
An Exercise in Mutual Cooperation: the Second Inter-Party Government, the American Embassy and the Establishment of the Agricultural Institute, 1954–7¹

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the efforts of the Second Inter-Party Government and the American embassy in Dublin to establish an agricultural research institute in Ireland between 1954 and 1957. In doing so, it will highlight the growing recognition of the importance of Marshall Aid in using research to advance Irish agriculture during the 1950s. This article will also add to the debate on what the Marshall Plan contributed overall to Irish agriculture and society during the decade.

INTRODUCTION—THE SECOND INTER-PARTY GOVERNMENT AND IRISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS

On 10 June 1954, the American ambassador to Ireland, William H. Taft III, met the recently-elected taoiseach, John A. Costello, who had just returned to office to lead the Second Inter-Party Government.² Taft reported to the US State Department that Costello had a ‘pleasant and unassuming manner’ and ‘listens to others with much

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¹In relation to sources, this article primarily draws from the files of the State Department and the US embassy in Dublin held at the US National Archives in College Park, Maryland. This reading was conducted as part of wider research for my doctoral thesis, ‘The crisis years: the Second Inter-Party Government and the politics of transition in Ireland, 1954–1957’, (University College Cork, 2008, unpublished). The findings of this paper highlight the important and constant role the American embassy played in creating the shape of the agricultural institute during the lifetime of the Second Inter-Party Government, as it became the most important issue in Irish-American diplomacy during the period. Any material from Irish sources concerning the involvement of the embassy tends to overlap with American ones. Therefore, where there has been duplication, I have used the reference in the US file because much of the material concerning the embassy’s involvement could not be accommodated into my thesis for reasons of space.

²Taft—the grandson of the former republican president of the same name—was Professor of English at Yale University who had served in the intelligence service of the US Army during the Second World War.

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greater attention than his predecessor does.’ The differences in dealing with Costello and Éamon de Valera were significant for the diplomat, who pointed to how the new taoiseach ‘did not stand on ceremony, and in any case, does not retain the formal approach and aloofness of Mr. de Valera.’ Taft drew a similar comparison between the new minister for external affairs, Liam Cosgrave, and the man he replaced in Iveagh House, Frank Aiken. Cosgrave, his portrait went, was ‘young, obviously intelligent, and friendly but at the same time very shy. He would never, as Mr. Aiken, his predecessor, has done, attempt to lecture me on political and financial matters.’³ In that same conversation with Cosgrave, Taft reported a discussion which contained ‘nothing of importance other than the Government’s anxiety to promote the release of the counterpart funds in Washington. Nothing was said of foreign affairs. It seemed best to leave these matters alone.’⁴

IRELAND, THE MARSHALL PLAN AND THE GRANT COUNTERPART FUND, 1951–4

Operated under the European Recovery Programme (ERP) or the Marshall Plan—the programme with which the United States attempted to rebuild Europe after the war—the grant counterpart arrangement was one of a number of schemes through which Ireland received money and its arrangement stressed the building of projects that would be of a lasting and durable nature for Irish society. Ireland had received the bulk of aid (\$130 million) from the United States in the form of loans and had used loan monies on schemes like the Dollar Import Programme to bring commodities such as bread grains, corn, tobacco, machinery, vehicles and petroleum products into the country.⁵ The main impact would be to double exports by 1953; even if, however, much of the earlier success resulted in a dependency on United States aid to increase the efficiency of the Irish economy. The grant counterpart arrangement did, admittedly, allow the government to satisfy public demand for consumer goods and the influential secretary of the Department of Finance during the late 1950s and 1960s, Dr T.K. Whitaker, admitted this particular programme had been ‘a very useful supplement in this regard’.⁶

Other programmes like, for example, the Loan Counterpart Fund covered the cost of more elaborate projects such as land reclamation, local authorities’ works, harbour projects and mineral development. Because of Ireland’s designated loan status, however, the American Mission in Ireland had little control over the nature and direction of the Loan Counterpart Fund as the Irish government had the final decision over how monies should be used. The Land Reclamation Project proved to be particularly emblematic of the government’s desire to bolster the primacy of agriculture in Irish society as it used funding to combat rural depopulation and heavy emigration. The envisioned benefits were not, as the definitive account of Irish involvement with the Marshall Plan points out, ‘new or innovative.’ Rather, they offered a short-term rise in employment as the rural schemes tended to employ the largest numbers of any of the capital projects during the period.⁷ Consequently, the

He subsequently served in the Dublin mission of the European Recovery Programme. He was then elevated to the rank of ambassador, a post he held between 1953 and 1957. See profile in Bernadette Whelan, ‘The New World and the Old: American Marshall planners in Ireland, 1947–57’, *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 7 (2001), 179–89: 183.

³Foreign Relations of the United States (hereafter FRUS), 1952–4, 6, part 2, 1563.

⁴FRUS, part 2, 1563.3.

⁵Bernadette Whelan, *Ireland and the Marshall Plan, 1947–57* (Dublin, 2000), 227.

⁶Whelan, *Ireland and the Marshall Plan*, 227–9; 235.

⁷Whelan, *Ireland and the Marshall Plan*, 263; 238; 268; 276.

grant counterpart arrangement offered the best chance for Washington to directly influence Irish usage of Marshall Aid. In this particular scheme, 18 million dollars had been given conditionally in the form of a gift where for every dollar received from Washington, the Irish government had to set aside a similar sum in sterling to be used in a manner to be approved by the US government for the betterment of the country. An *Irish Times* editorial approvingly wrote in October 1954, that such insistence had compelled Dublin to undertake useful long-term projects which would probably have not been embraced under other circumstances.⁸

On 17 June 1954 Taft signed the text of the agreement with Cosgrave for the expenditure of counterpart funds which were to be arranged via a number of sub-agreements on various projects. Both men agreed on the undesirability of any publicity for the signing because of previous delays and changes, added to the fact that the terms of the agreement had yet to be approved by the US Congress. Prior to the signing, in a meeting with Costello, Cosgrave, Minister for Agriculture James Dillon and Attorney-General Patrick McGilligan, Taft had agreed to delete expenditure from the funds for production and cooking of potatoes and the improvement of bog and mine roads. By making that decision, £340,000 was transferred to the costs for establishing an agricultural institute, thereby increasing that fund to £1,840,000. Taft highlighted the significance of the move in his report to Washington, for the words 'educational and related' were removed in the final text on the objections of McGilligan, who felt that they emphasised unduly the educational aspects of the projects, several of which contained no such aspect in reality. Instead, both parties agreed to insert the phrase 'foregoing objectives' in its place. 'The change did not appear to us to be material in the circumstances', Taft reported after the signing.⁹

