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FIANNA Fáil ARD-FHEIS 1971

R.D.S., Ballsbridge, Dublin.

Presidential Address by the Taoiseach, Mr. John Lynch, T.D.,

Saturday, the 20th February 1971

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My first duty is to thank the Ard Fheis most sincerely for once again electing me President of Fianna Fáil. It is an honour of which I am deeply conscious. In return, I can only promise to discharge the onerous duties and heavy responsibilities which the leadership of Fianna Fáil involves to the best of my ability as I have endeavoured to do since this office was first conferred on me four years ago. Since our last Ard Fheis death has taken from our organisation and from our party some of our veteran members - men who were founder members of Fianna Fáil and who gave a life-time of devoted service to Fianna Fáil and to Ireland. Foremost amongst these was, of course, our late Vice-President and member of successive Fianna Fáil Governments for over thirty years - An Dr. Seamus Ó Riain. Ar Dheis Dé go raibh a anam uasal agus anamacha na laochra Gael eile a fuair bás i rith na bliana.

While we recall with much sadness and deep regret the passing of these great men it is a source of much consolation to all of us to know that Fianna Fáil has today, as it has had all down the years of its proud history, young men and women imbued with the same dedicated sense of public service and with the same unselfish spirit of patriotic endeavour as those of a generation who have passed on. My earnest hope is that it will always be so.

While the past year was not the most successful one for the economy, the picture was by no means one of complete gloom. It had its bright features as well as its dark spots. On the debit side in 1970 we saw a continuation

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of the severe price inflation built up in 1969, and the unhappy spectacle of prolonged disputes in the cement and banking industries. On the credit side there was a satisfactory influx of new industries which will sustain the impetus of economic development. There was continued social progress in the form of high, and in some cases record, levels of house and school-building. There were hospital improvements and increased social welfare services, while even in the vexed field of industrial relations, the year-end brought a national wage agreement which holds out prospects both for industrial peace and for the arrangement of income increases in a non-inflationary manner.

Some of the economic difficulties which we have had to face were caused by outside factors over which we have no control. But others were of our own making. The sharp rise in prices, the most immediate economic problem facing us, demonstrates this. Some prices have risen because of events abroad; increases in the price of coal and oil in recent months are examples of items the cost of which we cannot control. But many other price increases occur because of the rise in the costs of production here in Ireland. Of these cost rises, wage and salary increases were the chief cause. In most cases pay rates have risen by 20% or more in the past year or two and no financial expertise is needed to know that when this happens price increases must follow.

It is obvious that the most important task for us all now is to end this inflation before it inflicts widespread damage on the economy. By causing the loss of valuable export markets inflation can inflict serious damage on agriculture and on industry, on employers and on workers. Let us recognise then that there is a common interest in ending this problem; let us make the common effort needed to do so.

It has become increasingly obvious that one important step on the road to ending price inflation is a more orderly system for income increases. It is economic lunacy to continue a free-for-all where different groups engage in a futile scramble to overtake or surpass each other. This can only end

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with every income increase being swallowed up by ever-increasing prices, and even those groups who temporarily draw ahead will find their success short-lived when their own prosperity comes crashing down in the economic turmoil which would result from a protracted period of severe inflation.

The most significant and heartening feature in the past year in this inflationary spiral has been the evidence of the growing recognition, on the part of both employers and unions, of the need for some form of policy or guidelines for income increases. The Employer-Labour Conference established last May was designed to facilitate such a process and, despite some initial difficulties, finally succeeded in its first task by producing a national wage agreement. I give full credit to both sides for the hard work and the heartbreak which went into the preparation of this agreement. For some time indeed it seemed that no agreement was possible. To cope with the dangerous situation which would have resulted from such a failure the Government was forced to introduce legislation to regulate prices and incomes. In taking this step we made it clear that our preference was for voluntary agreements between employers and unions rather than for any form of Government directive. This has always been Fianna Fáil policy on industrial relations matters, and it is still our policy.

Legislation has a part to play in the shaping of the industrial relations climate, but legislation by itself cannot solve any problems or secure any progress. For that the enlightened efforts of both management and workers are essential.

