Foreword

I first met Neville Keery in our student days in Dublin in the late 1950s when we were both active in debating, he at Trinity and I at UCD and King's Inns. Having been at school at St Andrew's College, he was reading philosophy and had been elected a Scholar in his second year. He was a rare Irish voice in the College Historical Society, then dominated by the alumni of English public schools, who were a prominent presence in Trinity in those days.

In 1960, having been victorious in the Irish universities debating championship, we both travelled to Aberystwyth in Wales to take part in the semi-final of the Observer Mace tournament open to all universities in these islands. Neville's impassioned oration on the motion, which was about youth education, raised the rafters and swept him into the final of the competition.

We travelled home together along winding railways on the west coast of Wales. At one station we caught a glimpse of the philosopher, Bertrand Russell, on the platform, a great thrill for Neville.

The outing must have been a high point in Neville's student life but, while delighted, he remained cool, companionable and understated, qualities that have remained with him through the productive life of which this book is an account.

Although our friendship dated from that outing, our lives went in different directions and we have renewed contact only since he returned, on retirement, to live in Ireland around the turn of the century, having completed his career in the service of the European Union.

Meanwhile he has had a varied and fulfilled life, much of it outside Ireland, recorded methodically and chronologically in this book prefaced by some general reflections arising out of his career.

His has not been a life devoted to the pursuit of the glittering prizes of money or position but rather an exercise in self-fulfilment with varied work experiences, while also seeking to develop his own creative talents as poet, writer, artist and film-maker. His priority has been his family of two children and to remain true to the high standards of behaviour inspired by the Quaker religion he espoused with his first wife, Anne Moran, a few years after their marriage in 1967.

The detail in which Neville remembers his childhood and schooldays growing up in Dublin's closely knit middle class Protestant community is astonishing and makes the book valuable social history.

His insight into the politics of the Fianna Fáil party in the late 1960s and the 1970s

will also interest historians. Having been a Dáil candidate in the 1969 General Election, Neville became a senator and a member of his party's National Executive. He had a lead role in the 1972 referendum campaign that secured approval for Irish membership of the European Communities. He was also involved in preparing the manifesto for the 1977 General Election, which gave Fianna Fáil the last overall majority it ever achieved; he defends the manifesto itself and insists that the subsequent malaise in the economy could have been avoided if the government had reacted more quickly to the subsequent change in external circumstances. He foresaw the subsequent election of Charles Haughey as party leader and reveals that Haughey invited him to become General Secretary of the Party. But, by that time, he had become orientated towards a career in Brussels having had a taste of life there as deputy chef de cabinet to Patrick Hillery, Ireland's first European Commissioner. It was a loss to Irish political life.

The personal seeds of his decision can be traced back to the 1973 General Election when Neville was an unsuccessful candidate for the Seanad as well as the Dáil. In its aftermath he decided that he would re-grow the beard he had shed a decade earlier at the end of his students days when he began to seek employment. This was, he says, an assertion of the non-conformist dissenter side of his personality and was symbolic of his determination that fundamental convictions and choices would never be subject totally to the discipline of a political party, employer or any other institutional commitment into which he entered. He was determined to be his own man living a life true to his convictions.

This honesty is among the engaging personal attributes that shine through Neville's narrative. Another is the fidelity in personal relations first manifested as the dutiful elder son of a mother widowed when he was only six and then as a loving husband and attentive parent to a son and daughter. The photographs he has assembled are evocative, telling the story admirably at a visual level.

Another attractive feature of Neville is his openness to all comers and acceptance of differences. This has facilitated him in his relationships with those from different worlds; he rejoices that his two grandchildren have a mother hailing from Ghana. I found his account of his visit to Ghana to meet his obstetrician daughter-in-law's relatives most interesting and informative.

While he is ready to admit to faults and errors of his own, Neville never complains about his treatment by others. He shies away from adverse judgments on those he has encountered in his diverse life. In this, as in other ways, he is true to the Quaker principles which have been a pole star of a fruitful life that is well worth recording, as he has done in this book.

CHARLES LYSAGHT
JULY 2026

Preface

Yes this is a real collage. It's made up of bits and pieces collected from memoir and reflection texts written over many years and gathered together now. You can't look at it stuck together on a wall like the pioneering work of Picasso and Braque but if you stick with it in these pandemic times you will learn a lot about a public and private life, notably through Seanad Éireann and a career with the European Commission in Dublin and Brussels. There are poems and photographs too.

Personality and the passage of time are the inevitable enemies of memoirists and diarists. I've changed in my 81 years and there have been occasions when memory or other demands let me down in trying to keep up with the years. Some gaps have been filled with fiction. As a Freudian, and as a dedicated worker committed to professional duties in hand, I am struck by clouds of omission in relation to female friendships and to career opportunities.

The record shows that I am an inveterate dreamer of manifestos, coming up with ideas on democracy, philosophy, politics, poetry and, in more particular contexts, thoughts on film and art criticism, journalism, peace and Quakerism, family planning and, most recently, universal basic income. A surprise among these is likely to be the 1977 Fianna Fáil general election manifesto. *See pages 24-26 and pages 156-160.*

It is just over a year since I married the poet and novelist Pauline Hall, who is also working away to complete a lot of work. Ross Hinds, who published my three collections of poetry to date, and is familiar with some of my memoir exercises, has encouraged me to get some kind of finished volume to the press. I would like to get the job done for myself and my family and for the accumulated Keery record.

The great gift centrepiece of this collage came with marriage in 1967 to the late Anne Moran and the arrival of our family, Justin and Patricia. Our children were lucky in their grandparents and I hope our grandchildren know how proud and how thrilled Anne and I were with their arrival as the children of Justin and Dr. Amma Kyei Mensah. Part of the joy of celebrating both my 80th birthday and marriage to Pauline has been to see how well both our families get on together.

But what is the Keery record to which I have made reference? In 1992, when visiting for dinner in Brussels at a time of down-sizing, Professor Joe Lee had a

look at all my political and other papers in our house cave [basement in Belgium] and said he would take the lot for the archive of University College Cork. That visit led to the eventual publication in 2018 of the *Neville Keery Collection Descriptive List*, preceded by an exhibition based on the collection, '1972; Ireland Votes for Change', launched by now Emeritus Professor Lee, marking the 45th anniversary of three referendums. The work of the library archivists has been exceptional and I would like to be sure all my memoir material joins the collection, in part through this collage.

The collage falls easily into two parts. Part I REFLECTION is a reflection in the form of a collection of essays. Each essay is intended to highlight a background theme or to provide more information relevant to following the timeline.

Part II TIMELINE is a chronological account worked on over many years with editorial help from Pauline Kelly and Jo Hughes, who got it into a format where it could be published online as part of a Keery Blog in 2013. I have now brought that up to date.

NEVILLE KEERY
DECEMBER 2020

PART I



Reflection

Being a Dubliner

In the Dublin of the 1930s and 1940s well-to-do middle class parents chose well thought of city centre nursing homes as the places in which their children would be born. There were excellent Catholic nursing homes and Protestant nursing homes in the Earlsfort Terrace/Hatch Street area.

On 5 May 1939 I was born in the Protestant Hatch Street nursing home, known familiarly as 'The Hatch'. I understand that I was small and fragile at birth and that excellent nursing care ensured my survival, avoiding the risk of an emergency departure for the Rotunda Maternity Hospital.

I was the first child of a Dublin solicitor, William John Keery and his wife Florence Mary Murphy. Thanks to the choice of Hatch Street I have always been a real Dubliner, that is to say someone born between the two Dublin canals, the neighbouring Grand Canal on the south side and the Royal Canal on the north side.

Anne Moran, who was to become my wife, had been born a few years earlier in a Catholic nursing home on Earlsfort Terrace. She never claimed her Dublin birthright and always saw herself as a Bray, Co. Wicklow, person. Her parents were popular local chemists in that Co. Wicklow seaside town, fifteen miles from Dublin. She was amused that I saw Bray as 'outside the Pale', historically the lawless hinterland of Dublin, separated from the capital city by a ditch or wall. 'They eat their young out there' I have been known to say.

