advocated launching the ‘battle for economic freedom’.²⁴

As Ireland struggled, British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan was telling his voters that they had ‘never had it so good’. The 1950s in Britain was a period of affluence and increasing consumption.²⁵ Post-war reconstruction there created employment, and with few such opportunities in Ireland, the allure of a better life in the neighbouring country – relayed by relatives and friends who had already left – drew mainly young people away from their native land. By 1960, the average British worker earned at least forty per cent more than his Irish counterpart.²⁶ A Bank of England official who met with staff from the Irish Department of Finance while on a visit to Ireland in 1957

observed, 'the country gives the impression of being an economic slum from which there is a constant outflow of emigrants who have any initiative and any desire to better themselves'.²⁷ The stark reality of Ireland in the 1950s was captured in John B. Keane's *Many Young Men of Twenty*. The first act of the play shows brothers Kevin and Dinny preparing to leave for London, where they would join siblings already settled. Eighteen-year-old Dinny cried openly, admitting 'I don't want to go away at all'.²⁸ His tears reflected his frustration and the lack of choice available not just to him but also to those real emigrants whom his character represented. The fictional story of Kevin and Dinny was not far removed from the anguish of real emigrants captured in *The Vanishing Irish*.²⁹ Those who left in the 1950s and early 1960s were predominantly young, and they tended to be children of small farmers, unskilled or semi-skilled manual labourers.³⁰ Writing in *Studies* in 1951, R. C. Geary had wondered whether 'a large proportion of those born here are pre-destined to emigrate?'.³¹ Between 1951 and 1961, more than 400,000 people left the Republic of Ireland, a figure that accounts for almost one-sixth of the total population as recorded in 1951.³² The 1961 census showed the population to be at an all-time low of 2,818,341.³³ Among those who left was Michael Sweetman, who went to Canada in 1957. As a future member of the Fine Gael policy committee and research staff who worked on the 1965 election campaign, he would do much to assist behind the scenes in the development of the Just Society ideas.³⁴

The traditional government line on emigration had typically been one of denial. Eamon de Valera once claimed that 'there is no doubt that many of those who emigrate could find employment at home at as good, or better, wages – and with living conditions far better – than they find in Britain'.³⁵ The incentive to respond was diminished by the fact that emigration to Britain reduced the level of unemployment, the burden on the exchequer, and it alleviated potential social unrest.³⁶ However by the mid-1950s, when the Commission on Emigration and Other Population Problems filed its report, the problem could no longer be ignored. The failure of independent Ireland to support its own was thrown into stark relief by developments in Northern Ireland resulting from the 1946 commitment that the state would be granted parity of services with the UK outlined in the 1942 Beveridge Report. The contrast between services in Britain and Ireland was summed up in the account of one emigrant, Donál MacAmghlaigh: 'the [Irish] people go in to the doctor as they used to go in to the aristocrats or the landlords long ago – shaking with humility. In England he'll give you to understand that you are a person and not a beggar'.³⁷

Economic modernisation

Despite the problems of the 1950s, Irish policymakers were beginning to look to the future. By the end of that decade, the debate about the symbols

of independence had been replaced with a discussion about how best to build a modern economy.³⁸ As Seán Ó Faoláin observed:

Time was when common words on every lip in every Irish pub were Partition, The Civil War, The Republic, The Gun. The vocabulary of the mid-fifties and sixties was very different – the Common Market, Planning, Growth Rates, Strikes, Jobs, Educational Opportunities, or why this factory failed or that one flourished.³⁹

