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## PRESS STATEMENT

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# Must Labour Wait?

The outcome of the Election of 25th February, in terms of the traditional parties, is that it gives the Labour Party the opportunity to end 'Civil War politics'. It has been said often enough over the years that this is what it wants to do, because it is held back by the overlay of Civil War politics which obscures class issues. Well, the Election has given it the opportunity to attempt this under very favourable conditions.

The Labour slogan at the start of the Election campaign was *Gilmore For Taoiseach!* It seemed for a moment that the old order was in melt-down under the impact of the second major crisis of capitalism that the State has had to face. It soon became clear that the old order would not crumble so easily, and that Fine Gael was benefitting from the collapse of morale in Fianna Fáil.

The appeal to the electorate was then to prevent the return of a single-party Fine Gael Government by ensuring that it would once more have to form a Coalition with Labour as its minor partner. As minor partner in a Coalition, Labour would calm down the wilder capitalist impulses of Fine Gael.

The election result has given Labour a much better opportunity of shackling Fine Gael than by becoming yet again the junior partner in a Coalition. Gilmore cannot be Taoiseach, but the position of Leader of the Opposition is his for the taking. By taking up this position, he would not only make Fine Gael continuously dependent on Dáil votes in the conduct of government, but would transform Labour from a *niche* party to a national party. It would, of course, risk its *niche* position by doing this. But one does not get to govern a State without taking risks. And it is not possible to be *niche* and national simultaneously.

Labour has 37 seats, there are at least 12 left wing independents, and Sinn Féin are left wing. If Labour provides leadership of the left they would dominate the opposition and could dictate terms to the FG government as FF would have to row in or clearly align with FG, which they would find difficult. If politics should be left-right, as Labour leaders have consistently stated, then this strategy will win in the short and the long term. If politics are not to be right-left, then what is the point of Labour and left politics? If Labour have real confidence in themselves then this strategy can only work.

If Labour does not assert itself as Leader of the Opposition, and handle Fianna Fáil as its junior partner, but prefers to become itself the junior partner in a Fine Gael Coalition yet again, then it gives the position of Leader of the Opposition, with all the prestige that goes with it, to Fianna Fáil, and encourages the revival of the Civil War structure.

For the first time ever, the fate of Labour is in its own hands! Now we will see what's in its head.

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Fianna Fail has wantonly sacrificed its position as *the* national party. The sacrifice has been in preparation for some time, particularly under Bertie Ahern. The suicide thrust was delivered by Micheál Martin in the television debate between the five party leaders, when he turned on Gerry Adams and berated him for "*coming down here*" and finding fault with us. And he followed up this with a press briefing to the effect that Bertie Ahern was of the opinion that Adams had done the Northern Bank Robbery.

Martin seems to be living in a Jack Lynch fantasy in his Cork City bailiwick in which he has sought to replace the activity of the Fianna Fáil Cumann with his own personal *entourage*. The attack on Adams for "*coming down here*" certainly lost Fianna Fáil a great many votes in constituencies close to the Border, where the North is not a foreign country. And there are few parts of the Republic where the Fianna Fáil leadership could burn its boats with its Sinn Féin origins without being punished for it.

Fine Gael (in its first manifestation as Cumann na nGaedheal) cut itself adrift from its origins with a series of actions from 1922 to the early 1930s (the Immaculate Conception Massacre, the Ballyseedy Massacre, the suppression of the Collins inheritance in 1924, that attempt to suppress the democracy by means of the Oath in the mid-1920s, the draconian Emergency legislation of its last period in office (1927-32), and its turn to Fascism after losing to Fianna Fáil in 1932 and 1933), but its survived as the junior party of the state. Fianna Fáil grew by assimilating what Cumann na nGaedheal discarded, and it has been the dominant party of the democracy from 1932 until the 2011 Election. It now lies a poor third, not far ahead of the party that "*came down here*".

A correspondent for German radio, interviewed about the Election on Radio Eireann, saw the significant thing that happened in it as being the rise of Sinn Féin. In our last issue we urged a vote for Sinn Féin on the grounds that it was what would be noticed in Europe and spur the EU into a more responsible conduct towards Ireland.

If Labour baulks at its first real chance, then the opportunity for a radical development of politics goes to Sinn Féin. Micheál Martin will just have to harden himself to more and more of them "*coming down here*" and behaving as if this were their country too.

But as of now, it's all for Labour to choose.