



sought to use the **PostAim** unaddressed mail delivery system of An Post (whose then chairman, Feargal Quinn is a cousin of Ruairi Quinn), but were told of the database system developed by a company called Eu-Mark. This allowed the party to send its electoral address on behalf of Barry Desmond to each household, but particularised to the inhabitants of each, eg: Mr & Mrs. Murphy, the Murphy Family, etc., a

system known as de-duplication

Marian Conlan, managing director of Eu-Mark, says it's household information source is probably the biggest in the country. From the electoral role it has taken the names and addresses of everyone over the age of eighteen who is registered to vote — some two and a half million individuals. Along with this it uses around twelve other databases containing infor-

mation on individuals to produce a pinpoint analysis tool — a means of identifying target groups for marketing campaigns.

Electioneering is itself a type of marketing campaign, where the product to be sold is the party, its policies, or more particularly in the Irish context, the individual candidate and, as in the commercial world, the falling price of computer power is making the use of more sophisticated database driven marketing techniques available in politics. Quinn, for example, has loaded the records of all the constituency work he has done since 1977 onto a computer file. With thirteen years worth of records on his constituents, Quinn can easily find out the things that most occupy his constituents, and then tailor his messages to suit different groups of voters, thus a politician can be much more effective at becoming all things to all men.

Come election time, reminders can be sent out about favours done in the past, for Quinn is a firm believer in the political adage that at election time you do not win votes, you collect them. This means in effect trying to emulate the American system of constant electioneering. Quinn's approach to this is to segment his constituents by interest group. For example, Quinn has selected everyone on the electoral roll whose name appears in Irish and has written to them in Irish over the past six elections. "As a consequence we have received first preference votes from people who are not Labour supporters, but who regard their commitment to the Irish language as more important than a party political preference, and respond to the effort which we have taken to recognise that commitment in them", he says.

Like any marketing exercise, the TD expects to get a return on his marketing spend (though in the case of TDs, one of the major costs, that of postage, is greatly reduced by the free electoral address, and the 1,500 free letters a month to which a TD is entitled). In politics the return is votes from the constituents, although unlike commercial transactions, the political transaction is difficult to monitor because of the secrecy of the ballot.