US INVOLVEMENT WITH THE AGRICULTURAL INSTITUTE, 1950–4

That minor squabble over the educational element proved to be significant in the government's attempts to establish an institute. The idea for an institute had first arisen in conversations between Joseph E. Carrigan—a former dean of an agricultural college in Vermont and the senior official dealing with the distribution of Marshall Aid in Ireland—and James Dillon during his first period as minister for agriculture between 1948 and 1951. The two men had established a close relationship and Carrigan proposed to Dillon that Ireland would adopt the American model for its agricultural, educational and research services where all endeavours rested within a single institution. Dillon, attracted by the logic of the idea and aware of the need to do something about the absence of any worthwhile scientific research in agricultural and veterinary matters, drew up a proposal for an independent, degree-giving institute to cover such functions. After further discussions with Carrigan, the universities and the Department of Finance, Dillon brought the proposals to cabinet on 12 May 1950 where they were approved in principle. The plan envisioned building an institute of agricultural and veterinary science using £3 million from the counterpart finds. The institute would be a recognised college of the National University of Ireland (NUI) and Trinity College Dublin (TCD) charters. It intended for students to spend two years studying basic sciences at a university of choice before transferring to the institute for a further two years to specialise in their respective areas of interest. As the government set about coming up with a plan to satisfy the US authorities,

⁸*Irish Times*, 28 October 1954, 5.

⁹National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter NARA), Record Group 59—Records of the State Department (hereafter RG 59), Central Decimal File (hereafter CDF), 1950–4, Box 3493, 740A.5—MSP/6—1854, despatch 485, American embassy, Dublin to State Department, 'Negotiation of counterpart release agreement', 18 June 1954.

opposition from various lobbies began to ferment. Elements within the NUI and the veterinary services raised objections at the possibility of associating with TCD, due to what they saw as its Protestant elitism. The proposal subsequently languished with the fall of the First Inter-Party Government, the return of a new Fianna Fáil administration and moves by the Department of Finance to kill the project. Significantly, Éamon de Valera, despite growing ill-health, continued to support the project and take a personal interest in it. Opposition continued to grow, however, as de Valera had to deal with a UCC delegation which included the Bishop of Cork, Dr Cornelius Lucey. Undeterred, he did not concede any points to the various representations. In the meantime, de Valera's electoral position weakened, and after a number of by-election defeats in March 1954, he called a general election for May in which he lost power again to the inter-party alliance.¹⁰

By then, Dublin had submitted the final list of proposals to be utilised under the scheme. Its contents once more reflected agriculture's primacy in Irish society with such projects as a ground limestone subsidisation scheme; a scheme for the eradication of bovine tuberculosis; grants for equipment to pasteurise separated milk and sterilise milk containers; along with a provision of grants for the Irish Countrywomen's Associations, Muintir na Tíre and Macra na Feirme.¹¹ While the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee was sympathetic, Senator William Fulbright argued 'strongly' for the fund to be used for an educational exchange programme between the two countries. The Irish government responded by drawing up an agreement—costing £100,000—where not more than six Irish scholars could visit the US at a time. Fulbright replied by suggesting that the total counterpart fund of £6 million should be set aside to establish an agricultural institute which could also incorporate a scholarship exchange agreement. That proposal offered, he suggested in a meeting with Irish diplomats on 7 May 1954, 'a suitable and lasting symbol of the generosity of the American Government in making aid available to Ireland'. Both sides eventually reached an agreement in mid-1954 which included an educational exchange programme, given the provision of £500,000, on the final, revised list of projects.¹² The insertion remained, however, a contentious issue in the negotiations and provides a useful indicator of how the Irish government and the US embassy viewed the value of research and education in discharging these funds. When discussing the scholarship exchange agreement with Ambassador Taft on 27 June 1955, Cosgrave 'wondered whether the project fitted clearly into the Marshall Plan objective of economic development'. Taft replied by stating that 'it could easily be construed as doing so, since pure research had a real place in creating economic benefit.'¹³

Until 1954, the responsibility for the makeup of the programme had been left with the Irish ambassador to the United States, John Hearne, and the Foreign Operations Administration (FOA). Taft, in personal agreement with Fulbright about the importance of education and anxious to avoid an impasse, 'felt that the fund would best serve the Irish economy and Irish-American relations if its employment went

¹⁰National Archives of Ireland (hereafter NAI), Department of the Taoiseach (hereafter DT), S14815C, Report on 'Proposed institute of agricultural education and research—brief history of the project'. Further details of the institute's history before 1954 can be found in Maurice Manning, *James Dillon: a biography* (Dublin, 1999), 296–9; Anthony J. Jordan, *John A. Costello, 1891–1976: compromise taoiseach* (Dublin, 2007), 119–20; Paul Loftus 'Crisis years', 160–2.

¹¹Whelan, *Ireland and the Marshall Plan*, see 312 for final list of projects.

¹²Whelan, *Ireland and the Marshall Plan*, 310–13.

¹³NARA, Record Group 84—Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the United States (hereafter RG 84), Dublin embassy (hereafter DE), General Records (hereafter GR), 1953–55, Box 3, '500-Irish counterpart sub-agreement-educational exchange-1953–1955', Memorandum of Conversation, Cosgrave, Taft, 'Scholarship exchange', 27 June 1955.

chiefly for projects of a permanent and educational character'. 'We have', the ambassador wrote in a 'frank' letter to Costello on 11 June, 'in the past, been too open to the charge from Americans, and, indeed, from some Irishmen, that the Marshall Plan monies have gone for very temporary and fleeting objectives.' Now he suggested including in the revised plan increased building facilities, experimental farm land, equipment and the linking of the Fulbright scholarship with the Plan in some manner. 'The original point of Marshall Aid', Taft pointed out, 'was to emphasise permanent economic improvements.' He told the taoiseach that 'from the American point of view, the break-up of the fund into several projects seems less attractive and its significance dissipated.'¹⁴

Taft underscored this resolve by proposing in November 1954 to William H. Christensen—stationed at the Office of British Commonwealth and Northern European Affairs in the State Department—that the US embassy in Dublin presented 'the most helpful channel to arrive at speedy final approval of any project.' He attempted to thwart what was described as:

the apparent assumption of the Irish that all negotiating of projects is to be accomplished in Washington. Our feeling is strong that such an arrangement, if carried out in practice as well as in form, will result in more disadvantages to United States interests, which are to have the projects well and carefully planned.

