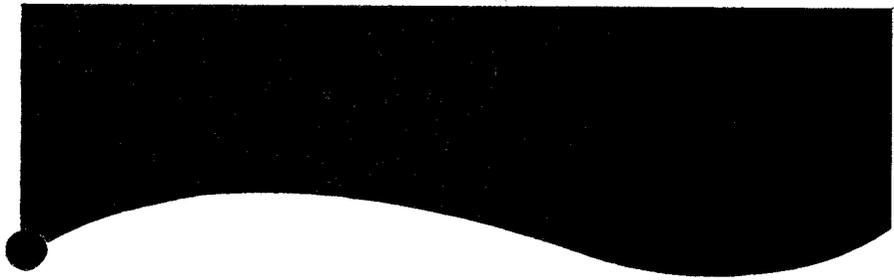


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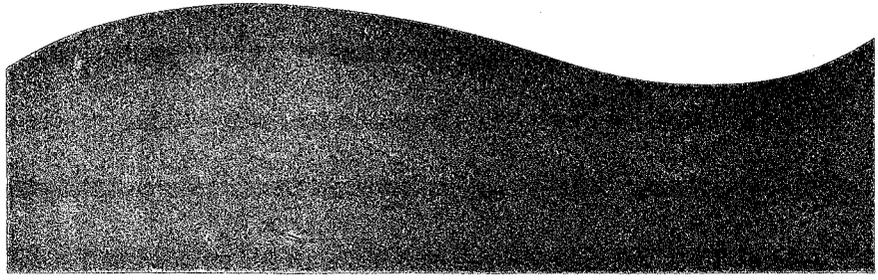
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• **Winning
through to
a just
society**



FINE GAEL



SUMMARY OF POLICY

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INTRODUCTION:

Every political party seeking office should tell the people how it will use the power entrusted to it. That is the purpose of this document which summarises the most important of Fine Gael's policy proposals. Some of these were published in 1965 before the last general election; others have been developed since then, after detailed consultation with experts in the fields which they cover.

Fundamentally we are concerned with making a reality of two cepts; freedom and equality. Irish society today denies the full realisation of these concepts for all citizens. It is therefore not a just society. We seek office to work towards a society in which freedom and equality are not concepts from an academic textbook but are expressed in real and tangible conditions which all our people can enjoy.

We propose a bold and vigorous programme of economic and social reform. The needs of our people are many. The urgency for reform is great; the work should not be further delayed. Those who oppose reform usually do so from ignorance or because they have a vested interest in the status quo.

It is political chicanery to talk about improving living conditions when the measures necessary to bring them about are not taken. The reforms we propose will not occur spontaneously and we accept the necessity for more effective government action in industry, agriculture, education, health and all our social services. To condemn action by the State as 'intervention' without examining its purpose or the means to be adopted is often an emotional reaction rather than an intelligent one. Government action on the lines we suggest, far from curtailing personal freedom, will help to extend it and make it meaningful for all our people. In the past, too little attention has been given to the necessity for efficient public administration. We accept the urgent need for administrative reforms and the very great importance of ensuring that the machinery of government is designed to serve the public efficiently and fairly.

Social Doctrines

The social and economic thought of the Fine Gael party has been informed and moulded by the social doctrines contained in the papal encyclicals. Most people in public life will state their acceptance of the teachings contained in the papal encyclicals. But two dangers exist. Firstly, such acceptance may amount merely to lip service and, secondly, these principles may be used as an excuse for inaction. We accept the principle of subsidiary function and in our plans for reform we will be guided at all times by this principle. It is our responsibility as laymen in politics to learn and appreciate these principles; to review the situation as it exists in Ireland; to form a judgment on that situation and in the light of these principles to decide how they should be implemented in this country at the present time. We believe we have done this in this publication.

Every society is in constant course of change. A political party fails in its responsibilities if it ignores this fact and fails to meet the challenge of changing times. We have attempted to do so. We are aware of the limitations of political power in a democracy—limitations which we accept and welcome. But Ireland is a small, largely homogenous country. A profitable dialogue between the people and the government should be possible if our institutions are properly reformed. The fact that Ireland is a mixed economy need not involve any conflict between the public and private sectors, for both can stimulate and aid the other. Given proper planning of our economic affairs, we can maximise the benefits of favourable and minimise the effects of unfavourable economic factors abroad which are outside our control.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ECONOMIC PLANNING :

Under modern conditions, economic and social progress cannot be achieved haphazardly, by waiting for things to happen. There must be planning. In a democratic community this planning cannot be authoritarian; it must involve the participation of all groups in the mobilisation of national resources to secure national aims.

Fine Gael proposes that democratic planning should take the following form :

1. There must be full consultation with the sections of the community contributing to national output.
2. An internally consistent plan for economic and social development must be prepared covering a period of years. This plan must contain realistic targets for each aspect of economic, social and cultural activity, clearly stating the results expected to be achieved as a result of the policies proposed in the plan. Where possible, alternatives that may be open should be stated.
3. This plan should be debated and endorsed by the Oireachtas, which should choose between any alternative courses of action that may be open.
4. An impartial body must be created to review progress with the plan, and to propose steps to be taken where planned results are not being achieved. This body must be representative of major national interests.

Not Planning

The present Fianna Fail system of programming does not meet these requirements, and is not in fact planning in any meaningful sense.

1. Consultations with producing sectors have been inadequate in the case of industry and the services, or almost non-existent in the case of the farming community.
2. The Third Programme does not contain targets for each aspect of national activity. The targets for agricultural products in the Second Programme have been dropped completely, and only a few targets remain in the industrial sector. The targets of the social programme are not specified at all. And no alternatives are offered in any area of programming.
3. The Oireachtas has not been consulted about the Third Programme, and time for a Dail debate on it was refused by the Government.
4. The Government has failed to provide agricultural representation on the reviewing body, the NIEC, which is accordingly unable to make an adequate assessment of progress with the programmes.