Therefore we welcomed the renewed efforts to secure a voluntary agreement, which followed on our action, and were pleased that these efforts culminated in agreement. Our wish is that in the coming months employers and unions will continue to examine the many complex and controversial problems which must be overcome before an equitable and effective mechanism for regulating pay increases can be secured. Both parties can be assured that they will have the full and active support of Government in their endeavours. I know that it will not be easy to devise a fully-fledged system but we can take heart that the first step, with which even the longest

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journey begins, has been a step in the right direction.

The task of securing satisfactory arrangements for income increases in industry, complex though this task may be, is by no means the only requirement. It is also necessary to secure satisfactory income relationships for other groups, such as farmers or social welfare recipients.

In the social welfare field we have for many years now increased benefits at a rate large enough, not only to cover price increases but to bring about improvements in the real incomes of these groups. I am encouraged that despite our economic difficulties we were again able to make substantial improvements during this financial year.

In agriculture, where the main source of income must be the farmers' own production efforts, the State has, likewise, provided very substantial financial aids. These increases fall short of the improvements sought by the farming community itself and, to that extent, there is continuing pressure on the Government to further raise income supports. This is becoming extremely difficult to do. Exchequer resources are not unlimited and increases in State aid to agriculture have been one of the fastest growing spending areas in recent years. It is important too not to lose sight of the fact that, apart from direct aids, the farming community benefit from the general improvements in services, such as education and health, which have been taking place.

The Government are just as anxious as the farmers themselves to see a thriving and prosperous agricultural community. We will continue to provide to the fullest extent that our resources will permit, the incentives and aids which will make agriculture more productive and more profitable.

In the coming years these efforts will be especially directed towards preparing for our prospective membership of the Common Market. Such preparations apply, of course, not only to farming but to all sections of the community.

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As you know negotiations on our application for membership began last Summer, and will continue throughout the coming months. The immediate emphasis both in negotiations and in public discussion is on the economic issues, since although there are longer-term political intentions and aspirations among the member countries, the Treaty of Rome itself is concerned with economic and related social questions. The Government view is that there are substantial grounds for concluding that the national interest and the welfare of our people will best be served by entry to an enlarged community which includes Britain.

Because of the small size of the home market, economic growth in Ireland depends mainly on expanding our export trade. Our main markets are Britain and the other countries of Western Europe. To remain outside a community which included Britain would place our agricultural exports in serious jeopardy and would put in doubt the possibility of maintaining, much less expanding, our industrial exports. It is important to bear in mind that any alternative market opportunities which might be available to us outside the enlarged community show no signs of offering prospects for expansion of our exports comparable to those which would be available to us as a member of the EEC. This is especially so with agriculture.

At present Britain is the only country in Western Europe to which we are free to export agricultural products in any appreciable quantity. However, the prices obtaining in Britain are much below those obtaining within the Common Market. When it is realised that about half of all the output coming off Irish farms is exported, it can be seen that the present situation has the effect of keeping the prices which the Irish farmer receives at a relatively depressed level.

Because of the operation of the Community's common agricultural policy our cattle and beef and dairy products have been effectively cut off from continental markets for some years. Membership of the EEC will provide access to a much larger and more valuable market than our farmers enjoy at present. Furthermore, the policy of the Community is to ensure that farmers obtain remunerative prices for their products. Community prices for the main agricultural products that we supply are appreciably

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higher than the prices which our farmers obtain at present. Membership would therefore provide not only larger markets but also more profitable markets for our main exports, cattle and beef, dairy products, lamb and pigmeat. Given these markets, the volume of agricultural production in Ireland might be expected to increase by 30-40% by the end of the decade. Because of higher prices the income increases to farmers would be considerably higher than this.

Industry has been the main source of growth in the Irish economy over the past decade. This is almost entirely due to the rising trend in the exports of industrial goods. The value of industrial exports increased from £41 million in 1959 to £214 million in 1969 (including exports from Shannon Industrial Estate). Many of the new industries set up in Ireland have been attracted by the duty-free access to the British market and, perhaps also to some extent, by the possibility of duty-free access within an enlarged Community of which Ireland would form part.