Britain applied for membership of the European Economic Community in 1961. The decision to do so increased Ireland's dependency on her nearest neighbour (the country's application would be closely linked to the success of Britain). This opened Irish policy outwards, as policymakers began to look to Europe. It also resulted in a shift towards free trade and a more open economy.⁴⁰ The necessity for this outward-looking policy was something that British economist Charles Carter had advocated in his 'outsider perspective' when addressing the Irish Association in 1957: 'Economic prosperity is not beyond the reach of the Republic, but it is not to be found in self-satisfied isolation, nor in the narrow pride of economic nationalism'.⁴¹ There was a gradual realisation that the old rhetoric had no place in a changing Ireland. The first programme for economic expansion – the work of T. K. Whitaker, secretary of the Department of Finance – was published in 1958. The document hailed a significant shift away from the economic nationalism of old Sinn Féin: the protectionist policies that Seán Lemass had put in place in the 1930s and which were maintained in the two decades that followed were to be stripped away and replaced with a more outward-looking policy. The removal of tariff barriers was an important preparation for an Irish application for membership of the European Economic Community. There had been earlier signs of this shift in Gerard Sweetman's budget in 1956 in which he suspended the Control of Manufacturers Act. Whitaker's document, with an emphasis on programming, set a number of targets to be achieved, thus allowing for economic growth. This interventionist approach ran contrary to the teaching of the Catholic Church, although, as Louise Fuller demonstrates, not all clerics in the 1950s took a dim view of state planning. In fact, Whitaker cited an article by the Bishop of Clonfert in *Studies* as having been a source of inspiration to him.⁴²

Increased foreign investment and accompanying job opportunities resulted in a growing optimism as emigration figures declined, while there was also some increase in immigration, albeit at a much slower rate. The latter was further stimulated by Ireland's entry into the EEC, after which net immigration was recorded for the first time since the foundation of the State as returning emigrants arrived back in Ireland to avail of the new opportunities.⁴³ As a result, between 1971 and 1981, the population grew by 465,000.⁴⁴ This, of course, was reversed as a result of the downturn in the economy in the 1980s, and is discussed in Chapter 8.

Agents of change

Mobilisation of opinion on social policy was widespread outside political circles in the 1950s. New centres of social ideas had emerged. The People's College began to run lecture courses and summer schools in the early 1950s. In 1952, a Social Study Conference had been launched, while two years later, the Catholic Workers College was established. The Dublin Institute of Catholic Sociology also emerged in 1954. However, there was a clear disconnect between the themes discussed by these groups and the areas addressed by governments. Many of the issues raised were ignored in public policy.⁴⁵ Part of the problem for policymakers was the absence of forums that provided professional research into Irish society. As Joe Lee put it, a hidden Ireland awaited investigation.⁴⁶ The government of the day would benefit from the emergence in 1958 of An Foras Taluntais, which assisted with agricultural research, and the establishment in the 1960s of the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and the National Industrial and Economic Council (later the National Economic and Social Council or NESC). The appearance of publications such as *Crane Bag*, *Irish Economic and Social History* and *Irish Jurist* was also important in contributing to the debate on major issues. These developments helped create a decisive break with the past.⁴⁷

A growing interest in social issues was also reflected in the socio-religious magazine programme *Radharc*, which explored Irish society extensively, while also looking beyond the island. Produced for RTÉ by Fr Joe Dunn, chaplain of UCD, the first programme was televised on 12 January 1962, and over a thirty-five year period, more than 400 films were shot in seventy-five different countries across five continents. From 'House Hunters' (28 February 1965), which told the story of Eamon Casey's Housing Aid Society that assisted Irish low-income earners in Britain with purchasing a home, to 'The Problems' (19 May 1966), which examined the work of missionaries in Kenya, the programmes connected the domestic audience to the diaspora, while also acting as a vista to the wider world.

The 1960s saw the emergence of a new mentality as the grips of Archbishop John Charles McQuaid and Eamon de Valera were loosened. That generation had a more pious, static image of what Ireland ought to be.⁴⁸ McQuaid, who had once wielded great power, appeared to recognise that his influence was waning. Among his papers at the Dublin Diocesan Archive are letters written to him by mothers concerned about the type of magazines that their daughters were reading. In the margins, he had written names of people to contact to pursue the subject. Previously, he would simply have had inappropriate literature banned or censored.⁴⁹ Seán Lemass succeeded de Valera as leader of Fianna Fáil in 1959. As Tom Garvin has pointed out, 'the idea of a virtuous Ireland surrounded by economic and ideational walls of tariffs and censorship was dying, but nothing much had yet taken its place'.⁵⁰

