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Farmers, Agriculture and Politics in the Irish Free State Area, 1919-1936.

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctorate (in History),

from the National University of Ireland, Cork.

Conducted under the Department of History, Faculty of Arts.

Submitted in July 2005.

Head of Department: Professor Dermot Keogh.

Supervised by Dr. Andy Bielenberg.



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Abbreviations.

A. C. C.	Agricultural Credit Corporation.
B. P. P.	British Parliamentary Papers.
C. A. I.	Cork Archives Institute.
Co.	County.
D.A.T.I.	Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, Ireland.
I. C. M. S. A.	Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers' Association.
I. F. A.	Irish Farmers' Association.
I. T. G. W. U.	Irish Transport and General Workers' Union.
I. R. A.	Irish Republican Army.
M. P.	Member of Parliament.
N. A. I.	National Archives, Ireland.
N. L. I.	National Library, Ireland.
TD.	Teachta Dála.
U. C .D. A .D.	University College Dublin Archives Department.

Unless otherwise stated, the term "union" refers to the Irish Farmers' Union.

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Finally, special thanks are due to Ms. Eileen Kelly, Office Manager, Fine Gael National Headquarters, who granted me permission to inspect the material held in the Fine Gael Collection housed in the Archives Department, University College Dublin.

The period under review entailed many attempts by farmers to form representative organisations and encompassed differing policy regimes. The thesis will open in 1919, when the first national organisation representing farmers, the Irish Farmers' Union, was formed. In 1922, the union established the Farmers' Party. By the mid- 1920's, a number of protectionist agricultural associations had been formed.

While the Farmers' Party was eventually absorbed by Cumann na nGaedheal, local associations of independent farmers occupied the resultant vacuum and contested the 1932 election. These organisations formed the nucleus of a new national organisation; the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League. The agricultural crisis caused by both the Great Depression and the Economic War facilitated the expansion of the league. The league formed a political party, the Centre Party, to contest the 1933 election. While the Centre Party was absorbed by the newly-formed Fine Gael, activists from the former farmer organisations led the campaign against the payment of annuities and rates. Many of them continued this campaign after 1934, when the Fine Gael leadership opposed the violent resistance to the collection of annuities. New farmer organisations were formed to co-ordinate this campaign which continued until 1936, the closing point of the thesis.

The thesis opens at a time when the British government was operating an interventionist agricultural policy; enforcing compulsory tillage, regulating produce prices, restricting exports and regulating wages. With the formation of the Irish Free State, the Cumann na nGaedheal administration adopted a free trade policy for agriculture but intervened to improve the standard of produce. With the onset of the Great Depression, Cumann na nGaedheal introduced tariffs on agricultural imports. After 1932, Cumann na nGaedheal

policy was reversed by Fianna Fáil, which promoted tillage at the expense of livestock, increased agricultural subsidies and promoted domestic consumption of produce over exportation.

No comprehensive study of any of the farmers organisations from the period under review exists in the historiography. A brief study of the Irish Farmers' Union was conducted by Healy and Smith in *Farm organisations in Ireland.*[2] Fitzpatrick provides a detailed assessment of the early years of the Irish Farmers' Union in *Politics and Irish Life*. However, the union is analysed by Fitzpatrick as part of a "conservative reaction" to the revolutionary period 1916-21 and not in the context of agricultural conditions. Fitzpatrick's study concludes in 1921[3] and his analysis has influenced Foster's limited treatment of the union, characterised by an exclusive treatment of the early years of that organisation.[4] Other studies exhibit this fragmented treatment of the Irish Farmers' Union over a narrow time period, coinciding with major political events. For example, Farry and Coogan have carried out local studies of farmers' organisations during the period 1919-1923,[5] while Daly has studied the resistance by the union to the payment of rates during the early 1920's.[6] Also, no attempt has been made to synthesise these disparate studies.

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[2] S. Healy & L. P. F. Smith, *Farm organisations in Ireland- A century of progress.* Four Courts Press, Dublin, 1996, p.18.

[3] D. Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life, 1913-21, provincial experience of war and revolution.* Cork University Press, Cork, 1998, pp.221-29, passim.

[4] R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972.* Allen Lane, London, 1988, p.513.

[5] M. Farry, *The aftermath of revolution, Sligo 1921-23.* University College Dublin Press, Dublin, 2000 p.41, pp.66-67 & pp.149-50. O. Coogan, *Politics and war in Meath.* Folens, Dublin, 1983 p.216 & p.245.

[6] M. Daly, *The Buffer State, The historical roots of the Department of the Environment.* Institute of Public Administration, Dublin, 1997, pp.86-87.

Disputes between organised farmers and trade unionists have received much attention from O'Connor[7] and Bradley. [8]However, both these authors are favourable to the labour cause. Their exclusively class-based analysis of the activities of the Irish Farmers' Union has been adopted by Ferriter in his treatment of farmers' organisations within his recent survey of Irish social history.[9]

The only description of the organisation of the Farmers' Party dates as far back as 1933, when Moss published a study of Irish political parties.[10] The subsequent historiography generally treated the Farmers' Party cursorily. For example, Murphy merely notes the existence of a farmers' party.[11] Lyons has noted that the Farmers' Party represented larger farmers but makes no reference to the role of the Irish Farmers' Union in its establishment.[12] Even when the Farmers' Party has been analysed, it is often treated in a condescending manner. Manning describes the party being as poorly organised, incoherent on policy issues while "even on questions of agriculture had little that was constructive or positive to say.",[13] without describing why the Farmers' Party experienced these difficulties.[14] Healy and Smith dismissed the party as being divided and lacking "an unifying philosophy or natural

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[7] E. O' Connor, *Syndicalism in Ireland, 1917-23.*Cork University Press, Cork, 1988, pp.160-61. *A labour history of Waterford.* Waterford Trades Council, Waterford, 1989, pp.167-73 & pp.189-96, passim.
[8] D. Bradley, *Farm Labourers, Irish struggle, 1920-76.* Athol Books, Belfast, 1988, pp.43-67, passim.
[9] D. Ferriter, *The transformation of Ireland, 1900-2000.* Profile Books, London, 2004, pp.211-12.
[10] W. Moss, *Political parties in the Irish Free State.* Columbia University Press, New York, 1933, p.57 & pp.142-45.
[11] J. A. Murphy, *Ireland in the Twentieth century.* Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 1975, p.59.
[12] F. S. L. Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine,* 2nd edition, Fontana, London, 1973, p.459.
[13] M. Manning, "The Farmers" in *Ireland 1945-70,* ed. J. J. Lee. Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 1979, pp.48-61, p.51
[14] Idem.

objective."[15] Fitzpatrick condescendingly dismisses the concerns of the Farmers' Party with "prosaic issues such as rates, rents, tariffs and the iniquity of measures against foot and mouth disease."[16] At best, Garvin argues that the Farmers' Party played "stabilising and conservative role in the system, supporting the Cumann na nGaedheal government loyally."[17] The historiography has also been characterised by error. For example, O' Halpin misinterprets the relationship between Cumann na nGaedheal and the Farmers' Party, incorrectly arguing that Cumann na nGaedheal tailored economic policy to gain the support of the Farmers' Party while the Farmers' Party was supposedly united in terms of economic policy.[18]

In contrast, Lee has made a more considered appraisal of the Farmers' Party through making comparisons with European peasant parties.[19] Some historians have made detailed studies of aspects of the Farmers' Party. Gaughan described attempts in 1926 to merge the Farmers' Party and the Redmondite National League.[20] Regan has made reference to the various negotiations conducted between the Farmers' Party and Cumann na nGaedheal during the 1920's.[21] However, these studies interpret the activities of the farmers within a narrow political context.

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[15] Healy & Smith, op.cit, p.23.
[16] D. Fitzpatrick, *The two Irelands, 1912-39.* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1988, p.202.
[17] T. Garvin, "Nationalist elites, Irish voters and Irish political development: a comparative perspective.", *Economic and Social Review,* Vol 8, April 1977, No.3, pp.161-87, p. 180.
[18] E. O' Halpin, "Politics and the state, 1922-32.", in *A new history of Ireland, VII: Ireland 1921-84.* ed J. R. Hill. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003, pp.62-85, pp.94-95.
[19] J. J. Lee, *Ireland, 1912-85, politics and society.* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989, p.72.
[20] J. A. Gaughan, *A political odyssey, Thomas O' Donnell, M.P. for West Kerry, 1900-18.* Kingdom Books, Dublin, 1983, pp.157-59.
[21] J. M. Regan, *The Irish Counter- Revolution, 1921-36, Treatyite politics and settlement in independent Ireland.* Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 1999, pp.150-52 & p.265.

The existence of the protectionist agricultural associations of the mid 1920's has been noted by Daly. Again reflecting the characteristic weakness of the historiography, she has placed such organisations within the context of the general demand for protectionist economic policies, rather than studying their origins in the policy debate within the Irish Farmers' Union.[22] Little research has been conducted on the farmers' organisations during the period 1927 to 1932, which encompasses the demise of the Irish Farmers' Union and the adoption of independent policies by a number of county associations. This led to independent farmer candidates contesting the 1932 general election. Again this dearth of research has led to inaccurate statements, such as those by Maye, who states that the independent farmer associations materialised from thin air just in time to contest the 1932 election![23] Little research has been conducted on the demands for the de-rating of agricultural land and the imposition of tariffs on agricultural produce.

The formation of the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League in 1932 and the Centre Party in 1933 have recently received attention from both Manning[24] and Regan.[25] However, these studies have examined the league in the context of the high politics of the era, rather than studying both the agricultural background and the membership of these organisations.
The Economic War and the resistance to the payment of annuities has been well researched. Cronin had observed that previous historians have studied the anti-annuity collection campaign in the context of the political conflict of the day rather than treating the campaign

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[22] Daly, *Industrial development and Irish national identity, 1922-39.*, op.cit, pp. 27-28.
[23] B. Maye, *Fine Gael, 1923-1987.* Blackwater Press, Dublin, 1993, p.31.
[24] M. Manning, *James Dillon, a biography.* Wolfhound Press, Dublin, 1999, pp.61-67, passim.
[25] Regan, op.cit, pp. 319-20.

as an autonomous response by farmers to a crisis which threatened their livelihood.[26] He has also emphasised the centrality of the Economic War and farmer agitation to the Blueshirt movement.[27] Orridge has argued that the resistance by farmers to the collection of land annuities and the opposition by the Blueshirts to Fianna Fáil were conflated during the Economic War.[28]

Apart from some brief references by Manning,[29] no research has been conducted on the latter stages of farmer resistance during the Economic War and the attempts to revive farmers' organisations. Apart from a cursory treatment by Gaughan,[30] little research has been conducted on the pro-Fianna Fáil United Farmers' Protective Association which existed in the mid-1930's. Underlying economic conditions have been detailed by Crotty and Ó Grada,[31] while Lee has elucidated the ideological basis of policy and Daly has traced the development of government agricultural policy,[32] without reference to the reaction of farmers to these policy changes.

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[26] M. Cronin, "The socio-economic background and membership of the Blueshirt movement, 1932-5.", *Irish Historical Studies*, XXIX, no. 114, November 1994, pp. 234-249, p.246.
[27] M. Cronin,"The Blueshirts and Irish politics." Four Courts Press, Dublin, 1997, p.167.
[28] A. W. Orridge, "The Blueshirts and the 'Economic War', a study of Ireland in the context of dependency theory.", *Political Studies*, Vol XXXI, No.3, September 1983, pp. 351-69, p.361.
[29] Manning, *James Dillon*, op.cit, p.106 & p.114.
[30] Gaughan, op.cit, pp.220-21.
[31] R. Crotty, *Irish agricultural production: Its volume and structure*. Cork University Press, Cork, 1968, pp.115-153, passim. C. Ó Grada, *Ireland, A New Economic History, 1780-1939*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1994, p.391.
[32] Lee, op.cit, pp.70-73, pp.112-117 & pp.183-86, passim. M. Daly, *The first Department*, op.cit, pp. 55-204, passim.

Land agitation was a catalyst for the organisation of farmers during the late nineteenth century.[33] However, the involvement of farmers' organisations in the land agitation that occurred in the post-War period has been ignored in the historiography. While Bull recognises that the land issue continued remained potent during the early years of the Irish Free State, he ignores the revived land agitation of the 1920's and the role played by the Irish Farmers' Union in this agitation, preferring to concentrate on the high politics of the payment of land annuities to Britain and the role of the land issue in Irish nationalist discourse.[34] Although Dooley has recently traced the progress of the land issue in the Irish Free State, he surprisingly ignores the role of the Unpurchased Tenants' Association, which was formed by the Irish Farmers' Union to promote land purchase in the early 1920's.[35]

Through extensive study of a range of sources between 1919-1936, encompassing the formation of farmers' organisations, and tracing their evolution in a continuous manner, this thesis challenges and re-examines the existing historiography regarding the role of farmers in Irish society. A principal source are the manuscripts of the Irish Farmers' Union which cover the period 1919-1924. Unfortunately no documentary evidence from the Irish Farmers' Union exists after 1924. This gap had been bridged to some extent by a study of the correspondence of George O' Callaghan-Westropp. The minute books of the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League have also been consulted.

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[33] J. S. Donnelly Jnr, *The land and the people of Nineteenth-Century Cork.* Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1975, pp.326-29. Laurence. M. Geary, *The Plan of Campaign, 1886-91.* Cork University Press, Cork, 1986, pp.22-23.

[34] P. Bull, *Land, Politics and Nationalism, a study of the Irish land question.* Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 1996, p.3 & pp. 187-88.

[35] T. Dooley, *'The land for the people', the land question in independent Ireland.* University College Dublin Press, Dublin, 2004, pp.39-56, passim.

For the activities of farmers after the formation of Fine Gael, records of the Fine Gael Standing Committee have been consulted. It is worth noting that while these sources have been studied previously, historians have not used them to examine the development of farming organisations. Material from the Crime and Security division of the Department of Justice has uncovered valuable information about the anti-annuity payment campaign after 1934. Files from the D.A.T.I., Department of Agriculture, Department of Taoiseach and Department of Finance, relating to deputations from farming organisations have been studied. Some of this material has been cited in previous studies but have been interpreted in a purely policy-driven context.

While no documentary evidence exists for the individual county associations of the Irish Farmers' Union, the protectionist agricultural associations and the independent farmer organisations of the early 1930's, their activities have been extensively recorded in local newspapers. In general, national newspapers, especially the *Irish Independent* and *Irish Times*, provided extensive coverage of the activities of the Irish Farmers' Union and the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League. Local newspapers, such as the *Anglo-Celt, Cork Examiner* and *Limerick Leader*, reported the activities of local farmers' associations in great detail, often providing verbatim reports of meetings. Newspapers also provide a corrective to a reliance on sources based on the views of Dublin-based government officials. The attitude of the farmer political parties to government agricultural policies are revealed in parliamentary debates but due caution is necessary with these sources, as attitudes expressed by parliamentarians were often distorted by partisan debate. Government reports have been consulted to provide the policy background for the activities of farmers.

The thesis will commence in 1919 and will examine the forces which led farmers to establish the Irish Farmers' Union, whose structure and support base will be described. The second chapter, commencing in 1922, will discuss why the Irish Farmers' Union established a political party. It will consider both the response of farmers to government agricultural legislation and why the union began to experience policy disputes. The third chapter will explain the organisational decline of the union after 1925 and how the Farmers' Party was eventually emasculated by Cumann na nGaedheal. This chapter will also reveal why protectionist farmers split from the union to establish their own organisations.

The fourth chapter will account for the demise of the Irish Farmers' Union between 1928 and 1932, and explain why farmers repudiated the union as a medium to air their grievances. The response by farmers to the Great Depression and why protectionist policies became increasingly favoured by farmers will also be considered. The fifth chapter, encompassing the period from 1932 to 1934, will examine the response by farmers to both the Economic War and the interventionist agricultural policy of Fianna Fáil. The structure and support base of the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League will be described. The chapter will explain why farmers dissolved their organisation to form the Fine Gael party. The attempts by Fianna Fáil to gain support within the agricultural community for their policies will be elucidated. The sixth chapter will explain the continuance of the anti-annuity payment campaign by farmers in a number of localities after 1934, in spite of opposition by Fine Gael. The failure of such farmers both in extending their campaign and in forming a new national farmers' organisation will be described. The chapter will also explain why the previously pro-Fianna Fáil United Farmers' Protective Association now opposed their former sponsors.

The conclusion will draw upon the findings of the individual chapters to explain why farmers failed to establish a lasting representative association. It will establish the social and economic outlook of organised farmers during this period and will suggest how previous interpretations of farmers' organisations in the historiography need to be revised.

Chapter I.

The establishment of the Irish Farmers' Union and the struggle against the government and the trade unions; 1919-21.

By early 1919, Irish farmers made a determined effort to organise themselves. Until this date, no national representative body existed for farmers, whereas labourers had formed trade unions in the 1860's and the Dublin Employers' Federation had been formed in 1911.[1] Many of the factors which prevented the formation of a national vocational farmers' organisation in the pre-War period have been noted by Kennedy; such as differences in farm size and agricultural systems and the decline in land agitation, which had in the nineteenth-century been a focus of unity for farmers.[2] However, opposition to the Corn Production Act of 1917, which enforced compulsory tillage, provided an incentive for farmers to organise themselves. The Dublin-based Irish Farmers' Union, which had been in existence since 1911, provided an organisational lead. In the wake of the opposition of the Corn Production Act, the membership of the union expanded beyond Dublin.[3]

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[1] Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine*, op. cit, p.272 & p.282.
[2] L. Kennedy, "Farmers, traders and agricultural politics in pre-Independence Ireland." in *Irish Peasants; violence & political unrest, 1780-1914.*, ed. S. Clark & J. S. Donnelly. Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1983, pp.339-74, pp.366-67.
[3] *Irish Farmer*, October 25th 1919.

By October of 1918, the union officially decided to organise on a national basis and the first annual congress was held in 1919. The President of the union, R. A. Butler, argued that all sectors of society, except farmers, had the benefit of representative bodies. Butler was optimistic that farmers could unite under a single representative organisation.

The first issue facing farmers was the inability to sell oats at the maximum price. The Clare landlord Colonel George O' Callaghan-Westropp, criticised the ineffectiveness of the D. A. T .I. and the Council of Agriculture in this area, describing, in 1919, the tillage scheme as "evidently intended to be a kind of benefit association for rats and mice."[4] W .J. Fahy, Secretary of the Cork Farmers' Association, argued that farmers should adopt trade union methods to achieve higher prices for their produce. He argued that farmers should cease the production of food for commercial purposes until the government increased the price of agricultural produce, which would allow for increased wages for agricultural labourers. However, Fahy's policy was not supported by other delegates.[5] It was evident that the union would oppose what it regarded as adverse government intervention in agriculture.

The Irish Farmers' Union campaigned to revoke compulsory tillage measures. The Tillage (Ireland) General Order 1919 stipulated that all holders in excess of 200 statute acres of arable land had to cultivate a minimum of 20% of their holdings.[6] This

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[4] *Cork Examiner*, January 15th 1919.
[5] Idem.
[6] *Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland, 19th Annual General Report of the Department, 1918-19.* B.P.P., 1920, Vol IX, cmd.929, p.75.

measure was resented by the farmers' associations. As early as November 1918, the County Clare Farmers' & Ratepayers' Association had protested at the enforcement of compulsory tillage to the D.A.T.I.[7] Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp lobbied the Chief Secretary for Ireland, J. P. MacPherson, on this issue. O' Callaghan-Westropp argued that compulsory tillage orders actually reduced food production. This was due to the enforcement of an uniform percentage of land to be tilled, regardless of soil and climatic conditions of farms, while ignoring the type of agriculture practised on individual farms. The problem of harvesting hay in a limited period of time was also ignored by the tillage order.[8] In further correspondence, O' Callaghan-Westropp informed MacPherson that the compulsory tillage orders were causing considerable unease amongst farmers. O' Callaghan-Westropp wrote, " it is most undesirable that another agitation and one founded on real injustice, should be added to the embarrassment of the Irish government."[9]

Farmers from North Kildare also protested against the tillage regulations, arguing that compulsory tillage prevented the most economic use of land. Oat stocks at present could not be disposed of and farmers were forced to sell tillage produce at less than the minimum price. The issue of labour agitation was linked with the tillage orders. Farmers argued that the payment of unemployment benefit forced farmers to raise wages, while the I. T. G. W. U. used the threat of industrial action during harvest time as a means to

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[7] N.A.I., D. A. T. I, A. G. 1. / A.14287/19. Deputation from Co. Clare Farmers' Association, 1919, re. compulsory tillage. Resolution submitted by Richard Stacpoole, Chairman of Association, November 16th 1918.

[8] Ibid, letter from Col. O'Callaghan-Westropp to the Rt. Hon J. P. MacPherson, Chief Secretary for Ireland, January 21st 1919.

[9] Ibid, letter from Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp to the Rt. Hon. J .P. MacPherson, January 29th 1919.

intimidate farmers.[10] A deputation from the Irish Farmers' Union, which included W. J. Fahy and Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp, met the D. A. T. I. on these issues. O' Callaghan-Westropp argued that farmers were not opposed to increased tillage but wished to make it economically viable. However, compulsory tillage increased the demand for labour and facilitated the expansion of trade union membership. O' Callaghan-Westropp warned that if a solution was not found a farmers' strike would be organised in certain counties. W. J. Fahy threatened that farmers would defy the law if compulsory tillage was maintained while "farmers contended that unless the labour threat was adverted they were between upper and nether millstones and would rebel."[11] T. P. Gill, Secretary to the D.A.T.I., stated that labourers had a case as well, referring to the high inflation of the period which was eroding the living standards of labourers. An end to compulsory tillage would lead to industrial disputes. He cited the uncertain condition of the international food supply as another reason to maintain compulsory tillage.[12]

Another union deputation met the Chief Secretary on the same issue. Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp described difficulties faced by farmers in transporting crops and referred to losses suffered by farmers due to a succession of poor harvests. Lord Cloncurry argued that tillage cultivation on grassland retarded the livestock sector. R.A. Butler stated that the union was not opposed to tillage but was opposed to compulsory tillage. He further

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[10] N.A.I., D.A.T.I., A.G.1 / A.8786/19. Deputation from North Kildare Farmers on tillage regulations, 1919. Resolution to H. T. Barrie, Vice-President D.A.T.I., from North Kildare Farmers' Federation, February 1st 1919.

[11] Ibid, report of deputation received from North Kildare Farmers' Federation by T. P. Gill, Secretary, D.A.T.I., February 1st 1919.

[12] Idem.

argued that if the I. T. G. W. U. demand for a 50/- per week wage was granted, farmers would either abandon tillage or carry it out at a loss.[13] Eventually the union called for a withdrawal of the compulsory tillage order. It was argued that it was unfair to make farmers dependent upon extra labour without guaranteeing either the supply of that labour or to fix wages which would allow the farmers to make a profit.[14] The lobbying carried out by the farmers' associations did bear fruit. On the 4th of April 1919, a new order was issued which reduced the minimum percentage of a holding to be tilled.[15]

Yet another union delegation met H. T. Barrie, vice-president of the D. A. T. I., Professor Campbell and T. P. Gill in June 1919. The delegation sought automatic representation by members of farmers' associations on the Council of Agriculture, an advisory body comprised of farming interests which advised the D. A. T. I., arguing that; "there was an impression that in the future there might be very few farmers on the County Councils and this would be reflected on the representation in the Council of Agriculture."[16] The farmers correctly anticipated a future Sinn Féin victory in the local elections. However, the Council was not convened from 1920 onwards,[17] and the Irish Farmers' Union lost an opportunity to influence agricultural policy.

The deputation sought an end to restrictions on live pig and milch cow exports. They

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[13] N. A. I., D.A.T.I., A.G.1 /A.14287. Report of meeting with deputation from County Clare Farmers' Association to the Chief Secretary for Ireland and Dr. Hinchcliff, D.A.T.I., February 25th 1919.
[14] *Irish Times*, March 14th 1919.
[15] *19th Annual Report of the D.A.T.I.*, op.cit., p.76.
[16] N. A. I., D.A.T.I., A.G.1 /G.4726/19, Irish Farmers' Union delegation. Report of meeting with delegation, June 19th 1919.
[17] Daly, *The first department*, op.cit, p.105.

also demanded the free sale of hay. Nevertheless, Professor Campbell argued that prices controls would be maintained. Restrictions on milch cow exports were necessary to maintain stock levels. T. P. Gill argued that regulation of agriculture was necessary to guarantee the long-term interests of farmers. Barrie stated that consumer interests had to be taken into account as well,[18] again mindful of the effects of high inflation of the period upon the non-agricultural population. The union now changed the nature of its demands and sought to turn government regulation to its advantage. W. J .Fahy argued that farmers should seek guaranteed prices, markets and wages.[19] In July, a resolution was passed by the union which called on the government to introduce legislation which would guarantee economic returns on all commercial activity, including agriculture.[20] However, the D.A.T.I. rejected this demand.[21]

Some farmers contemplated direct action against adverse government regulation. Members of the County Dublin Farmers' Association were instructed to withhold root crops from sale until a free market for such produce was restored or when an economic fixed price was established.[22] The County Louth Executive opposed the control of both prices and the marketing of potatoes by either the government or by a private cartel, believing that farmers should have a free market of all their produce.[23] A correspondent to the *Irish Farmer* argued that the existing system of Food Control discriminated against

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[18] N. A. I., D.A.T.I., A.G.1 /G.4726/19, Report of meeting with Irish Farmers' Union delegation, June 19th 1919, op.cit.
[19] *Cork Examiner*, March 24th 1919.
[20] N.A.I., D.A.T.I., A.G.1 /G.4726/19. Copy of resolution from M .F. O' Hanlon, Irish Farmers' Union, July 22nd 1919
[21] Ibid, note by Mr. Deegan, to T. P. Gill, D.A.T.I., August 9th 1919.
[22] *Irish Independent*, October 23rd 1919.
[23] *Irish Farmer*, October 25th 1919.

farmers. Unless the Irish Farmers' Union achieved full representation on all bodies which had responsibility for setting the price of agricultural produce, they should refuse to recognise any fixed prices established by such bodies. The correspondent believed that resolutions and meetings by farmers were useless, direct action was necessary to redress this issue.[24]

The disposal of excess tillage produce also caused difficulties for farmers. Following the cessation of the War, the Wheat Commission reduced oat purchases, a situation partially alleviated when the D. A. T. I. negotiated the purchase of 50,000 tons of oats. The tillage marketing problem was made acute by restrictions on grain exports. While grain exports from Ireland to Great Britain were not restricted, licences were required for the export of grain to countries outside of the United Kingdom.[25] These restrictions caused frustration amongst farmers.

A deputation from the Irish Farmers' Union met D. A. T. I. officials on this issue. Mr. O' Loughlin of the Wexford Farmers' Association stated that farmers sought a free market for the sale of barley. He described how Wexford grain merchants operated a cartel which reduced the prices paid to farmers for their produce. The Wexford Farmers' Association intended to export grain to France and Belgium which would provide an alternative market for farmers' produce. However, delays were experienced in obtaining export licences. O' Loughlin believed it was natural justice when farmers had been

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[24] Ibid, October 4th 1919.
[25] *19th Annual General Report of the D.A.T.I.*, op.cit., p.82.

compelled to grow grain that they should be facilitated to market it. Mr. Maher of the Kilkenny Farmers' Association argued that farmers experienced so many problems in marketing oats and barley that they would not comply with the tillage orders. He believed that a free market should be restored for the tillage sector.[26]

These complaints demonstrate how adverse government regulation led some farmers to oppose state regulation of agriculture. By late 1919, the Irish Farmers' Union National Executive called for an increase in the number of licences issued for the exportation of oats and barley. An end was sought to restrictions on cattle exportation while increased representation of farmers on the Agricultural Wages Board was demanded.[27] Some members of the Irish Farmers' Union began to criticise the principle of state regulation of agriculture, rather than focussing on specific issues within the regulated sphere. Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp criticised the necessity for state interference in agriculture. He argued that control of prices, compulsory tillage, government marketing schemes and regulation of wage rates were part of an attempt by an urban country to achieve cheap food from a rural country; "The whole weight of the English industrial centres were concentrated on the Irish farmer and unless they were prepared they might find themselves driven back to slave labour."[28] In correspondence with Mr. Hussey de Burgh, O' Callaghan-Westropp emphasised that the union sought the abolition of state control of agriculture and the abolition of compulsory tillage in favour of a voluntary scheme.[29]

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[26] N.A.I., D.A.T.I., A.G.1 /G.4726/19. Report of meeting with deputation from the Irish Farmers' Union to the D.A.T.I., November 26th 1919.
[27] Ibid, press cutting, *Irish Times* 21st November 1919.
[28] *Cork Examiner*, October 24th 1919.
[29] U. C. D. A. D. , George O' Callaghan-Westropp papers, P.38/4/134. Letter from

By 1920, union members abandoned any hope that government intervention could be altered in their favour and now favoured de-regulation. For example, the Cork Farmers' Association attacked the continuation of compulsory tillage while criticising the restrictions on butter prices and exports. The association argued for "the removal of the present irritating controls which are impeding the farmers at every turn to the detriment of the farming industry."[30] The Limerick Farmers' Association argued that the existing controlled prices for dairy produce were less than the existing costs of production. The National Executive passed a resolution calling for an end to regulated dairy produce prices.[31]

The continued regulation of the butter industry caused hardship for dairy farmers. During the months of October and November 1920, export licences for butter were suspended in order to maintain domestic supply.[32] As a result creameries and butter merchants amassed large stocks of butter which could not be disposed of. The Cork Farmers' Association warned that as a result of this policy, the dairying sector was rendered uneconomic and the only solution was to de-regulate butter exportation.[33] A member of the Cavan Farmers' Association, Mr. Cassidy, believed that butter export licences were issued to those who were not involved in butter production. He stated "it is about time

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Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp to Mr. J. Hussey de Burgh, January 28th 1920.

[30] *Cork Examiner*, February 23rd, 1920.

[31] *Irish Farmer*, January 31st 1920.

[32] *D.A.T.I., 21st Annual General Report of the Department, 1920-21.* Stationery Office, Dublin, 1922, A.2, p.112.

[33] *Cork Examiner*, October 18th 1920.

that the Irish farmers did something to bring to their senses the bungling autocrats at the department who are playing havoc with one of our chief industries."[34] At a National Executive meeting of the union, W. J. Fahy, Denis Gorey and Col. Bryan, amongst others, described the regulation of the butter industry as part of a conspiracy by the trade union movement and the D.A.T.I. to crush the economic power of the farmers. A resolution was passed which stated that if extra butter export licences were not issued, farmers would be unable to pay annuities.[35] In spite of disturbed political conditions of 1921, farmers obtained some measure of de-regulation. The compulsory tillage order was revoked in February.[36] The exportation of butter was de-regulated in March.[37] Some farmers regained their enthusiasm for government regulation in agriculture. Denis Gorey, a prominent member of the Kilkenny Farmers' Association, supported a licensing scheme for bulls to improve progeny.[38] A delegate to the 1921 union congress suggested that a tariff be imposed on imported barley, given the importation of Canadian produce.[39]

The most urgent issue facing the Irish Farmers' Union was the deteriorating labour situation. Agricultural labourers joined the I. T. G. W. U. and made high wage demands, hoping to share the benefits of inflated war-time agricultural prices. Initially farmers' associations treated the labour movement with caution. For example, the Cork Farmers'

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[34] *Irish Times*, November 3rd 1920.
[35] Ibid, November 19th 1920.
[36] *21st Annual General Report of the D.A.T.I.*, op.cit., p.78.
[37] Ibid, p.112.
[38] *Irish Farmer*, April 24th 1920.
[39] Ibid, March 12th 1921.

Association refused a request to affiliate with the Dublin Employers' Federation.[40] The Chairman of the Queenstown and Great Island Farmers' Association stated that the union was not hostile to labour and wished to improve the position of labourers.[41] However, the urge to oppose the trade unions was another factor which encouraged farmers to organise, thus overcoming the divisive social and economic factors identified by Kennedy which retarded the growth of farmers' organisations in the past.[42] For example, F. V. de Vere, Secretary of the Kildare Farmers Association, argued that threatened labour activity by the I. T. G. W. U. in North Kildare led farmers in the locality to form a farmers' association in 1918.[43] Despite the wishes of some members of the union, many farmers adopted a hostile attitude to the trade unions and the consequent tension facilitated the expansion of the Irish Farmers' Union.

However, attempts were made to resolve disputes with the labour movement. For instance, a conference was organised between the I. T. G. W. U. and the North Kerry Farmers' Association to resolve wage disputes. During the conference, the farmer delegates argued that if excessive wage demands were granted to labourers, farmers would be forced to lay off workers and would abandon tillage, while the trade union delegates accused the farmers of mistreating labourers.[44] The conference collapsed with local trade unionists rejecting accusations by local farmers that they were Bolsheviks. During all the subsequent labour disputes, farmers would accuse trade unionists of being

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[40] *Cork Examiner*, March 24th 1919.
[41] Ibid, May 6th 1919.
[42] Kennedy, op.cit, pp.366-67.
[43] *Irish Farmer*, October 4th 1919.
[44] *Cork Examiner*, April 2nd 1919.

motivated by either political or communistic motives in taking industrial action. Following the failure of the conference, a spate of strikes erupted in North Kerry. In April, farmers throughout East Donegal locked out labourers.[45] In May, a major strike by agricultural labourers took place in County Dublin. The dispute resulted from a demand by the County Dublin Farmers' Association to its members to lock out all I. T. G. W. U. employees, unless labourers in the Lucan, Palmerstown and Clondalkin areas resumed work. [46] Thomas Fitzpatrick, the County Secretary of the association, stated that the I. T. G. W. U. had rejected the association's wage offer of 36/- per week. This offer was higher than the prevailing wage paid by the Agricultural Wages Board. The discipline of the association was tested when eight farmers in the Crumlin district granted the I. T. G. W. U. wage demand to their employees. These farmers were expelled from the association. The Chairman of the association, J. J. Lawlor, argued that excessive wage demands would reduce employment and force farmers to revert to rearing livestock.[47] The National Executive of the Irish Farmers' Union endorsed the stance of the Dublin farmers. However, intervention by Gordon Campbell, a Ministry of Labour official, resolved the dispute.[48]

As a result of these experiences, farmers criticised the existing labour regulation system. At a meeting of the Tullow branch of the Carlow Farmers' Association, a resolution was passed stating that agriculture would be harmed if I. T. G. W. U. demands were acceded

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[45] Bradley, *Farm Labourers*, op.cit, p.45.
[46] *Irish Independent*, May 7th 1919.
[47] Ibid, May 8th 1919.
[48] Ibid, May 10th 1919.

to. These farmers argued that the government should establish a minimum wage for farmers as well as for labourers.[49] Denis Gorey criticised the I. T. G. W. U demand for a wage increase of 6/- per week and a fifty hour week. He stated that "the Wages Board was the anchor of the unrest in Ireland and so long as it was there, so long would the loafers, and even honest workmen be led onto strikes."[50] R. A. Butler informed the D.A.T.I. that farmers were unhappy at the constitution of the Wages Board. The farmer representatives should be directly elected by farmers. Small farmers should also be represented on the board. Butler argued that the union should be responsible for the election of farmer delegates. In addition, the neutral board members should have some knowledge of agriculture. H. T. Barrie was favourable to the demand of the farmers; "he was fully alive to the farmers' difficulty. He might say that he agreed that the farmers on the Board should be practical men who knew their business."[51]

In the ensuing discussion, reference was made to the difficulty experienced by farmers in obtaining labour for overtime work and for Saturday afternoons. Butler made reference to the previous strikes by the I. T. G. W. U. So far these strikes had been resolved. However, Butler feared that "some of the men beaten in the strikes were biding their time and preparing for a big effort later. The trade union officials were not always able to control them."[52] Barrie sympathised with the difficulties experienced by the farmers

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[49] Ibid, April 26th 1919.
[50] Ibid, July 15th 1919.
[51] N.A.I., D.A.T.I., A.G.1 /G.4726/19. Report of meeting with Irish Farmers' Union delegation, June 19th 1919, op.cit.
[52] Idem.

and agreed with them that the trade union demand for a 48 hour week was undesirable.[53] Some D.A.T.I. officials believed that the formation of the Irish Farmers' Union would assist in alleviating labour disputes. A departmental memo argued that

"owing to the extremely rapid organisation, of both farmers and their workspeople within the last two years, the wages boards, which were admirably suited to the conditions prevailing in 1917, have since lost a considerable amount of their effectiveness."

To replace the existing system, conciliation boards made up of both farmers and labourers were recommended. These would assist the Irish Farmers' Union, as it would "give a real authority to the farmers' associations as against any individual farmer in the district."[54]

Similar ideas were suggested by Jonathan Russell, a member of the Louth Farmers' Association. In correspondence with T. P. Gill, Russell stated that farmers could not afford the wage increases demanded by farm labourers. Russell suggested the formation of a court of arbitration to settle these disputes. He stated that; "the fixing of fair wages ought not to be more impossible than the fixing of fair rents before the war, a standard must be found very soon or disaster will result."[55] In reply, Gill welcomed the fact that farmers were willing to consider arbitration. He made reference to the East Donegal dispute, which was aggravated by the unwillingness of local farmers to accept arbitration.

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[53] Idem.
[54] N.A.I., D.A.T.I., A.G.1 / G.2863/19. Labour disputes and farm labourers, undated memo.
[55] Ibid, letter from Jonathan Russell, Dunleer, Co. Louth to T. P. Gill, Secretary, D.A.T.I., June 22nd 1919.

He requested from Russell if ;

"your friends in the farmers' union could get the matter discussed in such a way as to bring some representative body of employers to a definite conclusion, whether they should apply or not for the setting up of such machinery, you would be advancing matters in a practical way."[56]

These attempts at conciliation were overtaken by major labour disputes in Counties Meath and Kildare. In July 1919, the Meath Farmers' Association attempted to impose upon the I. T. G. W. U. a wage settlement which the association had earlier negotiated with the Meath Labour Union, a rival body representing agricultural labourers.[57] The I. T. G. W. U. members then took industrial action. Farmers and their families were forced to save the harvest themselves. These difficulties did not weaken the resolve of the Meath Farmers' Association to resist the I. T. G. W. U. Thomas Austin, the Secretary of the association, claimed that out of 1,309 farmers, only 3 small farmers had settled with the I. T. G. W. U. labourers.[58]

One member of the association, Major Arthur Preston, described the effects of the dispute to the D. A. T. I. He stated how I. T. G. W. U. members prevented agricultural produce from reaching Dublin. Preston argued that the activity undertaken by the I. T. G. W. U. extended beyond the norms of a normal labour dispute. He argued that trade union officials were "preaching socialism and telling the people that wages will be

[56] Ibid, letter from T. P. Gill to Jonathan Russell, June 24th 1919.
[57] Coogan, *Politics and war in Meath*, op.cit, p.245.
[58] *Irish Independent*, July 24th 1919.

increased so that no farmer can live."[59] Preston later described how with his labourers on strike he could not save his harvest. He had fulfilled his duty to his Monarch by abiding with D. A. T. I. compulsion in tilling his holding. However, these crops were now lost due to I. T. G. W. U. action.[60] Eventually, the D. A. T. I. convened a conference attended by the I. T. G. W. U. and Meath Farmers' Association delegates where a settlement was reached.[61] The settlement provided an opportunity for farmers' associations and trade unions to co-operate to resolve industrial disputes. Mixed success was experienced in Meath. The I. T. G. W. U. alleged that some members of the Meath Farmers' Association broke the settlement by refusing to re-employ labourers who had been on strike.[62] Charles McKenna, the Chairman of the association, stated that it had ordered all members to re-employ all labourers who had been on strike.[63] Thomas Austin wrote to the D.A.T.I. of the adverse effects of the agreement upon association members. Only a single case existed where a breech of the agreement was reported against a member of the association. Austin stated that in abiding by the agreement, which provided for wage increases, farmers would be forced to lay off workers. Austin added; " the association is anxious to counteract any action which tends towards aggravating ill-feeling. It's policy has been and will be co-operation with labour *where possible.* "[64]

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[59] N. A. I., D.A.T.I., A.G.1 /A.13029/21. Co. Meath Farmers' Association, labour dispute. Letter from Major Arthur Preston to D.A.T.I., July 25th 1919.
[60] Ibid, letter from Major Arthur Preston to D.A.T.I., August 16th 1919.
[61] *Irish Independent*, August 25th 1919.
[62] N. A. I., D.A.T.I., A.G.I ./A.13029/21. Letter from Thomas Foran, I. T. G. W. U., to T. P. Gill, D.A.T.I., September 4th 1919.
[63] Ibid, letter from Charles McKenna to T. P. Gill, September 8th 1919.
[64] Ibid, letter from Thomas Austin to T. P. Gill, November 21st 1919. Emphasis in original.

The Kildare dispute originated when the I. T. G. W. U. submitted a demand for a 45/- per week wage in March. The Kildare Farmers' association rejected these demands. By June 27th labourers employed by members of the association took industrial action. In response, members of the association implemented a lock-out of all I. T. G. W. U. members.[65] The I. T. G. W. U. attempted to portray the Kildare Farmers' Association as being unrepresentative of ordinary farmers. Trade unionists in Newbridge claimed that farmers in various localities had accepted the I. T. G. W. U. claim for a 35/- per week wage and had repudiated the association. This was disputed by F. V. de Vere. He argued that the majority of those farmers who had settled with the labourers had never been members of the association.[66] Of the 600 association members affected by the strike, only 20 members had settled with the I. T. G. W. U., most of these being small farmers. De Vere described how as a result of the strike, farmers could not save the turnip and oat crop. Cattle could not be transported to Dublin. He also claimed that non-union labourers were intimidated by the I. T. G. W. U. strikers. The Kildare farmers rejected the intervention of an independent arbitrator as they believed "that an arbitrator might be appointed who would have no practical knowledge of conditions in the country and who might be carried away by rates of wages paid in the city."[67]

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[65] *Irish Farmer*, October 4th 1919.
[66] *Irish Independent*, July 17th 1919.
[67] Ibid, August 20th 1919.

In spite of such bellicose sentiments the Kildare dispute was resolved. A settlement was reached in the Athy district, due to the efforts of the local Sinn Féin TD Art O'Connor.[68] Afterwards the association and the I. T .G. W. U negotiated a settlement for the rest of the county. One feature of this settlement was that farmers could dismiss labourers as long as such labourers were not dismissed on the grounds of union membership.[69]

Industrial disputes between farmers and labourers extended to Munster. In Cashel, I. T. G. W. U. activists took industrial action over the refusal of the local farmers' association to grant a 36/- per week wage, in addition to a nine hour day.[70] This dispute spread to the Fethard district. At a meeting of local farmers, it was stated that farmers had to defend themselves from impossible demands by trade unionists. Farmers would treat the just demands of labourers fairly but would oppose politically-motivated strikes.[71] Dairying districts in West Limerick were also affected by industrial action carried out by farm labourers and creamery staff. Farmers were forced to milk their own cows.[72] John Boohan and Michael Walsh, members of the Limerick Farmers' association, argued that these labour disputes were forcing farmers to abandon dairying.[73] At a meeting of the Kilkenny Farmers' Association, Denis Gorey condemned the burning of farmers' ricks of hay. Gorey blamed these incidents on I. T. G. W. U. extremists and

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[68] Ibid, August 22nd 1919.
[69] Ibid, August 25th 1919.
[70] *Cork Examiner*, August 13th 1919.
[71] *Irish Independent*, August 20th 1919.
[72] *Report of the Departmental Committee on the decline of dairying in Ireland, D.A.T.I.*, B.P.P. 1920, Vol ix, cmd 808, p.8.
[73] *Cork Examiner*, September 27th 1919.

he warned, "if one can play this game I can promise two can play it."[74], which expressed the desire of some farmers to employ violent means to suppress the trade unions. In Waterford, Irish Farmers' Union activist and local landlord, Sir John Keane, condemned the boycotting carried out by local trade unionists.[75] Not all organised expressed outright opposition to the trade union movement. John Maher informed the Sligo County Executive that the union was not antagonistic to labourers. He warned that a poorly paid labour force was a liability to the agricultural sector.[76] At a joint meeting of the Clare and Limerick Farmers' Associations, T. W. Bennett advocated the creation of a conciliation board for the dairying industry which would resolve disputes between farmers and labourers, an echo of the proposals made by T. P. Gill.[77]

The spring of 1920 witnessed a major confrontation between the Irish Farmers' Union and the I. T. G. W. U. On the 1st April, the Butter (Ireland) Order was revoked, an action which restored the free exportation of butter.[78] However, trade unionists enforced an embargo on butter and bacon exports[79] until butter sufficient for domestic consumption was retained. The trade unionists also demanded the maintenance of low retail prices.[80] The embargo was resented by members of the union. At a National Executive meeting, Denis Gorey stated that the labour movement had assumed the powers of a government through their actions. The dispute established a precedent where a section of society

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[74] *Irish Farmer*, October 8th 1919.
[75] Idem.
[76] Ibid, October 25th 1919.
[77] Ibid, November 1st 1919.
[78] *D.A.T.I., 20th Annual General Report of the Department, 1919-20*, Stationery Office, Dublin, 1921, A.1, p.112.
[79] *Cork Examiner*, April 23rd 1920.
[80] Ibid, April 16th 1920.

could take militant action in order to set the price of a product. Yet Gorey seemed oblivious of the fact that the union did take militant action in the past to increase the price of their own produce! A Limerick delegate, Batt Laffan, argued that the trade union embargo was part of an anti-rural conspiracy by urban interests.[81]

At a meeting of the Kilkenny Farmers' Association, Colonel Loftus Bryan stated that both the embargo and the government regulation of wage determination were part of a policy to prevent farmers from determining the price of their own produce. Farmers faced the following choice; either to cease production or to establish a paramilitary force which would organise the transit and marketing of agricultural produce.[82] At a subsequent National Executive meeting , Denis Gorey supported the formation of a "Farmers' Freedom Force" as suggested by Col. Bryan. Gorey believed that the use of physical force was the only solution to the farmers' difficulties. He also suggested the formation of a special embargo committee to monitor developments.

The formation of a paramilitary force was not welcomed by other union activists. W. J. Fahy, who normally adopted a militant stance in the support of farmers' rights, believed that county associations should evaluate the political situation before approving the formation of any paramilitary body.[83] County executives in Cork, Galway and Dublin either opposed or expressed unease at the proposed force.[84] However, the formation of

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[81] *Irish Farmer*, April 24th 1920.
[82] Ibid, May 8th 1920.
[83] Ibid, May 22nd 1920.
[84] Ibid, July 10th 1920.

the proposed force proved unnecessary when trade unionists lifted the embargo on the 25th of April 1920.[85]

Relations between the farmers' associations and trade unionists remained tense during 1920, although disputes seldom occurred. Some associations continued to protest against the operation of the Agricultural Wages Board. The Limerick Farmers' Association criticised the excessive wages fixed for agricultural labourers.[86] The Wexford Farmers' Association argued that the proposed reduction in the hours worked by agricultural labourers would only have the effect of reducing wages and output.[87] In spite of such differences, farmers and labourers began to co-operate to resolve their differences. Bradley describes how county wage agreements were negotiated between trade unionists and farmers' associations in Dublin and Waterford. In Limerick a conciliation committee of I. T. G. W. U. and Irish Farmers' Union delegates was established,[88] following the earlier suggestion of T. W. Bennett.

At national level, the Irish Farmers' Union achieved its aim of gaining influence over the determination of wages paid to agricultural labourers. In October of 1920, the membership of the Agricultural Wages Board was expanded. The union secured five places on the Board. Their delegates included R. A. Butler, Thomas Linehan of the Cork

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[85] P. Bew, "Sinn Féin, agrarian radicalism and the War of Independence, 1919-21" in *The revolution in Ireland, 1879-1922*, ed. D. G. Boyce. Macmillan, London, 1988, pp.217-34, p.227.
[86] *Irish Farmer*, February 7th 1920.
[87] Ibid, April 10th 1920.
[88] Bradley, op.cit., p.51.

Farmers' Association and the Tipperary landlord, T. B. Ponsonby.[89] The Chairman of the Board, J. V. Coyle, argued that conferences between farmers and labourers, as in the example of the Wages Board, encouraged co-operation between both these groups.[90] However, such moderation was often achieved through fear rather than through good-will. For example, T. B. Ponsonby informed Professor Campbell how he re-employed two labourers he had earlier dismissed, due to fear of action by the I. T. G. W. U. Ponsonby reversed his earlier action as he wished to reduce tension in "the critical agricultural condition existing at the moment."[91]

By early 1921, fears arose among farmers that labour disputes would resume. The AGM of the Dublin Farmers' Association recommended the establishment of a central emergency fund to assist those farmers who were engaged in industrial disputes.[92] However, the continued operation of the Agricultural Wages Board was resented by farmers. The board increased wages in March, an action which was resented by farmers who argued that they could not afford to pay such a wage increase given declining agricultural prices and a poor harvest in the previous autumn.[93] Farmers' associations in Limerick and Waterford criticised this increase in wages.[94] At a meeting of the Kilkenny Farmers' Association, Denis Gorey repeated the argument that in the context of declining agricultural prices, farmers could not increase wages paid to agricultural labourers. The

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[89] *20th Annual General report of the D.A.T.I.*, 1919-20, op.cit., p.318.
[90] Ibid, p.326.
[91] N.A.I., D.A.T.I., A.G.1 /A.23156/20. Farmers' Union and I.T.G.W.U, labour dispute, agreement. Letter from T. B. Ponsonby to Professor Campbell, D.A.T.I., September 5th 1920.
[92] *Irish Farmer*, February 5th 1921.
[93] *Irish Times*, March 17th & March 21st 1921.
[94] *Irish Farmer*, April 9th 1921.

only solution was for both farmers and labourers to increase productivity. Gorey was sceptical as to the benefit of other measures advocated to alleviate farmers' losses, such as reduced local authority rates. Other members of the Association expressed their own opinions on how to deal with labourers. Richard Holohan argued that the "honest labouring man" should be retained, while all I. T. G. W. U. activists should be dismissed. John Maher criticised the manner in which the Agricultural Wages Board operated whereby union delegates were always in a minority when wage rates were determined, as the neutral board members constantly voted with the trade union delegates.[95] The Cork Farmers' Association also criticised the Agricultural Wages Board. Thomas Linehan stated that there would "be no progress in agriculture until state interference within the industry ceased and the law of supply and demand again became operative."[96] Farmers again achieved relief when the Agricultural Wages Board was abolished in October 1921.[97] They were now determined to defend their new-found freedom. The union rejected proposals by T. P. Gill that a "conciliation conference" of farmers and labourers should succeed the Agricultural Wages Board.[98]

Both the National Executive and a number of county associations engaged in commercial activities. Such actions bypassed existing merchants and increased prices received for agricultural produce. The National Executive directed farmers not to accept less than 50/- per barrel for barley, when the Maltsters' Association set barley prices

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[95] Ibid, June 11th 1921.
[96] Ibid, July 9th 1921.
[97] *21st Annual General report of the D.A.T.I.*, op.cit., p.11.
[98] *Irish Farmer*, July 23rd 1921.

without consulting the union.[99] This action was successful.[100] The Cork Farmers' Association sought quotations from foreign, as opposed to domestic manufacturers of fertilisers.[101] The 1920 congress also discussed the commercial activities of the union. A Galway delegate, Mr. Egan, believed that the scale of such activities should be increased and should be organised on co-operative principles.[102] Delegates also discussed plans to operate a meat processing plant in Waterford and a fertiliser factory in Arklow. [103]

While the Irish Farmers' Union had demonstrated that it was an active lobbying group, the development of the organisation was uneven in many counties. Richard Wilson, the Chairman of the County Wicklow Association, referred to the poor attendance at many meetings. He appealed to farmers to take a greater interest in the organisation.[104] In Tipperary, 35 branches of the union were formed. However, it was reported that many farmers did not join. The reason cited for non-membership were general scepticism about the effectiveness of a farmers' organisation, intimidation by the I. T. G. W. U. of potential members and a mentality among some wealthier farmers that they did not require the services of a representative organisation.[105] In some cases the union adopted intimidation as a means to coerce hesitant farmers to join. Sir John Keane submitted a resolution to the executive of the Waterford Farmers' Association, stating that members

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[99] Ibid, September 27th 1919.
[100] Ibid, October 8th 1919.
[101] Ibid, October 4th 1919.
[102] *Irish Times*, March 5th 1920.
[103] Ibid, March 6th 1920.
[104] *Irish Farmer*, September 27th 1919.
[105] Ibid, October 18th 1919.

should not render assistance of any kind to farmers who did not join the association.[106] The Milford and Dromina branch of the Cork Farmers' Association instructed the local creamery not to accept milk which was supplied from farmers who were non-members of the union.[107] Problems were also experienced at national level. Michael. F. O' Hanlon was appointed as General Secretary of the union in early 1919.[108] However, Col. O' Callaghan- Westropp described how the National Executive could not afford to provide sufficient funding for the national headquarters. As a result, O' Hanlon had an excessive workload which prevented him from visiting the individual county associations.[109]

At the second annual congress of the union, O' Hanlon reported a significant increase in contributions from county associations to the National Executive between 1918 and 1919. He expressed satisfaction that full-time organisers had been appointed in all counties. However, he criticised the inefficiency of a number of county associations. Sir John Keane believed that the union had expanded too rapidly. As a consequence the National Executive office could not cope with the existing volume of correspondence. Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp attributed the weakness of the union in several counties to a mentality among farmers that their interests had been secured through the Land War. He argued that this was a short-sighted attitude, citing the apparent threat posed by communism to farmers' property.[110]

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[106] Ibid, October 8th 1919.
[107] Ibid, May 22nd 1920.
[108] *Cork Examiner*, March 28th 1919.
[109] U. C. D. A. D., O' Callaghan- Westropp papers, P.38/4/155. Letter from Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp to Jonathan Russell, March 17th 1920.
[110] *Irish Times*, March 6th 1920.