Although I know early childhood memories are very suspect in the eyes of child psychologists, I have always claimed extremely early memories, insisting that I remember colours and shapes perceived when lying in my pram in the back garden at 8 Cowper Drive, Rathmines. I would have been brought home to Cowper Drive from the nursing home. Within Dublin, perhaps I should be defined as a Rathmines or Ranelagh person? My current residence is definitely Rathmines but the early nexus of my life was between Cowper Drive and Manders Terrace, Ranelagh, home of my maternal grandmother, and only five minutes from where I live now. The garden of 5 Manders Terrace was where my Christening party was held and the house is the one property I am sorry did not stay in the family. Particularly now, with the opening of a Luas station across from the grass paddock in front of the

house, it must be one of the most desirable residences in Dublin.

As I grew up I became more and more a Dubliner enjoying as a child every outing, being pushed in my go-car (a buggy in today's terms) or being brought on a bus to the city centre, then Nelson's Pillar. When I was able to ride a bicycle with confidence I was allowed cycle freely around the city. There was relatively little traffic then and no one imagined the safety fears facing young people today.

As soon as I became a university debater and heard my voice recorded, or, later as a politician on radio or television, I was surprised at the strength of my Dublin accent. When joining the European Commission and becoming a reasonably fluent French speaker I could never shake off the Dublin sound of my French accent.

Catholics, Protestants and Dissenters

GROWING UP in Cowper Drive I became aware that the distinction between Protestants and Catholics seemed important.

The short cul-de-sac had an unusual cross-section of middle-class Dublin society. To the right of us was a large family headed by the business manager of a leading newspaper. To the left was an older family running one of the country's petrol suppliers. Beyond them was the head of the Department of Foreign Affairs. Ending the road was the bungalow of the family of the engineer looking after the big electricity sub-station on the site. Working back down the opposite side of the road was the family of a leading city grocer. That house was followed by the family of a Chief Superintendent of the Guards. His house was next to that of the head of the Church of Ireland Representative Church Body. Next came the houses of two Jewish professional families, with, below them, the homes of two civil servants. Across from them, on our side, came another civil servant, and the home of the developer of a new department store.

Playing on the road with the children of my age from these households, and visiting each other's houses, the strongest sense of a distinct identity came from the Roman Catholic households, they blessed themselves a lot. Families spoke of sons and daughters who might become priests or nuns. Going to Mass on Sundays was very important. Beechwood church was close by and had a barrel with a tap from which you could get holy water.

This distinctiveness seemed important at the time but was never a source of animosity in the friendly environment where the road facilitated roller-skating and all sorts of other activities. Our family employed live-in Catholic maids and I knew it was important to respect their free time, in particular their going to Mass on Sundays.

As I grew up I came to understand more clearly the distinction of being a Protestant in a majority Catholic community. While I knew I had been baptised into the Church of Ireland, I learnt that living near us were Methodists, Presbyterians, Plymouth Brethren and Quakers, all of whom were regarded as Protestants. The decision to be confirmed into the Church of Ireland was a decision I made for myself as a teenager, more out of solidarity than conviction.

From then until now, I have followed a religious odyssey through agnosticism and atheism, to attending a Roman Catholic outreach course for non-Catholics, to thinking of going on to ordination in the Church of Ireland, to joining in what was called a 'mixed marriage' with a Roman Catholic wife, to becoming with my wife Quakers in Brussels.

I have no idea when I first heard that the revolutionary patriot, Wolfe Tone, had spoken of the need to bring together Catholics, Protestants and Dissenters in a better Ireland. I learnt that Quakers counted as Dissenters and I felt and feel a natural dissenter. From my school and undergraduate education, through my professional and political career, and into retirement, I am very happy to be in the environment of family, friends and fellow activists constantly questioning and discussing how to do things better.

In the real Ireland, whenever religion seemed or seems relevant, I know I am regarded as carrying a Protestant label.

Learning and Education

IN SUBJECT OR ACTIVITY areas where I have an interest, I think I am recognised for the speed and competence of my 'cop on'. Unfortunately from the age of about fourteen or so I realised that I would never make it in mathematics or music.

In sport, within the limitations of my build and gifts, I had the discipline and training commitment to register some achievements. Captaining the winning Under 14 seven-a-side rugby team in a league competition in my

secondary school, St Andrew's College, still feels a highlight. I have an Irish Championship gold medal for lifesaving, where the only competition came from the army and from the Royal Ulster Constabulary, who had swimming pools, as did St Andrew's.

When asked where did I learn most, I often reply mischievously, skipping my excellent kindergarten, St Andrew's, and my formal university education, to give all the credit to the boy scouts and the Hist.

The Scout Association of Ireland, in which I participated over many years, was a non-denominational organisation, pre-dating the Catholic Boy Scouts of Ireland, with which it merged after my time. It had a structure ranging from Wolf Cub Packs for younger boys, to Scout Troops, to Rover Crews for young men who might be students or already in employment. Participation involved the wearing of distinctive uniforms. Today, uniforms are out of fashion and Baden-Powell, who founded the scout movement, is criticised for his thinking, which had a British military and colonial heritage. Like most youth organisations, it has also faced allegations of leadership child abuse.

My own Dublin experience from Cub to Rover always felt positive and enjoyable. As a patrol leader in the St Andrew's College troop the discipline of inspections and of advance through the awarding of badges suited me. I particularly enjoyed camping expeditions in Ireland and the UK. In my time, without mobile phones or thoughts of risk and insurance, there was a real sense of adventure and we did things from rafting, to night games over unknown terrain, that would probably be unthinkable now. As an Assistant Scoutmaster I found myself in a situation where I was looking after a summer camp virtually single-handed and I know I was wrong not to ask for higher support through a Commissioner. Happily everyone survived the dangers of chopping wood and cooking over fires. Some of the things I learnt, from making an inventory of all that would be needed to cater for fifteen boys over ten days, to first aid, and the packing of rucksacks, are skills I have used ever since.

The Hist is the 250-year-old College Historical Society of Trinity College Dublin. Becoming a member and participating in debates from 1957, my first undergraduate year in Dublin University, led to my acquiring a very different range of skills. One begins with listening attentively to what people have to say and, without having any particular personal commitment, you learn how to make the case for or against any issue put up for debate.

My strongest card is giving the impression of seriousness and commitment, using my voice, its volume and mannerisms, to appeal to the emotions of potential voters. In my penultimate year in College, 1959, I became Ireland's leading competitive university debater. To this day I can make a strong case for or against almost anything and know, even in Zoom conditions, whether or not I am making an impression. Having said that, I always try to avoid invitations to be an after-dinner speaker, wit and repartee I know are not part of my tool kit.

From Secondary School to Philosophy

TODAY'S ST ANDREW'S COLLEGE is in fine architect-designed buildings in Booterstown, Co. Dublin, and has a reputation as one of the best secondary schools in the country. When I was sent to St Andrew's in 1950 it was on Clyde Road and Wellington Place within cycling distance of home. The premises were several large former dwelling houses with, to the rear, toilets, an assembly hall, and laboratories in what might have been mews stables at the end of a yard with bicycle sheds. The only survivors from what might have been extensive gardens were an outside tap and a large mulberry tree.

The school is a Presbyterian foundation and began life in a house right in the city centre on St Stephen's Green. Like most schools it must have had ups and downs as headmasters and teachers changed. In my view, during my time as a pupil, it was lamentable as a place of education. Not many of the boys went on to university, most – and the teaching of commerce must have been good – went into banks and insurance companies or family businesses. Those who went to university seemed to favour science or engineering. There were also boys with clear vocations to be airline pilots, architects, doctors, etc…

In my case, it was simply assumed I would go from school to Trinity College. With no particular gifts in maths or science, without any career guidance I just needed to get into the University. Trinity had its own entrance examinations and one needed to have particular ranges of subject to get into different faculties. I seemed to be short a science subject so grinds were arranged so that I could pass an exam in biology – not taught in St Andrew's.

But what would I study in Trinity? My answer was Philosophy – not taught in the school – but talked about in what should have been Latin classes by a master we called 'Buster' O'Neill. He always had big tomes in his pockets with titles like Cosmology and Epistemology and could be easily diverted into talking about these. One day he put to us the question 'Has a dog got a soul?' and from that moment I became a philosopher. I knew that this was the kind of abstract question I really enjoyed and realised that as long as I could remember I had been a boy who believed in the truth and in telling the truth.

