

166 Who Rule: The Dáil Deputies of November 1982

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Abstract: Analysis of the backgrounds of the Dáil deputies elected in November 1982 shows certain strong similarities with previous Dála. Most deputies were born in their constituencies, and most were local authority members before entering the Dáil. A high proportion are small businessmen. But change is also detectable: the number of professionals is growing larger, while farmers are a declining force. The educational level attained by deputies has been rising steadily, while the proportion of women in the Dáil, though still low, is higher than ever before. Cohort analysis permits speculation about trends likely to develop in the future.

I INTRODUCTION

Past analyses of the backgrounds of deputies of Dáil Éireann, the lower house of the parliament of the Republic of Ireland, have been discouraged by the sheer difficulty of acquiring complete and reliable data. This obstacle notwithstanding, valuable studies have been conducted into the composition of earlier Dála, but it is only in recent years that the availability of data has permitted an exhaustive analysis.¹ This paper will examine the backgrounds of the 166 deputies returned at the general election of 24 November 1982,

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1. The most important studies of earlier Dála referred to are McCracken (1958, Chapter 7); Whyte (1966, pp. 24-38); Chubb (1970, pp. 95 207-213); Farrell (1970-71); Farrell (1974-75); Chubb (1982, pp. 222-227). The researcher's task has been greatly facilitated for recent elections by the publication of two invaluable series, culminating respectively in Nealon (1983) and Magill (1982). These books, along with national and provincial newspapers, notices of poll, and local and general election results published by the Department of the Environment, have been used as the sources for most of the information used in this analysis.

concentrating in particular on their age, experience, occupational and educational background, sex and routes of entry to the Dáil.²

II AGE AND EXPERIENCE

McCracken (1958, pp. 90-91) presented a picture of a steadily aging Dáil, from a mean of 40.9 years in 1922 to 51.3 in 1948. The Dáil then became a younger body: Whyte (1966, p.26) suggested that the 1961 and 1965 TDs were on average around 49 years old, with about three-fifths (compared with three-quarters in 1948) being 45 or over. By 1969 the proportion of deputies over 44 had fallen further, to 52.5 per cent, though it rose again to 55.5 per cent in 1973 (Farrell, 1970-71, pp. 312-313; Farrell, 1974-75, p. 409).

The average birth date of the deputies elected in November 1982 was October 1937, giving them a mean age of 45.1 years (see Table 1); 54.8 per cent were aged 45 or more. The average age is relatively low when compared with some earlier figures, and may be partly attributable to the three closely grouped elections of 1981-82, which afforded young aspiring TDs an unusually rich opportunity to build up a high profile in a short time and displace older incumbents. It is also lower than the average age of members of most of the parliaments surveyed by Blondel (1973, pp. 160-161) in the early 1970s.

Table 1: *Ages of deputies*

		<i>Below 40</i>	<i>40-49</i>	<i>50 plus</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Average age</i>
Fianna Fáil	N	22	31	22	75	45.2
	%	29.3	41.3	29.3	100	
Fine Gael	N	28	22	20	70	43.7
	%	40.0	31.4	28.6	100	
Labour	N	3	7	6	16	49.2
	%	18.7	43.7	37.5	100	
Others	N	1	1	3	5	49.8
	%	20.0	20.0	60.0	100	
<i>Total</i>	N	54	61	51	166	45.1
	%	32.5	36.7	30.7	100	

Note: The ages given are those of deputies as of the date of the election.

2. One factor not given extended examination is religion, since there is little to examine. The Dáil contains just four members of minority religions (one Protestant and three members of the Jewish faith), the rest being Catholics of varying degrees of piety.

The distribution of ages varied somewhat around the country: 39.6 per cent of the Dublin TDs, but only 20.4 per cent of those from Munster, were under 40. The oldest constituency was Cavan-Monaghan (deputies' mean age was 56.6 years) and the youngest Wexford (35.7 years). Of the three main Dáil parties, Fine Gael was youngest and Labour oldest. Most of the TDs under 40 belonged to Fine Gael, but only three Labour TDs were under 40, which suggests that Fine Gael is well placed to consolidate its recent success while Labour will face problems fairly soon when its older TDs, most of whom have a sizeable personal vote, stand down. The pattern of Fianna Fáil TDs' ages did not vary much across the regions, but Fine Gael's Dublin TDs were the youngest group in the country; with an average age of 40.5 years they were six years younger than their Fianna Fáil counterparts.

The mean date of the TDs' initial election was June 1975, 7.4 years earlier (see Table 2). Nearly half first entered the Dáil at the June 1981 general election or subsequently, and fewer than a third had parliamentary experience extending back before 1973. Fianna Fáil's TDs were spread evenly across the three categories used in Table 2, but Fine Gael had a much newer Dáil party, more than half of its TDs having less than 18 months' parliamentary service as of November 1982. Once again its 22 Dublin TDs were exceptionally new; their average date of entry to the Dáil was December 1978, and only 8 of them were TDs before June 1981. Labour and the other deputies both contained a mixture of newcomers and veterans, with relatively few in the middle category. There was considerable countrywide variation in

Table 2: *Date of first election of deputies*

		<i>Pre-1973</i>	<i>1973-1980</i>	<i>1981-82 1982</i>	<i>Average date of initial election</i>
Fianna Fáil	N	23	26	26	February 1975
	%	30.7	34.7	34.7	
Fine Gael	N	19	15	36	May 1976
	%	27.1	21.4	51.4	
Labour	N	6	3	7	June 1974
	%	37.5	18.7	43.7	
Others	N	2	0	3	April 1972
	%	40.0	0	60.0	
<i>All</i>	N	50	44	72	June 1975
	%	30.1	26.5	43.4	

Table 3: *Age of deputies at first candidacy and first success*

	<i>Fianna Fáil</i>	<i>Fine Gael</i>	<i>Labour</i>	<i>Others</i>	<i>All</i>
First candidacy	36.2	34.9	36.3	33.9	35.6
First success	37.4	37.2	40.8	39.2	37.7

the experience of TDs; those from both Donegal South-West and Wexford had an average Dáil membership of less than 2 years, while in Donegal North-East and Laois-Offaly the figure was over 15 years.