Later, Denis Gorey criticised the fragmented nature of authority within the Irish Farmers' Union. He believed that the National Executive should exercise greater control over the county associations. Gorey correctly predicted that the degree of autonomy enjoyed by the county associations would split the union.[111] The 1921 congress discussed the continued weakness of the union in Connacht. A delegate from Roscommon attributed this weakness to cattle-driving and social tensions between large and small farmers. A Leitrim delegate argued that many of the small farmers residing west of the Shannon could not afford to pay membership subscriptions to farmers associations.[112] Even in counties where effective associations existed, concern was expressed over the willingness of farmers to support an organisation dedicated to their interests. The County Dublin Farmers' Association was concerned about the apathy demonstrated by some farmers towards the union.[113] Similar concerns were expressed by Mr. de Vere about Kildare farmers.[114]

The Irish Farmers' Union began to campaign actively for the completion of land purchase. Land purchase, according to Dooley, remained a vital issue given that small farmers sought the redistribution of grazing ranches, younger sons of farmers desired their own holdings while the British Government had curtailed advances for earlier land purchase Acts.[115] This led to a spate of cattle drives and land seizures between 1918 and

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[111] *Irish Farmer*, May 22nd 1920.
[112] Ibid, March 5th 1921.
[113] Ibid, February 5th 1921.
[114] Ibid, June 25th 1921.
[115] Dooley, *"The land for the people"*, op.cit, p.31.

1920, occurring principally in Kerry, Connaught and the Midlands.[116] The leadership of the Irish Farmers' Union opposed this agrarian unrest. Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp criticised the hostility expressed towards the large livestock farmers, the graziers. He warned that commercial farming would collapse if grazing farms were sub-divided.[117] However, the union also recognised that a further measure of tenant purchase was necessary to end agrarian agitation. In 1919, the County Cork and Clare Farmers' Associations passed resolutions calling for the completion of land purchase.[118] Col. O' Callaghan - Westropp argued that given disturbed political conditions, a voluntary land purchase scheme should be negotiated between landlords and the union rather than expecting the British administration to devise such a scheme.[119] At a meeting of the Kilkenny Farmers' Association, Denis Gorey argued that the existing Land Acts were no longer adequate for the completion of land purchase. He advised tenants to make voluntary agreements to effect the sale of the estate which they were part of with their landlord.[120] By June 1920, the union drew up the terms of a new land purchase scheme. Annuity purchase payments would be equivalent to one year of reduced rent. These reductions were based on a 35% reduction for non-judicial tenants and 25% for judicial tenants.[121]

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[116] M. A. G. Ó Tuathaigh, " The land question, politics and Irish society, 1923-1960" in P. J. Drudy, ed. *Ireland, land, politics and people.* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1982, pp.167-91, p.169.
[117] *Irish Times*, March 6th 1920.
[118] *Irish Farmer*, October 25th & October 4th 1919.
[119] U. C. D. A. D., O' Callaghan-Westropp papers, P.38/4/158. Letter from Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp to M. F. O' Hanlon, March 23rd 1920.
[120] *Irish Farmer*, April 24th 1920.
[121] Ibid, June 5th 1920.

The union leadership were divided over what means should be adopted to promote land purchase. Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp, himself an ex-landlord, advocated a conciliatory approach towards landlords. He believed that a conference between landlords, the union and the Chief Secretary was the best method to advance land purchase. A more radical approach was adopted by Denis Gorey, who argued that tenants should withhold rents as a means of forcing landlords to sell their estates.[122] At a meeting of the Kilkenny Farmers' Association, Gorey stated that a rent strike should be launched if land purchase was not adopted by landlords within a reasonable period of time.[123]

The Kilkenny Farmers' Association then commenced the organisation of unpurchased tenants. At a conference of such tenants held in Kilkenny city, Denis Gorey warned that the probability of the passage of a land purchase Bill was declining. He alluded to disagreements between landlords and the Irish Farmers' Union over agreed terms for land purchase. In addition, any land purchase Bill would be linked to the forthcoming Government of Ireland Bill, which given the current political situation, may or may not come into effect. In this context, Gorey urged unpurchased tenants to take action on their own behalf. Tenants should form associations on an estate by estate basis. Rents should be withheld from those landlords who would refuse to sell their estates. This meeting passed a resolution stating that unpurchased tenants who refused to join the Irish Farmers' Union should not receive any assistance in the purchase of their holdings.[124]

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[122] Ibid, July 3rd 1920.
[123] Ibid, June 19th 1920.
[124] Ibid, July 31st 1920. Compare these tactics with those of the Plan of Campaign as described by Geary, *The Plan of Campaign*, op.cit, pp.22-23.

Gorey later expressed satisfaction that farmers in Kilkenny were adopting the "no-rent" campaign. He stressed that this initiative was independent of the policy adopted by the National Executive of the union. Gorey argued that the "no-rent" policy was morally justified. The principle of compulsion was commonplace in modern governance. The only means that tenants had to compel landlords to sell their estates was to withhold rents.[125] While Gorey's activities could be attributed to a visceral hostility to landlords, his radical stance may have brought independent land agitators into the Irish Farmers' Union. Dooley argues that land agitation was organised by ad-hoc local bodies.[126] Gorey's activities also extended the land reform campaign beyond Connaught and the Midlands into South Leinster. For example, the organisation of unpurchased tenants also occurred in Counties Meath and Waterford.[127] A similar initiative was undertaken by the Wexford Farmers' Association. In contrast to the attitude of Gorey, the County Secretary of the Wexford Farmers' Association, Michael Doran, opposed the withholding of rents. He believed that the completion of land purchase should be delayed until the political situation was resolved.[128]

Another solution to the problem of land purchase was suggested by Jonathan Russell. He believed that the county associations of the union should purchase land and re-distribute it among small farmers. Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp opposed this scheme as he believed

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[125] *Irish Farmer*, September 25th 1920.
[126] Dooley, op.cit, p. 33.
[127] *Irish Farmer*, October 9th & November 13th 1920.
[128] *Irish Times*, October 25th 1920.

it would cause friction between both large and small farmers, while the union sought to encourage the maximum number of farmers to join.[129] One prediction by Denis Gorey was not fulfilled. By the autumn of 1920, the Irish Farmers' Union National Executive and the Irish Landowners' Convention agreed to the terms of a land purchase scheme. The price of a holding was established at 13 years' purchase, purchase being equal to one years' reduced rent.[130] Tenants were to pay only a single year of rent arrears, which would be added onto the purchase annuity. Landlords were to be paid a 5% bonus on the sale of estates.[131]

Some tenants were dissatisfied with this scheme. At a meeting of the County Clare Farmers' Association, the proposed 25% reduction in rents as stipulated in the agreement was described by one branch as insufficient for poor farmers in West Clare. Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp justified the agreement by arguing that the union had attempted to secure a 35% reduction in rents, but the landlords had refused. Another delegate raised an issue which would feature prominently in the land question, that landlords should cease the issue of writs to recover unpaid rents.[132] The land issue continued to loom throughout 1921. Michael Walsh, the Limerick County Organiser for the Irish Farmers' Union, called for the non-payment of rent. Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp argued that the National Executive opposed this policy, which he claimed was forcing landlords to leave

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[129] U. C. D. A. D., O' Callaghan-Westropp papers, P.38/4/155. Letter from Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp to Jonathan Russell, March 17th 1920, op.cit.
[130] *Irish Times*, October 25th 1920.
[131] *Irish Farmer*, November 27th 1920.
[132] Ibid, January 15th 1921.

the union.[133] However, delegates to the 1921 union congress adopted a more conciliatory attitude towards the landlords than that expressed at branch level.[134] The land purchase issue resulted in divisions between ex-landlord and ex-tenant farmer members of the union, which would re-emerge over the coming years.

The question of contesting the local elections of 1920 was also considered. At a branch meeting of the County Offaly Farmers' Association, the County Secretary criticised excessive rates on agricultural land. To remedy this, farmers were urged to return candidates favourable to their interests at the local elections.[135] A correspondent to the *Irish Farmer* argued that given the introduction of proportional representation to local authority elections, the Irish Farmers' Union should nominate candidates.[136] Members of the National Executive were divided as to whether the union should contest the local elections. One member of the executive, Mr. McLoughlin, believed that candidates favourable to farmers' interests should contest the elections. R. A. Butler was opposed to this course of action. He argued that due to the disturbed political conditions, members of the union should not contest the local elections.[137] However, some county associations ignored this decision and ran candidates.[138]

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[133] U. C. D. A. D., O' Callaghan-Westropp papers, P.38/4/246. Letter from Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp to M. F. O' Hanlon, May 27th 1920.
[134] *Irish Times*, February 26th 1921.
[135] *Irish Farmer*, November 15th 1919.
[136] Ibid, November 1st 1919.
[137] Ibid, May 22nd 1920.
[138] Coogan, *Politics and war in Meath*, op.cit, p.216. E. Marnane, *Cork County Council, 1899-1985*, Cork County Council, Cork, 1986, p.177.

Farmers also directly campaigned against what they saw as excessive rates on agricultural land. The Kanturk branch of the Cork Farmers' Association condemned the increase in rates given that agricultural prices were set to decline. Increases in wages paid to local authority employees were also criticised.[139] The Athy branch of the Kildare Farmers' Association recommended the formation of a ratepayers' association.[140] This proposal was endorsed by the Monasterevin branch which stated that "the object of this to afford all responsible ratepayers, who may not be eligible for membership of our association, an opportunity of assisting our efforts with their moral and financial support."[141] This was indicative of how farmers sought the co-operation of urban propertied interests to further mutual aims. The Carlow Farmers' Association also endorsed the formation of an auxiliary ratepayers' association. The Kildare Farmers' Association, through intensive lobbying, succeeded in reducing the rate warrant for the county.[142]

The Dublin Farmers' Association also formed a ratepayers' association in May. The Dublin County Council met a deputation from the association in July 1921.The deputation accused the council of making no attempt to reduce expenditure and sought a reduction in rates. The council regarded the association as being dominated by farmers and of wishing to antagonise labourers. It denied that it was dominated by the Irish Farmers' Union and stated;

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[139] Ibid, February 14th 1920.
[140] Ibid, March 26th 1921.
[141] Ibid, May 14th 1921.
[142] Ibid, June 11th 1921.

"the association is slightingly referred to as being compounded with the influential farmers' association owing to the accident of the same man being secretary for both organisations. This stab is followed up by saying that our association concentrates on the farmers' point of view and thereby gives a hint to other ratepayers that we are only using them for the farmers' benefit." [143]

Other associations considered more radical measures in their attempts to reduce rates, which demonstrated the willingness of some farmers to employ illegal means to defend their interests. The Clare Farmers' Association proposed a rate strike if a rate in excess of 20/- in the £ was adopted by the County Council.[144] The County Secretary of the Carlow Farmers' Association argued with members of the Rathvilly branch that a rate strike would endanger the operation of county asylums and hospitals. However, he accepted that it was a matter of individual discretion among farmers whether to pay or not pay rates.[145] Rate collectors throughout North Kerry and in the Kilgarvan district of South Kerry reported the existence of an organised anti-rate payment campaign by local branches of the farmers' association.[146] The Kerry farmers also publicised their opposition to the payment of rates. A meeting of farmers and ratepayers from the Bonane district near Kenmare argued that due to poor harvests and declining agricultural prices, farmers could only pay a maximum rate of 8/- in the £.[147]

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[143] N.A.I., Dáil Éireann Local Government Series , DELG 9/18, Dublin County Council, 28th August 1921- 5th May 1922. Report, Dublin County Council October 1st 1921. Memorandum from County Dublin Ratepayers' Association.

[144] *Irish Farmer*, June 25th 1921.

[145] Ibid, July 2nd 1921.

[146] N.A.I., Dáil Éireann Local Government Series, DELG 12/16, Kerry County Council, 18th October - 29th November 1921. Extracts from report by Kerry Inspector to Department of Local Government.

[147] Ibid, resolution submitted by M. O' Shea, Bonane, Kenmare to W. F. Quinlan, Kerry County Secretary, October 25th 1921.

The disturbed political conditions were a source of concern to the Irish Farmers' Union. In particular, the actions of Crown forces were resented by farmers. In 1919, Col. O' Callaghan- Westropp condemned the British prohibition on the holding of fairs which prevented farmers from disposing of livestock. This was "the latest addition of the Penal Laws, by which farmers are selected for punishment out of the whole population."[148] The County Clare Farmers' Association protested against the destruction of agricultural produce by the military.[149] The County Limerick Farmers' Association condemned the closure of creameries by Crown forces.[150] M. K. Noonan of the Cork Farmers' Association criticised the government ban on the holding of marts and fairs.[151]

The attitude of the union towards republicanism depended upon the attitude of individual members, and demonstrated the divided political loyalties of the membership, some of whom were either unionists or supporters of the Irish Parliamentary Party. Maume claims that many supporters of the Irish Parliamentary Party were involved in the establishment of the Kilkenny Farmers' Association.[152] As observed by Hart, larger farmers in North and East Cork remained aloof from the I. R.A., while Cork I .R. A. officers viewed the union as a non-supportive, and even hostile organisation.[153] However, the County Organiser of the Kerry Farmers' Association, Liam McCarthy, was a

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[148] U. C. D. A. D., O' Callaghan-Westropp papers, P38/4/89. Letter from Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp to M. F. O' Hanlon, October 18th 1919.
[149] *Irish Farmer*, October 23rd 1920.
[150] Ibid, June 25th 1921.
[151] Ibid, July 9th 1921.
[152] P. Maume, *The long gestation, Irish nationalist life, 1891-1918.* Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 1999, p.208.
[153] P. Hart, *The I. R.A. and its enemies; violence and community in Cork, 1916-23.* Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1998, p.143.

prominent I. R. A. officer in that county.[154] Some leading union members, such as Col. Bryan who "did not care whether the government came from College Green or Westminister",[155] and Denis Gorey who argued that Dáil Eireann may be more sympathetic to farmers than the British regime.[156] Patrick Hogan, Sinn Féin TD for Galway, was elected as a Vice-President of the Union in 1921.[157] Ferriter also argued that organised farmers supported republicans when it was in their interests to do so.[158]

Until 1921, the union remained aloof from political action, abstaining from the general election of that year. R. A. Butler informed the County Meath Farmers' Association that "farmers as individuals or as members of other organisations were free to act as they pleased in that or in other matters, but for such action the National Executive accepted no responsibility."[159] This was a sensible position, given the divided political allegiances of the union membership. However, with the truce and the consequent negotiations between Dáil Éireann and the British regime, would change the political environment for the union.

Between 1919 and 1921, Irish farmers succeeded in forming a strong representative organisation, the Irish Farmers' Union. A number of exogenous factors facilitated the expansion of the union that were sufficiently strong enough to overcome those forces of

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[154] T. Ryle Dwyer, *Tans, terror and troubles, Kerry's real fighting story, 1913-23.* Mercier Press, Dublin, 2001, p.296.
[155] *Irish Times,* November 21st 1919.
[156] *Irish Farmer,* June 19th 1920.
[157] *Irish Times,* February 25th 1921.
[158] Ferriter, *The transformation of Ireland,* op.cit, p.211.
[159] *Irish Times,* January 19th 1921.

sectional and economic diversity, which in the past had retarded the formation of a national farmers' organisation.[160] The organisation of farmers was facilitated by opposition to inept and intrusive government intervention in the agricultural sector, the threat posed by a recently unionised agricultural workforce and the revival of land agitation in the form of a campaign to complete land purchase.

The union emerged in response to the interventionist agricultural policy of the British Government. It opposed many of the government measures concerning agriculture; opposition which was based on inappropriate regulation was much as ideology. Indeed some members of the union considered that suitable intervention could be of benefit to farmers, although enthusiasm for government intervention declined by 1920. The union stridently defended the sectional interests of farmers. It rallied farmers to oppose the wage claims made by labourers, who were portrayed as being politically motivated by communism. The D.A.T.I. hoped that the formation of the union would facilitate a corporate system of setting agricultural wages. However, once the agricultural wages board was abolished, farmers refused to maintain a voluntary system of collective wage determination which was partly based on their opposition to government intervention. Indeed, a hostile attitude towards labourers encouraged farmers to join the union. The proposed Farmers' Freedom Force demonstrates how farmers contemplated the use of force to overcome industrial disputes.

[160] Kennedy, op.cit, p.366-67.

While members of the union agreed on the necessity to complete land purchase, they were divided on how to achieve this aim. While the National Executive favoured negotiation with landlords, radicals such as Denis Gorey, favoured a revival of traditional land agitation. While Gorey's actions succeeded in diverting the torrent of land agitation within the Irish Farmers' Union, this effectively alienated landlords from the union, as evident in the resignation of landlords from the Limerick Farmers' Association, and was a source of future division. Union members began to campaign against excessive rates on agricultural land. Significantly the union sought the support of urban ratepayers, which was indicative of the willingness of farmers to seek support from other sectors of society to further their aims. Some farmers took direct action and began to withhold rates. In the disturbed political climate of the period, and given the differing political allegiances of its membership, a position of political neutrality was the wisest course for the union. At this early stage, many of the factors which would lead to the collapse of the union were evident. As correctly identified by Denis Gorey, the union suffered from a decentralised structure which retarded the effective development of policy. It also experienced difficulty in attracting the support of small farmers, especially in the West of Ireland, given the hostility of some union members to tillage and the support given by the union to the graziers. Given that the leadership of the union was dominated by ex-landlords such as Sir John Keane and Col O' Callaghan-Westropp, it was hardly surprising that the union was seen as representative of larger farmers. Indeed some members of the union were dismissive of small farmers, as evident in the comments by Meath and Kildare Farmers Association activists that those small farmers who settled with the trade unions did not count as real farmers. A worrying trend

emerged in counties such as Tipperary, where large farmers felt that they did not require the services of the union. While these difficulties revealed the diverse nature of farmer interests, nevertheless, the establishment of the Irish Farmers' Union marked a significant achievement in terms of developing some level of national representation for the agricultural community.

Chapter II.

Politics and Policy; The formation of the Farmers' Party, 1921-25.

Farmers eagerly awaited the formation of a native government, which despite the non-revival of the Council of Agriculture,[1] offered the prospect of an administration favourable to their interests. The Chairman of the South Tipperary Farmers' Association, Con O'Neill, argued that farmers should participate in a future Irish government as "there was no use passing resolutions and asking other people to look after their business."[2] These comments demonstrate the willingness of farmers to participate in political life.

The first overtly political act of the union was its acceptance of the Treaty, in early 1922.[3] By April, the volatile political situation forced the National Executive to issue a resolution affirming its commitment to democracy. The resolution, which was opposed by two delegates, argued that free speech and voting rights should not be subordinated to violence and military dictatorship. All political and military issues should be subject to civilian control.[4] The "Pact Election" of 1922 provided an opportunity for the union to contest an election. Members of the union had earlier debated the desirability of forming a political party. In August of 1921, Jonathan Russell of the Louth Farmers' Association argued that a farmers' party be established.[5] At a meeting of the County Wexford Farmers' Association, a number of delegates, led by Colonel C. M. Gibbon, objected to participation in political activity. They were opposed by Col. Bryan, who argued that a political party was necessary to

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[1] Daly, *The First Department*, op.cit, p.105.
[2] *Cork Examiner*, February 1st 1922.
[3] *Irish Farmer*, January 7th 1922.
[4] *Irish Independent*, April 21st 1922.
[5] *Irish Farmer*, August 20th 1921.

promote the economic interests of farmers.[6] In April 1922, the National Executive formally discussed this issue. It was argued that the present nomination of candidates by the other parties threatened to leave farmers without adequate representation in the new Dáil. However, the executive decided that county associations should discuss the desirability of contesting elections.[7] At two such meetings, held in Cavan and Tipperary South Riding, some delegates believed that the union would split if elections were contested.[8] By May, the executive decided, with one member opposing, to nominate candidates for the Dáil. The executive specified that it would not raise the issue of the Treaty. It would contest the election solely on agricultural issues.[9] Shortly afterwards, an election manifesto was issued. The new Farmers' Party supported the maintenance of law and order, stable government and the guaranteeing of political freedom. It advocated the completion of land purchase and security of tenure. The party favoured the expansion of agricultural education, lower freight costs for farmers, reduced rates on agricultural land and no unwarranted interference by the state in agriculture. The party advocated an economic policy based on free trade.[10]

Following the example set in the campaign to reduce rates, the Farmers' Party did not seek electoral support exclusively from farmers. The candidates in the Waterford-East Tipperary constituency sought support from urban-based professional and business voters. They argued that the prosperity of urban areas depended upon a strong agricultural sector.[11]

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[6] Ibid, March 11th 1922.
[7] Ibid, April 8th 1922.
[8] Ibid, April 22nd & April 29th 1922.
[9] *Irish Times*, May 26th 1922.
[10] Ibid, May 27th 1922.
[11] *Irish Farmer*, June 10th 1922.

The National Executive recommended that candidates should have a 'national record', mindful of the strong nationalist sentiments of the time. This advice was followed by a number of county associations. The candidate for County Dublin, John Rooney, was a member of Sinn Féin and the Gaelic League.[12] The candidate for North-East & East Cork, John Dineen, had served as a judge in the Sinn Féin courts. One of the candidates for the rest of Cork County, Daniel Vaughan, had been a prominent officer in the I. R.A.[13] In a number of constituencies, the local farmers' associations agreed to support the Sinn Féin candidates if they agreed to promote a stable government.[14] The Galway Farmers' Association, for example, endorsed Patrick Hogan, Pro-Treaty Sinn Féin TD.[15] Farry describes how the Sligo Farmers' Association endorsed both of the pro-Treaty independent candidates for the Sligo-Mayo East constituency.[16]

Despite the selection of candidates favourable to Sinn Féin, the Farmers' Party was pressurised to withdraw its candidates in favour of the Sinn Féin panel in several constituencies. Farmers' Party candidates retired in favour of the Sinn Féin panel in Clare, North Roscommon-Leitrim and South Mayo-South Roscommon.[17] Following an intervention by Dan Breen at a Farmers' Party convention in Tipperary Town, the candidate for North Tipperary, J. J. Hassett, withdrew.[18] Bernard Egan, the candidate for North & West Mayo, also withdrew, the reasons for which were disputed.[19] One of the candidates for Cork County,

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[12] *Irish Times*, May 26th 1922.
[13] Ibid, June 2nd 1922.
[14] Ibid, June 1st 1922.
[15] *Irish Farmer*, June 10th 1922.
[16] Farry, *The aftermath of revolution, Sligo 1921-23*, op.cit, p.67.
[17] *Irish Times*, June 7th 1922.
[18] Ibid, June 6th 1922.
[19] Ibid, June 7th 1922.

W. J. Fahy, also withdrew. He cited that his work within the Irish Farmers' Union would be of more benefit than any progress he could make in the Dáil.[20] In the Kerry-West Limerick constituency, the Kerry Farmers' Association selected three candidates.[21] However, the association later withdrew its candidates on the grounds of 'national unity.'[22] Those candidates who did not withdraw voluntarily were subjected to intimidation. Shots were fired at the residence of Godfrey Greene, a candidate for Waterford- East Tipperary. As a consequence he withdrew. An armed party raided the house of Denis Gorey, who was a candidate for Carlow-Kilkenny.[23] In spite of such harassment, those Farmers' Party candidates who contested the election of the 16th of June polled strongly.

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[20] *Cork Examiner*, June 6th 1922.
[21] *Irish Times*, June 3rd 1922.
[22] *Cork Examiner*, June 7th 1922.
[23] *Irish Times*, June 7th 1922.

Table 2.1; Electoral performance of Farmers' Party candidates in the 1922 election.

Constituency	Votes received	As % of votes cast	Number of candidates	Seats
Carlow-Kilkenny	6,122	19.60	1	1
Cavan	5,624	23.33	1	0
Cork N.E. & E.	6,989	29.35	1	1
Cork (rest of)	6,372	11.63	2	1
Dublin County	3,697	7.13	1	1
Kildare-Wicklow	6,261	18.14	3	1
Waterford-Tipperary	5,871	17.23	2	1
Wexford	7,786	23.62	2	1
Total	48,718	16.95	13	7

Source: B. Walker, ed., *Parliamentary election results in Ireland, 1918-92.* Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, 1992., pp.104-08.

The successful Farmers' Party candidates included Denis Gorey in Carlow-Kilkenny, Daniel Vaughan in Cork County and Richard Wilson in Kildare-Wicklow. In Cavan, Patrick Baxter was defeated for the final seat by only 15 votes.[24] The strong performance of John Dineen in Cork North-East and East was due to the fact that he was only one of two pro-Treaty candidates, compared to three anti-Treaty Sinn Féin candidates.[25]

The Civil War resulted in the Irish Farmers' Union adopting a more explicit pro-Treaty position. W. J. Fahy criticised the disruption to economic life caused by railway stoppages

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[24] M. Gallagher, "The Pact General Election of 1922", *Irish Historical Studies,* Vol xxi, No.84, 1979, pp.404-22, p.416.

[25] B. Walker, ed., *Parliamentary election results in Ireland, 1918-92.* Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, 1992, pp.104-08.

and the destruction of bridges.[26] The Limerick Farmers' Association cited the disruption caused by republicans to economic life as the principal reason why it supported the pro-Treaty armed forces. It called on "the young farmers of military age to join up immediately for the duration of the fight."[27] Hart describes how anti-Treaty I. R. A officers in Cork viewed the Irish Farmers' Union as a reactionary force which had a disproportionate influence upon local pro-Treaty supporters.[28]

Normal political activity resumed with the general election of August 1923. The National Executive re-affirmed the independence of the party by making a decision not to enter into an electoral pact with Cumann na nGaedheal. County associations were also instructed not to select candidates who recommended alliances with other parties.[29] In some cases the county associations were not fully prepared for the task of fighting an election. Michael Heffernan commented that the electoral organisation of farmers had to improve in performance as compared to the 1922 election. Heffernan also alluded to the tendency of farmers not to vote for Farmers' Party candidates.[30] At national level, Michael O' Hanlon complained that many county secretaries did not return questionnaires relating to electoral organisation. He warned that the union office in Dublin would find difficulties in coping with the work generated by the election as no extra secretarial staff had been hired.[31] In contrast, other county associations expressed over-confidence about the forthcoming election. At a meeting of the Galway Farmers' Association, Sir Henry Grattan- Bellew raised the prospect of a Farmers' Party

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[26] *Cork Examiner*, September 11th 1922.
[27] Ibid, October 4th 1922.
[28] Hart, *The I. R.A. and its enemies*, op.cit, p.145.
[29] *Irish Times*, July 21st 1923.
[30] *Cork Examiner*, February 2nd 1923.
[31] N.L.I., Irish Farmers' Union MSS, Ms.19021. Letter, by M. F. O' Hanlon to Irish Farmers' Union county secretaries, September 18th 1923.

government. He urged the delegates to select nine candidates, one for each seat in the Galway constituency.[32] More realistic advice was offered by the Milford and Dromina branch of the Cork Farmers' Association. The branch passed a resolution recommending that only one Farmers' Party candidate be selected per constituency. This policy would ensure the guaranteed return of a Farmers' party TD per constituency.[33] Unfortunately, this advice was ignored by many of the farmers' associations.

Again, the Farmers' Party also drew support from business and commercial interests. In Cork, Senator Thomas Linehan referred to the financial support given by local businessmen to the Cork Farmers' Association. One such subscriber informed the association that the Farmers' Party could form the nucleus of a commercial party in the Dáil.[34] In Limerick, the local Employers' Federation decided not to nominate a candidate and urged its members to vote for the Farmers' Party candidates.[35] The Farmers' Party, as observed by Maume,[36] nominated former supporters of the Irish Parliamentary Party as candidates, which facilitated their participation in the political life of the Irish Free State. The former Irish Parliamentary Party activist D. L. O' Gorman contested Cork East.[37] Former M. P. Hugh Law[38] contested Donegal, while Patrick McKenna, candidate for Longford-Westmeath, had contested a by-election for the Irish Parliamentary Party in 1917.[39] In Monaghan, a prominent clergyman, Rev. Thomas Maguire attended the Farmers' Party convention and called on the delegates to select a

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[32] *Irish Independent*, May 10th 1923.
[33] *Cork Examiner*, August 9th 1923.
[34] Idem.
[35] *Irish Times*, July 31st 1923.
[36] Maume, *The long gestation*, op.cit, p.218.
[37] Walker, *Parliamentary election results in Ireland, 1918-92*, op.cit, p.109.
[38] B. Walker, *Parliamentary election results in Ireland, 1801-1922*, Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, 1978, p.178. Maume, op.cit, p.233.
[39] Ibid, p.184.

Protestant candidate for the constituency. The delegates refused to do so, arguing that religion should not be a criteria for candidate selection.[40]

Individual Farmers' Party candidates campaigned on a variety of issues, although this lead to inconsistency in policy and in some cases to candidates opposing the Farmers' Party program. Geographic considerations often accounted for such differences. For example, the candidates for Leitrim-Sligo campaigned for the division of ranches and assistance for evicted tenants.[41] In Laois-Offaly, P. J. Bermingham, called for a tariff to be imposed on imported barley and oats,[42] which appealed to the many tillage farmers in that constituency. The second candidate for the constituency, Daniel Kennedy, called for government aid for the meat-processing industry.[43] Both these candidates contradicted the Farmers' Party policy of free trade.

The majority of Farmers' Party candidates endorsed the Treaty. Denis Gorey declared his support for the Treaty. He urged Farmers' Party voters to continue their lower preferences for the Cumann na nGaedheal candidates.[44] A similar call was made by the Donegal candidate, John White.[45] In Tipperary, Michael Heffernan argued that the Farmers' Party would support the Treaty. However, they "would never be the tail of a government party."[46] As in the 1922 election, Farmers' Party candidates suffered from harassment at the hands of republicans. This occurred despite the best efforts of the Farmers' Party to present themselves as a

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[40] *Irish Times*, August 11th 1923.
[41] Idem.
[42] *Irish Independent*, August 21st 1923.
[43] Ibid, August 24th 1923.
[44] Ibid, August 13th 1923.
[45] *Irish Times*, August 22nd 1923.
[46] Ibid, August 20th 1923.

patriotic party. It added a commitment to achieving Irish unification to the party program.[47] Comments by Michael Brennan and Art O'Connor on the patriotism exhibited by farmers during the War of Independence were cited in the points issued by the Irish Farmers' Union to election workers.[48]

Some members of the Farmers' Party also attempted to attract republican voters, a position which was in direct contradiction of the party's endorsement of the Treaty. Tómas Ó Duinn, a member of the Offaly Farmers' Association welcomed a statement from W. J. Fahy that the Irish Farmers' Union, as a non-political body, "welcomed and expected republican farmers into its ranks."[49] However, republicans remained hostile to the Farmers' Party. At Lismore, Co. Waterford, Farmers' Party candidates were prevented from holding a meeting due to local roads being blocked with barbed wire.[50] In Co. Wexford, the director of elections for the local Farmers' Party candidates was attacked by republican supporters as he attempted to make a speech.[51] Hugh Law was forced to abandon a meeting due to disruption by republicans.[52] In Tipperary, the prominent republican, Mrs. Tom Clarke, called on the Farmers' Party candidates to withdraw.[53] Having refused to do so, subsequent meetings by Farmers' Party candidates in the constituency were disrupted.[54] In the Kildare constituency, Labour Party supporters disrupted a Farmers' Party meeting held in Athy.[55] Farmers' Party had

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[47] N.L.I., Irish Farmers' Union MSS, Ms. 19021. Irish Farmers' Union election program, July 5th 1923.
[48] Ibid, circular (undated), from M. F. O' Hanlon, General Secretary Irish Farmers' Union, re. points for 1923 election.
[49] *Irish Independent*, August 10th 1923.
[50] Ibid, August 21st 1923.
[51] *Irish Times*, August 21st 1923.
[52] Ibid, August 22nd 1923.
[53] Ibid, August 17th 1923.
[54] Ibid, August 20th 1923.
[55] Ibid, August 22nd 1923.

a relatively successful election, winning 15 seats in the provinces of Munster, Leinster and Ulster. The party polled above average in all three Cork county constituencies, which was due to the strong organisation of the Cork Farmers' Association. The unusually high share of the vote achieved by the Farmers' Party in Cork North was due to a weak Cumann na nGaedheal candidate. The party won no seat in Connacht due to organisational difficulties and a lack of support from small farmers. The Mayo results were the worst for the party. As a consequence of nominating too many candidates, potential seats were lost in the Galway, Leitrim-Sligo and Laois-Offaly constituencies The new deputies for the party included T. J. O' Donovan in West Cork, Michael Heffernan in Tipperary, John Conlan in Kildare, Patrick McKenna in Longford-Westmeath and Patrick Baxter in Cavan. One outgoing TD, John Rooney, was defeated in Dublin County.[56]

[56] Walker, *Parliamentary election results in Ireland, 1918-92*, op.cit, pp.108-115.

Table 2.2: Electoral performance of the Farmers' Party in the 1923 Election.

Constituency	Votes received	As % of votes cast	No. of candidates	Seats.
Carlow-Kilkenny	5,532	13.77	2	1
Cavan	7,551	22.70	3	1
Clare	4,783	12.13	3	1
Cork Borough	1,616	3.79	1	0
Cork east	7,138	23.52	3	1
Cork north	7,684	37.52	2	1
Cork west	5,007	16.85	3	1
Donegal	7,727	14.65	4	1
Dublin County	2,206	3.85	2	0
Galway	4,187	8.64	5	0
Kerry	4,856	8.85	2	0
Kildare	3,650	19.53	1	1
Leitrim-Sligo	5,081	11.13	5	0
Laois-Offaly	5,471	13.44	3	0
Limerick	5,995	11.72	4	1
Longford-Westmeath	7,223	20.75	3	1
Louth	3,877	15.82	1	0
Mayo north	944	3.60	2	0
Mayo south	929	2.86	1	0
Meath	3,974	17.11	1	1
Monaghan	2,937	11.47	1	0
Roscommon	3,824	12.26	3	0
Tipperary	6,793	12.42	4	1
Waterford	5,422	16.64	2	1
Wexford	9,152	23.40	2	1
Wicklow	4,281	18.70	1	1
Total	127,840	13.42	65	15

Source: Walker, *Parliamentary election results in Ireland, 1918-92*, op.cit, pp.108-115.

Following the election, Michael O' Hanlon admitted that the results were not as favourable as anticipated. However, the number of Farmers' Party deputies had more than doubled and "it would be calamitous to slack even for a brief period and it is not improbable that the trend of circumstances may enable us to wield a far greater power and influence than heretofore."[57] However, O' Hanlon's hopes were not fulfilled. By December, Denis Gorey wrote to his fellow deputies criticising their poor attendance record in the Dáil. As a result, the Farmers' Party passed a resolution which specified that any absence from the Dáil by Farmers' Party deputies required prior notification from one of the Honorary Secretaries of the party.[58]

By late 1921, disputes between farmers and labourers resumed. Following attacks by trade unionists on farmers' property and produce in County Wexford, the National Executive decided to raise an emergency fund to assist those farmers who were affected by labour disputes.[59] The labour movement presented a formidable challenge to the Irish Farmers' Union with the seizure of the Cleeves creameries by the I. T. G. W. U., in May 1922.[60] Farmers strongly opposed the seizures. At a meeting of the Limerick Farmers' Association, Batt Laffan instructed co-operative creameries to accept milk from former Cleeves suppliers. The delegates attending the meeting condemned the intimidation of suppliers who refused to supply milk to the seized creameries. Members of the union were instructed not to supply milk to such creameries.[61] The National Executive of the union condemned the seizure of the

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[57] N.L.I., Irish Farmers' Union MSS, Ms 19021. Letter by M. F O' Hanlon to Irish Farmers' Union county secretaries and Farmers' Party deputies, September 12th 1923.
[58] Ibid, letter from Denis Gorey to Farmers' Party deputies, December 12th 1923.
[59] *Irish Farmer*, December 24th 1921.
[60] *Cork Examiner*, May 10th & May 20th 1922.
[61] Ibid, May 1st 1922.

creameries as a "manifestation of a tendency towards sovietism in the country." It called on the government to restore law and order. Delegates alluded to the intimidation of suppliers by trade unionists in addition to the seizure of milk separators and other property from farmers. Denis Gorey and W. J. Fahy believed that the dispute was part of a plot to disrupt economic life. A Laois delegate, Mr. Cobbe, argued that the union should crush the strike itself if the Provisional Government remained inactive. The County Secretary to the South Tipperary Farmers' Association, Michael Heffernan, made the familiar argument that the workers operated according to a communist agenda. He argued that huge quantities of milk were wasted as a result of the dispute.[62] The Cleeves dispute actually strengthened the union. In many districts in South Tipperary, the County Association increased in membership due to the effort to divert milk supplies from the Cleeves creameries.[63]

By 1923 trade union agitation slackened. The armed forces of the Irish Free State crushed I. T. G. W. U. activity in Kildare, assisted by vigilante groups recruited from the local farmers' association.[64] The last significant industrial dispute between labourers and farmers occurred in Waterford. In April 1923, the Waterford Farmers' Association, led by Sir John Keane, attempted to impose wage reductions upon the local I. T. G. W. U. membership.[65] The resultant dispute was particularly bitter with violence employed by both sides.[66]

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[62] Ibid, May 19th 1922.
[63] *Irish Times*, May 29th 1922.
[64] Bradley, *Farm Labourers*, op.cit., p.67.
[65] O' Connor, *A labour history of Waterford*, op.cit, p.180.
[66] Ibid, pp.185-99, passim.

The issue of excessive local authority rates concerned farmers. The South Tipperary Farmers' Association argued in early 1922, that due to low agricultural prices, farmers would be unable to pay the second rate moiety due in March. It suggested that County Councils should fix rates at their 1914 level.[67] Resolutions of a similar nature were passed by the Cork Farmers' Association.[68] The Ballylongford branch of the Kerry Farmers' Association stated that farmers would not pay rates which were in excess of the 1914 figure.[69] Members of the Athy branch of the Kildare Farmers' Association threatened to withhold rates.[70] However, other associations did not approve of such radical policies. The West Clare Farmers' Association abandoned a planned rate strike due to the critical political situation surrounding the Treaty negotiations.[71] The County Kildare Farmers' Association passed a motion criticising any proposed policy of withholding rates.[72]

However, farmers in Kerry continued to withhold rate payments. It was reported that only 2.5% of rates were collected in the Listowel Rural District. Branches of the Kerry Farmers' Association in Tarbert and Ballylongford appealed rate decrees to the district court as a delaying tactic. A prominent member of the Ballylongford branch intimidated a rate collector. The association called for a reduction in rates and an extension to the payment period, which was refused by the County Council.[73] At a special meeting held by the association, delegates

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[67] *Cork Examiner*, February 1st 1922.
[68] Ibid, February 27th 1922.
[69] Ibid, February 18th 1922.
[70] N.A.I., Dáil Éireann Local Government Series, DELG 13/11, Kildare, December 1st-March 1st 1922. Reports by Departmental Inspectors to the Minister for Local Government, January 12th & January 17th 1922.
[71] *Irish Farmer*, November 19th 1921.
[72] Ibid, March 4th 1922.
[73] N.A.I., Dáil Éireann Local Government Series, DELG 12/16, Kerry County Council 21st January - 12th April 1922. Memo by Departmental Inspector, March 3rd 1922.

were divided on the merits of withholding rates. Some members believed that the government should provide financial assistance for the payment of rates. Michael O' Hanlon, who attended the meeting, stated that there was little prospect of government financial assistance for rate payers. He warned farmers to meet their liabilities where possible; "he supposed he would be very popular if he told them to pay no rates, taxes, annuities, bills or anything else."[74]

In contrast, the Limerick Farmers' Association adopted a lawful stance when it argued for a revision of the rating system and for new elections to local authorities once political stability had been restored.[75] The County Galway Farmers' Association requested that the government extend credit to local authorities which would facilitate the reduction of rates. Such loans would then be re-paid to the national exchequer in future years.[76] With the restoration of law and order following the Civil War, the anti-rate payment campaign ceased and farmers now employed lawful means to reduce rates. Michael O' Hanlon urged the county associations to contest the forthcoming local elections, reviving an idea suggested earlier in the decade. Farmer councillors could reduce rates through effecting economies in local government expenditure. O' Hanlon argued that the best means to achieve this aim was to establish a pre-determined rate figure, which was not to be exceeded; "When the officials find that the majority of the council are determined not to exceed a given figure for rates there is little

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[74] *Cork Examiner*, June 9th 1922.
[75] Idem.
[76] N.A.I., Department of Finance, FIN1/1251. Resolution of County Galway Farmers' Association asking for government advance to relieve pressure of high rates. Letter, by James. C. O'Sullivan, Organising Secretary, County Galway Farmers' Association, to Minister for Finance, July 28th 1922.

doubt that they will find a means of keeping the expenditure within that figure."[77] The farmers' associations were determined to contest the local elections. They desired, as traditional leaders of the rural community, to regain control of local government. For example, James Bowen of the Cork Farmers' Association argued that;

"the present local councils had long outstayed their welcome and the feeling in the country was that these councils, elected in times of stress and altogether on a political basis did not at the present time represent the people and should not be allowed to control local government and expend money."[78]

At the Irish Farmers' Union annual congress in 1924, R. A. Butler called for the de-rating of agricultural land, while Con O'Neill argued for a maximum rate of 5/- in the £.[79] Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp called for the appointment of commissioners to replace County Councils. The congress called for the introduction of a Local Government Bill which would limit local government expenditure with reference to 1914 expenditure levels, inflation and the capacity of farmers to pay. The congress also sought to reduce the number of local authority employees and to revise salaries and pensions.[80]

Poor weather conditions and low agricultural prices during the years 1923-24[81] led the government to introduce the Local Government (Rates on Agricultural Land) Bill as a relief measure for farmers. It allowed local authorities to borrow an amount equal to two-thirds of rates levied on agricultural land. This sum was to be re-paid to the government over seven

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[77] N.L.I., Irish Farmers' Union MSS, Ms.19021. Letter by M. F. O' Hanlon to county secretaries, Irish Farmers' Union, June 29th 1923.
[78] *Cork Examiner*, April 8th 1924.
[79] *Irish Times*, March 26th 1924.
[80] Ibid, March 27th 1924.
[81] *24th General Report of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, 1923-26.* Stationery Office, Dublin, 1927, pp.3-4.

years.[82] The Bill was similar to the proposals suggested by the Galway Farmers' Association two years previously. Denis Gorey expressed disappointment that an opportunity was missed to provide permanent relief on rates through an increase in the agricultural grant.[83]

From 1922 onwards, unpurchased tenants made greater demands upon landlords, encouraged by the imminent formation of a native government. W. J. Fahy argued that the terms of the earlier land purchase agreement between landlords and the Irish Farmers' Union were no longer acceptable to farmers.[84] At a meeting of unpurchased tenants in County Cork, a 40% reduction in rents was demanded.[85] Unpurchased tenants in Limerick demanded a 50% reduction in rents and argued that if landlords refused to accept such reductions, rents should be withheld and paid into an account which would fund the purchase of tenant holdings.[86] This was identical to the tactics adopted by nineteenth-century Plan of Campaign.

In April, the union co-ordinated these demands by organising a national conference of unpurchased tenants, which established a national representative body. W. J. Fahy stated that the new organisation would seek the introduction of new land purchase Bill, the provision of credit for unpurchased tenants, immediate reductions in rents and a suspension of all legal proceeding by landlords against tenants. Fahy emphasised that the proposed Unpurchased Tenants' Association sought an equitable land purchase scheme and was opposed to the confiscation of holdings; "there was nothing bolshevik in their attitude. They did not

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[82] *Dáil Debates* Vol VII 25th April - 26th June 1924, col 1821, June 4th 1924.
[83] Ibid, col 2891, June 24th 1924.
[84] *Irish Farmer*, October 29th 1921.
[85] Ibid, November 26th 1921.
[86] Ibid, May 20th 1922.

inaugurate a no-rent campaign but a fair-rent campaign."[87] Fahy's comments revealed the dilemma which faced the Unpurchased Tenants' Association, how to agitate for the completion of land purchase without encouraging the indiscriminate seizure of land, as previously witnessed in the West of Ireland.

Another prominent figure in the association was the Rev. Maguire of Monaghan. He suggested that the Unpurchased Tenants' Association be organised on an estate by estate basis. Tenants should not negotiate with landlords without the permission of the Central Standing Committee of the association. Adopting the cautious attitude of Fahy, Maguire argued that tenants did not want to seize land and he rejected an universal "no-rent" campaign. However, he believed that tenants were entitled to an immediate reduction in rent. If this was refused, tenants were morally justified in withholding rents.[88] The Executive Committee of the Unpurchased Tenants' Association held its first meeting in June. It discussed the opposition by a majority of landlords to the demands of the association. Denis Gorey proposed the formation of a small standing committee, a policy upon which committee members were divided.[89] The efforts of the Unpurchased Tenants' Association were hindered by the existence of a rival body which styled itself as the "Land League". This group recommended a rent strike until land purchase was achieved.[90]

However, no action was taken to expedite land purchase until the cessation of the Civil War. According to Dooley, the government agreed to complete land purchase in order to deprive

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[87] *Irish Independent*, April 20th 1922.
[88] *Irish Farmer*, May 6th 1922.
[89] Ibid, June 3rd 1922.
[90] *Irish Independent*, April 20th 1922.

republicans of support from small farmers.[91] By December 1922, the Minister for Agriculture in the Irish Free State administration, Patrick Hogan, argued that a conference should be held between landlords and unpurchased tenants to agree the terms of a land purchase scheme.[92] The Irish Unpurchased Tenants' Association advocated a purchase scheme where purchase annuities were to represent a 50% reduction on judicial rents, and a 60% reduction on leases, non-judicial rents and rents on holdings within Congested Districts.[93] At branch meetings held in Meath and Tipperary, delegates suggested that outstanding rent arrears be settled through one years' extra payment added to the purchase price of the holding. At the meeting held in North Tipperary, J. J. Hassett stated that tenants were withholding rents from landlords as the 50% reduction was not granted.[94]

The Irish Unpurchased Tenants' Association held their general convention in January 1923 and officially accepted the invitation issued by the government to attend any conference which would be held to resolve the land issue. The convention was dominated by dissent from a small faction which was led by the Rev. Maguire and the prominent Dublin tillage farmer Patrick Belton. Belton called for unity among all associations who represented unpurchased tenants. This surprised many delegates who considered the Unpurchased Tenants' Association as the only legitimate body representing such tenants. Delegates resented accusations that the association was dominated by landlords. Maguire opposed the current association policy, by arguing that the association should campaign to reduce rents rather than promoting land

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[91] Dooley, *'The land for the people'*, op.cit, p.60.
[92] N.A.I., Department of Taoiseach, S.3192, Land Act 1923. Extract from Executive Council Minutes, December 17th 1922.
[93] *Irish Independent*, January 22nd 1923.
[94] Ibid, January 20th 1923.

purchase.[95] However, the leadership of the association acted swiftly to undermine Maguire. At a meeting of the national executive held after the convention, Maguire was defeated by Denis Gorey for the position of Chairman. Gorey argued that the outgoing executive was dissatisfied with Maguire's actions, in particular for the support he gave to dissident tenant associations. The executive followed the earlier proposal suggested by Gorey in establishing a small standing committee.[96] As a result, both Maguire and Belton defected to the Land League of Unpurchased Tenants.[97] Maguire now accused the Irish Farmers' Union of being too timid in their dealings with the government. Nothing was done to oppose the government, he argued, who had placed the forces of law and order at the service of landlords wishing to extract rent arrears. He stated that the Unpurchased Tenants' Association had little independence from the Irish Farmers' Union National Executive, which was still committed to the moderate terms of the 1920 land purchase agreement. Maguire attempted to stimulate anti-landlord sentiment within members of the union when he described the executive as dominated by "landlords, ex-landlords, ex-policemen, representatives of the defunct United Irish League and other quasi-defunct organisations deliberating with much of the cant of the remnant of the British garrison in Ireland."[98] Maguire now supported a rent strike and argued that annuity payments to Britain should be ended. Such payments should be substituted by a land tax, the revenue of which would be retained by the Irish Free State.[99]

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[95] N.L.I., MSS. 19021, Irish Farmers' Union Manuscripts. Record of General Convention of the Irish Unpurchased Tenants' Association, January 19th 1923.
[96] Ibid, Record of meeting of National Executive of the Irish Unpurchased Tenants' Association, January 19th 1923.
[97] *Irish Independent*, January 20th 1923.
[98] Ibid, February 7th 1923.
[99] Ibid, March 9th 1923.

