

# Donegal, the 1918 General Election and the First Dáil



Comhairle Contae  
Dhún na nGall  
Donegal County Council



### **Dáil Éireann, 10 April 1919**

Front row, l. to r.: Laurence Ginnell, Michael Collins, Cathal Brugha, Arthur Griffith, Eamon de Valera, Count George Noble Plunkett, Eoin MacNeill, William Cosgrave, Ernest Blythe.

Second Row: P. J. Maloney, Terence MacSwiney, Richard Mulcahy, Joseph O'Doherty, John O'Mahoney, James Dolan, Joseph McGuinness, Patrick O'Keeffe, Michael Staines, Joseph McGrath, Dr. Bryan Cusack, Liam de Róiste, Michael Colivet, Fr. Michael O'Flanagan (chaplain).

Third Row: Peter Ward, Alexander McCabe, Desmond Fitzgerald, Joseph Sweeney, Cornelius Collins, Pádraic Ó Máille James O'Meara, Brian O'Higgins, Séamus Burke, Kevin O'Higgins.

Fourth Row: Dr Richard Hayes, Paul Galligan, Seán McEntee

Fifth Row: Piaras Béaslai, Robert Barton, Joseph McDonagh,

Back Row: Philip Shanahan, Seán Etchingham.

(Image Courtesy of Capuchin Archives)



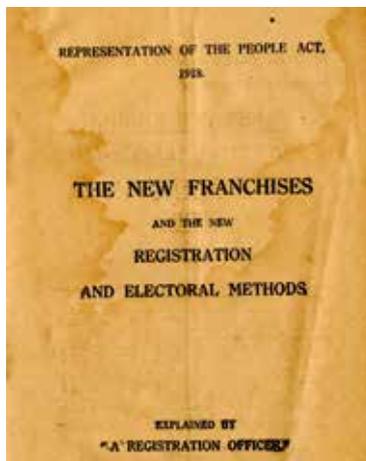
a dramatic shift in the party's policy. Even with this compromise, agreement could not be reached and the discussions collapsed once more. Home rule had still not been achieved and Redmond's willingness to temporarily abandon even more nationalists in Ulster lost the Irish Parliamentary Party many supporters.

The first sign that the Irish Parliamentary Party's dominant role in nationalist Ireland might be under severe threat came with a series of by-election defeats in 1917. Most notable was the success of Éamon de Valera in winning the East Clare seat, previously held by John Redmond's brother Willie who had been killed in the War.

The Military Services Bill, proposing to extend conscription to Ireland, was introduced in April 1918 and was vigorously opposed across the country. Sinn Féin's support rose further as it campaigned against the bill.

## The 1918 General Election

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British Government booklet explaining the greatly extended franchise for the 1918 General Election (Donegal County Archives)

The 1898 Local Government Act had democratised local elections. The Representation of the People Act 1918 continued this process, reforming the entire political process. The property qualification was removed for all men over the age of 21. This enabled working class men to vote for the first time in a general election. For the first time women were allowed to vote in parliamentary elections though this was restricted to those who were aged over 30, with a property qualification. The Irish electorate increased overnight from 700,000 to over 2 million voters.

The Great War ended on 11<sup>th</sup> November 1918. A General Election took place on 14<sup>th</sup> December 1918. The hugely enhanced electorate saw Sinn Féin prevail across nationalist areas of Ireland. In total Sinn Féin won 73 seats, the unionists won 26 and the Irish Parliamentary Party won