The belief was that projects like the institute were too complex to be examined by the Irish embassy in Washington and the FOA—'with its only occasional attention' in the words of Taft—away from local difficulties. Taft suspected the Irish government had an 'apparent hope to gain FOA compliance by catching that Agency when it may be occupied with other more pressing interests.'¹⁵ Christensen's reply to Taft was equally empathic about the necessity for embassy involvement:

You are perfectly right about your Embassy being in a better position to make certain evaluations than either the FOA or the Department, or for that matter the Irish Embassy which simply does not have the talent here. If they insist on completing the agreements without reference to you, and merely give you a copy, our people here will withhold final action until they have your comments and evaluation. This will slow things up but if the Irish insist on this procedure they will have to accept the responsibility for this slower method of doing things.¹⁶

With his mission's role secured, Taft now focused on keeping 'further agreements as simple and straightforward as possible, consistent with ensuring reasonable safeguards that the money will be properly used.' 'This seems desirable to me', he wrote to Washington:

in any matter of "aiding" a foreign government—but particularly in this delayed liquidating stage of utilizing Irish counterpart—it seems to me important that in the guise of extending aid to their country, we do not get into the position of running their country for them.¹⁷

¹⁴NARA, RG 84, DE, GR, 53–5, Box 2, '500-Counterpart-General-1955', Letter, Taft to Costello, 11 June 1954.

¹⁵NARA, RG 59, CDF, 50–4, Box 3493, 740A.5-MSP/11-2954, Letter, Taft to Christensen, 29 November 1954.

¹⁶NARA, RG 84, DE, GR, 53–5, Box 2, '500-ECA-MSA-Ireland (Counterpart funds) 1953–1954', Letter, Christensen to Taft, 3 December 1954.

¹⁷NARA, RG 59, CDF, 50–4, Box 3493, 740A.5-MSP/12-2254, Letter, Taft to Christensen, 22 December 1954. Taft's attempts to ensure that the negotiations of the counterpart sub-agreements would be conducted through embassy in Dublin also accord with how he described the function of any US ambassador in Ireland in a 1956 letter to the State Department. Any envoy posted to Dublin should, he believed, save the 'Department's time and effort for more substantial problems than Ireland', Dwight

Those hopes, particularly in terms of the institute, were not so obtainable in practice. Cosgrave prophetically warned the ambassador in October 1954 as ‘regards the Agricultural Institute...I am afraid we cannot hope to proceed so fast as with the less complex projects.’¹⁸

THE INSTITUTE AND THE DOMESTIC DEBATE, 1954–5

Many of the domestic factors which conspired to hold up the institute’s progress had already begun to coalesce between 1954 and 1955. UCC, University College Galway (UCG) and TCD all began to campaign for their own agricultural schools. The memorandum sent from UCC’s president, Professor Alfred O’Rahilly, to the government stressed how the UCC proposal did not aim to militate against establishing an institute, but argued instead to have a coordinating body ‘capable of representing university and other establishments without interfering with academic variety, and not a semi-state centralisation.’¹⁹ Dillon rejected O’Rahilly’s overtures in a short reply where he suggested the proposal would only complicate matters.²⁰ The minister’s dismissal persuaded O’Rahilly to send a further note to Dublin emphasising how the Cork proposal resulted from consultations around the Munster region with Macra na Feirme (MNF),²¹ agricultural cooperative societies and the larger farming community. ‘Thus it was based not only on grounds of economy, efficiency and decentralisation’, the professor observed, ‘but also on the important social principle of vocational control as opposed to State domination.’ ‘This is a serious issue of social principle’, the conclusion again ominously warned, ‘and is bound to lead to controversy in the near future.’²²

Shortly thereafter, the Catholic Hierarchy added to the government’s difficulties when it requested an audience at short notice with Costello in January 1955 to discuss the position TCD would secure in any arrangement. In a meeting on 19 January with Bishops Lucey and Michael Browne (Galway), the taoiseach insisted that Trinity’s role had been agreed upon in principle and ‘would appear now to be an accomplished fact.’ While the bishops maintained they did not object to any participation by Trinity, they remained adamant the college should not be involved on equal terms with NUI universities and that it ‘must not have a say in the teaching of agriculture in the new institute.’ In what proved to be a tense encounter, Costello intervened at this point to remind Lucey and Browne that in dealing with Trinity’s place, it would be necessary not to do anything which would give material for unfriendly persons to make charges of intolerance or unfairness towards the Protestant minority, considering that the fund came from an external source. The meeting concluded with Costello promising to consult as events proceeded.²³

D. Eisenhower Library, John Foster Dulles Papers, Personnel Series: Chiefs of Mission Subseries, Box 2, ‘Name (Strictly Confidential) [T-V]’, Letter, Taft to Hanes, 1 August 1956.

¹⁸NARA, RG 84, DE, GR, 53–5, Box 2, ‘500-Irish counterpart-disposition of balance in special acct.-1953-54-55’, Letter, Cosgrave to Taft, 26 October 1954.

¹⁹NARA, RG 84, DE, GR, 53–5, Box 2, ‘500-Counterpart-general-1955’, Memorandum from O’Rahilly, ‘Proposal for the establishment of a faculty of agriculture in University College, Cork’, 7 July 1954.

²⁰NARA, RG 84, DE, GR, 53–5, Box 2, ‘500-Counterpart-general-1955’, Letter, Dillon to O’Rahilly, 23 July 1954.

²¹This was a farming organisation which sought to bring young farmers together to discuss ideas.

²²NARA, RG 84, DE, GR, 53–5, Box 2, ‘500-Counterpart-General-1955’, further note from O’Rahilly, ‘Proposed Faculty of Agriculture for University College Cork’, 31 August 1954.

²³University College Dublin Archives (hereafter UCDA), John A. Costello Papers (hereafter JACP), P190/706(20), Summary of Meeting, Costello, Dr Browne, Dr Lucey, ‘Agricultural institute’, 19 January 1955; Manning, Dillon, 299; Jordan, Costello, 120; Loftus, ‘Crisis years’, 163.

The formation of the National Farmers' Association in January 1955 on the initiative of MNF would also become a prominent factor in the institute debate.²⁴ Although many expected increased liaison between the government and this new group to benefit Irish agriculture overall; the reality proved to be somewhat different. John O'Donovan, the parliamentary secretary to the government, told a US embassy officer in March 1955 of the possible resignation of Dillon on the grounds of ill-health.²⁵ The report for Washington referred to other sources, which purported to how the minister had lost the confidence of Irish farmers because 'they do not agree with many of his policies and especially because his reception of farmer delegations has been insulting and rude, and his public statements have been lacking in tact.' A Department of Agriculture source also made the indication that many officials regarded his hold in office 'as being somewhat tenuous'. Dillon himself had confided to a personal friend that 'he might not be long in office'.²⁶ Although the 'resignation' never materialised, the report is still revealing for the level of distrust that prevailed between farmers and officials, particularly Dillon who had become increasingly frustrated at the slow process of implementing change in Irish agriculture.