Fine Gael in government will remedy these defects, and will change the present weak programming into a genuine and effective national planning system, operating under the control of a Department of Economic Affairs. This department will be responsible for pin-pointing departures from plan targets. It will ensure that these are brought to the attention of the government at the earliest stage, and that policy failures are not brushed under the carpet. This Department will be equipped with adequate resources of expertise, in such fields as economic planning, social planning, demographic forecasting, statistics, and technological development. It will work closely with the National Economic Council, on which agriculture will be fully represented. It will also be responsible for co-ordinating regional planning within the context of national economic planning.

PRICES AND INCOMES.

It is generally accepted that price stability should be one of the principal objects of government economic policy. Rising prices can produce undesirable inflationary conditions; in an open economy they can bring about balance of payments difficulties. Increased prices result in increases in the cost of government expenditure which are frequently not matched by revenue buoyancy, resulting in budgetary difficulties. Apart from these economic grounds, there are very strong social reasons for avoiding price increases. Living costs can easily outpace social welfare payments and many groups in society never catch up on increased prices.

One of the major failures of the present government has been its inability to control the level of prices. On social and economic grounds a policy on prices and incomes is urgently necessary.

Economic theory isolates four causes for rising prices; excess demand, excessive negotiated wage increases, special price increases and profits. In examining the Irish experience in relation to prices over the past few years, it is necessary to warn against the dangers of oversimplification in diagnosing the causes. Expert opinion can point to different factors operating at different times. At times price increases were mainly due to special factors, for example the cut in food subsidies or the imposition of the turnover tax. At other times import prices have adversely affected domestic prices; and at other times wages and profits have been contributory factors.

The Government has concentrated on an attempt to influence the level of wages in its effort to control prices. This policy has failed. It is recognised as essential by experts such as the NIEC that all kinds of income must be dealt with equitably in an incomes policy. Such policies are generally known as "incomes policies" and have been advocated for Ireland by Fine Gael for a considerable time.

Prerequisite

An essential prerequisite for the formulation of an incomes policy must be an accurate estimate of future economic trends. The government must establish machinery providing for consultation between

trade unions, employers' groups and the government itself, so that the government's views can be considered and so that the norms for increases in wages and non-wage incomes can be agreed. The government should not act merely in the role of mediator. It must play a positive part in helping to bring about an orderly and sustained growth in wages and salaries.

As the largest employer in the state, the Government should not merely await the development of patterns of salaries and wages in other employments but should make its contribution to the development of these patterns by dealing expeditiously with the claims of its own employees.

An effective prices policy must be worked out. The efforts by Fianna Fail to control prices rigidly by legislation has proved ineffective and in increasing free trade has potentially undesirable effects in inhibiting industrial growth. In free trade conditions the forces of competition will ensure that in most commodities excessive price increases cannot take place. Nevertheless the existing attempt at rigid price control should be replaced by a system of price surveillance to ensure that action can be taken in situations where, due to the existence of a monopoly or other restraints to free competition, action can be taken on exorbitant price increases.

The Government's approach has, as we have indicated, been an approach dealing with wage incomes alone, and it has shown no intention of dealing with non-wage incomes or rising prices. In implementing an incomes policy and in considering profits and dividends the Government must take into account the need for growth and expansion of production, employment, efficiency, modernisation and the need for exports. If, however, after considering all these matters it is found that excessive profits have been made the fiscal powers of government must be used to ensure that such excessive profits are brought into relationship with the general growth of wages and salaries. With this in view we propose, as indicated in the section dealing with taxation, to examine the feasibility of introducing a dividend equalisation tax.

BANKING AND MONETARY POLICY

CO-ORDINATION OF ECONOMIC AND MONETARY POLICY :

We believe that it is vitally necessary to bring about an effective co-ordination between economic and monetary policy; that alterations in the present framework of our banking system are necessary; that if the policies which we suggest are not adopted economic growth may be impeded; that if they are, economic growth will be facilitated.

THE PRESENT LINK BETWEEN THE BALANCE OF PAYMENTS AND CREDIT POLICY :

Under our present system the commercial banks require to maintain foreign reserves (i.e. sterling) for two purposes: firstly, to obtain

Irish notes from the Central Bank, and secondly, for making external payments on their customers' behalf. Prior to 1955 these foreign reserves were so large in relation to the deposits in Ireland that there was no necessity to have a fixed ratio between external reserves and deposits, and the size of the reserves did not in any way determine the internal credit policies of the commercial banks. In the official Government publication, Economic Development, however, it was stated that experience and expert opinion confirmed that in relation to deposits within Ireland, a net external assets ratio of 30% represents no more than a minimum safe level for the commercial banks as a whole, and it was pointed out that if the ratio fell below 30% a tightening of bank credit must be expected and accepted as a corrective to the balance of payments.

The Central Bank pointed out the implications of this policy and stated that the connection between movements of the banks' holdings of external assets and the amount of credit they can extend was direct and inevitable. Since then the 30% ratio has been abandoned and nothing has been put in its place.

THE NEED FOR A RATIONAL DETERMINATION OF CREDIT POLICY :

We believe it is desirable to insulate the credit policy of the commercial banks against fluctuations in the balance of payments as has been done in other countries. We accept, of course, that a balance of payments deficit resulting in a loss of foreign reserves may be a reason for contracting domestic credit—but it should not automatically take place. It is possible to conceive circumstances where it would be proper to accept a temporary loss of foreign reserves because of the prospect of future economic expansion, rather than endanger that expansion by restricting domestic credit. Neither the Government nor the Central Bank have any control over domestic credit policy at the present time. This situation must be altered. The Government has a duty to provide a suitable framework by means of which the level of credit can be rationally determined by the responsible monetary authorities, not by the exigencies of the balance of payments.