In Trinity at that time the philosophy course was called Mental and Moral Science. Happily one of my classmates and lasting friends, Robert (Bob) Tweedy, knew a potential divinity student doing the course and arranged a meeting. His description of the first year sounded extremely interesting and he thought I would find it easy. So it proved and I found myself top of the class in my Junior Freshman year. While the lecturing proved very uneven, there were very good reading lists and in addition to library access I was fortunate in the support of my mother and bought as much of the recommended reading as I could find and set myself the goal of becoming a College Foundation Scholar in Mental and Moral Science.

On the philosophy course we had introductions to logic and psychology and covered the history of philosophy. In termly modules we focused on the big names of key periods from Plato and Aristotle, to Descartes, Leibniz and Spinoza, to Locke, Berkeley and Hume, Hegel and Kant. We covered themes like ethics and aesthetics and the theory of knowledge with reference to the writings in contemporary journals of big names, often from Oxford and Cambridge. Apart from my examination priorities, I realised that the training we were getting in clarity and the assessment of arguments was extremely helpful in my Hist debating and other contexts.

Happily I achieved my goal and was elected a Scholar in 1959 and treat that as my philosophy badge. *See pages 92-3.* Never losing my interest in the subject, I kept trying to keep up with the new big names in English language philosophy and learning something of the very different continental schools.

Over time I have given most of my collection of books to the library of the College's Metaphysical Society, of which I have been elected a vice-President. The small selection of books I retain and enjoy dipping into, apart from Aristotle's *Ethics*, draw on the big names of the 20th Century, Bertrand

Russell, G. E. Moore and Ludwig Wittgenstein. In addition to their theoretical writings, men like Russell and Wittgenstein were powerful personalities who influenced many through the way they lived and the values they pursued. Being a philosopher is more than a constant and enjoyable interest, it is, in a sense, a way of life.

Journalism, from Trainee to Critic

MY VIEW OF JOURNALISM is based primarily on my experience from 1961 to 1964, when my first employment was as an editorial trainee with Westminster Press Provincial Newspapers, at the time one of the largest press groups in the UK. I worked first on a weekly newspaper in Blyth in Northumberland and moved on to evening papers in South Shields and York.

At that time there were no word-processing or online capabilities and everything was typed by reporters, whose copy was then processed by a subeditor. In Blyth the editor was the only subeditor but in South Shields and York there were separate offices where a team of subeditors worked around a large table with spikes for unused material, dictionaries and reference books for checking copy, with scissors and paste-pots handy for cutting or re-arranging stories.

On the larger papers, a daily conference involving the editor, the commercial manager, the chief reporter and other senior staff would meet to agree the space available for copy and advertising and the shape of the day's paper would emerge, with plans for photographs, regular features and a leading article or editorial. Trainees might be allocated a regular feature like Church Notes or a What's On column. Everything had to be typed up in a particular format, identifying the author and publication and conforming to the Westminster Press house style. That style was defined in a small style book which focused on the importance of clear simple sentences, the use of punctuation, and a uniform treatment for people's names and the use of capital letters and numbers. The sub-editors would check for errors of style and presentation. Every piece of copy had to be complete in itself. The copy-paper used was of small size, taking a few paragraphs at most, and the last line on each page had to be complete.

I find I still write mostly in Westminster Press style and the habit of

never having carry-over at the bottom of a page helps readability. It would be a subeditor's decision as to whether or not an item should have a by-line, with the name of the reporter. Getting a by-line either indicated an important story or that the piece was considered well-written. Some regular features, usually assembled from a collection of short reports, would be under a standard pen-name. For reasons of ecclesiastical geography, I wrote Church Notes in Blyth as *Lindisfarne* and in South Shields as *Bede*.

The Westminster Press was big enough to organise occasional weekend training-courses for its trainees and these were a great success socially and educationally. It was great to be able to swap experiences with trainees working on bigger papers and in many different parts of the country from Reading and Oxford to Yorkshire. A particularly outstanding weekend was held in Ripon, where the leader was Harold Evans, at the time editor of the Northern Echo in Darlington, since then one of the 20th century's most famous journalists and writers on press and media, following his key career moment as editor of the Insight Section, introduced by the Sunday Times. In addition to practical exercises over the weekend Evans spoke a lot about the dangers of trying to introduce colour into reports and the dangers of over-writing.

I still remember his example of a US reporter who sent copy on a Mississippi river disaster to New York with the opening line: "God sits on a hill tonight looking down on the tragic valley". The message back from his sub-editor was: "Drop story. Interview God. Get pic if possible."

Dealing with tragedy is the worst part of reporting. In South Shields I was regularly sent out to cover fatal accidents on the grounds that I was good at being polite and sympathetic. It is just awful to find oneself telling the wife of a shipyard worker that her husband has been killed in an accident. One would prefer to get some other kind of front page story.

Court reporting is not easy, particularly on an evening paper, where afternoon deadlines can be as early as midday, and opening statements may have been made in Court at 10.30 am. Friendly experienced reporters taught me a few standard formulae, particularly helpful for the introduction of humorous quotes. My favourite came from a case where a popular South Shields restaurant called the Happy Palace was being prosecuted for a breach of food hygiene. 'My Lord', said the lead barrister, 'this is the story of an establishment that was neither happy nor palatial'.

Press and media have completely changed since my Westminster Press Days. The use of computers means that most reporters do their own subediting and it is evident, particularly, in serious daily papers, that the checking of grammar and an insistence on clear and simple writing is a thing of the past. Stories and features are given exaggerated by-lines complete with photographs. Unfortunately the impact of social media as a purveyor of news and a vehicle for advertising is putting the future of newspapers at risk. Fake news has become a political weapon.

For older people at this time of pandemic, the most read newspaper page can be that carrying the Death Notices. There, accuracy still reigns. One of my first jobs on the Blyth News was to cover local funerals, trying to list the names of all the mourners present. Given the instant reader complaints about omissions or a misspelled name gives one a great respect for facts, particularly when the test of any news coverage has to be: Who, What, When, How and Why.

Although the institution has changed much over the years, as a trainee journalist I found the annual reports of the British Press Council full of interesting advice on ethical issues. Years later, as a Senator, I became one of the first campaigners for the establishment of a Press Council in Ireland. I was disappointed to find that my proposal was opposed initially by my union, the National Union of Journalists.

A Fianna Fáiler

BECAUSE OF MY AGE and reputation, and by acquiring recently a new circle of family and friends by virtue of marriage, I seem to be asked with increasing frequency 'How on earth could you be a member of Fianna Fáil?' Clearly being judged as a progressive liberal from a Protestant background is seen as completely out of step with the image of Fianna Fáil, even a Fianna Fáil that has just gone into coalition for the first time with its historic rival, Fine Gael. Fianna Fáil has been a somewhat toxic brand name for many years now, a reality I always offset by remembering a post-election observation by my late friend and colleague, Michael Yeats, that 'No one loves Fianna Fáil except the voters.' I never got elected to any public office as a Fianna Fáil candidate but within the party I garnered enough votes to get elected to the National Executive on a number of occasions and, thanks to Jack Lynch, as

Taoiseach and Party Leader, was on his list of eleven Senate Nominations in 1969.

Returning to Dublin in 1964 after my first three career years of employment in the north of England, I felt I was coming back at a time when Ireland had started on a path of modernisation. I gave the credit for this to Sean Lemass, who had succeeded Éamon de Valera as Taoiseach and assumed that the best way of supporting change was to be a member of his Fianna Fáil Party. As I had no political pedigree of any kind I simply wrote to the party's Mount Street Headquarters asking about the membership process. The result was a visit to my Dalkey home by the secretary of the local Cumann, with an assurance that I would be very welcome at its meetings in a rather dilapidated building off the town's main street. I was completely engaged from my first meeting. *See pages 119-120.*

My experience as a local journalist had convinced me of the importance of community organisations with a representative cross-section of members and had taught me that wit and intelligence ran right across society. The Dalkey Cumann had members ranging from top lawyers to struggling middle-class householders, to an electrician and a bus conductor, to the corporation employee I recognised as sweeping the town streets. Dún Laoghaire Councillors and the Fianna Fáil TDs for Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown were regular attenders, as was the Constituency Delegate to the National Executive. There was lively discussion on contentious local and national political issues. These discussions could be continued further at the constituency council or Comhairle Ceantair representing all the Cumainn in the constituency, about ten in all. I was quickly involved in most discussions and felt I could hold my own and perform as well as any of the current officers and representatives. Volunteering for various jobs and learning about the election processes I saw no reason why I would not seek office or election myself and found there were weighty and experienced members who were happy to encourage me.