The rise in Irish living standards in the 1960s meant that more people had disposable income and there were more options available. One of the negative implications was a surge in crime in the 1960s and 1970s.⁵¹ From the mid-1960s, there were huge increases, for example, in housebreaking, robbery and indictable assaults.⁵² That aside, an example of the psychological shift in Ireland is reflected in the replacement of the traditional céilí bands with showbands in dancehalls around Ireland. At the forefront of the new phenomena was future Taoiseach and Fianna Fáil leader, Albert Reynolds. As the owner of such establishments as Cloudland and Roseland, he was one of the most prominent organisers of such events. He twice booked 'The Beatles', but was forced to cancel because of the unavailability of a large enough space to cater for the inevitably large crowd that would attend. In his autobiography, he observed how Irish people at that time had more money in their pockets and their willingness to spend it on dances.⁵³ John McGahern recalled of the Ivy Leaf, run by Patsy Conboy, that 'people came by bus, by lorry, hackney car, horse trap, on bicycle and on foot to dance the night away'.⁵⁴ In addition to their own songs, the bands also played hits from the charts and imported foreign music. Brendan Bowyer of The Royal, one of the most important showbands of the era, scored a hit in 1965 with his cover of the 1949 American success, *The Hucklebuck*. The dancehalls, along with cinema and television, gave Irish people a different type of outlet, while exposing them to other cultures. As Father P. J. Brophy of St Patrick's Diocesan College in Carlow recalled, before such changes 'the mass house was the meeting house because there was nowhere else to go and nothing else to do'.⁵⁵

It was technological advances that did most to open up a new world and present alternative lifestyles, helping to shape rising expectations and changing social attitudes. On 14 March 1958, the government announced the establishment of a television commission that would consider instituting a native television station; Irish citizens on the east coast were able to pick up transmission signals from Britain. The project was subsequently approved at a meeting of the cabinet on 31 July 1961. Eamon de Valera in his address for Telefís Éireann's inaugural broadcast on New Year's Eve 1961 commented that 'never before was there in the hands of men an instrument so powerful to influence the thoughts and actions of the multitude'. Although he was wary of the development, the arrival of television helped to lift Ireland from its isolation and insular attitude and to strip away the country's parochialism. Only one-in-three households in 1963 had television sets, but by the end of the decade, three-quarters of homes owned one.⁵⁶ There was a shift from a young John McGahern concentrating intently on the knob of the radio set, imagining the rough and tumble of the football game upon which the presenter was commenting,⁵⁷ to the young Gene Kerrigan who saw 'New York, London, Paris ... mountains and jungles and deserts and seas'. Television closed the distance between countries. As Kerrigan put it, television allowed those 'who had never set foot

outside Ireland ... experience close up the look, the sound, the atmosphere of more foreign lands than the greatest travellers of the previous centuries'. He recalled that it was America about which they learned most.⁵⁸ This was due to a reliance on imported sit-coms and films, as the rights to American programming were considerably cheaper than the cost of home-produced programmes.⁵⁹ By 1985, Philip Nolan, writing in the pages of *Woman's Way* magazine, was lamenting the Americanisation of everyday language, which he attributed to '*Dallas, Dynasty, Falcon Crest* and their ilk'. He, perhaps facetiously, suggested that a bill might be introduced in the Dáil prohibiting the use of American phrases!⁶⁰ How this was to be enforced, he did not explain.