METHODS OF CONTROL :

Methods of control of credit policy by central banks in other countries take different forms. Certain of these techniques, for example, what is known as open market operations and the alteration of bank rate, are inapplicable in the circumstances of the Irish economy. Informal discussions and consultation are, of course, most important but they are obviously not enough if the institutional framework in which the banks operate make it difficult for them to have regard both to the public interest and the interest of depositors and shareholders and it is anomalous that the Central Bank should have power to influence an expansion of domestic credit (a power

which it has under the Central Bank Act 1942) but has no express statutory power to influence a contraction of credit, if it deemed it desirable.

In some countries the Central Bank is empowered by law to fix minimum reserve requirements. The Irish Central Bank has no such power, and we propose to amend the Central Bank Act to give it this power. The system will be operated within the present banking conventions of this country and the Central Bank would, subject to the agreement of the Minister for Finance, be empowered to fix minimum reserve requirements. The ratio to be determined could be chosen after consultation between the government and the commercial banks. If the net external assets ratio was agreed to be the most appropriate one, then the Central Bank could fix the ratio at the figure that was thought desirable. If the net external assets of the banks declined, the authorities could induce a contraction of credit at home by maintaining the ratio. Alternatively, if the authorities decided against a policy of credit restriction, the ratio could be reduced.

FOREIGN RESERVES OF BANKING SYSTEM :

One of the unusual features of our banking system is the fact that the foreign receipts of our commercial banks are retained by them instead of being passed to the Central Bank. In other countries the Central Bank maintains the foreign reserves of the banking system and grants to the commercial banks deposits in exchange for the foreign reserves it obtains. Under this system it is the Central Bank and not the commercial banks which has to decide, in the event of a depletion of its external reserves, when credit should be restricted. We believe that it is desirable to adopt this system in Ireland so that eventually the country's external reserves will be centred in the Central Bank. In order to achieve this, we propose to operate Section 51 (2) of the Central Bank Act 1942, which provides for the making of regulations requiring the commercial banks to lodge with the Central Bank for clearance all cheques, bills and other negotiable instruments payable outside the State.

ASSETS OF LEGAL TENDER NOTE FUND :

We believe that consideration should be given at the appropriate time to increasing the foreign securities (other than sterling) as a Legal Tender Note fund so that other suitable currencies could be added and the assets structure of the Legal Tender Note Fund can be diversified.

New financial institutions are developing in this country, some of which advertise extensively. Their development will be carefully watched and if legislative measures to safeguard the public are necessary (such as exist at present in relation to commercial banking), they will be introduced.

AGRICULTURE

There is no aspect of national life in which a clear statement of long-term government policy is more urgently needed than in agriculture. Failure by successive Fianna Fail governments to formulate such a long-term policy and systematically to take the steps necessary to implement it has been more than any other single factor responsible for the social and economic disintegration of large areas in the country. Even in the Third Programme there is no awareness of the need for a long-term plan for the development of agriculture. Instead some minor adjustments in state activity are suggested. Fundamental changes are urgently needed both in government agricultural policy and in the institutions for implementing that policy.

OBJECTIVES :

The objectives of Fine Gael's agricultural policy are:

1. To maintain on the land at an acceptable standard of living, the maximum possible number of farmers.
2. To develop and foster a healthy and expanding rural community.

"An acceptable standard of living" is one which is comparable to that enjoyed in other occupations, after making reasonable allowance both for the special non-economic compensations of agriculture as a profession and its extra burdens and responsibilities. The young people of the rural community are unlikely to adopt farming as a career except on these terms. This is evident in the present migration patterns—where the young and more enterprising are the first to leave the land. The attraction of other careers and activities is increasing, not diminishing.

Modern farming is a highly challenging career, requiring above average qualities of intelligence, initiative, enthusiasm and commitment to achieve success. People with these qualities will not adopt it without adequate return in income, opportunity and satisfaction. A realistic farming policy for the 1970s must take that as its starting point.

To achieve these objectives requires:

1. Stable markets for agricultural products at remunerative prices.
2. Reform of the agricultural industry's structure.

Prices and Markets :

Market security is essential to the modern farmer. He must have:

- (1) Assured outlets for his production:
- (2) Assured economic prices.

This security can only be achieved by long-term government planning, to match the long-term planning which the successful farmer will himself have to adopt. (He may be investing for a return over 5 or 10 years.)

Fine Gael in government will work for market security by:

- (1) Using the best available forecasting techniques to identify the most profitable long-term opportunities for Irish farmers:
- (2) Using the resources available for financing agriculture to encourage those activities with the best prospects
 - (a) by long-term price guarantees and appropriate market price support mechanisms.
 - (b) by relating closely to these long-term objectives grants and other aids to investment;
 - (c) by concentrating agricultural education, the advisory services and research work on the most promising activities.
- (3) Using modern marketing techniques for Irish farm products.
 - (a) Giving farmers the major role in the marketing of their own products.
 - (b) Extensive use of market research.
 - (c) Long-term market planning.
 - (d) Investment in the establishment of overseas marketing organisations and promotional campaigns.
 - (e) Intensified development of the Irish food-processing industry.

Structural Policies :

Fine Gael in government will :

- (1) Establish a realistic target-size for the farm enterprise bearing in mind the objective of achieving an "acceptable standard of living" for all those in agriculture.
- (2) Provide attractive alternatives for those without any prospect of achieving "an acceptable standard of living" in farming :
 - (a) Attractive pensions or other compensation to farmers wishing to retire from farming.
 - (b) A new drive to provide employment opportunities in industry, tourism, forestry and local development work with special training schemes, resettlement allowances and provision of housing.
- (3) Implement major reform of State activities in the rural development field:
 - (a) Establishment of a Rural Development Authority controlled by farmers and other rural interests to take over many of the operating functions of the Departments of Agriculture and Lands. The national board of the Rural Development Authority would act as a top level advisory group reporting directly to the Minister for Agriculture in person.
 - (b) Decentralisation of responsibility for the development of each area to local or regional branches of the Rural Development Authority. These representative bodies

would control the agricultural development funds allocated for their area and would run the advisory and other State services.

