

CUMANN NA NGAEDHEAL / FINE GAEL  
MINUTE BOOKS

P39 / MIN



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Introductory note

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Fine Gael minutes: content and structure

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## Introductory note

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The archives of the Fine Gael Party contain material created by both the Cumann na nGaedheal and Fine Gael Parties, 1922-75. The six minute books described in this list are the only surviving records predating 1949. This would appear to be the result of a fire at Party Headquarters in Hume Street, sometime in the late 1950s.

The bulk of the collection consists of material in file format relating to party organisation, policy, and elections, created or maintained at party headquarters after 1949.

These are available as:

P39/GE:        general election and bye-election records  
P39/PR:        presidential elections and proportional referenda records  
P39/C:         constituency records

Researchers should note that permission from the Fine Gael Party is required before access can be granted to any Party archives. Details of the procedure for obtaining such permission may be had from the duty archivist.

A detailed description of the collection is available in S Helferty 'The records of the Fine Gael Party' Irish Archives Bulletin 9-10 (1979-80), 24-31.

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## I. CUMANN NA nGAEDHEAL / FINE GAEL

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### A. Standing Committee / Coiste Gnotha

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- 1 [March 1922]  
February 1923-  
May 1928
- Minute book mainly recording proceedings of meetings of the Standing Committee or Coiste Gnotha, and the General Council or Ard Comhairle, from the foundation of the Cumann na nGaedheal Party in March 1923; but also containing minutes of meetings of a number of sub-committees predating the formal establishment of the Party. Early meetings of the Provisional Standing Committee are concerned primarily with organisation, with reports on Cumann and branches formed, conventions held, and from June 1923, consideration of reports from full-time organisers. The Committee meets regularly throughout the period in question and proceedings concentrate on organisation and finance. Its functions on a committee system and meetings receive regular reports from sub-committees appointed with specific responsibilities. Meetings of the Ard Comhairle take place less frequently and are concerned mainly with policy matters, the appointment of members to the Standing Committee, and the consideration of reports from constituencies. A recurrent topic at meetings is the need for a clear distinction between the responsibilities of the Ard Comhairle itself, the Coiste Gnotha, and the Parliamentary Party. The volume also contains minutes of occasional general meetings such as the Preliminary Conference of Cumann na nGaedheal, 7 December 1922; and a Convention held in the mansion house, 27 April 1923, to consider the objects and constitution of the organisation.

#### **Minutes of sub-committees included in the volume are:**

March 1922-June 1923	Election Sub-Committee, General Election Committee, Treaty Election Committee
April-November 1922	Free State Paper Sub-Committee
April-July 1922	Propaganda Sub-Committee
December 1924-March 1925	[Executive] Organising Committee

volume size is 37x22x4cms

2                    October 1933-                    Minute book recording proceedings of  
November 1945                    meetings of the Standing Committee of  
the Fine Gael Party, called the General  
Purposes Committee until August 1934. Meetings concentrate on  
organisation and finance, the Committee's primary areas of  
responsibility, but also touch on policy matters. Sub-committees are  
appointed on matters such as organisation, finance, policy, propaganda,  
agriculture, industry, and on more specific topics such as cattle seizures  
(1934) and the publication and distribution of the Party newspaper  
United Ireland (1946). All such sub-committees report regularly to the  
Standing Committee.

Recurrent and occasional matters under discussion include:

-the relationship between the Standing Committee and the national  
Executive; ratification of Standing Committee decisions by the  
National Executive, preliminary arrangements for meetings of the  
National Executive;

-arrangements for Ard Fheiseanna;

- the problem of integrating farming interests within the Party and the  
avoidance of any division which might lead to the formation of a  
separate farmers' organisation;

-the resignations of General Eoin O'Duffy (September 1934) and James  
Dillon (February 1942);

-arrangements for conventions and the selection of candidates.

The frequency of meetings declines sharply after 1940.

volume size is 24x26x4cms

## B. Parliamentary Party, 1929-49

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3 volumes of minutes of meetings of the Cumann na nGaedheal [P39/MIN/3] and Fine Gael [P39/MIN/3] and Fine Gael [P39/MIN/4,5] Parliamentary Party. Minutes are generally terse, particularly in the first two volumes. Matters under discussion at meetings include both parliamentary business and party affairs.

Parliamentary matters include discussion of legislation going through the Oireachtas – when the Party is in power the appropriate Minister usually explains the provisions of a Bill; in opposition the Party decides its policy on a Bill and the procedure to be adopted during readings. Additional matters include consideration of motions on the Order Paper, the Party position on individual Private Members' Bills, appointments to Oireachtas Committees, and the most recurrent item on the agenda of meetings, absentees from divisions.

Party matters include consideration of reports from Committees such as the Standing Committee, general Party organisation at constituency level, amendments to Party rules, and preparations for conventions and general elections.

A record of discussion on any individual item is usually confined to a list of speakers and a note of decisions taken.

3	November 1929- July 1933	volume size is 40x30x5cms
4	September 1933- October 1946	volume size is 40x30x5cms
5	May 1948- May 1949	volume size is 22x33x2cms

## II. NATIONAL FARMERS' AND RATEPAYERS' LEAGUE

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### A. Standing Committee

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- 6 September 1932- July 1933
- Minute book of the Standing Committee of the National Farmers' and Ratepayers' League recording proceedings of meetings held at least monthly, and usually more frequently, from the foundation of the organisation. Initial meetings are concerned with the League's structure and organisation, particularly at county level; the drafting of a provisional constitution to be ratified at a General Convention, 6 October 1932; the issuing of a statement of policy and aims, and what the components of this should be; and the question of eligibility for membership and whether farm labourers should be recruited to the League. Other matters considered include the appointment of a Director of Organisation, with interviews being conducted by the Standing Committee; the question of whether candidates should be fielded at specific by-elections; the formation of a party in the Oireachtas to be called the Centre Party; the effects upon the farming community of the Economic War and the high cost of agricultural credit; the likely effects of the Land Bill on landholding; and the precarious nature of the League's finances. Included are minutes of Standing Committee meetings at which Centre Party TDs are present.

volume size is 24x20x1cms