I have never thought I made a wrong decision in joining Fianna Fáil and made some fascinating friendships from top to bottom in the organisation. It was easy to get enmeshed in the organisation as it then was. Over time there have been substantial changes, particularly in Dublin, where Cumainn virtually disappeared leaving the Comhairle as the key leadership body. Much of this change is due to the way change accelerated, people seem to

have much less leisure time and are happy to work together by e-mail and mobile phones. When I first got into correspondence with Sean Lemass, for example, I saw that his replies were direct and personal and not mediated through the Department of the Taoiseach. It was still acceptable for the Taoiseach to go home for lunch. In the period of my political involvement, the volume of responsibilities and the escalation of media and European demands has made the work of Ministers all consuming.

I have recently become a life-member of Fianna Fáil through one of the party's fund-raising schemes. I felt that my preparedness to be a Fianna Fáiler now mirrors the uncomplimentary phrase used not just in Ireland but in US politics, 'you can take the man out of the bog but you can't take the bog out of the man'.

A Senator

As a Taoiseach's nominee in the Senate I felt I had a particular duty to support him in every way. As a Fianna Fáil party member I was also subject to the party whip in Senate votes. Cynics say the party was glad to have me and to use me as a spokesman because of my unusual Protestant intellectual background. The fact that my period in office from 1969 to 1973 coincided with a sense of leadership challenge in the party, the intensification of horrors in the North of Ireland, and the three referendum campaigns of 1972 generated a lot of work I was called on to do.

The Fianna Fáil Senate party group met before every Senate sitting. It was agreed that we would vote for the appointment of Michael Yeats as Cathaoirleach or Speaker of the Senate. Between the group meeting and the vote in the chamber I had a phone call from a TD purporting to speak for Neil Blaney, Minister for Local Government, and instructing me to vote for a candidate other than Michael Yeats. Of course there was no question of my voting for anyone other than Michael Yeats, a fellow member of the Dalkey Cumann, rapidly becoming a close friend. Michael was easily elected but I had learnt about the pressures to which I might become subject.

I knew Neil Blaney quite well as Honorary Treasurer of the party when I had been elected to the National Executive as constituency delegate. Executive meetings provided opportunities to see the Taoiseach in action as chairman and to see key Ministers in action. Blaney and Haughey impressed,

while Kevin Boland gave a rather crude impression. At times Jack Lynch surprised by seeming poorly informed on key issues, particularly Europe. Paddy Smith, a former Minister, who seemed to retain a powerful voice, and with whom I often differed on the Executive, became one of my strongest supporters in the Parliamentary Party. Tommy Mullins, the party's General Secretary, became a real friend and taught me a lot.

Let me give two examples of how one could feel let down. I spoke to Neil Blaney after one National Executive meeting to put to him my conviction that the recent Buchanan Report on regional planning was important and should be implemented. He told me cheerfully that that was an example of my usual naïve idealism and that the best political approach to regional planning was 'the watering can approach', trying to bring a factory to every parish in every constituency. Much later I spoke to Jack Lynch about my belief that the time had come for the government to develop a science and technology policy. 'Would there be votes in that?' he asked me.

As a former Trustee of the Irish Family Planning Association I was in favour of the introduction of legislation to facilitate contraception. Mary Robinson, who had just arrived in the Senate following the death of Trinity Senator Owen Sheehy Skeffington, tabled a draft Family Planning Bill. I was uneasy as to how the party might deal with the Bill and made an agreement with Tommy Mullins, then leader of the group, that there would be a Senate Party discussion of the draft bill so that I could consider my voting position in due course. At the opening of business in the Senate Chamber one Wednesday, Mary Robinson asked about the future of her draft Bill. 'We are taking it today and we are throwing it out,' said Tommy Mullins. As I sat just behind him I tapped him on the shoulder and said 'You know, Tommy, I can't do this'. 'Stay where you are', he replied. So I sat in my seat while my colleagues headed to vote. No one said anything except Des Hanafin, who muttered as he passed me, 'We know why you have to do this, Neville.'

What did Hanafin mean? Did he mean it was because I was a Protestant or did he mean it was because I was likely to be a general election candidate in the progressive constituency of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown. There was virtually no media reference to my abstention and I think it is likely that at that time abstentions were not noted in the Senate voting procedure.

The most notable occasion on which my Protestantism was brought into

play was at a meeting of the National Executive Organisation Committee of which I was a member. Kevin Boland was Chairman of the Committee, although no longer a Minister, he had not yet left Fianna Fáil. Decisions were to be made about the forthcoming annual commemoration of Wolfe Tone, at Bodenstown, Co. Kildare. It had been assumed that Jack Lynch would give the oration but it became apparent as the meeting moved into detailed discussion that there might not be approval for the Taoiseach's participation. A key member of the committee and a long-standing organisation man was Joe Groome, the party's Honorary Secretary. Sensing the way things might go he intervened to say that he thought Senator Keery, as a Protestant, would be the ideal person to deliver the oration. Given that I was there in the meeting nobody was ready to say boo to a goose and I accepted the honour. *See page 138.*

At the end of the Meeting, Joe Groome told me that I was to go immediately to the Taoiseach's Office. Jack Lynch said it was great I would do the oration and he handed me some notes he had been working on and said they might be useful. I did not use them in any way in what turned out to be a very difficult assignment; I believe the notes are among the Keery Papers in the UCC Archive.

More routine assignments were to represent the party in radio and television discussions and in newspaper interviews in relation to the deteriorating situation in Northern Ireland. When Michael McInerney, the political correspondent of *The Irish Times*, requested party nominees to work in the Movement for Peace in Ireland he was trying to establish, the late Senator Eoin Ryan and myself were nominated as participants. History seems to have left no trace of the Movement for Peace although it led to interesting involvements with people like Dermot Ryan, Conor and Máire Cruise O'Brien and Nicholas Simms and Northern clergy and trade unionists. On occasions going on air led to attacks from party TDs who accused me of supporting repression in the North. The only comment I had on a major *Sunday Times* feature on the North, where I participated with Austin Currie and Bill Deedes, came from the Fine Gael TD, Tom O'Donnell, who told me he had been in the UK on the publication weekend and that several people spoke to him about how well the Dublin view had been represented.

Dramatic though they were at the time, the impact of the Northern crisis and the stresses of being a Whipped Senator, took only a small part of my

focus and energy. I saw my brief from the Taoiseach as contributing freely to all debates and to specialise in Fianna Fáil's preparations for accession to Europe. Much of this will appear under other headings. One ludicrous exchange I had with the Chief Whip, Joe Farrell, was when he spoke to me about being seen having lunch in the Leinster House dining room with Conor Cruise O'Brien and Justin Keating. It was a summer holiday custom in Leinster House that parliamentarians did not sit in the tight party groupings of term time. I did not see that my choice of lunchtime company was anyone's business but my own.

Becoming a European

BECOMING A MEMBER of the Senate immediately changes how one is perceived at home and abroad. Former Taoiseach, Garret FitzGerald, often said the title by which he was best known was Senator. In continental Europe, certainly in France, titles like Minister, Ambassador and Senator stay with you for life. In 1969 I suddenly realised my new title raised my status in organisations of which I was an active member, like the Irish Family Planning Association and the Anti-Apartheid Movement in Ireland. Invitations came in asking me to join other organisations and the invitation that most changed my life and career came from the Irish Council of the European Movement (ICEM) through Denis Corboy, Director of Dublin's EC Information Centre and a founder of the ICEM.