As a member of the enlarged Community we shall have completely free access for our industrial goods to a vast market of some 250 million people. This will provide unparalleled opportunities for industrial exports on which the growth of our industry and our economic development generally depend. I know that many of our industrial firms have made the necessary preparations so that they may be in a position, once we join the EEC, to avail fully of the opportunities for expanded exports which will be available to them. But I regret to say that there are many who have not yet made adequate preparations to compete successfully in this highly efficient and sophisticated market.

Access to the Community will also entail greater competition for our industry on the home market. The Government has, in the past ten years, been assisting and encouraging our industrial firms to make the adaptations and reorganisation necessary to prepare for conditions of free trade. It is essential that whatever further adaptations and reorganisation are necessary be put in hand without further delay. It seems likely that we shall accede to the Communities in January 1973 and that there will be a five-year transitional period during which our industrial tariffs against the other member States of the enlarged

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Communities will be removed, and our tariffs against non-member countries must accord with the Community's common customs tariff. This should provide adequate time for the vast majority of our industries to prepare for the free trade conditions which they shall encounter on the home market as members of the EEC. But it is important to remember that probably within two years we shall be a member of the Communities and in the process of phasing in the full obligations of membership. There is no time to waste.

A major factor in our industrial growth in the past decade has been the large foreign industrial investment here. It has been, and continues to be, the Government's policy to attract foreign industries to establish in Ireland, and the Government make available financial aid and tax reliefs for this purpose. It is most important for us that this industrial investment from outside should continue. Membership of the EEC for Ireland should enhance the attractions of Ireland as a base for new foreign industrial investment.

While the general effects should be beneficial, there are undoubtedly areas in which entry to the EEC could create difficulties; fisheries, land sales to non-nationals, some of the smaller or weaker industries are the most obvious examples. I cannot, in the time available, go into these questions in detail. I will simply say that the Government do not share the doubts or the fears of the pessimists because we are satisfied that it is not the intention of the EEC countries to make a depressed area out of one of their members. It is certainly not the intention of my Government to allow this to happen. We are confident that we can negotiate entry terms which will be acceptable and beneficial both to ourselves and to the other members.

We recognise that Common Market membership will bring changes, not all of which will be initially welcome. But to remain outside would mortally damage the prospects of achieving full employment, and ending emigration, which membership holds out. These prospects will not automatically come to fruition by the simple act of membership. Hard work and sustained efforts will be needed to ensure that we can match our European counterparts in all walks of trade and commerce. But

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for the first time in decades we will have the opportunity to compete freely and fairly with neighbouring countries and I have every confidence in our abilities to hold an equal place in the Europe of tomorrow.

But whether inside or outside the EEC we should never lose sight of the kind of society we would wish to see flourish here. I have spoken of the future challenges which face us. I have also dwelt on the most immediate problems such as inflation.

Ultimately we must face the question - what kind of society do we want - whether living as a free society we want to use the freedom that we have prudently and intelligently for the benefit of ourselves, our neighbours and our country? God made us all equal but some are better endowed than others either with talents, intellect or fortuitous heritage and these, too, are God-given and therefore our Maker expects those who possess them to share their fruits with the less well-endowed. One of the greatest developments of our time is that there is evolving a real sense of social justice, which is beginning to express itself in an understanding and sympathy between all sections of the community. But this social consciousness, entirely worthy and necessary though it be, can be exploited.

There are some who would see social policies advanced through a sophisticated approach. - but it is well to remember that sophistication in its earlier meaning referred to those who preached doctrines which were superficially attractive but fundamentally unsound. So we must beware of the present-day sophists with their fluent tongues and their facile thoughts.

Extreme socialist ideologies would have the one sector seek to destroy the other; would create a 'them' and 'us' conflict in society. Those who would promote such a conflict would do well to remember that in war there never really emerges a victor and especially in an internecine socio-economic war. We know from recent history that the so-called emancipation of the masses in other countries has produced tyrannies and destroyed as well the freedom of the workers. Therefore let us beware of empty ideologies. Let us work instead for the recognition of the needs and rights of all people and seek a more equitable distribution of wealth. We must avoid putting the distribution into the hands of a mindless, heartless bureaucracy that

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can place itself beyond the checks and accountability of democratic procedures. But when we talk about distribution of wealth we must first create the wealth.