Deputies of all parties were roughly the same age when they started out on the trail (see Table 3), and differences in the ages at which they reached the Dáil are largely due to the greater ease with which deputies of the major parties secured election. About a quarter of the deputies were under 30 when they first contested an election; only 30 per cent were over 40, and just three were older than 50. The average TD was aged 37.7 years when first elected. The gap between first candidacy and first success was rather longer for Labour candidates than for those from the major parties, and the former were older when first elected. (It should be noted that one of the Independents was first elected for Fianna Fáil when aged 26, and another was first elected for Labour when 35.) TDs as a whole fall fairly evenly into three categories: 58 were aged 33 or less when first elected, 52 were aged from 34 to 40 inclusive, and 56 were 41 or over. The youngest, a Fine Gael TD from Wexford, was only 21.7 years when first elected; at the other end of the scale, a Labour deputy from Kerry was six days short of his 64th birthday when finally winning election at his seventh attempt, 27 years after his first. There was considerable variation between constituencies: the five TDs from Cavan-Monaghan were 45.4 years when first elected, while the five from Galway West averaged only 30.0 years. There are no systematic data from past Dála with which to compare these figures, though Chubb (1982, p. 224) suggests that after 1922 "new entrants tended to be over 40", in which case it seems that the age of entry to the Dáil has come down in recent years.

Another way of approaching the concept of experience is to look at the number of times TDs have stood for the Dáil. Table 4 shows that on average each deputy has been a candidate on about 5 occasions and has been successful 4 times. The TDs collectively have an impressive success rate of 83 per cent, with Fianna Fáil TDs in particular sustaining few defeats. Most TDs did not have to wait long before their first success (see Table 5). A majority of them were elected the first time they stood. Altogether, only 8 TDs suffered as many as 3 defeats before first being elected (6 had 3 unsuccessful can-

Table 4: *Electoral records of deputies*

	<i>Deputies</i>	<i>Candidacies</i>		<i>Successes</i>		<i>Success rate (per cent)</i>
		<i>Total</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Average</i>	
Fianna Fáil	75	361	4.8	318	4.2	88.1
Fine Gael	70	343	4.9	280	4.0	81.6
Labour	16	96	6.0	69	4.3	71.9
Others	5	33	6.6	24	4.8	72.7
<i>Total</i>	166	833	5.0	691	4.2	83.0

Table 5: *Dáil candidacy on which deputy was first elected*

		<i>First</i>	<i>Second</i>	<i>Third or later</i>	<i>Average number of unsuccessful candidacies before first elected</i>
Fianna	N	51	17	7	0.44
Fáil	%	68.0	22.7	9.3	
Fine	N	36	17	17	0.79
Gael	%	51.4	24.3	24.3	
Labour	N	3	7	6	1.44
	%	18.7	43.7	37.5	
Others	N	2	1	2	1.80
	%	40.0	20.0	40.0	
<i>Total</i>	N	92	42	32	0.72
	%	55.4	25.3	19.3	

didacies and the other 2 both lost 6 times). This suggests that for most aspiring TDs, success comes early or not at all. However, candidates who have stood several times unsuccessfully can take consolation from the fact that 6 of the 8 TDs who had to wait until at least their fourth attempt for their first success have achieved prominent political positions. They include the leader of Fianna Fáil, the president of the Workers' Party, the Ministers for Communications and Defence appointed after the election, and one present and one former Minister of State.

Of the 92 TDs elected the first time they stood, 10 subsequently suffered a temporary loss of their seats, leaving 82, just under half the members of the Dáil, who have never tasted defeat at an election. Only one constituency re-

turned a group of TDs none of whom had ever lost a Dáil election. Avoidance of defeat was strongly related to party, for while 46 Fianna Fáil TDs had never lost an election and only 9 had lost as many as two, among Labour TDs only 2 were undefeated and 8 had lost 2 or more contests. Deputies of all parties have proved hard to dislodge once *in situ*. Leaving aside the 18 first elected in November 1982, only 19 (12.8 per cent) had sustained a defeat after their initial success, the other 129 (87.2 per cent) having unbroken Dáil membership since their initial victory, which confirms Marsh's (1981, p. 68) demonstration of the significant advantage incumbents have at elections.

Age and experience are both related to entry into government ranks. Although a full analysis of the relationship between ministerial status and background variables would require data covering several Dála, the large proportion of present or former Ministers among the deputies elected in November 1982 allows some exploration of the subject. Altogether, 44 deputies (26.5 per cent of the total) were present or former cabinet Ministers, and another 35 (21.1 per cent) had attained Minister of State rank.³ Despite the above-noted success of some late entrants to the Dáil, it is generally the case that the earlier (in terms of candidacies) and younger a deputy enters the Dáil, the better the chance of reaching the cabinet. Those deputies to have become Ministers suffered on average 0.57 defeats before entering the Dáil and were first elected at an age of 35.6 years; those to have been only junior Ministers suffered 0.80 defeats and were 37.8 years when first elected; deputies who have always been backbenchers suffered an average of 0.77 defeats and were 38.7 years when first elected. This relationship is unaffected by a control for seniority, i.e., it is valid for each of the three cohorts identified in Table 2. On average, the deputies to have been full Ministers entered the government 6.9 years after entering the Dáil; the figure for junior Ministers is 6.4 years.

III OCCUPATION

As has been noted in previous attempts to explore Dáil deputies' occupational backgrounds, a difficulty arises out of the fact that some deputies have more than one occupation. Farming and auctioneering, in particular, seem to be combined with other occupations (or each other) by a number of TDs. In this analysis, each deputy is classified according to what appears to be his or her main occupation. Full-time politicians are categorised according to their previous occupations. At the November 1982 election, 95

3. "Present Ministers" denotes those appointed to the government formed immediately after the November 1982 election. Twenty-two of the 44 full Ministers had been junior Ministers before entering the cabinet, and another two had held both positions but acquired them in reverse order. The proportion of TDs to attain ministerial status varies little by province or by party.

deputies (47 from Fianna Fáil, 32 from Fine Gael, 11 from the Labour Party and all 5 others) seem in practice to have been full-time or almost full-time politicians.