- (c) A broadening of agricultural development responsibility to include development of the rural community, including social amenities and close co-operation with industrial and tourist development.
- (d) Provide leadership and greater resources to voluntary bodies concerned with rural development.

Co-Operation :

Massive development of co-operation at all levels in Irish agriculture offers the only satisfactory way of achieving the scale and efficiency of operation necessary in the 1970s to give farmers an acceptable standard of living.

Fine Gael in government will promote farmer co-operation by :

- (1) Encouraging farmer representative organisations to play an increasingly important role in the development of the industry;
- (2) Intensive educational effort to increase understanding of the techniques and benefits of co-operation.
- (3) Providing special financial incentives for co-operative projects (e.g. group farming, machinery pools, processing, marketing and bulk purchasing.)
- (4) A major expansion of the I.A.O.S.

A healthy agricultural industry in the 1970s can only be achieved by adopting courageous new policies now. The industry has suffered for many years from Fianna Fail's failure to rise above manipulating agricultural policy for short-term political objects. In consequence large sections of the rural community now face collapse. Given dynamic and honest leadership at government level this situation can be reversed and a prosperous rural community can find its place in the Ireland of the 1970s.

INDUSTRY

To reach full employment in Ireland in the 1980s would require creating about 7,000 new jobs per annum in Ireland. We are nowhere near this level at present. Most of these new jobs will have to be found in industry. This will not be possible without a considerable speeding up both in the rate of establishment of new industry and in the expansion of existing industry.

Fine Gael believes in a planned approach to industrial development in line with over-all national planning. Planning industrial development means first of all identifying precisely both the expansion potential and the weaknesses of existing Irish industry and the opportunities which exist for new industry. This will involve a careful appraisal of the human and economic resources of each

area of the country, together with detailed and continuous market research and analysis in order to match market opportunity with local potential. In free trade it is the marketability of Irish products in markets outside Ireland which will determine whether industries in Ireland are successful or not.

Fine Gael propose :

- (1) Concentration of national resources available for industrial development on those activities which show greatest potential for expansion;
- (2) Regrouping of the numerous state services at present dealing with industry into a new **industrial development corporation** which would be responsible for providing a comprehensive service to existing industry and for preparing and implementing a planned "new industry" programme.

Industrial development in many areas is greatly affected by the local environment and the availability and efficiency of essential services. Insufficient attention has been given to this in the past. Fine Gael intend to carry out a comprehensive review of the structure of local government, an important object of which will be to identify and eliminate administrative barriers to industrial development. Action is also urgently necessary to develop regional planning in Ireland. From the point of view of industry this involves identifying and designating those places most suitable for particular kinds of growth and taking positive steps to stimulate that growth. It should also involve giving each region greater responsibility for planning its own future and taking and implementing its own decisions within a broad national framework.

Fine Gael will :

- (1) Establish regional planning with new regional institutions throughout the country;
- (2) Publish assessments of the specific growth prospects for various areas;
- (3) Expand rapidly the small industries programme, extending it to the whole country and simplifying and speeding up its operation by delegating responsibility for specific decisions to local level;
- (4) Rapidly expand the industrial estates programme.

EMPLOYMENT AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS:

Unless the general climate in Ireland is favourable for industrial expansion we cannot expect industry to grow at the high rate necessary to meet our objectives. A critical influence on the industrial climate is the state of industrial relations. We believe that much of the present industrial unrest is attributable to Fianna Fail's failure to achieve an adequate and equitable incomes policy.

Fine Gael's principal proposals in this field are :

- (1) The establishment of a genuine incomes policy embracing all categories of money income in line with the NIEC's recommendation on this matter.
- (2) Recognition of the right of women workers to equal pay for equal work and equal job opportunity. Existing inequalities will be progressively eliminated over a definite period.
- (3) Measures to improve job security, including lengthening to four weeks the legal minimum period of notice for termination of employment, and in the case of longstanding employees a longer period related to the number of years' service. Training and placement schemes will be developed to deal more effectively with redundancy problems. The provisions of the Redundancy Act will be extended to those earning more than £1,200 per annum. The industrial training scheme will be extended to those leaving agriculture.
- (4) A determined effort to deal with the long-standing basic industrial relations problems within the State-sponsored companies.
- (5) Full support for the Irish Congress of Trade Union's policy of encouraging a reduction in the number of trade unions.
- (6) The issuing of contracts of employment to all permanent employees will be encouraged.
- (7) Works committees elected by the workers will be established in State-sponsored bodies to meet management periodically for discussions on matters of mutual interest.
- (8) The recommendation by the NIEC that more information on the affairs of the enterprise in which he works should be made available to the worker will be implemented by Fine Gael.
- (9) Fine Gael will make immediate provisions for the representation of workers on the boards of state enterprises.
- (10) Fine Gael will introduce tax incentives to encourage profit-sharing with workers.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

SOCIAL WELFARE

For many years too low a priority has been given to reforms in our social welfare system. Fine Gael proposes to give first priority to this task. Our present social welfare system is an amalgam of ad hoc measures firmly rooted in the nineteenth century poor law notion of 'how little' rather than 'how much'. This system is not alone antiquated—it is haphazard, inefficient and in a number of respects, unjust. It leaves far too much of the burden of social welfare to be carried by voluntary organisations which are not given adequate assistance by the state and whose services are not properly utilised by the public authorities.

Fine Gael has a comprehensive long-term plan for the complete reform of the system, but will take certain interim measures, as a matter of urgency, to improve the situation in the shorter term.