What is wealth in this context? It is economic wellbeing that will make it possible for us to achieve the social standards we all desire and economic wellbeing can be created only by the combined efforts of all our people - there is no short-cut. If we wish to retain democracy there is no radical revolutionary remedy. We must work together and not against each other. The contributions of all sections of the community, farmers, workers, management and the professions, must complement each other. All provide the necessary ingredients for the metaphoric national cake. Nobody but ourselves will do this for us. Nobody can make the mix to our taste better than the combined talents of all our people. We should therefore re-examine our social consciences and acknowledge and eliminate our deficiencies. We must admit that one of our main deficiencies is that too many of us want too much for less and less effort. We all know the meaning of the adage "sufficient for the day is the evil thereof". How much more self-destructive is it to seek a surfeit for the day! Even if we succeed in grabbing for ourselves that surfeit are we any the happier? In the last ten or fifteen years we have made enormous advances in our economy, in health services, in education, in housing and in living standards generally. Let us not jeopardise them by pushing the national economic stress to breaking point, nor mortgage the future of ourselves, our children, and of our nation by seeking now, rewards that we have not yet earned.

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Sula bpléifidh mé cúrsaí an Tuaiscirt ba mhaith liom tagairt a dhéanamh do chúrsaí na teanga.

In ár bpáirtí, sí athbheochan na teanga Gaeilge an aidhm chultúrdha is suntasaí againn. Sa chéad óráid a thugas díbh mar Uachtarán ar Fhianna Fáil dubhairt mé dá dhiúlteódh pobal na hÉireann riamh d'Fhianna Fáil de bhárr ár ndearcadh ar an dteanga dúchasach, ná staonfaimís ón bpolasaí sin agus ná staonfaimís ón ár ndóchas cinnte ná clisfeadh riamh ar chúis na teanga.

Ní acfuinn do dhuine ar bith a rá go bhfuil polasaí Fhianna Fáil i leith athbheochan na Gaeilge fachta ar iasacht ó aon aicme pholaiticiúil eile, ná go bhfuil an polasaí sin beagthábhachtach nó mídhílis i gcomparáid le haidhmeanna na bpáirtithe eile.

Is údar diomá é nach raibh dul chun cinn na Gaeilge níos beoga ná mara bhí sé go dtí seo, ach tá dóchas láidir againn go dtiocfaidh feabhas mór ar an scéal. Beidh sé ina lá dearóil d'athbheochan ár dteanga má theannann Fianna Fáil i ndiaidh a chúil san aigne diongbháilte atá acu an Ghaeilge a chur ar ais ina ionad ceart sa tír.

Ní leor béalghrá amháin a thabhairt don sár-aidhm seo - agus féadaim a dhearbhu gur fada ón béalghrá atá dearcadh Fhianna Fáil air. sa bhliain atá romhainn déanfadh gach aon duine againn a dhiongbháilteach a léirchruthú tré ghníomhú dearfach agus tré dheae-eiseamláir.

Iarraim oraibh arís bhur seacht ndicheall a dhéanamh príomh chuspóir ár n-eagrais a chur chun críche. Ná bíodh aon staonadh san iarracht.

We have seen a year in which there has been much violence leading to loss of life in the North. This situation offers more potential for harm or harmony than any other aspect of Irish life. At times it has faded from the headlines only to return to fill the television screen. Peace in the North is precariously poised. At

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any moment it can be lost and prosperity, happiness, even life itself in both parts of this island can be seriously damaged. We can be damaged in other ways also. During the period of tension around the 13th July last the Press and television of the world turned its eyes on Belfast. There were during that period as many foreign correspondents in Belfast as there normally are in Saigon. In some cases they were the same men who covered the war in Vietnam. We can take no pleasure out of this. But beneath the turmoil and disturbance which unhappily continue, it would be wise also to notice the fundamental changes which are taking place.

While mistakes have been made, both political and tactical, especially in Belfast, the movement to legislative reform has also continued and we look to the full and speedy implementation of the Downing Street Declaration which guarantees equality of treatment to everyone in the North without regard to religious considerations. This is a fundamental issue and a fundamental change from the situation which existed up to August 1969. Impatience is certainly understandable on the part of the minority and it is easy to provoke a depressed community into physical violence; but it remains the task of political leadership both North and South to do all possible to calm the situation so that the benefits of reform can be achieved with the least possible delay.