The Irish Farmers' Union attempted to discredit the Land League. C. F. McLoughlin, the Deputy General Secretary of the union, dismissed the League as an insignificant grouping.[100] He implied that the Rev. Maguire was now opposed to the Unpurchased Tenants' Association because of failure to be elected Chairman of the National Executive.[101] The Chairman of the Waterford Unpurchased Tenants' Association, Alex Heskins, advised farmers to ignore the league.[102] However, criticisms made by the Land League worried some members of the union. At the 1923 annual general congress, a delegate from Monaghan proposed a resolution in favour of land purchase which was necessary given the accusations that the union was supportive of landlords.[103]

Small farmers in the West of Ireland questioned whether the Irish Farmers' Union would safeguard their interests in the negotiations for a future Land Act. At a meeting of unpurchased tenants in Mayo, Mr. Conroy argued that the interests of large and small farmers were diametrically opposed. Small farmers in the West of Ireland would benefit only from land re-distribution, with land being appropriated from large farmers who happened to be members of the Irish Farmers' Union.[104] The identification of the union with the interests of the hated graziers was fatal. As Seth-Jones argues, small farmers in the west of Ireland viewed the graziers as being socially aloof,[105] and of having forced the small farmer off the land in favour of livestock.[106]

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[100] Ibid, March 3rd 1923.
[101] Ibid, February 22nd 1923.
[102] *Cork Examiner*, March 14th 1923.
[103] *Irish Times*, March 16th 1921.
[104] *Mayo News*, April 28th 1923.
[105] D. Seth-Jones, *Graziers, land reform and political conflict in Ireland.* Catholic University of America Press, Washington D. C., 1995, p.146.
[106] Ibid, p.254.

To protect their position against radical land agitators, the Irish Farmers' Union and the Unpurchased Tenants' Association adopted a more aggressive stance towards both the government and the landlords. Deputy Richard Wilson of the Farmers' Party requested that a moratorium be introduced on writs issued by landlords for the recovery of rent arrears until a new land bill was introduced. He argued that farmers were by nature conservative and desired for the restoration of law and order. However, due to disrupted socio-economic conditions farmers could not pay rent.[107] Denis Gorey, addressing a meeting of the Carlow Unpurchased Tenants' Association, stated that the recent proliferation of writs and solicitors' letters issued by landlords to recover rent arrears was an attempt by the landlords to pre-empt the terms of a future Land Bill. Gorey promised that the Unpurchased Tenants' Association would provide financial assistance for those farmers facing legal costs. If the proposed conference of landlords and tenants collapsed, Gorey threatened that those landlords who "failed to understand the present position ...would be made realise it in six months time."[108]

Patrick Hogan expressed undue scepticism about the introduction of a Land Bill in the context of land seizures, cattle driving and rent strikes. He argued; "while tenants are not paying rents and while they consider that they need not pay rents in future, they don't want a Land Bill, except on terms that would amount to confiscation."[109] The promised conference between landlords and tenants was convened by the government in April. Denis Gorey, Patrick Baxter

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[107] *Dáil Debates*, Vol II, 6th December 1922 - 27th March 1923. Cols 1707-08, February 23rd 1923.
[108] *Cork Examiner*, April 7th 1923.
[109] N.A.I., Department of Taoiseach, S.3192. Letter by Patrick Hogan to W. T. Cosgrave, April 7th 1923.

and M. K. Noonan represented the Unpurchased Tenants' Association.[110] However, the conference collapsed on the 16th of April with no agreement being made between landlords and tenants. Hogan attributed the collapse of the conference to the attitude of the tenant delegates. According to him, they treated the landlords as members of a despised minority, to be disposed of at pleasure. The delegates presented to the landlords the terms proposed by the Unpurchased Tenants' Association for land purchase. The landlords rejected these terms and would not make any offer beyond the terms of the aborted 1920 agreement made with the Irish Farmers' Union. They also rejected the unpurchased tenants' proposals for the treatment of rent arrears. Hogan held private discussions with the tenants' delegates but they would not yield in their demands. Hogan also met one of the landlord delegates, Mr. Franks, in an attempt to restrain landlords from issuing further writs for the recovery of rent arrears.

Given the failure of the conference, Hogan decided to introduce his own Land Bill. He was confident that such a Bill would be supported by unpurchased tenants, arguing that the demands of ordinary tenants were moderate compared to those of their leadership. Hogan believed that most Irish Farmers' Union activists desired "a Bill which will be so good that it will satisfy the tenants, even in their present mood and at the same time give them a case strong enough to fight the Bolshevists [sic] on."[111] Hogan correctly perceived that the radical rhetoric adopted by farmers was superficial, being only a defence against radical land agitators. The only possible opposition to the Bill, according to Hogan would come "from the minority, who are the leaders, and whose reputation rests on the impunity with which they can

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[110] *Irish Independent*, April 5th 1923.
[111] N.A.I., Department of Taoiseach, S.3192. Memo by Patrick Hogan to W. T. Cosgrave, April 17th 1923.

withhold rents and grab land."[112] However, Hogan was incorrect in arguing that the leadership of the Unpurchased Tenants' Association held radical views, as demonstrated by their subsequent acceptance of the Land Bill.

Hogan introduced the Land Bill in May. It allowed the Land Commission to acquire land on a compulsory basis. The purchase terms of the Bill occupied a median position between the terms suggested by the Unpurchased Tenants' Association and those negotiated between the Irish Farmers' Union and the landlords in 1920. Purchase annuities represented a 35% reduction on existing rents. Arrears accumulated after 1920 were to be reduced by 25%. Untenanted land in Congested Districts was to be acquired for re-distribution among small farmers.[113]

Farmers' Party deputies Denis Gorey and Michael Doyle welcomed the Bill.[114] Gorey was satisfied that action was being taken to break up the untenanted ranches in Connaught and the Midlands.[115] The Irish Unpurchased Tenants' Association held a special conference to discuss the Bill. Denis Gorey, who presided, agreed to accept whatever decision the conference took as regards acceptance or non-acceptance of the Bill. He praised the Bill as a measure which would hasten the decline of landlords and warned the delegates that if they rejected the principle of the Bill, it would be futile to propose amendments to that same Bill. The delegates followed Gorey's advice and unanimously accepted the principle of the Bill. The amendments proposed by the delegates demanded the reduction of arrears accumulated by

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[112] Idem.
[113] *Dáil Debates*, Vol III, 12th April- 2nd July 1923, cols 1149-1151, May 28th 1923.
[114] Ibid, cols 1154 & 1158, May 28th 1923.
[115] Ibid, col 1159, May 28th 1923.

tenants by a greater percentage than was proposed in the Bill and that arrears paid to landlords during the period when the Bill was drafted should be funded by the national exchequer.[116]

The Farmers' Party deputies complied with the proposals of the unpurchased tenants, and proposed that the bill be amended, with rents reduced by 40% for annuity payments[117] and arrears reduced by 40%.[118] Patrick Hogan cited divisions between the ex-landlords and the Unpurchased Tenants' Association over land purchase to discredit the amendments proposed by the Farmers' Party. Denis Gorey admitted that the 1923 Bill was more generous that the 1920 scheme approved by the union but argued that the ex-landlords were a spent force; "I want to say that the Farmers' Union in those days was a landlords' union, led by a landlord, Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp, and backed up by landlords' men in the union. They were kicked out of it and then we formed the Unpurchased Tenants and never acted for them."[119] However, the landlord members of the union had not been silenced. From his vantage point in the Senate, Sir John Keane criticised the compulsory acquisition clauses in the Bill, which he claimed would reduce the incentive by farmers to invest in their holdings.[120] Keane also criticised the refusal of unpurchased tenants to pay rent.[121]

Opposition to the Land Act was reflected in the nomination of independent farmer candidates in the 1923 election. The South and West Cork Unpurchased Tenants' Association nominated

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[116] N.L.I., Irish Farmers' Union MSS, Ms.19021. Report of Irish Unpurchased Tenants' Association Convention to discuss 1923 Land Bill, June 8th 1923.
[117] *Dáil Debates*, Vol III, op.cit. Col 1949, June 14th 1923.
[118] Ibid, col 2069, June 19th 1923.
[119] *Dáil Debates*, Vol IV, 3rd July- 9th August 1923, col 289, July 5th 1923.
[120] *Seanad Debates*, Vol I, 11th December 1922- 9th August 1923, col 1478, July 27th 1923.
[121] Ibid, col 1475, July 27th 1923.

Joseph O' Mahony as a candidate for the West Cork constituency. O' Mahony argued for a revision of the Land Act describing it as "a landlord relief bill and was rushed through the Dáil without consulting the unpurchased tenants."[122] In Laois-Offaly, Patrick Belton contested the constituency on behalf of the National Democratic Party and Land League and advocated the introduction of a new Land Bill and greater assistance for small farmers.[123] However, the poor electoral performance of these candidates reflected the general support by farmers for the Land Act.

Nevertheless, many small farmers in the West of Ireland were dissatisfied with the Land Bill. A Mayo delegate to the 1923 Unpurchased Tenants' Association convention argued that the Bill did not offer sufficient aid to small farmers in Connacht.[124] These concerns were coupled with a lack of support for the Irish Farmers' Union in Connacht. Attempts were made to re-organise the union in South and West Mayo. However, the *Mayo News,* owned by veteran land agitator P. J. Doris,[125] laconically observed that the attendance at these meetings was "small" and dominated by large farmers.[126] At a meeting in Castlebar, M. F. O' Hanlon claimed that large farmers did not dominate the Irish Farmers' Union in Mayo. He argued that the under-representation of small farmers was due to their own apathy.[127] The Irish Farmers' Union made an effort to assist small farmers. It organised a conference of western and midland farmers at Claremorris, which called for the extension of credit to farmers to purchase stock and implements, the provision of seed oats and potatoes by the Department of

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[122] *Cork Examiner,* August 16th 1923.
[123] *Midland Tribune,* August 11th 1923.
[124] N.L.I., Irish Farmers' Union MSS, Ms,. 19021. Report of Irish Unpurchased Tenants' Association Convention to discuss 1923 Land Bill, June 8th 1923, op.cit.
[125] Maume, op.cit, p.226.
[126] *Mayo News,* April 7th 1923.
[127] Ibid, June 9th 1923.

Agriculture and the provision of land for the relief of congestion.[128] Small farmers in Mayo did organise themselves but in a manner which would have displeased the union. By mid-1924, a "Small Farmers' Association" had been established.[129] It sought to re-distribute ranch land among evicted tenants and landless men. It also accused the Irish Farmers' Union as being representative of large farmers. Mr. Conroy, a leading member of the Association noted how the views of small farmers were not represented in the Agricultural Commission, while Sir John Keane, as a Commission member wielded influence on behalf of ex-landlords and large farmers.[130]

Organisational problems also occupied the union. At a meeting of the National Executive held in 1921, Mr. Brophy attributed the weakness of farmers' associations in a number of counties to apathy among farmers, local rivalries and the tendency of small farmers to support the labour movement. This argument was disputed by W. J. Fahy, who attributed the existence of weak county associations to inefficient county secretaries. He proposed that the general secretary dismiss inefficient county secretaries. Michael O' Hanlon rejected this proposal, stating that the existing rules of the union did not grant him sufficient authority over the individual county associations to allow him dismiss county secretaries.[131] The decentralised nature of the union militated against the efficient operation of the organisation, as foreseen by Denis Gorey.

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[128] Ibid, January 2nd 1924.
[129] *Mayo News*, April 26th 1924.
[130] Ibid, June 28th & July 5th 1924.
[131] *Irish Farmer*, December 24th 1921.

A debate existed among some members of the union about the desirability of political action. A contributor to the *Cork Examiner*, "W. J. L.", argued that the farmers' associations should cater "for the farming interests of members irrespective of political beliefs."[132], while the Farmers' Party should broaden its support and become the nucleus of a conservative, pro-business party, presumably based on the precedent of the co-operation between farmers' associations and urban ratepayers. "W. J. L." demonstrated that the willingness of farmers to vote for candidates who were non-agriculturists displayed the weakness of a purely agricultural party.[133]

This weakness frustrated members of the Farmers' Party. At a meeting in Tullamore, Patrick Baxter accused farmers of not promoting their own interests. Patrick McKenna criticised farmers in Offaly for not supporting the Farmers' Party candidates at the previous election. McKenna attributed this unwillingness of farmers to vote for candidates who were devoted to their interests, as the principal reason for the weakness of the Farmers' Party.[134] At a meting of the Dublin Farmers' Association, Mr. Roe also criticised the tendency of farmers to neglect their organisation once specific grievances had been addressed.[135]

Members of the farmers' associations discussed the desirability of commercial activities. R. A. Butler urged members of the Dublin Farmers' Association to engage in commercial activity which would allow them to deal directly with consumers and by-pass middlemen.[136] W. J. Fahy argued that farmers had excessive expectations from government assistance. He

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[132] *Cork Examiner*, January 18th 1924.
[133] Ibid, January 22nd 1924.
[134] *Irish Times*, February 19th 1924.
[135] Ibid, September 23rd 1924.
[136] Idem.

believed that the farmers' associations would benefit their members more by engaging in commercial activities. Fahy cited how the Cork Farmers' Association had commenced the exportation of pigs, which was of benefit to farmers as it eliminated middlemen.[137] At the annual congress, Col. C. M. Gibbon urged that co-operative marketing of agricultural produce be expanded while the union should establish a national body to organise such marketing.[138]

Col. Gibbon also suggested that a political committee be formed which would liase between the Farmers' Party and the Irish Farmers' Union National Executive. Presumably Gibbon was concerned with a divergence of policy between the Farmers' Party and the union. The committee would conduct research and formulate policy on behalf of the parliamentary party. He argued that the disappointing electoral performance of the Farmers' Party was due to the lack of a distinct policy. Gibbon stated that the Farmers' Party deputies were not highlighting the positive elements of their program, such as the elimination of middlemen and the improved marketing of agricultural produce. Instead the deputies were simply engaging in petty criticism of the government. As a result;

"the farming community, therefore, preferred to support the government which had a policy in regard to national questions, rather than the Farmers' Party which could talk about nothing except their own petty class grievances in general terms of criticism as opposed to construction."[139]

Gibbon feared that Cumann na nGaedheal would absorb support from the Farmers' Party through the implementation of a progressive agricultural policy.[140] This contradicts the argument by O' Halpin that Cumann na nGaedheal adjusted economic policy to gain the

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[137] *Cork Examiner*, April 1st 1924.
[138] *Irish Times*, March 26th 1924.
[139] N.L.I., MSS.19021, Irish Farmers' Union MSS. Memorandum by Col. C. M. Gibbon on the organisation of the Farmers' Party, October 29th 1923.
[140] Idem.

support of the Farmers' Party.[141] Instead Cumann na nGaedheal devised its economic policy without regard for the Farmers' Party, and the fact that the agricultural policy of both parties coincided was a threat rather than an opportunity for the Farmers' Party.

With the establishment of the Irish Free State, farmers were forthcoming in suggesting agricultural policies, some of which had a protectionist hue. The Dublin Farmers' Association submitted a resolution to the National Executive calling for a 10% admixture of native grain in all flour produced in Ireland, as a means of increasing tillage.[142] Both the County Limerick and Tipperary South Riding Farmers' Associations supported the prohibition of butter importation.[143] The marketing of agricultural produce was also discussed. The Limerick Farmers' Association argued that a butter-grading scheme should be introduced as a means of eliminating sub-standard produce.[144] At an union-sponsored convention, attended by creamery managers and butter merchants, branding and grading schemes for butter were discussed.[145] The Cork Farmers' Association called for an inquiry into excessive freight charges, the establishment of a commission to investigate all aspects of agriculture and the establishment of a minimum price for barley.[146]

The union also took measures to assist barley growers. In September, a deputation met the Guinness Board of Directors to request a minimum price for barley. According to Dennison and MacDonagh, the board refused this request while the deputation complained of the

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[141] O' Halpin, "Politics and the state, 1922-32" in Hill, ed. *A new history of Ireland VII*, op.cit, pp.94-95.
[142] *Irish Farmer*, October 29th 1921.
[143] Ibid, April 8th & April 15th 1922.
[144] Ibid, November 26th 1921.
[145] Ibid, May 20th 1922.
[146] *Cork Examiner*, February 27th 1922.

monopoly position of Guinness.[147] Subsequently Michael O' Hanlon chaired a meeting of union members from barley growing counties which formed the Barley Growers' Association. A leading member of this association was a Kildare farmer who would become synonymous with the demands of tillage farmers, J.J. Bergin. He claimed that farmers would cease the cultivation of barley if they did not receive an economic price for their produce.[148] Another attempt was made in May to lobby Guinness to increase barley prices. While the Guinness board was receptive to the association's proposed three-grade barley price, the board rejected the demand by the association that they cease the purchase of imported barley.[149] By October, the Barley Growers' Association, having abandoned any attempt to persuade Guinness to increase barley prices, now advocated a subsidy for barley. This was to be funded from duties on grain produce and was justified as a means to maintain the tillage acreage.[150]

In early 1923, the government formed the Commission on Agriculture. Members of the Irish Farmers' Union gave evidence, but did so as members of their individual county associations, not on behalf of the National Executive. These witnesses favoured measures to improve the quality of agricultural produce, such as the establishment of a national brand for creamery butter[151] and the licensing of bulls.[152] They sought a reduction in local authority rates,[153]

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[147] Dennison, S. R. & MacDonagh, O. *Guinness, 1886-39; from incorporation to the Second World War*. Cork University Press, Cork, 1995, p.206.
[148] Ibid, April 21st 1922.
[149] Dennison & MacDonagh, op.cit, pp.206-07.
[150] *Cork Examiner*, October 26th 1922.
[151] *Irish Independent*, March 1st 1923, evidence of Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp. March 21st 1923, evidence of P. P. Moloney. March 15th 1923, evidence of P. F. Baxter.
[152] Ibid, March 21st 1923, evidence of P. P. Moloney. *Cork Examiner*, March 13th 1923, evidence of John Twomey.
[153] *Irish Independent*, March 27th 1923, evidence of James Byrne. March 21st 1923, evidence of Edward Hackett and Michael Heffernan.

criticised excessive freight costs[154] and criticised the prevalence of middlemen between farmers and consumers.[155] The adverse effects of trade unionism upon the economic viability of agriculture was raised by some witnesses.[156] Union witnesses were divided on the merits of tillage as opposed to livestock rearing. John Leonard of the Meath Farmers' Association wished to promote livestock rearing.[157] Frank Wood of the Waterford Farmers' Association argued that tillage cultivation was now uneconomic and that agriculture would benefit from a shift towards livestock rearing.[158] In contrast, Michael Casey of the Clare Farmers' Association favoured a government subsidy on tillage.[159] J. J. Bergin argued for a tariff to be imposed on imported grain.[160] The report by the Agricultural Commission suggested the implementation of many union policies. The Commission report rejected a interventionist policy for agriculture,[161] but favoured state aid for "the promotion and attainment of better practice both in the production and marketing of agricultural produce."[162] It favoured an expansion of dairying while commercial tillage production was not encouraged.[163]

The government acted on the recommendations of the Commission and introduced a number of Acts to improve the quality of livestock produce. The Agricultural Produce (Eggs) Bill prohibited the exportation of eggs unless they had been neatly packed at clean and suitable

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[154] Ibid, March 1st 1923, evidence of J. W. Young. July 28th 1923, evidence of Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp.
[155] Ibid, March 14th 1923, evidence of Owen Hughes.
[156] Ibid, November 17th 1923, evidence of C. J. Kettle. *Cork Examiner*, March 22nd 1923, evidence of Nicholas Fitzgerald.
[157] Ibid, March 26th 1923.
[158] Ibid, March 20th 1923.
[159] Ibid, March 28th 1923.
[160] Ibid, March 15th 1923.
[161] *Reports of the Commission on Agriculture, Final Report.* R.25. Stationery Office, Dublin, 1924, p.27.
[162] Ibid, p.31.
[163] Ibid, pp.29 &pp.44-45.

premises and had been tested by government officials.[164] The Dairy Produce Bill established minimum standards of cleanliness for creameries and prohibited the supply of dirty milk to creameries. The export of butter was confined to registered premises who had to fulfil a more rigorous set of conditions.[165] The Livestock Breeding Bill stipulated that bulls had to be licensed. A licence could be refused on the grounds of anticipated defective and inferior offspring or of congenital disease.[166]

The Farmers' Party deputies offered qualified support for the Bills. Patrick Baxter and Denis Gorey admitted while state intervention was regrettable, it was necessary as farmers were unable to improve the quality of their produce on a voluntary basis.[167] Gorey welcomed the Livestock Breeding Bill, recalling his earlier advocacy for such a measure.[168] He believed that the scope of the Agricultural Produce (Eggs) Bill was too limited. Gorey wanted to limit the sale of eggs to co-operative societies.[169] Some Farmers' Party Oireachtas members were not as enthusiastic as their leadership about the bills. Michael Heffernan accepted both the Agricultural Produce (Eggs)[170] and Livestock Breeding Bills[171] as unwelcome but necessary measures. As regards the Dairy Produce Bill, Heffernan revived memories of the government regulation of the butter trade during the early 1920's;

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[164] *Dáil Debates*, Vol VII, op.cit, col 1545, May 29th 1924.
[165] Ibid, cols 2672-73, June 19th 1924.
[166] *Dáil Debates*, Vol IX, 22nd October- 19th December 1924, col 387, October 29th 1924.
[167] *Dáil Debates*, Vol VII, op.cit, cols 2685-86 & col 2677, June 19th 1924
[168] *Dáil Debates*, Vol IX, op.cit, col 393, October 29th 1924.
[169] *Dáil Debates*, Vol VII, op.cit, col 2304, June 12th 1924.
[170] Ibid, col 2309, June 12th 1924.
[171] *Dáil Debates*, Vol IX, op.cit, col 400, October 29th 1924.

"we who have some knowledge of the actions of the Department in regard to butter manufacture in this country in the past are very dubious about this and we are very slow to give our support to any measure which will put such complete control in the hands of the Department and the officials of the Department."[172]

In the Senate, Sir John Keane described the Dairy Produce Bill as excessively restrictive and bureaucratic. He believed that more benefit would accrue from expanded agricultural education.[173]

The Livestock Breeding Bill generated unease among members of the Irish Farmers' Union. The National Executive received a motion from the Clare County Executive recommending rejection of the Bill. The executive decided to support the Bill but added "that the type of animal to be classed as unsuitable for the particular districts should be decided by a body composed of representatives of the Irish Farmers' Union, County Committees of Agriculture and others interested in livestock development."[174] However, the Farmers' Party TD for Clare, Conor Hogan, persisted in opposing the Livestock Breeding Bill, in the course of which he delivered the following justification for non-interference by the state in the agricultural sector;

" I am afraid that the energy of the state in a large measure will have the effect of making him (the farmer) less self-reliant, of making him look to the state more and more- looking up to it at it were- and that he will not be as efficient as heretofore."[175]

In spite of such opposition, Patrick Hogan welcomed the general acceptance by the Irish Farmers' Union of the Bills; "I am glad to learn...that the point of view of the farmer is changing. The farmers used not welcome inspectors nor officials from the Department of

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[172] *Dáil Debates*, Vol XII, op.cit, col 2684, June 19th 1924.
[173] *Seanad Debates*, Vol III, 1st May 1923- 19th December 1924, cols 1076-83, November 19th 1924.
[174] N.L.I., Irish Farmers' Union MSS, Ms. 19021.Record of meeting of the National Executive, October 16th 1924.
[175] *Dail Debates*, Vol IX, op.cit, col 406, October 29th 1924.

Agriculture in the past."[176] The Livestock Breeding Act continued to generate hostility. In the following year, D. L. O' Gorman claimed that the Act had no beneficial effect upon cattle prices.[177]

The union was divided on the merits of free trade against protectionism. At a National Executive meeting held in 1923, both Sir John Keane and Michael Heffernan expressed their support for free trade while others favoured a tariff on imported flour.[178] A motion was passed at the 1924 annual congress, proposed by Michael Heffernan and seconded by W. J. Fahy, opposing protectionism on the grounds that it would increase inflation. Nevertheless, Heffernan admitted that the union should not permanently commit itself to a free trade policy. John Conlan proposed an amendment which advocated protection for barley. This was opposed by Heffernan, who argued that such a proposal would set a precedent for other sectors in agriculture. Conlans' amendment was defeated.[179] From 1924 onwards, barley growers campaigned independently of the leadership of the Irish Farmers' Union for government assistance. Their efforts were facilitated by the concentration of barley growers, as noted by Gilmour, in a small number of counties.[180] Using 1927 figures 91.6% of the barley acreage was concentrated in eight counties; Kildare, Kilkenny, Laois, Louth, Wexford, Cork and Tipperary.[181] As a result barley growers were able to organise readily and held considerable electoral influence.

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[176] *Dail Debates*, Vol VII, op.cit, col 2299, June 12th 1924.
[177] *Cork Examiner*, August 24th 1925.
[178] N. L. I., Irish Farmers' Union MSS, Ms. 19021. Report of meeting of the National Executive, September 20th 1923.
[179] *Irish Times*, March 27th 1924.
[180] D. A. Gilmour, "Land and people, c.1926" in *A new history of Ireland, VII: Ireland 1921-84*.ed. J. R. Hill. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003, pp.62-85, p.65.
[181] *Statistical Abstract 1931*, Stationery Office Dublin, 1932, pp.32-33.

The barley growers attempted to persuade the Irish Farmers' Union to adopt their demands. In September 1923, John Conlan called for a tariff to be levied on imported barley. This was opposed by Michael Heffernan who nevertheless admitted that a case existed for the subsidization of barley cultivation.[182] Many agricultural organisations demanded protection for barley growers. The County Kilkenny Unpurchased Tenants' Association called for the levying of an import duty on barley and for a minimum price of 25/- per barrel for domestic barley.[183] The Cork Farmers' Association also supported the imposition of a protective tariff on imported malting barley and malt.[184] Members of the East Cork Farmers' Association attempted to secure a pledge from the Cumann na nGaedheal candidate for a by-election in the local constituency to support a tariff on imported barley and malt.[185] R. A. Butler supported a motion in the Senate requesting a government-guaranteed price for barley, arguing that barley cultivation had been uneconomic for the previous three years while a reduction in the barley acreage would increase unemployment. He opposed a tariff on barley as this would lead to demands for similar measures for oat and wheat farmers.[186]

By October of 1924, the Laois Farmers' Association passed a resolution calling for an duty to be levied on all imported malting barley and malt, the revenue from this duty be used to subsidise barley growers. J. W. Young, who proposed the motion claimed that this motion would not increase the cost of production for livestock farmers, as the tariff would not be

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[182] N.L.I., Irish Farmers' Union MSS, Ms. 19021. Record of meeting of National Executive, September 20th 1923, op.cit.
[183] N.A.I., Department of Agriculture, A.G.I / G.3233/28. Tariff on Barley. Copy of resolution from County Kilkenny Unpurchased Tenants' Association, July 29th 1924.
[184] Ibid, letter from E. J. Cussen, Secretary Cork Farmers' Association, to the Department of Agriculture, July 22nd 1924.
[185] *Cork Examiner*, November 4th 1924.
[186] *Seanad Debates*, Vol III, op.cit, col 1024, July 28th 1924.

imposed on barley used for animal feed. He argued that any subsidy to barley growers should be funded by brewers who imported barley.[187]

The Department of Agriculture was hostile to the demands of the barley growers. It argued that barley acreage was not responsive to price changes, as it was not an extensively cultivated crop, and that any assistance would lead to small farmers subsidising wealthy tillage farmers.[188] Patrick Hogan expressed his frustration at the wave of resolutions passed calling for the protection for barley growers. He believed that this campaign was orchestrated by barley growers for selfish interests. He disputed many of the claims made by the barley growers. For instance, Hogan argued that Guinness did not abuse their predominant position in the malt sector to exploit farmers. Guinness actually paid prices for barley in excess of market value.[189] Hogan considered it possible to ignore the demands of the barley growers. He believed that the Irish Farmers' Union would not pose a threat on this issue as divisions existed between the Farmers' Party and the individual county associations on the protection of barley.[190]

Eventually the government acknowledged the grievances of the barley growers. Patrick Hogan and W. T. Cosgrave received a deputation of barley growers in October 1924. This deputation included John Conlan, J. W. Young and Richard Hipwell of Laois. The deputation argued for a tariff on imported barley and malt produce, the revenue from which could be

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[187] *Irish Times*, October 17th 1924.
[188] N. A. I, Department of Agriculture, A.G.I / G.3233/28, op.cit. Memo from Mr. Morris to Mr. Meyerick, Secretary, Department of Agriculture, October 30th 1923.
[189] Ibid, memo from Patrick Hogan to Mr. Meyerick, Secretary Department of Agriculture, August 20th 1924.
[190] Ibid, memo from Patrick Hogan to Joe McGrath, Minister of Industry and Commerce, September 17th 1924.

used to subsidise barley growers, and stated that the current market price for barley was uneconomic. A decline in the barley acreage would reduce tillage. In addition, barley growers found it difficult to adopt other forms of agriculture. J. W. Young added that in placing an import duty, Guinness would be forced to abandon their exploitation of barley growers. Patrick Hogan disputed the arguments of the barley growers. He considered that the economic benefit of barley cultivation was exaggerated, while the proposal for a 20% duty on imported malt would render the brewing sector uncompetitive.[191]

The period 1921 to 1924 saw the Irish Farmers' Union at the height of its power. It was in a position to influence the agricultural policy of the Irish Free State. While it did lobby the government on issues such as support for barley growers and land purchase, the union also sought direct political representation through the formation of the Farmers' Party. Union members also co-operated with business interests to advance mutual aims. However, the formation of the Farmers' Party, in spite of its relative electoral success, was a detrimental action for the future of the union. Contesting the election forced the Farmers' Party to openly endorse the Treaty. In spite of attempts to portray themselves as a patriotic party, the Farmers' Party and the Irish Farmers' Union were now viewed with hostility by republicans. The ability of the union to represent farmers on a vocational basis was now hindered by its political activities. The role of the Irish Farmers' Union was also threatened by the government. The energetic agricultural policies pursued by Patrick Hogan, in relation to both the free exportation of agricultural produce and improvement of produce quality, were based on suggestions by union members. As a consequence, the union was rendered superfluous as

[191] Ibid, report of meeting of deputation from County Committees of Agriculture representing barley growing counties with President Cosgrave and Minister Hogan, October 16th 1924.

regards the formation of agricultural policy, and its role was limited to making minor criticisms. In seeking to reduce rates on agricultural land, the union adopted a negative stance towards local authority expenditure. Some commentators argued that the scope for an agricultural party was too limited, and that the Farmers' Party should form the nucleus of a pro-business party. In spite of their hostility to the interventionism of the old regime, the Irish Farmers' Union generally supported Cumann na nGaedheal agricultural policy, realising that farmers could not reform the marketing of agricultural produce on a voluntary basis. Ideological opposition to government intervention in agriculture was limited to those high priests of *Laissez-Faire*, Sir John Keane and Conor Hogan.

Farmers again demonstrated their willingness to employ illegal means to defend their sectional interests, evident in the unpurchased tenants withholding rent from landlords, the violent action taken by farmers against trade unionists and the refusal by many farmers to pay what they considered to be excessive rates. However, the union leadership defused the potential for violence by diverting the anti-rate payment agitation towards contesting the forthcoming local elections and by persuading the unpurchased tenants to accept the 1923 Land Bill. Moreover, the armed forces of the Irish Free State crushed radical trade unionism, further limiting the scope for farmer violence. However, the decline of these external threats and diverse sectional interests caused many farmers to abandon active involvement in the union. Small farmers in the West of Ireland viewed the union as supportive of the graziers and unsympathetic to land re-distribution, in spite of the union's campaign in favour of the completion of land purchase. Union members were divided on trade policy, while tillage farmers began to campaign independently of the union in support of their sector. As a consequence of these divisions, Patrick Hogan, as early as 1924, could effectively afford to

dismiss the power of the union. The Irish Farmers' Union, in spite of achieving parliamentary representation, now was subject to the disruptive forces of sectional diversity, which had been masked by the now moribund threats of militant trade unionism and adverse government intervention. The union now faced a significant challenge; to maintain its cohesiveness and to use its parliamentary representation to best advantage.

Chapter III.

Division and Debate; The political and ideological struggle within the Irish Farmers' Union; 1925-28.

The year 1925 opened with a major crisis for livestock farmers. A prolonged period of wet weather in late 1924 caused a liver fluke epidemic. The epidemic effected sheep and then spread to cattle. The Counties of Leitrim, Roscommon, Galway and Clare were worst affected.[1] Guiomard and O'Connor argue that the epidemic caused severe hardship for farmers and have estimated that the 277,000 decline in national cattle stocks between 1924/25 and 1925/26 was principally caused by the epidemic.[2] The Irish Farmers' Union campaigned on behalf of fluke victims. The County Cavan Farmers' Association demanded government assistance for farmers who had suffered from excess cattle mortality.[3] At a meeting of the County Clare Farmers' Association, it was argued that cattle mortality was so severe that farmers would not be able to meet annuity and rate charges unless aid was provided. A moratorium on land annuity payments and other government charges in affected areas was suggested.[4]

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[1] *24th General Report of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, 1923-26,* op.cit, pp.3-4.
[2] C. Guiomard & R. O' Connor, "Agricultural output in the Irish Free State area before and after independence", *Irish Economic & Social History,* XII (1985) pp.89-97, pp.96-97.
[3] *Anglo-Celt,* April 15th 1925.
[4] *Clare Champion,* February 27th 1925.

Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp assumed a leading role in the campaign to compensate farmers affected by liver fluke. He requested an estimate of livestock mortality from a Clare Farmers' Association member in Kilkee as "I want to draw the attention of the Farmers' deputies and of congress to a definite and authentic state of the calamity and to rebut the Departments' [Agriculture] attitude to blame everybody but themselves."[5] In reply to a farmer from Cratloe, O' Callaghan-Westropp criticised how farmers in the area had allowed the former branch of the Irish Farmers' Union to lapse. If the branch had been still in existence, livestock losses could have been estimated. O' Callaghan-Westropp argued that the government would ignore the demands of unorganised farmers.[6] These observations reveal how apathy among farmers and the consequent weakening of their organisation hindered their ability to articulate their grievances.

In the Dáil, Patrick Baxter requested the government to advance loans to farmers for the purpose of re-stocking.[7] Patrick Hogan announced the formation of special credit societies for this purpose. Every pound invested by farmers would be matched by the government. Hogan believed that such a scheme would be preferential to a *Loan Simpliciter*, as advocated by the Farmers' Party, where difficulties would exist with "government departments trying to discriminate between thousands of applicants for a loan."[8] Hogan also disputed the severity of the crisis.[9] However, deputies Baxter and Gorey opposed the government scheme,[10] as did

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[5] U. C. D. A. D., O' Callaghan-Westropp papers, P.38/11/5. Letter from Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp to W. J. Counihan, March 22nd 1925.
[6] U. C. D. A. D., O' Callaghan-Westropp papers, P.38/11/28. Letter from Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp to Mr. Murnane, May 1st 1925.
[7] *Dáil Debates*, Vol XI, 22nd April 1925- 29th May 1925, col 508, April 29th 1925.
[8] Ibid, cols 778-79, May 1st 1925.
[9] Ibid, cols 773-74, May 1st 1925.

farmers affected by the liver fluke epidemic. At a meeting of Roscommon farmers, it was argued that farmers would be unable to raise matching funding. A preference was expressed for long-term government loans.[11] Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp also expressed opposition to the government scheme,[12] as did the farmers' associations in Counties Kerry and Clare.[13]

The government introduced a new sector to agriculture in the form of sugar beet. In 1924, the Irish Farmers' Union National Executive established a sub-committee to investigate sugar-beet cultivation.[14] Members of the union were divided on the merits of sugar beet cultivation. The East Cork Farmers' Association strongly supported measures to support the sugar beet industry.[15] The Cork Farmers' Association requested that a sugar beet factory be constructed in North Cork.[16] However, D. L. O' Gorman strongly opposed the promotion of sugar beet. He argued that it was more economic to import sugar than to subsidise domestic beet cultivation.[17] The debate over a protectionist policy for agriculture had an adverse effect upon the receptiveness of the members of the union to new agricultural commodities which required government support. The government justified the subsidisation of sugar beet, as it would increase the tillage acreage, beet pulp could be used to feed cattle and beet processing would increase employment.[18] Denis Gorey favoured the promotion of sugar beet cultivation on an experimental basis but doubted whether the industry would ever be economically

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[10] Ibid, cols 790-92, May 1st 1925.
[11] *Irish Independent*, May 12th 1925.
[12] *Clare Champion*, May 30th 1925.
[13] U. C. D. A. D., O' Callaghan-Westropp papers, P.38/11/37, Letter from Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp to M. F. O' Hanlon, May 18th 1925.
[14] N. L. I., Irish Farmers' Union MSS, Ms.19021. Meeting of National Executive of the Irish Farmers' Union, October 16th 1924, op.cit.
[15] *Cork Examiner*, November 4th 1924.
[16] Ibid, October 26th 1925.
[17] Ibid, August 24th 1925.
[18] *Dáil Debates*, Vol XII, 2nd June - 8th July 1925, cols 567-70, June 9th 1925.

viable.[19] Michael Heffernan was opposed to the scheme, believing that other sectors of agriculture would benefit more from the proposed subsidy that sugar beet. He also argued that a sugar beet company would abuse its monopoly position.[20] The continued hostility by some members of the union to the sugar beet industry was evident at the annual general congress of 1926. A motion, which was proposed by Col. C. M. Gibbon and seconded by Michael Doyle, urging support for the sugar beet industry, was opposed by some delegates.[21]

The Farmers' Party continued to advocate the de-rating of agricultural land. In 1924, Richard Wilson called for a 50% reduction in the rateable value of agricultural land which would be funded from central taxation.[22] Michael Heffernan argued that the current rating system was regressive, as it did not take account of the ability of the farmer to pay. He also drew attention to the fact that the agricultural grant was not indexed to inflation.[23] By June of 1925, the government introduced the Local Government (Rates on Agricultural Land) Bill which doubled the agricultural grant.[24]

By 1925, the county associations of the Irish Farmers' Union commenced their local election campaign. They followed the policy suggested by Michael O' Hanlon and campaigned not to exceed a specified rate figure. The candidates of the Limerick Farmers' Association advocated a maximum rate of 5/- in the £.[25] Similar policies were adopted by the candidates

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[19] Ibid, col 910, June 12th 1925.
[20] Ibid, cols 947-964, June 16th 1925.
[21] *Irish Times*, March 18th 1926.
[22] *Dáil Debates*, Vol VII, op.cit, col 2145, June 11th 1924.
[23] Ibid, col 2147, June 11th 1924.
[24] *Dáil Debates*, Vol XII, op.cit, col 1424, June 24th 1925.
[25] *Limerick Leader*, February 21st 1925.

for the Clare and Waterford Farmers' Associations. The candidates for the Waterford County Council pledged to remove political discussion from Council deliberations.[26] The Kilkee branch of the Clare Farmers' Association argued that shopkeepers and business people be approached for support as they also suffered from excessive rates, again demonstrating how the union sought co-operation from urban interests. Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp suggested to the Clare Farmers' Association that no rate be struck until the new councils were elected.[27] At a meeting of the Cork Farmers' Association, a proposal for a conference between the association and Cumann na nGaedheal to select joint candidates was rejected in favour of an independent stance by the association.[28] With the absence of officially designated Cumann na nGaedheal candidates, and with the electoral register confined to ratepayers, the Irish Farmers' Union candidates performed strongly. Michael O' Hanlon welcomed the results and declared; "the farmers who have been returned are mainly of the middle class, keen and hard-headed, and their term of office is likely to be marked by a concentration on securing economy and efficiency in local administration."[29]

However, a more sombre assessment of the local election campaign was made by Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp. He described how the candidates of the Clare Farmers' Association failed to utilise their organisation and how the candidates fought the campaign as individuals rather than as a team, with poor internal transfers as a consequence. Too many candidates had been selected and such weak candidates split the vote which prevented effective candidates

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[26] *Irish Independent*, May 26th 1925.
[27] Ibid, March 22nd 1925.
[28] *Cork Examiner*, February 7th 1925.
[29] *Irish Independent*, June 27th 1925.

from being elected.[30] The Irish Farmers' Union facilitated the return of former supporters of the Irish Parliamentary Party to local government. In Cork, for instance, 5 of the 27 Farmers' Association councillors had served on the pre-1920 council.[31]

The Irish Farmers' Union supported the reform of agricultural credit. In 1924, an union deputation, comprised of deputies Heffernan and White, Col. C. M. Gibbon and C. F. MacLoughlin, met the Irish Banks' Standing Committee on this issue. The committee refused to act on the proposals presented by the deputation to reduce interest rates charged to farmers and to extend credit.[32] At the 1925 annual congress, resolutions were passed which criticised excessive interest rates being charged on loans to farmers, the seeking of excessive security for loans by the banks and the difficulty in obtaining long-term loans for farmers.[33] The formation of the Banking Commission appeared to offer redress for the grievances of farmers. However, Michael Heffernan criticised the membership of the Commission, whom he argued had no specific knowledge of agricultural credit.[34] The Commission issued an invitation to the Irish Farmers' Union to present evidence. Heffernan was opposed to accepting this invitation and believed that the government should have had implemented the recommendations of the Agricultural Commission as regards credit without recourse to another commission. Sir John Keane opposed Heffernan's stance. He argued that it would be foolish for farmers to boycott

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[30] U. C. D. A. D., O' Callaghan-Westropp papers, P.38/11/58. Letter from Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp to M. F. O' Hanlon, July 6th 1925.
[31] Marnane, *Cork County Council, 1899-1985*, op.cit, p.205.
[32] N.L.I., Irish Farmers' Union MSS, Ms. 19021. Record of meeting of Irish Farmers' Union delegation and Irish Banks' Standing Committee, June 11th 1924.
[33] *Irish Times*, March 28th 1925.
[34] *Dáil Debates*, Vol XIV, 19th January- 26th March 1926, col 845, February 12th 1926.

such an important commission.[35] The report issued by the Commission concerning agricultural credit was more favourable than members of the union had anticipated. It recommended the formation of a dedicated agricultural credit organisation which would extend loans to individual farmers and to co-operative societies.[36] The union welcomed these proposals. E. J. Cussen argued that the extension of agricultural credit would "create an agricultural community independent of the gombeen man and all he stood for."[37]

The settlement of the agricultural credit issue was timely for the Irish Farmers' Union, as some farmers considered radical measures to resolve the bank debt issue. The North Tipperary Farmers' Association formed a Farmers' Defence League which demanded the restructuring of farmers' debts to the banks.[38] Mr. Seymour, the Chairman of the North Tipperary Farmers' Association, argued that farmers did not wish to repudiate debts but wished their obligations as far as humanly possible. He stated that the league desired to meet the banks to discuss the re-structuring of debt and did not plan violent resistance.[39] League branches were also formed in Westmeath where they received the support of Fianna Fáil activist, M. J. Kennedy.[40] Some members of Cumann na nGaedheal accused the league of encouraging farmers to renege on debts. This was denied by an embarrassed Michael Hefferman.[41]

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[35] *Irish Times*, March 18th 1926.
[36] *Banking Commission, Second, Third and Fourth Interim Reports on Agricultural Credit, Business Credit and Public Finance. Second Interim Report, Agricultural Credit.* R.33/2. Stationery Office, Dublin, 1926, pp.10-12.
[37] *Irish Times*, April 16th 1927.
[38] *Limerick Leader*, February 12th 1927.
[39] *Cork Examiner*, March 14th 1927.
[40] *Westmeath Examiner*, January 1st 1927.
[41] *Dáil Debates*, Vol XIX, 22nd March- 20th May 1927, cols 1564-65, April 26th 1927.

The league received the support of J. J. Bergin, who called on the banks to restructure farmers' debt by seeking the re-payment of loans extended during the inflationary post-war period at their real, as opposed to nominal value.[42] Members of the league were sceptical of the effectiveness of the Banking Commission.[43] However, the league supported the recommendations of the commission report on agricultural credit. It called on the banks to cease the seizure of farmers' stock and implements in lieu of loan repayments until loans were restructured.[44] However, J. J. Bergin doubted the effectiveness of the proposed A. C. C.[45]

The issue of protectionism continued to divide the union. At the 1925 general congress, a motion, proposed by Brooke Brazier and seconded by Denis Gorey, sought to reverse the free trade motion passed at the previous congress. Brazier cited the difficulties in the tillage sector as a reason why the previous years' motion should be reversed. J. W. Young and John Conlan argued it would be unfair to introduce tariffs for the industrial sector while agricultural produce was freely imported. Sir John Keane, Col. C. M. Gibbon and Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp opposed a protectionist policy. As a result, a compromise motion was passed. The motion criticised the government for introducing tariffs for the industrial sector, which would increase inflation, without the introduction of equivalent protection for the agricultural sector.[46]

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[42] *Irish Times*, April 18th 1927.
[43] *Westmeath Examiner*, January 1st 1927.
[44] Ibid, April 2nd 1927.
[45] *Irish Times*, April 18th 1927.
[46] Ibid, March 28th 1925.

However, this compromise did not end the divisions within the union over protectionism, as evident in the 1925 budget debate, where "experimental tariffs" were introduced by Ernest Blythe, Minister for Finance.[47] Michael Heffernan opposed these tariffs, arguing that farmers would be handicapped if they had to buy their inputs in a protected market while having to sell their produce in a free market.[48] He preferred to assist agriculture by reducing taxation on farmers. He argued that the increased cost of living which would result from protectionism would force farmers to dismiss labourers, which in turn would reduce the tillage acreage.[49]

In contrast, Denis Gorey stated that union members would be "whole-hearted protectionists" if the country was in a position to protect its agricultural produce. Gorey advocated free trade in those commodities where the country enjoyed an exportable surplus and supported the imposition of tariffs on imported bacon and butter.[50] Richard Wilson supported the imposition of tariffs on agricultural imports which could be produced within the Free State. He supported the imposition of a tariff on imported butter to stimulate winter dairying.[51] John Conlan argued that while he generally supported free trade, he favoured protectionist measures for the barley and oat sectors. Conlan was the only Farmers' Party TD who advocated the official Irish Farmers' Union policy when he declared; "our party are free traders by conviction but they are being forced to change their policy in that respect and to demand that when other industries are being protected their industry should also be protected."[52]

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[47] *Dáil Debates*, Vol XI, 22nd April - 29th May 1925, col 21-22, April 22nd 1925.
[48] Ibid, col 103, April 22nd 1925.
[49] Ibid, col 317, April 23rd 1925.
[50] Ibid, col 177-78, April 23rd 1925.
[51] Ibid, col 218-19, April 23rd 1925.
[52] Ibid, col 280, April 24th 1925.

Patrick Hogan ridiculed the policy shift of the Farmer' Party, whom he described as "free traders in the abstract, who want protection for an industry that has protection already. In other words they want to suffer the disadvantages of protection without getting any of the advantages of it."[53] As regards the barley farmers, Hogan observed that they demanded a subsidy and a minimum price for their produce; in effect they demanded government control of their sector; "I would like to hear what farmers of the south have to say about controlled prices. They remember the butter control and other controls."[54]

The demands for increased tillage and the protection of agricultural produce continued unabated. The Chairman of the South Tipperary Farmers' Association, Con O' Neill, endorsed the levying of tariffs on imported bacon, butter, barley and wheat.[55] J. J. Walsh, Minister for Posts and Telegraphs, criticised the importation of agricultural produce and supported compulsory tillage.[56] These comments caused anxiety amongst members of the Irish Farmers' Union. Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp claimed that the government would introduce compulsory tillage.[57] Walsh's proposals were also opposed by Michael Heffernan, who claimed that the scheme to promote tillage originated from an internal Cumann na nGaedheal committee and had no sanction from the Department of Agriculture.[58]

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[53] Ibid, col 293, April 24th 1925.
[54] Ibid, col 301, April 24th 1925.
[55] *Limerick Leader*, May 6th 1925.
[56] *Irish Independent*, May 25th 1925. *Irish Times*, August 17th 1925.
[57] *Limerick Leader*, October 24th 1925.
[58] *Cork Examiner*, August 25th 1925.

However, increased tillage was supported by Thomas Linehan, who succeeded R. A. Butler as president of the Irish Farmers' Union. Linehan argued that increased tillage was desirable for the domestic needs of farmers. He hoped that the Irish Free State would become a net exporter of grain produce.[59] Some members of the Cork Farmers' Association endorsed measures to promote tillage. Brooke Brasier strongly supported a tariff on imported grain produce. The association also protested at the lack of influence by farmers on government agricultural policy. It called for regular consultations between the National Executive of the Irish Farmers' Union and the Department of Agriculture, while the Council of Agriculture should be revived.[60]

By August 1925, the Kildare County Committee of Agriculture took a significant step in the organisation of tillage farmers, an initiative which was independent of the Irish Farmers' Union. It proposed that a conference of delegates from grain-producing counties should be held to discuss measures to increase grain prices. J. J. Bergin, who presided at the conference, which formed a grain growers' association, argued that the decline in the tillage acreage resulted in increased imports. In addition, grain prices at present did not cover the cost of production. Patrick Belton recommended that tariffs be imposed on imported barley and oats. He argued that given increased foreign competition, Irish farmers required protection. Philip Harold-Barry feared that the increased importation of oats would lead to a fall in the domestic oat acreage. J. W. Young argued for a tariff on imported barley, repeating the argument that this would force Guinness to increase prices paid for barley. However, J.J. Bergin warned

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[59] *Irish Times*, March 28th 1925.
[60] *Cork Examiner*, October 26th 1925.

that Guinness could absorb the cost of the tariff and reduce the price paid to barley-growers accordingly.[61]

The conference resumed three weeks later to discuss proposals to assist tillage farmers. Credit would be extended to small farmers, freight costs for agricultural produce were to be reduced, tillage farmers were to be subsidised and farmers who tilled at least 25% of their land were to be remitted from paying income tax. A minimum price of 25/- per barrel was recommended for barley. Tariffs were to be levied on imported barley, oats and flour. J.J. Bergin justified these measures as an increased wheat acreage was necessary to guarantee the food supply of the nation and to increase employment. He argued that a tariff on imported oats was necessary to increase the oat acreage. However, Bergin opposed compulsory tillage, which would lead to the cultivation of unsuitable land. Col. C. M. Gibbon, keeping a watching brief for the Irish Farmer's Union, unsuccessfully attempted to quash the proposals for tariffs and subsidies. He favoured research on technical issues related to arable cultivation.[62]

The proposals were submitted to the Department of Agriculture, but were rejected. Departmental officials were opposed to a minimum price for barley. It was argued that the subsidization of tillage cultivation would be expensive and difficult to administer. The officials suspected that the proposal for a tariff on imported flour originated from the selfish interests of millers.[63]

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[61] *Irish Times*, August 5th 1925.
[62] Ibid, August 25th 1925.
[63] N.A.I., A.G.1 / G.3233/28, op.cit. Memo from Mr. Hinchcliff to Mr. Meyerick, Secretary, Department of Agriculture, September 29th 1925.