Longer Term Reforms :

- (1) Provision of adequate family allowances financed through a **family welfare fund** which may be raised by ear-marked taxation. The institution of such a fund incorporating all existing forms of family allowances (including the child allowance in the income tax code, the special family allowances paid to civil servants, teachers and dependents and allowances in the social welfare schemes) will be part of a radical review of the whole structure of income re-distribution in Ireland which will include not alone social security but the redistributive effects of taxation and of educational, housing and health policy. The object will be to replace these unsatisfactory and complex income redistribution arrangements by a simpler and more equitable system which will eliminate the 'poor law' approach from Irish social welfare.
- (2) Fine Gael will develop plans for a comprehensive national pensions scheme which would not alone represent a major advance in social security but could prove of great importance in stimulating economic growth.
- (3) A logical consequence of this integrated approach to the nation's social problems is that these problems must be handled by a single department equipped with the necessary skills of economic analysis, social administration, psychological expertise and administrative vision to create an entirely new and modern social policy suitable to Irish needs. Fine Gael propose to establish such a department.

Short-Term Proposals (For next four years).

The urgent interim measures Fine Gael will take are :—

1. Non-contributory old age pensions will be raised to at least £5 per week and be available at age 67 (65 for women) as a first step to making them available at age 65 for all.
2. As a first step towards adequate family allowances, Fine Gael will increase by at least two-thirds the present children's allowances, e.g. from £63 to £105 per annum for a family with five children.
3. Children's allowances will be extended to illegitimate children.
4. Other social assistance payments will be increased by at least 40%.
5. Retirement pensions (contributory old age pensions) will be increased by one-half, and the qualifying age lowered to 67, and 65 for women during the 5 year period covered by the Fine Gael social programme.
6. Other insurance benefits will be increased by at least one-third.
7. Graduated insurance benefits will be introduced related to wages, offering higher-paid workers benefits up to double those at present payable in their cases.
8. A lesser contribution rate for lower-paid workers will be introduced.
9. There will be substantial increases in maintenance allowances and in the provision for rehabilitation, home assistance and other social welfare provisions.
10. Social insurance will be extended to non-manual employees earning more than £1,200 a year, and the possibility of extending it in some form to self-employed people will be investigated.
11. Widows' pensions will be payable to deserted wives and orphans' pensions to children deserted by their father.

HEALTH

1. Fine Gael will carry out a complete re-organisation of the health services and introduce a new comprehensive health service based on insurance covering the overwhelming majority of the people, with the following main advantages :
 - (a) The present vexatious means test and the medical card system will be abolished.
 - (b) The cost of the new scheme will be met on the accepted social welfare basis of a contribution from the State of one third, leaving the other two thirds to be financed by contributions from employers, employees and self-employed persons.

Those unable to provide for themselves, for example, old age pensioners, persons receiving widows' pensions, unemployment benefit or unemployment assistance, home assistance, farmers with a P.L.V. of £25 and under, will be pro-

vided with all services, medical, surgical and hospital, drugs and medicines, free of charge and without contribution.

- (c) A free medical service based on the family doctor. A free choice of doctor will, where possible, be provided.
- (d) Free hospital and specialist services.
- (e) Drugs and medicines, at substantially reduced prices, will be provided for those who do not get them free.

Note: The new method of financing personal health services will remove the cost of these from the rates. This, together with Fine Gael's proposal to transfer to the Central Fund the main cost of maintaining local hospitals and institutions will substantially reduce the burden of local rates.

2. Fine Gael will provide generous grants to bodies engaged in cancer research, to hasten the discovery of a cure for cancer.
3. Fine Gael will provide increased state aid for the prevention, early diagnosis, treatment and cure of cancer, and provide, free of charge, the best medical treatment, drugs and care.
4. Fine Gael will establish child welfare clinics throughout the country to cater for children from birth to the age of 16. The present school medical examination will be abolished.
5. Community welfare centres will be established. In country areas mobile units will be attached where necessary. The welfare clinics will contain the district nurse's office, the family social worker's office, the welfare clinic for mothers and babies, pre-school and school children mental health outpatients' clinics and the home help centre.

MENTAL HANDICAP :

The present services for the mentally handicapped are deplorably inadequate. Fine Gael propose :

- (1) To expand considerably the diagnostic services which are non-existent in large areas of the country.
- (2) To establish where necessary day centres, five-day residential centres and give assistance for the expansion of the existing residential centres for the mentally handicapped.
- (3) To provide sheltered workshops and suitable hostel accommodation for the mentally handicapped.
- (4) To establish a single statutory authority charged with the responsibility for providing the necessary services. This authority would be under the responsibility of the Minister for Health. It would assist existing institutions in expanding their services and organisations, and provide new services where they are needed.

DOMICILIARY WELFARE SERVICE

The great gap in our existing social services is the lack of a domiciliary service, i.e. a service which would be available to families, not in an institution but in their own homes. We propose to take steps immediately to introduce and expand such a service.

We propose :

- (1) To establish community welfare centres which will be manned by trained social workers who would work in co-operation with the local clergy, local doctors, nurses, home assistance officers and voluntary charitable organisations.
- (2) To appoint fully trained social welfare officers who will assist the family in need in their own homes by means of expert counsel and advice.
- (3) To develop a home help service for old persons living in their own homes, so as to save them from the County Home which, excellent though some of them may be, is no substitute for the independence of being on one's own floor.
- (4) To provide proper help, by means of the domiciliary welfare service, to deal with the problem of children-in-care. Home help will be organised to prevent children being sent to institutions because of short-term emergencies, and for long-term care the social worker will endeavour to find foster-parents.
- (5) The amount paid to foster parents will be increased.
- (6) A proper after-care service for patients from mental hospitals will be established. At the present time there are only two psychiatric social workers with psychiatric social welfare qualifications employed by the public mental hospitals in this country.
- (7) A suitable system will be introduced to ensure that the social worker is made aware of the social problems in her administrative area. The home assistance area will be the unit of administration for the domiciliary service we propose to establish.

NATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR YOUTH :

In the field of general youth welfare we propose :

- (1) To expand considerably the number of trained professional youth leaders.
- (2) To increase considerably the out-of-school facilities, such as play-grounds, youth clubs and the provision of community centres where recognised clubs can meet.
- (3) To establish a system of vocational guidance at primary school level.
- (4) To establish a National Youth Council representative of all the voluntary organisations in the country, to disseminate information and advise on youth problems, and represent the country at international meetings.

To deal with the special problem of juvenile delinquency and the young offender, we propose :

- (5) To increase the number of probation officers.
- (6) To provide a proper centre of detention with adequate facilities and a fully trained staff and a small probation hostel.
- (7) To improve considerably the facilities in industrial schools and reformatories, including the provision of adequate psychiatric care.
- (8) To move, wherever possible, institutions caring for young people to new, small and up-to-date buildings, and to establish small family group homes.
- (9) To increase grants to the existing institutions so as to permit them to expand and improve their facilities.
- (10) To provide an adequate after-care and follow-up service for young people leaving industrial schools.
- (11) To stop the practice of transferring boys serving short-term prison sentences to St. Patricks and to improve the after-care service.

EMIGRANT WELFARE

The vast majority of Irish emigrants would prefer to stay at home. They emigrate because they are unable to find acceptable living standards in Ireland. The Fianna Fail government has failed to secure the increase in employment which would solve the problem of emigration.

Many of our emigrants in England find themselves facing appalling social conditions and very grave personal problems without adequate assistance. We repudiate the attitude of the present government as expressed by the Minister for External Affairs—if the emigrants return they will be given social assistance here; when they are in England the government has no responsibility for them. We believe that the Irish government must accept responsibility for assisting to the limits of resources those who are emigrating and those who have emigrated. We propose the following measures:

- (1) The setting up of a welfare department in the Irish Embassy in London and the appointment in Britain of welfare and probation officers attached to this department. The welfare department will develop close ties with the voluntary private organisations now assisting Irish emigrants.
- (2) The government will make itself responsible for providing or assisting welfare centres for Irish emigrants throughout Britain.
- (3) Financial assistance will, where necessary, be given to existing organisations to expand present facilities for helping immigrants. A detailed survey will be carried out to establish the needs of Irish emigrants in Britain.

- (4) The authorities in Britain will be approached to accept the secondment to the British probation service of Irish probation officers appointed to help deal with Irish offenders. This would materially help the rehabilitation work which the probation service is designed to provide.
- (5) No person under 18 will be permitted to leave the country without a travel permit. This permit will be granted:
 - (a) on proof that the emigrant is going with his parents' or guardians' consent, or
 - (b) on proof by the parent or guardian that the person under 18 is going on a holiday.
- (6) The Department of External Affairs will be made responsible for collecting information on conditions in Britain and making it available for Irish emigrants to England. This would help to prepare emigrants to deal more effectively with the problems which they will face.
- (7) Steps will be taken to encourage the return of emigrants to employment in Ireland, particularly those who have secured experience or skills abroad which can make a special contribution to the development of this country. This would include arrangements for Irish workers abroad to register for employment in Ireland. Grants to help to defray the costs of returning workers will also be considered.

EDUCATION

Fine Gael's education policy is based on two principles—the handing over of responsibility for educational policy as far as possible to those who are involved in education—teachers, school managers, educationists and parents—and the elimination of obstacles to equality of opportunity in the educational field.

Taking education out of politics :

So far as the first point is concerned Fine Gael believes that education should be taken out of politics. At present all key decisions, both with regard to curriculum and examinations and with regard to the expansion of educational facilities, are taken by the Minister for Education, advised by administrative civil servants. This means that decisions are often made on political rather than educational grounds. This has been particularly the case where the revival of the Irish language has been directly, or even indirectly, concerned. For example, the number of examination papers in English is determined by the number thought by the administrative civil servants to be appropriate for Irish! To get away from this undesirable mixture of political and bureaucratic control of the educational system, Fine Gael intends :

1. To reorganise the Department of Education, staffing it at the highest level with qualified educationalists, working in intimate collaboration with the schools, the teachers and the parents.
2. To establish a professional schools committee to undertake responsibility for the examination system and to advise the Minister publicly on the curriculum and teaching methods in the schools. This has been done with great success in Northern Ireland since 1961.
3. To establish an advisory body for educational expansion, an education planning committee, which will advise on the planning of the future human and physical resources for education.
4. To establish regional schools offices to control the maintenance, cleaning, lighting etc. of national schools, which because of insufficient State aid and lack of organisation, are at present frequently neglected.
5. To encourage the establishment by parents of primary schools committees to work with school managers in the management of national schools.
6. To ensure that a higher education authority is representative of the views of those engaged in higher education, and that its work is so organised as to protect the autonomy of institutions in higher education from State interference.
7. To reorganise the university system along lines acceptable to teachers and students rather than in accordance with a rigid pattern laid down for political reasons.
8. To support and encourage educational research to be carried on independently of political or bureaucratic control.

Promoting Equality of Opportunity :

To increase equality of opportunity within the educational system Fine Gael will :

1. Encourage non-aided primary schools to become national schools.
2. Start post-primary education normally at 12—so that, regardless of their parents' means, children will have at least three years' broader post-primary education after their period in a primary school.
3. Aim to extend the school leaving age beyond 15 by 1975.
4. Speed up the secondary school building programme by providing additional State finance and by legalising the covenanting of income free of tax for this purpose.
5. Re-activate plans abandoned by Fianna Fail for building State comprehensive schools where they are needed and where private education authorities are not providing them.
6. Review the technical education system and introduce Irish technician examinations and certificates.