As time passes it must become more and more evident to objective observers that the traditional Unionist policy of turning its back on its own place in Ireland - and, indeed, on its own history in Ireland - contains neither common sense nor prospects of a peaceful and prosperous future. It is also obvious that North and South are not two separate nations.

Policies based on such fallacies are wilfully blind; they were sustained in the North only by repression of the minority. The absurd lengths to which this logic of denial found itself forced resulted in the breakdown of society; it was the prime cause of the breakdown; and it continues to trap policy in the dismal round of provocation, reaction and further repression. To find a way forward we must begin with a recognition of the facts.

There is no use in pretending, as some do, that the incidence of

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discrimination in the North was fragmentary and rare and that, therefore, all that is required now is the elimination of minor irritations. I would go further and say that, even if it were recognised that discrimination was a conscious way of life, it is not now sufficient to eliminate discrimination via legislative reforms. Such reforms attack the obvious symptoms but do little to solve the underlying problems.

Much more is needed. A community of half a million has been deprived of normal and reasonable participation in the affairs and wealth of the area for half a century; their cultural values have been ignored or denigrated. To reverse this - and redress the balance - requires a depth of attention to their views and needs, of which we would like to see much more evidence. When will it be understood that there will be no peace with justice in the North until Unionism has the courage to recognise that it represents only part of a community and that traditional Unionism itself divided the community by insisting on outmoded loyalties and conformities? Can we hope that enough has been seen of strife and death in the North to persuade the better instincts of the Northern majority into a realisation that an effort of will is required on their part to correct what is wholly wrong - their refusal to accommodate the political and cultural sensitivities of the Northern minority?

The basic issue remains what it always has been. No words of mine could express it better than Yeats did in his speech to the Seanad in 1925 when he said "it is perhaps the deepest political passion with this nation that the North and South be united into one nation".

For 50 years North and South have been divided one from the other; we are not complete, one without the other. During these decades we in the South have founded an independent State and, from beginnings which were immensely difficult socially and economically, we have increased our prosperity and happiness. We have done this by our own efforts. We have obtained a position of respect for our country throughout the world. If we now say to the North that their place is with us, in a nation formed by us all, we offer something in which we have pride and confidence and which all

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Irishmen are welcome to share.

Indeed there are many examples over the last couple of decades of cooperation between North and South in economic undertakings to the mutual benefit of both parts of the country. A recent example was the preferential tariff concessions that we unilaterally extended to a range of industrial goods from Northern Ireland firms. More recently when the Anglo-Irish Free Trade Agreement was negotiated, it provided, at our instigation, for more favourable tariff treatment for a range of North of Ireland industrial goods than for British goods.

Under the terms of the Agreement this preferential treatment comes up for review next June after five years of operation. The Government will be anxious to see how this can be continued. I know that these concessions create problems for some Twenty-six County industrialists but I know that they will continue to react as generously as they have done in recent years.

I want to repeat also our offer of cooperation in regional development. One example of what I have in mind is the creation of much-needed industrial employment for what is essentially a homogeneous community along border areas, without regard to creed or political affiliation and without regard to the border itself. I know there will be snags, legal and technical, for example, joint participation by Dublin and Stormont in making industrial grants available, reciprocity in employment insurance benefits and the existence of work permits and other employment restrictions. But I believe that with goodwill, such problems can be overcome.

I would like to draw attention to one thing in which I believe we can be particularly helpful.

We are in direct contact with the European Economic Community in the course of negotiating our entry to the Community. We have developed a great amount of information and expertise on what membership of the Community will mean for the future of this country.

The problems the North will face in relation to membership of the

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European Community are much closer to ours over a wide field than they are to British problems. We would be very happy to make our knowledge available to the Stormont Administration and to enable the North to draw on our experience at any time and on any subject. There have already been occasions, because of the closer identity of some of the North's problems with ours than with Britain's, when informal exchanges have taken place between officials. We regard this as a welcome development and one which we will be glad to pursue.