The failure of the conference to have its proposals implemented did not end the campaign to promote tillage. The Cork Farmers' Association wrote to the Department of Agriculture arguing; "if immediate measures are not taken to promote markets for the products of the tillage farmer he will be compelled to lay down his land on grass with a resulting loss to the community at large."[64] At a meeting held in Dublin, Patrick Belton demanded that tariffs be imposed on all imported agricultural produce and that the tillage acreage be increased. He criticised the lack of a public response to the demand of the Grain Conference and praised J.J. Walsh as the only government minister who supported increased tillage. Belton accused the Irish Farmers' Union of favouring the graziers.[65]

The barley growers continued to lobby the government for assistance. The Offaly Farmers' Association called for the imposition of tariffs on imported barley and for a minimum price to be established.[66] The County Secretary of the Wexford Farmers' Association requested aid for barley growers, describing them as "a most deserving and long suffering class."[67] The Laois County Committee of Agriculture now turned to the Department of Finance in their quest for a tariff,

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[64] N.A.I., Department of Agriculture, A.G.1./E.21427/25. County Cork Association, Irish Farmers' Union. Submission to Department, re. general agricultural policy, October 30th 1925.
[65] *Irish Times*, September 28th 1925.
[66] N.A.I., Department of Agriculture, A.G.1/G.3233, op.cit. Letter from County Secretary, Offaly Farmers' Union, to the Minister for Agriculture, October 12th 1925.
[67] Ibid, letter from Nicholas Murphy, County Secretary, Wexford Farmers' Association, to the Minister for Agriculture, September 28th 1925.

on imported barley.[68] However, J. J. MacElligott of the Finance Department argued that barley prices were depressed due to a recession in the brewing sector while a tariff on barley would render Irish stout exports uncompetitive.[69]

Agriculture experienced a recovery in 1926. Livestock prices increased while sheep stocks recovered from the fluke crisis. A good harvest was experienced in 1925 although oats and barley fetched low prices.[70] The issue of protection for the agricultural sector was re-opened when Ernest Blythe made a speech in Portlaoise, stating that the government would consider the application of protective tariffs on agricultural imports.[71] This set the context for the annual congress of the Irish Farmers' Union. Brooke Brazier and Deputy Conlan again attempted to pass a protectionist motion. Their proposal was opposed by Sir John Keane and Michael Heffernan. Richard Wilson steered a middle course between free-traders and protectionists. He argued that the congress should endorse free trade in principle but should also state that selective tariffs on some agricultural imports could be of benefit. The motion which was passed by the congress was more explicit in its support for free trade than its equivalent in the previous year. It stated that protection had an inflationary effect upon agriculture without any corresponding benefit, while the government should not impose tariffs until they secured a mandate from the people to do so.[72]

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[68] N. A. I., Department of Finance, F 22/65/25, Laois County Committee of Agriculture, tariff on imported barley. Letter from P. O'Neill, Secretary Laois County Committee on Agriculture, re. resolution on imported barley, October 14th 1925.
[69] Ibid, memo from J. J. MacElligott, to Ernest Blythe, Minister for Finance, October 21st 1925.
[70] *Twenty-Fourth General Report of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, 1923-26*, op.cit, pp.4-5.
[71] *Irish Times*, January 25th 1926.
[72] Ibid, March 18th 1926.

During the Budget speech of that year, Blythe announced that a tariff of 2/6 per cwt would be imposed on oatmeal imports as a means to increase the oat acreage. He stated that the arguments in favour of tariffs on other agricultural imports had been rejected.[73] The Farmers' Party expressed scepticism about the effectiveness of the oatmeal tariff. Michael Heffernan predicted that millers would not pass on the benefit of the tariff to farmers. Michael Doyle argued that the tariff would not eliminate the importation of oatmeal.[74]

Protectionist farmers again demonstrated their willingness to organise independently of the union, when a conference of delegates from County Committees of Agriculture was convened which discussed a protectionist agenda. Patrick Belton chaired the conference. Mr. Egan of Galway argued that increasing agricultural output while prices remained low was self-defeating. Farmers would only benefit from an expansion in the domestic market for agricultural produce. The conference supported the levying of tariffs on imported oats, barley and wheat. Reform of agricultural credit was also recommended. J. J. Bergin argued that farmers would benefit from protectionism, as they would then enjoy secured prices and markets.[75] The conference also sought the revival of the Council of Agriculture. The introduction of a moratorium on land annuity payments was discussed. A resolution which urged the formation of co-operative marketing associations was defeated, which revealed the preference among many farmers to seek government financial assistance for their difficulties rather than attempt to solve such difficulties themselves. The delegates also criticised the

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[73] *Dáil Debates*, Vol XV, 20th April - 31st May 1926, col 155, April 1st 1926.
[74] Ibid, col 196, April 21st 1926.
[75] *Irish Times*, April 28th 1926.

Irish Farmers' Union.[76] Writing for the *Leader*, Patrick Belton argued that agricultural policy should be directed towards the supply of the domestic market in preference to exportation. Belton stated that both the Farmers' Party and the leadership of the Irish Farmers' Union were unrepresentative of most farmers. The leadership of the union promoted free trade as a means of maintaining class prejudice and had no wish to promote policies of benefit to agriculture. Belton claimed that most of the ordinary union membership supported protectionist policies.[77] While Belton perhaps overstated his case, he was correct in arguing that some farmers were disillusioned with the free trade stance of their leadership.

However, the free-traders re-asserted their position at the 1927 annual congress, where D. L. O' Gorman and Col. C. M. Gibbon supported a motion affirming free trade as the best policy for farmers. O' Gorman argued that tariffs would only assist inefficient industries and increase farmers' costs. Michael Heffernan argued that barley growers were the only farmers who demanded protectionism. He stated if tariffs were imposed on agricultural imports, it would follow logically that protectionism would be introduced for industrial goods. Again both Brooke Brazier and John Conlan argued for a protectionist policy. They were supported by a Mr. Fitzgerald who supported the levying of tariffs on imported bacon and butter. Denis Gorey argued for a pragmatic approach. He expressed his support for selective protectionism, judged on a case by case basis. Gorey spoke of his support for tariffs on bacon and barley imports. The motion passed by the congress re-affirmed free trade but permitted members to

[76] Ibid, April 29th 1926.
[77] *The Leader*, May 15th 1926.

submit whatever evidence they desired to the Tariff Commission.[78] This motion was insufficient to gain the support of protectionist farmers, many of whom had now spilt from the Irish Farmers' Union. In April 1927, J. J. Bergin addressed a number of meetings in Kildare, where he called for tariffs to be levied on oat, barley and bacon imports. He described how the leadership of the Irish Farmers' Union had frustrated his activities. As a consequence a "Farmers' Protectionist Union" would be formed. This new organisation intended to nominate between eight to ten candidates at the forthcoming general election.[79] Significantly, Thomas Harris, a Fianna Fáil supporter in Kildare, called on Fianna Fáil voters to extend their lower preferences to Bergin if he were to contest the next election.[80] Laois barley grower J. W. Young wrote to Ernest Blythe, describing how the barley growers split from the Irish Farmers' Union;

"the executive of the union has now been captured by academic free traders and is no longer representative of the bulk of the tillage farmers, who have lost all confidence in them. A year ago, the Laois Farmers' Association on this question disowned them and there is no farmers' union now in existence in this county."[81]

The apathetic attitude by farmers towards the Irish Farmers' Union, which had been observed in the early 1920's, had become widespread. This was evident from the decline in the membership of the county associations. The Cork Farmers' Association reported a decline in the number of affiliated branches from 121 in 1921 to 87 by 1924.[82] A contributor to the

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[78] *Irish Times*, April 16th 1927.
[79] *Leinster Leader*, April 9th 1927.
[80] Ibid, April 23rd 1927.
[81] N.A.I., Department of Finance, F22/65/25. Letter from J. W. Young to Ernest Blythe, September 1st 1927.
[82] *Cork Examiner*, February 7th 1925.

Leader accused former landlords of undue influence over the Cork Farmers' Association.[83] P. K. Hogan, the Chairman of the Limerick Farmers' Association, stated that both the finances and the number of affiliated branches to the association had declined, especially in East Limerick. J. J. O' Shaughnessy, the Secretary of the West Limerick Farmers' Association, observed that large farmers in West Limerick now displayed apathy towards the association while another member argued that farmers had become complacent and ignored the need for organisation; "They want another '79 to wake them up."[84] Patrick Baxter, addressing the annual general meeting of the Cavan Farmers' Association, observed that many farmers were apathetic towards the union. Baxter argued that the government could not revitalise agriculture by its own efforts. Farmers had to organise themselves but he saw little evidence of this so far.[85]

Organisational problems were also experienced in Sligo. The financial position of the County Association declined as a result of the general election campaign and the failure to appoint a County Organiser. Subscriptions had not been collected from a number of branches.[86] Upon the appointment of a new County Organiser, it was discovered that many branches had collapsed.[87] The Clare Farmers' Association had no organiser between 1924 and 1925. Branches had collapsed in the Ennis area and in the east of the county. Subscriptions had declined by two-thirds between the 1919 and 1924.[88] Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp complained

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[83] *The Leader*, January 16th 1926.
[84] *Limerick Leader*, November 6th 1926. " '79" refers to the poor harvests in the West of Ireland in 1879 which stimulated the formation of the Land League.
[85] *Anglo-Celt*, April 15th 1925.
[86] *Sligo Champion*, May 17th 1924.
[87] Ibid, June 7th 1924.
[88] *Clare Champion*, February 27th 1925.

how the decline in subscriptions retarded the activities of the association and placed enormous pressure on the small number of activists. He accused farmers of only supporting the union during periods of crisis.[89] In the following year, O' Callaghan-Westropp threatened to resign from the Presidency of the association in protest at the apathy demonstrated by farmers in Clare, who avoided involvement in the association and were content "if they saw a letter in the papers signed 'George O' Callaghan-Westropp.' "[90] He also criticised the lethargic performance of the Farmers' Party in the Dáil, describing how the party was split on many issues, while only 5 of the 15 Farmers' Party deputies could be considered active.[91] However, in the privacy of personal correspondence, O' Callaghan-Westropp admitted that the Farmers' Party deputies had only one obligation to the union which was "to put farming interests first, but outside of these we have neither the right nor the power to interfere with his other political activities."[92], an attitude which permitted division within the union.

John Boohan and Patrick Hartigan of the Limerick Farmers' Association criticised the association councillors for not doing enough to reduce the burden of rates.[93] Similar criticisms were expressed in Waterford. Sir John Keane defended the performance of the Farmers' Association County Councillors, arguing that they had reduced expenditure where possible.[94] Other activists questioned the necessity for a political party. E. J. Cussen, Secretary of the Cork Farmers' Association, argued that the union should concentrate on commercial activity

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[89] U. C. D. A. D., O' Callaghan-Westropp papers, P.38/11/10. Letter from Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp to Batt Crowley, April 3rd 1925.
[90] *Limerick Leader*, January 20th 1926.
[91] *Irish Times*, March 25th 1925.
[92] U. C. D. A. D., O' Callaghan-Westropp papers, P.38/4/496. Letter from Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp to Patrick MacMahon, March 2nd 1925.
[93] *Limerick Leader*, February 27th 1926.
[94] *Munster Express*, March 4th 1927.

rather than on politics.[95] The Cork Farmers' Association achieved considerable success in its commercial activities. By 1927, the association exported cattle, pigs, bacon and poultry, imported grain and fertilisers, and marketed barley.[96] Other associations also engaged in commercial activity. The Galway Farmers' Association exported pigs,[97] as did the Westmeath Farmers' Association.[98] The Cavan Farmers' Association organised the sale of eggs.[99]

The disorganised condition of the farmers' associations rendered them vulnerable to approaches from other parties. As early as 1924, Cumann na nGaedheal approached the Cork Farmers' Association to secure their co-operation during the course of two by-elections which were held in Cork constituencies. The association was invited to send delegates to the Cumann na nGaedheal selection convention for the Cork Borough constituency. In spite of arguments in favour, which stressed how farmers could defend their interests within Cumann na nGaedheal, the delegates rejected the proposal desiring that the Cork Farmers' Association remain independent of political parties.[100] However, the successful Cumann na nGaedheal candidate for the Cork East constituency was M. K. Noonan, formerly of the Cork Farmers' Association and the Unpurchased Tenants' Association.[101] Cumann na nGaedheal sought the co-operation of the Farmers' Party for the series of by-elections which were held in 1925. The decentralised nature of the union militated against such co-operation at a national level. According to Regan, the Farmers' Party informed Cumann na nGaedheal that the county

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[95] *Irish Times*, January 25th 1926.
[96] Ibid, January 24th 1927.
[97] Ibid, April 9th 1927.
[98] *Westmeath Examiner*, March 19th 1927.
[99] *Anglo-Celt*, April 18th 1925.
[100] *Cork Examiner*, November 6th 1924.
[101] Ibid, November 4th 1924.

associations enjoyed such a level of autonomy that an instruction to select pro-Treaty candidates could not be enforced. However, some co-operation did take place between Cumann na nGaedheal and the Farmers' Party. Martin Roddy, an unsuccessful Farmers' Party candidate for the 1923 election was elected as a Cumann na nGaedheal candidate for the Leitrim-Sligo bye-election. A joint Farmers' Party -Cumann na nGaedheal convention was held in Roscommon.[102]

Some of the county associations refused to direct members as to their political allegiance, which was indicative of the divergent political tendencies of their membership. The Limerick Farmers' Association refused to direct to its members who to support with their lower preferences. J. J. O' Shaughnessy justified this refusal by arguing that the Irish Farmers' Union was a non-political organisation and members were entitled to vote for whoever they wished after voting for the Farmers' Party candidates. Another member of the association observed that farmers voted for any type of candidate and as many farmers voted for Cumann na nGaedheal as they did for the Farmers' Party.[103] Other associations expressed hostility to Cumann na nGaedheal. At a meeting of the Cumann na nGaedheal Standing Committee, Fr. Vaughan of Ennis referred to the destructive criticism made by the Clare Farmers' Association of the government. The committee expressed concern that "the Irish Farmers' Union was particularly virulent in its opposition to the government."[104] Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp continued to argue for a non-political stance. In reply to a correspondent who

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[102] Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution*, op.cit, p.241.
[103] *Limerick Leader*, November 6th 1926.
[104] U. C. D. A. D., Fine Gael collection, P.39/ MIN/ 1, Minutes of Cumann na nGaedheal Standing Committee. Committee meeting, December 1st 1925.

argued that the union should adopt a nationalist policy, O' Callaghan-Westropp wrote that would embroil the union in distracting political activity at the expense of campaigning on economic issues. He argued that three nationalist parties, Cumann na nGaedheal, Sinn Féin and the followers of Joe McGrath existed; "if the Irish Farmers' Union were national in the sense of any one of them it would evidently antagonise the other two and thereby at once make itself sectional."[105]

In December of 1924, the Cavan Farmers' Association asserted its independence from the other political parties and decided to contest the forthcoming by-election in the County. [106] The association selected John O' Hanlon, proprietor of the *Anglo-Celt* newspaper,[107] as its candidate, who had unsuccessfully contested the East Cavan by-election for the Irish Parliamentary Party in 1918.[108] Patrick Baxter, in spite of the co-operation between the union and Cumann na nGaedheal in the West of Ireland, declared that the Irish Farmers' Union would not endorse a candidate from another party. He argued that it would be undesirable to elect another Cumann na nGaedheal TD, given their existing majority. Michael O' Hanlon justified the existence of the Farmers' Party. He argued that it would be undesirable to create a single pro-Treaty party, as Cumann na nGaedheal should be opposed on socio-economic issues.

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[105] U. C. D. A. D., O' Callaghan-Westropp papers, P.38/4/496. Letter from Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp to Patrick McMahon, March 2nd 1925, op.cit.
[106] *Irish Times*, December 15th 1924.
[107] H. Oram, *The Newspaper Book*, M. O. Books, Dublin, 1983, p.136.
[108] Walker, *Parliamentary election results in Ireland, 1801-1922*, op.cit, p.117.

In his acceptance speech, John O' Hanlon denied that the Farmers' Party simply existed to gratify the selfish interests of farmers. He described the farmer as "the financial barometer of the country."[109] During the election campaign, O' Hanlon called for reduced government expenditure and taxation. He criticised the hostility expressed by republicans towards the cattle export trade. He argued that the continued argument between Cumann na nGaedheal and republicans over the Treaty, at the expense of socio-economic issues, alienated voters; "I am in favour of working the Treaty for all it is worth but I don't want to make it the sole issue of the election."[110] He also expressed opposition to the "experimental tariffs" introduced by Ernest Blythe.[111] Deputy Patrick McKenna emphasised O' Hanlon's support for the Irish Parliamentary Party and how the Irish Farmers' Union was the successor to the Land League.[112] The election saw O' Hanlon receiving a credible 10,285 votes which accounted for 38.5% of the valid vote. However he was defeated for the final seat by the Cumann na nGaedheal candidate by a narrow margin of 861 votes.[113] O' Hanlon attributed his defeat to organisational inefficiencies within the Cavan Farmers' Association.[114]

Cumann na nGaedheal was not the only grouping to court the Farmers' Party. Former supporters of the Irish Parliamentary Party, Thomas O' Donnell and W. G. Fallon, discussed the formation of a new party with Patrick McKenna.[115] By 1926, the National League, led by William Redmond, was formed. McKenna supported an alliance between the Farmers' Party

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[109] *Anglo-Celt*, January 3rd 1925.
[110] Ibid, January 24th 1925.
[111] Ibid, February 21st 1925.
[112] Ibid, February 14th 1925.
[113] Ibid, March 14th 1925.
[114] Ibid, March 21st 1925.
[115] Gaughan, *A political odyssey, Thomas O' Donnell M.P.*, op.cit, p.146.

and the National League. Speaking at an executive meeting of the Westmeath Farmers' Association, he argued that both the National League and the Farmers' Party held similar economic policies and they would benefit from an alliance.[116]

Denis Gorey had other plans. He claimed, that from 1925 onwards, he was of the opinion that Cumann na nGaedheal and the Farmers' Party should merge. Gorey believed that such a merged party would prevent the return of an anti-Treaty regime. The Irish Farmers' Union would then exert considerable influence over agricultural policy.[117] Gorey was correct in perceiving the impotent political position of the Farmers' Party, unable to influence government agricultural policy and acting as a focus of political instability as a consequence of its independent political stance. Gorey anticipated that the Irish Farmers' Union would have greater influence if it had representatives within the governing party of the state. The intrigues of McKenna and Gorey's ambitions call into question Fitzpatrick's assertion that the Farmers' Party did not wish to participate in government and was content in being a lobby group.[118]

By early 1927, the Farmers' Party commenced a frantic series of political negotiations. Thomas O'Donnell wrote to Patrick McKenna, urging that the Irish Farmers' Union merge with the National League. McKenna again advocated an alliance between the Farmers' Party and the National League, arguing that such an alliance would provide an alternative to

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[116] *Limerick Leader*, October 16th 1926.
[117] *Irish Times*, May 4th 1927.
[118] Fitzpatrick, *The two Irelands*, op.cit, p.202.

Cumann na nGaedheal.[119] A meeting between the leadership of the National League and the Farmers' Party was held in March, but no outcome was reached. Gaughan concludes that the failure of the meeting strengthened the position of the pro-Cumann na nGaedheal faction within the Farmers' Party.[120] This is confirmed by comments made by Denis Gorey to the effect that the National League would dissolve the Irish Farmers' Union as part of a merger. Gorey claimed these proposals made the necessity of an alliance with Cumann na nGaedheal more urgent. In this Gorey claimed the support of Michael Heffernan.[121]

Heffernan disputed the version of events outlined by Gorey. Both of them opposed an alliance with the National League. However, Heffernan claimed that Gorey wished to preserve the existence of an independent farmers' party with the option of forming a coalition with Cumann na nGaedheal.[122] Gorey and Michael O' Hanlon then held private discussions with W. T. Cosgrave, Patrick Hogan and Kevin O' Higgins concerning a merger. Gorey reported the outcome of these discussions to the Farmers' Party. The parliamentary party voted with 11 in favour and 4 against to conduct formal discussions with Cumann na nGaedheal. Deputies Doyle, Heffernan, Wilson and Gorey comprised the negotiating team.[123] However, Heffernan claimed that he was opposed to these negotiations as both Gorey and Michael O' Hanlon had undermined the position of the Farmers' Party in their earlier contacts with Cumann na nGaedheal.[124]

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[119] *Westmeath Examiner*, January 8th 1927.
[120] Gaughan, op.cit, p.166.
[121] *Irish Times*, May 4th 1927.
[122] *Irish Independent*, May 12th 1927.
[123] *Irish Times*, May 4th 1927.
[124] *Irish Independent*, May 12th 1927.

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At the conference held between the two parties, agricultural policy, protectionism, the formation of a committee to investigate public expenditure and the future role of the Farmers' Party deputies within Cumann na nGaedheal was discussed. Gorey claimed that agreement was reached on agricultural policy and on the need to reduce taxation.[125] Heffernan subsequently argued that Gorey over-emphasised the progress made with Cumann na nGaedheal. Heffernan claimed that agreement was reached only in the area of agricultural policy. Other proposals were outlines of future Cumann na nGaedheal policy for the benefit of the Farmers' Party delegates.[126] The negotiating team presented the proposals to the Farmers' Party deputies. They decided, with four opposing, to submit the merger proposals to the Irish Farmers' Union congress. Patrick Hogan expressed optimism about the prospect of a merger. Reporting to the Cumann na nGaedheal Standing Committee, Hogan

"stated that the Farmers' Party had taken the initiative entirely of their own accord; that the party decided to merge with the Cumann na nGaedheal Party, that the Farmers' Party had accepted the Cumann na nGaedheal programme, including selective protection, agricultural policy and essential Irish."[127]

The merger debate contradicts O' Halpin's argument of a passive alliance between the Farmers' Party and Cumann na nGaedheal.[128]

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[125] *Irish Times*, May 4th 1927.
[126] *Irish Independent*, May 12th 1927.
[127] U. C. D. A. D., Fine Gael Collection, P.39/ MIN/1, Minutes of Cumann na nGaedheal Standing Committee. Committee meeting, April 1st 1927.
[128] O' Halpin, "Politics and the state, 1922-32" in Hill, ed. *A new history of Ireland VII*, op.cit, p.94.

The individual county associations now considered the merger proposals. Activists in West Cork opposed the merger.[129] In South Tipperary, the pro-merger proposal was defeated at the executive meeting by a narrow margin.[130] Conor Hogan persuaded the Galway Farmers' Association to reject the merger proposals.[131] Patrick Baxter, speaking to the Cavan Farmers' Association, argued that the Farmers' Party should maintain its independence.[132] Given the failure of his own plan to merge the Farmers' Party and the National League, Patrick McKenna was a strong opponent of the merger with Cumann na nGaedheal. Addressing the Westmeath Farmers' Association, he argued that an unrepresentative faction within the Irish Farmers' Union desired a merger with Cumann na nGaedheal. He stated that the union would be unable to formulate an independent agricultural policy as a result of the proposed merger.[133] However, McKenna was oblivious to the fact that he also represented an "unrepresentative faction" in attempting to merge the Farmers' Party with the National League!

The merger with Cumann na nGaedheal was rejected by the congress. A resolution was passed stating that the Farmers' Party would maintain an independent existence but would support the security and agricultural policies of the government. As a consequence of the rejection of the merger, Michael O' Hanlon resigned as General Secretary of the union.[134] Denis Gorey attempted to defend his position as leader of the Farmers' Party. During the public session of the congress, a Col. Quinn called for his resignation. Gorey replied; "if this

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[129] *Irish Times*, April 6th 1927.
[130] Ibid, April 11th 1927.
[131] Ibid, April 9th 1927.
[132] *Anglo-Celt*, April 2nd 1927.
[133] *Westmeath Examiner*, April 15th 1927.
[134] *Irish Times*, April 16th 1927.

member of the old gang is in a hurry for my resignation, I am afraid I am not going to oblige him. This spleen that has been going on here for the past three years is finding expression at last."[135] Gorey was referring to the hostility expressed by many ex-landlords towards him which dated from his involvement with the Unpurchased Tenants Association. However, Gorey's position was untenable. A fortnight later, he resigned as leader of the Farmers' Party and joined Cumann na nGaedheal.[136] He was succeeded as leader by Patrick Baxter.

Gorey subsequently attributed the failure to pass the merger proposals to the influence of ex-landlords, such as Sir John Keane and Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp. Again reviving his dispute with ex-landlords which dated from the land purchase campaign of the early 1920's, Gorey accused them of wishing to preserve the Irish Farmers' Union as a means to maintain control over farmers. Gorey claimed that information on the merger proposals was withheld from the Clare and Galway Farmers' Associations by a Farmers' Party TD who opposed the merger. Gorey also criticised the decision to allow county associations who had not paid affiliation fees to the National Executive to vote at the congress.[137] In reply, Conor Hogan, who was Gorey's intended target in his claims of misleading delegates, stated that when the Farmers' Party had approved of the merger proposals, Gorey argued that no details of the merger should be released until the congress. Hogan added;

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[135] Idem.
[136] Ibid, April 28th 1927.
[137] *Irish Independent*, May 7th 1927.

"Mr. Gorey, having had the wool pulled over his eyes in the matter of negotiations is now anxious to pose as the innocent abroad, whose good intentions were defeated by treachery and guile, but unworthy motives or conduct should not be attributed to those who resisted his policy."[138]

Michael Heffernan argued that non-affiliated counties had been allowed to send delegates to the congress for the past five years. The main opposition to the merger proposals did not originate from the ex-landlords, who in any case should not be excluded from the union.[139] Col. O' Callaghan- Westropp deeply resented Gorey's attack on his character. In a letter to R. A. Butler, O' Callaghan-Westropp declared that both he and Sir John Keane were answerable only to their county associations. O' Callaghan-Westropp described Gorey's attacks as "calculated to discredit our proceedings and to create dissension and class prejudice."[140] These comments reflected the latent conflict between the ex-landlords and former tenant farmers within the union, which only surfaced during moments of crisis.

At a meeting of the Cork Farmers' Association following the merger debate, E. J. Cussen admitted that the Farmers' Party and Cumann na nGaedheal agreed on agricultural and security policy. However, the proposed merger would only have resulted in the elimination of the Farmers' Party without any reciprocal benefits for the Irish Farmers' Union.[141] At a meeting held in Tipperary, Michael Heffernan repeated his opposition to a merger with Cumann na nGaedheal. Heffernan stated that he was not hostile to the government. In particular he approved of the agricultural policy followed by Patrick Hogan.[142] Heffernan

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[138] Ibid, May 9th 1927.
[139] Ibid, May 12th 1927.
[140] U. C. D. A. D., O' Callaghan-Westropp papers, P.38/4/865. Letter from Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp to R. A. Butler, April 19th 1927.
[141] *Irish Times*, April 18th 1927.
[142] Ibid, April 19th 1927.

argued that the Farmers' Party could participate in a future coalition government, as long as the party could maintain an independent existence.[143] The comments of Cussen and Heffernan reveal that members of the union still favoured co-operation with Cumann na nGaedheal, in spite of the merger attempt. In contrast, Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp expressed satisfaction that the merger failed. The crisis actually strengthened the union as the pro-Cumann na nGaedheal faction had now left. He did not query "the honesty of the good intentions of those who sought to hand us over to the government party machine, but they were clearly mistaken and misinformed."[144] However, this was an overly-optimistic view. The merger debate revealed the divisions within the union to the public.

A general election was called for June. The strength of the county associations varied considerably. The Kilkenny Farmers' Association reported that its financial position had improved dramatically in 1927, while new branches were formed.[145] However, members of the Westmeath Farmers' Association admitted to organisational difficulties, especially in comparison with the neighbouring Longford Farmers' Association.[146] In contrast, five new branches of the South Tipperary Farmers' Association had been formed between 1926 and 1927, but membership subscriptions had declined.[147] The position in the Clare Farmers' Association had declined further. Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp informed Conor Hogan that the Clare Association, in common with other county associations, did not subscribe funds to the National Executive, preferring to retain funds for Dáil elections. National Headquarters

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[143] *Irish Independent*, May 12th 1927.
[144] U. C. D. A. D., O' Callaghan-Westropp papers, P.38/4/867. Letter from Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp to Joe Healy, April 23rd 1927.
[145] *Kilkenny People*, February 19th 1927.
[146] *Westmeath Examiner*, May 7th 1927.
[147] *Cork Examiner*, March 21st 1927.

condoned this breach of discipline. O' Callaghan-Westropp further argued that many county associations took this action as they were disillusioned with the political infighting with the Farmers' Party. As a consequence of the lack of a clear political policy by the party, he claimed that Cumann na nGaedheal supporters, such as Patrick Burke and James O' Flynn, had infiltrated the Clare Farmers' Association.[148] O' Callaghan-Westropp also believed that farmers did not appreciate the efforts made by the Farmers' Party on their behalf. On the question of standing for the Dáil, O' Callaghan-Westropp had declined to do so as he believed that the Farmers' Party candidates should be "of the people."[149]

Farmers' Party candidates campaigned in favour of a conservative fiscal policy. Patrick Baxter criticised protectionist policies and called for reduced taxation.[150] Michael Doyle urged the formation of an inquiry to investigate government expenditure.[151] Michael Heffernan advocated reduced government expenditure,[152] as did D. L. O' Gorman who also criticised the sugar beet subsidy.[153] In contrast, Brooke Brazier, a candidate for East Cork, called for the subsidisation of livestock exports from the Free State, given that similar measures were carried out by other countries which exported to Great Britain.[154] Given that most of the protectionist farmers had resigned from the union, the Farmers' Party candidates campaigned on an unified economic policy, in contrast to the 1923 election.

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[148] U. C. D. A. D., O' Callaghan-Westropp papers, P.38/4/853. Letter from Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp to Conor Hogan TD, March 23rd 1927.
[149] U. C. D. A. D., O' Callaghan-Westropp papers, P.38/14/24. Letter from Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp to Mary Molohan. May 7th 1927.
[150] *Irish Times*, May 21st 1927.
[151] Idem.
[152] Ibid, May 23rd 1927.
[153] *Irish Independent*, May 17th 1927.
[154] Ibid, May 17th 1927.

The Cork Farmers' Association demonstrated the willingness of farmers to co-operate with the professional classes, by selecting two solicitors, Jeremiah McCarthy and Daniel Forde, in addition to Cork City Businessman, Frank Daly, as candidates.[155] Daly emphasised how urban economic life was dependent upon the prosperity of agriculture. He called on farm labourers to support the Farmers' Party, as a prosperous agricultural sector would ensure employment for farmers. Daly also called for the improvement of transit facilities for agricultural produce.[156] Timothy Corcoran, Daly's fellow candidate for the Cork Borough constituency, argued for the completion of land purchase, the division of ranches and extension of loans to small farmers for the construction of dwellings. However, Corcoran opposed "unreasonable interference" in the operation of farms.[157] T. J. O' Donovan called for greater government assistance for the fishing sector, which he believed would be of greater socio-economic benefit to the nation that the sugar beet industry.[158] Daniel Forde called for the greater provision of agricultural education.[159]

The Farmers' Party campaign was marred by the consequences of the attempted merger with Cumann na nGaedheal and the earlier discussions with the National League. Speaking as a Cumann na nGaedheal candidate, Denis Gorey argued that the Farmers' Party and Cumann na nGaedheal had identical agricultural and economic policies. He believed that a valuable opportunity had been missed with the failure of the merger.[160] Richard Wilson rejected accusations made by Kevin O' Higgins that the ex-landlords within the Irish Farmers' Union,

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[155] *Irish Times*, January 24th 1927.
[156] *Cork Examiner*, May 16th 1927.
[157] Ibid, May 10th 1927.
[158] Ibid, May 17th 1927.
[159] Ibid, May 25th 1927.
[160] *Irish Times*, May 19th 1927.

the "Colonels", had prevented the merger. Wilson argued that ordinary members of the union had led the opposition to the merger.[161] At Granard, Richard Cleary, a former member of the Westmeath Farmers' Association, argued that the National League and the Farmers' Party would have merged, were it not for the efforts of Denis Gorey and Michael O' Hanlon.[162]

Regarding the future political stance of the party, Timothy Corcoran hoped that the Farmers' Party would hold the balance of power in the next Dáil. He emphasised his support for the Treaty, but argued that Cumann na nGaedheal should be opposed on domestic policy.[163] Jeremiah McCarthy, speaking in Kinsale, stated that the Farmers' Party would participate in any future coalition government.[164] At a meeting in Carrigaline, Jeremiah Sullivan, another Farmers' Party candidate for West Cork, argued that the attempted merger with Cumann na nGaedheal was prompted by fear within Cumann na nGaedheal of an independent farmers' organisation. He also criticised the bureaucratic nature of the Free State administration.[165] Patrick McKenna called for a change of government and criticised the restrictive and interventionist nature of Cumann na nGaedheal agricultural policy. McKenna argued that the Farmers' Party candidates were not professional politicians. Instead they wished to serve the best interests of the country.[166] However, the election campaign revealed the political divisions within the Farmers' Party. In Kerry, the Ardfert and Kilmorley Branch of the called on members of the Irish Farmers' Union to support Cumann na nGaedheal candidates.[167] At

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[161] Ibid, June 2nd 1927.
[162] Idem.
[163] *Cork Examiner*, May 16th 1927.
[164] Ibid, May 20th 1927.
[165] Ibid, May 21st 1927.
[166] *Westmeath Examiner*, May 21st 1927.
[167] *Irish Times*, June 4th 1927.

Berrings, Frank Daly and Liam de Roiste of Cumann na nGaedheal spoke from the same platform.[168] A number of former Farmers' Party activists contested the election for Cumann na nGaedheal. They included Hugh Law in Donegal,[169] and James O' Flynn in Clare, a member of the Cumann na nGaedheal "Fifth Column" within the Clare Farmers' Association.[170]

Protectionist farmer candidates contested the election. J. J. Bergin was selected as a Farmers' Protectionist Union candidate for Kildare. In the course of his campaign Bergin extended his demands for the imposition of tariffs from tillage to livestock imports. He disputed the effectiveness of extending credit to farmers, and believed that protectionism was a surer way of developing agriculture. Bergin attacked the banks for harassing indebted farmers. He also criticised the outgoing Farmers' Party TD for Kildare, John Conlan, who he accused of having an inconsistent policy towards protectionism.[171] In reply, Conlan repeated his support for a tariff on imported malt and barley. He "thought it strange that anyone should charge him with want of sympathy with the barley-growers."[172] The Farmers' Protectionist Union also nominated a candidate for Laois-Offaly, Richard Hipwell.[173] He campaigned for increased tillage and higher milk prices. Joseph Delaney, an activist in the Farmers' Protectionist Union, argued that the government was now turning against its own supporters.[174] The protectionist agenda was also endorsed by Fianna Fáil party, contesting its first election. In the course of the campaign, the party supported the levying of tariffs on imported agricultural

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[168] *Cork Examiner*, May 10th 1927.
[169] Walker, *Parliamentary election results in Ireland, 1918-92*, op.cit, p.119.
[170] K. Sheedy, *The Clare elections*, Bauroe publications, Dublin, 1993, p.640.
[171] *Leinster Leader*, May 7th 1927.
[172] *Irish Times*, May 19th 1927.
[173] Ibid, May 9th 1927.
[174] *Irish Independent*, May 1st 1927.

produce and promised to reverse the pro-grazier agricultural policy of the current government.[175] The party also attracted the support of small farmers with a policy of land re-distribution.[176] This mobilised support among farmers alienated from the Irish Farmers' Union. An unwelcome electoral intervention for the Farmers' Party occurred in Cavan. John O' Hanlon now stood as an independent candidate. He criticised the excessive taxation of farmers and called for greater government assistance in marketing agricultural produce. He also called for improved credit facilities for farmers. He criticised the Shannon Scheme for being too expensive and attacked the government for its limited response to the 1925 liver fluke crisis.[177]

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[175] *Irish Times*, May 21st & May 30th 1927.
[176] R. Dunphy, *The making of Fianna Fáil power in Ireland, 1923-48.* Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1995, pp.93-95. O Tuathaigh, "The land question, politics and Irish society" in Drudy, ed. *Ireland, land politics and people*, op.cit., p.182. Dooley, *'The land for the people'*, op.cit, p.99.
[177] *Anglo-Celt*, May 14th 1927.

Table 3.1: Electoral Performance of Farmers' Party Candidates in the June 1927 Election.

Constituency	Votes received.	As % of total vote	candidates	Seats
Carlow-Kilkenny	6,971	16.51	2	1
Cavan	3,311	9.64	1	1
Clare	5,140	13.51	1	1
Cork Borough	3,587	7.93	2	0
Cork East	5,828	17.20	3	1
Cork North	6,674	28.64	2	1
Cork West	8,202	23.00	3	1
Donegal	5,031	9.74	1	1
Galway	3,668	6.35	2	0
Kerry	3,842	7.20	2	0
Kildare	2,310	10.52	1	0
Leitrim-Sligo	7,007	14.13	2	1
Laois-Offaly	3,257	7.55	1	0
Limerick	4,100	7.72	2	0
Longford-Westmeath	5,925	15.31	3	1
Mayo South	2,168	6.44	2	0
Meath	3,451	13.50	1	0
Tipperary	6,734	11.25	2	1
Waterford	3,376	10.83	2	0
Wexford	7,555	18.87	2	1
Wicklow	3,056	12.62	1	0
Total	101,223	12.10	39	11

Source: Walker, *Parliamentary election results in Ireland, 1919-92*, op.cit, pp.117-25.

Given such circumstances, it was inevitable that the Farmers' Party would lose support. The party increased its vote in only five constituencies The union later admitted that the partial support for Cumann na nGaedheal on security issues by the Farmers' Party resulted in republican farmers defecting to Fianna Fáil. In addition, former supporters of the Irish Parliamentary Party defected to the National League while some small farmers defected to Labour.[178]

The election resulted in a loss of four seats for the Farmers' Party. Seats were lost in the Limerick and Meath constituencies where the outgoing deputies had retired. Richard Wilson, Nicholas Wall and John Conlan lost their Dáil seats in the Wicklow, Waterford and Kildare constituencies. J. J. Bergin's electoral intervention was a decisive factor in the loss of Conlan's seat. The protectionist candidate also adversely affected the Farmers' Party vote in Laois-Offaly. The intervention of the National League contributed to the loss of seats in Meath and Wicklow. The independent candidature of John O' Hanlon accounted for the substantial swing against the Farmers' Party in Cavan. The party achieved its best results in the Cork North and West constituencies, a tribute to the efficient Cork Farmers' Association. Dan Vaughan again had the benefit of a weak Cumann na nGaedheal candidate in Cork North.[179] A number of new Farmers' Party deputies were returned. In Clare, Tom Falvey retained the seat previously held by Conor Hogan. In Kilkenny, Richard Holohan replaced Denis Gorey. In Cork East and Longford-Westmeath, outgoing Farmers' Party deputies John Dineen and Patrick McKenna were defeated by their fellow party candidates, D. L. O'

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[178] U. C. D. A. D., O' Callaghan-Westropp papers, P.38/16/300-7. Report of Committee on Economic Policy & Political Action, Irish Farmers' Union, April 1929.
[179] Walker, *Parliamentary election results in Ireland, 1918-92*, op.cit, p.118.

Gorman and Hugh Garahan respectively.[180] The Farmers' Party gained a seat in the Leitrim-Sligo constituency, the first seat the party won in Connacht. The successful candidate was Michael Carter,[181] Chairman of the Leitrim County Council and a prominent member of the Ancient Order of Hibernians.[182] The party increased its vote in both the Mayo South and Leitrim-Sligo constituencies at the expense of Cumann na nGaedheal, indicating that some small farmers may have voted for the Farmers' Party in protest against the government. The candidates of the Farmers' Protectionist Union polled poorly, receiving 9.6% and 6.57% of the vote in the Kildare and Laois-Offaly constituencies respectively.[183] In his correspondence with Ernest Blythe, J. W. Young argued that Richard Hipwell would have won a seat in Laois-Offaly, had not a rumour that he held anti-Treaty views been spread.[184] John O' Hanlon was elected for Cavan as an independent farmer.[185]

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[180] Ibid, pp.117-25.
[181] Ibid, p.121.
[182] *Irish Times*, April 12th 1927.
[183] Figures calculated from Walker, *Parliamentary election results in Ireland 1918-92*, op.cit, pp.121-22.
[184] N. A. I., Department of Finance, F.22/65/25. Letter from J. W. Young to Ernest Blythe, September 1st 1927, op.cit.
[185] Walker, *Parliamentary election results in Ireland, 1918-92*, op.cit, p.117.

Cumann na nGaedheal failed to secure a majority in the new Dáil, The Irish Farmers' Union National Executive then formed an advisory committee comprised of current and former Dáil deputies to study the political situation. The committee decided to maintain the independence of the Farmers' Party, while maintaining co-operation with Cumann na nGaedheal "in the best interests of the country."[186]

A special congress was held in early June to define the political stance of the Farmers' Party. The Executive of the Cork Farmers' Association instructed its delegates to support an alliance with Cumann na nGaedheal consistent with the independent existence of the Farmers' Party.[187] However, members of the Clare Farmers' Association took a more critical attitude to Cumann na nGaedheal, reflective of the wide range of political views within the union. Conor Hogan argued that the Oath of Allegiance should be removed. Another delegate called for a conference between all the political parties to resolve outstanding constitutional issues.[188] Eventually, the special congress decided to re-affirm the decision of the April congress to maintain the independent existence of the Farmers' Party. It followed the advice of the special committee by agreeing to support any government which would maintain stability and implement a progressive agricultural policy. Once again this implied support for Cumann na nGaedheal.[189]

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[186] U. C. D. A. D., O' Callaghan-Westropp papers, P.38/16/300-7. Report of Committee on Economic Policy and Political Action, Irish Farmers Union, April 1929, op.cit.
[187] *Irish Times*, June 20th 1927.
[188] Ibid, June 21st 1927.
[189] Ibid, June 22nd 1927.

When the new Dáil met, Patrick Baxter stated that the Farmers' Party would support the re-election of W. T. Cosgrave as President of the Executive Council. However, the party would not provide unconditional support to all legislation presented by Cumann na nGaedheal.[190] With the entry of Fianna Fáil to the house in August, the prospect arose of a new administration, comprised of the National League and Labour, coming to power. In the no-confidence debate of the 16th of August, Patrick Baxter stated that the Farmers' Party would continue to support Cumann na nGaedheal. The Farmers' Party was opposed to the coming to power of the Labour Party, given the past disputes between the Irish Farmers' Union and the trade union movement.[191] D. L. O' Gorman cited the opposition by the Farmers' Party to the possible protectionist policy of the proposed coalition.[192] Michael Heffernan made a suggestive comment that the proposed coalition did little to attract the support of the Farmers' Party.[193] At the following election, Baxter claimed that the Labour-National League alliance offered him the position of Minister for Agriculture if the Farmers' Party withdrew their support for Cumann na nGaedheal.[194]

Following the failure of the no-confidence motion, a new general election was called. The Farmers' Party now faced a polarised political environment with the electorate faced with a straight choice between Fianna Fáil and Cumann na nGaedheal. Given their support for the Treaty and conservative economic policies, the Farmers' Party had little option but to support Cumann na nGaedheal. The Irish Farmers' Union National Executive decided to contestthe

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[190] *Dáil Debates*, Vol XX, 23rd June- 16th August 1927, cols 19-20, June 23rd 1927.
[191] Ibid, col 1693, August 16th 1927.
[192] Ibid, col 1737, August 16th 1927.
[193] Ibid, col 1740, August 16th 1927.
[194] *Irish Times*, September 9th 1927.

election as an independent party but to support any government which would maintain law and order, a thin disguise for supporting Cumann na nGaedheal.[195] The county associations willingly co-operated with Cumann na nGaedheal. In Kerry, Farmers' Party voters were urged to extend their lower preferences to Cumann na nGaedheal.[196] The Meath Farmers' Association and the local Cumann na nGaedheal organisation negotiated an electoral pact.[197] In Kildare, a resolution supporting the Cumann na nGaedheal ministry was passed at the meeting which selected John Conlan as a candidate.[198] Members of the Cork Farmers' Association supported a formal coalition with Cumann na nGaedheal. Both D. L. O' Gorman and E. J. Cussen addressed Cumann na nGaedheal meetings.[199] In Limerick, the Farmers' Association agreed, with only one delegate opposing, to co-operate with Cumann na nGaedheal. P. K. Hogan expressed his support for a merger between the Farmers' Party and Cumann na nGaedheal.[200] The Farmers' Party candidate for Limerick, C. D. O' Sullivan, contested the election on a manifesto pledging co-operation with other pro-Treaty candidates. Such was the intensity of support for Cumann na nGaedheal that O'Sullivan was forced to issue a statement denying rumours that he was a covert Fianna Fáil supporter.[201] The only prominent figure within the Farmers' Party who opposed co-operation with Cumann na nGaedheal was, unsurprisingly, Patrick McKenna. He opposed proposals that supporters of the Farmers' Party should continue their lower preferences to Cumann na nGaedheal.[202]

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[195] *Anglo-Celt*, September 6th 1927.
[196] *Irish Times*, August 27th 1927.
[197] Ibid, August 29th 1927.
[198] *Irish Independent*, August 30th 1927.
[199] Ibid, August 30th 1927. *Irish Times*, September 1st 1927.
[200] *Limerick Leader*, August 31st 1927.
[201] Ibid, September 10th 1927.
[202] *Anglo-Celt*, September 6th 1927.

Given the degree of co-operation between the Farmers' Party and Cumann na nGaedheal, there was little scope for the Farmers' Party to campaign on independent policies. As argued by Dooley, the entry of Fianna Fáil to the Dáil made the introduction of a protectionist agricultural policy a distinct possibility.[203] Therefore the outgoing Farmers' Party TDs criticised such policy.[204] During the course of the campaign, Michael Heffernan was heckled in Nenagh by Fianna Fáil and Labour supporters when he argued that the Farmers' Party would support the Treaty and enforce law and order.[205] Three days later Heffernan appeared on a Cumann na nGaedheal platform.[206] Organisational problems also contributed to a lacklustre campaign by the Farmers' Party. The Clare Farmers' Association was reported to be in a poor financial and organisational condition.[207] Despite the fact that no protectionist farmer candidates contested the election, the barley growers attempted to influence the political parties. J. W. Young impressed upon Ernest Blythe how Cumann na nGaedheal had lost votes in the previous election to both Fianna Fáil and Labour due to the barley issue. Young claimed that if Cumann na nGaedheal supported a tariff on barley, they would win ten or twelve extra seats in the barley-growing counties.[208]

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[203] Dooley, op.cit, p.100.
[204] *Irish Times*, September 2nd & September 10th 1927.
[205] Ibid, September 6th 1927.
[206] Ibid, September 9th 1927.
[207] *Irish Independent*, August 30th 1927.
[208] N.A.I., Department of Finance, F.22/65/1925. Letter from J. W. Young to Ernest Blythe, September 1st 1927, op.cit.

Table 3.2: Electoral Performance of Farmers' Party Candidates in the Sept1927 Election.

Constituency	Votes received.	As % of total votes cast	No. of candidates	Seats
Carlow-Kilkenny	4,599	10.69	1	1
Cavan	4,484	12.90	1	0
Clare	2,481	6.12	1	0
Cork East	4,939	13.88	2	0
Cork North	5,147	19.96	1	1
Cork West	5,893	16.25	1	1
Donegal	4,627	8.48	1	1
Kerry	4,594	8.22	2	0
Kildare	3,284	14.95	1	0
Leitrim-Sligo	6,586	14.21	2	0
Limerick	3,434	6.03	2	0
Longford-Westmeath	3,838	10.18	1	0
Tipperary	5,914	10.09	1	1
Waterford	4,583	14.28	1	0
Wexford	7,351	18.77	2	1
Wicklow	2,869	11.59	1	0
Total	74,623	11.59	20	6

Source: Walker, *Parliamentary election results in Ireland, 1918-92*, op.cit, pp.125-31.

The Farmers' Party vote fell as less candidates were nominated for a smaller number of constituencies. However, the percentage of the vote received by the party in constituencies contested in both the 1927 elections only fell by a small amount, although the party's vote declined in eleven constituencies. However, this did not prevent the defeat of

Patrick Baxter in Cavan, in spite of an increase in his vote. Other constituencies where the Farmers' Party lost seats included Clare, Cork East, Leitrim-Sligo and Longford-Westmeath. The only new TD elected for the party was Michael Jordan in Wexford, who defeated his fellow party candidate, Michael Doyle.[209] Again the best result for the party was in Cork North, followed by Wexford. In spite of increasing their vote, John Conlan and Nicholas Wall failed to regain their seats in Waterford and Wexford respectively. Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp, reviewing the electoral results, believed that Farmers' Party candidates who supported co-operation with Cumann na nGaedheal, such as John Conlan, Nicholas Wall and Richard Wilson, were defeated as they lost their independent support while Cumann na nGaedheal did not offer any assistance to them. Deputies Baxter, Doyle and Garahan, who supported the existence of an independent farmer's party were defeated due to the "loss of old friends."[210]

Baxter's successor as Party leader, Michael Heffernan argued that the decline experienced in the electoral support for the party was inevitable. The party campaigned to support the Treaty rather than on economic issues. Heffernan believed that the entry of Fianna Fáil to the Dáil would require the formation of "a strong, independent agricultural party, conservative in its tendencies, one that would have the confidence of the conservative-minded members of the community." Heffernan stated that the Farmers' Party, as before would maintain an independent existence. It would support Cumann na nGaedheal on security issues but would

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[209] Walker, *Parliamentary election results in Ireland 1918-22*, op.cit, pp.126-29.
[210] U. C. D. A. D., O' Callaghan-Westropp papers, P.38/4/937. Letter from Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp to C. F. McLoughlin, September 20th 1927.

maintain an independent stance on agricultural policies.[211] However, when the Dáil resumed, the Farmers' Party had entered into a coalition with Cumann na nGaedheal. Michael Heffernan stated that the Farmers' Party deputies had a mandate not to support Fianna Fáil. If they maintained their independence, the Farmers' Party could be manoeuvred into a position where they could defeat the government. Indirectly, Heffernan now vindicated Denis Gorey's earlier arguments in favour of a merger with Cumann na nGaedheal. Cumann na nGaedheal offered some concessions to the Farmers' Party. An inquiry into public expenditure was established and Michael Heffernan was appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs.[212]

Heffernan did not approach the National Executive of the Irish Farmers' Union to endorse the coalition until the 10th of November. He argued that the Farmers' Party continued to exist as an independent political entity and was still subject to the authority of both the National Executive and the annual congress. Heffernan argued that the Farmers' Party could withdraw from the coalition if it desired. The National Executive agreed to support the coalition, although it was later conceded that an error was made in not holding a special congress after the entry of Fianna Fáil to the Dáil, to define party policy on coalition.[213] Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp warned that many union activists, particularly in Connaught and the Midlands, would oppose an association with Cumann na nGaedheal.[214]

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[211] *Irish Times*, September 22nd 1927.
[212] Ibid, October 13th 1927.
[213] U. C. D. A. D., O' Callaghan-Westropp papers, P.38/16/300-7. Report of Committee on Economic Policy and Political Action, Irish Farmers' Union, op.cit.
[214] U. C. D. A. D., O' Callaghan-Westropp papers, P.38/4/972. Letter from Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp to Michael Heffernan, November 11th 1927.