7. Increase the level of grants to secondary schools with a view to enabling all schools to join the 'free' scheme, and with a view to making possible improved pupil/teacher ratios and better teaching aids and extra-curricular activities.
8. Introduce board maintenance grants for pupils living far from a post-primary school whose parents cannot afford boarding school fees.
9. Introduce local maintenance grants for senior school pupils whose parents have limited means, and who might not otherwise be able to keep their children at school.
10. Extend the university grant scheme to cover the payment of university fees so that the recently introduced grants become available for the maintenance of university students instead of being used up in paying fees. Direct current grants to universities would then be confined to grants for research and post-graduate work, thus reducing the risks to university autonomy arising from Exchequer subventions.

The Teacher :

The teacher's role in education is crucial. Fine Gael recognises this and accordingly will :

1. Reverse the present government's 1964 decision to limit the output of primary teachers.
2. Modify the present primary teacher-training arrangements to ensure that all entrants have a university education in addition to their training as teachers.
3. Encourage the running of refresher courses for teachers and make provision for sabbatical leave for teachers wishing to undertake special courses or research projects.
4. Improve promotional opportunities by establishing posts of school librarian and school gamesmaster/mistress in the larger primary schools, and by introducing special incremental salary provisions applicable to headmasters in secondary schools. This latter provision will eliminate one obstacle to the appointment of laymen to the post of headmaster in clerical secondary schools.

IRISH LANGUAGE POLICY

Fine Gael's aim is the preservation of the language by means of realistic policies designed to secure the support of the people. The keynote for a successful policy for the preservation of the language must be a determination to secure popular support for the language. We believe that the revised policies we propose will eliminate much of the hostility and apathy which at present exists with regard to the language. This negative attitude largely derives from resistance to policies that involve making Irish an obligatory subject for educational or employment purposes. The following specific measures are proposed :

- (1) Increased assistance for Irish speaking schools and special provisions to encourage the establishment of these in areas where they do not now exist and where there is a demand for them amongst parents.
- (2) A new drive to provide an adequate range of Irish text books under the control of an Irish text books committee associated with the Schools committee proposed in the Fine Gael education policy.
- (3) Extra encouragement for Irish studies, including language, folklore traditions, history and literature. Including special scholarships for children and university students who show an aptitude for these studies will be provided.
- (4) Revision of approach to Irish teaching in national schools to achieve a more reasonable balance between the time given to Irish and that given to other subjects. All children will continue to study Irish in primary schools.
- (5) Fine Gael will abolish the requirement of a Pass in Irish for the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate examinations.
- (6) In every school the language of the home shall be the medium used for teaching unless the majority of the parents of children attending the school choose to have an alternative language employed for teaching purposes.
- (7) Fine Gael will abolish Irish language tests for entry to or promotion within the public service. At the same time we will take steps to ensure that all citizens seeking to do business with the public service through Irish can do so.

GAELTACHT POLICY

Should the Gaeltacht disappear, Irish as a living language would vanish. Fine Gael has specific policy directives aimed at strengthening the social and economic life of the Gaeltacht. These include:—

- (1) Priority to Gaeltacht areas in the extension and improvement of public services. While the comparatively small area involved would not perceptively affect the timing of such extensions to other areas, this priority proposal will help to offset the sense of neglect felt by those living in the Gaeltacht.
- (2) The development and expansion of the tourist potential of the Gaeltacht by means of a Gaeltacht Tourist Development Plan based on the individual householder and aimed at:
 - (a) expanding greatly the numbers of school children visiting the Gaeltacht to learn Irish as part of their recognised school courses, and to do this on an "all year round" basis.
 - (b) catering for the holiday visitor of moderate income who seeks a less elaborate service and at a lesser tariff than he can secure at hotels.

- (3) Promotion and development of an urban focus with a community centre in each major Gaeltacht area. New educational facilities, local Irish-speaking branches of government departments and new industries will be located in these areas. Local cultural activities will be encouraged, if necessary by financial assistance.
- (4) Extension of state forestry to include planting schemes in areas where considerable employment can be given to men from the Fíor-Gaeltacht.
- (5) Development of fisheries, with particular reference to the shell-fish industry, together with improvement of landing facilities and marketing.
- (6) Fine Gael endorses in general the approach to industry in the Gaeltacht of an Coimisiún um Athbheochan na Gaeilge and proposes to secure the establishment of industrial projects in each of the major Gaeltacht areas.

GOVERNMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION :

Many defects in our society can only be remedied by energetic State action. At the same time many of our institutions of government and public administration are proving inadequate to deal effectively with the problems of a modern society. A great deal of the machinery of government was taken over uncritically at the foundation of the State, or shaped in close imitation of the British model. Yet our needs in this field are in many cases very different to those of Britain, and we have failed even to keep pace with reforms which have been introduced in the British model, such as the appointment of a Parliamentary Commissioner (Ombudsman) to deal with citizens' grievances against the administration.

Fine Gael proposes the following immediate measures to improve the effectiveness of our legislature and public service, as well as to restore confidence in the integrity and impartiality of government which is essential to the healthy functioning of a democratic system:

- (1) At present many people are not clear as to what they are entitled to from various schemes and public authorities. Fine Gael propose to establish Citizens' Advice Bureaux to ensure that all citizens know their rights and are enabled to secure what they are entitled to in their relations with public authorities.
- (2) In addition to the establishment of Citizen's Advice Bureaux, an ombudsman will be appointed to help all citizens in securing their rights in the public service.
- (3) The merit principle for appointment to all public posts will be unambiguously established, and Fine Gael will introduce the necessary legislative and other changes to ensure this.
- (4) Fine Gael will change the procedure for the appointment of judges so that these appointments are made after consultation with the appropriate professional bodies.
- (5) Fine Gael pledges itself not to employ the power to appoint directors of state companies as a means of rewarding political services, but to appoint the people best qualified to undertake these tasks.
- (6) Fine Gael will establish a committee system in the Oireachtas as a first step towards improving the efficiency of the national legislature.
- (7) Ministers in the present government have increasingly abdicated their responsibility to take policy initiatives and have left this more and more to the civil service. Fine Gael will reverse this trend by honouring its commitment to implement the wide range of policies which it has published over the past five years.