Is it not better that the Northern majority should participate in the further development of Ireland than that they should remain caught in a dilemma which is as tragic as it is unnecessary? The use of armies to maintain a State destroys the freedom of all the population in the long run. History is full of examples of this from the Roman Empire to the present day. To go down that road again, in order to maintain a myth or a selfish part-prosperity, would be an act of folly carrying incalculable consequences.

Far from saying any of this in rancour, my purpose is to say to the Northern majority that between us, with goodwill and the use of all the talents we have, we can break the chains of a long history of distrust and misunderstanding and refuse to be bound by the mistakes of the **past**. We share this country not merely because we live on the same island; we share it also because of common history, because of qualities which complement each other where they are not the same; because our blood has been intermingled as much as it has been uselessly shed; because we have, all of us, formed and cultivated the land of Ireland and none of us can be removed from what we made.

Out of our rich store of shared experience is it not better to find a means of bringing peace and happiness to Ireland than to continue the shameful exploitation of lesser passions, an exploitation designed to maintain a division within Ireland, and even within the North itself, at the expense of the character of the Northern majority as well as of the fair treatment of the Northern minority in their own land?

We on our part are prepared to seek, with our Northern brethren, a true meaning for Irish nationalism. It is, in our view, a wide and

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embracing concept - not the exclusive property of any single set of beliefs or attitudes. It is one which would attract and retain the respect and allegiance of all Irishmen. It is founded in the belief, expressed throughout our history, that we Irish are a distinct nation; that none of us, irrespective of ancient origin or later migration, remains uninfluenced by the environment of the land in which we live.

We are free to create our own united society. It is one which would have as a principle running through its Fundamental Law and its Statutes and its Regulations, the idea that the State shall protect religious liberties; that the State shall respect civil liberties, and that cultural diversity is a source of strength.

I said in Dáil Éireann on the 28th July last "insofar as there are constitutional difficulties which are legitimately seen by people to be infringements of their civil rights, then their views are worthy of intensive examination and we should try to accommodate them in our constitution and in our laws".

I repeat that now. The Constitution of a united Ireland requires to be a document in which no element of sectarianism, even unconscious or unintended, should occur.

There is a wrongful idea current in the North that the Republic is constantly plotting to destroy the North, that the South is solely interested in taking over the North for the sake of territorial aggrandisement and that the South is motivated in this by religious antagonism. Whenever such absurdities are likely to be forgotten there are people who, depending on these myths for their positions of power, prestige and privilege, come out from under the stones of history and stir up hatred.

It is true that there are some, a tiny percentage of our total population, who keep alive the physical force tradition. They do not represent anything significant in our community, yet this tiny minority, coupled with these ancient fears stirred up again and again by tales of a Catholic plot, are enough to give the North recurring crises.

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Our laws are not framed to give offence to anyone. At the time that our Constitution was drafted it represented the deep, general and genuine religious outlook of the majority of Irish people. The same goes for our laws, which are administered equally and not with bigotry. It has often seemed to us in the South that many people who raised the question of our "Catholic legislation" as they termed it, did so, not as a matter of genuine principle, but as shibboleths to be used to confuse issues rather than engage in genuine dialogue.

But times have changed.

It was the great Protestant patriot Charles Stewart Parnell who said "No man may set a boundary to the march of a nation". Despite the terrible events of the last two years the South is moving, not towards combat and harshness, but towards a new and hopeful vision of peace and progress for everyone in all of Ireland. Where it can be shown that attitudes embodied in our laws and Constitution give offence to liberty of conscience then we are prepared to see what can be done to harmonise our views so that, without detracting from genuine values, a new kind of Irish society may be created equally agreeable to North and South. Then the whole nation, in extension of Parnell's statement, could begin to remove barriers to its progress and develop the ability and willingness to accommodate the best in its laws and practices and in its religious and cultural traditions.

We wish to extend an olive branch to the North and we wish the North to accept it. If this means that we must grasp some nettles which sting our pride then we will readily do so if the result be a just and lasting peace throughout our island.

