



ANNEX A

FINE GAEL AND IRISH INTERNAL POLITICS

Fine Gael have 55 Dail seats in a Chamber of 166 (Fianna Fail 76, Labour 15, Progressive Democrats 6, Workers Party 7, Independents 7). Their response to the re-emergence of the 10 year old telephone tapping scandal was to table a no confidence vote. This played a part in putting pressure on the junior coalition partners in government to demand changes. The ensuing problems could still put Mr Bruton's visit to London in question.

Since succeeding to the leadership of FG in late 1990, Mr Bruton has tried to raise the profile of his party by staking out radical positions on shibboleths of Irish politics like neutrality, the constitutional claim to Northern Ireland, extradition and divorce. He may have reckoned without the Irish electorate's conservatism. Fine Gael's poll ratings remain below even their disappointing performance at the 1989 election (29% of first preference votes).