Table 6 shows that the deputies elected in November 1982 were by no means a microcosm of the population which elected them.⁴ Manual workers, comprising about a quarter of the workforce, had a minimal presence, while non-manual employees and farmers were represented in only about half their strength in the workforce. In contrast, the commercial group, at most a twentieth of the population, constituted over a quarter of the Dáil, and professionals, below 10 per cent of the population, made up over 40 per cent of the Dáil. Unlike many European legislatures the Dáil contains no civil servants, for in Ireland they are not allowed to stand for election, and those above a certain level are not permitted even to participate in party political activities (Dooney, 1976, pp. 114-117, 181-182).

Table 6: *Occupations of deputies elected in November 1982*

	<i>Fianna Fáil</i>		<i>Fine Gael</i>		<i>Labour</i>		<i>Others</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Manual employees	2	2.7	0	0	2	12.5	0	0	4	2.4
Non-manual employees	10	13.3	5	7.1	8	50.0	0	0	23	13.9
Commercial	20	26.7	20	28.6	3	18.7	2	40.0	45	27.1
Farmers	11	14.7	10	14.3	0	0	0	0	21	12.7
Lower professionals	14	18.7	14	20.0	0	0	1	20.0	29	17.5
Higher professionals	17	22.7	18	25.7	3	18.7	2	40.0	40	24.1
Others	1	1.3	3	4.3	0	0	0	0	4	2.4
<i>Total</i>	75	100.0	70	100.0	16	100.0	5	100.0	166	100.0

Note: For the classification scheme used, see footnote 4.

The predominance of professionals (like the virtual absence of manual workers) is a feature of most legislatures (Blondel, 1973, pp. 80-81, 160-161), and can be attributed, in Ireland as elsewhere, to professionals' possession of qualities making for political success, such as education, high income, fluency in speaking, self-confidence and political awareness. Lawyers, in particular, possess skills relevant to a parliamentary or ministerial role; there were 16 of them (9.6 per cent of all deputies) in the Dáil, a proportion

4. The classification scheme used is as follows. Under "commercial" are included business people, mostly small businessmen such as shopkeepers, publicans, auctioneers, contractors and so on. In Table 6, "lower professionals" are mainly schoolteachers, while "higher professionals" include doctors, lawyers, lecturers, architects, accountants and economists. "Non-manual employees" include trade union officials.

much the same as that obtaining in earlier Dála. The presence of so many small businessmen, though, seems peculiar to Ireland, and, indeed, has been a feature of most Irish political movements since the early nineteenth century (Garvin, 1981, pp. 83-84). Its explanation may lie in the fact that publicans, auctioneers, shopkeepers and the like are ideally placed to develop the network of contacts needed by aspiring rural TDs, who spend far more time on constituency brokerage work than on parliamentary duties. It has also been argued (Gibbon and Higgins, 1974-75, pp. 34-36) that debt-bondage may still be a factor in helping small businessmen to reach the Dáil, especially in the west of Ireland. The self-employed, like many professionals, have the additional advantage of being able to arrange their own working hours and take time off during the day for political activities.⁵ It is noticeable that only 8 out of 48 Dublin TDs (16.7 per cent) had a "commercial" background, compared with 37 out of 118 (31.4 per cent) in the rest of Ireland. Twenty-one Dublin TDs (43.8 per cent) were higher professionals, compared with only 19 (16.1 per cent) in the rest of the country. The only other striking regional pattern, apart from the predictable absence of farmers in Dublin, was the high proportion of lower professionals in Connacht-Ulster; there were 11 out of 32 TDs (34.4 per cent), or almost twice the national average.

The most striking feature of Table 6 is the similarity of the profiles of the Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael Dáil groups. Fianna Fáil had rather more employees, both manual and non-manual, while Fine Gael was slightly stronger in most other categories, but overall the similarities far outweighed the differences. A study of the major parties' candidates at the 1977 election concluded that Fianna Fáil "is certainly the nearest thing we have to a businessman's party" (MacKechnie and Marsh, 1979, p. 56), but in November 1982 neither major party had a greater claim than the other to this label. The "difference index" between Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael TDs is only 9.2 per cent,⁶ and it is doubtful whether there is another country in the world where the two major parties have such virtually identical deputy profiles. Labour TDs were rather different occupationally, containing no farmers and relatively few professionals. Six Labour TDs (numbered among the non-manual employees) were trade union officials, and they outnumbered manual workers in the Dáil;

5. It should be noted that some professionals owe their election to clientelism rather than to respect for their perceived governmental abilities. This applies particularly to doctors dealing with medical card patients.

6. The index (see Rose, 1971, pp. 200-201) is calculated by summing the differences between the two sets of percentages and dividing by two. It can range from 0 (indicating no difference between the two groups) to 100 (indicating that they have nothing in common). A comparison of the Fianna Fáil and Labour TDs in Table 6 produces a difference index of 46.6 per cent; the index is 55.4 per cent when Fine Gael and Labour deputies are compared.

trade union officials have traditionally formed the backbone of Labour deputies and Dáil candidates (Gallagher, 1982, pp. 4, 304-305).

Surprisingly, occupation is not, of itself, strongly related to the attainment of ministerial status. Exactly a third of the TDs with a professional background (23 out of 69) have become full Ministers, a smaller over-representation than might be expected, and a lower proportion of professionals (17.4 per cent) than of TDs as a whole have become junior Ministers. This leaves 49.3 per cent of professionals who have never reached even the junior ministerial rung on the ladder, a similar proportion to those for commercial TDs (44.4 per cent) and farmers (57.1 per cent). Commercial TDs fare just as well as professionals as far as promotion is concerned, but farmers tend not to get beyond junior Minister level; although nine have advanced beyond the status of backbencher, only one of these has become a full Minister.

To some extent, though, this apparent non-relationship between professional occupation and ministerial status is explained by the relative newness of professionals (see next paragraph below). The non-relationship holds for the TDs first elected since 1980, and for those elected between 1973 and 1980 inclusive, but among the pre-1973 deputies there is a strong relationship: 13 out of the 17 professionals (76.5 per cent) have become full Ministers, compared with 12 of the other 33 deputies (36.4 per cent). The relationship between occupation and ministerial status varies a little between parties, with commercial TDs faring better in Fianna Fáil and farmers in Fine Gael. Of Fianna Fáil's 20 commercial TDs, only 6 have been permanent backbenchers, the fate of 13 of Fine Gael's 20. But of the 11 Fianna Fáil farmers, 9 have never achieved even junior Minister status, while only 3 of Fine Gael's 10 have suffered this fate.