From its foundation in 1955 the ICEM had sought to ensure that its Executive Committee represented a cross-section of Irish interests and I found myself in meetings with Fine Gael's Tom O'Higgins and Garret FitzGerald, academics like Professor Louis Smith of UCD and Dr Miriam Hederman O'Brien, and leading agricultural spokesmen, like Sean Healy and Paddy O'Keeffe. The background support of the EC Information Centre meant I became aware of essential reading like the Brussels-published newsletter, *Agence Europe*, and the European Commission's *Bulletin.*

When it became clear that Ireland's application for membership of the European Communities was proceeding to formal negotiations where success would mean legislation and a referendum, ICEM meetings and participation in European conferences accelerated. As I had been given a job in Fianna Fail Headquarters to work on referendum preparations I had some privileged

access to information from the Department of Foreign Affairs, where the Minister, Dr Patrick Hillery, was both Ireland's chief negotiator and Director of the Party's referendum campaign effort.

Given the significance of the campaign preparations, rarely mentioned in the context of the incredibly positive referendum outcome, I regret that I did not share more information with my ICEM colleagues who tended to project a belief that it was the ICEM effort, led particularly by Garret FitzGerald and the newly appointed Director, Michael Sweetman, which was the main shaper of public opinion. My personal commitment was influenced by my first continental conference trips and participation in the first Fianna Fáil Parliamentary Party visit to the European Commission in 1971 facilitated by both Denis Corboy and Ireland's Permanent Representation in Brussels, led by Ambassador Sean Kennan. I had suggested contact with the three major European Trades Union organisations and found it was a first for them.

These experiences taught me how deeply political the European scene was and the importance of the community languages. It was quite clear that even European Commission officials reflected the thinking of the three big European families, Christian Democrats, Social Democrats and Liberals, and that French was not only the dominant working language, but that French administrative structures and habits were reflected in the European Institutions. The Commission's Secretary General, Émile Noël, was at least as influential as the Presidents he served with enormous brilliance and commitment.

My first visit to the Commission's Berlaymont Building Headquarters in Brussels made a huge impression on me and I never imagined that within four years I would be working on the 13th floor housing the offices of the President and Commissioners and that I would be Denis Corboy's deputy in the Commission's Dublin Office, where he had been appointed its first Head.

Of course not everything would be a bed of roses in my career as a convinced European. I learnt rapidly that not all colleagues would share my conviction and that differences of politics and personalities could make life difficult and painful at times. It took me much longer than I had hoped to get the mastery of French that I saw as necessary to working effectively. It seemed to me that French was much more than a language. It expressed a completely different way of thinking. I felt, for example, that the French thought in paragraphs, where English speakers thought in sentences. Senior

French officials seemed to come from an educational background that not only equipped them for higher administration but created an expectation of leadership.

The French newspaper, *Le Monde*, became preferred reading and I liked the way Frenchmen, who considered themselves intellectuals, even dressed distinctively. While at one stage I thought my ideal future would be to live in France, I gradually realised that I would never make the grade to be totally at home with my family in Paris or a major conurbation like Lyons or Nice. Perhaps it is true nevertheless for myself as a European, that, as the saying goes, 'Every man has two countries, his own and France.'

An Administrator

THE ROLE OF ADMINISTRATORS is to deliver decisions and directions from senior management or from political decision-makers. This role can be seen cynically as a bureaucratic framework famous for the view that to avoid mistakes you simply do nothing, knowing that with some work there will be some mistakes and much work means many mistakes. Happily I found myself a natural mover and shaker in a range of responsibilities where a lot was achieved.

In the course of my varied career experiences in Ireland, the UK and the European Communities I have seen differing interpretations of administration and management, often depending on institutional structures and views on appropriate training or experience. While business schools have been around a long time, the creation of university business schools in Ireland dates from the 1960s. At one time to hold an MBA seemed to be the gold standard and I have contemporaries who were sent to business schools in the US and I watched with interest my daughter's experience of acquiring an MBA in a leading Belgian institute.

While I have no experience of management training other than short in-house courses in the European Commission, I had a short but very interesting and fruitful working experience in the training environment of the Institute of Public Administration in Dublin. I picked up guidelines too from the time when passing through airport bookshops there was shelf after shelf of business books. Today there is a more reflective focus on general economic challenges and the impact of computing and artificial intelligence.

There are writers suggesting that business education has lost its way and that the decline of the Japanese economy began with the introduction there of the MBA!

I learnt a useful basic guideline in the IPA, namely that one always needs to be aware that what look like good decisions may have unexpected consequences. I learnt later of Parkinson's Law and the Peter Principle, both named after management theorists. It often seems true that work expands to fill the time available for its completion and that people are often appointed to posts beyond their competence. I greatly disliked working with bosses or colleagues who were clearly more interested in the advancement of their own careers rather than the aims and effectiveness of the teams they were supposed to be leading. Discussion of best management practice was very rare and could be read as threatening.

It was in my personal hobby experience of trying to make a film that I fully understood that most successful efforts are the result of a team of skilled and enthusiastic people working together. When, rather late in my professional life, I became a senior manager, I knew that first and foremost I must win the confidence of my team. I was extremely lucky that my predecessor had an individual management style. I was concerned that he certainly had professional competences beyond me but was encouraged that the context of my arrival was one in which there was a dynamic of extraordinary change. I was appointed Head of Documentation and Libraries for the European Commission in Brussels and Luxembourg in 1993.

My predecessor had been an officer in LIBER, the prestigious European organisation of research libraries, including many university and national libraries, and I was anxious that on my first outing to a LIBER annual meeting I might be the only participant who had neither training nor experience as a librarian. In fact I found myself in discussions where uncertainty and doubt about the future prevailed. Important university libraries had become part of a computer department's management structure and vacant posts for the directors of national libraries were being advertised as managerial and heritage posts.

My Commission appointment was seen as perfectly logical, fitting in with changing times. The Commission was embarking on the process of putting its catalogue online and creating a database that would give direct access to electronic publications. My team would work more closely with

the EU Publications Office where the Official Journal, for example, would become available electronically, with work already underway on having all the historic journals digitised.

Of course I had no experience of cataloguing, but my previous experience as Head of Project in the Spokesman's Service for the creation of the RAPID database of Commission press releases meant I had no problem of communication with my own computer and cataloguer staff. There was a huge management difference of scale between my work as a Commission Head of Division and other Head of Unit appointments. I had a staff of just over 100 between Brussels and Luxembourg and my team ranged beyond administrators and secretaries, to experienced cataloguers, to storekeepers for our massive bookstocks, to staff specialised in acquisitions and finances. I was in a Directorate in the process of changing its name from Press and Information to Education and Culture and could see opportunities to develop my unit as a leader and moderniser in an organisation increasingly aware of its online potential and responsibility, and of the importance of projecting its image in public relations terms.

Given the freedom to introduce my own theories of management, I gave my specialists management responsibilities of their own and opened a staff consultation on drawing up an overall mission statement. I began work on a three-year rolling plan and gave myself the daily discipline of 'management by walking about' so that my personnel would get to know me and I could learn from them. Aware that I would be in permanent need of increased space and funds I decided on a policy of rigorous assessment and transparency, thus differing from the usual bureaucratic habit of simply trying to demand major increases all the time. When the Directorate-General's budget authorities saw that they were not being fed bullshit I began to enjoy exceptional support.

EUROLIB, a somnolent network of the Commission's library with other Institutional libraries like that of the European Parliament, Council of Ministers, Economic and Social Committee, the European Central Bank, the European University Institute in Florence, and other smaller bodies, was transformed under my leadership into an active lobby from which all members benefited. I believed that at a meeting of the Institutional Secretaries-General shortly before my 2001 retirement a merger of the Commission and European Parliament Libraries had been agreed to create a

single outstanding European reference resource in Brussels. That ideal was not realised but I understand the European Parliament has created an outstanding research and visitor centre in Brussels for people with a real interest in understanding the development of the EU Institutions.

A Referendum Man: Into the Europe Referendum and Fianna Fáil

THE MAIN THRUST of this note is to suggest that in historic coverage to date, particularly in references to the campaign leading up to the vote in the Irish Accession Referendum of 10 May 1972, there is relatively little reference to the Government's information campaign and to the campaign mounted by the Fianna Fáil Party, then the party of government. It is assumed that the overwhelming economic case for joining the European Communities was fully understood and that the most effective pro-accession voices were those of Garret FitzGerald, the Spokesman on Foreign Affairs for the Fine Gael opposition party, and of the Irish Council of the European Movement, led by its Director, Michael Sweetman.

