

Statement by the Fianna Fáil (February 1979)

Caption: In February 1979, Fianna Fáil, an Irish Conservative Party, reveals its political agenda for the first direct election to the European Parliament.

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European Progressive Democrats

A vote for Fianna Fail candidates in the first direct elections to the European Parliament is a vote in the national interest. In the current economic situation it is also a vote in the European Community's interest.

As the Party which led Ireland into Europe and whose members have given the people of Ireland their most effective voice in the European Parliament, Fianna Fail wants to see the Community attain its objective of shared economic prosperity achieved, under democratic control and in continuing peace. Unless Ireland and the other developing regions within the Community reach the levels of prosperity enjoyed in the developed areas of other member states it will be impossible for European integration to proceed as foreseen in the Community Treaties.

Ireland's economic interest in the European Community lies primarily in the guaranteed levels of farming incomes provided through the Common Agricultural Policy and in Community support for national initiatives to increase employment and growth, and to bring down inflation. This support comes through the European Social Fund, the European Regional Fund, the European Investment Bank, and the proposed European Monetary System (EMS), for example.

In the present European Parliament Fianna Fail's members joined in the creation of a European Progressive Democrat Group to further these interests. This Group published a statement of common views at a pre-election Convention in Cork last November.

In the election to the enlarged Parliament on June 7, Fianna Fail will be seeking a clear national majority in the four Euro-constituencies drawn up for the first time by a Government-appointed independent commission. Local elections will be held on the same day. In its election campaign Fianna Fail will ask for a mandate at local level and in the European Parliament which will lend support to the Government's economic and social policy.

Among the priorities for the Community which Fianna Fail members of the European Parliament will continue to pursue are measures to better the potential of the average Irish family, whether living in town or city or on the land.

Fianna Fail in Europe will work for a substantial increase in the European Regional Development Fund. The European Social Fund must also become a real instrument of employment policy and take account of the needs of the young, the handicapped and the underprivileged. Threatened industrial sectors must be given temporary protection and small and medium-sized industries need more support from Community policies. There should be progress towards genuine social participation in industry through the participation of employees with management in the decision-making process.

The Common Agricultural Policy must be supplemented by a proper incomes policy. Among other policies Fianna Fail will press for the phasing out of monetary compensatory amounts and the revision of the structural directives. EEC structural policy must aim at keeping young people in farming and bringing more profit to the small farmer. Fianna Fail accepts the need to reach agreement on a common fisheries policy and emphasises the necessity of developing and protecting fish resources.

Fianna Fail in the European Progressive Democrats believe that improved living standards must be accompanied by improvements in the quality of life. Action is required at Community level to ensure the quality of consumer goods and to give full compensation for product liability. New measures to protect against atmospheric, noise and water pollution will be supported.

A European passport and driving licence should be introduced immediately with free travel for the elderly extended into all member states. Fianna Fail in Europe will press for the full implementation of equal rights and equal pay for women. A Committee for working women should be established at EEC level to be

available for direct consultation on proposals for new legislation.

The current European Parliament has not had the benefit of Northern Ireland members. An important feature of the political progress in Europe represented by direct elections will be the election of three members from the North. Fianna Fail has already taken initiatives in the European Parliament to improve cross-border co-operation and looks forward to working on matters of common interest with the North's elected members in the new Parliament.

Participation in progress towards the further enlargement of the Community and in the balanced development of the Community's trade and aid relationships with the rest of the world is in both Ireland's interest and Europe's interest. Young people in Fianna Fail take a special interest in the ideals of world development and in the employment opportunities and cultural stimulus offered by a positive approach to Community membership.

Further information from:

Senator Seamus Brennan,
National Director of Election,
Fianna Fail European Election Campaign Office,
13 Upper Mount Street, Dublin 2.