PARLIAMENTARY VOTERS.		PERSONS ENTITLED TO VOTE.	
1	<p><b>I. PARLIAMENTARY VOTERS.</b></p> <p><b>1</b> A man who has attained 21 years of age and has resided in a city or town or adjoining hamlets for the qualifying period.</p> <p>When a person is or has been serving as a member of the navy, military, or air force of the Crown at any time during the qualifying period, one month shall be substituted for six months as the qualifying period.</p>	5	<p>A man who has attained 21 years of age or a woman who has attained 20 years of age and who is married or about to marry with the wife, and receiving</p> <p>(a) in a naval or military character for which payment is made, and of money provided by Parliament, or before the payment ceases on the commencement of his service, pension in the United Kingdom out of the public funds of any part of His Majesty's dominions; or as a pensioned seaman, pilot, victualler, including the master of a pensioned ship or fishing boat and apprentices on such ship or boat; or</p> <p>(b) in any work of the British Red Cross Society or the Order of St. John of Jerusalem in England, or any other body with a similar object; or</p> <p>(c) in any work recognised by the Admiralty, Army Council, or Air Council as work of national importance in connection with the war.</p> <p>and who has for the service on which he or she is engaged would have had the necessary qualifications as a parliamentary elector.</p>
2	<p>A man who has attained 21 years of age and who has occupied land or business premises of the yearly value of not less than £10 in a city or town or an adjoining hamlet for the qualifying period.</p> <p>When a person is or has been serving as a member of the navy, military, or air force of the Crown at any time during the qualifying period, one month shall be substituted for six months as the qualifying period.</p> <p>When two or more persons occupy business premises the aggregate yearly value of which is not less than the amount provided by subsection (1) for the number of years complete, each joint occupier shall get a vote if otherwise qualified, but not more than two votes from the occupied premises.</p>	6	<p><b>II. LOCAL GOVERNMENT VOTERS.</b></p> <p>A man or woman who has attained 21 years of age and who has occupied as owner any property for the qualifying period.</p>
3	<p>A woman who has attained 21 years of age if unmarried or her husband has occupied as owner business land or premises (other than a dwelling house) of the yearly value of not less than £5 or any dwelling house, in a city or town or for the qualifying period.</p> <p>These include—</p> <p>(i) a person who includes his estate of any office, service, or employment (paid or unpaid) or partnership's dwelling house which is not inhabited by the person in whose name he or she is engaged;</p> <p>(ii) a person who occupies a house or rooms as a lodging place when such house or rooms are let as an un-furnished house.</p> <p>When two or more persons occupy land or premises, each joint occupier shall get a vote if otherwise qualified, provided that not more than two votes aggregate shall be so treated in respect of the same land or premises, unless they are jointly engaged as partners, and provided further that in the case of land or premises (other than a dwelling house) the aggregate yearly value stated must be not less than the amount provided by subsection (1) by the number of joint occupiers.</p>	7	<p>A man or woman who has attained 21 years of age and who has occupied as owner or tenant any property for the qualifying period.</p>
4	<p>A man who has attained 21 years of age or a woman who has attained 20 years of age and who is serving in the navy, military, or air force of the Crown and who, last but not least, in which he or she is engaged, would have had the necessary qualifications as a parliamentary elector.</p>	8	<p>A man or woman who has attained 21 years of age and who has occupied as owner or tenant a dwelling-house for the qualifying period.</p>
		9	<p>A man or woman who has attained 21 years of age and who has occupied lodgings, if he or she is so engaged, for the qualifying period.</p>
		10	<p>A man or woman who has attained 21 years of age and who has occupied in virtue of any office, service, or employment, a dwelling-house for the qualifying period, which is not inhabited by the person in whose service he or she is engaged.</p>
		11	<p>A woman who has attained 17 years of age and who is the wife of a man who is registered in respect of qualifications mentioned in or in like words in the will of a naval or military officer who is registered as recipient of a pension payable.</p>
		12	<p><b>III. QUALIFYING PERIOD.</b></p> <p>The qualifying period in all instances, from 25th January to 10th July, unless so regular every 12th January unless voting, or otherwise provided in connection with the war, when one month alternatively is substituted for six months.</p>

Ulster Unionist Council Booklet explaining the greatly extended franchise for the 1918 General Election (Donegal County Archives)

only six seats. One of the six IPP seats was in East Donegal. East Donegal was the only one of the four Donegal constituencies where a unionist candidate stood for election in 1918.

Sinn Féin agreed not to field a candidate against IPP candidate Edward J. Kelly, a sitting MP. Kelly defeated the unionist candidate Major R. L. Moore by 2,800 votes. In the other three Donegal constituencies Sinn Féin was successful. Joseph O'Doherty, from Derry, was elected in North Donegal; Joseph Sweeney, the veteran of 1916, was elected in West Donegal; and Peter Joseph Ward succeeded in obtaining a seat in South Donegal.



Joseph Sweeney, Easter Week, 1916 (Image Courtesy of Capuchin Archives)

The 73 Sinn Féin MPs including Ward, Sweeney and Doherty, made good on their party's promise of abstention in their Election Manifesto and refused to take their seats in Westminster. Instead, plans were put in place for the first meeting of an Irish parliament in Dublin.

## Dáil Éireann

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On 21<sup>st</sup> January 1919 the newly elected Sinn Féin MPs put their policy of abstention into practice and created their own parliament for Ireland, Dáil Éireann, in the Round Room at the Mansion House, Dublin city (residence of the Lord Mayor of Dublin). Unionists and members of the IPP refused to recognise the Dáil, and four Sinn Féin candidates had been elected in two different constituencies, so the First Dáil consisted of a total of sixty-nine Deputies or TDs.



**Dáil Éireann, January 1919: Members of the First Dáil Éireann, 21 January 1919.**

**Seated from left:** Joseph O'Doherty, S. Hayes, J.J. O'Kelly, Count Plunkett, C. Brugha, S.T. O'Kelly, P. O'Malley, J.J. Walsh, T. O'Kelly. **Standing from left:** Joseph Sweeney, K. O'Higgins, R. Barton, D. Buckley, R. Mulcahy, E. Duggan, C. Collins, P. Beazley, P. Shanahan, Dr. J. Ryan, Dr Crowley, P.J. Ward, I.A. Burke, P.J. Maloney, R. Sweetman.  
(Image Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland.)

The members of Dáil Éireann were to take the title TD – Teachta Dála (Deputy to the Dáil). There was a small attendance at the inaugural meeting of the Dáil, just twenty-seven TDs. Thirty-four of the Sinn Féin MPs were still in prison and neither the 26 Unionist MPs nor the six Irish Parliamentary Party MPs accepted the invitation to attend. Unionist MPs were listed in the Official Report as “as láthair” (absent). Others were listed as “ar díbert ag Gallaibh” (banished by foreigners) or “fé ghlais ag Gallaibh” (imprisoned by foreigners). Among these was Countess de Markievicz, the first woman to be elected to a British parliament. She was imprisoned in Holloway prison. However the room was packed with journalists and curious members of the public, greatly outnumbering the politicians. It was an historic occasion.