The period 1925-27 witnessed the fracturing of the Irish Farmers' Union. With the collapse of trade union agitation and the absence of intrusive government intervention, many farmers did not maintain their membership of local farmers' associations. This led to a decline in support for the National Executive from county associations, which retarded the ability of the union to represent farmers effectively. On policy issues, the union attempted to unify free traders and protectionists. However, such compromise policies rendered the economic policies of the union and the Farmers' Party incoherent. The policy compromises failed to satisfy tillage farmers who resigned from the union and who either supported Fianna Fáil or formed their own organisations. Radical protectionists, such as Patrick Belton and J. J. Bergin, used the demands of the tillage farmers to gain support for wider protectionist measures. The organisations formed by the protectionist farmers proved to be ephemeral. However, they succeeded in drawing the support of tillage farmers from the Irish Farmers' Union especially in the Midlands.

The union also suffered from political divisions. Former supporters of the Irish Parliamentary Party, such as Patrick McKenna, attempted to merge the Farmers' Party with the National League. However, McKenna's failure strengthened those who supported a merger with Cumann na nGaedheal. The stance of support for Cumann na nGaedheal on constitutional and security issues, and of criticism of domestic legislation was viable only in with the absence of an anti-Treaty opposition in the Dáil. Denis Gorey correctly anticipated the emergence of Fianna Fáil, and he responded to the overtures made by Cumann na nGaedheal since 1924 in the form of his merger proposals. Had Gorey succeeded, the Farmers' Party would have constituted a bloc of fifteen TDs within Cumann na nGaedheal. However, the merger was

rejected. The Farmers' Party lost support in the first 1927 election. The emergence of Fianna Fáil challenged the pro-livestock/free-trade orientation of agricultural policy. The Farmers' Party continued their support for Cumann na nGaedheal, but their support base collapsed in the more polarised political environment which emerged during the September 1927 election. The Farmers' Party was not permitted to enjoy the luxury of independent support for the government by Cumann na nGaedheal. A 'coalition' with Cumann na nGaedheal was formed after the September election, but from a weaker position than if the party had merged with Cumann na nGaedheal prior to the first 1927 election. As anticipated by Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp, by supporting Cumann na nGaedheal, the Farmers' Party alienated those who opposed the Treaty. Therefore, having declined organisationally, having lost the support of tillage farmers and now trapped in the all-enveloping embrace of Cumann na nGaedheal, the Irish Farmers' Union faced an uncertain future.

Chapter IV.

The Great Depression and the decline of the Irish Farmers' Union; 1928-32.

With the Farmers' Party in coalition with Cumann na nGaedheal and favourable economic conditions, the annual agricultural price index increased from 131.9 for 1927 to 137.1 for 1928,[1] the potential for political activity among farmers seemed limited. At the 1928 Irish Farmers' Union Congress, R. A. Butler expressed content with the status quo by praising the formation of the A. C. C., approving of the efforts made by the government to assist the poultry and dairying sectors and by predicting an optimistic future for Irish agriculture.[2] However, the Great Depression would destroy the idyll enjoyed by the farmers.

The first major controversy to affect agriculture was the campaign for the complete de-rating of agricultural land, which commenced in 1929. Complete de-rating had been adopted in the United Kingdom during the previous year. Consequently, according to Daly, Irish farmers demanded a similar measure.[3] Complete de-rating was a logical progression from the long-standing desire of the Irish Farmers' Union to reduce local government expenditure. The de-rating campaign opened with a flurry of resolutions from local authorities requesting exceptional relief from rates. The Kerry County Council argued that complete de-rating would have a more beneficial effect on the Irish economy than the British economy, given the greater dependence by the Irish Free State on agriculture. Patrick Belton also advocated de-rating through his latest organisation, the "Agricultural League". He proposed to finance de-

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[1] *Statistical Abstract, 1937.* Stationary Office, Dublin, 1938, p.171.
[2] *Irish Times*, March 29th 1928.
[3] Daly, *The Buffer State*, op. cit, p.139.

increase domestic flour production.[61] Delegates to the conference continued afterwards to lobby for a protectionist agricultural policy. The Limerick County Committee of Agriculture discussed the merits of a tariff on bacon imports. John McCormack argued that the strongest arguments in favour of tariffs on agricultural imports came from supporters of the government. He argued that the political parties should be lobbied to agree to the imposition of tariffs on bacon and flour imports.[62]

The free trade and livestock-export orientation of government agricultural policy was also called into question by Fianna Fáil. The party advocated a protectionist and interventionist policy for agriculture and also acted as a focus for the various radical agricultural groups. In describing the party's agricultural policy in the Dáil, Dr. Jim Ryan exhibited the characteristic Fianna Fáil tendency of maximising support from a cross-section of the community, through combining the traditional farmer grievances of excess taxation and increased living costs demands for protectionist policies.[63] Tillage was to be encouraged through the substitution of domestically cultivated produce for imported feedstuffs. Guaranteed prices were to be introduced for barley and wheat, the latter to be encouraged through an admixture of domestic grain in all flour produced by millers.[64] He argued that the domestic market be supplied with its total demand for bacon and butter and then any existing surplus be exported, rather than relying on the net surplus of extensive exports and imports. Ryan praised government efforts to reform butter and egg marketing, but argued that this had little material

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[61] *Irish Independent*, March 3rd 1928.
[62] *Limerick Leader*, September 29th 1928.
[63] *Dáil Debates*, Vol XXVII, 14th - 30th November 1928, cols 840-847, November 25th 1928.
[64] Ibid, cols 855-61, November 25th 1928.

benefit for farmers. He criticised the concentration of exports to a single market, Great Britain. Government supporters denounced Fianna Fáil agricultural policy. Michael Heffernan stated that an expansion of wheat cultivation would occur only at the expense of more remunerative sectors of agriculture.[65] Patrick Hogan criticised those who saw wheat cultivation as "the panacea for all agricultural ills."[66] The debate between Fianna Fáil and the government now had the effect of politicising the differing claims of the livestock and tillage sectors. The Great Depression encouraged greater support for protectionist policies. While cattle prices experienced a small decline, the price of livestock produce and crops fell sharply.

Table 4.1; Agricultural prices indices for 1929-30.

Year	Livestock	Livestock produce	Crops
1929	139.4	144.0	139.2
1930	136.0	111.5	124.9

Source: *Statistical Abstract 1937*, op.cit, p.171. 1911-13=100.

Demands for a protectionist agricultural policy were now advocated outside of the tillage sector. The chairman of the East Kerry Farmers' Association, Eugene O' Sullivan, criticised the importation of bacon.[67] Farmers also demanded protection for the butter sector. This demand was fuelled by the drastic fall in butter prices; creamery butter prices fell from 166/1 per cwt in 1929 to 124/8 per cwt by 1930.[68] Butter imports were blamed for this fall in prices, despite the fact that such imports actually fell from 40,545 cwt to 30,279 cwt between 1929

[65] Ibid, col 904, November 25th 1928.
[66] Ibid, col 936, November 25th 1928.
[67] *Cork Examiner*, January 31st 1930.
[68] *Statistical Abstract 1937*, op.cit, p.173.

and 1930.[69] By 1930, the West Limerick Farmers' Association demanded a one year moratorium on land annuity payments and the de-rating of agricultural land as a means to assist dairy farmers.[70] It later made demands for an embargo on bacon and butter imports.[71] The Cork Farmers' Association also supported an embargo on butter imports. The sole opposition to this proposal came from D. L. O' Gorman, who argued that government intervention could not increase butter prices in the British market while a tariff would increase the cost of living.[72] Michael Heffernan attempted to oppose the drift towards protectionism. At a speech to the Dublin Publicity Club, he believed that agriculture could be developed by improving the marketing and advertising of exports.[73] However, in the climate of declining prices this was a message that farmers did not want to hear.

The Grain Growers' Association attempted to co-ordinate the various demands for protectionist agricultural policies. In October 1930 it convened a conference to discuss these proposals. Veteran campaigners for the protection of barley, such as J. W. Young, favoured a tariff on barley. This was opposed by Dr. James Ryan and William Davin of the Labour Party, who argued for a licensing system to restrict barley imports. J. J. Bergin also favoured such a system but wanted to retain the option of a tariff if the licensing system collapsed. The conference also discussed protective measures for the bacon sector. Frank Aiken suggested that all these proposals be presented before the Dáil.[74] The proposals of the conference were submitted to the Executive Council. The conference recommended an embargo on oat

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[69] *Statistical Abstract 1931*, Stationery Office, Dublin, 1932, p.64.
[70] *Limerick Leader*, March 15th 1930.
[71] Ibid, May 16th 1930.
[72] *Cork Examiner*, May 19th 1930.
[73] *Irish Times*, March 28th 1930.
[74] Ibid, October 3rd 1930.

importation, a licensing system for barley and malt importation, a 20/- per cwt import duty on bacon, to be followed by an embargo after 18 months. Butter, egg, condensed milk and cream imports were also to be banned.[75] The government took no action on these proposals, which were effectively thinly disguised Fianna Fáil and Labour policies.

By late 1930, the government was forced to address the deteriorating economic situation. In a statement to the Dáil, W. T. Cosgrave admitted that agriculture faced a severe crisis. However, both Cosgrave and Hogan rejected protectionism as a solution to the farmers' difficulties.[76] Hogan also criticised;

"the attitude of other parties and other organisations through the country who have no real good-will for the country, the attitude that is directed towards persuading the farmer of this country that his position is particularity bad, and is bad as a result of forces which operate in this country only, and which go back in their origin to the present government."[77]

In response, Fianna Fáil and Labour tabled a motion based on the Mansion House Conference proposals agreed in October. Jim Ryan argued that agricultural policy should aim at the supply of the domestic market, where prices could be regulated, rather than relying on volatile export markets.[78] He argued that protection of the bacon and butter sectors would safeguard the interests of small farmers.[79] William Davin rejected the argument that the protectionist agricultural associations were unrepresentative of farmers. He accused Cumann na nGaedheal itself of being unrepresentative of ordinary farmers as it was dominated by graziers who

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[75] N.A.I., Department of Taoiseach, S.6081, Irish Grain Growers' Association. Copy of motions passed at Mansion House Conference, October 2nd 1930.
[76] *Dáil Debates*, Vol XXXVI, 19th November - 11th December 1930, col 65, November 19th 1930.
[77] Ibid, col 114, November 19th 1930.
[78] Ibid, col 205, November 20th 1930.
[79] Ibid, col 195, November 20th 1930.

desired cheap foodstuffs.[80] However, some Cumann na nGaedheal deputies supported protectionist measures for agriculture, especially if their constituents would benefit from such measures. George Bennett of Limerick admitted that a tariff on butter may encourage winter dairying.[81] Denis Gorey supported a tariff on bacon as it would increase pig stocks and expand the domestic market.[82] Michael Heffernan argued that he would support tariffs if they would benefit farmers. However, tariffs were of little benefit if an exportable surplus existed for that product.[83] Only in the case of butter could Heffernan see where the imposition of a tariff could be of benefit.[84] Heffernan criticised the protectionist agricultural associations as being ephemeral and of being a front for Fianna Fáil.[85] He urged farmers to ignore demands for subsidies.[86] John O' Hanlon opposed the drift towards protectionism and called for the improved marketing of agricultural produce.[87] Nevertheless, the government gradually abandoned the policy of free trade. By November 21st 1930, an emergency duty of £5 per cwt was imposed on imported butter, pending the report of the Tariff Commission.[88] Early in the following year, the Tariff Commission recommended the imposition of a tariff on butter, which was justified in the context of the collapse of butter prices and as a means of encouraging winter dairying.[89] Later, former Farmers' Party TD Richard Wilson, argued for a 5d per lb subsidy on butter exported during winter to encourage winter dairying.[90]

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[80] Ibid, col 233, November 20th 1930.
[81] Ibid, col 212, November 20th 1930.
[82] Ibid, cols 239-40, November 20th 1930.
[83] Ibid, col 286, November 20th 1930.
[84] Ibid, col 293, November 20th 1930.
[85] Ibid, col 290, November 20th 1930.
[86] Ibid, col 291, November 20th 1930.
[87] Ibid, col 309, November 20th 1930.
[88] Ibid, cols 333-34, November 21st 1930.
[89] *Tariff Commission, Report on application for a tariff on butter.* R.36/9. Stationery Office, Dublin, 1931, pp.14-16.
[90] *Seanad Debates,* Vol XIV, 19th November 1930- 3rd December 1931, cols 513-15,

Economic conditions continued to decline in 1931. In addition to declining prices, farmers suffered from poor weather conditions while cattle numbers fell to their lowest levels in five years.[91] The continued crisis increased support for the protectionist agricultural associations. Early in the year the "Farmers' Protection Association" was established by Dublin farmers. It supported protectionist measures for agricultural produce and increased tillage. It advocated an one year moratorium on land annuity payments and the de-rating of agricultural land. One member, H. T. Gallagher, argued that farmers should consider withholding annuity and rate payments in the current economic circumstances.[92]

Following the imposition of a tariff on butter, similar demands were made for the bacon sector. Bacon prices fell from 85/6 per cwt in 1930 to 76/9 by 1931.[93] Bacon exports collapsed over this period while imports increased. As a result the Free State became a net importer of bacon.

Table 4.2: Bacon exports and imports, per cwt, for the Saorstat 1929-31.

Year	Exports	Imports	Exports-Imports
1929	482,247	357,811	124,436
1930	329,144	371,059	-41,915
1931	295,230	400,824	-105,594

Source: *Tariff Commission, Report application for tariff on bacon, hams and other pig products.* Stationery Office, Dublin, 1931 pp.113 & 124, Appendices 11a and 13.

March 12th 1931.

[91] *29th and Final General Report of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland, 1930-31.* Stationery Office, Dublin, 1931, p.3 & p.7.

[92] *Irish Times*, January 26th 1931.

[93] *Statistical Abstract 1937*, op.cit, p.173.

As a result of this collapse, the Cork Farmers' Association endorsed the levying of a tariff on bacon and called for an end to the fraudulent sale of foreign bacon as Irish produce.[94] The Kerry Farmers' Association also supported a tariff on imported bacon.[95] The demand for protection of the bacon sector was supported by a number of delegates at the annual general congress of the Irish Farmers' Union, in spite of opposition expressed by Michael Heffernan.[96] In July, the Cork Farmers' Association organised a conference to discuss the issue. A motion was passed calling for the government to make an application to the Tariff Commission for a tariff on bacon. This was opposed by both Michael Heffernan and Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp who attempted to defend free trade. Another motion, proposed by Patrick Belton, which called for a 40/- per cwt tariff to be imposed without reference to the Tariff Commission was also defeated.[97] The campaign in favour of a tariff on bacon continued during 1931. The Cavan Agricultural League demanded either a prohibition or a 50% tariff on imported bacon.[98] It is noteworthy that the most strident demands for a tariff on bacon came from counties identified by Gilmour as being leading pig-producing areas.[99] By late 1931, bacon curers submitted an application for a tariff on bacon to the Tariff Commission. This application was supported by the farmers' associations in Counties Cork, Kerry, Limerick and Laois.[100] The tariff was granted in the context of increased importation of bacon which threatened both pig stocks and prices.[101]

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[94] *Cork Examiner*, July 6th 1931.
[95] *Kerryman*, May 23rd 1931.
[96] *Irish Times*, March 27th 1931.
[97] *Cork Examiner*, July 17th 1931.
[98] *Anglo-Celt*, December 26th 1931.
[99] Gilmour, "Land and people c.1926" from Hill, ed. *A new history of Ireland VII*, op.cit, p.66.
[100] *Tariff Commission, Report on application of tariff for bacon, hams and other pig products.* R.36/14. Stationery Office, Dublin, 1931, pp.4-5.
[101] Ibid, pp.42-43.

With the decline in agricultural prices, farmers criticised all aspects of government agricultural policy. C. D. O' Sullivan, Chairman of the West Limerick Farmers' Association, criticised those provisions of the Dairy Produce Act which regulated milk supply as being too stringent.[102] J. J. O' Shaughnessy argued that an excessive number of bulls were being rejected due to the Livestock Breeding Act.[103] The Kerry Farmers' Association criticised the butter order made by the government which increased the standard required for the exportation of non-creamery butter. Mr. Horgan, a member of the association, argued that the order would destroy the trade in non-creamery butter. He advised the farmers to "kick against the coercion of the government and all the political parties who were trying to cow them down."[104]

Suppliers of creameries closed under the 1928 Creameries Act began to campaign against the government. The Act facilitated the purchase and closure of redundant creameries, principally those operated by private enterprise.[105] Members of the Irish Farmers' Union had supported the rationalisation of creameries since 1924.[106] In 1927, Michael Heffernan welcomed the government purchase of the Condensed Milk Company of Ireland as providing an opportunity to rationalise the creamery sector,[107] and he supported the Act.[108] Suppliers to redundant creameries were required to purchase shares in the new creameries which they supplied. Many of these suppliers also had long distances to supply these creameries. These factors,

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[102] *Limerick Leader*, May 16th 1931.
[103] Ibid, November 7th 1931.
[104] *Kerryman*, August 22nd 1931.
[105] *Dáil Debates*, Vol XXV, 10th July - 31st July 1928, col 147, July 10th 1928.
[106] *Cork Examiner*, August 22nd 1924.
[107] Ibid, March 21st 1927.
[108] *Dáil Debates*, Vol XXV, op.cit, col 210, July 11th 1928.

combined with the collapse in butter prices, created a financial burden for these farmers. The Kerry Farmers' Association supported their grievances. J. F. Medill argued that the government implemented the rationalisation policy in an over-zealous manner.[109] These suppliers, concentrated in Counties Limerick and Tipperary, formed an association to campaign on their behalf. The Chairman of the association, William Conway, denied that their campaign was influenced by political opposition to the government. However, the government was unwilling to address their grievances. Michael Heffernan met these suppliers in Tipperary and refused to entertain their concerns. He argued that the rationalisation scheme was necessary to allow the Irish creamery sector to compete with foreign competitors.[110]

Until the onset of the Great Depression, members of the Irish Farmers' Union continued to question the necessity for political action. In 1928, the Cork Farmers' Association voted to exclude itself from political activity and to concentrate on economic affairs.[111] However, a motion to extend this exclusion to national level was not discussed at the 1928 congress.[112] Elsewhere, the decline of union which was observed in previous years continued apace. Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp informed M. F. O' Hanlon that by 1927 many branches in Clare had disaffiliated from the county association, which as a consequence collapsed. O' Callaghan-Westropp hoped that branches which remained intact in East Clare would be allowed representation at the union congress.[113]

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[109] *Kerryman*, March 7th 1931.
[110] *Irish Times*, February 9th 1931.
[111] Ibid, March 26th 1928.
[112] Ibid, March 29th 1928.
[113] U. C. D. A. D., O' Callaghan-Westropp papers, P.38/16/22. Letter from Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp to M. F. O' Hanlon, February 3rd 1928.

In the following year, the Chairman of the Cork Farmers' Association, Timothy Corcoran, argued that farmers should take an active role within the own associations and engage in commercial activity, rather than blaming the government for their problems. At a meeting of the near moribund Kildare Farmers' Association, W. J. Fahy emphasised the need to campaign on non-political issues such as excessive freight charges. Fahy criticised the importation of bacon and maize and recommended the better commercial organisation of farmers, rather than tariffs, as a solution.[114] However, at the annual congress, D. L. O' Gorman and Patrick Baxter argued that an independent farmers' party remain in existence. The formation of a committee was recommended which would investigate "how best we can encourage the development of sound economic policy side by side with legitimate political action."[115] Nevertheless, the congress continued to support Cumann na nGaedheal and endorsed government agricultural policy.[116]

The committee formed by the congress reported a month later. It argued that due to declining membership and funds, in addition to polarised political conditions, the union was unable to adopt an independent political stance. The best policy was for the union to abandon political action and concentrate on economic issues. Individual county associations who wished to contest elections could do so on an independent basis.[117] However, the growing impotence of the union was resented by some of its activists. Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp referred to the

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[114] *Leinster Leader*, May 25th 1929.
[115] *Irish Times*, March 23rd 1929.
[116] Idem.
[117] U. C. D. A. D., O' Callaghan-Westropp papers, P.38/16/300-7. Report of Committee on Economic Policy & Political Action, Irish Farmers' Union, op.cit.

unilateral decision by Michael Heffernan to form a coalition with Cumann na nGaedheal when he complained of the "open dictatorship of the handful of deputies [of the Farmers' Party] who after defying congress have now muzzled what remains of the National Executive. We have long ceased to be a national farmers' union and become a fifth wheel in a party coach."[118] O' Callaghan-Westropp warned Patrick Hogan that the Irish Farmers' Union was too politicised while the views of the Farmers' Party and of ordinary farmers were diverging.[119] This was a correct assessment as farmers subsequently campaigned independently of the union in pursuit of their aims.

Many members of the individual farmers' associations became frustrated with the lack of activity by both the government and the union to introduce de-rating and protectionist policies. R. A. Butler offered cold comfort for farmers when he stated that the only remedy for declining agricultural prices was tax reduction.[120] While the 1929 committee permitted the associations to engage in independent political activity, the politically active associations now repudiated the union. For example, the West Limerick Farmers' Association criticised the inactivity of the Farmers' Party in the Dáil,[121] and later discussed the possibility of forming a new farmers' organisation.[122]

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[118] U. C. D. A. D., O' Callaghan-Westropp papers, P.38/16/409. Letter from Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp to W. J. Fahy, December 12th 1929.
[119] U. C. D. A. D., O' Callaghan-Westropp papers, P.38/16/313. Letter from Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp to Patrick Hogan, April 29th 1929.
[120] *Irish Times*, February 8th 1930.
[121] *Limerick Leader*, May 16th 1930.
[122] Ibid, June 14th 1930.

The Kerry Farmers' Association also adopted an independent attitude. In May 1930 it was decided to revive branches throughout the entire county. J. F. Medill, a member of the North Kerry Executive, was appointed County Organiser.[123] At the AGM of the association, the outgoing Chairman, Eugene O' Sullivan, attributed the decline of the association to an excessive concentration on local issues. He argued that it should campaign on national issues of concern to farmers. He criticised the traditional "non-political" stance of farmers as an excuse for inactivity. The incoming chairman, Patrick Trant, argued that farmers should contest elections, both as a means to address their grievances and as an incentive for improving their organisation.[124] He repudiated the existing Farmers' Party as "an obstruction in our path and after the next election they will be effaced."[125]

Likewise in Cavan, farmers began to organise. Branches of Belton's Agricultural League in the county agreed to form a county executive and establish new branches, the membership of which would be confined to farmers. The demand for de-rating agriculture land encouraged Cavan farmers to support the new organisation. Patrick McGovern, who was elected chairman of the new "Cavan Agricultural League", urged farmers to organise themselves rather than to depend upon the Farmers' Party. McGovern also desired co-operation with farmers' organisations in other counties. Another member, Mr. McCabe, argued that the League should campaign on issues such as tariffs and excessive railway freights.[126]

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[123] *Kerryman*, May 10th 1930.
[124] Ibid, June 7th 1930.
[125] Ibid, May 17th 1930.
[126] *Anglo-Celt*, August 23rd 1930.

In Roscommon, farmers agreed to form a Farmers' and Ratepayers' Association and to campaign against increased rates. The association absorbed branches of Belton's Agricultural League which had been formed in the County.[127] Indirectly, Belton had succeeded in damaging the Irish Farmers' Union. By forming branches of the Agricultural League, Belton had laid the foundations for locally-based independent farmer organisations. The atomisation of the Irish Farmers' Union and the adoption of protectionist policies by farmers was welcomed by D. P. Moran. He argued that the union was now an unrepresentative organisation; "and what little is left of it now is, we suppose, mostly a graziers' union, an union largely of wilful wasters of land meant to support people."[128] He supported Patrick Belton's Agricultural League, hoping that it would supplant the Irish Farmers' Union and contest the next general election.[129]

The former county associations of the Irish Farmers' Union drifted further away from their parent body. J. F. Medill, addressing branch meetings of the Kerry Farmers' Association, argued that it was of no value to farmers to support candidates from the two main parties as the party whip would force deputies to vote against the interests of farmers.[130] He emphasised the need for organisation to farmers;

"Where the farmers had always failed in that respect was that they only organised in an emergency and instead of perfecting the organisation they generally let it die away to eventually realise that the remedy was worse than the disease."[131]

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[127] *Roscommon Herald*, December 13th 1930.
[128] *The Leader*, May 17th 1930.
[129] Ibid, January 12th 1929.
[130] *Kerryman*, January 24th 1931.
[131] Ibid, March 7th 1931.

He declared that the Kerry Farmers' Association had repudiated the Irish Farmers' Union.[132] At a meeting of the North Kerry Executive, Medill claimed that issues of concern to farmers in Kerry had been ignored at the annual congresses of the union.[133] The association then announced its decision to contest the next general election.[134]

The independent stance of the farmers' associations in Limerick and Kerry found new expression in the proposed Munster Farmers' Association, the formation of which was suggested by the Cork Farmers' Association and was endorsed by the West Limerick[135] and Kerry Farmers' Associations.[136] Members of these associations agreed to invite delegates from Clare, Tipperary and Waterford to a convention at Mallow, where the policies of the new association were to be presented.[137] At the Mallow conference, the association declared its intent to organise on a national basis. It would promote the representation of farmers on political bodies and would raise electoral funds for independent farmer candidates. The association would organise the co-operative purchase of agricultural inputs. It advocated reductions in government expenditure and supported de-rating. The association called on the Farmers' Party to withdraw its support from the government if de-rating was not granted. However, a motion which called on local authorities not to strike a rate until the de-rating commission had reported was withdrawn. A Cork delegate, John Fahy, correctly argued that it would be impossible to form a national farmers' organisation due to sectional differences among farmers. The best that could be hoped for was to unify Munster farmers. The delegates

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[132] Ibid, January 31st 1931.
[133] Ibid, February 14th 1931.
[134] *Irish Times*, January 28th 1931.
[135] *Cork Examiner*, January 20th 1931.
[136] *Kerryman*, February 14th 1931.
[137] *Limerick Leader*, February 14th 1931.

disagreed as to whether the association was independent of the Irish Farmers' Union. J. J. O' Shaughnessy stated that the association opposed the Irish Farmers' Union, which had no independence from Cumann na nGaedheal. Similar arguments were made by E. J. Cussen, who described the union as unrepresentative of farmers. However, other delegates believed that the Munster Association was a sub-division of the union. The proposed association was also handicapped by the non-attendance of delegates from Tipperary and Waterford.[138]

The ambiguity concerning the relationship between the association and the Irish Farmers' Union, and the unwillingness of some of the constituent county associations to sacrifice their autonomy led to the collapse of the Munster Farmers' Association. Members of the West Limerick Farmers' Association were opposed to the establishment of a centralised electoral fund by the Munster Association. They preferred to retain funds for their own electoral campaign in Limerick and argued that co-operation should only occur between any independent farmer deputies who may be elected.[139] The Kerry Farmers' Association did favour a centralised electoral fund.[140] However, the Kerry Association was adamant that the Munster Farmers' Association should remain independent of the Irish Farmers' Union. The Kerry Association also desired that the Munster Association adopt a protectionist economic policy.[141] In contrast, the Cork Farmers' Association opposed the argument made by the Kerry Association that the Munster Association form the nucleus of an independent farmers' party. The Cork Farmers' Association viewed the Munster Association as a means to re-vitalise the

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[138] Ibid, March 14th 1931.
[139] Idem.
[140] *Kerryman*, March 21st 1931.
[141] Ibid, February 21st 1931.

Irish Farmers' Union and were opposed to a formal split.[142] As a result the Munster Farmers' Association was aborted.

However, this failure did not demoralise the efforts of the West Limerick and Kerry Farmers' Associations to promote an independent farmers' party.[143] Following the example set in Kerry, the West Limerick Farmers' Association revitalised defunct branches. In the course of such re-organisation, it was reported that republican farmers would extend lower preferences to an independent farmer candidate, if that candidate did not support Cumann na nGaedheal as the current Farmers' Party had done.[144] Even within the Cork Farmers' Association, D. L. O' Gorman criticised the inactivity of the existing Farmers' Party and argued in favour of an independent farmers' party.[145]

In Cavan, the Agricultural League continued to expand. At the AGM of the league, it was reported that membership had increased while branches were formed in Leitrim.[146] The league had a similar policy to the farmers' associations in Munster; the complete de-rating of agricultural land to be funded from economies in government expenditure,[147] reform of land annuity payments[148] and for farmers to maintain an organisation independent of the major political parties.[149] It did not favour contesting elections.[150] However, it acquired a

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[142] *Cork Examiner*, July 6th 1931.
[143] *Limerick Leader*, June 6th 1931.
[144] Ibid, July 11th 1931.
[145] *Cork Examiner*, September 28th 1931.
[146] *Anglo-Celt*, August 22nd 1931.
[147] Ibid, February 7th 1931.
[148] Ibid, December 12th 1931.
[149] Ibid, December 12th 1931.
[150] Ibid, November 28th 1931.

parliamentary spokesperson in the form of John O' Hanlon. He praised the league as being representative of farmers and impressed upon them the need to improve the marketing of agricultural produce.[151] Patrick McGovern described O' Hanlon as the only TD representative of farmers, a calculated insult to the Farmers' Party.[152]

The Roscommon Farmers' and Ratepayers' Association also considered independent political action. P. J. Mulligan called for the formation of an independent farmers' party. A young James Dillon warned both Fianna Fáil and Cumann na nGaedheal that the association would contest the Roscommon constituency if the existing deputies did not represent the county effectively. A letter was read from Monsignor Cummins, a prominent cleric in the County. Cummins warned the delegates not to allow the association be dominated by party politicians who did not have the interests of farmers at heart.[153]

From 1928 onwards the issue of land annuity reform drew the attention of republicans and the radical farmers' organisations. In that year Peadar O'Donnell, Fr. John Fahy and Senator Maurice Moore formed the "No Tribute Campaign", which advocated the non-payment of land annuities. By the end of that year, a number of County Councils had passed motions in favour of non-payment of annuities.[154] The National Agricultural Association also supported the reform of annuity payments arguing that the payment period for land annuities be extended, while such payments should be reduced by 50%. However, association members

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[151] Ibid, February 7th 1931.
[152] Ibid, October 31st 1931.
[153] *Roscommon Herald*, June 30th 1931.
[154] D. Ó Drisceoil, *Peadar O' Donnell*, Cork University Press, Cork, 2001, p.49.

such as J. J. Bergin stressed that this was a policy of payment reform, not of repudiation. Members of the Irish Farmers' Union initially opposed this campaign. Brooke Brazier criticised the policy of repudiating land annuity payments, and argued that the Farmers' Party supported the payment of all lawful debts.[155]

However, as a consequence of falling agricultural prices due to the Great depression farmers experienced difficulty in paying land annuities. Arrears as a percentage of total collectable annuities increased from 11.6% for 1930-31 to 15.2% for 1931-32.[156] Consequently, farmers began to support the reform of annuity payments. J. F. Medill called for government action to clear annuity arrears.[157] The Kerry Farmers' Association advocated negotiations with the British government to revise annuity payments. One delegate argued that if land annuities were to be retained they should be used to fund agricultural projects and not to fund general government expenditure.[158] Some members of the West Limerick Farmers' Association supported the Fianna Fáil policy of retaining land annuities.[159] The Ballingarry branch of the association argued that annuity payments should be suspended until all agricultural produce was protected.[160] The Aghada branch of the Cork Farmers' Association proposed a two-year moratorium on land annuity payments. This policy was supported by Brooke Brasier and D. L. O' Gorman. However, a Mr. McCarthy argued that if a future Fianna Fáil administration

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[155] *Cork Examiner*, June 16th 1928.
[156] *Commission of Inquiry into Banking, Currency and Credit, Memoranda and Minutes of Evidence, Vol II.* Stationery Office, Dublin, 1938, p.1186.
[157] *Limerick Leader*, September 20th 1931.
[158] *Kerryman*, May 23rd 1931.
[159] *Limerick leader*, June 6th 1931.
[160] Ibid, October 10th 1931.

retained the land annuities, farmers should consider withholding such payments.[161] These demands for annuity payment reform were a product of adverse economic conditions. The organised farmers were not flocking to Peadar O' Donnell's campaign to abolish annuity payments.

The atomisation of the Irish Farmers' Union provided a new opportunity for Patrick Belton to extend his influence. Belton addressed a meeting of the Kerry Farmers' Association in August where he outlined his opposition to the government de-rating scheme. He proposed the formation of a new farmers' party, which he hoped would win up to 25 seats in the Dáil. Belton hoped that the Kerry Farmers' Association would adopt his policies.[162] He also appealed to the Cavan Agricultural League to support him. However, Patrick McGovern refused Belton's request. He stated that the League was opposed to direct political representation by farmers' organisations.[163] By September, Belton organised a convention of farmers in Limerick, which was attended by delegates from Clare, Cork, Tipperary and Limerick. The convention argued for the formation of a co-ordinating body for the various farmers' organisations.[164] This led to the formation of a "Centre Party" in Dublin. This group advocated the formation of an independent farmers' party, complete de-rating of agricultural land, and a protectionist policy for agriculture and industry. Government expenditure should be reduced by an amount corresponding to the fall in agricultural prices. Belton was elected President of the group. He advised farmers not to pay annuities if their payment would

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[161] *Cork Examiner*, September 28th 1931.
[162] *Kerryman*, August 22nd 1931.
[163] *Anglo-Celt*, August 22nd 1931.
[164] *Limerick Leader*, September 12th 1931.

deprive their families of the necessities of life. Belton threatened that farmers would adopt "direct action" if their demands were not granted.[165] The Cork Farmers' Association opposed Belton' activities. Members of the executive opposed an invitation from J. F. Medill to support the Centre Party.[166]

Parallel to Belton's efforts, the Irish Grain Growers' Association and the Farmers' Protective Association held a joint conference. The conference argued for reduced annuity and rate payments. It was proposed that a convention be held of all the farmers' organisations in the Irish Free State to discuss these proposals and to ascertain the attitude of the political parties towards relief for farmers.[167] Difficulties in meeting annuity payments encouraged the farmers' organisations to combine their efforts. Belton agreed to participate and by November 1931, the National Conference of Farmers' Associations was held in Dublin, chaired by Thomas McKeogh of the Farmers' Protective Association. The convention passed a resolution calling for a moratorium on land annuity and rate payments. No agreement was reached among the delegates concerning protectionism. A deputation was appointed to meet W. T. Cosgrave to present the farmers' demands.[168] Cosgrave received the delegation and informed them that no further assistance could be provided for farmers.

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[165] *Irish Independent*, September 26th 1931.
[166] *Cork Examiner*, September 28th 1931.
[167] *Leinster Leader*, November 7th 1931.
[168] *Irish Independent*, November 12th 1931.

The convention resumed in December. Resolutions were passed calling on farmers not to support those deputies who opposed de-rating. Any refusal to support a moratorium for annuity and rate payments would cause a new land war.[169] This radical policy was opposed by a delegate from the Cavan Agricultural League who argued that if annuities were withheld, stock would be seized in lieu of such payments.[170] The conference was informed by Thomas McKeogh that Eamon de Valera informed some delegates that land annuities could be retained to finance complete de-rating and tillage subsidies.[171]

The Cork Farmers' Association decided to nominate candidates for the general election. A number of delegates, led by Canon Barrett, attempted to persuade the association to support Cumann na nGaedheal in the forthcoming election. Barrett argued that the Farmers' Party had proved itself ineffectual.[172] This argument was opposed by D. L. O' Gorman who stated that the existence of an independent farmers' party was necessary to defend the interests of farmers. O' Gorman also attacked the leadership of the Irish Farmers' Union for compromising the independence of the movement. The Cork Farmers' Association voted by a large majority to nominate candidates for the forthcoming general election.[173]

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[169] Ibid, December 10th 1931.
[170] *Anglo-Celt*, December 26th 1931.
[171] *Irish Independent*, December 10th 1931.
[172] *Irish Independent*, November 24th 1931.
[173] *Cork Examiner*, November 23rd 1931.

In December, the Cavan Agricultural League selected John O' Hanlon as a candidate for the forthcoming general election. O' Hanlon emphasised his stance as an independent farmer TD. In a deliberate challenge to the Farmers' Party, he stated;

"I take the greatest possible pride in being the first genuine representative of the organised farmers of County Cavan if for no other reason than that in its setting an example to other counties to do what the farmers of Cavan are doing to make the country prosperous."[174]

The agricultural depression persisted in 1932. The setting of crops was disrupted by bad weather.[175] Live cattle exports continued to decline while butter prices remained low.[176] As predicted by Patrick Hogan, tariffs failed to bring significant improvements to farmers. The Farmers' Protection Association argued that the oat and bacon tariffs were of little effect.[177] The government now aimed at securing preferential access to the British market. This policy option emerged when the new National Government in Britain abandoned free trade in favour of preference for imperial produce.[178]

A general election was called for February. The Farmers' Party collapsed as a political force before any vote was cast. The Irish Farmers' Union Congress, following the report of the 1929 committee, allowed the constituent county associations to adopt an independent electoral position. Similar freedoms were granted to the outgoing Farmers' Party deputies after "having consulted those who might be regarded as responsible for their return in the

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[174] *Anglo-Celt*, December 19th 1931.
[175] *First Annual Report of the Minister for Agriculture, 1931-32.* Stationery Office, Dublin, 1932, pp.2-3.
[176] Ibid, pp.6-7.
[177] *Irish Times*, January 28th 1932.
[178] Ibid, January 14th 1932.

previous general election."[179] Outgoing deputies John White and Michael Jordan ran as Cumann na nGaedheal candidates, as did the former Farmers' Party Leader, Patrick Baxter.[180]

The most prominent defector from the Farmers' Party to Cumann na nGaedheal was Michael Heffernan. The Cumann na nGaedheal organisation in Tipperary unanimously selected Heffernan as a candidate.[181] Heffernan was permitted by his supporters to stand in the Cumann na nGaedheal interest. In his election campaign, Heffernan expressed his regret at the decline of the Farmers' Party. However, farmers had a higher duty in supporting the Treaty and in maintaining security. Heffernan argued that the Farmers' Party, in supporting Cumann na nGaedheal, had prevented Fianna Fáil from taking office. This had secured almost five years of stable government, which was in the interests of farmers.[182] However, Heffernan had lost the confidence of his former supporters. At a meeting of Tipperary farmers held in late 1931, Heffernan was shouted down as he argued that tariffs would not be of any benefit to farmers, how the Farmers' Party had succeeded in reducing public expenditure and that the primary duty of the Farmers' Party was to support the Treaty.[183] The Waterford Farmers' Association supported Cumann na nGaedheal.[184] The Meath Farmers' Association did not contest the election.[185]

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[179] Ibid, January 22nd 1932.
[180] Walker, *Parliamentary election results in Ireland, 1918-92*, op.cit, pp.132-37.
[181] *Irish Independent*, January 11th 1932.
[182] Ibid, January 19th 1932.
[183] Ibid ,December 14th 1931.
[184] *Irish Times*, January 27th 1932.
[185] *Leinster Leader*, January 30th 1932.

The Cork Farmers' Association selected outgoing Deputies Dan Vaughan and T. J. O' Donovan as candidates. D. L. O' Gorman was selected as a candidate for East Cork.[186] They campaigned for a 10% reduction in government expenditure, the direct representation of farmers in the Dáil and for deputies who represented farmers' organisations to maintain their independence from the two major parties. Only in a commitment to uphold the Treaty could any indication of support for Cumann na nGaedheal could be detected.[187] In the course of its campaign, the association hoped that farmer deputies would hold the balance of power in the Dáil. It was argued that friendly relations should be maintained with Britain which was the only market for Irish agricultural produce.[188] In Carlow-Kilkenny, outgoing Farmers' Party TD Richard Holohan contested the election as a supporter of Cumann na nGaedheal but described himself as an "Independent Farmer."[189]

However, most of the candidates standing in the interests of farmers were hostile to the outgoing government. Daniel Kennedy, a former election candidate for the Farmers' Party, contested Laois-Offaly as a candidate for the Laois Farmers' Protective Association. Kennedy stated that he would sit as an independent farmer TD in the Dáil. He called for assistance for the barley sector, reduced annuity payments, reduced taxation, complete de-rating of agricultural land and reform of the unemployment benefit system to encourage work. Kennedy favoured an extension of protective measures towards agriculture. He believed that the oat and bacon tariffs had been imposed too late to be of benefit of farmers, although he

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[186] *Irish Times*, January 25th 1932.
[187] *Cork Examiner*, February 13th 1932.
[188] Ibid, February 16th 1932.
[189] *Irish Times*, January 11th 1932.

admitted that the oat tariff did halt the decline in the tillage acreage.[190] Brooke Brasier stood as an independent candidate for Cork East. He called for the provision of capital to farmers to maintain agricultural production.[191] In Wexford, former Farmers' Party TD Michael Doyle was selected as an independent farmer candidate. He claimed that, apart from the introduction of the Livestock Breeding Act and the increase in the agricultural grant, Cumann na nGaedheal had done little to assist farmers. Doyle criticised excessive local authority rates.[192] He claimed that the Farmers' Party had achieved little as a result of their coalition with Cumann na nGaedheal and argued that the Farmers' Party should have had adopted a policy of independent support for Cumann na nGaedheal, which he believed would have been of more benefit to agriculture.[193]

Unsurprisingly, the Kerry Farmers' Association contested the election. J. F. Medill argued that if one independent farmer TD were elected per constituency, the basis for a farmers' government would exist. He criticised the defunct Farmers' Party and urged farmers to support candidates who would represent their sectional interests.[194] The association selected its chairman Patrick Trant, as a candidate.[195] He campaigned for complete de-rating, the suspension of payments due from transferred creamery suppliers, government assistance for the construction of labourers' cottages and a two year moratorium on land annuity payments. Trant emphasised that reform of land annuity payments constituted a revision, not a repudiation of the Treaty. He warned farmers that if they refused to support candidates who

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[190] *Midland Tribune*, January 23rd & February 13th 1932.
[191] *Cork Examiner*, January 12th 1932.
[192] *Free Press*, January 9th 1932.
[193] Ibid, February 13th 1932.
[194] *Cork Examiner*, January 13th 1932.
[195] *Irish Times*, January 20th 1932.

would represent their interests, "they would for ever be a doormat to the big rival political parties."[196]

The West Limerick Farmers' Association selected J. J. O' Shaughnessy as their candidate. He emphasised his stance as an independent farmer candidate, responsible only to his association, yet he would cooperate with other independent farmer deputies.[197] He campaigned for reduced taxation and an extension of credit to farmers.[198] He favoured a reduction in annuity payments but argued that annuities should continue to be paid to Great Britain. O' Shaughnessy warned farmers that they remained dependent upon the British market. He also supported reduced government expenditure and the complete de-rating of agricultural land.[199] In Cavan, John O' Hanlon pledged himself to co-operate with other independent farmer deputies for the purpose of forming a new farmers' party.[200] He also favoured the raising of a national loan on the security of agricultural land.[201] Branches of the Agricultural League in Leitrim were initially reluctant to nominate a candidate as they were doubtful whether a farmers' candidate could be elected for the Leitrim-Sligo constituency.[202] However, a change of heart occurred and former TD Michael Carter stood as an independent farmer.[203]

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[196] *Cork Examiner*, February 16th 1932.
[197] *Limerick Leader*, January 30th 1932.
[198] Ibid, February 9th 1932.
[199] Ibid, February 6th 1932.
[200] *Anglo-Celt*, January 23rd 1932.
[201] *Irish Independent*, February 3rd 1932.
[202] *Anglo-Celt*, January 16th 1932.
[203] Ibid, February 13th 1932.

In Roscommon, the Farmers' and Ratepayers' Association decided to contest the election. A prominent member of the association, Thomas O'Donnell, criticised excessive national and local government expenditure. He also condemned the insistence by the government that farmers should pay their annuities when agricultural prices were depressed. He praised the independent farmer organisations in counties Kerry, Limerick and Cavan. He believed that farmers were only beginning to realise the importance of organisation.[204] At the instigation of James Dillon, it was agreed to affiliate with the farmers' organisations in Counties Cavan and Leitrim.[205] The association selected Frank MacDermot, member of a old Gaelic land-owning family, as their candidate. MacDermot criticised both the main parties for their plans to tax agriculture in order to finance wasteful public expenditure.[206] He called for the reduction of taxation and rates levied on farmers in addition to support for rural railways.[207] MacDermot's supporters argued that Cumann na nGaedheal had done little to assist small farmers.[208] Monsignor Cummins predicted that the election of MacDermot would be the catalyst for the formation of a new farmers' party.[209]

Delegates from the farmers' associations in Cavan, Leitrim and Roscommon met at Carrick-on-Shannon to agree on a common policy platform. The delegates agreed to support a reduction in national and local government expenditure, subsidised pork, egg and butter exports; these subsidies to be funded from tariffs on industrial imports, the complete de-rating of agricultural land, a two-year moratorium on land annuity payments and for ratepayers to

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[204] *Roscommon Herald*, January 9th 1932.
[205] Ibid, January 9th 1932.
[206] *Irish Independent*, February 11th 1932.
[207] *Roscommon Herald*, February 13th 1932.
[208] Ibid, February 6th 1932.
[209] Ibid, February 13th 1932.

maintain control over local government.[210] At a subsequent meeting of the Cavan Agricultural League, Patrick McGovern argued that these policies were not of a party political nature but were aimed instead at the development of agriculture. He explained that the subsidisation of agricultural exports would compensate farmers for the increased cost of living consequent from a protectionist industrial policy. McGovern criticised Cumann na nGaedheal for their opposition to the complete de-rating of agricultural land.[211]

The presence of independent farmer candidates was criticised by Michael Heffernan. He argued that these candidates weakened pro-Treaty forces. Support for Cumann na nGaedheal on constitutional issues was meaningless if the independent farmers would vote against Cumann na nGaedheal on economic issues.[212]

The Farmers' Protective Association issued a manifesto which advocated the complete de-rating of agricultural land, a review of the payment of land annuities to Britain and a protectionist policy for agriculture. It instructed farmers not to support candidates who did not support their manifesto, a barely disguised call for support for Fianna Fáil. The Redundant and Transferred Milk Suppliers' Association called on its supporters to support both Fianna Fáil and the independent farmer candidates in Kerry and Limerick. This advice was given as Fianna Fáil had promised that it would subsidise the transferred suppliers while President Cosgrave had refused to meet them.[213] The Chairman of the association described how he had

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[210] *Anglo-Celt*, January 16th 1932.
[211] Ibid, January 23rd 1932.
[212] *Irish Independent*, January 22nd 1932.
[213] *Limerick Leader*, February 20th 1932.

been a Cumann na nGaedheal supporter but now supported Fianna Fáil because of that party's willingness to support the dairy sector.[214]

Fianna Fáil came to power in the 1932 election. The party campaigned to retain land annuities to fund complete de-rating and to introduce protectionist measures to guarantee the domestic market for Irish farmers.[215] It has been observed that a significant swing to Fianna Fáil occurred in Leinster and Munster constituencies as larger farmers were supportive of Fianna Fáil's de-rating campaign, while the support of smaller farmers was retained by promises of land re-distribution.[216] The campaign by the transferred milk suppliers may have deprived support for Cumann na nGaedheal in Limerick and Tipperary.

Given the polarised political conditions of the election and the collapse of a national farmers' organisation, farmers enjoyed some success in winning six seats. This was only one seat less than the combined total of the Farmers' Party and John O' Hanlon in the outgoing Dáil. Both T. J. O' Donovan and Dan Vaughan, representing the Cork Farmers' Association were re-elected, as was John O' Hanlon in Cavan. Richard Holohan was defeated in Carlow-Kilkenny. J. J. O' Shaughnessy and Frank MacDermot were elected for the Limerick and Roscommon constituencies respectively. Their election formed the nucleus of a new farmers' party. Of the three former Farmers' Party deputies who defected to Cumann na nGaedheal only one, John White, was re-elected. Michael Jordan and Michael Heffernan were defeated.[217]

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[214] Ibid, February 20th 1932.
[215] *Irish Times*, January 16th 1932 & February 3rd 1932.
[216] P. Bew, E. Hazelkorn & H. Patterson, *The dynamics of Irish politics*. Laurence & Wishart, London, 1989, p.43. Dooley, *'The land for the people'*, op.cit, pp.93-96 & pp.204-05.
[217] Walker, *Parliamentary election results in Ireland, 1918-92*, op.cit, pp.125-135, passim.

The independent farmers increased their vote in three constituencies, Cork North, Limerick and Cavan, compared to the result achieved by Farmers' Party candidates in September 1927. The decline in dairy prices may have contributed to the success of J. J. O' Shaughnessy in Limerick. Frank MacDermot achieved a higher share of the poll than the Farmers' Party candidates for Roscommon in 1923. However, the vote received by independent farmer candidates in Carlow-Kilkenny, Cork West, Kerry, Leitrim-Sligo and Wexford was lower than that received by Farmers' Party candidates in the September 1927 election. In East Cork, the independent candidature of Brooke Brasier had an adverse effect on the vote of D .L. O' Gorman, but their combined vote was higher that the Farmers' Party result in September 1927. Garvin's analysis of the 1932 electoral results showed a positive correlation between the Cumann na nGaedheal vote and high farm valuation, and a corresponding negative correlation between high farm valuation and the independent farmer vote.[218] This divided between large and small farmers contributed to the swing against farmers' candidates in Carlow-Kilkenny and Wexford.

[218] Garvin, "Nationalist elites, Irish voters and Irish political development". *Economic and Social Review*, Vol 8, op.cit, p.178 & p.182.

Table 4.3: performance of candidates representing farmers in the 1932 Election.

Constituency	Votes received	As % of total votes cast	No. of candidates	Seats
Carlow-Kilkenny	2,688	5.72	1	0
Cavan	7,281	20.01	1	1
Cork East	5,991	15.10	2	1
Cork North	6,408	22.93	1	1
Cork West	5,310	13.02	1	1
Kerry	4,548	7.54	1	0
Laois-Offaly	1,553	3.32	1	0
Leitrim-Sligo	1,984	7.60	1	0
Limerick	4,887	7.91	1	1
Roscommon	4,560	12.90	1	1
Wexford	3,322	7.70	1	0
Total	48,532	9.82	12	6

Source: Walker, *Parliamentary election results in Ireland, 1918-92*, op.cit, pp.132-35. Note: the Cork East result includes the votes received by Brooke Brasier, 4,245(10.69%) and D. L. O' Gorman, 1,746(4.41%).

