

IRELAND

Date of Elections: June 18, 1969

Characteristics of Parliament

The Irish Parliament (*Oireachtas*) is composed of two Houses:

— the House of Representatives (*Bail Eireann*) whose number of seats is so determined that each member represents approximately 20,000 citizens (Electoral (Amendment) Bill, 1968, adopted on March 20, 1969)*. The *Bail Eireann* currently has 144 members.

— the Senate (*Seanad Eireann*), consisting of:

11 members nominated by the Prime Minister

3 members elected by the National University of Ireland

3 members elected by the University of Dublin

43 members elected from 5 panels of candidates, corresponding to the principal cultural, economic and social sectors, by an electoral college.

Under the Electoral Bill, a legislature cannot last longer than 5 years. The previous elections to the *Bail Eireann* were held on April 7, 1965, while the renewal of the *Seanad* was set for August 12 to 14, 1969.

Electoral System

Every citizen without distinction of sex who has reached the age of 21 and is sane of mind has the right to vote in elections to the *Bail Eireann* in the constituency in which he resides, provided he

* See *Parliamentary Developments in the World*, p.20.

is not in prison and has not been deprived of his civil rights by court order. Members of the armed forces and police force are authorized to vote by correspondence.

As regards elections to the Senate, the following can participate:

— for the 3 delegates of the National University of Ireland, all citizens of both sexes over 21 years of age who have received a degree in the University;

— for the 3 delegates of the University of Dublin, all citizens of both sexes over 21 years of age who have received a degree in the University or have obtained a foundation scholarship or, for women, a non-foundation scholarship;

— for the 43 other senators, members of the new *Dail Eireann*, out-going senators and members of county, or county borough, councils.

Voting in senatorial elections is by correspondence.

All citizens of both sexes who fulfil the conditions required to vote in elections to the *Dail Eireann* and who have not been declared bankrupt or convicted of corrupt electoral practices are entitled to stand for election to this House, with the exception of members of the armed forces, police force or civil service unless — in the case of the latter — they are by the terms of their employment expressly permitted to be members of Parliament. The President of the Republic, the Comptroller and Auditor General and the judges are also excluded from membership of Parliament.

The same conditions apply to candidates for election to the Senate who must also:

— be nominated by 10 registered electors of the University if they are standing for a University seat;

— be nominated by either 4 members of Parliament or a registered nominating body, if they wish to be included in one of the 5 economic-socio-cultural lists, and be qualified to represent the interests of the corresponding sector.

Ireland

Members of the *Dail Eireann* are elected in a ratio of 3, 4 or 5 to each of the 42 electoral constituencies, according to the single transferable vote system with proportional representation.

Each voter receives a ballot-paper containing the names of all the candidates in his constituency. He votes for one of these by writing the figure 1 opposite his name; he is then at liberty to indicate an order of preference for the other candidates by adding the figures 2, 3, 5, etc. against their names'.

In counting the votes, a quota is first established in the following manner: the total number of valid votes recorded is divided by the number of seats to be filled plus 1; the quota is then deemed to be the smallest whole number that exceeds the figure obtained. Candidates who obtain a number of first preferences equal to, or greater than, this quota are immediately elected.

Should any seats remain to be filled, then the surplus votes (i.e. those in excess of the quota) obtained by candidates already elected are transferred to the remaining candidates, on the basis of the second preferences indicated. This is done by multiplying the number of second preferences recorded for each remaining candidate on the ballot-papers of each elected candidate by the latter's surplus votes, and by dividing the product by the total number of second preferences indicated on those ballot-papers, the resulting figure giving the number of votes that each candidate was entitled to receive from the surplus. As before, candidates who now possess a number of votes equal to, or greater than, the quota are elected.

The same operation is repeated with regard to the next available preference until such time as all the seats are filled or there remain no more transferable surplus votes. In the latter event, all the ballots of the remaining candidate with the least votes to his credit are transferred to the other candidates not yet elected, on the basis of the next available preferences. The same procedure is then repeated until such time as all the seats are filled or there remain only as many candidates as there are seats to be filled. The latter are then declared elected.

Senate elections operate on the same basis.

It should be pointed out that, if he stands for re-election, the outgoing Speaker (*Ceann Comhairle*) of the *Dail Eireann* is returned uncontested in the constituency he represented in Parliament; this constituency then designates 1 deputy less (Electoral Act, 1963, section 14).

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

On May 21, 1969, President de Valera dissolved the 18th *Dail* at the request of the *Taoiseach* (Prime Minister), Mr. Jack Lynch, who considered that conditions were ideal for the holding of general elections.

Organized a month later, these elections involved the 3 traditional Irish parties which contested seats in 42 new constituencies fixed by an amendment to the Electoral Act adopted in March 1969.

Fianna Fail, led by Mr. Jack Lynch and in power since 1932, put up 121 candidates; *Fine Gael*, a liberal bourgeois party headed by Mr. Liam Cosgrave, put up 125; for its part, the Labour Party, under Mr. Brendan Corish, submitted only 99 candidatures. In addition, 28 non-party candidates contested seats.

The political parties conducted an extremely lively campaign, particularly *Fianna Fail* which, in an effort to smooth over its defeat in the referendum on October 16, 1968, laid stress on the country's prosperity, the high level of employment and standard of living. *Fine Gael* based its programme on a "just society", in which the growing State control of the economy would be counterbalanced by greater social security. Finally, the Labour Party adopted a highly militant Socialist attitude, thereby, perhaps, alienating voters who might otherwise have supported it so as to provoke changes in the country's policy. The results of the elections which gave the victory to *Fianna Fail*, which for the first time since 1957 won an absolute majority in the *Dail*, came as a surprise to many observers who were inclined to think that this party was suffering from political atrophy.

Finally, the Speaker of the previous *Dail Eireann*, Mr. Cormac Breslin (*Fianna Fail*), was returned uncontested in the constituency of Donegal-Leitrim.

Statistics

1. Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats in the Dail Eireann

| | |
|---|-------------------|
| Number of registered electors | 1,735,388 |
| Voters | 1,334,963 (76.9%) |
| Blank or void ballot-papers | 16,010 |
| Valid votes | 1,318,953 |

| Political Group | Votes obtained (1st preference) | % | Number of Seats in the <i>Dail Eireann</i> |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------|------|--|
| <i>Fianna Fail</i> | 602,234 | 45.7 | 75 (+ 3) |
| <i>Fine Gael</i> . . . | 449,749 | 34.1 | 50 (+ 3) |
| Labour Party | 224,498 | 17.1 | 18* (-4) |
| Independents . . | 42,472 | 3.1 | 1 (-2) |
| | | | 144 |

2. Distribution of Deputies according to Sex

| | |
|-----------------|-------|
| Men | 140 |
| Women | 3 |
| | 143 * |

* At the opening of the Legislature on July 2, 1969, the Labour Party held only 17 seats in the *Dail*, following the death on June 25 of the representative for the constituency of Dublin South-West.