The Late Late Show, a Friday night television chat-show hosted by Gay Byrne, has often been cited as an important vehicle for change. Although there have been often extravagant claims made about its impact, it provided audiences with access to free-flowing discussions and debates.⁶¹ Two particular – and well-cited – incidents on the programme serve as examples of how certain topics had opened up. The first was a suggestion by one woman that she did not wear a nightgown on her wedding night, which caused Bishop Thomas Ryan of Clonfert to strongly protest at what was being inferred. The second was Brian Trevaskis's criticism of Bishop Michael Browne of Galway for allowing the construction of the county's new cathedral, which he described as a 'ghastly monstrosity'. Unsurprisingly, even before these incidents, the Church was concerned about the impact of television. *The Irish Ecclesiastical Record* had cautioned readers to give 'long and careful preparation before you admit the monster to your homes'.⁶² In the rush to embrace modernism, there was a fear that traditional values were being abandoned. It is notable that a time when American lifestyles were entering Irish homes through the medium of television, censorship increased. Judge J. C. Conroy, chair of the Censorship of Publications Board, declared that 'there is a little bit of Adam in everybody. If we were all in paradise we wouldn't want it'.⁶³ Between 1946 and 1965, 8,000 books were banned, and in the twelve-month period between 1962 and 1963 alone, thirty-nine films were banned.⁶⁴

From the perspective of policymakers, the impact of Vatican II was as important as the arrival of television. The Second Vatican Council opened under Pope John XXIII in October 1962 and closed just over three years later in December 1965 under Pope Paul VI. The resulting philosophical change resulted in 'a thorough-going reassessment by the people and the Council Fathers of the Church's role in the modern world'.⁶⁵ Although the Church did not change its policy on family-related issues such as contraceptives or abortion, the vision for the Church's mission changed from that of charitable activity to working for structural change to help deliver social justice.⁶⁶ There was also a fundamental shift in its thinking regarding the role of the state. The Church had previously been concerned with the redemption of the soul and strongly advocated the right of the family to support itself; this had been particularly evident during the Mother and Child controversy in

the 1950s. But by the 1960s, notions about the role of the state had changed internationally, something that Pope John XXIII recognised. The Pontiff played the seemingly contradictory roles of traditionalist, pragmatist and reformer. He was sceptical of television and not only initially upheld the ban of Pope Pius XII on priests owning television sets but he was also acutely aware of how fast the world was changing and he did much in the last two years of his life to turn the Church in a new direction.⁶⁷

His 1961 encyclical, *Mater et Magistra*, represented a major breakthrough in the hierarchy's thinking. It spoke of the necessity 'to remedy lack of balance, whether between different sectors in the economy, or between different parts of the same country, or even between the different peoples of the world'.⁶⁸ Moreover, he stated that 'governments have the care of the common good and in these conditions it is urgently necessary for them to intervene more frequently'. *Pacem in Terris*, 1963, which dealt with establishing universal peace in truth, justice, charity and liberty, placed a particular emphasis on social justice. Archbishop McQuaid treated the new developments in the Catholic Church with suspicion. However, key changes in personnel resulted in the spread of Vatican II thinking. The appointment of William Conway to the see of Armagh as the successor to Cardinal D'Alton was significant. Though cautious, his attitude to change was important. His leadership was instrumental in steering the Irish church towards change at a critical time.⁶⁹

The aforementioned documents, as explained in the introduction to *Towards a Just Society*, 'informed and moulded' the social and economic arguments put forward in the document. Declan Costello framed his policies in the language of this new thinking and saw the church as a forum to help bring about change. As he put it, the church

must act as a social conscience and speak out, not with a still quiet voice, but if necessary a large and strident one. If civil authority has failed to bring about social justice, it can, and I suggest, should, point out the failure.⁷⁰

In this respect, Costello's policies diverged with those formulated by Garret FitzGerald, who advocated a more pluralist approach. Costello was certainly a committed Catholic, but there may also have been a further reason why he chose to frame his document within the context of Church teaching – that was to defend from the charge of dangerous socialism. This was important in the international context of the Cold War and the suspicion that surrounded socialism.

If television opened up the world and Vatican II contributed to a reassessment of the role of the state, the EEC was also an important agent for change. As already noted, from the late-1950s, membership had become a priority for the Irish government. While Lemass was keen to secure entry for economic benefits, Europe would come to have an important influence on the development of social policy in Ireland. As will be seen over the coming