I hope that the recent publication by Barry Desmond, former Labour TD, Member of the European Parliament, and Member of the Court of Auditors of the European Union, *IRELAND, The EEC Referendum 1972, A Campaign Compendium,* will go some distance towards establishing a better understanding of the context and content of the campaign. The value to the compendium of my own papers in the Archives of University College Cork, which I hope will attract more researchers, is acknowledged in the Preface.

Dr Patrick Hillery, who as Minister for Foreign Affairs was responsible for the accession negotiations, was also the Referendum Campaign Director for Fianna Fáil. He took the view that EC Accession was an historic opportunity for the betterment of Ireland, such as might never recur, and that it was therefore imperative to do everything possible to ensure a Yes vote in the referendum. For him that meant mobilising his Department in a new way, including the recruitment of an information and public relations specialist. Whatever spending was required would be found, including support for campaigning organisations such as the European Movement.

The Taoiseach and Fianna Fáil National Executive took the same view

and backed unlimited campaign expenditure that would otherwise be part of a General Election war-chest. The Fine Gael party was happy to protect its election funds as much as possible. Within Fianna Fáil, Brian Lenihan, the Minister for Transport and Power, would be the Deputy Campaign Director and I was appointed a Research and Information Officer at Fianna Fáil Headquarters to act as Secretary to the Campaign Committee. The Committee drew on talent from the Irish Management Institute, like Noel Mulcahy and Noreen Slattery, and Eoin Kenny, one of the country's leading civil engineers.

Dr Hillery believed that it would be necessary to educate the Fianna Fáil Party at large as to the importance of the Referendum if we were to guarantee a positive result. As Fianna Fáil's mission statement was 'The Republican Party', it could not be assumed that the sophistication of the new sovereignty to come with EC membership would be understood. Key segments in Fianna Fáil electoral support, particularly small farmers, might see the Common Agricultural Policy as a threat, and be worried about the purchase of land by Germans and others.

Given the way party politics has developed since, it is important to remember what a strong political force Fianna Fáil was at that time. In every constituency there was a grass roots structure linking members into an organisational hierarchy. All over Ireland, Jack Lynch, as Taoiseach, had the status of a heroic sporting figure who could be trusted. This meant that the pre-campaign educational exercise had to reach every constituency in the country and that much of the campaign focus would have to be on the Taoiseach himself.

A programme of Constituency Conventions was organised once a Campaign Director had been appointed in every Constituency. Present at every Convention had to be that Director, the Constituency TDs and Councillors and a member of the Government. In every convention venue everyone present would find on his or her seat the free Information leaflets published by the Department of Foreign Affairs and an A4 sheet written by me pointing out what EC accession would mean for that constituency. It was agreed that where it looked important or appropriate we would find experts to address a Convention. Among those speaking at Conventions would be Professor Louis Smith of UCD and Professor Martin O'Donoghue and Dr Michael Woods, who in time would become Ministers themselves.

Difficult constituencies were those of Neil Blaney and Charles Haughey, who had been dismissed from Ministerial Posts by Jack Lynch. Neil Blaney agreed to welcome Dr Tom Walshe, Head of the Agricultural Institute to his Convention and Charlie Haughey said I would be welcome to act as a Minister at his Convention. I was accompanied by Eoghan Fitzsimons SC as a legal expert – later to become Attorney General.

Everybody assumes today that in a General Election Campaign party leaders will tour the country in a campaign bus. The first-time such a tour was deployed was in the EC Referendum Campaign. Eoin Kenny designed a superb map enabling Jack Lynch to be seen in every constituency without ever having to go back on his tracks. Of course the campaign enlisted the professional support of advertising agencies and took on a full-time Press Officer with a secretariat. Slogans and guides emerged from committee brain-storming sessions and I still point out that our two poster headlines remain true today: 'Markets in Europe Make Jobs at Home' and 'Unite With Europe' – the suggestion that EC Membership might help towards a united Ireland was, of course, deliberate.

A brilliant innovation in the last weeks leading up to polling day, was the creation at party headquarters of a team of young barristers given the roles by the Party's Honorary Secretary, Anthony Hederman, SC, of telephoning constituency directors every evening to ascertain how the campaign was going. In those pre-mobile phone days, when we had great communication problems, those nightly calls kept everyone on their toes, checking that canvassing and leafleting was on target, and giving us feedback on voter response. On the eve of the poll Dr Hillery was confident of a positive result, saying that he would have no need of a script for result coverage, all he would have to do would be to go on television and smile.

Historians and others who talk about the surprise and shock of the magnitude of the result, with 83% of voters in a 71% poll, in a landslide for Yes, should, I believe, accept that the Fianna Fáil commitment and effort must have been a major element in that outcome. Opponents of accession, notably 'The Common Market Study Group' and the 'Common Market Defence Campaign', felt that it was quite wrong that a government should spend so much on the promotion of government policy and helping organisations endorsing that policy. Their suggestion that there had been an abuse of democracy in the referendum led to legal action and eventually

a Supreme Court decision that the running of consultations through referendums should become the responsibility of an Independent Referendum Commission.

Before that, in December 1972, Fianna Fáil and the main opposition parties agreed to put to the people two Referenda, one to lower the voting age from 21 to 18 and the other to change the wording of Article 44 of the Constitution to remove the reference to the special position of the Roman Catholic Church. Given the expenditure on 'Into Europe' and everything learned at Fianna Fáil HQ these two referendum campaigns were undertaken with minimum outside help and I was able to enjoy the privilege of running almost everything on my own.

A Manifesto Man

PROFESSOR GARY MURPHY has written the most extended account and assessment of the 1977 Fianna Fáil Manifesto I have read. It was published in 2015 in *The State in Transition: Essays in Honour of John Horgan,* New Island Books, pages 142-165.

The impression is given of a very carefully planned exercise in auction politics with a focus on employment and the economy, with Northern Ireland relegated to two brief paragraphs. Professor Murphy backs the widespread view that the manifesto was responsible for disastrous economic consequences. I am contesting this analysis because of my involvement in the final preparation of the Manifesto in the weeks leading up to its publication on 26 May. The late Senator Eoin Ryan had been appointed Fianna Fáil Director of Elections and the prime mover was Esmond Smyth, the Party's Director of Research. Very restricted confidential meetings were held in Leinster House and in the homes of the Party Leader, Jack Lynch, and the late Noel Mulcahy, who worked closely with Des O'Malley. Martin O'Donoghue was a huge contributor and in the final run Brian Lenihan, George Colley and Seamus Brennan had something to say.

The reason I describe my involvement in Part II of this collage as 'an amazing political enterprise' is that I was given a free hand to shape the manifesto and contribute ideas of my own. I am among the last survivors of this period and I may get a chance to check my recollections with Esmond Smyth and to consult my notes in the Keery Papers archived in University

College Cork. Obviously I was involved on a totally confidential basis, servicing my job in the European Commission's Dublin Office and working with all the engagement I could muster at a big table in my Monkstown home.

It all began with a phone call from Esmond out of the blue and asking me to go to his office in Leinster House as soon as I could. The shock when I got there was an immediate request to try to draft a manifesto out of all the reports gathered from the work of the back-up groups supporting each shadow-spokesperson. No doubt an interest in manifesto thinking had been remembered from my National Executive days. This would require total urgency and secrecy as Jack Lynch believed he knew the June date when the General Election would be called and wanted the manifesto available for the day after the dissolution of the Dáil. I could structure the draft any way I liked, subject to a few conditions. First, the economic proposals would build on the economic platform already published the previous September by Martin O'Donoghue. The Health proposals from Charlie Haughey's team were not to be changed in any way because any discussion of them was out of the question. Similarly the proposal on Northern Ireland from Michael O'Kennedy was to stay as it was. I could report to Esmond at any time. So I headed home with a large file of papers taken from a filing cabinet in Esmond's Office after I had had a brief meeting with Jack Lynch.