Complexities, then, political and otherwise, started to reinforce the importance of caution for both the government and the embassy, especially as the concerned groups had only recently started to take a more concerted interest in the institute. 'The task', Taft told the US Department of Agriculture, made it 'not easy to arrive at the most desirable type of organization. And the Embassy has a rather subtle job to do to steer the different parties in the right direction.'²⁷ After conversations with large and small farmers, Taft wrote a letter to Dillon on 23 March 1955 urging the minister to avoid, in forming a suitable plan of operation, creating 'the impression that it has been altogether imposed from above.' He stressed to Dillon the importance of taking account of advice from interested groups, especially as the government would be subjected to the influence of these groups through a governing body anyhow, as 'the good points of such a policy seem to me to be indispensable. The United States has a considerable stake in the continuing success of the project in the years to come.' In that context, Taft tried to convince the minister, in what would be the first of many attempts on the issue, to link the Irish agricultural advisory services to any institute.²⁸

So the problem essentially became a matter of trust. 'The rather turbulent recent history, especially of Irish versus Irish', wrote the agricultural attaché at the US embassy, Louis M. Smith, 'makes the problem of reaching a satisfactory agreement difficult and it is unusual to find any Irishman who can, or will, sincerely endorse the professional qualifications of, or place any trust in, any other Irishman.' His analysis for Washington on the state of relations between the government, farmers, and universities aptly captured the situation as it stood by mid-1955:

In the main, each group (especially the universities and the Department of Agriculture) seems more interested in maintaining its own prerogatives and prestige than in working together on the common problem. The Department of Agriculture consider it most presumptuous if the farmers either question departmental policy and performance, or show an interest in the matters relating

²⁴Loftus, 'Crisis years', 151.

²⁵NARA, RG 84, DE, Classified General Records (hereafter CGR), 53-5, '350-Ireland political-1953-54-55', Memorandum of Conversation, O'Donovan, Smith, 23 March 1955.

²⁶NARA, RG 59, CDF, 1955-9, Box 3170, 740A.13/3-3055, despatch 325, American embassy, Dublin to State Department, 'Possible "resignation" of Mr. Dillon from Cabinet', 30 March 1955.

²⁷NARA, RG 59, CDF, 55-9, Box 4416, 840A.433/5-1255, Letter, Taft to Ogdon, 9 March 1955.

²⁸NARA, RG 84, DE, GR, 53-5, Box 2, '500-Irish counterpart sub-agreement: agricultural institute 1953-54-55', Letter, Taft to Dillon, 23 March 1955.

to the Institute. The Department also considers that the universities have not satisfactorily performed their responsibility in either teaching or research. The universities, on the other hand, feel that they have an intrinsic right to carry on any and all university teaching and research but at the same time they (with some exceptions) show a lack of appreciation of the need for relating studies in the basic sciences to the needs of the agricultural community. Neither the Department nor the universities have done any significant work in agricultural economics or engineering. The farm organizations which have concerned themselves in this matter are convinced that neither the Department nor the universities have done what could be done, or should be done, to benefit agriculture. This conviction has led some of the farm groups...to take a very strong interest in the proposed Institute.²⁹

Smith outlined three possible routes in creating an agricultural institute. First, to allocate funds to existing institutions without creating any new authority; in other words, to leave matters as they were. Second, he proposed to follow through on the original proposal for the institute to take over education, research and advisory services—a route, Smith now believed, which was not ‘either practicable or necessary’. Finally, his letter proposed a compromise by assisting existing agencies through a central office that would coordinate all services. Retaining the two existing agricultural faculties (UCD and UCC’s dairy science school), ‘properly directed by the institute’, he argued in his lengthy analysis, ‘would work as well or better than a larger staff at a single center.’³⁰

Anxious to make some progress, Dillon granted an interview to the *Irish Independent* in July outlining the details of his scheme. He envisioned establishing an institute by statute of the Oireachtas, with its own director and governing body that would be responsible for coordinating all work in research and higher education in agricultural science. As was his earlier thinking, students would study the fundamentals of scientific education at a university of choice for two years before transferring to the institute to acquire the appropriate agricultural specialisation.³¹ Those proposals were enunciated by Costello just under a month later when he addressed the opening of MNT’s rural week at Navan. His appearance there seemed to be an attempt to mollify the concerned interests as it pre-empted the official publication of the proposals. Costello moved to dispute the claims of state control by referring to how the governing body—comprising of equal representation from government, academic and agricultural organisations—would run the institute. The powers of the minister for agriculture were to be confined to the institute being placed at his disposal in times of an agricultural crisis and for specific research tasks to be carried out. Monetary affairs would be handled by a finance committee and Costello also moved to reassure hierarchical concerns by talking about the necessity of providing for a student’s religious and moral welfare.³²

Ambassador Taft highlighted for the State Department that a suggestion of political tension had resulted in Costello emerging to take a leading hand in presenting the plan to the public. Until then, there had been no specifics on which to focus the controversy. ‘It remains to be seen how the present plan will be dealt with by the universities and the farm organizations’, he concluded in an assessment of developments, adding:

²⁹NARA, RG 59, CDF, 55–9, Box 4416, 840A.433/5-1255, Letter, Smith to Garnett, 10 May 1955.

³⁰NARA, RG 59, CDF, 55–9, Box 4416, 840A.433/5-1255, Letter, Smith to Garnett, 10 May 1955.

³¹*Irish Independent*, 20 July 1955, 7.

³²UCDA, JACP, P190/636, Speech by Costello to the National Rural Week of Muintir na Tíre at Navan, 14 August 1955.

It is very likely that the conflicting points of view held by the various interested parties will involve the Embassy in complicated discussions and even in the role of conciliator. Also, we must do what we can informally here to persuade the Irish Department of Agriculture to agree to a reasonably autonomous institute and to obtain significant popular support for it.³³

Lines continued to harden nonetheless. In conversation with the new embassy attaché, E. Raymond, at the end of August, Dillon vowed that ‘vested interests would eventually be beaten down.’³⁴

Reaction, meanwhile, to both Costello’s speech and the plans overall could best be described as adverse. Such that it was that the *Leader* believed the government had been caught ‘napping in a manner akin to that which characterised the “Browne” crisis.’³⁵ Nor would the situation be helped by the NFA and MNT’s decision to appoint a joint commission to investigate the feasibility of an institute. It was an act the *Leader* compared to ‘the classic American definition of a fact-finding mission as a party of men who travel the world seeking evidence to support their preconceived idea.’³⁶ In an interesting similarity to what had happened with the First Inter-Party Government during the Mother-and-Child affair,³⁷ the concerned interests found they had a powerful and compatible ally who also wanted to stop the government’s plans, as the most hostile and defiant opposition came from the Catholic Hierarchy.

