

20th Century Irish Political History

Governments of Ireland 1948—1959

Ireland's economy was slow to recover after the war (WWII—the Emergency) and support for Fianna Fail slipped.

A new party Clann na Poblachta took some of the traditional Fianna Fail support and won 10 Dail seats.

Following a General Election in **1948** a combination of Fine Gael, Labour, Clann na Poblachta and others defeated Fianna Fail and set out to form Ireland's first coalition government. John A Costello of Fine Gael became the Taoiseach of this first Coalition government. **(1948-1951)**

The Clann na Poblachta party, led by Sean MacBride pushed its coalition partners to make Eire into a republic.

It was felt that Ireland was virtually a republic and that a formal declaration and a departure from the British Commonwealth would increase Ireland's self respect and that doing so would have the added effect of diminishing the role of the IRA.

In 1949 the Republic of Ireland Act came into force.

In view of the fact that Britain was at that time the principal market for Ireland's goods, a special arrangement or relationship remained between both countries in terms of trade and citizenship.

But the declaration of Ireland as a Republic separated Eire even further from Northern Ireland and did not stop the IRA ambitions for a 32 county Ireland.

Noel Browne, as Minister for Health, a member of Clann na Poblachta introduced significant measures to help eradicate tuberculosis (TB) which at the time was a major killer disease in Ireland.

He also tried to provide free medical care for all mothers and their children under a plan called the Mother and Child Scheme. This plan or scheme was met with strong opposition by doctors and in particular by the Catholic Church. The excuse given by the Church for its opposition to the scheme was that it opposed State interference in private family life.

Throughout the 1950s there were several changes of governments in Ireland. Fianna Fail governed from **1951 –1954**. A second coalition returned to government from **1954-1957** and Fianna Fail were back in power in **1957**.