Comparing the November 1982 Dáil with those produced by earlier elections (Table 7), two clear trends emerge. The proportion of farmers in the Dáil has declined fairly steadily, while professionals have grown in strength; the two groups were evenly balanced in 1965, but by 1982 the latter outnumbered the former by over three to one. The decline in farmers' presence in parliament has been more rapid than the decline in their proportion of the population, and is particularly marked when set against their dominance in earlier Dála; in the late 1930s and early 1940s, McCracken (1958, p. 98) calculates that over 40 per cent of deputies were engaged in agriculture. It is likely that the number of TDs in the commercial category will diminish in future, and the number of professionals will continue to increase, since, in the November 1982 Dáil, the former figure disproportionately among older TDs (their average age was 47.2 years) and the latter among younger deputies (average age 42.6 years). Commercial TDs comprise 38.0 per cent of those first elected before 1973 but only 20.8 per cent of those first elected after 1980; professionals comprise 34.0 per cent and 44.4

Table 7: *Occupations of deputies at general elections 1961-November 1982*

	<i>Manual employees</i>	<i>Non-manual employees</i>	<i>Commercial</i>	<i>Farmers</i>	<i>Professionals</i>	<i>Others</i>	<i>Total</i>
1961	2.8	9.7	31.2	23.6	31.2	1.4	100.0
1965	3.5	9.0	34.0	24.2	25.0	4.2	100.0
1969	4.2	10.4	34.7	18.7	31.9	0	100.0
1973	4.2	21.5	28.5	16.0	29.9	0	100.0
1977	2.0	16.9	31.8	13.5	35.8	0	100.0
1981	3.6	13.9	28.9	14.5	36.1	3.0	100.0
1982-1	4.8	12.7	27.7	12.7	41.0	1.2	100.0
1982-2	2.4	13.9	27.1	12.7	41.6	2.4	100.0

Source: See footnote 1.

Notes: All figures are percentages. The figures presented in the sources used for the pre-1973 Dáil have been modified, and individuals re-classified, where necessary.

per cent of these categories, respectively. Professionals make up 59.3 per cent of those TDs aged under 40 at the time of the election; the commercial TDs comprise only 16.7 per cent of this group.

IV EDUCATION

Education, like occupation, can be difficult to measure, and a number of different categorisation schemes have been employed in previous studies of Dáil personnel. This analysis uses a dichotomy between TDs who do and TDs who do not possess a university degree, a scheme which has the merits, unlike some used in earlier studies, of being simple to operationalise and requiring only information which is readily available from reference books.

Altogether, 63 TDs, 38.0 per cent of the total, had university degrees (see Table 8). This seems to represent an upward drift in the educational attainments of TDs. McCracken (1958, p. 93) found that only 21 per cent of pre-1948 TDs had anything more than secondary education, and by 1965 this figure had risen to 30 per cent (Whyte, 1966, p. 25). In 1969, 41 per cent of TDs had either a degree or "professional training" (Farrell, 1970-71, p. 314), while in 1973 and 1977 the figures (for only those with a university degree) were 28.5 per cent and 29.7 per cent, respectively. Apart from the rather exceptional 1969 figure, then, the proportion of university-educated deputies has risen steadily over the years, and although cynics might wonder whether there is any evidence that the Dáil's performance has improved concomitantly, there may be a connection between this trend and the recent reforms of Dáil procedure. The percentage of graduates in the Dáil is only

about half that in many other legislatures (Putnam, 1976, pp. 26-28, 34-37).

Table 8 shows the small Workers Party/Others group to be the best educated, but among the main parties Fine Gael had a considerably higher proportion of university-educated deputies than either Fianna Fáil or Labour. In fact, Fine Gael had more graduate deputies than these two parties combined. This accords with a pattern noted for the 1961 and 1965 elections, though once again the 1969 figures are deviant, possibly because a slightly different classification scheme was used (Whyte, 1966, p. 33; Farrell, 1970-71, p. 315). It may also match the pattern among party supporters: a survey of Dubliners in 1972-73 found that 10.6 per cent of Fine Gael supporters, but only 4.8 per cent of Fianna Fáil supporters and 4.3 per cent of Labour supporters, had received university education (Mac Gréil, 1974, p. 26).

Table 8: *Educational backgrounds of deputies*

		<i>Fianna Fáil</i>	<i>Fine Gael</i>	<i>Labour</i>	<i>Others</i>	<i>All</i>
Deputies with a	N	25	31	4	3	63
university degree	%	33.3	44.3	25.0	60.0	38.0

Education is, of course, linked to occupation. Fifty-two of the 69 professionals (75.4 per cent) had a degree, compared with just 11 of the other TDs (11.3 per cent). There is also a relationship with region: most Dublin TDs (27 out of 48), but only about a third or fewer in each of Leinster, Munster and Connacht-Ulster, had degrees. University-educated deputies tended to be younger when first elected; 47.6 per cent of them were under 34 at the time, compared with only 27.2 per cent of non-graduates. Predictably, they feature prominently among Ministers. Twenty-three of the 44 TDs (52.3 per cent) to have been cabinet Ministers had degrees, against 25.7 per cent of the TDs who have been junior Ministers only and 35.6 per cent of those who have always been backbenchers.

