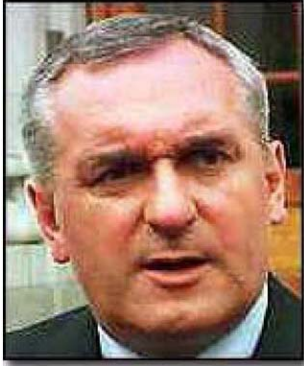




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Dublin money scandals continue



Bertie Ahern

Mr. Ahern heads a coalition government and the junior partners, the Progressive Democrats, are reported to be getting nervous at the revelations of the rather unusual fund-raising methods of Mr. Ahern's Fianna Fail party. It seems that a scandal like that which overtook his predecessor, Charles Haughey, is about to break upon his head.

A property developer, Tom Gilmartin, claims that he gave IR £50,000 to Padraig Flynn, currently Ireland's EU Commissioner, in 1989, when Flynn was then Minister for the Environment. Mr. Gilmartin was then engaged in building a IR £200m complex but had run into planning problems. He sought help from Mr. Ahern, then Minister of Labour, and claims he met him four times. Mr. Ahern claims he can only recall one meeting. Gilmartin also claims that he was asked by Mr. Ahern for a political donation.

This request came just after he had given Mr. Flynn a cheque for IR £50,000. Fianna Fail headquarters have no record of the donation.

Following a newspaper story on the incident, Mr. Gilmartin says that he was contacted by Mr. Flynn and asked to say that the donation was for his personal expenses.

To have made such a statement would have meant changing an affidavit he had already sworn for another inquiry into payments made by some builders to former Foreign Affairs Minister, Ray Burke. He says he refused to change his story. Mr. Flynn has not yet replied to this very serious allegation.

Mr. Ray Burke suddenly retired from politics last year in a shock move.

All told, sums of money approaching IR £200,000 are involved.

Former Dublin premier, Charles Haughey, was found to have received IR £1.3m from a Dunnes Store boss, Ben Dunne. Legal proceedings are presently continuing against Haughey for obstructing the tribunal that looked into his affairs. These events, which have not yet run their course, will do much to tarnish Ahern's image of "Mr. Politically Clean." They could also get in the way of Dublin's pursuance of the implementation of the Good Friday "Peace Agreement." Dublin sees the Agreement as its best hope of achieving a united Ireland, the longtime ambition of successive Dublin governments.