The period 1928 to 1932 witnessed great changes both in agricultural policy within the farmers' organisations. The Irish Farmers' Union experienced an irreversible decline and the National Executive abandoned central control over the individual county associations. The leadership of the union now supported Cumann na nGaedheal, following the lead of the Farmers' Party which was now emasculated by Cumann na nGaedheal. As observed by Col. O' Callaghan-Westropp, the union lost credibility amongst ordinary farmers, who now organised around specific economic demands. As a consequence of this decline, and the assimilation by Cumann na nGaedheal of the Farmers' Party, the Irish Farmers' Union was

unable to respond to the campaigns in favour of de-rating, the protection of livestock produce and the reform of annuity payments, all exacerbated by the impact of the Great Depression.

Dissident farming organisations organised around these issues. Patrick Belton formed a number of ephemeral organisations. His campaign in favour of de-rating detached support from the Irish Farmers' Union and members of his various organisations contributed to the formation of independent farmer associations. In addition, a number of former county associations of the Irish Farmers' Union supported these campaigns and now repudiated their parent body. These associations argued that the participation of the Farmers' Party in the government prevented the Irish Farmers' Union from adequately representing farmers. However, these associations were isolated geographically and jealously defended their independence. Attempts to bring them together (such as the Munster Farmers' Association) either proved abortive or were limited in scope.

Protectionist agricultural organisations were also active during this period. The fall in livestock prices extended the demand for protectionist measures beyond the tillage sector. Protectionist farmers still relied on ad-hoc conferences to organise their demands and their activities resulted in gathering agricultural support for Fianna Fáil, which also supported de-rating. While a protectionist "Farmers' Protective Association" was formed, its membership was confined to Dublin farmers, and it supported Fianna Fáil. Eventually, Cumann na nGaedheal did yield to demands for a measure of de-rating and protection of agricultural produce. However, Cumann na nGaedheal's actions were too little, too late for farmers. The demands for annuity payment reform, de-rating and protectionist measures illustrate how

farmers sought direct financial aid to resolve their problems. Farmers ignored the arguments of the de-rating commission and of their representatives, such as John O' Hanlon, Michael Heffernan and Timothy Corcoran, to seek solutions themselves for their own problems and to improve agricultural production and marketing. Farmers also criticised certain government measures such as the Dairy Produce and Livestock Breeding Acts, treating them as scapegoats for the adverse effects of the Great Depression.

While farmer apathy, diverse sectional interests and over-politicisation sealed the doom of the Irish Farmers' Union, a number of former county associations of the union, together with a number of new associations maintained an organisational presence for farmers. These organisations were characterised by limited sectional demands. In spite of the polarised political conditions of the 1932 election and the collapse of the Farmers' Party, a number of independent farmer TDs were elected forming the nucleus of a new farmers' party. Yet, they faced a great challenge as the new Fianna Fáil administration altered Irish agricultural policy.

Chapter V.

The Economic War and the revival of farmers' organisations; 1932-34.

When the new Dáil met in March 1932, the first issue facing the independent farmer deputies was who to support in the election for President of the Executive Council. Members of the West Limerick Farmers' Association issued a non-binding recommendation to J. J. O' Shaughnessy to vote for de Valera. O' Shaughnessy argued that regardless of whom he supported for President, he would not be bound to any of the political parties. He hoped that the various independent farmer deputies would eventually form a new party.[1] At a meeting of the Cavan Agricultural League, John O' Hanlon pledged that the independent farmer deputies would not be absorbed by the two main parties. The league acceded to O' Hanlon's request that he be allowed to use his own discretion as who to vote for as President of the Executive Council. He argued that de Valera be allowed a chance to implement his policies. The delegates supported O' Hanlon's arguments and expressed strong criticisms of Cumann na nGaedheal.[2]

However, the independent farmer deputies demonstrated their political disunity when the vote for the Presidency of the Executive Council occurred. John O' Hanlon and J. J. O' Shaughnessy voted for de Valera, while Frank MacDermot abstained and both T. J. O' Donovan and Daniel Vaughan voted against de Valera.[3]

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[1] *Limerick Leader*, March 5th 1932.
[2] *Anglo-Celt*, March 12th 1932.
[3] *Dáil Debates*, Vol XLI, 9th March - 25th May 1932, cols 25, 27 & 36-38, March 9th 1932.

After this initial display of disunity, the independent farmer deputies then attempted to co-ordinate their efforts. Their presence in the Dáil provided an unified focus which they lacked as members of individual county farmer associations. J. J. O' Shaughnessy informed his association that the independent farmer deputies had agreed to a platform of reduced taxation, to seek preferential access to the British market and the promotion of friendly relations with members of the British Commonwealth. He stated that while the independent farmer deputies supported Fianna Fáil at present to prevent an early general election, they would oppose any action which would precipitate a dispute with Great Britain.[4] The independent farmer deputies demonstrated the "dependency" mentality of export-orientated farmers reliant on trade links with Great Britain, as argued by Orridge.[5] O' Shaughnessy declared that the independent farmers intended to form a political party.[6]

The West Limerick Farmers' Association concerned itself with the problem of land annuity arrears. O' Shaughnessy claimed to have had received between twenty to thirty letters on this issue since he was elected as a TD. C. D. O' Sullivan advocated an one-year moratorium on land annuity payments. J. F. Medill wrote to the West Limerick Association suggesting the formation of an inquiry on the issue of annuity arrears and that such arrears be added onto the purchase price of holdings. He praised the activity of O' Shaughnessy, which he believed would encourage the election of independent farmer deputies in other constituencies.[7]
The Cork Farmers' Association also discussed the merits of a new farmers' party. E. J. Cussen believed that members of farmers' organisations should join both of the main parties

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[4] *Limerick Leader*, April 9th 1932.
[5] Orridge, "The Blueshirts and the 'Economic War' ". *Political Studies*, Vol XXXI, op.cit, pp.360-61.
[6] *Limerick Leader*, April 14th 1932.
[7] Ibid, May 14th 1932.

to influence their policies in favour of agriculture. This suggestion was opposed by Dr. Nyhan who argued that farmers could exert their influence only through direct political representation. Nyhan cited the current influence exerted by the Labour Party over Fianna Fáil as an example. T. J . O' Donovan predicted that the removal of the oath of allegiance and the retention of land annuities would force farmers to re-organise themselves politically. The association also opposed the protectionist industrial policies of Fianna Fáil. D. L. O' Gorman criticised the tariff imposed on imported agricultural machinery.[8] The attitude of both the deputies who represented the Cork Farmers' Association was of concern to Cumann na nGaedheal. At a parliamentary party meeting, W. T. Cosgrave agreed to meet deputies O' Donovan and Vaughan to ascertain their relationship with the Irish Farmers' Union and their intended relationship with Cumann na nGaedheal.[9] Obviously, Cumann na nGaedheal hoped that the two deputies would join their ranks, on the basis of their opposition to de Valera.

Members of the Cavan Agricultural League supported the formation of a national farmers' organisation and called on both the deputies who represented the Cork Farmers' Association to ally themselves with Frank MacDermot.[10] Addressing the West Limerick Farmers' Association, MacDermot criticised both Cumann na nGaedheal for their neglect of provincial Ireland and excessive public expenditure, and Fianna Fáil for their industrialisation policy which would increase the cost of imports necessary for agriculture. He warned farmers that while they remained disorganised they would have no influence on government policy. MacDermot emphasised the opportunities provided by the forthcoming Ottawa Conference in

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[8] *Cork Examiner*, March 28th 1932.
[9] U. C. D. A. D., Fine Gael collection, P.39/ MIN/3, Minutes of Cumann na nGaedheal Parliamentary party. Parliamentary party meeting, March 16th 1932.
[10] *Anglo-Celt*, June 4th 1932.

allowing the Free State preferential access to the British market. James Dillon called for a two-year moratorium on land annuity payments and promised that the independent farmer deputies would consult regularly with their associations on agricultural issues.[11]

Surprisingly, given his later attitude on the subject, MacDermot favoured retention by the Irish Free State of the land annuities. However, he doubted whether retention would be legal and he supported arbitration on the issue.[12] On the eve of the Economic War, MacDermot argued for a moratorium on land annuity payments regardless of the outcome of the negotiations with Britain and for a concerted effort to promote agricultural exports. He favoured international arbitration on the issue of annuity retention and described any policy which would threaten access to the British market as reckless.[13] The worst fears of the farmers were realised. Following the failure of negotiations between the British and Irish governments to resolve the annuity retention issue, the British government imposed a special 40% *ad valorem* duty on all Irish imports, including agricultural produce.[14] This marked the beginning of the Economic War. With the imposition of British tariffs, farmer activists were galvanised into action. Patrick Belton proposed a conference where the legality of annuity payments and the ability of farmers to pay could be discussed. He predicted that the British import duties would cripple the livestock and dairy sectors and urged both farmers and labourers to co-operate in opposing the government. He invited the views of others as to the best way for farmers to "clear up the mess produced by incompetent politicians."[15]

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[11] *Limerick Leader*, June 11th 1932.
[12] *Anglo-Celt*, April 23rd 1932.
[13] *Irish Independent*, July 12th 1932.
[14] *Memoranda and Minutes of Evidence, Commission of Inquiry into Banking, Currency and Credit*, Vol II, op.cit, p.1191.
[15] Ibid, July 14th 1932.

Michael Heffernan argued that the cattle trade would be destroyed by the special duties. As a result, farmers would no longer be able to meet annuity and rate payments. He supported arbitration as a means to resolve the dispute, with reference to ability to pay. If this issue was not resolved, He warned that farmers would withhold annuity and rate payments. "if a moratorium is not declared on all farm debts, it will take place automatically. The danger of such developments are obvious."[16]

The Economic War, as predicted by T. J. O' Donovan, led to the revival of politically orientated farmers' associations. In one example, farmers and ratepayers from Fethard, County Tipperary, met to discuss the adverse effects of the British tariffs and to demand relief. They rejected the demand by Senator Quirke of Fianna Fáil that the farmers should support the government in resisting the British claims rather than promoting their own self-interest.[17] At a subsequent meeting, the Tipperary farmers established a county-wide organisation. They claimed that government policy rendered farmers unable to pay rates and annuities, while private property was threatened. Delegates also warned that farm labourers would be laid off. Michael Heffernan argued that it was impossible for any farmers' organisation to remain non-political in current circumstances. At this Fianna Fáil supporters withdrew from the meeting.[18] At a meeting held by farmers in Ashbourne, Co. Meath, local Fianna Fáil TD Matthew O' Reilly was interrupted as he attempted to present the benefits of a reduced livestock export trade. A pro-government motion was rejected by the delegates.[19]

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[16] Ibid, July 16th 1932.
[17] Ibid, July 27th 1932.
[18] Ibid, August 22nd 1932.
[19] Ibid, October 7th 1932.

In Murroe, County Limerick, J. J. O' Shaughnessy called for the formation of a new farmers' party, advocated the complete de-rating of agricultural land and continued membership of the British Commonwealth warning that; "the people of Ireland should be very careful before they closed their best market against themselves and he did not think that the time had arrived when they could afford to do so.",[20] a classic statement of the dependency outlook recognised by Orridge.[21] At a meeting of farmers held in Dungarvan, restoration of free trade with Britain was demanded while government attempts to increase tillage were criticised. One delegate recalled how the Irish Farmers' Union had united farmers and allowed them to defeat the labour movement. Class considerations also emerged when farmers were warned that "undesirable elements" were threatening their social position.[22]

The Cork Farmers' Association also responded to the new mood of defiance among farmers. The Kinsale branch presented a motion which argued that farmers should withhold annuity and rate payments until action was taken to settle the trade dispute with Britain. Some delegates opposed this policy. J. W. Fahy supported the formation of a new farmers' organisation . D. L. O' Gorman approved of the emergence of new farmers' organisations throughout the country. T. J. O' Donovan expressed a preference that the Irish Farmers' Union be re-vitalised. The association criticised the government proposal to introduce an admixture of domestic grain for animal feedstuffs, as this would increase costs for farmers. However, Brooke Brazier supported the scheme as a valuable form of assistance for tillage

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[20] *Limerick Leader*, August 13th 1932.
[21] Orridge, op.cit, p.360-61.
[22] *Cork Examiner*, September 12th 1932.

farmers.[23] Patrick Belton now believed that farmers should organise agricultural opinion through a national convention. He favoured negotiations with British delegates to revise the terms of the Ultimate Financial Agreement, as a solution to the Economic War.[24] J. F. Medill argued that it was unfair for farmers to meet their liabilities when access to their markets had been lost and where no attempt had been made to reduce public expenditure. He resented how the farmers' organisations were labelled as pro-British if they raised the problems of agriculture. Medill argued that the existing farmers' organisations were isolated, while there were too few independent farmer Dáil deputies to be of any effect. He advocated the formation of a new national farmers' organisation which could co-ordinate the existing farmers' associations and form new organisations in districts where they did not exist at present.[25]

Eventually, concrete measures were taken to organise farmers on a national basis. At a conference held in Dublin on September 15th 1932, it was decided to establish a national association representing both farmers and ratepayers. Frank MacDermot was elected Chairman. Delegates discussed the adverse affect of the British duties upon the livestock sector. Opposition was expressed to the expansion of tillage.

However, a spilt emerged among the delegates. Patrick Belton presented a resolution which argued that since farmers had already paid land annuities and rates to the British Exchequer through the medium of tariffs, farmers had no obligation to pay such debts to the Free State.

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[23] Idem.
[24] *Irish Independent*, August 19th 1932.
[25] Ibid, August 28th 1932.

Belton argued that the association should assist those farmers who would test the legality of such payments to the government. Belton's proposal was defeated. The convention decided to form a delegate committee representing all counties. The policy of the association was reflected in two resolutions. The first requested the government to restore export markets for Irish agricultural produce and to obtain any trade preference to which the Irish Free State was entitled to. The second resolution argued that farmers could not pay rates and annuities in current economic conditions. The burden of such payments should be distributed among all sectors of Irish society.[26] Belton continued in his efforts to persuade farmers to adopt a militant policy. At the inaugural meeting of the County Dublin Farmers' and Ratepayers' Association, which was attended by members of the Army Comrades Association, Belton attempted to have the motion he presented at the national convention passed. Frank MacDermot, also in attendance, opposed Belton, but took the opportunity to call on the government to assist farmers financially. Michael Heffernan argued that farmers were morally entitled not to pay annuities but they should pay rates. Belton rejected the proposal that farmers should seek assistance from the government. He stated ; "we have paid our debts once and no one on earth has a right in law or in equity to ask us to pay them a second time."[27]

On October 6th, the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League was formed in Dublin. Frank MacDermot was elected President. He argued that the league would remain independent of the two principal parties, mindful of the fate of the Farmers' Party. However, the league would engage in political activity for the purpose of influencing government agricultural policy. MacDermot admitted that previous attempts to form a national farmers' organisation

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[26] Ibid, September 16th 1932.
[27] Ibid, September 30th 1933.

had failed. However, "by degrees we shall gather strength and we shall teach the farmers to use their power for their own benefit and the benefit of the country, and not for the benefit of politicians."[28] The league intended to restore access to the British market, to reduce government expenditure, and to maintain property rights. It would contest both national and local government elections.

Disagreement occurred over the desired membership of the league. One delegate attempted, without success, to restrict membership to farmers. Patrick Belton objected to the wording of the membership stipulation which stated that the league was open to all Irish citizens who accepted that the Free State was a sovereign and independent nation. He argued that this wording would discourage republican farmers from joining. However, Belton was defeated on this issue.[29] The issue of league membership occupied the initial meetings of the Standing Committee. Patrick McMahon, a delegate from Meath, warned that it would be difficult to attract labourers and small farmers to join.[30]

The league appointed two directors of organisation; veteran Cork Farmers' Association activist, W. J. Fahy, and Thomas McCluskey.[31] When the Standing Committee discussed the appointment of County Organisers, the perennial problem of county associations wishing to defend their independence emerged. Martin Farrell of Tipperary argued that an official attached to the Standing Committee should advise the county associations on their choice of organiser. However, Thomas Lawlor of Kildare believed that this would limit the

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[28] Ibid, October 7th 1932.
[29] Idem.
[30] U.C.D.A.D., Fine Gael Collection, P.39/MIN/6, National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League, Minutes of Standing Committee. Committee meeting, September 22nd 1932.
[31] Ibid, Committee meeting, September 27th 1932.

independence of the county associations.[32] Many of the existing farmers' associations affiliated to the league, such as the Cork[33] and Meath Farmers' Associations.[34] Surprisingly, the Cavan Agricultural League delayed in affiliating with the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League. Patrick McGovern argued that while the Cavan Agricultural League supported the formation of a national farmers' organisation, they did not send delegates to the conferences held by the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League as they wished to ascertain the nature of the new organisation, given the poor record of previous "national farmers' organisations."[35] The Cavan farmers did not affiliate with the league until January 1933.[36] The league also established branches in districts where farmers' associations did not exist, such as North Cork, Kildare and East Limerick.[37]

With the expansion of the league, the Irish Farmers' Union was rendered superfluous. The National Executive passed a motion which called for co-operation between all organisations which were opposed to the government's economic policy, and for such co-operation to be enacted at the forthcoming general election. The union then dissolved itself in favour of the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League.[38]

However, the disparate origin of the county associations, composed of remnants of the Irish Farmers' Union, independent farmer associations and new associations posed a threat to the cohesiveness of the league. E. J. Cussen proposed that the constituent associations adopt a

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[32] Ibid, Committee meeting, October 20th 1932.
[33] *Irish Independent*, October 24th 1932.
[34] Ibid, October 21st 1932.
[35] *Anglo-Celt*, November 2nd 1932.
[36] Ibid, November 19th 1932.
[37] *Irish Independent*, October 21st 1932.
[38] Ibid, December 16th 1932.

common title. MacDermot agreed, but expressed doubt whether this could be achieved. League members were also divided on policy issues. Patrick McMahon argued that the league should campaign to relieve farmers' debts to the banks. MacDermot opposed this course of action, believing that little would be achieved by antagonising the banks. J. J. Rooney believed it was an inopportune time to raise this issue and the same applied to the de-rating of agricultural land.[39] A more divisive issue for the league was the deliberate withholding of annuity and rate payments. The threat to withhold such payments by farmer activists prior to the 1932 election were now a reality. In Counties Louth and Limerick, branches of the league organised legal representation for farmers who did not pay annuities.[40] The Cork Rural and Mallow District Executives of the Cork Farmers' Association advocated a policy of non-payment of annuities, a policy supported by T. J. O' Donovan.[41] Such divisions placed Frank MacDermot and the leadership of the league in a difficult position. They had to support the demands of the farmers without condoning illegal behaviour. At a meeting held in Dungarvan, MacDermot called on farmers to pay other outstanding debts prior to paying annuities.[42] A month later, he moderated this advice. He argued that while it was unjust for the government to insist on the collection of annuities from farmers who had lost access to their markets, the league advised members to pay annuities as repudiation of debts would undermine the rule of law.[43]

This advice was unwelcome to ordinary league members. At a meeting of the Macroom District Executive, Michael Twomey desired that the league adopt a more active policy of

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[39] U. C. D. A. D., Fine Gael Collection, P.39/ MIN/6, National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League, Minutes of Standing Committee. Committee meeting, September 27th 1932, op.cit.
[40] *Irish Independent*, November 23rd 1932.
[41] *Cork Examiner*, December 19th 1932.
[42] Ibid, November 26th 1932.
[43] Ibid, December 13th 1932.

opposition to annuity payments. He compared MacDermot unfavourably with the leadership of the Land League when he described MacDermot as not being "made of the same stuff as the old leaders."[44] Divisions also existed among league members in Kildare on this issue. Gordon Campbell, a member of the Athy branch, opposed the non-payment of annuities as this would place farmers in the position of defying the law.[45] However, at a meeting held in Ballytroe, Richard Brophy defended the right of league members to withhold annuity payments. Brophy admitted that the Kildare County Executive was in opposition to the Standing Committee on this issue. Another delegate to the meeting, Mr. Colgan, argued that league members should disrupt the sale of stock seized from their colleagues who did not pay annuities.[46] This issue was also debated by members of the Cavan Agricultural League. One delegate, Mr. McQuillan, argued that farmers should provide for their families before paying annuities. Another delegate, Mr. Brady believed that passive resistence to the payment of annuities was ineffective.[47]

In spite of the similar views held by Cumann na nGaedheal and the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League concerning the Economic War, the latter organisation held a hostile view to the former, a legacy of the absorption by Cumann na nGaedheal of the Farmers' Party. D. L. O' Gorman expected that the league would contest future elections as an independent party. T. J. O' Donovan believed that the league should intend to form a future administration.[48] A Limerick activist hoped that the league would not fall victim to the same fate as the Irish Farmers' Union, but satisfaction was expressed that MacDermot would

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[44] Ibid, December 14th 1932.
[45] *Leinster Leader*, December 3rd 1932.
[46] Ibid, December 19th 1932.
[47] *Anglo-Celt*, November 19th 1932.
[48] *Irish Independent*, October 24th 1932.

ensure "that the members of the Dáil shall be the servants and not the masters."[49] Denis Gorey, presumably because of his promotion of the attempted merger between the Farmers' Party and Cumann na nGaedheal, was refused permission to address a meeting held by the league in Kilkenny.[50] By December, the Standing Committee of the league agreed to form a political party, fulfilling the earlier promises made by the independent farmer deputies. It decreed that membership of the league was incompatible with membership of other political parties.[51]

Some members of Cumann na nGaedheal favoured co-operation with the league. The Cumann na nGaedheal TD for Waterford, John Kiersey, welcomed the formation of a new national farmers' organisation.[52] At a Cumann na nGaedheal meeting in Roscommon, Rev. Keane expressed his support for a coalition between Cumann na nGaedheal and any political party formed by the league.[53] However, the party leadership expressed greater reservations about the league. W. T. Cosgrave feared that the formation of a new farmers' party would divide any opposition to Fianna Fáil.[54] Some Cumann na nGaedheal deputies resented the hostility expressed by the league towards them. Sidney Minch supported co-operation between the league and Cumann na nGaedheal but this would be impossible as long as Frank MacDermot remained hostile to Cumann na nGaedheal. T. F. O' Higgins described how the attitude expressed by the league towards Cumann na nGaedheal varied among the county associations. While the league associations in Tipperary and Kilkenny were favourable to

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[49] *Limerick Leader*, December 24th 1932.
[50] *Irish Independent*, November 28th 1932.
[51] U. C. D. A. D., Fine Gael Collection, P.39/ MIN/6, National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League, Minutes of Standing Committee. Committee meeting, December 6th 1932.
[52] *Cork Examiner*, October 24th 1932.
[53] Ibid, December 17th 1932.
[54] U. C. D. A. D., Fine Gael collection, P.39/ MIN/3, Minutes of Cumann na nGaedheal Parliamentary party. Parliamentary party meeting, November 16th 1932.

Cumann na nGaedheal, the party should oppose the league wherever it was hostile. In contrast, Denis Gorey argued that farmers supported the league regardless of who was its leader. Gorey believed that in criticising MacDermot, more harm would be done than good. Undoubtedly speaking from his past experience as leader of the Farmers' Party, Gorey made reference to the anti-political party attitude among organised farmers.[55]

The farmers' organisations now faced a changed agricultural policy regime. Fianna Fáil supported an agricultural policy which was based on increased tillage and the reduction of agricultural imports These policies were also intended to benefit Fianna Fáil supporters such as small farmers. The first expression of this interventionist policy was the Dairy Produce (Price Stabilisation) Bill in May 1932. The new Minister for Agriculture, Jim Ryan, stated that the Bill would impose a levy on domestic sales of butter, the revenue from which would be used to subsidise butter exports. This would allow farmers to obtain the cost of production from butter sales.[56] The Bill was supported by J. J. O' Shaughnessy.[57] However, the West Limerick Farmers' Association expressed concern at the levying of domestic sales of butter. A subsidy from general funds was preferred.[58] At a meeting of the Cavan Agricultural League, Patrick McGovern supported the Bill but favoured greater financial aid for the dairying sector. John O' Hanlon criticised the limited scope of the Bill, whose aim was to *stabilise*, not to expand the dairying industry.[59] From August 1932, subsidies were paid on exported pig produce, eggs and butter in an attempt to offset the effects of the British duties,[60] and to gain

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[55] Ibid, Parliamentary party meeting, November 24th 1932.
[56] *Dáil Debates*, Vol XLI, op.cit, col 1312, May 4th 1932.
[57] Ibid, col 1367, May 4th 1932.
[58] *Limerick Leader*, May 14th 1932.
[59] *Anglo-Celt*, June 4th 1932.
[60] *Memoranda and Minutes of Evidence, Commission of Inquiry into Banking, Currency and Credit*, Vol II, op.cit, p.1191.

support among small-scale livestock farmers. However, the benefits of these subsidies were dismissed by the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League. It argued that subsidies were merely a re-distribution of money extracted from farmers through taxation.[61]

Aid was provided for tillage farmers, strong supporters of Fianna Fáil, through the Agricultural Produce (Cereals) Bill. This Bill fulfilled the aim of the Grain Growers' Association by introducing an admixture of domestic grain to be used in maize meal by millers.[62] Wheat cultivation was now subsidised and restrictions were imposed on the importation of tillage produce.[63] Dr. Ryan stated that one of the advantages of the Bill was that it did not compel farmers to grow wheat.[64] Denis Gorey argued that the Bill would result in livestock farmers subsidising those whom he regarded as lazy tillage farmers. The Bill represented a triumph for the organised tillage farmers who had split the Irish Farmers' Union in the mid-twenties.[65] J. J. O' Shaughnessy and T. J. O' Donovan also opposed the Bill.[66] Gorey's predictions were fulfilled as the government tillage policy favoured the large wheat farmers of Leinster, represented by J. J. Bergin, rather than the small farmers in the west of Ireland who continued to abandon non-subsidised oat and potato cultivation.[67]

Another relief measure for farmers was the Rates on Agricultural Land (Relief) Bill which relieved rates on the first £10 of valuation per holding,[68] a measure which benefited small farmers, as argued by Fianna Fáil TD Martin Corry, while previous de-rating schemes had

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[61] *Irish Independent*, October 24th 1932.
[62] *Dáil Debates*, Vol XLIV, 19th October - 18th November 1932, col 1410, November 10th 1932.
[63] *3rd Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture*, Stationery Office, Dublin, 1924, pp.128-29.
[64] *Dáil Debates*, Vol XLIV, op.cit. Col 1404, November 10th 1932.
[65] Ibid, cols 1484-88, November 10th 1932.
[66] Ibid, col 1418 & col 1476, November 10th 1932.
[67] Crotty, *Irish agricultural production*, op.cit, p.146. Lee, *Ireland 1912-85*, op.cit, p.185-86.
[68] *Dáil Debates*, Vol XLV, 23rd November - 22nd December 1932, col 845 December 6th 1932.

benefited large farmers .[69] However, James Dillon continued to argue for the complete de-rating of agricultural land.[70] The failure by Fianna Fáil to use the annuities to fund the complete de-rating of agricultural land was cited by the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League as a betrayal by Fianna Fáil of those farmers who had supported the party in the 1932 election.[71]

Fianna Fáil supporters also organised farmers. In July 1933, an "United Farmers' Association" was established, which supported the retention of the land annuities. Annuities were to be used to alleviate any losses suffered by farmers due to the Economic War. It supported the restructuring of debts owed by farmers to the banks. Prominent members of the Association included former Cumann na nGaedheal TD Pádraig Ó Máille and Thomas O' Donnell, formerly of the National League.[72] The association urged farmers who experienced financial difficulties with the banks to submit details of their cases. Branches of the association were to be established in localities where farmers experienced particular problems with the banks. It also drew support from members of the Farmers' Protective Association.[73]

By October, the United Farmers' Association held a convention in Dublin. The delegates were opposed any negotiations or arbitration concerning the retention of land annuities. The convention supported loans to farmers for the purchase of agricultural requirements.[74] At branch meetings of the association, the complete de-rating of agricultural land and the

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[69] Ibid, col 850, December 6th 1932.
[70] Ibid, col 848, December 6th 1932.
[71] *Cork Examiner*, September 12th 1932.
[72] *Irish Times*, July 22nd 1932.
[73] *Limerick Leader*, August 20th 1932.
[74] *Irish Independent*, October 28th 1932.

restriction of unemployment benefit were advocated.[75] In November 1932, the now re-named United Farmers' Protective Association issued a manifesto which called for the establishment of an independent currency, the break-up of ranches, increased tillage, the retention of land annuities and the appointment of government agents to European countries who would seek alternative markets for Irish agricultural produce; these demands broadly reflected Fianna Fáil agricultural policy.[76] J. J. Bergin encouraged tillage farmers to support the government.. At a meeting of tillage farmers held in Athy, the retention of land annuities was supported. The meeting expressed confidence that the Irish farmer could withstand the Economic War, while those who wished to scare farmers were criticised. Bergin argued that those who were now concerned about the state of farmers had in the past done nothing to assist the livestock and tillage sectors.[77] Fianna Fáil also threatened those farmers who opposed their policies. Dr. Ryan stated that the graziers would be deprived of their holdings.[78]

By January 1933, Cumann na nGaedheal authorised W. T. Cosgrave to negotiate with the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League with the aim of strengthening anti-Fianna Fáil forces.[79] These contacts were disrupted when de Valera called an early general election. Frank MacDermot then issued a statement which announced the formation of the "Centre Party" to contest the forthcoming election. He made reference to the negotiations with Cumann na nGaedheal but argued that the new party would maintain its independence. MacDermot admitted that the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League was not properly organised in

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[75] Ibid, December 19th 1932.
[76] Ibid, November 23rd 1932.
[77] *Leinster Leader*, July 30th 1932.
[78] *Cork Examiner*, September 10th 1932.
[79] U. C. D. A. D., Fine Gael collection, P.39/ MIN/ 3, Minutes of Cumann na nGaedheal Parliamentary Party. Special meeting, Parliamentary party and Standing Committee, January 3rd 1933.

several counties and "the prolonged search for ideal candidates which we had contemplated is impossible."[80] MacDermot opened the campaign by calling for greater representation for farmers in the Dáil. He emphasised the independence of the Centre Party by criticising Cumann na nGaedheal for being anti-rural and of ignoring the needs of farmers.[81]

The former Fianna Fáil TD for East Cork William Kent, defected to the Centre Party. Kent had informed Fianna Fáil officials that "He definitely intended to stand in the farmers' interests but would not touch MacDermot's party."[82] However, Kent reversed this decision and accepted a Centre Party nomination to contest East Cork. He justified this decision on the grounds that farmers were under-represented in the Dáil and that Fianna Fáil had reneged on earlier promises to use the retained land annuities for the purposes of assisting agriculture.[83]

Kent's defection to the Centre Party was offset by divisions within the West Limerick Farmers' Association. While J. J. O' Shaughnessy supported Frank MacDermot, other leading association members were hostile to the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League.[84] These divisions erupted at a special meeting held by the association to determine its stance in the election. C. D. O' Sullivan and other activists attempted to persuade O' Shaughnessy to stand down in order to facilitate a straight choice between the two main parties. However, O' Shaughnessy's supporters attempted to merge the association with the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League. As a consequence the association split[85] with the officers now

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[80] *Irish Times*, January 6th 1933.
[81] *Irish Independent*, January 9th 1933.
[82] C. A. I., Seamus Fitzgerald Papers, PR/6/453. Letter from Seamus Fitzgerald to Honorary Secretary, Fianna Fáil, January 11th 1933.
[83] *Irish Independent*, January 9th 1933.
[84] *Limerick Leader*, December 3rd 1932.
[85] Ibid, January 14th 1933.

supporting Fianna Fáil.[86] The Centre Party issued its manifesto in late January 1933. It was committed to ending the Economic War, to restore access to export markets and to reduce taxation. It aimed at winning 20 seats and holding the balance of power in the Dáil. Party supporters were urged not to continue their lower preferences to Fianna Fáil or Labour candidates. The manifesto concluded with a commitment "to teach the agricultural community to know and to use its power over the policies of our government."[87] MacDermot pledged that the Centre Party would not be absorbed by Cumann na nGaedheal. He opposed the subsidisation of agricultural exports; "I have resolutely opposed the crazy politics which have deprived him (the farmer) of his markets and turned him into a needy mendicant, dependent on the charity of the government for a miserable existence."[88]

MacDermot argued in Cork that farmers required a national organisation for the purpose of influencing government policy. He dismissed the earlier efforts of the Irish Farmers' Union and warned that suspicion and jealously had hindered earlier attempts to organise farmers.[89] At Kilmallock, MacDermot stated that the Centre Party hoped to hold the balance of power in the new Dáil, which implied that Fianna Fáil should lose seats.[90] He hoped that a national government, comprised of moderate elements from all the parties, would be formed.[91] In Cavan, John O' Hanlon spoke of the desirability of the Centre Party holding the balance of power, which would force any government, regardless of its composition, to pass measures of benefit to farmers.[92] Centre Party candidates appealed to all sections of agriculture in an

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[86] Ibid, January 21st 1933.
[87] Ibid, January 23rd 1933.
[88] Ibid, January 11th 1933.
[89] *Cork Examiner*, January 20th 1933.
[90] *Irish Times*, January 21st 1933.
[91] Ibid, January 24th 1933.
[92] Ibid, January 13th 1933.

attempt to maximise their vote. F. B. Barton, candidate for Kildare, campaigned for a 50% reduction in annuity payments, the restructuring of farmer debt owed to banks and the encouragement of tillage.[93] Barton denied that the Centre Party was pro-grazier.[94] John Finlay, candidate for Laois-Offaly, also argued that the party was supportive of tillage.[95] The Duc de Stacpoole, candidate for Meath, promised that the Centre Party would offer the same level of financial aid to wheat farmers as did Fianna Fáil.[96]

However the party presented itself as the champion of livestock farmers elsewhere in the country. The Centre Party followed the earlier example set by the Farmers' Party in presenting an inconsistent policy platform. T. J. O' Donovan accused Fianna Fáil of attempting to eliminate the livestock sector.[97] Con Duggan, candidate for Cork Borough, described how the Economic War threatened the livestock trade and the adverse affect that this would have on urban-based industries, such as shipping and food-processing.[98] In Kerry, J. F. Medill argued that the government butter bounty scheme offered little assistance to producers of non-creamery butter.[99]

In Longford-Westmeath, Robert Belton, made an appeal for the votes of farmers' wives by promising that the Centre Party would restore the export markets for eggs and poultry.[100] In Bantry, T. J. O' Donovan criticised Fianna Fáil economic policy which had led to the loss of the British export market and to excessive government expenditure. He called on farm

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[93] *Irish Independent*, January 12th 1933.
[94] *Irish Times*, January 12th 1933.
[95] Ibid, January 21st 1933.
[96] *Irish Independent*, January 16th 1933.
[97] Ibid, January 12th 1933.
[98] *Cork Examiner*, January 18th 1933.
[99] Ibid, January 23rd 1933.
[100] *Irish Times*, January 13th 1933.

labourers to support the Centre Party. A Centre Party supporter who attended the meeting, Denis O' Driscoll, stated how he had supported Fianna Fáil in the previous election but now rejected their policies.[101] Robert Belton stated how he had supported Fianna Fáil in the previous election, believing that they would promote the interests of farmers, "but he was disillusioned and now he fully realised the necessity for the farmers to depend on their own organisation solely."[102] At a Centre Party meeting held in Tipperary, the defection of William Kent was cited as evidence of the lack of support among farmers for Fianna Fáil. Edward O' Dwyer claimed that the government had delayed the serving of processes to land annuity defaulters as they feared the farmers.[103]

Given the strong anti-Fianna Fáil bias in the Centre Party campaign, it was inevitable that co-operation with Cumann na nGaedheal would occur. At a convention held in Cork, Mr. Kiely argued that the league should support Cumann na nGaedheal, which was also committed to the restoration of access to the British market.[104] In Carlow, the withdrawal of J. A. Kehoe as a Centre Party candidate was welcomed by the local Cumann na nGaedheal organisation as a measure to unify the pro-Treaty vote. A transfer pact between the two parties was negotiated in the same constituency.[105] In Midleton, a joint meeting was held by Cumann na nGaedheal and the Centre Party.[106] The Centre Party did not escape the ire of Fianna Fáil supporters, with party meetings in Macroom and in County Longford disrupted.[107] J. W. Canty, the second Centre Party candidate for Limerick, argued that Fianna Fáil supporters would extend their

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[101] Ibid, January 7th 1932.
[102] Ibid, January 9th 1932.
[103] Ibid, January 11th 1933.
[104] *Cork Examiner*, January 9th 1933.
[105] *Irish Independent*, January 11th 1933.
[106] Ibid, January 24th 1933.
[107] Ibid, January 11th & 18th 1933.

lower preference to Cumann na nGaedheal candidates in an effort to deny farmers representation in the Dáil.[108] This claim was validated when Roscommon Fianna Fáil TD Dan O' Rourke called on his supporters to extend their lower preferences to Cumann na nGaedheal rather than to Frank MacDermot.[109]

The United Farmers' Protective Association also intervened in the election, calling on members to support Fianna Fáil.[110] However, less enthusiasm for Fianna Fáil was expressed by the Farmers' Protection Association. Thomas MacKeogh urged the association to support Fianna Fáil. However, some members opposed this policy. In particular dissatisfaction was expressed that Fianna Fáil had not introduced complete de-rating. As a result resolutions calling on association members to support Fianna Fáil and Labour candidates were not moved.[111]

The Centre Party achieved a credible result, winning eleven seats, yet this did not achieve its own target of twenty seats. Former Farmers' Party deputies, Richard Holohan and Nicholas Wall returned to the Dáil for the Carlow-Kilkenny and Waterford constituencies respectively. Among the new Centre Party deputies included Richard Curran and Charles Fagan. The Centre Party gained seats in the Longford-Westmeath, Leitrim-Sligo, Cork East, Tipperary and Laois-Offaly constituencies. James Dillon, elected in the previous election as an independent TD for Donegal, was re-elected for the Centre Party. With the exception of Cork East, where William Kent unseated independent TD Brooke Brazier, all Centre Party gains

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[108] Ibid, January 18th 1933.
[109] Ibid, January 13th 1933.
[110] *Irish Independent*, January 7th 1933.
[111] Ibid, January 11th 1933.

were made at the expense of Cumann na nGaedheal. Three outgoing Centre Party deputies lost their seats. Dan Vaughan and J. J. O' Shaughnessy were defeated in the Cork North and Limerick constituencies respectively. In Cavan, John O' Hanlon was defeated by his running mate Patrick McGovern. Compared with the 1932 election, the Centre Party increased the share of the vote achieved by independent farmer candidates in five constituencies. In Cork North, Kerry and Wexford, the Centre Party vote declined compared with the independent farmer vote. The Centre Party results in Cork West, Longford-Westmeath, Meath, Roscommon and Tipperary exceeded the best Farmers' Party results in those constituencies. While the Centre Party candidates polled strongly in Meath, Kildare and Wicklow, areas dominated by large farmers, the party failed to win seats in these constituencies. This can be attributed to the polarised contests in these constituencies, either four or five candidates contested these constituencies, while farmers' associations in these constituencies had not contested the previous election. The Centre Party maximised its number of seats by limiting the number of candidates. Only in Limerick did the party lose a potential seat by nominating two candidates.[112]

[112] Walker, *Parliamentary election results in Ireland, 1918-92*,, pp.136-42, passim.

Table 5.1: Electoral Performance of the Centre Party in the 1933 Election.

Constituency	Votes received	As % of total	No. of	Seats
Carlow-Kilkenny	6,482	12.64	2	1
Cavan	8,663	22.51	2	1
Clare	4,041	9.15	1	0
Cork Borough	2,111	3.82	1	0
Cork East	7,712	17.63	1	1
Cork North	6,799	22.10	1	0
Cork West	9,075	22.15	1	1
Donegal	5,319	7.65	1	1
Dublin County	2,833	3.13	1	0
Kerry	3,141	4.65	1	0
Kildare	4,408	16.67	1	0
Laois-Offaly	5,784	11.48	1	1
Leitrim-Sligo	6,001	10.49	1	1
Limerick	6,798	9.71	2	0
Longford-Westmeath	9,383	21.06	2	1
Meath	5,873	18.81	1	0
Roscommon	7,703	19.43	1	1
Tipperary	11,301	16.33	2	1
Waterford	5,228	13.53	1	1
Wexford	3,606	7.62	1	0
Wicklow	5,045	17.83	1	0
Total	126, 906	12.31	26	11

Source: Walker, *Parliamentary election results in Ireland 1918-92*, op.cit, pp.136-42.

Following the election, the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League Standing Committee reviewed the results. Frank MacDermot argued that the election had occurred at too early a stage of the league's development and had revealed organisational difficulties. He stated that the election campaign had drained the finances of several county associations who now required financial support. Some associations had still not paid their affiliation fees.[113] By March, MacDermot informed the Standing Committee that the league was indebted by over £600. In addition, organisers had not been appointed in all counties. The county associations were instructed to select candidates for the local elections.[114]

The league held a national convention in the same month. MacDermot criticised de Valera for not making any attempt to resolve the Economic War.[115] Delegates from Cork recommended that the league publish a newspaper. This was opposed by other delegates, who recalled that farmers had shown little interest in the Irish Farmers' Union paper, the *Irish Farmer*. D. L. O' Gorman argued that the Centre Party should maintain its independence in the Dáil. A delegate from Meath argued that a committee should be formed to examine the problem of agricultural credit. MacDermot opposed this proposal, believing that people should pay their just debts. Alterations in the value of money was a risk which all debtors incurred.[116] However, the league did form such a committee, which held discussions with the banks.[117] The United Farmers' Protective Association also campaigned on the issue of farmer debts, the only issue upon which the farmers' organisations agreed. A delegation from the

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[113] U. C. D. A. D., Fine Gael collection, P.39/ MIN/ 6, National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League, Minutes of Standing Committee. Committee meeting, February 6th 1933.
[114] Ibid, Committee meeting, March 6th 1933.
[115] *Irish Times*, March 7th 1933.
[116] Ibid, March 8th 1933.
[117] U. C. D. A. D., Fine Gael collection, P.39/ Min/6, National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League, Minutes of Standing Committee. Committee meeting, May 3rd 1933.

association met the Irish Banks' Standing Committee as to suggest measure to reduce farmers' liabilities. The banks rejected any general scheme to reduce farmers' debts, as every advance was regarded as a separate contract between the farmer and the banker. Any remission of debt would be unfair to those farmers who were able to meet their liabilities.[118]

Branches of the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League campaigned against the payment of rates. The Cork District Executive passed a motion which stated that due to the Economic War, farmers could not pay rates higher than the level set for 1932-33. Rates which were set higher than this level should not be paid. W. J. Fahy argued that farmers should not pay rates at all until access to the British market was restored. He believed that farmers could not afford to pay rates at the 1932-33 level. Batt Cooney, a member of the Cork County Council, opposed this policy, reminding delegates that rates funded local health services.[119] At meetings of the Ballineen and North Cork District Executives, some delegates regarded the motion of the Cork District as too weak. They believed that rates should not be paid at all. At a meeting of the Mallow branch, one delegate warned that trade union methods would have to be adopted in order to protect those farmers who defaulted on rate payments from legal action.[120] At a meeting of the Tipperary District Executive, Mr. McCann argued that farmers should organise themselves as they did during the plan of campaign. Nicholas Ryan believed that a campaign of passive resistance, involving the non-payment of rates and annuities should be adopted.[121]

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[118] *Irish Independent*, April 24th 1933.
[119] *Cork Examiner*, April 17th 1933.
[120] Idem.
[121] Ibid, January 30th 1933.

The league continued to seek support from non-farmers, following the precedent set by the Irish Farmers' Union. Nicholas Wall argued that the league should attract those not directly involved in agriculture.[122] John Boohan of Limerick urged shopkeepers to join.[123] Speaking in Newcastle-West, J. J. O' Shaughnessy exhibited a class bias when he argued that the league opposed the extension of the local government electoral franchise to the lower classes while "we hold that the present government had not got a mandate from the responsible people of the country, they got it from the irresponsible people."[124] The Standing Committee of the league opposed the extension of the franchise, arguing that it would politicise local authorities, undermine their efficiency and increase expenditure.[125]

The United Farmers' Protective Association held their first annual general meeting in June. Dr. Ryan addressed the meeting. He denied that the government wished to promote tillage at the expense of livestock. The assistance provided to the dairy sector was proof to the contrary. He also defended the grain admixture policy and stated that any future de-rating scheme would be differentiated in favour of farmers who provided employment. The forthcoming Land Bill would remove unproductive farmers from their holdings. Ryan praised the association, arguing; "the reason that farmers' organisations had not succeeded in the past was because they tended to be political and anti-national."[126] Yet, Ryan was praising the existence of a politically biased organisation, albeit one biased in his favour!

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[122] Idem.
[123] *Limerick Leader*, April 2nd 1933.
[124] Ibid, May 27th 1933.
[125] U. C. D. A. D., Fine Gael collection, P.39/ Min/ 6, National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League, Minutes of Standing Committee. Committee meeting, June 3rd 1933.
[126] *Irish Press*, June 30th 1933.

The delegates to the convention criticised the operation of the A. C. C. One delegate from Tipperary referred to the seizure by the banks of cattle from indebted farmers and warned that if the association or the government did not assist such farmers, the farmers would call on the I.R.A to assist them.[127] The delegates passed resolutions calling for a fixed price of 15/- per barrel of oats and for a more equitable distribution of cattle licences. Delegates were divided on the issue of land annuity payments with some arguing that land annuities should not be paid by farmers.[128] Later that year, the association proposed an extension to the payment period for rates, the funding of annuities from central taxation and a moratorium on the payment of bank debts was proposed.[129] At the 1934 annual conference, the association urged the government to assist farmers and to reform the banking system. A resolution was passed which called on members to support Fianna Fáil candidates at the forthcoming local elections in spite of unease at some recent government policies.[130] Fianna Fáil also received support from dairy farmers. A party meeting in County Limerick was addressed by former members of the Irish Farmers' Union, such as Batt Laffan, John McCormack and C. D. O'Sullivan, who supported the government measures to support dairying and who depreciated the importance of the British market.[131]

The main legislative proposal affecting agriculture which was introduced in 1933 was the Land Act. Many Fianna Fáil supporters had sought reforms to the 1923 Act. For example, the "Limerick and Tipperary Land Executive" passed resolutions which called for reduced annuity payments, reduced compensation for graziers whose holdings were appropriated by

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[127] Idem.
[128] Ibid, July 1st 1933.
[129] *Irish Independent*, September 11th 1933.
[130] *Irish Press*, May 25th 1934.
[131] *Limerick Leader*, July 15th 1933.

the Land Commission and to shift the concentration of land re-distribution from the West of Ireland to Munster and Leinster.[132] The 1933 Land Act incorporated some of these demands. Land annuities were reduced by 50%, funding for arrears was provided, the scope for land acquisition by the Land Commission was increased and compensation for farmers whose holdings were appropriated was reduced.[133] Those who opposed the Bill included James Dillon who argued that it undermined fixity of tenure.[134] The Standing Committee of the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League met to oppose the Bill. MacDermot warned the committee that the Bill should be opposed due to the threat it posed to the individual liberty of farmers. By opposing the principle of the Bill, and ignoring the material interests of large farmers, MacDermot believed that the league would attract the support of small farmers and labourers in opposing the bill.[135]

League activists implemented this directive. E. J. Cussen warned that Fianna Fáil would use the Land Act to reward their supporters with land confiscated from farmers.[136] D. P. O' Connor of Limerick argued that the Act would undermine the title of farmers' holdings and would provide a precedent for "future Bolshevist enactments."[137] This opposition confirms Dooley's argument that the supposed threat to fixity of tenure posed by the 1933 Land Act engendered hostility to Fianna Fáil among large farmers. However, Dooley is mistaken in identifying the farmers' opposition to the Act within the Blueshirt movement,[138] whereas opposition to the Act originated within the National Farmers' and Ratepayers'

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[132] Ibid, April 2nd 1933.
[133] *Dáil Debates*, Vol XLVIII, 7th June - 15th July 1933, cols 2380-83, July 13th 1933.
[134] Ibid, cols 2414 & 2522, July 13th 1933.
[135] U. C. D. A. D., Fine Gael collection, P.39/ MIN/6, National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League, Minutes of Standing Committee. Committee meeting, July 7th 1933.
[136] *Cork Examiner*, August 8th 1933.
[137] *Limerick Leader*, August 5th 1933.
[138] Dooley, op.cit, p. 206.

League, and such opposition was due to the ideological and economic interests of farmers rather than on political grounds.