This relationship holds true for TDs of all durations, and is most striking for those who first entered the Dáil before 1973. Of these 50 TDs, the 16 with university degrees have been extremely successful: 13 have become full Ministers and 2 have become junior Ministers, with only 1 (an Independent) never receiving preferment. In contrast, only 12 of the other 34 have entered the cabinet, and 9 have not attained even junior ministerial rank. It seems that in earlier years, promotion would eventually come to almost every university-educated TD who managed to stay in the Dáil long enough, but a degree is probably no longer an automatic passport to promotion since it is

now a more common commodity. The tendency for backbenchers to be better educated than junior Ministers was particularly marked among TDs aged 50 or more at the time of the election. Four out of the 17 permanent backbenchers from this group had a degree, but only one of the 16 junior Ministers had one, which might seem to bear out suggestions that different criteria govern the selection of full and of junior Ministers, and that the latter are sometimes appointed more as a reward for loyal service than because of any perceived governmental ability. This particular relationship holds true for both major parties, but there is a noticeable difference in the backgrounds of their full Ministers: 12 of the 16 Fine Gael TDs (75.0 per cent) to have reached this rank have possessed degrees, compared with only 9 of the 22 Fianna Fáil TDs (40.9 per cent).

As was the case with occupation, there is every sign that existing trends will continue, for there were clear differences in the backgrounds of the two groups of TDs. University-educated deputies were younger (42.1 years as opposed to 46.9 years for the others) in November 1982, and formed a majority (29 out of 54) of TDs aged below 40, whereas they made up only 13 out of 51 (25.5 per cent) of the TDs aged over 49. Graduates also featured strongly among new TDs; they made up 44.4 per cent of TDs first elected since 1980, 34.1 per cent of those first elected between 1973 and 1980 inclusive, and 32.0 per cent of those first elected before 1973.

V BIRTHPLACE AND RESIDENCE

Inevitably, in a political system where many voters see political representatives' main duty as seeking central government resources for their constituencies and dealing with a multitude of individual and community group cases, deputies must have a close connection with their constituencies. Residence in the capital, with occasional visits to the constituency for publicity purposes, does not suffice in Ireland. It does in some countries, and may also have been enough in earlier years for some Irish politicians, prominent figures who were tacitly exempted from the brokerage duties demanded of most deputies. This did not apply to their successors, and Garvin (1971-72, pp. 360-361) demonstrates that the percentage of TDs resident in or near their constituencies increased fairly steadily between 1923 and 1969.

The November 1982 TDs were, predictably, almost all resident in the constituency they represented.⁷ By the criteria applied here, fewer than 10 appear not to live in their constituencies, and some of the exceptions live

7. In this analysis deputies representing Dublin constituencies are deemed to be resident in (or born in) their constituencies if they live in (or were born in) any part of Dublin. The same treatment is applied to Cork City.

just outside their constituency boundaries. Even accepting that some of the addresses in the reference books may be *pieds-à-terre*, it is obvious that in Ireland constituency residence is a constant rather than a variable.

Moreover, 143 deputies (86.1 per cent) were born in the constituency they went on to represent (see note 7). Some of the 23 exceptions (12 from Fianna Fáil, 8 from Fine Gael, 2 from Labour and 1 from the Workers Party) were brought to their future fiefdoms at an early age. Seventeen were neither born nor educated in their constituencies (10 of them represented Dublin constituencies), but almost all were living and working there before they first stood for the Dáil. Not only voters, but also – perhaps especially – the selectorates are reluctant to accept outsiders as potential candidates (Gallagher, 1980). The only genuine example of a “parachuted” candidate, one with no apparent connections with his constituency before he first stood there, seems to be the current Minister for Finance; his background as an agricultural economist appears to have been regarded by Kildare voters in 1981 as an acceptable substitute for local roots, though it is noticeable that he subsequently moved to the constituency.

VI SEX

In Ireland, as in every other country, women have always been under-represented among the political elite. Of the 3,360 Dáil seats filled at general elections and by-elections between 1922 and November 1982 inclusive, only 110 (3.3 per cent) were taken by women. Altogether there have been only 37 different women TDs: 20 for Fianna Fáil and its forebears, 14 for Fine Gael or Cumann na nGaedheal, 2 for Labour, 1 for Clann na Poblachta, and 1 for Sinn Féin in June 1927 (she is also included in the Fianna Fáil group as she had earlier been elected for de Valera's party in 1923). The average proportion of women among deputies is not very different from that in most western countries outside Scandinavia (cf. Carty, 1980, p. 94), but in the past the extraordinary feature of the Irish record has been the very low number of women to reach the Dáil under their own steam (cf. Manning, 1978, p. 94). Of the 26 women to win election up to the eve of the 1981 general election, 13 were widows of male TDs or independence struggle figures, 3 were sisters, 4 were daughters and 1 was a granddaughter, leaving just 5 who could claim initial election entirely on their own merits. No woman TD became even a junior Minister until 1977, and the first woman cabinet Minister was appointed in December 1979.

One possible explanation for women's low participation rate in Irish parliamentary politics would emphasise political socialisation, and would suggest that such features of Irish society as a mainly single-sex education system and the powerful position of the Catholic Church, a male-dominated

institution traditionally ascribing a passive role to women, have constrained women, deadened their ambition and reduced voters' readiness to accept women as politicians. To support this, there is evidence that in the European Community political interest among women, especially those with little education, is lower in the Catholic countries than the Protestant ones (Inglehart, 1981) and that Irish voters of both sexes say they would have more confidence in a male than a female TD (Laffan, 1981, p. 16).

Another line of explanation would highlight the electoral system: it has been observed that the proportion of women elected in countries using the single transferrable vote (STV), while higher than where the British "first past the post" system is employed, is lower than in countries which use list systems, and it has been suggested that it may be harder for women to be elected under STV than under a list system, because STV allows greater opportunity for the electorate's supposedly traditionalist views to determine the candidates elected (see Castles, 1981; Bogdanor, 1983, pp. 249-250). However, Marsh (1981, p. 68), analysing the 1977 election, found no evidence to support this theory, as after controlling for factors like incumbency, party affiliation and so on, there was no significant relationship between a candidate's vote and sex.

In any case, the low level of women's participation in parliamentary politics everywhere suggests that factors common to all countries exist. The persisting cultural norm that women should bear the prime responsibility for bringing up the children and running the home makes it harder for them to acquire crucial political contacts during their twenties and thirties. In the USA, "structural" characteristics have been identified as most important: high education and income are strongly related to participation in politics, and women have less education and wealth than men, so that when these two factors are controlled for, many differences in male and female participation rates disappear (Welch, 1977, pp. 720-721). In Ireland, too, women are not prominent in most of the occupational groups from which deputies emerge, such as farmers, publicans, lawyers and auctioneers, the exception being the teaching profession.

