

IRELAND

Dates of Elections: February 28, 1973 (House of Representatives)
May 1-4, 1973 (Senate)

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held to renew all the members of the House of Representatives, which was prematurely dissolved on February 5, 1973, by the President of the Republic, on the advice of the Prime Minister. Normal expiry of the House's term was not due until June 1974.

General elections for the Senate, which must take place no later than 90 days after a dissolution of the House of Representatives, were subsequently held.

Characteristics of Parliament

The bicameral Parliament of Ireland, the *Oireachta*, is composed of the House of Representatives (*Ddil Eireann*) and the Senate (*Seanad Eireann*). Under the Electoral Act, 1963, the *Ddil* is not to continue for more than 5 years from the date of its first meeting.

The House of Representatives has 144 members.

The Senate is composed of 60 members, of whom:

- a) 11 are nominated by the *Taoiseach* (Prime Minister);
- b) 3 are elected by the National University of Ireland;
- c) 3 are elected by the University of Dublin;
- d) 43 are elected from 5 panels of candidates, consisting of persons having knowledge and practical experience in culture and education, industry and commerce, public administration and social services, labour and agriculture.

Not more than 11 and not less than 5 members of the Senate are elected from any 1 panel.

Electoral System

Every citizen of either sex who has reached the age of 21* has the right to vote in elections to the *Ddil* in the constituency in which he ordinarily resides,

* On April 15, 1973 — that is, subsequent to the *Ddil* elections but prior to the *Seanad* elections — the voting age was lowered to 18. See section *Parliamentary Developments*, p. 14.

provided he is not subject to any legal incapacity. Members of the armed forces and police force are authorized to vote by post.

Registers of electors are revised annually at the county or county borough level. Voting is not compulsory.

As regard elections to the Senate, the following persons may participate:

- a) For the 3 representatives of the National University of Ireland, every citizen over 18 years of age who has received a degree in the University;
- b) For the 3 representatives of the University of Dublin, every citizen over 18 years of age who has received either a degree or a foundation scholarship in the University or, if a woman, has obtained a non-foundation scholarship;
- c) For the 43 other Senators, new members of the *Ddil*, outgoing Senators and members of every council of a county or county borough.

Electoral rolls for Senate elections are revised before each such election.

Citizens of either sex who fulfill the conditions required for electors to the *Ddil* are entitled to stand for election to this House, with the exception of the insane, undischarged bankrupts, persons undergoing imprisonment with hard labour for at least 6 months or penal servitude for any term imposed by a court of competent jurisdiction, persons convicted of corrupt electoral practices, members of the armed forces and police force, and civil servants unless — in the case of the last — 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 all judges are also excluded from membership.

For election to the *Ddil*, a person may nominate himself or may, with his consent, be nominated by another person (who is registered as a *Ddil* elector in the same constituency), as proposer. Nominations must be made at least 9 days after the issuance of the writ for election, and be accompanied by a deposit of £100, which is reimbursable if the candidate is elected or gains one-third of the electoral quota.

Candidates to the Senate must be eligible to become members of the *Ddil* and, in addition:

- a) Be nominated by 10 registered electors of the University concerned, if they are standing for a University seat;
- b) Be nominated by either 4 members of Parliament or a registered nominating body, if they are standing as panel members.

Members of the Boards of State-sponsored bodies are disqualified from being members of either House. No person, furthermore, may be a member of both Houses simultaneously.

Members of the *Ddil 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 the name of his choice; 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 (that is, 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.

Voting for the Senate, which is by secret postal ballot, operates on the same basis.

If he stands for re-election, the outgoing Speaker of the *Ddil* is returned uncontested in the constituency he represents.

Vacancies of seats formerly held by elected members of Parliament, which occur between general elections, are filled by by-election. The Prime Minister nominates a person to fill a vacant seat formerly held by a nominated senator.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

On February 5, 1973, Prime Minister Jack Lynch called for a premature national election for later in the same month on the grounds that a Government

was needed with a popular mandate to deal, principally, with problems concerning Northern Ireland, especially to appraise the British White Paper on the subject soon to be published.

For the first time in the 16 years it had governed the country, the *Fianna Fail* party was confronted by a united Opposition — the *Fine Oad* (United Ireland Party) and Labour Party — which carried on a common campaign based on a 15-point manifesto.

A total of 334 candidates contested the 143 *Ddil* seats at stake. Although the Prime Minister's campaign was based originally on an appeal that his party had the know-how to deal with the crisis in Northern Ireland, to ease a peaceful reunification of the country, and to deal with his country's recent entry into the European Common Market, the campaign issues ultimately bore more on domestic issues, with Mr. Lynch seeking to match the vast social and economic programme of the Opposition pledging to relieve the soaring cost of living through increased welfare benefits and tax reforms. On these "bread-and-butter" issues, Mr. Liam Cosgrave, leader of *Fine Gael*, and Mr. Brendan Corish, leader of Labour, advocated, *inter alia*, removal of the value-added tax on food and reduction of rent taxes, as well as equal rights for women. Mr. Lynch, in turn, proposed to do away with the local rent tax and to raise pensions, unemployment compensation and family allowances.

Among minor Opposition parties was the *Acmtacht Eireann* (Republican United Party), founded in 1971 by 5 former *Fiona Fail* members, who deserted in regard to the Prime Minister's firm stand vis-a-vis the Irish Republican Army (IRA).

Election day, which was generally calm, saw a big turnout of voters. The *Fine Gael* - Labour coalition gained an overall majority of 4 seats in the *Ddil* and Mr. Cosgrave took office as Prime Minister on March 14.

In the Senate elections, held subsequently, all 878 of the qualified electors for panel members cast ballots. While panel members are elected not only on a party basis but as persons having knowledge and experience of certain interests and services, candidates for University constituencies rarely go forward as representing political parties.

Statistics

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

Number of registered voters	1,783,604
Voters	1,366,474(76.6%)
Blank or void ballot papers	15,937
Valid votes	1,350,537

Political Group	Number of Candidates	First Preference Votes obtained	%	Number of Seats in Dáil Éireann
<i>Fianna Fáil</i> . . .	118	624,528	46.24	68
<i>Fine Gael</i>	111	473,781	35.09	54
Labour Party . .	55	184,656	13.67	11
<i>Aontacht Éireann</i> .	13	12,321	0.91	—
<i>Sinn Féin</i>	10	15,366	1.14	—
Independents . .	27	39,885	2.95	2
				144

* There were 2 vacancies at the time of dissolution.

2. Distribution of Members of Parliament according to Sex

	Dáil
Men . .	139
Women	4
	143*

* Plus 1 vacancy, as a result of the election of Deputy Childers as President of the Republic.