We recognise that the slow, difficult, painful and even dangerous process of continually and unflinchingly holding out the hand of friendship to our fellow-country men in the North is an essential step towards the goal of an Ireland in which all of our people may live in peace, tolerance, respect, understanding and in unity. This

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result can only be postponed by every fresh act of aggression which sets Irishmen against Irishmen. We know that there are in the North more and better people than the ranting bigot, or the bullyboys with the bombs, with the tar and feathers. We know that there are moderate, decent, God-fearing, self-respecting Christians of all denominations trying to keep themselves and their families according to their beliefs and to live normal neighbourly lives irrespective not alone of the pressures arising from the disordered situation in Northern Ireland but also those of modern society. All these people want to live at peace with each other and we want to live at peace with them.

Before I leave this subject I would once again put it into a context which extends beyond this island. Our closest neighbour has been involved in our affairs for many centuries. There is no use, as I have said to Britain and the British people, in continuing a quarrel which time has made irrelevant to the greater good of either of us. The relationship between Ireland and Britain requires no formalisation. Indeed the attempts, for centuries, to bind the relationship into formulas which took no account of Irish nationhood, failed. Since the failure was admitted 50 years ago the relationship between Britain and the South has become all the stronger for being a mutually valuable one without overtones of conquest. The remnant of that conquest, which is an aspect of the division of Ireland, remains the only but dangerous disaffection in what has become otherwise a unique condition between independent countries.

The events in the North have had repercussions in this part of the country not least within our own party. They have given rise to issues on the roles and relationships between party, Government and leader. It is important that I should speak to you this evening on these issues so that you as spokesmen and leaders of our party and organisation should have the opportunity of considering them.

Fianna Fáil is a republican party. As such it advocates a democratic form of government for the nation and it applies the same democratic principles to the government of the party itself.

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At Ard Fheiseanna, the party organisation, through its chosen representatives, lay down major principles, and outlines the policies and methods by which it seeks to attain its stated aims and objectives. It does not and cannot seek to legislate for every eventuality in such a forum. Instead it leaves the day-to-day direction and operation of the organisation to the National Executive and the officers who are elected annually for the purpose. The decisions and actions of the Executive can be brought under scrutiny at this annual Ard Fheis, where approval or disapproval may be recorded.

This defines a clear framework within which any individual or group who seek to influence policy must operate. If the matter is one of major importance involving substantial policy shifts then it is clear they must advocate their views to the organisation in general, and seek to persuade an Ard Fheis to make the relevant decisions. On other matters which fall within the ambit of the National Executive they must abide by the Executive's decisions unless and until an Ard Fheis rules otherwise.

It is important that throughout the organisation as a whole no member, whether through over-enthusiasm or otherwise, will overstep his remit. When difficulties arise, as they inevitably must in any human society, it is the task of the National Executive to take appropriate action.

As for the Parliamentary Party, the primary requirement is to ensure that agreed party policy is properly presented and advocated, and that all members in their speeches and actions remain within the acceptable boundaries of policy as laid down. Should any difficulties or disputes arise, it is my task as leader to ensure that any disciplinary or corrective measures are taken. He is not worthy to be a leader who avoids or evades whatever problems arise and fails to face up to decisions and actions however unpalatable.

The role of Party Leader takes on an added dimension when his party is given the task and honour of governing the country. Last year it was my duty, a sad duty, to take unpalatable action when I believed, after deep and balanced considerations, that the acceptable boundaries of policy to which I refer were breached.

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It is fully recognised that membership of a political party calls for some restraint on individual freedom of action. It is unlikely, indeed impossible, that all members will hold identical views on every detail of policy, and the range of opinion will vary from subject to subject. Each member is free to advocate his or her views, but then must accept as party policy whatever the party decides. If the gap between the party viewpoint and their own thinking becomes too great then they are free to withdraw if they so desire. As true democrats we recognise and respect the right of every man to hold steadfastly to his views, and there is nothing dishonourable in being willing to accept a party decision which runs counter to one's personal views in some respects. In fact the contrary is the case - a willingness to sacrifice part of one's self for the greater good and for a common cause has, throughout history, been recognised as one of the noblest and most splendid of human endeavours.

Because politics deals with the ideas and ideals by which men live, and which they hold with deep and sometimes passionate conviction, men may be expected to advocate their views with vigour and enthusiasm. Again this is not wrong - the healthy thrust and counterthrust of dedicated and sincere protagonists create a climate in which all aspects of an issue are fully debated. Indeed the real danger to democracy comes from the reverse situation of apathy and lethargy where there is silent acquiescence in decisions to which only superficial examination is given.