The first obvious thing to do was to list all the policy headings to be included. The quality of the material varied enormously. Where Foreign Affairs and Social Affairs were concerned I either drafted the policy from scratch or added material I thought would improve the presentation. My answer to the presentation problem was to take the Health policy structure of an introductory paragraph heading a list of points and apply it to all the other usable material. For the economic, employment and industrial policy material to be the introductory chapters I had a lot of consultation with Martin O'Donoghue and Noel Mulcahy, who was evidently a close policy adviser to Des O'Malley.

The aim overall was a final document that would read like an Action Plan for National Reconstruction, with an introduction from Jack Lynch. As in all my political work as a speech-writer or Cabinet member I had the luxury of being able to put down ideas knowing that in the end the responsibility for publication would not be mine. A proposal I considered very important went into the introduction and was implemented, namely

an Independent Electoral Commission would be established. This idea was topical because we believed the 'Tullymander', the re-drawing of constituency boundaries by the Labour Minister for Local Government, James Tully, might make it almost impossible for Fianna Fáil to win the election. Because of the overwhelming vote, to which the manifesto contributed, the Tullymander backfired in favour of Fianna Fáil.

Now to consider the 'giveaways' in the manifesto. First, the abolition of local domestic rates, which I now consider a mistake, had been promised by the party in the previous General Election and had also become Fine Gael policy. Secondly the abolition of car tax for cars under a certain horsepower had been identified as a great potential relief for key voters like commercial travellers and small farmers. Retaining the tax on larger cars made good environmental sense, a point never referred to in the campaign. A grant for first-time house buyers was also proposed, recognising a challenge for young couples still with us today.

I believe the exceptional economic problems that began to hit the government brought into office after the successful manifesto election were largely due to a global economic downturn that had not been anticipated. It was a time when European governments were making U-turns and I believe Fianna Fáil had the parliamentary numbers to deliver a U-turn designed to meet some of the unexpected adverse outcomes of what had been an ambitious and energetic economic policy.

Professor Murphy dismisses the eloquent defence of the manifesto in Padraig Faulkner's 2005 review of Fianna Fáil and Irish Politics, *As I Saw It.* Of the relevant political memoirs I have read, it seems to me that Faulkner's views may well be the most accurate and reliable of the time. There is a copy of this much discussed manifesto in the Keery Papers and a number of other texts that might be regarded as manifestos. Perhaps the most original is a Poets' Manifesto I drafted for a Dublin Poetry Conference in 2002.

A Spokesman

PERHAPS because of my university experience as a debater and my first working experience as a journalist I have never asked how one becomes a spokesman, or what it means to be a spokesman. I have noticed recently a new curiosity about the different career manifestations in which I have

appeared as a spokesman. I suspect this may have something to do with the current public presentation of the Covid-19 pandemic, when medical doctors, who must never have imagined themselves in the limelight, find themselves the stuff of headline television news, briefing us from behind special podiums and with a sign language interpreter alongside.

If questioned by a journalist in a public context each of us becomes a spokesperson. Obviously elected representatives and, in Ireland, members of the Oireachtas, have particular status. Dáil Deputies and Senators are frequently making statements and trying to get their particular views across. The President is a very influential public voice but can be subject to some government parameters. Judges are subject to particular constraints and disciplines.

It is important to recognise how the role and the demands of being a spokesperson can vary over time and circumstances. In politics, for example, in any 24-hour period there can be demands from a range of television and radio channels. Some years ago, a British Minister based in the Midlands resigned because she felt she could no longer do her job properly! No one questioned her competence or commitment, but she was of the view that the demands of local press and radio in her constituency every morning and all the press interest in her responsibilities in London during the day, made it impossible for her to give enough time to looking ahead and working on the further planning, which she considered the most important part of government. It is because of such time and other demands that Ministers and others holding major political responsibilities create appointments like Spokesmen and Advisers.

Thanks to my experience as a Senator, both as a Taoiseach's nominee and a whipped member of the Fianna Fáil Parliamentary Party, I learnt what it means to have to make a case on matters and issues with which one may not necessarily be fully informed or in 100 per cent agreement. That provides the territory into which journalists want to probe and question. Members of the Oireachtas have the advantage of constant contact with government sources and an incredible supply of statistical and report material and, increasingly, staff research and assistance.

In working with the European Commission from 1973 to 2001 my preferred roles were in information, public relations and political advice, including membership of the Commission's Spokesman's Service. Again, I

have been asked, how is it possible to become a Commission Spokesman, going on stage daily to brief and answer questions on any area of Commission action or policy. Much may have changed since my retirement, particularly as European Union enlargement has greatly added to the number of countries involved. I suspect however that much has to stay the same because of the way the Commission organises itself to work on a week by week basis as a major political institution.

The Members of the Commission meet as a college every Wednesday, and significant press conferences are scheduled for the Commissioners after the meeting to announce new decisions made. Each Commissioner has a Cabinet or team of advisers and their Heads of Cabinet meet every Monday to begin preparation of the Wednesday agenda. This pattern of preparation ensures a wide awareness of everything that is going on. It also means that the Commission's General Secretariat, its Legal Service and Spokesman's Service are fully in the loop: as general horizontal services they are present at all Commission and Chefs de Cabinet meetings. This means that to be a Member of a Cabinet or a Member of the Spokesman's service is always a most interesting and privileged post.

Work backwards then from major press conferences. First the Commission needs a well equipped conference room to seat all the accredited journalists. Many of the accredited journalists will have been in Brussels for years and know the context of what is going on almost as well as the Commissioners and Spokesmen. This means that briefings can be very focused and virtually everyone at any press conference knows the key issues likely to make headlines. A good example of this would be briefings on the Brexit negotiations.

Of course there will be many days when meeting schedules and current events demand a daily briefing and the Spokesman's Service is organised to meet the Press every day at noon. The Spokesman will have had a meeting with the President of the Commission first thing in the morning on the basis of the day's press reports from member state capitals. Having talked to their cabinets too, all the spokesmen meet at 10 am to review matters and to decide on any midday briefing required. Of course journalists are free to telephone or meet spokesmen at any time and an account of any briefing goes out publicly on line about an hour after each Brussels briefing.

Given the complexities of Commission policies on matters like competition, agriculture and fisheries, this is where one can wonder how spokesmen

themselves keep adequately briefed. Again, this is a matter of context, and I may offer my own experience when I had to act as the Commission's spokesman on fisheries for a number of months. The initial challenge at that time, when briefing was mainly done in French, was to get a rapid language course on the names of fish and technical terms relating to catch and equipment. Being up to date was not a great problem as I was effectively embedded in the Directorate-General for Fisheries and the cabinet of the member of the Commission with special responsibility for fisheries. When I could not answer a question immediately, I told the journalist most interested that I would get the answer and report back in an agreed time. With experience one usually knows how long it will take to get the information one needs.

Of course much depends on the timing and challenge of each Commission's mandate, and the performance of the College as a whole, always shaped by its President. Some Presidents take a particular interest in the projection of the Commission's image and reputation, something reflected immediately in the organisation of the Spokesman's Service.

Jacques Delors is universally acclaimed as an outstanding President. His Cabinet was feared and respected for its energy and talent and his arrival brought an immediate change of leadership to the Spokesman's Service of which I was a Member at the time. I found it helpful that I had already direct experience of work in the Cabinets of the first two members of the Commission appointed from Ireland. Dr Hillery was appointed a Vice-President on his arrival and Dick Burke became a Vice-President near the end of his term.

In the course of his three mandates, Delors appointed three Spokesmen, Claus-Dieter Ehlerman, Hugo Paemen and Bruno Dethomas, as far as I was concerned outstanding and dynamic personalities. Pascal Lamy came with Delors to Brussels as his Chef de Cabinet from the Cabinet working with Delors, when he was the French Minister for the Economy and Finance. I was very lucky that my role in the Spokesman's Service meant I had very close contact with Lamy and, over time, with two Cabinet Members, Patrick Venturini and Christine Verger. All three had notable careers subsequently, Lamy becoming Secretary-General of the World Trade Organisation, Venturini becoming Secretary-General of the EU's Economic and Social Committee, and Christine Verger becoming Secretary-General of the Socialist Group in the European Parliament.