In response to the grievances of the organised farmers, Dr. Ryan argued that they exaggerated the severity of the economic crisis, while the Economic War did not account for the entire decline in agricultural prices.[139] Ó Grada has cited a Department of Finance paper which calculated that the income of farmers declined by 15%, between 1929-33, but still would have declined by 13% had the Economic War not occurred. Ó Grada estimates that the net loss suffered by farmers, taking subsidies and non-payment into consideration was £2.2 million over the same period.[140] While this would verify Dr. Ryan's claims, Ó Grada admits that the Economic War made the "1930's a much rougher period for the Irish farmer than it would have been [otherwise]."[141]

The cattle sector received another setback when the United Kingdom introduced import restrictions upon live cattle exports. The Department of Agriculture introduced cattle export licences from early January 1934. Major problems were experienced in the allocation of such licences.[142] Patrick Belton organised a conference of stall-fed cattle raisers and delegates from the County Committees of Agriculture to discuss the issue. He called on the Minister for Agriculture to issue licences to producers of stall-fed cattle. J. N. Greene argued that the existing licensing system was abused by cattle traders, who wished to exploit farmers. Licences should be distributed directly to farmers. The Duc de Stacpoole warned that a

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[139] *Limerick Leader*, July 15th 1933.
[140] Ó Grada, *Ireland, a New Economic History*, op.cit, p.413.
[141] Ibid, p.412.
[142] *3rd Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture, 1933-34.*, op.cit, p.126.

reduction in the number of stall-fed cattle would reduce the demand for tillage.[143] From February 1934, licences were allocated to owners of stall-fed cattle.[144] Patrick Belton claimed that the licence system depressed cattle prices while insufficient licences were available for all cattle ready to export.[145] Even supporters of Fianna Fáil, such as the West Limerick Farmers' Association, suggested that extra licences should be issued for store cattle as opposed to fat cattle which were raised by graziers. Export licences should be allocated to farmers' organisations and co-operative societies.[146]

An initiative which had a disastrous effect upon the morale of farmers was the slaughter of calves scheme. Due to restrictions on cattle exports and an expansion of dairying, a surplus of calves existed. In April, the calf slaughter scheme was introduced. Bounties were paid for calf skins. An average of 25,000 calves were killed per week.[147] Opponents of the scheme argued it was insanity to slaughter calves at a time when the country was understocked and such a scheme would reduce the demand for tillage.[148] However, the West Limerick Farmers' Association supported the slaughter of calves as a means to equate the supply and demand of cattle.[149] Unsurprisingly, the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League criticised agricultural policy. W. J. Fahy argued that agricultural policy was controlled by theorists who "were busy applying poultices and restoratives in the form of bounties and subsidies."[150] J. F. Medill warned that European and American producers were taking advantage of the Economic War to increase their share of the British market while "the present Free State government after

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[143] *Cork Examiner*, January 26th 1934.
[144] *3rd Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture*, op.cit, p.126.
[145] *Cork Examiner*, February 8th 1934.
[146] *Limerick Leader*, April 14th 1934.
[147] Manning, *The Blueshirts*, 2nd edition, Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 1987, p.133.
[148] *Irish Press*, May 16th 1934.
[149] *Limerick Leader*, March 10th 1934.
[150] *Cork Examiner*, August 8th 1933.

telling the people that the British market was useless followed up the statement by paying millions of money to subsidise their position on that very market."[151] League members in Limerick called on farmers' deputies of all parties to judge the merit of legislation on the effect it would have on agriculture rather than on political grounds and supported the complete de-rating of agricultural land.[152] Denis Slattery, a league activist from Kerry, criticised the inadequate level of government support for producers of domestic butter.[153] In the privacy of the Standing Committee however, some members argued for increased subsidies to be paid on agricultural exports. However, the majority favoured de-rating and relief on annuity payments as a means to support farmer income.[154]

League members in Cork advocated militant policies. A number of branches in Mid-Cork discussed the possibility of forming a paramilitary group which would protect farmers from "undesirable elements".[155] These proposals to form a "Young Farmers' Defence League" were studied by the Standing Committee. It adopted a non-committal approach towards forming a paramilitary group, but did not openly disapprove of such a measure as not to alienate militant members. It concluded "at the present stage, national action on these lines was not considered practical but if any county felt able to take such action, it would be an interesting and valuable appointment."[156]

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[151] Idem.
[152] *Limerick Leader*, May 27th 1933.
[153] *Kerryman*, July 1st 1933.
[154] U. C. D. A. D., Fine Gael collection, P.39/ MIN/6, National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League, Minutes of Standing Committee. Committee meeting, February 6th 1933, op.cit.
[155] *Cork Examiner*, August 8th 1933.
[156] U. C. D. A. D., Fine Gael collection, P.39/ MIN/6, National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League, Minutes of Standing Committee. Committee meeting, June 6th 1933, op.cit.

League delegates from Munster Counties held a meeting in Mallow. A resolution was passed which stated that the principal obligation of the farmer was to his family. In current circumstances farmers could not meet annuity and rate demands. League activists from Cork argued that a rate strike could bring down the government.[157] The Mallow convention was a source of great concern to the Standing Committee. It argued that such conventions questioned its authority. In future, regional conventions could only be held with the prior permission of the Committee. However, the threat of an annuity strike was of greater concern to the Standing Committee, believing that opposition to the payment of annuities should be based on the inability of farmers to pay. It opposed the deliberate withholding of annuity payments.[158]

Farmers ignored the caution expressed by their leaders and withheld rate and annuity payments. The actions of the farmers were reminiscent of their predecessors in the early 1920's. The Department of Local Government informed County Councils that many councillors condoned the non-payment of rates.[159] Rate collectors in Counties Limerick and Tipperary South Riding alleged that wealthier farmers withheld rate payments.[160] The authorities seized cattle and other valuables from farmers in lieu of annuity and rate payments. In one prominent case, cattle seized from a Mr. McEniry, Clonmel, were brought to Dublin to be sold. The sale was disrupted by a group of farmers who were members of the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League. These farmers were accompanied by deputies

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[157] *Cork Examiner*, July 24th 1933.
[158] U. C. D. A. D., Fine Gael collection, P.39/ MIN/6, National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League, Minutes of Standing Committee. Committee meeting, July 7th 1933, op.cit.
[159] *Department of Local Government and Public Health, Report 1933-34.* Stationery Office, Dublin, 1935, p.172. Appendix 1, circular letter, October 9th 1933.
[160] *Irish Independent*, September 11th & October 4th 1933.

Belton and Wall.[161] The authorities expressed concern about the anti-rate and annuity payment campaign. The Garda Superintendent in Naas reported that at meeting of the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League held at Straffan, farmers were advised not to pay either rates or annuities. A pledge to this effect was circulated amongst the attendance.[162] The Chief Superintendent in Carlow informed the Garda Commissioner that the activities of the league were viewed as potentially serious but he requested instruction on how to act as "the Centre Party is supposed to be purely political."[163] The Legal Assistant to the Department of Justice suggested that both E. J. Cussen and Denis Lucey, another prominent member of the Cork Farmers' and Ratepayers' League, be questioned as to whether they actively promoted the non-payment of rates and annuities.[164]

By early September, nine farmers in East Waterford who were members of the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League were arrested under the Public Safety Act for organising the non- payment of rates and for intimidating those who did paid.[165] The case was heard by the Military Tribunal. The government case was based on the accusation that the farmers had attempted to compel their neighbours to sign a circular which pledged support for the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League. The circular also claimed that annuities and rates had already been paid through the medium of tariffs. Those who did not sign the circular were

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[161] Ibid, September 21st 1933.
[162] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/722. Centre Party, alleged conspiracy against payment of rents, rates and taxes. Report by Superintendent Murphy, Naas, to Chief Superintendent O' Dwyer, Carlow, August 31st 1933.
[163] Ibid, undated note from Chief Superintendent O' Dwyer, Carlow, to Garda Commissioner.
[164] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/731, National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League, Cork. Letter from P. P. Dunphy, Legal Assistant, Department of Justice, to Secretary, Department of Justice, November 18th 1933.
[165] *Irish Independent*, September 9th 1933.

boycotted.[166] However, the government case collapsed when during the course of evidence it was revealed that the farmers in question did not behave in a hostile manner towards those who did not sign the circular. The defence accused the government of prosecuting the farmers for purely political reasons.[167] Yet, this action demonstrated that the government was willing to employ the special powers at its disposal to confront the farmers.

These events were overshadowed by the decision of the pro-Treaty parties to form a single party, Fine Gael, or the United Ireland Party, In spite of the previous absorption by Cumann na nGaedheal of the Farmers' Party, and of their insistence that the Centre Party would remain independent, most members of the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League supported the merger of their organisation with Cumann na nGaedheal. This was evident of how the Economic War alarmed farmers to such a degree that they sacrificed their independence to form a party capable of effective opposition to Fianna Fáil. For example, Dr. E. F. O' Connor, addressing the Kerry County Executive, claimed that the new party would defend the interests of farmers and that the Cumann na nGaedheal and Blueshirt leadership had accepted Centre Party policy. This was in contrast to the absorption by Cumann na nGaedheal of the Farmers' Party.[168]

The league held a conference to approve the merger. Frank MacDermot argued that what was being proposed was the formation of a new party, not the absorption by Cumann na nGaedheal of the Centre Party. Opposition to the merger was led by William Kent. However, those opposed to the merger abstained on the vote. Two county associations, Wexford and

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[166] Ibid, October 6th 1933.
[167] Ibid, October 7th & 11th 1933.
[168] *Cork Examiner*, September 6th 1933.

Cavan abstained.[169] The Cavan association later ratified the merger with only two branches out of a total of nineteen opposed.[170] Following the merger, William Kent announced that he would now act as an independent farmer TD.[171] Another opponent of the merger, T. F. Darcy of Enniscorthy, argued that farmers should avoid direct political action. He predicted that the Centre Party would suffer the same fate as the Farmers' Party.[172] The organised farmers welcomed the formation of the new party. Speaking at Cashel, Martin Farrell expressed his regret at the liquidation of the Centre Party. However, unity among opposition parties was necessary to defend the interests of farmers. As regards agricultural policy he argued "I want neither tariffs nor subsidised slavery. I want a free market back where I can sell my produce."[173] The leader of the new party, Eoin O' Duffy, supported the farmers' demand to be relieved of annuity and rate payments.[174]

Six former members of the league were nominated to the National Executive of the new party. They included F. B. Barton, Patrick Baxter and E. J. Cussen.[175] However, the independent role of farmers was restricted within the new party. The General Purposes Committee was opposed to the formation of a separate farmers' organisation within Fine Gael. The party leadership, with considerable justification, feared that the former members of the Cork Farmers' Association would form an independent organisation. The committee compelled E. J. Cussen "to secure agreement with this principle [no independent farmer

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[169] *Irish Independent*, September 9th 1933.
[170] Ibid, September 21st 1933.
[171] Ibid, September 9th 1933.
[172] Ibid, September 21st 1933.
[173] Ibid, September 14th 1933.
[174] Ibid, September 16th 1933.
[175] Manning, *The Blueshirts*, op.cit, pp.93-94.

organisations] in Cork."[176] Some farmers were unhappy with this decision. A deputation of farmers from County Meath met the committee and argued that farmers should form a separate organisation. The committee opposed this but conceded that farmers could discuss matters of concern after normal party meetings.[177] This did not end the matter. Frank MacDermot held subsequent meetings with the Meath farmers. He allowed these farmers to form a vocational society which would discuss agricultural matters.[178] Former members of the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League complained of their treatment within the new party. W. J. Fahy wrote to the General Purposes Committee, complaining that former league activists were treated unfavourably compared to their counterparts who were former Cumann na nGaedheal and Blueshirt members.[179]

The campaign against the payment of rates and annuities escalated, which was condoned by Fine Gael and supported physically by the Blueshirts. The possessions of de-faulting farmers were hidden on the farms of sympathisers, while roads and means of communications were damaged to impede the authorities. Farmers and Blueshirts disrupted auctions where seized goods were sold.[180] The involvement of Fine Gael in the farmers' campaign can be illustrated with reference to Tipperary South Riding. At a meeting held in Golden in March, Patrick Belton argued that farmers had no moral obligation to pay rates.[181] Deputy Curran led a deputation to the under-sheriff for Tipperary, where a deal was brokered between local Fine Gael activists and the authorities on the payment of rates. The Garda Superintendent in

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[176] U. C. D. A. D., Fine Gael collection, P.39/ MIN/ 2, Minutes of Fine Gael Standing/General Purposes committee. Committee meeting, October 26th 1933.
[177] Ibid, Committee meeting, November 16th 1933.
[178] Ibid, Committee meeting, November 23rd 1933.
[179] Ibid, Committee meeting, July 7th 1934.
[180] Manning, *The Blueshirts*, op.cit, p.131.
[181] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/551, No rates campaign, Co. Tipperary, general file. Letter from Superintendents' Office, Tipperary to Chief Superintendent, Thurles, March 20th 1934.

Clonmel commented "it is known that some of the parties who were outstanding in the 'no rates' campaign have since paid up."[182]

The Chief Superintendent in Thurles informed the Garda Commissioner that the agreement and the consequent improvement in rate collection proved; "if proof were needed, that a secret underground conspiracy was fostered by the party [Fine Gael], not to pay poor rates in the South Tipperary County Council area owing to high rates prevailing."[183] In regard to Belton's Golden speech, the Superintendent commented ,"it can be safely assumed that when a responsible deputy of the Dáil makes such a statement publicly that lesser lights in the organisation are whispering similar advice to their supporters."[184] He argued that intense pressure should be placed upon defaulters in selected areas, especially upon large farmers. In contrast to the South Riding, the North Riding showed little evidence of the organised non-payment of rates. The superintendent commented ;"the Farmers' and Ratepayers' League, now the United Ireland Party, was not organised in North County Tipperary, a no rate campaign could not secure a footing there, in any event, valuations and rates are lower in that area."[185]

Farmers organised on a clandestine basis in other counties. In Cork, E. J. Cussen announced the formation of a new organisation which sought to reduce rate and annuity payments. He argued that farmers should cease production unless they achieved these demands.[186] This organisation was the Cork Land Annuitants' Defence Association. Cussen had reneged on his

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[182] Ibid, letter from Superintendent, Clonmel, to Chief Superintendent, Thurles, February 26th 1924.
[183] Ibid, report by Chief Superintendent W. P. Quinn, Thurles, to Garda Commissioner, March 29th 1934.
[184] Idem.
[185] Idem.
[186] *Cork Examiner*, March 1st 1934.

earlier commitment to the Fine Gael General Purposes Committee not to form an independent farmers' organisation. In Wexford, an "Irish Farmers' League" was formed, which pledged to end seizures of cattle, and to withdraw serving notices from defaulting farmers.[187] These events led Dr. Ryan to claim that Fine Gael held secret meetings in Wexford, which were attended only by de-faulting ratepayers.[188] Some Fine Gael members began to express concern at such illegal activities. At a General Purposes Committee meeting, F. B. Barton referred to a circular issued by E. J. Cussen to farmers in Kildare, urging them to organise on a similar basis to the Cork farmers. However, the committee decided not to take action on this issue.[189]

In May, a national convention of farmers was held, chaired by Patrick Belton. Two resolutions were passed. The first argued that farmers had already paid annuities and rates through tariffs. As a consequence, local authorities should be funded by the central government, the amount of funding equal to duties less farmers' liabilities. The second resolution called on the government to establish a tribunal to investigate the claims of farmers. Legal proceedings for outstanding annuity and rate payments should be suspended. The convention decided that a defence fund should be established if these demands were not fulfilled, which implied the threat of a national campaign of civil disobedience by farmers. Patrick Belton accused the government of undermining farmers. Michael Heffernan warned that farmers could no longer provide for their families. D. L. O' Gorman described how farmers resented the seizure of personal belongings in lieu of annuity payments. State intervention in the livestock sector was also criticised. Martin Farrell criticised the calf-

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[187] *Irish Independent*, May 24th 1934.
[188] Ibid, June 1st 1934.
[189] U. C. D. A. D., Fine Gael Collection, P.39/MIN/ 2, Minutes of Fine Gael Standing/General Purposes Committee. Committee meeting, February 15th 1934.

slaughter scheme.[190] Mr. Cobbe of Laois argued that farmers were unsatisfied with the existing system of distributing cattle licences. Martin Farrell added "it was bad enough for Mr. Hogan to give a vested interest to the butter creameries without the present government giving to cattle dealers and shippers a proprietary interest in their cattle."[191]

Farmers also sought ecclesiastical support. At a convention held in Thurles, messages of support were received from the Archbishop of Cashel, the Bishop of Waterford and from the Bishop of Killaloe. The Bishop of Killaloe, Dr. Fogarty, warned farmers not to establish an independent organisation. They would have a better chance of addressing their grievances through Fine Gael.[192] However, some farmers believed that their freedom of action was hampered due to their absorption within Fine Gael. Patrick Hartigan accused Fine Gael of being too timid in their opposition to government agricultural policy. There was insufficient opposition to the adverse measures implemented by the government towards the livestock sector. Hartigan raised the possibility of reviving an independent farmers' party.[193]

However, Fine Gael leader, Eoin O' Duffy was determined to bring the full support of the party behind the farmers' campaign. He held discussions with farmers in Kerry where he pledged the full support of Fine Gael for their struggle.[194] The Fine Gael National Executive endorsed the resolutions of the farmers' convention.[195] O' Duffy strengthened the position of the farmers by appointing Patrick Belton to the Fine Gael National Executive and as a party

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[190] *Irish Independent*, May 3rd 1934.
[191] *Irish Times*, May 3rd 1934.
[192] *Irish Independent*, May 28th 1934.
[193] *Limerick Leader*, April 11th 1934.
[194] Ibid, May 21st 1934.
[195] U. C. D. A. D., Fine Gael collection, P.39/MIN/2, Minutes of Fine Gael Standing/General Purposes Committee. Committee meeting, May 10th 1934.

spokesperson on agriculture.[196] Fine Gael received a major setback in the 1934 local elections. Fianna Fáil won 132 seats more than Fine Gael, who won control of only six councils.[197] Many former members of the Irish Farmers' Union were elected as Fine Gael councillors. In Cork, 15 former farmers' association councillors contested the elections for Fine Gael, of whom 12 were successful.[198] In Clare, 3 former farmers' association councillors were elected for Fine Gael. Yet some former members of the Irish Farmers' Union now supported Fianna Fáil. In Clare three of the Fianna Fáil county councillors had previously represented the Clare Farmers' Association, while former Farmers' Party TD, Conor Hogan, unsuccessfully contested the election for Fianna Fáil.[199] These results demoralised some farmers. Garda reports from County Waterford indicated that a Fine Gael victory in the local elections would have led to a major anti annuity and anti-rate payment campaign. However,

"the actual result of the elections will now have a very chastening effect on a policy of this kind and while there may be isolated efforts it is thought that the state will not be up against any serious menace as far as such payments are concerned [200]

As a consequence, the anti-rate payment campaign collapsed in Waterford and farmers commenced negotiations with the County Commissioner.[201]

The local election results did not demoralise the Cork farmers. The Cork Land Annuitants' Defence Association continued to organise the non-payment of annuities. At a meeting held in July, which was attended by Patrick Belton and Martin Farrell, E. J. Cussen stated that branches should be formed in every parish while a defence fund should be raised. He also

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[196] *Irish Independent*, May 28th 1934.
[197] Manning, *The Blueshirts*, op.cit, p.135.
[198] Marnane, *Cork County Council, 1899-1985*, op.cit, p.260.
[199] Sheedy, *The Clare elections*, op.cit, p.640.
[200] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS 8/ 554, "No rates campaign". Letter from Garda Commissioners Office, to Secretary, Department of Justice, July 3rd 1934.
[201] Ibid, report from Superintendents' Office, Waterford, to Garda Commissioner, July 20th 1934.

called for a hostile attitude to be adopted towards government officials.[202] The association also attempted to disrupt the sale of seized cattle. In August, Cussen issued a circular to businesses in Cork City urging them to close during the next sale of cattle.[203]

Fianna Fáil issued its own circular which described the illegal activities of the association. Association members cut telephone and telegraph wires, blocked roads and intimidated County Council employees who attempted to clear them. Farmers who refused to join the association suffered intimidation, which took the form of nocturnal raids on farms, "enforced participation in demonstrations, boycotting of milk supplies to creameries and prohibition of harvesting operations."[204] Blueshirts in County Cork assisted the association in the felling of trees and blocking of railways.[205] Republicans criticised the association for being unpatriotic and of being dominated by ranchers. *Republican Congress* accused two Cork Protestants who were members of the association of being involved in the "anti-republican association" during 1920.[206]

The activities of the Land Annuitants' Defence Association led to tragedy when an attempt to disrupt a sale of seized cattle at Marsh's Yard in Cork city led to the fatal shooting of a young Blueshirt, Michael Lynch.[207] The use of violence by the anti-annuity payment campaign was

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[202] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS 8/572. County Cork Land Annuitants' Defence Association. Press cutting, *Cork Examiner*, July 30th 1934.
[203] Ibid, circular from E. J. Cussen, Secretary, Cork Land Annuitants' Defence Association, August 8th 1934.
[204] C.A.I., Seamus Fitzgerald papers, PR/6/239. Circular issued by Cork County Advisory Committee, Fianna Fáil, re. County Cork Land Annuitants' Defence Association.
[205] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/509, Obstruction of road and rail traffic, Co. Cork, 1934. Report from Superintendent, Lismore, to Chief Superintendent, Waterford, November 5th 1934. Report from Duty Sergeant, Kilmainham, to Garda Commissioner, August 25th 1934.
[206] *Republican Congress*, September 1st 1934. On the supposed membership of Cork Protestants in anti-republican secret societies, see Hart, *The I. R. A. and its enemies*, op.cit, p.302-03.
[207] Mike Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish politics*, op.cit, p.145.

justified at a meeting held in Clonmel. In a speech which conflated political opposition to Fianna Fáil with the objections by livestock farmers to the tillage promotion policy, Deputy Curran argued that the productive elements of society were being penalised by the government while idlers were being subsidised. He criticised the tendency to accuse livestock farmers of being traitors to the country while tillage farmers were regarded as "super patriots". Curran argued that "under the present valuation the farmers were only tenants at will and before long their wives and children would belong to the state."[208] Addressing the same meeting, D. L. O' Gorman denied that the farmers had led Michael Lynch to his death. He argued that the farmers were following in the tradition of those who took part in the tithe war of the 1830's and in the Land League; "the Irish farmer had never got honest justice until those acts of violence, which every good Irishman regretted deeply, occurred."[209]

The anti-annuity payment campaign achieved another victory when Patrick Belton and E. J. Cussen were appointed to a Fine Gael sub-committee formed to investigate the seizures of livestock from annuity defaulters.[210] Eoin O' Duffy persisted in persuading the Fine Gael party to support the anti-annuity payment campaign. However, many Fine Gael members were concerned at the violence associated with the farmers' campaign. The party leadership began to frustrate O' Duffy's efforts.[211] Matters came to a close when the Westmeath County Executive at the Blueshirt convention proposed resolution 2C. This called on the Fine Gael National Executive to call for the suspension of annuity and rate payments until the Economic

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[208] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS 8/548. Sale of seized cattle on August 25th 1934 at Clonmel. Report of inflammatory speech by deputy R .Curran, August 25th 1934.
[209] Ibid, Report of inflammatory speech by D. L. O' Gorman in Clonmel, August 25th 1934.
[210] U. C. D. A. D., Fine Gael collection, P.39/ MIN/2, Minutes of Fine Gael Standing/General Purposes Committee. Committee meeting, August 2nd 1934.
[211] *The Blueshirt*, November 10th 1934.

War concluded. An annuity and rate payment strike was recommended if these demands were not granted by the government. O' Duffy proposed similar measures to the Fine Gael National Executive but these were rejected.[212] As a consequence, O' Duffy resigned the Fine Gael leadership. Fine Gael had formally rejected the demands of the organised farmers.

As with the formation of the Irish Farmers' Union in 1919, external threats led farmers to form representative organisations. Farmers' incomes continued to fall due to the Great Depression. These economic difficulties were compounded by the Economic War, which reduced access to the British market. Fianna Fáil agricultural policy, which imposed tariffs on agricultural imports and which favoured tillage at the expense of livestock, increased feed costs which was contrary to the interests of livestock farmers. As a consequence, farmers began to protest at what they saw as unfair and burdensome annuity payments. These threats led to farmers forming or reviving representative organisations. The independent farmer TDs provided leadership for this movement, which culminated with the establishment of the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League. The league expanded rapidly and revived the parliamentary representation of farmers in the form of the Centre Party. League activists followed the precedent of the nineteenth-century land agitators by engaging in violent acts. League members withheld rate and annuity payments, and considered the formation of a paramilitary force.

Many of the difficulties which plagued the Irish Farmers' Union recurred in the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League. The Standing Committee of the league had little control over the individual county associations, while league activists often ignored the more

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[212] Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics*, op.cit, p.151.

cautious attitude of their leadership on many issues, particularly with regards to the non-payment of annuities. The opposition of the league to the tillage promotion polices of the government limited its appeal to tillage farmers. The league's support for livestock farmers, its opposition to the 1933 Land Act, support for the inequitable complete de-rating of agricultural land and its alliance with urban ratepayers, following another precedent set by the Irish Farmers' Union, predictably alienated small farmers. The league adopted an anti-Fianna Fáil position that undermined its credibility as a vocational farmers' organisation. Frank MacDermot's strong support for continued membership of the British Commonwealth alienated republican farmers, evident in the early withdrawal of Fianna Fáil supporters from the league. By opposing the government on political grounds, the Centre Party was forced to co-operate with Cumann na nGaedheal, in spite of earlier avowals of independence. With the merger of Cumann na nGaedheal and the Centre Party to form Fine Gael in 1933, political opposition to Fianna Fáil and the grievances of farmers were conflated. While the former members of the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League initially believed that they dominated the new party, they were quickly disillusioned. Despite the physical support demonstrated by the Blueshirts and the approval of the farmers' demands by Eoin O' Duffy, the Fine Gael leader, the new party attempted to suppress the farmers' organisations and was opposed to the violent resistance to the collection of annuities. With the resignation of Eoin O' Duffy, the Fine Gael leadership rejected the farmers' demands.

While the crisis caused by the Economic War revived the organisational capability of farmers, the newly formed National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League suffered from the same divisive forces which destroyed the Irish Farmers' Union. These included the differing interests between small and large farmers, and an excessive sense of autonomy among its constituent

associations, all of which reduced the effectiveness of the league. Eventually, the polarised political climate led the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League to be absorbed by the pro-Treaty opposition. However, the resignation of Eoin O' Duffy liberated the organised farmers from the embrace of Fine Gael, and allowed them to continue the non-payment of annuities. Fianna Fáil also contributed to the politicisation of the farming community. Fianna Fáil gained the support of tillage and small farmers through protectionist policies, notably de-rating and land re-distribution. Fianna Fáil established the United Farmers' Protection Association as a front organisation within farming community. As a result farmers were totally polarised. The politicisation of the differing agricultural systems, livestock rearing and tillage, prevented the non-partisan promotion of agriculture by a vocational organisation. The collective interests of farmers were therefore lost in the midst of political and sectional strife.

Chapter VI.

Violence and collapse; The anti-annuity payment campaign and the decline of the farmers' organisations; 1934-36

With the failure to pass resolution 2C and the consequent resignation of Eoin O' Duffy as Fine Gael leader, the organised farmers lost the support of the Fine Gael leadership. Moreover, they were now targeted by an intensive government security campaign. However, free from the constraint of being members of a constitutional party and the moderating influence of a national farmers' leadership, the organised farmers still had the potential for violent action.

The organisational lead established by the Cork Land Annuitants' Defence Association was replicated in other counties. By late September, the Callan branch of Fine Gael decided to raise a defence fund to compensate annuity defaulters for the seizure of cattle.[1] Less than a fortnight later, local Gardaí reported that no further efforts had been made to establish the fund. Local Fine Gael activists now settled annuity arrears in order to avoid seizures;

"this change of front may be due to the recent quarrel in the Fine Gael and League of Youth Headquarters but it is the general opinion here that the farmers of this area are beginning to feel that the evasion of the payment of rates or annuities is not a wise policy or a paying proposition and the vast majority of them will, when approached by the sheriffs pay their annuities or make some settlement before they will allow their cattle to be seized."[2]

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[1] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/577, Land Annuitants' Defence League, formation of branch at Callan, Co. Kilkenny. Report to Chief Superintendent O' Halloran, Waterford, September 27th 1934.
[2] Ibid, report by Sergeant John Hunt, Callan, to Chief Superintendent O'Halloran, Waterford, October 8th 1934.

At an after-sales meeting in Kilmallock, Patrick Hartigan and John Boohan encouraged farmers to organise themselves.[3] In County Kildare, Richard Brophy, the former County Organiser for the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League, attempted to persuade Fine Gael and League of Youth Activists to form a branch of the Annuitants' Defence League in Naas. This endeavour failed.[4] It was reported that Thomas Lawlor, a leader of the anti-annuity payment campaign in Kildare, was now willing to pay his outstanding annuity warrant.[5]

The Fine Gael leadership was concerned to maintain their support within the farming community after O' Duffy's resignation. Fears existed that farmers would form a new political party. Michael Tierney, a prominent member of Fine Gael, wrote to Frank MacDermot, whom Tierney feared was about to leave Fine Gael. Tierney argued "if you do go back to independence, try and take none of the big farmers with you. Leave them and all the relics of the Farmers' Party where they are. They are a liability to any movement and my own view is that Cussen of Cork is probably more responsible for our present state than any other single person."[6]

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[3] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/532. Execution of decrees for non-payment of land annuities, general file, Co. Limerick, 1934. Report by Superintendent's Office, Bruff, to Chief Superintendent, Limerick, re. sale of seized cattle at Kilmallock, September 24th 1934.

[4] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/523. Attempt to form branch of Annuitants' Defence League in the District of Naas, Co. Kildare. Report by Nicholas Murphy, Chief Superintendent, Carlow, to Garda Commissioner, December 21st 1934.

[5] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/521, Execution of decrees for non-payment of land annuities, general file, Co. Kildare, 1934. Report by Chief Superintendent Nicholas Murphy, Carlow, to Garda Commissioner, December 21st 1934.

[6] N.A.I., MacDermot Papers, 1064/4/5. Letter from Michael Tierney to Frank MacDermot, October 4th 1934.

At a meeting of the Fine Gael parliamentary party, rural deputies asserted that farmers could not meet land annuity demands while difficulties were experienced in the allocation of cattle licences.[7] A deputation of farmer deputies met de Valera on these issues in October of 1934. James Dillon submitted a memorandum which argued that farmers suffered from low prices for agricultural produce and increased prices for feedstuffs. As a result, farmers were unable to pay annuities and "in these circumstances, the tradition of agrarian agitation is likely to manifest itself in a most undesirable form of sporadic resistance by violence to the representatives of the government who may be called upon to carry seizures, etc, into effect."[8] To avoid this situation, Dillon demanded that a trade agreement with Britain be negotiated to increase export quotas for livestock, that the distribution of cattle licences be reformed and that an independent tribunal be formed which would allow farmers appeal notices for payment of land annuities; "we urge that the farmer in present circumstances has a natural right to have his personal circumstances and his ability to pay examined and decided on, before seizures of stock and furniture are made in satisfaction of statutory obligations to the land commission."[9] De Valera rejected these proposals and was particularly dismissive of a plea by Dillon that seizures from farmers should cease.[10]

Later the Secretary to the President of the Executive Council argued that if Dillon's proposals were adopted, opponents of the government within the farming community would simply plea

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[7] *Irish Independent*, October 9th 1934.
[8] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/ 284. Memorandum submitted by Mr. James Dillon TD, to the President of the Executive Council on the subject of the agricultural position and the collection of land annuities.
[9] Idem.
[10] N.A.I., MacDermot Papers, 1064/2/6. Letter from James Dillon to Frank MacDermot, October 17th 1934.

poverty. The present system of seizures in lieu of annuity payments was equitable. A farmer who could not afford to pay annuities would not have property to seize. The present anti-annuity payment campaign was organised by farmers who were able to meet their obligations but who were hostile to the government. To crush the organised anti-annuity payment campaign, Garda Special Units would be established. The new system was to be launched in County Westmeath.[11] The units consisted of up to thirty selected guards, who were specially equipped to remove obstructions from roads and who would co-operate with local bailiffs.[12] The units experienced success in targeting Blueshirts and defaulting farmers in Westmeath. Seizures were made from the leadership of the local anti-annuity payment campaign. Those targeted included local Fine Gael deputy Charles Fagan. It was reported that "in many cases of leading Blueshirts and Fine Gael supporters the full amount of the annuities have been paid up when it was anticipated that seizures were a certainty."[13]

These measures were accompanied by the large-scale arrests of farmers. In late October, 100 farmers were arrested in Counties Cork, Kilkenny and Limerick.[14] Many of these farmers were subsequently convicted at the Military Tribunal for the obstruction of roads and wire cutting. However, when prosecuting a number of farmers from Kilkenny, the State Counsel complained that those appearing before the Tribunal "were really the dupes of people of a higher standard in life whom it had been found impossible to bring before the Tribunal and

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[11] Ibid, letter from Seán Ó Muimhneacháin, Secretary, President of the Executive Council, to Secretary, Department of Justice, October 23rd 1934.
[12] Manning, *The Blueshirts*, op.cit, p.175.
[13] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/555. Execution of decrees for non-payment of land annuities, general file, Co. Westmeath. Report, non-dated, by Inspector W. Halloran, Garda Special Unit, to Garda Commissioner.
[14] *Irish Independent*, October 27th 1934.

who were really the brains behind the offences."[15] The Tribunal was ineffective in dealing with the leadership of the anti-annuity payment campaign.

The forces of law and order were assisted by disputes among the organised farmers and their isolation from other sectors of rural society. In Waterford, a convention of farmers was held which discussed the non-payment of rates and annuities. The meeting broke up as "many of those present objected to obstructionist tactics such as the felling of trees, the cutting of communications and other acts of this nature."[16] In Wicklow, a number of Protestant farmers attempted to revive the anti-annuity payment campaign in the Rathdrum district. When questioned by Gardaí, one of the conspirators stated that he opposed the payment of annuities. He had resigned from Fine Gael as "the people of the locality had not the courage to organise properly."[17] In the Piltown area of Co. Kilkenny, an anti-annuity payment campaign was carried out by a pair of local farmers, who confined their activities to calling on their neighbours and canvassing their attitude towards the payment of annuities.[18]

The anti-annuity payment campaign also declined in Tipperary. The Chief Superintendent in Thurles described how farmers who had previously hidden stock as to prevent seizures now made settlements; "the spilt in the Blueshirts may have something to do with this as many of them are heartily sick of the position as it now exists, together with the fact that the longer

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[15] Ibid, November 17th 1934.
[16] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/552. Execution of decrees for non-payment of land annuities, general file, Co. Waterford, 1934. Report by Inspector Fahy to Superintendent's Office, Waterford, October 2nd 1934.
[17] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/570. No rent, no rates campaign, Co. Wicklow. Report by Chief Superintendent, Bray, to Garda Commissioner, November 10th 1934.
[18] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/528. No rates or rent campaign, Piltown, Co. Kilkenny. Report by Sergeant. J. Hunt, Callan, to Chief Superintendent, Waterford, September 4th 1934.

they would hold out the more we would pester them."[19] Similar reports came from Clonmel. Only fifty people attended a sale of seized cattle in the town. No Blueshirts were present and the only prominent activists from the anti-annuity payment campaign in attendance were Martin Farrell and Michael Heffernan; "considering that the persons from whom seizures were made are prominent United Ireland Party and Blueshirt members, and leading figures in the 'no rent and rates' campaign, the attendance at sale was very poor and the enthusiasm of those present still poorer."[20]

In spite of declining popular support and Garda harassment, some farmers continued their campaign. Martin Farrell stated that farmers would not be terrorised by the Garda Special Units.[21] John Boohan demanded the complete de-rating of agricultural land and accused politicians of deserting the farmers.[22] The Cork Land Annuitants' Defence Association remained active. By November, it consisted of 121 branches. Members of the Standing Committee included veteran members of the Cork Farmers' Association such as Brooke Brazier and Batt Cooney, in addition to William O' Driscoll, prominent Blueshirt John. L. O' Sullivan and Michael Twomey.[23] It raised a defence fund worth £3,500 to compensate members convicted of obstruction, while non-members continued to be boycotted.[24]

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[19] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/547. Execution of decrees for non-payment of land annuities, general file, Co. Tipperary, 1934. Report from Chief Superintendents' Office, Thurles, to Garda Commissioner, November 1st 1934.
[20] Ibid, report from Superintendents' Office, Clonmel, to Garda Commissioner, December 6th 1934.
[21] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/ 552. Press cutting, *Evening Echo*, October 9th 1934.
[22] *Limerick Leader*, November 3rd 1934.
[23] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/572. Report by Inspector Thomas Dowd to Garda Commissioner, October 9th 1934.
[24] *Irish Independent*, March 6th 1935.

The association branded cattle belonging to members. The first recorded instance of branding was on cattle belonging to T. J. O' Donovan. The cattle were branded "L. A. A."; Land Annuitants' Association. The local Garda Superintendent feared that cattle belonging to other farmers in the locality would be similarly marked. The Chief Superintendent in Cork believed that cattle were branded so "in the event of their being seized in default of payment of land annuities, their location may be subsequently followed."[25] Gardaí in County Kilkenny reported that the branding scheme operated in Cork would be used by farmers' organisations in Counties Kilkenny, Waterford, Limerick and Tipperary in an effort to prevent the sale of seized cattle.[26]

Eoin O' Duffy intended to gain the support of farmers disillusioned with the moderate Fine Gael leadership. During a speech delivered at the Mansion House he argued that farmers were paying annuities twice over. He justified the resistance by farmers to the seizure of property. O' Duffy accused the Fine Gael leadership of betraying the farmers and of exploiting the hardship caused by the Economic War for party political purposes. He advocated the establishment of an all-party conference to discuss a possible settlement to the Economic War and a revision of the 1933 Land Act, which would restore fixity of tenure. As regards the opposition by Fine Gael to the resistance to annuity collections, O' Duffy stated "the Blueshirts and farmers would just have to carry on as before." and added "I will egg no man on with my right hand while making a show of restraining him with my left."[27]

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[25] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/583. Marks on cattle, property of T. J. O' Donovan TD. Report by Superintendent M. McKenna to Chief Superintendent, Cork, December 14th 1934.
[26] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/632. Marking of cattle by advocates of the "no rates and rent" campaign. Report by Sergeant. T. Kilroy, Callan to Superintendent J. Hunt, Callan, December 19th 1934.
[27] *The Blueshirt*, November 10th 1934.

In many localities O' Duffy's supporters co-operated with militant farmers in an attempt to revive an independent farmers' organisation. At a joint meeting of farmers and Blueshirts held in Golden, County Tipperary, Dr. Hennessy spoke of the need to reform the existing farmers' organisations. Thomas Burke of the South Tipperary Farmers' Organisation supported the formation of a non-political farmers' movement.[28] In Limerick, John Boohan also argued for the formation of a new farmers' movement.[29] J. F. Medill argued for the formation of a non-political farmers' organisation. He regarded the politicisation of the farmers' struggle as disastrous. The present government had received a decisive mandate from the people and "this being so, what is the use of trying to hit one's head against a stone wall."[30]

Patrick Belton also attempted to establish a power base among farmers who opposed the payment of annuities. Following his expulsion from Fine Gael in October 1934 for suggesting negotiations with Eoin O' Duffy,[31] Belton continued to justify the non-payment of annuities.[32] In January 1935 he presided at a meeting of farmers in Dublin which formed a "National Agricultural Association" and called for a cessation of rate and annuity payments during the course of the depression. Sheriffs should also cease seizures in lieu of annuity payments. Belton argued that the new organisation was formed "not for the purpose of aggression, but to save the farmers from extermination."[33] A week later, the association held its first formal meeting. Belton was elected President. John Boohan was elected as Secretary. The

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[28] Ibid, December 1st 1934.
[29] *Limerick Leader*, January 5th 1935.
[30] Ibid, September 15th 1934.
[31] Maye, *Fine Gael, 1923-78*, op.cit, p.46.
[32] *Irish Independent*, December 1st 1934.
[33] *Irish Independent*, January 18th 1935.

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association called for the formation of a select committee to inquire on the incidence of special tariffs which were imposed on Irish agricultural exports and to discuss how the burden of the Economic War could be shifted to other sections of the community.[34]

Parallel to Belton's efforts, the Cork Land Annuitants' Defence Association announced plans to establish a non-political farmers' group.[35] These efforts by the Cork farmers to expand their organisation were endorsed by their counterparts in Tipperary. At a meeting held in Cashel, both Martin Farrell and Thomas Burke agreed to support the Cork organisation.[36] The meeting condemned the collection of annuities and supported the formation of a new farmers' party. Also in attendance were supporters of Eoin O' Duffy, "for the purpose of holding a watching brief on behalf of his organisation."[37]

O' Duffy approved of the efforts to revive an independent farmers' organisation. At a meeting in Galway, he predicted that the new organisations would mobilise farmers to an extent not experienced since the heyday of the Irish Farmers' Union. In an attempt to gain the support of small farmers O' Duffy called for a suspension of land annuity payments, increased tillage, the division of ranches, targeted de-rating in favour of small farmers and the establishment of a national corporate council composed of farmers to dictate agricultural policy.[38] Speaking in

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[34] Ibid, January 25th 1935.
[35] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/630, New Land League, general file. Press cutting, *Irish Press*, January 3rd 1935.
[36] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/624, Farmers' and Ratepayers' League, general file, 1935. Report by Sergeant John Sullivan on meeting of farmers and ratepayers at City Hall, Cashel, January 15th 1935.
[37] Ibid, report by Superintendent O' Shea, Cahir, on meeting of farmers and ratepayers at City Hall, Cashel, January 15th 1935.
[38] *The Blueshirt*, January 12th 1935.

Cavan, O' Duffy called on farmers to abandon the main political parties. He pledged the support of his followers to the Cork organisation and reminded farmers that "at the last three or four general elections you supported one or other of the two big political parties. You were led away by empty promises and party catch cries. You forgot realities for the time being, but when the elections were over you had to return to the homestead and try to carry on."[39] O' Duffy hoped that the farmers' organisations would provide support for his future corporate party.

The efforts of the Cork farmers came to fruition in January 1935. Delegates from several counties attended a meeting in Cork city to form a "non-political vocational organisation in the interests of agriculture." This organisation assumed the title of the "New Land League." The chairman, William O' Driscoll, described how agriculture was damaged by the collapse in livestock exports, by an unbalanced expansion of tillage and by the imposition of tariffs by Britain on agricultural exports, which demonstrated the league's exclusive concern with livestock farmers, reflective of its support in the dairying districts of Munster. Farmers were forced to sell stock and utilise savings to pay rate and annuity demands. He attributed the current crisis in agriculture to;

"our too-loyal adhesion to political parties to the utter neglect of our own vocational interests. In my opinion, the organisation we hope to establish to-day cannot succeed in any respect if it becomes associated with party politics or if it permits itself to be used as a stepping-stone to power on the part of any individual or group of individuals."[40]

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[39] Ibid, January 26th 1935.
[40] *Cork Examiner*, February 1st 1935.

E. J. Cussen described how the league would be organised at parish, county, provincial and national level. Sub-committees would be formed, which would be devoted to particular sectors of agriculture. These sub-committees could then lobby the government on agricultural policy. Cussen also called for an end to antagonism between farmers and labourers, and concluded, "let us follow in the footsteps of our fathers in the making of the New Land League what the old Land League was to them."[41] However, the ensuing discussion revealed that the members of the league were not concerned with the vocational representation of farmers. Instead they desired to rejuvenate the anti-annuity payment campaign. A delegate from Fermoy suggested that league organisers should circulate a membership roll to all farmers in their locality. Those who did not support the league should be boycotted. Both Martin Farrell and Michael Twomey called for the non-payment of annuities.[42]

A fortnight later, the Executive Committee of the league held its first meeting. A manifesto was issued which called for a suspension of annuity payments during the Economic War, adequate wages to be paid to agricultural labourers and the submission of evidence to the Banking Commission. Due to their political allegiance, county councillors were barred from membership of the executive.[43] This measure was an attempt by the leadership of the league to downplay their previous Fine Gael connections and to appeal to as many farmers as possible.

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[41] *The Blueshirt*, February 9th 1935.
[42] *Cork Examiner*, February 1st 1935.
[43] *Irish Independent*, February 11th 1935.

Many members of Fine Gael opposed the creation of the league. The Standing Committee of the party instructed local deputies to attend the New Land League conference "and to take the line of opposition to the formation of any other organisation."[44] However, none of the Fine Gael deputies followed this course of action. Ernest Blythe, using the alias "Gerald Smith", argued that a new farmers' party would facilitate Fianna Fáil's electoral strength. Even if such a party intended to maintain a non-partisan stance it would be "bound either to proceed ultimately along the old lines of deciding to put in its own candidates for the Dáil and thereby become a comparatively insignificant minority group" or else it would be dominated by one of the existing political parties.[45]

At local level, Fine Gael activists attempted to prevent members from joining the New Land League. At a meeting of the South Tipperary Farmers' Association, a resolution was passed which urged continued support for Fine Gael. Deputy Curran expressed his opposition to the New Land League and the National Agricultural Association. Other members opposed the arguments advanced by Martin Farrell in favour of the league. While the organisation of farmers was to be welcomed, the delegates believed that the interests of farmers would be best served through Fine Gael coming to power.[46]

The New Land League had a tense relationship with Patrick Belton's National Agricultural Association. At the inaugural meeting of the association, a letter was received from William

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[44] U. C. D. A. D., Fine Gael collection, P.39/ MIN/2, Minutes of Fine Gael Standing/General Purposes Committee. Committee meeting, January 24th 1935.
[45] *United Ireland*, January 12th 1935.
[46] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/631. South Tipperary Farmers' Association, general file, 1935. Press cutting, *Irish Press*, January 22nd 1935.

O' Driscoll pledging support for Belton.[47] However, O' Driscoll denied that he ever send such a letter.[48] At the league conference in Cork, John Boohan, urged that the league associate itself with the National Agricultural Association while Sean Murphy accused the Cork Land Annuitants' Defence Association of organising in opposition to Belton. In reply, William O' Driscoll and Martin Farrell criticised Belton.[49] Another prominent member of the New Land League, Patrick Heskin, declared that the Cork farmers wished to develop their own organisation without interference from politicians like Belton.[50] The league was aware of Belton's tendency to form ephemeral farmers' organisations which he subsequently abandoned and of his fondness for political manoeuvring.

In spite of this hostility, Belton continued to seek a *rapprochement* with the New Land League. At a meeting of O' Duffy supporters held in Cashel, Belton stated that the National Agricultural Association would merge with the New Land League.[51] The Garda Special Branch believed that Belton and his associate, William Kent, would dissolve the National Agricultural Association if they were co-opted onto the executive of the New Land League.[52] Eoin O' Duffy approved of a merger between the New Land League and the National Agricultural Association.[53] This did not occur and the association formed branches in Kildare, Sligo and Meath. Patrick Belton continued to demand that the burden of the Economic War

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[47] *Irish Independent*, January 18th 1935.
[48] Ibid, January 24th 1935.
[49] *Cork Examiner*, February 1st 1935.
[50] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/630, New Land League, general file. Press cutting, *Irish Independent*, February 7th 1935.
[51] *The Blueshirt*, February 9th 1935.
[52] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/630. Report by J. R. Cruise, Special Branch, to Garda Commissioner, February 14th 1935.
[53] *The Blueshirt*, February 9th 1935.

be distributed among other sectors of society.[54] He argued that the association would represent farmers on a non-political basis, while previous farmers' groups "were frequently used as platforms to give party politics the apparent backing of farming opinion."[55] At an association meeting held at Fedamore, Co. Limerick, the chairman argued for a non-political farmers' organisation to save farmers from the adverse affects of government corruption and extravagance. An end to cattle seizures and a 6d per gallon milk price were also demanded.[56] At a subsequent meeting of the Association in Limerick, John Boohan hoped that it could revive defunct branches of the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League. Boohan argued that he was not concerned with the rights or wrongs of the Economic War and only wished to alleviate its adverse effects upon farmers. This was another example of how the farmers' organisations attempted to de-politicise their grievances. Boohan criticised the calf slaughter scheme and called for the complete de-rating of agricultural land. Boohan also reflected the dismissive attitude by large farmers towards smaller farmers when he dismissed opposition by small farmers to de-rating as being motivated by jealously towards large farmers.[57]

Negotiations took place between the New Land League and P.J. Gaffney, Secretary of the United Farmers' Protective Association, on the formation of a single radical farmers' organisation.[58] The gradual adoption of an independent stance by the United Farmers' Protective Association made these previously inconceivable contacts possible. By late 1934,

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[54] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/628, National Agricultural Association, Dublin. Press cutting, *Irish Independent*, February 12th 1935.
[55] Ibid, press cutting, *Irish Times*, February 22nd 1935.
[56] *Limerick Leader*, February 23rd 1935.
[57] Ibid, April 27th 1935.
[58] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/630. Report by J. R. Cruise, Special Branch, to Garda Commissioner, February 14th 1935, op.cit.

P. T. Dunne criticised the failure by the government to appoint farmers' representatives onto the Banking Commission and the absence of a special investigation into the issue of farmer debt.[59] The Department of Agriculture opposed any re-structuring of farmer debt, which further alienated the association.[60]

P. J. Gaffney attended the initial meeting of the New Land League and supported the new organisation. Martin Farrell favoured co-operation with the United Farmers' Protective Association in the submission of evidence to the Banking Commission.[61] However, those members of the association who remained loyal to Fianna Fáil attempted to sabotage Gaffney's plans. The Bandon branch repudiated any alliance with the New Land League which was described as "a camouflaged imperialist party."[62] At the association's convention, Gaffney proposed that the association should cooperate with any organisation, regardless of its' political allegiance, which desired to promote agriculture and whose aims did not directly conflict with those of the Standing Committee. This proposal was resisted by deputy Tom Hales of Fianna Fáil, who opposed any cooperation with pro-British organisations, and by the Chairman, Martin Dolan, who wished to preserve the integrity of the association.[63] Political differences prevented the unity of farmers who opposed the payment of annuities.

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[59] *Limerick Leader*, November 10th 1934.
[60] *Commission of Inquiry into Banking, Currency and Credit, Memoranda and Minutes of Evidence.* Vol II, op.cit, p.1341, Q. 11430.
[61] *Cork Examiner*, February 1st 1935.
[62] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/629, United Farmers' Protective Association, general file, 1935. Press cutting, *Irish Press*, February 19th 1935.
[63] Ibid, press cutting, *Irish Independent*, February 20th 1935.

The association, however, continued to criticise the government. It issued a manifesto in May 1935 which criticised delays in re-distributing ranches among smaller farmers, called for increased wages to be paid to agricultural labourers, criticised the decline in domestic dairying and condemned the continued harassment of the farming community by the banks.[64] At a meeting held in Lucan, Patrick Gaffney argued that all lawful means should be used to resist the harassment of farmers by the banks. Fianna Fáil was criticised for failing to reform the banking system. Another member of the association, Mr. Clune, described how he was initially a Fianna Fáil supporter but had resigned from the party over their failure to support farmers. Mr. Moylett criticised the failure of the government to reform the banking system. He noted that the *Irish Press* no longer reported meetings held by the association. Moylett also criticised farmers for their indifference towards the association.[65] Again the problem of apathy among farmers confronted the association. The association submitted a memorandum to the Banking Commission, which called for the restructuring of debt owed by farmers to the banks and the abolition of land annuities. Annuities were described as a form of double taxation upon farmers.[66] The association claimed that it was comprised of 100 branches while total membership was an estimated 30,000.[67]

The New Land League also encountered apathy from the general public. By mid-February, only five small branches had been formed in Cork County. In one example, the league

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[64] Ibid. Copy of notice of meeting by United Farmers' Protective Association at Lucan, May 26th 1935.
[65] Ibid, report by Chief Superintendent Reynolds to Garda Commissioner on meeting held by United Farmers' Protective Association at Kishogue, Lucan, Co. Dublin, May 29th 1935.
[66] *Commission of Inquiry into Banking, Currency and Credit, Memoranda and Minutes of Evidence*, Vol II, op.cit, pp.790 & 793.
[67] Ibid, pp.796-97, Q. 6228 & Q.6235.

convened a meeting in Mallow which was poorly attended. As a consequence, no branch was formed.[68] Attempts were also made to form a branch in Cashel. Only sixteen people turned up to the meeting. The league failed to organise a meeting in Nenagh.[69] The formation of the league caused confusion among some farmer activists. It was commented that in the Clonmel area; "there are a multitude of organisations claiming the farmers' allegiance in this area and many of them do not themselves know to what particular organisation they properly belong."[70] Farmers in East Waterford also attempted to form branches of the league. A member of the League of Youth was reported to have attended these meetings.[71]

The authorities were determined to prevent the New Land League from developing as a focus for farmer discontent. In late February over 24 prominent members of the league were arrested in Cork County. They included the chairman, William O' Driscoll, the secretary Patrick Heskin, E. J. Cussen, Brooke Braizer, the former Cumann na nGaedheal TD and Irish Farmers' Union activist M. K. Noonan. in addition to several farmers from East and Mid Cork.[72] Fourteen of those arrested were charged with membership of an illegal organisation, the County Cork Land Annuitants' Defence Association. With reference to the New Land League, they were also charged with membership of "another unlawful association, not

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[68] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/630. Letter from Chief Superintendent, Cork to Garda Commissioner, December 17th 1935.
[69] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/632. Report by Chief Superintendent Quinn to Garda Commissioner, March 4th 1935.
[70] Ibid, report by Superintendent Ó Fiodhabhair, Clonmel, to Chief Superintendent, Thurles, March 2nd 1935.
[71] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/625. Meeting held by Co. Waterford farmers, general file, 1935. Report by Inspector Fahy to Superintendent, Waterford, re. meetings of farmers at Gaultier, Dumore East and Passage West, February 7th 1935.
[72] *Irish Independent*, February 22nd 1935.

confined to Cork."[73] By early March, Heskins, Brazier, O' Driscoll and Cussen were fined £100 each and were released.[74] With this action the authorities succeeded in eliminating the leadership of the New Land League. League activists who remained at liberty announced their intention to continue the work of their arrested colleagues.[75] However, the arrests inflicted damage upon the league.