It is clear then that there is no objection to any individual or group advocating policy developments or changes. It is also clear that there are limits, freely accepted and understood, to the methods and extent of legitimate advocacy for such changes. Such limits are the necessary safeguards to avoid the tyranny whereby any group can impose its views on the majority. Hence, no matter how sincerely held a conviction or viewpoint may be, no person nor group has the right to portray his or their views as being those of the party.

In some cases individuals may not realise that this is what they are doing. Because we are so close in time to the profound political changes which won for us our independence, and because there are still unresolved political issues in our country, much of the discussion is couched in terms of the Republican ideals enunciated by the patriots and

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leaders of the past. But history is itself a deaf witness, a blind onlooker and a silent spectator. It is the living who recreate the past and the voices which they hear echoing thoughts and ideals across the pages of history are their own.

In saying this I want at the same time fully to recognise our great debt to the past and its immeasurable contribution to the present. The way to do this is not to make the ideas and vision of our forefathers a mould in which to entomb the minds and actions of the living. Each generation must enrich and revitalise the tradition which it inherits, just as those whose names we so rightly revere brought new light and vision to their own times.

In our party the dominant political objective is the re-unification of our country. Since its foundation, Fianna Fáil policy has been, and is, to seek this objective by peaceful means. There has been no basic dispute nor questioning that this should be our attitude in any positive approach or initiatives towards the North.

In elaborating on our basic policy of peaceful means for promoting re-unification during past months I believe that I have been reflecting the thinking of Fianna Fáil, and because our party is the largest and most representative one, currently forming the Government party, I believe it also reflects the views of the vast majority of our people. If I am right in this then let it be made clear now since it is important that I as leader should know what the party desires.

It is not important that I personally as leader should be endorsed nor that my actions or statements be vindicated. The leader, any leader, as an individual is expendable. But the status of the leadership of our party is not, and we must ensure that it is not assailed nor undermined. We owe this not only to past leadership but more importantly to future leadership and to ourselves. What is important is that the fundamental principles of Fianna Fáil endorsed at successive Ard Fheiseanna and which bring us all together as members of this great party should not be distorted nor deviated from by any of its members or constituents.

No man nor woman is the repository of all that Fianna Fáil stands for.

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Fianna Fáil policy is the sum of what every member contributes and subscribes to - not what any one person interprets it to be. No man nor woman in this organisation is entitled to claim for himself or herself a superior brand of Republicanism than any other member.

When it is alleged that it is necessary to put the rank and file of Fianna Fáil on guard against a drift from Republicanism which could take place behind their backs, I say, clearly and unequivocally, as far as the leadership of Fianna Fáil is concerned, that such a draft exists nowhere except in the imagination of those who make the charge.

The Republican principles and Republican traditions to which Fianna Fáil dedicated itself almost forty-five years ago and in its adherence to which Fianna Fáil has never wavered and never will, are in the safe-keeping of all our party. There is no need for anybody to set himself up as the sole "keeper of the flame".

I have had the honour to lead the Fianna Fáil Party and Government over the past four years. I am not afraid to render an account of my stewardship over that period to any man and I totally reject any allegation - no matter where it comes from, be it from within or without - that I have ever by word or by deed reneged on the trust reposed in me by this Party or by the people as a whole in the last general election.

Either as a party or as a Government, Fianna Fáil has no reason to face the testing years immediately ahead with anything other than with firm confidence. As a party we have demonstrated that we can successfully overcome the stresses and strains, the hardship and the heartbreak imposed by internal difficulties, that we can refuse to be panicked or blown off course by such events, and that we can emerge from the process of internal questioning and soul-searching with renewed energies and even greater sense of purpose. As a Government we have shown our capacity to govern courageously, wisely and well, commanding the solid and consistent support of the Irish people whose aims and aspirations Fianna Fáil, from the beginning, has made its own. The measure of progress achieved has been greater than even those who founded Fianna Fáil could have thought possible forty-five years ago. When these illustrious predecessors of ours entrusted the future of this great national movement to us they did so in the firm belief that we would

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prove worthy of their trust - a trust to build not to destroy.
To bring their aims and aspirations to full fruition, that is our task.