- (8) Fine Gael in government will develop the cabinet as a real instrument of policy co-ordination. It will also review the existing distribution of functions between government departments which is largely traditional, and in some respects is demonstrably unsatisfactory.
- (9) Development units will be established in most government departments similar to that recommended for the Department of Education by the Investment in Education Report.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT :

Fine Gael believes that our present system of local government urgently needs reform. The following measures are proposed :

- (1) Transfer of housing subsidies from local rates to central taxation and removal of health charges from rates by implementation of Fine Gael's plan for a comprehensive national health service based on insurance. The hardships of the present differential rents scheme will be removed.
- (2) Pending fundamental reform of the rates system, which Fine Gael believes to be outdated and inequitable, immediate relief will be given to lower income groups through a rates rebate scheme. Arrangements for payment of rates by instalment will also be introduced.
- (3) Implementation of a proper system of physical planning to terminate the present scandalous situation which has allowed speculators to make fortunes out of the artificial scarcity of serviced land.
- (4) Fine Gael will give top priority to the development of building sites for housing and will stop the present wholesale demolition of sound and habitable dwellings to make way for office blocks. Priority will be given to very rapid expansion of house building by public authorities as part of a national drive to catch up with the appalling housing back-log.
- (5) Fine Gael will end the system of political appointments of officials which still applies in respect of certain posts.
- (6) Fine Gael will take away from the Minister for Local Government the power to decide appeals from the decisions of local planning authorities and transfer this power to a judicial authority.
- (7) Fine Gael will appoint in each administrative district a public adviser to provide any citizen who needs it with free and expert advice on the entire range of public welfare schemes, national and local, and if necessary to assist any citizen in making any appropriate application in the proper form.
- (8) Fine Gael believes that there should be a fundamental review of the functions and form of local authorities. The present structure of local government is entirely unsatisfactory. Local

authorities are rigidly bound by legislation in carrying out their functions. Local initiative is discouraged and inhibited and far too many minor decisions have to be approved by the Department of Local Government. A new system of local government will therefore be worked out involving the progressive restoration to local level of decision taking and responsibility for local affairs.

STATE ENTERPRISES :

Fine Gael believes that the activities of state enterprises can be developed and extended for the common good without conflict with private enterprise. One of the principal weaknesses of present government policy with regard to these bodies is the absence of any clear definition of the purpose for which each body is established and which in the public interest it is meant to pursue. Accordingly Fine Gael proposes to define clearly the roles of the state enterprises and to spell out their objectives and responsibilities. In this way wooliness in policy making will be avoided; room for undesirable interference by governments will be reduced and the existence of clearly stated objectives will provide a simple yardstick against which their performance and efficiency can be assessed.

Fine Gael proposes the following specific measures in relation to state enterprises :

- (1) The objectives and responsibilities of each enterprise will be clearly defined;
- (2) All directions from ministers to boards of state bodies in matters of policy must be given in writing and be published in the annual reports of the bodies concerned;
- (3) Reform of industrial relations machinery in state enterprises to give the staffs of these bodies a sense of real participation and proper facilities for consultation with management;
- (4) A clear division will be drawn between "economic" and "social" responsibilities of state enterprises. The "economic" activities will be required to be profitable on a normal commercial basis while the "social" activities will be financed not as at present by a complicated system of concealed subsidies but by annual grants voted openly by the Oireachtas for clearly defined purposes;
- (5) Reports of state bodies will in future deal with important policy matters as well as with day to day affairs. All state enterprises will be required to present their reports in a standard form which will show clearly the return being earned on state capital invested in the enterprise and the profit or loss as a percentage of turnover;
- (6) The present system of making political appointments to the boards of these enterprises will be abolished and future appointments will be on grounds of merit alone. The membership of

state boards by civil servants will be reviewed and those boards on which all or the majority of the members are serving civil servants will be reconstituted.

People's Rights

- (7) The Irish people's rights as shareholders in the state enterprises will in future be exercised by a committee of both houses of the Oireachtas. This committee will investigate the capital requirements of these bodies and the formulation and implementation of their policies. It will cover both state enterprises and other state agencies which receive grants in aid, and the majority of whose board members are appointed by the state. The affairs of each body will normally be reviewed at intervals of between three and six years. The reviews will be concerned not with day to day affairs but with examining the extent to which the body in question is carrying out the objectives laid down for it, and any problems which may be hindering it in achieving these objectives;
- (8) Fine Gael will establish an independent state enterprise to operate and expand the telephone service;
- (9) To protect the state enterprises from direct intervention by ministers and civil servants, to enable them to develop more flexibly and on a more commercial basis than at present and to build up a pool of specialised management skill, Fine Gael proposes a reorganisation of state-owned manufacturing enterprises to bring them under the authority of a single holding company with general responsibility for their efficient operation. The holding company will be given the task of putting these bodies on a commercial basis (subject to any sums which the government may ask the Oireachtas to vote to particular bodies to finance social tasks which they are asked to perform) and will provide capital to them on terms no more favourable than those on which private companies secure their risk capital. The holding company's own new capital requirements will be secured from the Exchequer and from the public simultaneously in a pre-determined ratio. Fine Gael do not envisage denationalisation of any of these bodies.

These proposals for the reorganisation and development of state enterprises engaged in manufacturing should largely ease the tension at present existing between the public and private sectors, since it would be clear that state companies will no longer be placed in a privileged position but will compete fairly in the open market. The holding company will also help to mobilise modern technology for the development of Irish industry, making possible a close partnership of public and private enterprise in ways not previously attempted. It will also be useful in ensuring that under free trade conditions an adequate proportion of Irish industry remains in Irish hands.