After his release, Patrick Heskins organised a number of meeting throughout County Cork. However, the attendance at such meetings was described as small and no seditious speeches were made. No new branches of the league were established and those who attended the meetings confined themselves to criticising government agricultural policy. At a meeting held in Mallow one delegate argued that the league had not been established with the aim of attacking the government, instead it intended to alleviate the adverse effects of the Economic War. Government efforts to increase the tillage acreage when no markets existed for tillage produce were criticised. Another delegate argued that the league was a purely defensive organisation. The arrest of the league leadership was criticised at both the Mallow meeting and at another meeting held in Kanturk.[76]

At a meeting held in Macroom, resolutions were passed criticising the slaughter of calves and calling for increased financial aid for farmers. Significantly, given the occurrence of cattle branding in West Cork in December, league members were instructed to brand cattle. The

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[73] Ibid, March 6th 1935.
[74] Ibid, March 9th 1935.
[75] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/630. Press cutting, *Irish Press*, February 25th 1935.
[76] *Cork Examiner*, April 3rd 1935.

leadership of the league claimed that it would persuade the Ulster Farmers' Union, the Scottish Farmers' Union and the National Farmers' Union not to purchase seized cattle intended for exportation.[77]

Martin Farrell continued to organise of behalf of the New Land League in County Tipperary. Speaking in Cashel, he stated that membership of the league was open to all those who worked on the land, an attempt to broaden the appeal of the league beyond livestock farmers.. Farrell emphasised that it was a vocational agricultural association which had no political affiliation and would not contest elections. Farrell also criticised the payment of low wages to agricultural labourers.[78] At a meeting in Tipperary Town, Farrell made reference to depressed cattle prices and attacked the banks for forcing farmers to re-pay loans. Farrell argued that the league was not established with the aim of ousting the government, yet farmers experienced "that constitutional protests would not get them any redress."[79] In September, Patrick Heskins attempted to form a branch of the league in Fethard. Only 21 people attended the meeting, all of whom had been former supporters of the Irish Farmers' Union and the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League.[80] In December a New Land League meeting was held in Cashel where Martin Farrell confined himself to calling for improved marketing facilities for oats and barley in addition to raising the possibility of independent farmer candidates contesting

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[77] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/630. Report by Chief Superintendent, Cork, to Garda Commissioner, re. New Land League, April 17th 1935.
[78] *Cork Examiner*, April 9th 1935.
[79] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/630. Report by Superintendent, Tipperary, to Chief Superintendent, Thurles, on meeting of New Land League, May 6th 1935.
[80] Ibid, letter from Chief Superintendent, Thurles to Garda Commissioner, September 23rd 1935.

the next general election.[81] However, these were isolated incidents. Gardaí in Cork concluded that the New Land League had ceased to be an effective political force from June 1935 onwards. This was due to insufficient finance and public support.[82] The New Land League managed to hold a single meeting in June 1936, whose attendance was confined to veterans of the former Cork Farmers' Association. W. J. Fahy criticised the continued collection of land annuities and low cattle prices. He called for reduced taxation and the de-rating of agricultural land.[83]

By mid 1935, Eoin O' Duffy had repudiated the New Land League. At the Ard-Fheis of the National Corporate Party, O' Duffy accused the leadership of the farmers' movements as being unpatriotic. O' Duffy expressed his disappointment at how the New Land League, which had initially expressed corporate tendencies, had been emasculated by Fine Gael supporters. O' Duffy hoped that any future farmers' organisation would be dominated by small farmers and labourers rather than by "the unions of big farmers hankering after TDs and political party bosses."[84] While O' Duffy was incorrect in stating that Fine Gael had emasculated the New Land League, he correctly perceived the non-radical nature of the league which was a farmers' protest movement.

Garda Special Units now operated in Munster. The organised non-payment of annuities collapsed in County Waterford. In the Lismore area seizures were made from only 17% of

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[81] Ibid, report by Inspector J. J. Moore, Cashel, to Chief Superintendent, Thurles, December 17th 1935.
[82] Ibid, letter from Chief Superintendent, Cork, to Garda Commissioner, June 17th 1935.
[83] Idem.
[84] *The Nation (formerly Blueshirt)*, June 22nd 1935.

de-faulting farmers.[85] Settlements were also made by de-faulting farmers in the Dungarvan[86] and Passage East districts.[87] Similar success was experienced in County Tipperary. In the Templemore area all farmers visited by the units made settlements.[88] In the Thurles area "even the most stubborn in the area have made attempts to pay and the state of collection in the area which was very bad in the start is now quite good."[89] The collapse of the anti-annuity payments campaign was attributed in part to the split within Fine Gael. In the Carrick-on-Suir area, "it is stated here that Cronin supporters are carrying on a boycott of sales of stock from the O' Duffy section of the Blueshirt movement."[90] Resistance in Tipperary was limited to individual farmers who had been associated with the New Land League. The isolated position of these activists mirrored that of their counterparts in Leinster. In the Killanaule area seizures were made from farmers who had their cattle branded with the initials "L.A.A."[91] The unit seized cattle from Patrick Brett, who had attended the New Land League Convention in Cork.[92] Seizures were also made from James O' Dwyer, Thurles, who was a prominent

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[85] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/610. Execution of decrees for non-payment of land annuities, general file, Co. Waterford, January - May 1935. Report by Inspector Ó Cuinneagáin to Chief Superintendent, Waterford, January 23rd 1935.

[86] Ibid, report by Sergeant R. Shea, to Chief Superintendent, Waterford, January 30th 1935.

[87] Ibid, report by Chief Superintendent O' Halloran, Waterford, to Garda Commissioner, March 12th 1935.

[88] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/603. Report by Superintendent Colleran, Templemore, to Chief Superintendent, Thurles, January 8th 1935.

[89] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/604. Execution of decrees for non-payment of land annuities, general file, Co. Tipperary, March-April 1935. Report by Superintendent J. L. Murphy, Nenagh, to Chief Superintendent, Thurles, April 15th 1935.

[90] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/605. Execution of decrees for non-payment of land annuities, Co. Tipperary, general file, May 1935. Report from Superintendent's Office, Clonmel, to Garda Commissioner, May 11th 1935. "Cronin supporters" refer to Blueshirts, led by Edmond Cronin, who remained loyal to the Fine Gael leadership.

[91] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/603. Report by Inspector W. Halloran, Garda Special Unit, to Garda Commissioner, February 22nd 1935.

[92] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/604. Report by Superintendent Muldoon to Chief Superintendent, Thurles, April 12th 1935.

member of the League of Youth.[93] Eventually such farmers abandoned the non-payment of annuities.[94]

However, the Special Units faced a more formidable challenge in County Cork in the form of the Land Annuitants' Defence Association. At the initial meeting of the Executive Committee of the New Land League, E. J. Cussen assured one of the delegates that the Land Annuitants' Defence Association would remain separate from the league and would continue in existence until it had achieved its objectives.[95] During the case of the arrested Cork farmers heard by the Military Tribunal, Cussen disputed that the Land Annuitants' Defence Association was an illegal organisation. He described it as a non-political body which was a successor to the Cork Farmers' Association.[96] However, Cussen's statements were belied by the role of the association in promoting the non-payment of annuities.

By early May, the units targeted wealthy annuity defaulters in North and East Cork. However, few settlements were made and it was believed that farmers who wished to settle with the authorities were pressurised not to do so by association activists. Inspector Halloran of the Special Unit described how association members refused to pay annuities and permitted the seizure of stock. This stock was not to be purchased at auctions in an attempt to cripple the

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[93] Ibid, report by Inspector W. Halloran, Garda Special Unit, to Garda Commissioner, April 19th 1935.
[94] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/605. Report by Inspector Muldoon to Chief Superintendent, Thurles, May 9th 1935.
[95] *Irish Independent*, February 11th 1935.
[96] Ibid, March 8th 1935.

cattle disposal system.[97] The association compensated members whose stock was seized.[98] Halloran stated that the units would target the leadership of the association but he was pessimistic about the possibility of defeating the association as long as it had access to finance.[99]

Members of the Land Annuitants' Defence Association aired their views in public at a protest meeting held at a sale of seized cattle in Fermoy, the first sale held in County Cork since the Marsh's Yard incident. Fine Gael TD Patrick Daly denied that a secret conspiracy existed to prevent the payment of land annuities. W. J. Fahy advised farmers that they should organise themselves, but not to adopt violence resistance.[100] The disingenuous argument by the Cork farmers that no clandestine campaign to prevent the payment of annuities was repeated by Michael Twomey. He argued that Fianna Fáil invented the idea of a conspiracy in Cork to justify seizures from farmers. Twomey believed that farmers in Cork were treated unfairly for protesting against "artificially made conditions under which our industry is fast rushing to irretrievable ruin and the very existence of ourselves and our families is gravely jeopardised."[101]

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[97] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/585. Execution of decrees for non-payment of land annuities, general file, Co. Cork, January- June 1935. Report by Inspector Halloran, Garda Special Unit, to Garda Commissioner, May 11th 1935.

[98] Ibid, report by Inspector W. Halloran, Garda Special Unit, to Garda Commissioner, May 24th 1935.

[99] Ibid, report by Inspector W. Halloran, Garda Special Unit, to Garda Commissioner, May 25th 1935.

[100] *Cork Examiner*, May 4th 1935.

[101] *Irish Independent*, July 26th 1935.

By June, the association's campaign began to falter. The membership were divided on the policy of not re-purchasing seized stock. Ordinary members, in defiance of the leadership, began to re-purchase seized stock.[102] Both the leadership and public representatives who were members were targeted by the units. Cattle were seized from W. J. Fahy,[103] Michael Twomey[104] and from Edmond Goold, a long-serving member of the Cork County Council.[105] W. J. Fahy was arrested in Cork City.[106]

Such targeting of the leadership moderated the policy of the association. By July, Halloran reported that "the more solvent members engaged in the campaign are prepared to let seizures take place and to buy back the property if its normal value exceeds the amount due on the decrees by a substantial margin."[107] However, the anti-annuity payment campaign persisted in some localities, especially in Mid-Cork. Blueshirts monitored the movement of the Special Units and gave advance warning to de-faulting farmers who hid valuables before the units arrived.[108] The resistance to the units assumed a violent nature. In the Macroom district, one particular seizure was resisted by a group of young people who were armed with sticks, stones and eggs. In another incident, friends of a defaulter confronted unit members with pitchforks. However, Inspector Halloran correctly interpreted the use of violence as a sign of weakness

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[102] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/585. Report by Inspector W. Halloran, Garda Special Unit to Garda Commissioner, June 1st 1935.
[103] Ibid, report, Inspector W. Halloran, Garda Special Unit, to Garda Commissioner, May 24th 1935, op.cit.
[104] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/586. Execution of decrees for non-payment of land annuities, general file, Co. Cork, July 1935. Report by Inspector W. Halloran to Garda Commissioner, July 1st 1935.
[105] Ibid, report by Inspector W. Halloran to Garda Commissioner, July 13th 1935.
[106] Ibid, press cutting, *Cork Examiner*, June 6th 1935.
[107] Ibid, report by Inspector W. Halloran to Garda Commissioner, July 1st 1935.
[108] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/585. Report by Inspector W. Halloran to Garda Commissioner, June 8th 1935.

on the part of the Land Annuitants' Defence Association; "it appears now, all other efforts having failed that the attitude is to prevent seizures being made and to make every effort to impede and retard the work of the Special Court Messengers."[109]

From mid-August, Land Annuitants' Defence Association gradually ceased activity. It was reported that the leadership of the movement now wished to avoid seizures. Members were advised to pay annuities in instalments. Increased collection rates were observed in the previously intractable Charleville and Macroom districts. Inspector McConville of the Special Unit concluded; "payments have improved and there is evidence of better feeling towards the unit on the part of defaulters."[110] One of the final seizures of cattle was made from T. J. O' Donovan TD [111] In addition to the activities of the Garda Special Unit, the negotiation of the Coal-Cattle Pact between the Irish Free State and the United Kingdom, negated the anti-annuity payment campaign. The agreement provided for an one -third increase in British cattle quotas for 1935, in return for increased purchases of British coal by the Free State.[112] This de-escalation in the Economic War had a beneficial effect on the livestock trade. The livestock price index increased from 74.9 in 1935 to 82.7 for 1936.[113]

This increase in cattle prices, in conjunction with the rigorous measures taken by the forces of law and order and divisions within the farmers organisations, brought the organised anti-

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[109] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/586. Report by Inspector W. Halloran to Garda Commissioner, July 20th 1935.

[110] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS8/587. Execution of decrees for non-payment of land annuities, general file, Co. Cork, August-September, 1935. Report by Inspector McConville, Garda Special Unit to Garda Commissioner, August 17th 1935.

[111] Ibid, report by Inspector P. MacNamara to Garda Commissioner, August 9th 1935.

[112] *Dáil Debates*, Vol LIV, 14th November 1934 - 21st February 1935, col 1757, February 13th 1935.

[113] *Statistical Abstract 1937*, op.cit, p.171.

annuity payment campaign to an end by 1936. The Special Units now encountered little resistance to the payment of annuities by Cork farmers and "on the contrary, there is an evident willingness on their part to meet their liabilities."[114] The only cases of the deliberate non-payment of annuities on political grounds occurred among a number of individual farmers in the Charleville district.[115] The rise and fall of the anti-annuity payment campaign, which peaked in 1935 is indicated as follows;

Table 6.1 Annuity Arrears, in £, for Selected Counties, February 1934-36.

County	Feb 1934	Feb 1935	Feb 1936
Cork	56,545	118,977	19,558
Kildare	20,668	35,512	11,762
Kilkenny	21,660	33,965	2,115
Limerick	29,784	42,299	1,385
Tipperary North Riding.	14,669	27,088	4,385
Tipperary South Riding.	37,107	52,146	16,040
Waterford	19,582	24,461	4,327
Westmeath	23,920	47,175	1,285
National Total	373,590	716,010	120,469

Source: *Commission of Inquiry into Banking, Currency and Credit, Majority Report 1938.* Appendix no.31, p.570. Counties were selected on the basis of experiencing an *organised* anti-annuity payment campaign by farmers.

Government intervention in agriculture continued. Crotty has calculated that government expenditure on agriculture as a percentage of agricultural output increased from 1.6% in 1930

[114] N.A.I., Department of Justice, JUS 8/633. Execution of decrees for non-payment of land annuities for Co. Cork, general file, 1936-37. Report by Inspector J. Dunning, Garda Special Unit, to Garda Commissioner, April 17th 1936.

[115] Ibid, reports by Inspector W. McConville, Garda Special Unit, to Garda Commissioner, January 8th 1936 & January 29th 1936.

to 15.7% by 1935,[116] mostly of benefit to tillage and dairy farmers.[117] However, livestock farmers continued to criticise government policy, and in particular the distribution of cattle licences. Mr. Kennedy from Dublin argued that cattle exporters received the majority of licences rather than the producers for the domestic market whom the government claimed to support.[118] The West Limerick Farmers' Association also called for a reform of export licensing, arguing that exporters were the sole beneficiaries of bounties.[119] The Kerry Farmers' Association was unsuccessful in its attempt to persuade the Department of Agriculture to allocate cattle licences to it. The association also disputed the effectiveness of the cattle bounty.[120] Patrick Belton criticised the licensing system, which was ineffectual in increasing price as long as cattle stocks were in excess of export quotas.[121] He claimed that "these licences were hawked about by all sorts and conditions of people."[122]

Dr. Ryan admitted that with licences initially allocated to exporters, farmers did not receive a fair price for their produce. However, the direct allocation of licences to farmers, as advocated by critics of the existing scheme, would be cumbersome.[123] In support of Dr. Ryan, the independent TD for Monaghan, Alexander Haslett, admitted that the system of allocating cattle export licences had improved.[124] By July of 1935, fat cattle export licences were to be

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[116] Crotty, *Irish agricultural production*, op.cit, p.119.
[117] Ibid, p.146-147.
[118] *Irish Independent*, October 8th 1924.
[119] *Limerick Leader*, October 27th 1934.
[120] *Cork Examiner*, April 19th 1935.
[121] *Dáil Debates*, Vol LV, 27th February - 12th April 1935, col 1588, March 27th 1935.
[122] Ibid, col 1585, March 27th 1935.
[123] Ibid, cols 1672-75, March 28th 1935.
[124] Ibid, col 1696, March 28th 1935.

allocated to farmers through the County Committees of Agriculture.[125] More controversial was the modification of the Dairy Produce (Price Stabilisation) Act, which imposed the butter levy on all dealers of non-creamery butter.[126] James Dillon opposed this, stating that it constituted an unwarranted interference in private commercial life and would destroy small scale domestic butter production.[127] Deputy Haslett argued that the bill was an example of how agriculture was over-regulated by the government.[128] The extension of the levy was also criticised by the United Farmers' Protective Association.[129]

One section of the farming community who remained inactive politically were small farmers. Fianna Fáil had retained the support of small farmers through the payment of welfare benefits and the increased scope of land re-distribution promised by the 1933 Land Act.[130] Republicans feared that small farmers may be tempted to support the anti-annuity payment campaign organised by larger farmers.[131] These fears were groundless. For example the Garda Special Unit discovered that no attempt was made to organise the Land Annuitants' Defence Association among the small farmers in the Bantry and Skibereen areas.[132]

However, as the criticisms by the United Farmers' Protective Association revealed, government policy was beginning to favour the larger farmers. The Coal-Cattle Pact of late

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[125] *5th Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture, 1935-36.* Stationery Office, Dublin, 1936, p.137.
[126] *Dáil Debates*, Vol LVI, 18th May - 7th June 1935, cols 41-42, May 1st 1935.
[127] Ibid, col 70, May 1st 1935.
[128] Ibid, cols 125-26, May 1st 1935.
[129] *Irish Press*, May 27th 1935.
[130] Lee, *Ireland 1912-85*, op.cit, p.185-86. Dunphy, *The making of Fianna Fáil power in Ireland* op.cit, p.155.
[131] *Republican Congress*, September 1st 1934.
[132] N.A.I, Department of Justice, JUS8/587. Report by Inspector W. J. McConville to Chief Superintendent, Cork, September 26th 1935.

1934, according to Crotty, revived the traditional livestock export-based agricultural economy.[133] Dooley argues that the scope for extensive land re-distribution had been exhausted by 1936.[134] Lee describes how the tillage subsidisation policy did not favour small farmers[135] while Healy and Smith argue that such policies increased costs for small-scale producers of pigs and poultry.[136] Contemporary observers, such as Patrick Belton believed that the Economic War was only affecting small farmers by 1935, as large farmers began to reduce the price of young stock raised by small farmers.[137] Varley observes that a general mood of disillusionment was exhibited by small farmers towards Fianna Fáil, due to low prices.[138] In spite of the efforts of republicans, small farmers remained unorganised for the time being.[139] However, by the ends of the 1930's, they would eventually vent their disillusionment in a manner similar to their wealthier counterparts. Assisted by the Irish Farmers' Federation, which included members of the United Farmers' Protective Association, the small farmers formed the leadership to the next wave of farmer agitation through a new political party, Clann na Talmhan.[140]

The years 1934 to 1936 saw the collapse of organised activities by larger farmers. Following the resignation of O' Duffy as Fine Gael leader, farmers attempted to continue the non-payment of rates and annuities. In many localities, these activities were confined to individual

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[133] Crotty, op.cit, p.147.
[134] Dooley, *'The land for the people'*, op.cit, p.280.
[135] Lee, op.cit, p.185.
[136] Healy and Smith, *Farm organisations in Ireland*, op.cit, p.24.
[137] *Commission of Inquiry into Banking, Currency and Credit, Memoranda and Minutes of Evidence*, Vol I, Stationery Office, Dublin, 1938, p.476, Q. 3585.
[138] T. Varley, "Farmers against nationalists; the rise and fall of Clann na Talmhan in Galway", in G. Moran, ed., *Galway, History & Society, Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of an Irish County*. Geography publications, Dublin, 1996, pp.589-622, p.591.
[139] *Republican Congress*, June 16th 1934 & September 1st 1934.
[140] Varley, op.cit, p.589.

farmers as many Fine Gael activists supported the party leadership and abandoned illegal activity. However, the Cork Land Annuitants' Defence Association provided a focus for radical farmers in Munster. The association also intended to form a new national organisation, the New Land League. In addition, Patrick Belton formed his own group, the National Agricultural Association, while Eoin O' Duffy hoped that organised farmers would support his new National Corporate Party. Parallel to these efforts, the United Farmers' Protective Association became more critical of its former sponsor, Fianna Fáil, and argued that farmers should retain land annuities.

Yet again, diversity among farmers prevented the formation of an effective radical farmers' organisation. Firstly, the adherents of the non-payment of annuities were dispersed geographically. The organised non-payment of annuities was confined to Cork and adjoining counties. These were areas characterised both by mixed farming (coupled with strong tradition of co-operation amongst farmers) and where strong farmers' organisations survived after the collapse of the Irish Farmers' Union. Patrick Belton, who could have provided national leadership for a farmers' movement, only enjoyed support in those counties where no attempt was made to organise the non-payment of annuities. In addition, the leadership of the Cork Land Annuitants' Defence Association feared that Belton would dominate their movement, another example of localism hindering the development of a national farmers' organisation. Once again sectoral diversity among farmers hindered the development of a new organisation during this period. Supporters of the new farmers' organisations during this period were strongly opposed to the tillage policy of the government which obviously limited the appeal of these organisations to tillage farmers. These organisations were also dismissive

of the needs of small farmers, evident in the support of these organisations for the full de-rating of agricultural land which was of greater benefit to larger farmers.

The Cork Land Annuitants' Defence Association and the New Land League were handicapped by their former allegiance to Fine Gael and the continued membership of a number of Fine Gael activists. This limited their appeal to republican-inclined farmers who were also opposed the payment of land annuities. This is evident in the hostile attitude exhibited by republicans to the Cork farmers and in the opposition by members of the United Farmers' Protective Association to an alliance with the New Land League. As observed by Fitzpatrick, the disparate political allegiances of those who opposed the payment of annuities prevented the formation of an united farmers movement to resist such payments.[141]

The tide of external events also turned against the farmers' organisations. The Fine Gael leadership discouraged its members from supporting the new farmers' organisations. The government, through the establishment of the Garda Special Units, succeeded in defeating the organised non-payment of annuities. The New Land League leadership was neutralised by the use of the Military Tribunal. The tactics of boycotting and intimidation, which served the nineteenth-century land agitators well, did not succeed in the 1930's. The farmers' organisations did not enjoy the mass support of the Land League as they now opposed a native rather than a foreign government. In the 1930's, the demands of the farmers were now viewed as selfish and unpatriotic. In addition, the farmers' organisations encountered apathy from

[141] Fitzpatrick, *The two Irelands*, op.cit, p.203.

politically unmotivated farmers. Finally, the grievances of livestock holders were now being partially redressed by the government. The negotiation of the Coal-Cattle Pact raised livestock prices and eased the economic difficulties of many farmers. This revival in livestock exports eased the position of the wealthier farmers, and the structure of Irish agriculture returned to the pre-1932 situation, albeit with a subsidised wheat and dairy sector. However, the interests of smaller farmers, who in the past supported Fianna Fáil, were now ignored by the government. This would contribute to the subsequent revival of political action by farmers in the near future.

Conclusion.

The period 1919 to 1936 saw many attempts by farmers to form representative organisations, which all ended in failure. While Kennedy has described the social factors that prevented the formation of a representative farmers' organisation in the early decades of the twentieth century; such as differences between large and small farmers, the differing interests between the various sectors of agriculture and excessive individualism among farmers,[1] external economic and political threats stimulated farmers to form representative organisations in 1919 and in 1932. However, the divisive social factors identified by Kennedy, in conjunction with the adoption of partisan political allegiances by farmers, prevented the successful consolidation of these organisations.

The most important factor which had an adverse on farmers' organisations was the incompatibility between large and small farmers. Arensberg and Kimball have noted the lack of social solidarity among large and small farmers.[2] The actions of representative farmers organisations reflected this outlook, in spite of occasional rhetoric expressing concern about small farmers. The Irish Farmers' Union supported the livestock export trade which was dominated by graziers. Both the union and the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League supported the de-rating of agricultural land which favoured large farmers .Small farmers who settled with trade unionists during the labour disputes of 1919 were dismissed by the Irish

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[1] Kennedy. "Farmers, traders and agricultural politics in pre-Independence Ireland" in Clark & Donnelly, ed. *Irish Peasants; Violence &Political unrest, 1780-1914.*, op.cit, pp.366-68.
[2] C. Arensberg & S. T. Kimball, *Family and community in Ireland*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2nd edition, 1968, p.3 & p.271.

Farmers' Union as being unrepresentative of "real farmers". Large farmers allied themselves with propertied urban interests to defend the status quo rather than to co-operate with small farmers.[3] Large farmers opposed Fianna Fáil measures, such as the extension of the local government franchise and the retention of land annuities, which they feared would reduce their dominance of rural society. Likewise, medium and large farmers opposed the 1933 Land Act which they feared would see their holdings re-distributed to small farmers and landless men. Large farmers co-operated with business people in the early 1920's to oppose trade unionists, as observed by Fitzpatrick and O' Connor.[4] The Cork Land Annuitants' Defence Association did not organise among the small farmers in West Cork. In turn small farmers did not support both the Irish Farmers' Union and the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League. Small farmers in Mayo identified the Irish Farmers' Union with the hated graziers. As observed by Arensberg and Kimball, small farmers were not immediately affected by the Economic War.[5] As a consequence they now supported Fianna Fáil, which secured their support with the payment of welfare benefits and promises of land re-distribution. In spite of sporadic attempts in Mayo during the 1920's and despite later attempts by republicans and members of the United Farmers' Protective Association to gain their support, small farmers remained disorganised during the period under review.

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[3] Dooley, *'The Land for the People'*, op.cit, p.33-34.
[4] Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life 1913-21*, op.cit, p.229. O' Connor, *Syndicalism in Ireland*, op.cit, p.160.
[5] Arensberg & Kimball, op.cit., p.29.

Another source of disruption to the farmers' organisations were the different sectors of Irish agriculture. The Irish Farmers' Union experienced dissent between supporters of livestock farming and tillage farmers, notably barley farmers, who desired protectionism. This division prevented the union from developing a coherent agricultural policy. Protectionist farmers began to organise independently of the Irish Farmers' Union. However, their support was limited to tillage farmers in Leinster. These organisations were poorly organised, relying mostly on ad-hoc conferences to organise themselves. During the early 1930's, the protectionist farmers acted as mere auxiliaries to Fianna Fáil. This sectional diversity also conditioned the response by farmers to the Economic War. Tillage farmers, especially in Leinster, enjoyed the benefit of subsidised wheat and sugar beet cultivation and supported Fianna Fáil. In contrast, support for the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League was strongest among livestock farmers. However, the largest farmers were not among the most loyal supporters of the farmers' organisations.

Individualism among farmers was another factor which inhibited the steady development of a representative farmers' organisation. Kennedy argues that large livestock farmers operated on an individualistic basis and had a tendency not to participate in co-operative organisations.[6] This attitude among wealthy farmers to avoid collective activity extended to non-participation in representative associations. Support for the Farmers' Party in constituencies such as Meath, Wicklow, Kildare and Waterford (which were dominated by large farmers) was erratic. Even in 1933, the Centre Party failed to win seats in Kildare, Wicklow and in the premier grazing

[6] Kennedy, op.cit. p.367-68.

county of Meath. The emergence of farmers' organisations in these counties during the industrial disputes of 1919, their decline during the mid-1920's and revival during the Economic War suggests that wealthy graziers engaged in collective action only during periods of crisis.

In contrast, the most consistent support for the farmers' organisations came from medium to large-scale dairy and mixed farmers. Kennedy argues that these farmers had a tendency towards collective action, evident in the participation of such farmers in the co-operative movement.[7] The anonymous contributor to the *Leader*, "Garryowen", attributed the success of the Cork Farmers' Association to the mixed farming system prevalent in that county.[8] The Farmers' Party enjoyed its strongest support in Cork while areas such as Carlow-Kilkenny, Cavan, Tipperary, and Cork, dominated by dairying and mixed farming, returned TDs representative of farmers on a near consistent basis. The independent farmer associations of the early 1930's were based in dairying and mixed farming areas, such as Cork, Cavan, North Kerry and West Limerick. Finally the campaign to retain land annuities persisted after the Fine Gael split, not in the plains of Meath, but among the dairy farmers of Cork and Tipperary. However, these farmers did not have the capacity to sustain a national movement.

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[7] Ibid, p.367.
[8] *The Leader*, January 16th 1926.

The adverse effect of individualism among farmers upon the farmers' organisations also manifested itself in a reluctance by farmers to participate in representative organisations on a personal basis. Moreover the excessive degree of autonomy among county farmer associations also had an adverse effect. Kennedy argues that the dispersal of farmers throughout the countryside and the time-consuming nature of their work prevented them from organising as readily as other sectors of society.[9] The Irish Farmers' Union believed that it had finally stimulated farmers to organise. Yet by the mid-1920's farmers' associations reported declining membership. Once the external threats of adverse government intervention and militant trade unionism receded, farmers lost interest in being involved in a representative organisation. Such popular participation in farmers' organisations only revived with the crisis caused by the Economic War.

Regional loyalties and a suspicion of centralised control also hindered the development of the farmers' organisations. The county associations of the Irish Farmers' Union enjoyed too much autonomy and the National Executive had little authority over the associations. In turn, the county associations refused to fund the National Executive. By 1929, the National Executive was forced to recognise the virtual autonomy of the county associations, a decision which resulted in the collapse of the movement. Organisational rivalries prevented the Cork, West Limerick and Kerry Farmers' Associations from co-operating in 1930. The ordinary members of the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League ignored the moderate stance of the Standing Committee as regards the non-payment of annuities. Finally, the Cork Land Annuitants'

[9] Kennedy, op.cit, p.364.

Defence Association feared that Patrick Belton's National Agricultural Association would emasculate it.

Political divisions were another disruptive influence on farmers' organisations. The presence of Protestants and former supporters of the Irish Parliamentary Party in the Irish Farmers' Union rendered it suspect in the eyes of republicans. However, as argued by Fitzpatrick and Maume,[10] the union played a positive role in allowing both Protestants and former supporters of the Irish Parliamentary Party to participate in post-revolutionary Irish public life. The decision by the union to endorse the Treaty further alienated republican farmers while republicans adopted a hostile attitude to Farmers' Party candidates in the 1923 election . The initial position of limited support for Cumann na nGaedheal on constitutional and security issues was unsustainable. Having rejected the 1927 merger proposal with Cumann na nGaedheal, a rump of six Farmers' Party deputies formed an apparent "coalition" with Cumann na nGaedheal to prevent Fianna Fáil from gaining power. However, the Farmers' party was then viewed as a mere front for Cumann na nGaedheal and of being ineffective in representing farmers. In response, the independent farmer candidates contested the 1932 election on a non-partisan platform. Yet these candidates suffered from the pro-Cumann na nGaedheal attitude of their predecessors. Republican voters were reluctant to extend their lower preferences to independent farmer candidates in the 1932 election.

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[10] Fitzpatrick *Politics and Irish Life*, op.cit, p.59. Maume, *The long gestation*, op.cit, p.218.

With the apparent willingness of the Fianna Fáil administration to sacrifice the livestock sector in the Economic War, the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League adopted a hostile attitude to the government and supported continued membership of the British Commonwealth by the Irish Free State. This alienated Fianna Fáil supporters. With the formation of Fine Gael, the grievances of the farmers were now identified with pro-Treaty views. Republicans and members of the previously pro-Fianna Fáil United Farmers' Protective Association refused to co-operate with the anti-annuity payment campaign after O' Duffy's resignation, viewing it as being dominated by pro-Treatyites. The limited appeal of farmers' political parties to the Irish electorate can be illustrated with reference to election figures.

Table C.1. Electoral performance of candidates representing farmers, 1922-1933.

Year	1922	1923	1927	1927	1932	1933
Votes cast	48,718	127,840	101,223	74,623	48,532	126,906
As % of votes cast in contested constituencies.	16.95	13.42	12.10	11.59	9.82	12.31
As % of all votes	7.84	12.13	8.83	6.41	3.48	9.18
Seats	7	15	11	6	6	11

Source: Walker, *Parliamentary election results in Ireland, 1918-92*, op.cit, pp.104-115 & pp..117-42, passim.

After the unrepresentative 1922 election, the Farmers' Party received its best result in 1923. However, the party's share of the vote and seats won declined, evident in the collapse in organisation in many constituencies. Yet the slower rate of decline observed in constituencies constantly contested between 1923 and 1933 shows that candidates representing farmers

retained support if an efficient local organisation, such as the Cork Farmers' Association, remained in existence. This accounts for the continuity of support for independent farmer candidates in the 1932 election. While the Centre Party almost matched the 1923 performance of the Farmers' Party, it failed to attract mass support from farmers affected by the Economic War, and only attracted the votes of farmers who were already willing to vote for a farmers' political party, regardless of an economic crisis.

The support by the Irish Farmers' Union for the livestock export trade and opposition to the demands of tillage farmers allowed critics, such as D. P. Moran, to accuse the union of being hostile to the independent economic development of the country. Arguments by members of the union in the 1920's, by the independent farmer candidates in the 1930's and by the Centre party in 1933 in favour of maintaining agricultural exports with Britain provides further support for the 'dependency theory' argument suggested by Orridge, where farmers' organisation were expressions of their dependency on trade links with Britain.[11]

Paradoxically, the dominance of farmers in Irish society actually harmed the prospects of a farmers' party. Given the large number of farmers in the electorate, other political parties had to appeal to the farming vote.[12] Patrick Hogan, as Minister for Agriculture, for example, implemented policies similar to those advocated by the Farmers' Party. This confined the role of the Farmers' Party to making minor criticisms of agricultural legislation and advocating

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[11] Orridge, "The Blueshirts and the 'Economic War'", *Political Studies*, Vol XXI, op.cit, pp.360-61.

[12] See Garvin, "Nationalist Elites, Irish voters and Irish political development" from *Economic and Social Review*, Vol 8, op.cit, p.172, on the need for urban-based Irish political parties to appeal to rural voters.

negative economic policies, such as the reduction of local and national government expenditure, while offering support for the general economic policy of the government. The farmers' organisations also suffered from the politicisation of agricultural policy. The free export of livestock produce to Britain and the free importation of agricultural inputs were identified with the conservative policies of Cumann na nGaedheal.[13] In contrast both Fianna Fáil and Labour supported protectionist and pro-tillage policies, which ran contrary to those of Cumann na nGaedheal. However, this led to an abrupt shift from an agricultural policy based on livestock exportation, to one based on domestic consumption and the promotion of tillage from 1932 onwards. This politicised the claims of the different interest groups within agriculture and made the non-political discussion of agricultural policy by a representative farmers' organisation impossible.

As previously noted, Protestants and ex-landlords participated in the Irish Farmers' Union. This was inevitable as MacCourt argues that farming practises between Protestants and Catholic farmers are not differentiated due to religious factors,[14] while Protestant farmers enjoyed the status of owner-occupiers, consequent to the Land Acts, as did their Catholic counterparts. Bowen also argues that rural Protestants had greater social contact with their Catholic neighbours than their urban counterparts, due to the close-knit nature of rural life.[15] As a consequence, Protestant farmers readily co-operated with Catholic farmers in the Irish

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[13] B. Girvin, *Between two worlds, politics and economy in independent Ireland.* Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 1989, p.16-17. G. O' Brien, "Patrick Hogan: Minister for Agriculture, 1922-32", Vol XXV-1936, pp.353-68, pp.355-358.

[14] M. P. A. MacCourt, "An exploratory comparative study of Catholic and Protestant farmers in the Republic of Ireland", *Economic and Social Review,* Vol 4, Oct 1972-73, pp.511-20, p.520.

[15] K. Bowen, *Protestants in a Catholic State, Ireland's privileged minority.* Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 1983, p.167.

Farmers' Union in pursuit of agricultural goals. Fitzpatrick suggests that the union allowed previously isolated Protestants to participate in rural life.[16] However, the participation of Protestants in the union was regarded with hostility in some quarters, evident in the resignation of Limerick landlords from the union due to the activities of unpurchased tenants, the refusal of Monaghan activists to select a Protestant candidate for the constituency and in the bitter hostility expressed by Denis Gorey to the alleged influence of ex-landlords in the Irish Farmers' Union. Despite such hostility, Protestants remained involved in the farmers' organisations. The Economic War encouraged Protestants to be involved in those farmers' organisations which opposed the government's policy of reduced dependence on the British market. Protestants were involved in the Cork Land Annuitants' Defence Association and Wicklow Protestants attempted to continue the anti-annuity payment campaign after the resignation of Eoin O' Duffy. Yet, the differing political interests of Protestant farmers contributed to the diversity and division which prevented the establishment of an enduring farmers' representative organisation.

In general, farmers promoted their livelihood in commercial rather than in ideological terms. Lee has observed that Irish farmers did not engage in spiritual evocations of rural life.[17] The Irish Farmers' Union defended agriculture in strictly economic terms, criticising excessive taxation and unnecessary regulation. While traders and monopolies were criticised, such criticism was based on economic criteria. The union also engaged in commercial activity. Only in comments made by Frank MacDermot in the 1932 election that both Cumann na

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[16] Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life, 1913-21*, op.cit, p.59.
[17] Lee, *Ireland 1912-85*, op.cit, p.72.

nGaedheal and Fianna Fáil neglected provincial Ireland can any trace of an anti-urban ideology be detected amongst organised farmers. Farmers who endorsed protectionism based their arguments on economic grounds and welcomed industrialisation, which their policies would complement.

Farmers did not segregate themselves from other sections of society. When it was to their advantage, they co-operated with urban interests. This can be demonstrated in the formation by the Irish Farmers' Union of Ratepayers' Associations in the 1920's and their willingness to receive support from the business community in the 1923 election in addition to the canvassing by the Farmers' Party of urban votes throughout the 1920's. The National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League sought support from shopkeepers and ratepayers. Both the Farmers' Party and the Centre Party even sought the votes of farm labourers.

Farmers regarded themselves as the most productive and important section of Irish society. On occasion, this led to the use of violence to defend their interests. Organised farmers opposed the trade unions during the period 1919-22 and the Fianna Fáil government between 1933 and 1935 by violent means, although the leadership of the farmers' organisations often took a more cautious stance on the use of violence than the ordinary membership. Rent strikes were also contemplated against landlords by members of the Unpurchased Tenants' Association. In this context the farmers' organisations regarded themselves as the heirs of the nineteenth-century land agitators. Members of the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League and the Cork Land Annuitants' Defence Association justified their activities with reference to

the Land League and the Plan of Campaign.[18] These similarities were also evident in the tactics they adopted. The rent strikes by the Unpurchased Tenants Association during the early 1920's were based on the strategy of the Plan of Campaign. The boycotting and intimidation carried out by the Cork Land Annuitants' Defence Association resembled some of the more violent aspects of the nineteenth-century land agitation.

The farmers' organisations employed the print media to publicise their arguments. The Irish Farmers' Union published its own periodical, the *Irish Farmer*, but it ceased publication in late 1922 after three years. This was due to a lack of support among farmers and as previously noted, this experience was cited by members of the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League as an argument not to publish a periodical. However, the necessity for a dedicated farmers' periodical was not urgent as the existing national and local newspapers publicised the activities of farmers. Both the *Irish Times* and the *Irish Independent* provided extensive coverage for the early years of the Irish Farmers' Union. Especially in the case of the *Irish Independent*, the union appealed to the interests of the core readership of the paper, the rural middle classes, as identified by Horgan.[19] While the amount of coverage declined during the 1920's, this was probably symptomatic of the organisational decline of the union, rather than due to a lack of interest within the newspapers. The political bias of the *Irish Independent* readership was catered to with voluminous coverage of the new farmers' organisations which emerged at the outbreak of the Economic War and later of the National

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[18] See Bew, Hazelkorn & Patterson, *The dynamics of Irish politics*, op.cit, p.50, where Fine Gael leaders adopted similar views to justify the early stages of the anti-annuity payment campaign.
[19] J. Horgan, *Irish Media, a critical history since 1922*. Routledge, London, 2001, p.6.

Farmers' and Ratepayers' League. However, the clandestine nature of farmer resistance to the payment of land annuities from 1933 onwards was not conducive to newspaper coverage, even that of a favourable nature.

The activities of protectionist agricultural organisations were covered extensively in both the national and local press. D. P. Moran frequently publicised the arguments of these organisations in *The Leader.* Unsurprisingly, the *Irish Press* promoted the pro-tillage policies of Fianna Fáil.[20] The United Farmers' Protection Association initially received favourable coverage from the *Irish Press.* However, when the association began to criticise Fianna Fáil, its members discovered that the *Irish Press* no longer published its statements. This was also reflective of the growing conservative outlook of the *Irish Press* and its abandonment of its earlier social radicalism, as argued by O' Brien.[21] The rural middle classes also provided the principal readership for provincial newspapers.[22] Such papers reported the activities of local farmers' associations in considerable detail.

Regional variations in newspaper coverage of the farmers' organisations reflected the differing agricultural systems in the localities. For example, the *Leinster Leader* covered the various activities of protectionist farmers in great detail while the *Mayo News* was hostile to the Irish Farmers' Union, given the long-standing support by its proprietor, P. J. Doris, for

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[20] Ibid, p.30.
[21] M. O' Brien, *De Valera, Fianna Fáil and the Irish Press.* Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 2001, p.68.
[22] Horgan, op.cit, p.6.

small farmers.[23] Sometimes, the opinions of the individual proprietors dictated the nature of newspaper coverage of the farmers' organisations. It was hardly surprising that John O' Hanlon TD ensured that the activities of the Cavan Agricultural League and the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League were extensively covered in his paper, the *Anglo-Celt.* Overall, the print media gave much coverage to farmers' organisations and their failure cannot be attributed to inadequate publicity.

The attitude by farmers to government regulation of agriculture also deserves attention. The Irish Farmers' Union was initially formed to oppose the various restrictions on imports and exports, regulation of prices and compulsory tillage measures introduced by the British government during the First World War, which had a negative effect on agricultural interests. However, some members of the union supported government intervention if it would favour farmers. For example, it supported the measures taken by the Irish Free State administration to standardise agricultural produce. These government measures were not criticised until the Great Depression when government intervention was blamed by farmers for their financial problems, whereas falling prices were the real cause of the farmers' difficulties. The voluntary organisation of farmers was hindered by the paradoxical attitude of farmers to collective action. Individualism amongst farmers prevented their voluntary organisation. As a consequence of this organisational failure, farmers then sought government assistance to their problems. They favoured government intervention if it was to their material benefit and had a preference for financial assistance, particularly de-rating, rather than incentives to improve agricultural productivity.

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[23] Maume, op.cit, p.226.

In accounting for the failure of farmers' organisations, many issues have been considered. How does this research alter the existing perception of farmers in the historiography? By selecting a seventeen year time period, the thesis reveals a continuity of farmer organisation which has hitherto been ignored in the historiography. The existing trend in the historiography studied the early years of the Irish Farmers' Union and then skipped almost a decade to the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League; periods which coincided with major political events such as the War of Independence and the Economic War.[24] In contrast, this thesis has revealed a continuity of farmer organisation and agitation throughout the intervening years. For example, the formation of independent farmer organisations in the early 1930's was therefore not the spontaneous phenomenon as described by Manning and Maye.[25]The National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League was not simply the product of disaffection with Cumann na nGaedheal, as described by Regan[26] The formation of these organisations dated from 1929 when the Irish Farmers' Union granted political freedom to its constituent county associations, which then adopted an independent political stance. Those TDs nominated by the independent associations later contributed to the formation of the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League. While the Economic War was a catalyst for the formation of the league, a number of the independent farmer TDs had discussed the formation of a national farmers' organisation prior to the Economic War.

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[24] Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life, 1913-21*, op.cit, p.221-29, passim, studies the early years of the Irish Farmers' Union from 1919 to 1922. No study of any farmers' organisation has been undertaken until the studies by Manning, *James Dillon*, op.cit, pp.61-67, and Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution*, op.cit, p.319-20, of the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League.
[25] Manning, *James Dillon*, op.cit, p.61. Maye, *Fine Gael, 1923-87*, op.cit, p.31.
[26] Regan, op.cit, p.318

This thesis also challenges the prevailing views in the historiography that farmers were primarily a negative political force, who seldom contributed to the formation of constructive agricultural policies. The Irish Farmers' Union, as evident in their annual congresses and in the evidence presented to the Commission on Agriculture, did advocate constructive policies to develop agriculture, contrary to the opinions of Healy & Smith and Manning.[27] Farmers were also capable of judging agricultural policies on their agricultural rather than political merits. Daly's view that "many disgruntled farmers blamed de Valera's government for their difficulties, [but] their anger does not appear to have been directed specifically at the Department of Agriculture"[28] is invalidated by the criticisms made by members of the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League of agricultural policy; especially in their opposition to the unbalanced promotion of tillage, the levying of domestic butter producers to subsidise creamery butter producers and in the payment of subsidies on agricultural exports, which were raised from taxation levied on farmers.

The demand for protectionist measures for tillage is another example where this study has revealed that farmers had a greater capability for independent action than previously believed. Daly argues that demands for tariffs on imported grain produce were a response to the poor harvests of 1925 and were interpreted in the context of the general demand for protectionist policies.[29] In fact, members of the Irish Farmers' Union discussed the merits of a tariff on barley from as early as 1921, while J. J. Bergin had advocated protection for the tillage sector

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[27] Healy & Smith, *Farm organisations in Ireland*, op.cit, p.23. Manning, "The Farmers", from Lee, ed. *Ireland 1945-70*, op.cit, p.51.
[28] Daly, *The first Department*, op.cit, pp.203-04.
[29] Daly, *Industrial development and Irish national identity*, op.cit, p.27.

to the Commission on Agriculture, without the stimulus of declining prices. The work of Orridge and Cronin has emphasised the autonomous response of farmers to the Economic War, in conjunction with political opposition to Fianna Fáil, as the constituent factors of the anti-annuity payment campaign.[30] This thesis confirms their views and also argues that the resistance by farmers to Fianna Fáil policy pre-dates the formation of Fine Gael and was more organised than Orridge and Cronin have assumed. Farmers had considered the non-payment of annuities prior to Fianna Fáil coming to power in 1932. The National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League organised the violent resistance to the payment of annuities prior to the formation of Fine Gael and without the involvement of the Blueshirts. The continuation of the anti-annuity payment campaign after Eoin O' Duffy's resignation was primarily due to the efforts of former members of farmers' associations and not by militant Blueshirts, as argued by Regan.[31]

The study has confirmed the existing perception in the historiography that the Irish Farmers' Union and the Farmers' Party were divided, yet the nature of these divisions have not been examined or accounted for in the historiography.[32] The divisions between large and small farmers, between tillage and livestock farmers and between the differing political affiliations of the Farmers' Party deputies have been revealed, and their divisive influence upon both the Irish Farmers' Union and the Farmers' Party has been elucidated.

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[30] Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics*, op.cit, p.246. Orridge, op.cit, p.361.
[31] Regan, op.cit, p.366.
[32] Manning, "The Farmers", op.cit, p.51.

The relationship between the Farmers' Party and Cumann na nGaedheal was more complex than hitherto believed.[33] In spite of supporting the Treaty, the Farmers' Party maintained an independent political stance during the mid-1920's. The attempted merger with Cumann na nGaedheal in 1927 was defeated by the ordinary Irish Farmers' Union members. The Farmers' Party only formed a coalition with Cumann na nGaedheal after the entry of Fianna Fáil into the Dáil, an alliance which was resented by many union activists, while the three Farmers' Party TDs who joined Cumann na nGaedheal did not do so until the 1932 election. Therefore the relationship between the Farmers' Party and Cumann na nGaedheal was not as simple as Lee suggests when; "in a straight fight between Cumann na nGaedheal and Fianna Fáil, the bigger farmers represented by the Farmers' Party had nowhere else to go."[34]

Differences between large and small farmers and between tillage and livestock farmers retarded the potential of farmers' organisations. The divisive political environment of the early years of the Irish Free State, coupled with the participation of farmers in political parties and the sectoral nature of agricultural production, also hindered the possibility of farmers representing their sector on a purely vocational basis. By 1936, organised farmers were dismissed as being politically extremist and unrepresentative of the rural community.

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[33] For examples of the view that the Farmers' Party was a mere adjunct of Cumann na nGaedheal throughout its existence, see Garvin, op.cit, p.180, Healy & Smith, op.cit, p.23, and Manning, "The Farmers", op.cit, p.52.

[34] Lee, op.cit, p.171.

The same difficulties were experienced by the next generation of farmer representatives, Clann na Talmhan, which also suffered from the problems of unifying the diverse demands of Irish farmers and of adopting partisan political opinions as a consequence of contesting elections.[35] It would be the following wave of organised farmers, embodied in the I. F. A. and the I. C. M. S. A,[36] who would avoid the peril of participation in electoral politics and learn from the experience of their predecessors who failed to establish a lasting representative farmers' organisation between 1919 to 1936.

[35] Varley," Farmers against Nationalists; The rise and fall of Clann na Talmhan in Galway" in Moran, ed. *Galway, History & Society*, op.cit, pp.594-95 &p.601.

[36] On the non-political stance of modern farmers' organisations, see Healy & Smith, *Farm organisations in Ireland*, op.cit, p.169, and M. Judge, "A new era of hope" in P. O' Grady, ed, *Leaders of Courage, the story of the I. C. M. S. A.*, IFP media, Dublin, 2000, pp.11-19, pp.15-16.

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