Bishop Lucey had attacked the plans at UCC on 16 September 1955 where he warned of the ‘gradual, hidden and undeclared’ process of socialisation. TCD, he claimed, ‘if not wholly Protestant, is free-thinking or indifferent as regards religion.’³⁸ By the following month, another letter arrived from the Hierarchy after a meeting held at Maynooth on 11 October. It dealt once again with the position of Trinity and the ‘forcible interjection into the university of extraneous and hostile elements.’ The bishops warned the government of ‘a serious matter for the Irish Catholic taxpayer to endow an institution which is prohibited to Catholics as intrinsically dangerous and it raises issues of very serious importance to us who are charged with the defence of the Catholic faith.’³⁹ Furious at their defiance, Costello was determined to meet the objections and he set about drafting a long and detailed reply. Sent on 4 November, it dismissed fears about Trinity’s place on the basis of the total Protestant population on the whole island (24 per cent). Again, Costello looked on it as a ‘matter in which it is the government’s broad duty to have regard to broad considerations of the national interest and common welfare.’ ‘In our circumstances’, the reply insisted, ‘considerations such as the desirability of giving an example of fair, or even generous, treatment of religious minorities must be given

³³NARA, RG 59, CDF, 55–9, Box 3171, 740A.5-MSP/8-2955, despatch 80, American embassy, Dublin to State Department, ‘Irish counterpart sub-agreement: agricultural institute’, 29 August 1955.

³⁴NARA, RG 84, DE, CGR, 1956–9, Box 5, ‘Counterpart agricultural institute’, Memorandum of Conversation, Dillon, Raymond, 31 August 1955.

³⁵*Leader*, 1 October 1955, 1.

³⁶*Leader*, 15 October 1955, 1.

³⁷The Mother-and-Child affair relates to a healthcare programme that the minister for health, Dr Noel Browne tried to implement during the lifetime of the First Inter-Party Government. He sought to provide free maternity care for all mothers and free healthcare for all children up to sixteen years of age, regardless of income. It met with strong opposition from the Irish medical lobby and the Catholic Hierarchy who believed it contradicted Catholic social teaching on the duty of all parents to provide for their children’s healthcare. It led to a major political crisis within the cabinet, which involved the resignation of Browne.

³⁸*Irish Independent*, 17 September 1955, 10.

³⁹UCDA, JACP, P190/706(42), Letter, Fergus to Costello, 18 October 1955; ‘Views of the Irish Hierarchy on the draft proposals for an institute of agriculture’, 11 October 1955; Manning, Dillon, 300–01; Loftus, ‘Crisis years’, 175–6.

special weight.’⁴⁰ Despite the firm and spirited reply, and despite the Hierarchy’s continuing opposition, the government did not issue any further replies to their concerns. The fact that these exchanges were conducted at a private, confidential level and that any public opposition remained at a regional level (only Cork and Galway bishops publicly protested), meant there would never be a full-blown public crisis similar to what had characterised the Mother-and-Child affair in 1951.⁴¹ Instead, the Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid, continued to insist that the church was only concerned with questions of faith and morals. He, like the farmers and universities, now began to campaign for a research-only institute and vowed to lose no opportunity to put subtle pressure on cabinet ministers to opt for an establishment focused on research.⁴²

RENEWED INVOLVMENT BY THE US EMBASSY, 1955–7

Taft had similarly attempted to persuade the government to form a committee of representative opinion to consider the problems involved in its establishment as well as referring to the desirability of attaching the advisory services; then operating under the Department of Agriculture’s Parish Plan⁴³ and the County Agricultural Committees, directly to it. On 12 August 1955, just before Costello delivered his Navan outline, the ambassador wrote a letter to the taoiseach stressing the importance of keeping any plan a flexible one. He presented his case for transferring advisory services to any institute by arguing how American experience showed that the most efficient way of passing on the application of research to farmers had been through giving the agricultural colleges direct responsibility for agents, while at the same time, allowing the concerned rural community to have a say in selecting their agent. ‘It must be very difficult to reconcile so many parties’ interests in the Institute’, he empathised with Costello, ‘and I am sorry to remind you of any difficulties you may be going through in the matter by pointing out that my Government, almost as much as yours, would not care to launch an Institute here which contradicts substantial, informed public opinion.’ The diplomat raised an informal conversation he had with Dillon where the minister believed the joint stand of the universities and some farm groups would not last and thus make it easier for the government to accomplish the institute’s establishment. ‘Actually’, Taft anticipated, ‘on thinking it over, I could not help but feel that we want to avoid the disagreement between disinterested parties

⁴⁰UCDA, JACP, P190/706(45), Reply from government to Hierarchy, 4 November 1955; Loftus, ‘Crisis years’, 176–7.

⁴¹Loftus, ‘Crisis years’, 178.

⁴²Dublin Diocesan Archives, John Charles McQuaid Papers, AB8/b/XV/b/3, undated notes by McQuaid which deal extensively with the government reply of 4 November 1955; Loftus, ‘Crisis years’, 179–80.

⁴³The Parish Plan had also been a scheme established by James Dillon during his first period as minister for agriculture between 1948–51 to provide farmers with information and expertise through employing a series of parish agents. Dillon envisioned having one agent for roughly every three parishes around the country. Between 1951 and 1954, opposition from Fianna Fáil and the Department of Finance had effectively killed off the scheme. Dillon returned to office determined to revive it, but also encountered considerable difficulties in achieving its implementation. In the meantime, Costello used his Navan speech of 14 August 1955 to safeguard the plan as he insisted it was still viable despite agricultural county committees already employing their own advisers. During 1956, MNF and the NFA increased their opposition at what they thought to be a loss of autonomy with the scheme, and this, combined with similar criticism from Bishop Lucey, ensured that the plan began to generate much negative publicity. Matters had not been helped by cooperative societies also beginning to employ their own advisers, as it now meant that there were three categories of agricultural instructor working in the country. This is what the US embassy focused on when it argued for advisers to be brought under the institute’s control. In the end, no further agents were recruited after Fianna Fáil returned to office in early 1957 and many of the departmental agents would eventually find work in the local committees. See Loftus, ‘Crisis years’, 164–5; 171–2; 181–5.

rather than wait for them to develop.’ He made his points in such a way so as to express embassy opinion without being dragged into the dispute in any overt form. He finished by writing: ‘I suggest the above with due deference because the burden is yours to gain support for the Institute, and naturally the Embassy wants to abstain from interference in the public discussion.’⁴⁴

Costello reacted to Taft’s overture by requesting the Department of External Affairs to examine the envoy’s proposals. Its written response reflected the resolve of the government to insist on some measure of involvement. The document referred to the problem of ‘ample liaison’ between advisory workers in the field and the research staff of the institute. ‘There will be no administrative difficulty in achieving this’, Iveagh House believed. ‘One of the defects of the present system is that there is a lack of such liaison but the responsibility for this cannot be placed on the government or the Department of Agriculture.’ It linked the necessity for involvement by the Department of Agriculture to agriculture’s place in the Irish economy and its subsequent position at the fulcrum of the export trade:

It is not in fact practicable or desirable to divorce the Department of Agriculture from advisory work among farmers here. The Department of Agriculture must be concerned with production, education and marketing; otherwise it cannot carry out its functions properly. It must be remembered that approximately one-third of total Irish agricultural output, and as much as 50% of that part of the output which is sold off farms, has to be exported and that the economic position of the country very largely depends on the returns received from our agricultural exports.⁴⁵

The argument made by the Department of External Affairs also questioned Taft’s idea of establishing an advisory committee. The advice pointed to ‘no question of principle...but rather one of what kind of effective arrangements can be made in practice which will not unduly defer the actual establishment of the Institute.’ Given the strength of the opposition, the Department’s analysis wrote of how it seemed:

very likely that the members of such an Advisory Committee would to a large extent have already made up their minds about the ideal shape of the Institute and that...anything like unanimity of opinion might in fact make differences more acute than they may be at the present.