In the Spokesman's Service I was responsible for the Commission's monitoring of the press in every member state, producing for 9 am every morning a summary of that day's coverage for the first meeting between the Spokesman and the President. During the day we produced other summary material and of course provided a wider cuttings service whenever requested by Commissioners or Commission services. Lamy was famous for his capacity and engagement and I knew from his frequent requests that he was by far the quickest and closest reader of everything provided for the Commission. He was known to be a marathon runner and it seemed to me that similar energy and focus applied to everything he achieved for Delors.

There were often occasions when the President or Members of his Cabinet invited the engagement of the Spokesman's Service and this led to a range of very interesting experiences. From time to time the President would invite the Spokesman's Service to lunch for a special briefing. I came to the view that these were occasions when Delors was in effect trying out ideas and presentation for a forthcoming major address, to the European Parliament, for example.

Other Cabinet invitations varied greatly in their focus. I was invited to join the working group preparing for the visit of Pope John Paul II to the Commission. On that occasion I think it was assumed that I must be a Roman Catholic. My responsibility was to facilitate the accreditation for the visit to the Commission of the international press corps following the Pope. Unfortunately my view that we should accept the accreditation agreed between Belgian Security and the Belgian Hierarchy was not accepted and on the day of the visit we were unable to cope with the volume of new accreditation requests and some journalists missed out on access to the Pope's speech. At least I was successful in having translations of the speech available for visitors of whatever nationality.

Another example of work between the President's Cabinet and the Spokesman's Service also involved translation. When the first Commission proposal for the reduction of tobacco advertising was on the way to the European Parliament, Venturini was very concerned that it would not get a positive vote in the Parliament because of the massive lobbying against it by the wealthy tobacco companies. We were asked what we suggested could be done about this. I suggested that one resource we had that the tobacco companies could not match was access to the best translation service in the

world. Up to then Commission Press material went to the Parliament in French and English, sometimes in German. We suggested that on the day before the vote in Parliament every member should get in his or her own language our best A4 presentation as to why the Commission had decided to launch an important health initiative. Parliament backed the vote and I think the Spokesman's Service can take some of the credit.

That was 1988. By 1991 European newspaper publishers, concerned that they would be badly hit by a decline in cigarette advertising, launched a vicious campaign attacking President Delors and the Commission for what they presented as an attack on freedom of expression and democracy. They were also concerned that the Commission had begun to promote the audio-visual industry in a new way. Niels Thogersen, a progressive Danish Director in the Directorate-General for Information and Culture DG X was launching a drive to ensure that the Commission would be an early and effective presence on the internet and I accepted an invitation to become a Head of Unit in his Directorate.

DGX was charged with finding a way to win the support of the professional organisations involved in the daily and periodical press and it was agreed that the Commission and the Government of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg would hold a European *Assises* of the Written Press in Luxembourg in July 1991. A former Luxembourg Minister, Colette Flesch, was Director-General of DGX and the Member of the Commission responsible for information was Jean Dondelinger, formerly Luxembourg's Permanent Representative in Brussels. On becoming the Commission's organiser for the *Assises* I found myself working in partnership with Jean Blaschette of the Dondelinger Cabinet, drafting speeches for both the Commissioner and Luxembourg's Prime Minster Jacques Santer, who would succeed Delors as President of the Commission.

A French company of conference organisers won the contract to help mount the *Assises* and with the co-operation of the Commission's Directorates General linked in one way or another to a press interest (from the supply of newsprint, to taxation, postal delivery and competition) we ran a very successful conference. I saw at first hand through Jean Blaschette the way in which Luxembourg resources could be mobilised. A police escort was organised to get President Delors from the Luxembourg border to the Conference centre in time for the arrival of the Grand Duke. A small team

of soldiers was mobilised to help with anything from moving around documents to photocopying. The Luxembourg Parliament agreed that some of its *huissiers* (ushers) would help at the plenary sessions. The Mayor of Luxembourg made available local transport to help get delegates to the Conference Centre. All this was achieved by Blaschette on a personal basis in a couple of hours. In any other Member State it would probably have been a difficult and slow matter of institutional and civil service negotiation.

Mortality at a time of Pandemic

IN REVIEWING my autobiographical and memoir material – life-writing I believe it should be called now – I have become conscious of the different ways in which death has shaped my narrative. I am conscious too that I am writing at a time when mortality is unexpectedly among my daily concerns. Both my wife and I are at an age when we are in a high-risk category in the context of the Covid-19 Pandemic. My daughter and my daughter-in-law are also in the high risk category because of under-lying health conditions.

The fact that my father died when I was six is probably the most decisive factor driving my self-perception and much of my educational and career behaviour. In an ongoing family context there would be much later the sudden death of my step-father when he and my mother came to visit me in Blyth in Northumberland when I was working in my first post-graduate job as a journalist. As a trainee reporter I had to cover stories of tragedy, including finding myself telling someone their spouse had been killed in an accident. My mother died of old age and my first wife, Anne, died at the end of a painful illness. My present wife, Pauline Hall, and her family were hit by the sudden death of her husband from a completely unexpected health calamity.

A friend and contemporary of mine died recently from Covid when already ill and in a nursing home. An elderly Quaker friend of mine, whom I visited in a nursing home over several years, had absolutely no fear of death. She was convinced that on at least two occasions in her illness she had what are known as "near death experiences", and spoke of peace, calm, and a welcoming light.

The nature of any death depends on health and circumstances. The contexts I have outlined suggest that the ideal way to die is to pass away

peacefully as if in a sleep from which there is no awakening or simply to die instantly in a quiet domestic context. That is the way I would like to die and I have no fear of death, hoping of course that I can continue my life without the shock and sadness of the loss of a spouse, child or grandchild. I know where I will be buried and hope that in any mourning the focus will be on thanks that I enjoyed a decent and fruitful life. Historically weight has often been attached to someone's last words, but I do not plan to leave any last message.

I was not brought to my father's funeral but I believe I remember things I overheard in the crowd of family and friends assembled afterwards in the family home. Hearing the verdict that my father had worked too hard meant that from then on I ruled out any possibility of my following him into the law. I overheard concerns about how Florence, our mother, might manage in bringing up myself and my younger brother. Florence turned out to be enormously resourceful and never dwelt on what my father, or later my step-father, meant to her. She enjoyed her friends, children and grandchildren and had great independence and health until she collapsed one night, dying in a nursing home near the home of my brother, John, in Glastonbury. At her funeral the Director of the home told me they had lost their best singer.

What hit me about my father's death during my childhood and school days, was an awareness that I was often the only boy among my contemporaries who had lost a parent. There were occasions when contemplating my defining identity I would become stunned by tears. At that time crying was not something boys or adults were supposed to do in any context other than physical pain. Fortunately much of the repressive culture of that time is no more and as an adult I was helped move on to an acceptance of emotional expression by living in continental Europe for many years and seeing the way in which my son believes in the importance of warmth and physical contact.

My father's death did motivate me strongly to do as much as possible to support my mother and make choices of which I hoped she would approve. Again, given the culture of the time, I am sure this was not always easy for her. She had never heard of anyone opting to study philosophy and, until she got to know Anne and her parents, was probably apprehensive about my marrying a Roman Catholic.

Alongside the Covid pandemic, Pauline and I unfortunately live in times

when illness has come close to us, not just because we have health conditions that are not immediately life-threatening, but because cancer has hit family and friends and I have direct knowledge of the ways in which excellent medical care becomes ineffective and continuing illness leads to a cycle of pain, infections and, eventually hospice-type palliative care.

Experienced physicians now write very illuminatingly about the challenge mortality presents for the medical profession. They recognise, to quote Dr Atul Gawande, that 'Assisted living is far harder than assisted death.'

As we confront mortality the best way of helping ourselves, family and carers is to be clear about our personal wants and enjoyments and try to get everything we can out of every day as our days become numbered. We need to follow the wise advice to think ahead and keep our affairs up to date and in good order, including wills, details of care preferences, and establishing an advance care directive.

As I close this text, among the last pieces of *Collage*, there is news that vaccination against Covid19 may begin in Britain towards the end of December (2020). Hopefully this means that what has been felt as the most imminent risk of mortality will depart the scene in the course of next year. There is talk of a return to normality but I believe the pandemic has led to such deep and lasting changes in the way we think and live that any coming normality will be quite different to pre-pandemic living.

PART II

Timeline