

THE WEST MUST WAIT: COUNTY GALWAY AND THE IRISH FREE STATE, 1922–32.

By Úna Newell. Pp xxiii, 218. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015. £65 hardback, £22.50 paperback.

This fascinating new study by Úna Newell analyses the politics and economics of Co. Galway during the first ten years of the Irish Free State. With this book, Newell makes a strong contribution to the growing body of work on Cumann na nGaedheal in recent years and extends to the 1920s the local framework pioneered by David Fitzpatrick and used by numerous historians in the last decade to analyse the revolutionary years. In so doing, she builds on recent studies of electoral politics and behaviours in the 1920s by Ciara Meehan and Micheál Martin, and, along with Mel Farrell, becomes one of the first historians to scrutinise Cumann na nGaedheal's policy and appeal at the local level. *The west must wait* firmly establishes the importance of local issues, geography, and personal ties in understanding the politics of the 1920s, and serves as a vitally necessary complement to the variety of works on the high politics of the Free State that have emerged recently.

Newell establishes that a local framework is not only a useful tool for historians, but also that such a perspective was central to Galway residents in the 1920s. Much of the slow decline of support for Cumann na nGaedheal and the rise of Fianna Fáil is ascribed to the former's relative neglect of issues important to those in the west – particularly economic issues – and the Cosgrave government's relentless focus on 'national' issues such as the oath and protection of the Treaty. As Newell writes in her prologue, 'for many people in Galway, poverty, not politics, was their primary concern' (p. xix). The land proved to be a central economic issue, and frustration with Cumann na nGaedheal's land policy reverberated throughout the decade. Galway farmer and minister for agriculture, Patrick Hogan, successfully passed a land act in 1923 that established a process for the state's acquisition and redistribution of agrarian land. However, the slow pace of redistribution, combined with Hogan's policy of making uneconomic holdings larger before giving land to landless families, led to increasing frustration with the government. While Newell notes that there simply was not enough land to satisfy all of the landless, the government's handling of the situation did not win it adherents.

Beyond the land, there was also a general frustration with the lack of a clear plan for economic growth in the west. The government had no policy for reviving the fishing industry, did not develop Galway as a port, and dragged its feet on implementing any of the suggestions made by the Gaeltacht Commission. Even Cumann na nGaedheal's promotion of the Irish language won it few friends in Irish-speaking regions of Galway, as it was not accompanied by well-funded educational initiatives or the availability of well-paying careers requiring Irish. Through a combination of newspaper editorials, stump speeches, and political debate, Newell effectively shows that local issues, particularly economic issues, were critical to local voters. Whereas Fianna Fáil by 1932 had 'subtly relegated the national question to the sidelines as increasing emphasis was placed on the local economic and social conditions of the county' (p. 173), Cumann na nGaedheal's propaganda continued to focus on national issues. Many of these, such as the red scare tactic used in the 1932 election, simply failed to resonate with Galway voters.

Newell's research shows that residents of Galway were generally pro-Treaty and supportive of constitutional politics, although perhaps somewhat unenthusiastically. But the Treaty and parliamentary politics were seen as means to further economic and social development, not ends in themselves. As Newell writes, 'Cumann na nGaedheal's considerable achievement in state-building and external affairs did not galvanise the local electorate' (p. 140). In fact, voters were alienated by the government's consistent emphasis on the Treaty in the absence of a clear economic plan for the west. Once Fianna Fáil entered the Dáil and gave Galway voters a viable alternative to a Cumann na nGaedheal government, voters shifted support to Fianna Fáil.

This connects with a final theme from Newell's work: political apathy. Despite the fact that Galway was active in the Land War, the Ranch War, and the Rising, the politics of the 1920s failed to create similar local activism. The *Connacht Tribune* noted

the lack of enthusiasm for independence in early 1922 and voter turnout in Galway was frequently at or near the lowest in the Free State. Newall attributes this to a combination of the size of the constituency, the lack of infrastructure that would have made it easier for voters to get to the polls, and a regionalism within Galway that prevented a county-wide view of elections. Candidates who were generally associated with one particular region of Galway, often failed to campaign outside of that particular region, and thus remained unfamiliar to many voters.

The book raises several themes critical in understanding the 1920s. The localism chronicled in *The west must wait* is a crucial component in understanding electoral behaviour, and either shows the responsiveness of Irish democracy, or, as Tom Garvin has written, the creation of a ‘parliament of backbenchers’. Cumann na nGaedheal’s ultimate electoral failure is given important local context as well, as the party’s success in state-building created rather passive or grudging support for the Free State (p. 28), but an unwillingness to translate that passive support into permanent enthusiasm for Cumann na nGaedheal. *The west must wait* is an indispensable addition to the literature on the 1920s, and its analysis of the intersection between localism, economic issues, and electoral politics provides an important framework in further advancing studies of the period. All scholars interested in twentieth-century Ireland should read it.

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‘A FAILED POLITICAL ENTITY’: CHARLES HAUGHEY AND THE NORTHERN IRELAND QUESTION, 1945–92. By Stephen Kelly. Pp 482. Newbridge, Kildare: 2016. €24.99, paperback.

Somewhat of a sequel to his earlier well-received work on Fianna Fáil policy on Northern Ireland, Stephen Kelly certainly has put in some impressive research in this new volume on Charles Haughey’s attitude to, and policy on, the North. He has diligently mined most of the relevant archives in Dublin and London and has carried out a series of interviews with some of the surviving protagonists, mainly civil servants. These provide useful insight into how Haughey’s administration ticked. There are two caveats regarding the research. Firstly, the paper trail runs cold in mid-1980s and there is no archival documentation for the entirety of Haughey’s third, and more impressive, term as taoiseach (1987–92). Therefore, some of the judgements that Kelly reaches may be revised upon the release of those papers. Secondly, he rarely uses the British Prime Minister’s Office (PREM) files, which offer a staggering level of detail to the historian. Margaret Thatcher’s thoroughness means that there is rarely a document without her signature, notation, and coded underlining. Instead, he relies much more heavily on Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Northern Ireland Office documentation from the British side. One can only assume, this is because the relevant PREM files have been quite well picked over in works by Thomas Hennessy and others. Nonetheless, it is a strange lacuna.

The book traces Haughey’s career and its intersection with the problem of partition from his early days to his death. One revelation here, not widely known, is that Haughey did not support the 1998 Belfast Agreement. To a Haughey supporter, this reflected his commitment to reject all settlements short of unity. To his detractors, it is just another example of his dismissal of anything that he could not claim credit for and echoed his unprincipled objections to the 1985 Anglo–Irish Agreement.

The assertion, early in the book about Haughey that ‘...Ulster ... always remained close to his heart’ and that he harboured a ‘hatred for the partition of Ireland’ (p. 25) is also not without problems. Much of this is to do with the relative paucity of archival material on the subject that Haughey has left behind or lies locked in his private papers