Consult separately but fully with each of the interests, the conclusion urged. ‘This should achieve the same results so far as consultation is concerned but would enable consultation to take place more rapidly and probably with much more effective results.’⁴⁶

Just after the Hierarchy had sent their letter of 11 October, an embassy report for Washington commented on the hostile publicity generated by the government’s proposal. It observed how hardly a week had gone by over the last two months where an article, in some form or other, had not appeared on the institute. This latest report believed that a large part of the publicity stemmed from meetings held by the special committee of the NFA.⁴⁷ Now, more than ever, the plan’s unending ability to attract

⁴⁴NARA, RG 59, CDF, 55-59, Box 3171, 740A.5-MSP/8-2955, Letter, Taft to Costello, 12 August 1955.

⁴⁵NARA, RG 59, CDF, 55-9, Box 3171, 740A.5-MSP/8-2955, Notes by the Department of External Affairs, ‘Observations on points raised by the American ambassador in his letter of 12 August, 1955, to the taoiseach on the agricultural institute’.

⁴⁶NARA, RG 59, CDF, 55-9, Box 3171, 740A.5-MSP/9-1555, Notes by the Department of External Affairs, ‘Observations’.

⁴⁷NARA, RG 84, DE, GR, 53-5, Box 2, ‘500-Irish counterpart sub-agreement: agricultural institute 1953-54-55’, despatch 155, American embassy, Dublin to State Department, ‘Publicity received by the government’s proposed plan for an agricultural institute’, 13 October 1955.

controversy underscored the resolve of Taft to launch, for an initial period anyhow, a research-only organisation. Costello told embassy officials on 13 October 1955 that the best course was now to wait and let the controversy die down. Those sentiments accentuated the ambassador's unease as he informed his superiors of an intention to suggest to the Irish government to launch the project on the basis of a national laboratory for agricultural research. He justified the course for two reasons. First, Taft proffered the opinion that:

Evidence in the past three months clearly indicates that the formation of such a research institute is just as likely to lead eventually to a linking of research with advanced agricultural education and the advisory services as any other course of action.

Second, he thought a research establishment would be free from academic politics, so enabling it, as a consequence, to concentrate fully on enhancing the quality of the agricultural sector. 'I am more convinced all the time', he concluded, 'that Irishmen lack the understanding of United States high standards of teaching and educational methods. There is no way to translate such to them without promoting research into such methods.' More tellingly, the analysis highlighted how some of the unfavourable criticism of government proposals, especially from the farmers, came 'closer to our conception of an ideal Institute.'⁴⁸

But the government and the embassy differed, however, in the question of how the institute could actually serve the needs of the country in practice. In December, the joint NFA/MNF commission published their findings on the institute. It sought to have the best of everything by calling for agricultural schools in every university and by establishing an institute to administrate research and advisory services. The Department of Agriculture scornfully believed that the report had been designed to be like 'Hamlet without the Prince or, should we say, Faust without Mephistopheles.'⁴⁹ The Counsellor at the US embassy, Ware Adams, kindly put the content of the report down to lack of experience on the part of a new farming organisation.⁵⁰ Taft's actual reply to the NFA president, Dr Juan M. Greene, confessed to an initial impression 'that your recommendations and ideas go considerably beyond anything the United States may have contemplated in offering to provide an Institute.' This was a scheme, so he believed, that required 'large annual budgets... which even populous states such as Wisconsin or Ohio in America cannot well afford.' 'I wonder', wrote the diplomat, 'whether your witnesses have really considered such problems, being more interested, understandably, in promoting regional rather than Governmental and taxpayers' interests.' He stressed that what farmers desired would only come about at the end of a process which reformed the educational and research sectors within Irish agriculture. 'At any rate', Taft warned, 'it would seem to be unfortunate to lose in grandiose plans the possibility of one really top-notch school of higher agricultural education.'⁵¹

By that stage, Taft started to campaign with relevant ministers about implementing his ideas. Encouraged by Dillon's increasing recognition that the most important thing now for the government was to fill the gap that existed in the present research

⁴⁸NARA, RG 84, DE, GR, 53-5, Box 2, '500-Counterpart-General-1955', despatch 222, American embassy, Dublin to State Department, 'Proposed change in agricultural institute', 18 November 1955.

⁴⁹NAI, DT, S14815G, Memorandum by the Department of Agriculture, 'Comments on the Report of the Joint Commission of Macra na Feirme and the National Farmers' Association on the agricultural institute, December 1955', 12 January 1956.

⁵⁰NARA, RG 84, DE, GR, 56-9, Box 4, '500-Counterpart sub-agreement-agricultural institute, 1956', despatch 273, American embassy, Dublin to State Department, 'Irish counterpart sub-agreement: agricultural institute', 4 January 1956.

⁵¹NARA, RG 84, DE, GR, 56-9, Box 4, '500-Counterpart sub-agreement-agricultural institute, 1956', Letter, Taft to Greene, 30 December 1955.

arrangements,⁵² the embassy stressed three advantages to their plan to initially set up a research-only establishment. First, such a proposal might lift the institute from the level of bitter controversy it had continually obtained to a more placid one. Second, if a decision could be reached that some plan might be operated, it would remove the government's excuse for holding in abeyance approval of funds requested by other agricultural agencies or departments. That, in turn, would remove the impression that the government sought to control the institute through finance. Finally, if the plan was accepted, deployment could at last be given to the specific task of getting its work underway.⁵³ 'The main problem', Taft explained to Dillon in February 1956, 'might be how to make a start without prejudicing the ultimate authority and governing body for the Institute.'⁵⁴ As August drew to close, and with no sign of progress, Taft informed Cosgrave of his distress at the lack of success. His letter to Iveagh House confessed to be 'worried personally about all this unfinished business.' The delays now made it increasingly difficult to explain the situation to Capitol Hill.⁵⁵