The generally low level of female membership of the Dáil has recently shown a dramatic upturn. The November 1982 election returned 14 (see Table 9), by some way the largest number ever. Moreover, only 5 of these

Table 9: *Women elected in November 1982*

		<i>Fianna Fáil</i>	<i>Fine Gael</i>	<i>Labour</i>	<i>Others</i>	<i>All</i>
Female	N	4	9	1	0	14
deputies	%	5.3	12.9	6.3	0	8.4

women occupied "inherited" seats; 8 had no predecessors in the Dáil, and the other can be classed with this group despite having been preceded into parliament by relatives.⁸ The women elected were mainly new TDs (only 4 were first elected before 1981, and their average date of first election, October 1979, was nearly five years later than that of male TDs), and at 39.8 years of age were almost six years younger than their male counterparts. They were also better educated than male TDs, exactly half of them having university degrees.

The rise of women TDs since 1977 is entirely due to changes in the Fine Gael Dáil party, for both Fianna Fáil and Labour had exactly the same number of women TDs after the 1977 election as in November 1982. From 1922 to 1977 inclusive, only 5 women were elected for Fine Gael; since then there have been another 9. Only 2 of these 9 inherited a family seat; several others, in contrast, had a record of involvement in the feminist movement. The geographical distribution of the women deputies suggests that traditional barriers may be harder to break down in some areas than in others. Seven of the 14 elected in November 1982, including 6 of the 9 "self-propelled" women TDs, represented Dublin constituencies. Of the 14 self-propelled women TDs elected since 1922, 9 have been elected from Dublin, another was elected by the graduates of the National University, and only 4 have come from the rest of the country.

VII ROUTES OF ENTRY

Previous studies have commented on the predominance of four well-trodden paths by which deputies have entered Leinster House. The first of these, participation in the independence struggle, is now closed; the last "1916 man" lost his seat in 1977. The other three (local government experience, being preceded into the Dáil by a relative and participation in sport) still flourish, and are examined below.

Local Government Experience

Earlier researchers pointed to the high proportion of TDs with a background in local government, although they were not always able to compile precise figures because local election results were not officially published before 1974. Their conclusions (McCracken, 1958, pp. 88-89; Whyte, 1966, pp. 30-31; Farrell, 1970-71, p. 320) were that 51 per cent of those elected between 1922 and 1948 were, or had been, members of local government, like 78 per

8. Both the father and brother of the TD in question had preceded her into the Dáil. However, by the time of her initial success, at the second attempt, she had built her own political base by becoming both a county councillor and a Senator, and was not in any sense inheriting a family seat.

cent of the 1961 TDs, 70 per cent of the 1965 TDs and 66 per cent of the 1969 TDs. Since McCracken found that this applied to 70 per cent of the 1937 TDs, it seems reasonable to conclude that the proportion did not change fundamentally thereafter.

Of the TDs elected in November 1982, 106 (63.9 per cent) had been elected to a local authority at the previous local election (held in June 1979) or had subsequently become members of a local authority.⁹ At the time of the election, 101 (60.8 per cent) were simultaneously local government members. This proportion is high, but by no means unique; most parliamentarians in Sweden and France are simultaneously local officeholders (Putnam, 1976, p. 50).

A more useful statistic is that reporting the number of TDs with local authority membership somewhere in their records (see Table 10). About two-thirds were county councillors before entering the Dáil, and several others reversed the sequence, leaving only about a fifth who have never been on a local authority (and even a few of these have been members of a minor local body such as an urban district council). The figure of 66.3 per cent of deputies who reached county councillor status before entering the Dáil seems to mark an increase over earlier Dála; Whyte (1966, p. 30) found that this applied to 56 per cent of the 1961 TDs and 55 per cent of those elected in

Table 10: *Local government experience of deputies*

		<i>Became local authority member before entering Dáil</i>	<i>Became local authority member after entering Dáil</i>	<i>Never local authority member</i>	<i>Total</i>
Fianna	N	48	12	15	75
Fáil	%	64.0	16.0	20.0	100.0
Fine	N	46	3	21	70
Gael	%	65.7	4.3	30.0	100.0
Labour	N	13	3	0	16
	%	81.3	18.7	0	100.0
Others	N	3	1	1	5
	%	60.0	20.0	20.0	100.0
<i>All</i>	N	110	19	37	166
<i>deputies</i>	%	66.3	11.4	22.3	100.0

Note: For the definition of a local authority, see footnote 9.

9. Here, a local authority is defined as one of the 27 county councils or the four major city corporations (Cork, Dublin, Limerick and Waterford), and the terms "local authority member" and "county councillor", when used in this paper, denote a member of any of these bodies.

1965.¹⁰ Here, too, the Irish pattern is far from unique; Putnam (1976, p. 50) reports that over two-thirds of legislators in several other countries (France, Italy, Sweden, West Germany, Austria, the USA) have served previously in local or regional government. Remaining a county councillor after reaching the Dáil has the advantages of doubling the TD's opportunities to remain in the public eye, keeping the TD in close contact with voters in his or her home base, and ensuring that the county council seat is not used by a rival to build up a political base.

As Table 10 shows, Labour TDs seem to find it most necessary to get onto a local authority before they can win election to the Dáil, for the obvious reason that the purely Labour vote in almost every constituency is not enough to elect a candidate and must be topped up by a personal vote which needs to be built up over time. Whyte (1966, p. 36) found that the same was true in the 1960s. The pictures for the two main parties are similar to each other, though it is noticeable that very few Fine Gael TDs who were not county councillors when first elected bothered subsequently to pick up this minor trophy, so that nearly a third of Fine Gael deputies have never been county councillors. Local government background is strongly related to province: only 26 of the 48 Dublin TDs (54.2 per cent) were county councillors before entering the Dáil, compared with 84 of the other 118 TDs (71.2 per cent). Whereas 31.3 per cent of Dublin TDs have never been members of a local authority, this is true of only 18.6 per cent of TDs from the rest of the country. This seems to confirm the general belief that local roots and a record of brokerage are more important in rural areas than in the capital, though it also owes something to the fact that there are far fewer local authority members per Dáil seat in Dublin (1.7 in 1982) than in the rest of the country (6.1).¹¹

Local government experience is strongly related to education and occupation. Only 30.0 per cent of those elected first to a county council, but 59.5 per cent of those who have never belonged to a county council, had university degrees. Twenty-six out of the 69 professionals (37.7 per cent) had never been county councillors, compared with only 11 out of the other 97

10. Four of the deputies in the first column of Table 10 became county councillors a matter of weeks before entering the Dáil; they were relatives of deceased TD-councillors, and were first co-opted to the vacated county council seat and then won election to the Dáil at the ensuing by-election. Their "route of entry" would be more realistically described as being preceded by a relative than as using a county council seat as a springboard to the Dáil.