A month later, on 25 September, Dillon finally called in Taft and Raymond to explain the government's new plan. He now proposed to establish it by using £1 million of the £1.84 million available for the institute to create an endowment fund, using any accruing interest from it along with an annual government grant to cover the cost of operating expenses. The remaining £840,000 would go towards capital improvements for existing research units which the institute would eventually bring under its own authority. Taft was unhappy at what Dillon attempted to do with the money as he pointed to how 'such a use of funds will represent a change in original intention and require consideration by Washington.' Dillon elaborated on the change in government intentions, and in particular, the provision in the original White Paper for the institute to assume control of agricultural education. Now, he argued, 'it has seemed best...to propose a modified plan and to limit the Institute's responsibilities and activities to supervising agricultural research work and to offering research fellowships and work to qualified persons seeking post graduate work under the Institute's direction.' Further modifications included: the institute to have responsibility for all agricultural research work; the institute to allocate funds and equipment to existing universities; while finally, the governing body of any institute would now have twelve instead of thirty members as provided for in the original plan, and, it would also have more autonomous status and practical independence except for an obligation to make reports to the government. The embassy report stated that the new plans had 'some merit' for three reasons. First, it provided for a substantial sum of money to be devoted almost entirely to research work. Second, it avoided crippling conflict with existing groups who had a vested interest in the country's educational system. Finally, it enabled 'the country to strengthen and expand the agricultural research work now being carried on very inadequately.' The difficulty, as Taft highlighted in what he stressed was a 'tentative' analysis for the State Department, lay in the details. 'Mr. Dillon', he pointed out, 'is prone to be vague, and details will never be adequately spelled out without insistence from us.'⁵⁶

⁵²NARA, RG 84, DE, GR, 56-9, Box 4, '500-Counterpart sub-agreement-agricultural institute 1956', Letter, Dillon to Taft, 8 March 1956.

⁵³NARA, RG 84, DE, GR, 56-9, Box 4, '500-Counterpart sub-agreement-agricultural institute, 1956', Memorandum Raymond to Taft, 'Thoughts for basis of discussion with Dillon', 27 January 1956.

⁵⁴NARA, RG 84, DE, GR, 56-9, Box 4, '500 Counterpart (General) 1956', Letter, Taft to Dillon, 24 February 1956.

⁵⁵NARA, RG 84, DE, GR, 56-9, Box 4, '500 Counterpart (General) 1956', Letter, Taft to Cosgrave, 29 August 1956.

⁵⁶NARA, RG 59, CDF, 55-9, Box 3171, 740A.5 MSP/9-2856, despatch 106, American embassy, Dublin to State Department, 'Ireland: Revised plan for the agricultural institute suggested by the Irish government', 28 September 1956.

By the end of October the cabinet had approved a bill to create the institute along the lines of what Dillon had proposed. State involvement had been cut to the minimal degree possible. The institute would concern itself with research and existing agricultural faculties would also remain in their respective universities.⁵⁷ Taft's response to Dillon in a letter on 26 November purported to be, generally speaking, in favour of the new plan. He did, however, continue to express concern at the planned endowment fund, and especially at the proposal for the Department of Finance to manage it. 'I would like to feel more confident', he wrote, 'that the endowment fund...will continue to go for genuine research purposes, rather than being expended in any way to ease the obligations of the State to maintain services which may arise as the result of research.' Taft also suggested to the minister that he make a provision for a director and treasurer so as to increase efficient administrative ability, and, as a consequence, properly coordinate policy making and administration of the institute.⁵⁸ Pace continued to be brisk; Dillon obtained authorisation from the cabinet on 30 November to introduce legislation in the Dáil.⁵⁹

Certain differences of opinion between the embassy and Dillon continued to persist. Taft had asked the government to find ways and means to broaden the definitions of the institute's functions.⁶⁰ The ambassador also informed Dillon of an inclination towards giving separate powers for policy making and management of the institute. The question he continually came back to was what the Department of Agriculture planned to surrender in terms of responsibility to the institute.⁶¹ Dillon's replies to the suggestions, the embassy informed Washington, had not been 'particularly enthusiastic'.⁶² He quelled Taft's worries about the endowment and capital funds in a letter to the ambassador on 21 January 1957 by explaining how the Department of Finance's only function would be to give expert guidance as to the securities in which the institute should hold its funds. Any interest, he insisted once more, would accrue directly and automatically to the institute. The minister also voiced his apprehension at Taft's belief that there should be a chairman and chief executive officer. Dillon argued instead to combine the two posts which could help to avoid the kind of clashes that might possibly arise between a chairman and a director or between the council and a director. As matters stood by mid-January, the bill only provided for a chairman.⁶³ In addition, he informed Taft in another letter one day later that any state grants for the institute would follow the same procedure for NUI universities and TCD. This was done, he insisted to the diplomat, so as 'to safeguard the essential autonomy of the Institute.'⁶⁴

The rapid progress which had accumulated since October had to be momentarily put aside during February when Costello called a general election for 5 March after a motion of no confidence had been put down by Seán MacBride—leader of Clann

⁵⁷NARA, RG 59, CDF, 55-9, Box 3171, 740A.5 MSP/11-2656, Letter, Dillon to Taft, 8 November 1956.

⁵⁸NARA, RG 59, CDF, 55-9, Box 3171, 740A.5MSP/11-2656, Letter, Taft to Dillon, 26 November 1956.

⁵⁹NAI, DT, S14815H, Memorandum, Agriculture to government, 'Agricultural Institute Bill, 1956', 29 November 1956; authorisation to introduce bill in the Dáil recorded on 30 November 1956 in the same file.

⁶⁰NARA, RG 84, DE, GR, 56-9, Box 4, '500-Counterpart sub-agreement—agricultural institute 1956', despatch 204, American embassy, Dublin to State Department, 'Irish counterpart sub-agreement—agricultural institute', 10 December 1956.

⁶¹NARA, RG 84, DE, GR, 56-9, Box 5, '500-Counterpart sub-agreement—agricultural institute', Letter, Taft to Dillon, 15 January 1957.

⁶²NARA, RG 59, CDF, 55-9, Box 3171, 740A.5 MSP/2-657, despatch 265, American embassy, Dublin to State Department, 'Draft bill providing for establishment of Irish agricultural institute', 6 February 1957.

⁶³NARA, RG 59, CDF, 55-9, Box 3171, 740A.5 MSP/2-657, Letter, Dillon to Taft, 21 January 1957.