11. This also has a significant effect on the composition of the Seanad, since most members of that body are returned by an electorate composed mainly of county and city councillors (cf. Coakley and Wolohan, 1982, pp. 86-87). This imbalance in favour of rural Ireland results in a marked under-representation of Dublin residents among Senators: only 9 of the 49 elected from the vocational panels in January 1983 had Dublin addresses.

TDs (11.3 per cent). Higher professionals, in fact, were just about as likely never to have been county councillors (this applied to 42.5 per cent of them) as to have been county councillors before entering the Dáil (45.0 per cent of them).

Moreover, the non-local authority TDs have been far more successful when it comes to promotion: 40.5 per cent of them are or have been full Ministers and only 45.9 per cent have been permanent backbenchers, whereas among the deputies who were county councillors before entering the Dáil the respective figures are 20.0 per cent and 58.2 per cent. This relationship holds true for TDs of each of the three degrees of seniority outlined in Table 2. It is most striking for the pre-1973 entrants: of the 10 never to have been county councillors, 9 have become full Ministers and the tenth a junior Minister, whereas of the 29 who were county councillors before entering the Dáil, only 34.5 per cent have become full Ministers and 24.1 per cent have been permanent backbenchers. The implication is that whereas most aspiring TDs have to demonstrate brokerage abilities before they can hope to be elected, people of perceived ministerial ability, ideally professionals with a university education, may be exempted from this requirement. There is no research on the question of whether they are also effectively exempted from brokerage demands after their election, but it might be expected that such deputies are less inclined to immerse themselves in constituency work than are those with a local authority background. Higgins (1982, p. 137) suggests that for the latter deputies their time as councillors socialises them into acceptance of a marginal role in decision-making and concentration on brokerage, which helps to explain why the Dáil provides only "illusory accountability".

There are indications that, notwithstanding the existence of this "high road" to the Dáil, a local authority base is becoming more important for an aspiring deputy. Of those first elected before 1973, 58.0 per cent had been county councillors before entering the Dáil, a figure which rises to 63.6 per cent for TDs first elected from 1973 to 1980 and to 73.6 per cent for those first elected after 1980.

Relationship to Other Deputies

Previous studies have highlighted the number of deputies related to former or sitting deputies. This route of entry to the Dáil was employed from the start, as relatives of deceased members of the nationalist movement were nominated by Sinn Féin for elections to early Dála. The practice of replacing a TD with a relative began in earnest in the 1930s. When a Leitrim TD was killed by a disaffected constituent during the 1932 election campaign, Cumann na nGaedheal nominated his widow in his place. When a Cork Fianna Fáil TD died after the election, the party selected his brother as its by-election candidate. At the 1933 election, Cumann na nGaedheal nominated

the widow of Captain Redmond, one of its Waterford TDs who had just died. In 1935 and 1936, when two by-elections arose in Galway as a result of the deaths of Fine Gael TDs Martin McDonogh and Patrick Hogan, the party nominated a brother of the dead TD in each case. During the second of these by-election campaigns, Fine Gael's Patrick McGilligan said, "We want a Hogan to replace Hogan. We want the Hogan tradition in County Galway" (*Connacht Tribune*, 8 August 1936). At the 1938 election, Fianna Fáil in Monaghan nominated the widow of one of its TDs there who had just died. When the party's opponents queried her absence from the hustings, the senior Fianna Fáil candidate, Conn Ward, defended her candidature thus (*Dundalk Democrat*, 18 June 1938):

In that campaign their opponents had complained that Mrs Rice had not addressed public meetings. He would tell them that it was none of their business whether she did or not. She was standing as the widow of Eamon Rice and those who knew him knew that no finer Irishman ever graced the public life of this country. If she had no other qualifications, as the widow of Eamon Rice she was entitled to fill the seat which her late husband won.

Mrs Rice was elected comfortably. In 1969, a Fine Gael candidate felt it worth stating in his election advertisements that he was the only "blood relation" of Seán MacEoin standing in the constituency (*Longford Leader*, 7 June 1969).

Such political cultural norms on the part of both the elite and ordinary voters led to a steady increase in the number of "relatives" among TDs. By the 1965 and 1969 elections, about 40 to 45 TDs, around 30 per cent of the total, had close family ties with previous or current deputies (Whyte, 1966, p. 31; Farrell, 1970-71, pp. 319-320; Farrell, 1974-75, p. 412).

Of the 166 deputies elected in November 1982, 41, or 24.7 per cent, were related to one or more present or former TDs who had preceded them into the Dáil. Twenty-two were from Fianna Fáil, 14 from Fine Gael, 4 from Labour and 1 was an Independent. Twenty-five of them were sons, 6 were nephews, 4 were daughters, 3 were brothers, 2 were widows and 1 was a son-in-law.¹² This percentage, while slightly lower than those for earlier Dála, is still exceptionally high for a modern legislature, though not all of the relationships are of equal significance. Some TDs clearly "inherited" their seats, while in other cases the connection is tenuous. For example, a

12. Several of these figures are slightly greater than those given in Nealon (1983, p. 162). Since the author does not provide a list of the deputies concerned, it is impossible to identify the cases he has missed.

Fianna Fáil TD first elected in Dublin in 1969 is unlikely to have picked up many extra votes by virtue of the fact that his father was a Labour TD in the mid-1940s. Attempting to apply more restrictive criteria, it is possible to reduce the list by 12 (6 Fianna Fáil and 6 Fine Gael) deputies whose family credentials may have been of some initial help in being selected as a Dáil candidate but almost certainly did not contribute significantly to their election. This leaves the still remarkable number of 29 deputies, 17.5 per cent of the Dáil, whose initial election was due in large measure to their family connections to a previous or current deputy.

Not surprisingly, these 29 were younger when first elected (32.3 years) than other deputies (38.8 years), and the gap between their first candidacy and their first success averaged only 0.2 years, compared with 2.5 years for other deputies. As many as 79.3 per cent were elected the first time they contested an election, compared with 50.4 per cent of other deputies. Nine of them (31.0 per cent) were first elected at a by-election, compared with just 8 other deputies (5.8 per cent), and another 4 first stood at a by-election caused by the death of a relative and were elected at the next general election. There is no evidence that this route of entry brings "inferior" deputies into the Dáil; in fact, 11 of the 29 (37.9 per cent) are, or have been, cabinet Ministers, compared with just 24.1 per cent of the other 137 deputies. It is possible that this pathway to the Dáil is diminishing in importance: while 26.0 per cent of those deputies first elected before 1973 owed their initial election largely to their family connections, this applies to only 18.2 per cent of the deputies who entered the Dáil between 1973 and 1980 and to 11.1 per cent of those first elected since January 1981. However, this apparent trend may simply reflect a low incidence of by-elections; there were only five from June 1976 to May 1983. It is noticeable that two of the three by-elections held to date since the November 1982 election have been won by relatives of the deceased deputies.

Sport

From early in the Free State's history there were indications that a background in sport could be put to use in politics. One of the leaders of the Farmers' Party, Michael Heffernan, had been a rugby international, as had a Cumann na nGaedheal candidate in Dublin South in 1932. The following year the same party nominated a Gaelic footballer, who polled almost 6,000 votes, in Kerry. Earlier studies of the Dáil noted that prominence in sport was apparently growing in importance as a launching-pad for a political career (Whyte, 1966, p. 31; Farrell, 1970-71, pp. 320-322). This, though, is a very difficult factor to quantify. Not everyone who kicks a football for his local Gaelic team thereby attains "prominence". Similarly, some sporting achievements are of limited electoral value. A deputy first elected in Mayo

in 1973 was probably not aided much by having played rugby for Connacht between 1952 and 1960, for example, while when Ireland's most-capped sportsman (a table tennis player) stood for Fianna Fáil in Dublin North in November 1982, he lost his deposit.

Certainly, many deputies have connections with sporting organisations. Of the 166 deputies elected in November 1982, about 50 were past or present members of the Gaelic Athletic Association (some of these were also members of other sporting bodies) and another 25 or so had records in other sports. There seemed to be some correlation between GAA membership and Fianna Fáil allegiance, especially in rural areas. A background of prominence in sport may help a candidate win a county council seat, but is unlikely of itself to take him into the Dáil. What is more likely is that to be a GAA member, and particularly to be a county board official, is another means of building up contacts, keeping a high local profile and maintaining community involvement.

VIII CONCLUSION

The twenty-fourth Dáil is not profoundly different from those thrown up by previous elections, but some trends detected by earlier studies have gathered strength. The Dáil is still predominantly a middle-aged and male body, although the number of women deputies is climbing gradually and deputies collectively are slightly younger than in some earlier Dála. Almost a half of all TDs were first elected in June 1981 or later, with the Fine Gael group being particularly new. About half of the November 1982 deputies have never lost an election and the overwhelming majority have had an unbroken Dáil membership since their initial election.

As in earlier Dála, most deputies are either business people or professionals. The latter are a steadily growing force among deputies, while farmers have been declining. The number of employees, especially manual workers, remains very small. Nearly 40 per cent of TDs have a university education, with Fine Gael being the most highly educated party. This represents an increase compared with earlier Dála, and is linked to the rise in the number of professionals, though it is noticeable that education is more strongly related to the attainment of ministerial status than is occupation. At the same time, the proportion of deputies born and resident in their constituencies is certainly not diminishing, and neither is the importance of establishing a base on a county council before challenging for a Dáil seat.

The steady rise in the number of university-educated professionals, coupled with the prominence of these attributes among new deputies, suggests that these trends will continue and that future Dála will have fewer TDs with a "commercial" or farming background. This, though likely, is not a foregone

conclusion, since it may be that the latter, being able to combine their other occupation(s) with the duties of a TD, are politically more durable than professionals, who in most cases have to interrupt their careers when they enter the Dáil, and who may be tempted to return to them unless political preferment arrives fairly rapidly. With less certainty, and subject to the earlier qualification concerning by-elections, it can be speculated that the proportion of deputies who have been preceded into the Dáil by a relative may decrease: not only has it been declining in recent years, but the existing TDs in this category are congregated disproportionately among older deputies.

Although a Dáil composed entirely of graduates from professional occupations would not be particularly desirable, the change in the occupational and educational backgrounds of deputies might none the less be expected to produce a Dáil better equipped than its predecessors to perform the conventional parliamentary roles of scrutinising government behaviour and improving the quality of legislation. There are signs that an increasing number of TDs, especially the newer ones, want a greater involvement in those areas, and the recent steps to reform the Dáil's procedures, such as the major expansion of the committee system, are a response to this. At the same time, there has been no easing in the burden of casework demands made on deputies; a recent survey suggests that the average TD holds three or four clinics and receives 140 representations every week (Roche, 1982, pp. 100-102). The continuing impact of the recession seems likely to keep at a high level the number of individuals wanting assistance in determining and obtaining their entitlements, and it is doubtful whether the office of the Ombudsman can make much of a dent in the total volume of casework.

Thus, although deputies collectively are keener and better able than hitherto to fulfil a parliamentary role, this may be offset by the ever-increasing volume of constituency work which they dare not ignore for fear of being punished electorally. This situation is unlikely to improve without a change in either public attitudes towards the role of their parliamentary representatives, public perceptions of the responsiveness of state agencies, or the electoral system. In the absence of any of these developments, not even a continuation of the trends noted in this paper will necessarily lead to a significant improvement in the quality of Dáil Éireann as a legislature.

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