⁶⁴NARA, RG 59, CDF, 55-9 Box 3171, 740A.5 MSP/2-657, Letter, Dillon to Taft, 22 January 1957.

na Poblachta and the party on whose support the government now depended—and Fianna Fáil. Only the casting vote of the ceann comhairle would save the government from defeat. Rather than fight the motion, the taoiseach opted to call an election. Even then, the minister for finance, Gerard Sweetman, attempted to reassure the ambassador that his department would serve only to give expert guidance to the institute—his letter of 14 February reaffirmed that his department would not manage the institute funds. The only function of Finance, he held, was a negative one—sanctioning funds for use.⁶⁵ Liam Cosgrave also attempted to mollify Taft as he informed him that the dissolution of the Dáil would not hinder the signature of the counterpart sub-agreement releasing the £1.84 million to set up the institute, and he expected to have it ready for signature by the end of February. The good press and the support of Fianna Fáil were used advantageously to show that it was business as usual for the plans.⁶⁶ Ironically, however, any desire to conclude the agreement on the government's part while it remained in office, and so use it as a factor to demonstrate progress during the election campaign, mattered little as the draft bill could not now be considered until a new Dáil had been established on 20 March. The Second Inter-party Government's attempts to establish the institute became, so the charge d'affaires of the US embassy, Arthur B. Emmons, reported to Washington, a 'victim of its own procrastination'.⁶⁷ It would be left to Éamon de Valera's last government to finally bring the institute into being. The new minister for agriculture, Seán Moylan, also tried to restore the teaching element as did his successor, Patrick Smith, but, like Dillon, they too eventually relented at the deep-rooted opposition. The only difference was the provision for a part-time chairman and a full-time director. An Foras Talúntais, as the agricultural institute was known by its official title, initially operated from offices at the Department of Agriculture before moving to its own headquarters at 33 Merrion Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin, with the official opening taking place on 19 May 1959. Since then, it has expanded to employ 1,500 people and encompass sixteen research centres and colleges across the country.⁶⁸

CONCLUSION—THE LEGACY OF THE INSTITUTE AND THE GRANT COUNTERPART FUND

What, then, does the legacy of the agricultural institute say about the development of Irish agriculture in the 1950s and of the country's involvement with the Marshall Plan? In terms of its impact on Irish agriculture, a delay in establishing it meant the agricultural sector could rarely be guided by research and innovation during the decade.⁶⁹ 'It is a matter of the highest national priority to raise the standard of Irish farming skills', Dr T.K. Whitaker wrote, when the seminal report, *Economic Development*, was published in 1958. The influential civil servant described agriculture as the 'Cinderella of the educational household' and recommended that its value in improving Irish farming should be 'sold to rural Ireland'.⁷⁰ As for the impact of the institute's creation from Marshall funding, there are two points to note.

⁶⁵NARA, RG 84, DE, GR, 56–9, Box 5, '500-Counterpart sub-agreement—agricultural institute', Letter, Sweetman to Taft, 14 February 1957.

⁶⁶NARA, RG 84, DE, GR, 56–9, Box 5, '500-Counterpart sub-agreement—agricultural institute', Letter, Cosgrave to Taft, 18 February 1957.

⁶⁷NARA, RG 59, CDF, 55–9, Box 3171, 740A.5 MSP/2-657, despatch 265, American embassy, Dublin to State Department, 6 February 1957.

⁶⁸Manning, *Dillon*, 302; Jordan, *Compromise taoiseach*, 188 (chapter 17 note 15); Loftus, 'Crisis years', 188.

⁶⁹Mary E. Daly, *The first department: a history of the Department of Agriculture* (Dublin, 2002), 542.

⁷⁰Daly, *The first department*, 387.

The first is elaborated by Bernadette Whelan in her book, *Ireland and the Marshall Plan*, as she suggests it may have been ‘somewhat fortuitous’ that the grant counterpart monies did not materialise until the mid-1950s. That, as a consequence, meant the political climate had more time to become attuned to the messages of productivity and efficiency the Marshall Plan had preached in its initial phase.⁷¹ Secondly, while the constant change of governments throughout the 1950s had not helped progress either, the process of creating the institute underscored the importance of creating a long-term strategy for Irish farming. The nature of Marshall funding for Ireland ‘revealed’, as Whelan writes in another perceptive passage, ‘the strengths and weaknesses in the Irish economic, political and administrative culture’.⁷² Any such embrace of these philosophies in the 1950s would be particularly crucial in changing attitudes when the doctrine of economic nationalism still held sway with many members within both Inter-Party and Fianna Fáil governments. In that context, the institute’s long creation also showed the importance for Irish governments of engaging with interest groups as the process of its establishment shows just how resistant attitudes towards change were in 1950s Ireland. Suspicious farmers, conservative academics and unrelenting church officials were never an easy combination to deal with at the best of times, but in an economic climate which continued to insist on the primacy of agriculture and the export trade to Britain, engagement and pragmatism remained necessary to achieve any progress.

Such factors reinforced the instinct of successive governments to spend Marshall Aid on agricultural schemes that offered immediate employment in fighting rural depopulation. It would only be through counterpart schemes however—where the US government had some say in how Marshall Aid should be used—that Dublin embraced the principles of investment and planning in the Irish economy. The involvement of the American embassy proved to be crucial in ensuring the institute’s eventual creation, for the institute still reflected a continuity in policy making and a reliance on agriculture and the British export trade to bolster the Irish economy.⁷³ If Irish governments were going to continue to insist on the primacy of agriculture and the importance of tradition in spending the funds, it became ever more imperative for US diplomats to stress the importance of research in agriculture. Taft exerted a subtle influence in steering the government towards a research-only establishment without ever becoming involved as a mediator between the various parties. By the mid-1950s the United States’ stake in the institute was simply a matter of reputation. The ambassador remained conscious of the criticism that earlier use of Marshall Aid had been spent on largely unproductive endeavours where usage had simply become another part of the government’s short-term policy towards relieving chronic unemployment. Circumstances, as they stood by the mid-1950s, allowed the Second Inter-Party Government and the American embassy to come together and create an institute—with a focus on research—which had a lasting long-term effect upon Irish agriculture. In that context it is fair to conclude that the establishment of the

⁷¹Whelan, *Ireland and the Marshall Plan*, 314.

⁷²Whelan, *Ireland and the Marshall Plan*, 402.

⁷³In a comparative essay, Brian Girvin takes the opposite view to Whelan on the benefit Marshall Aid brought to Ireland. The stability the British export trade provided during the 1950s contributed significantly to how funds were used. Ireland, he correctly writes, was slow to recognise that agriculture could no longer alone provide the means to generate growth. He goes on to suggest that the opportunity presented by the Marshall Plan ‘was one that was lost on Ireland.’ While this argument undoubtedly has its merits in relation to expenditure on import commodities, farming equipment and short-term schemes, it fails to mention or recognise the long-term value projects such as the institute or the Bovine TB Scheme (See Loftus, ‘Crisis years’, 153–6) had for Irish agriculture. Brian Girvin, ‘Did Ireland benefit from the Marshall Plan? Choice, strategy and the national interest in a comparative context’, in Till Geiger and Michael Kennedy (eds), *Ireland, Europe and the Marshall Plan* (Dublin, 2004), 182–220: 218–20.

agricultural institute in 1958—as an exercise in mutual co-operation between Ireland and the United States—for better and for worse offers a positive and enduring legacy for Ireland's involvement with the Marshall Plan.