Among the TDs in the Mansion House on 21<sup>st</sup> January 1919 were the three Donegal TDs. During the two-hour sitting, most of which was conducted in the Irish language, Dáil Members adopted a short Constitution. Article 1 of the Constitution stated the Dáil had “full powers to legislate” and would consist of representatives elected in elections conducted by the British government. A cabinet was created, answerable to the Dáil and headed by a “Príomh Aire” (also known as the President of Dáil Éireann). The first, temporary president was Cathal Brugha. He was succeeded, in April, by Éamon de Valera.



Newspaper headline on the inaugural meeting of the First Dáil and the shootings in Soloheadbeg, County Tipperary, January 1919.

At this first meeting members declared Ireland’s independence from Great Britain. The Dáil read out a Declaration of Independence, first in Irish, then in French and, finally, in English. This declaration ratified the Irish Republic that had been proclaimed on Easter Monday 1916.

The Declaration of Independence stated:

*And Whereas at the threshold of a new era in history the Irish electorate has in the General Election of December, 1918, seized the first occasion to declare by an overwhelming majority its firm allegiance to the Irish Republic:*

*Now, therefore, we, the elected Representatives of the ancient Irish people in National Parliament assembled, do, in the name of the Irish nation, ratify the establishment of the Irish Republic and pledge ourselves and our people to make this declaration effective by every means at our command :*

*We ordain that the elected Representatives of the Irish people alone have power to make laws binding on the people of Ireland, and that the Irish Parliament is the only Parliament to which that people will give its allegiance.*

To ensure that the historic event was noticed world wide the Dáil sent a 'Message to the Free Nations of the World' in which it declared that:  
*The Nation of Ireland having proclaimed her national independence, calls through her elected representatives in Parliament assembled in the Irish Capital on January 21st, 1919, upon every free nation to support the Irish Republic by recognising Ireland's national status and her right to its vindication at the Peace Congress.*

The Dáil's principles were stated in its 'Democratic programme':  
*We declare that we desire our country to be ruled in accordance with the principles of Liberty, Equality, and Justice for all, which alone can secure permanence of Government in the willing adhesion of the people.'*

One measure of note was its commitment to:

*'abolishing the present odious, degrading and foreign Poor Law System, substituting therefore a sympathetic native scheme for the care of the Nation's aged and infirm, who shall not be regarded as a burden, but rather entitled to the Nation's gratitude and consideration. Likewise it shall be the duty of the Republic to take such measures as will safeguard the health of the people and ensure the physical as well as the moral well-being of the Nation.*

## The Commencement of War

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On the same day, unknown to the new TDs or the Dáil as a whole, Irish Volunteers in County Tipperary launched an attack against members of the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) at Soloheadbeg. Two policemen were killed in the incident, which later was defined as the first act of the War of Independence. Reaction to this attack varied; some TDs actively condemned the incident. With opinion split, the Dáil decided not to openly support these activities. Nevertheless, as the number of attacks increased and spread across the country, it became clear that for the first time since the Land War, the political and military wings of Irish nationalism were combining to exert pressure on the British government.

In September 1919 the British government declared the Dáil an illegal organisation. From that point on the leaders of the Dáil were on the run, but that did not stop their efforts to create a fully functioning Irish state. In addition

**Dail Eireann.**  
**TRADE DEPARTMENT.**  
**Exclusion of British Goods.**

Order Issued	Class of Goods	Order Operative	Prohibition
No. 1. March 23rd 1921	<b>Agricultural Machinery:</b> Binders ... .. Mowing Machines ... .. Horse Rakes ... .. Swathe Turners ... .. Hay Trolleys (Risk Shifters) ... .. Ploughs ... .. Harrows ... .. Corn Drills ... .. Root Cutters ... ..	March 23rd 1921	Importation
No. 2. April 14th 1921	Biscuits ... .. Boot Polishes (including Boot Creams and Preparations for Suede and White Shoes) Soap (including Soap Powders of all kinds, Monkey Brand, Lux, Hims, etc.)	May 14th 1921	Importation and Sale
No. 3. May 5th 1921	Margarine ... ..	May 26th 1921	Importation and Sale
No. 4. May 18th 1921	Pictorial Calendars (whether for sale by retailers or for presentation to customers)	May 18th 1921	Importation, Sale and Stocking for Sale
No. 5. June 1st 1921	Preserves (Jams, Marmalades, etc.) Medicated Wines (e.g. Wincornia, Hall's Wine, Wines, etc.) Proprietary Ointments (e.g. Zam Bink, Germobone, Harrison's Nursery Pomade, Proprietary Veterinary Ointments, etc.)	Sept. 1st 1921	Importation and Sale

Dáil Éireann Official Notice boycotting trade in British goods, 1921  
(Donegal County Archives)

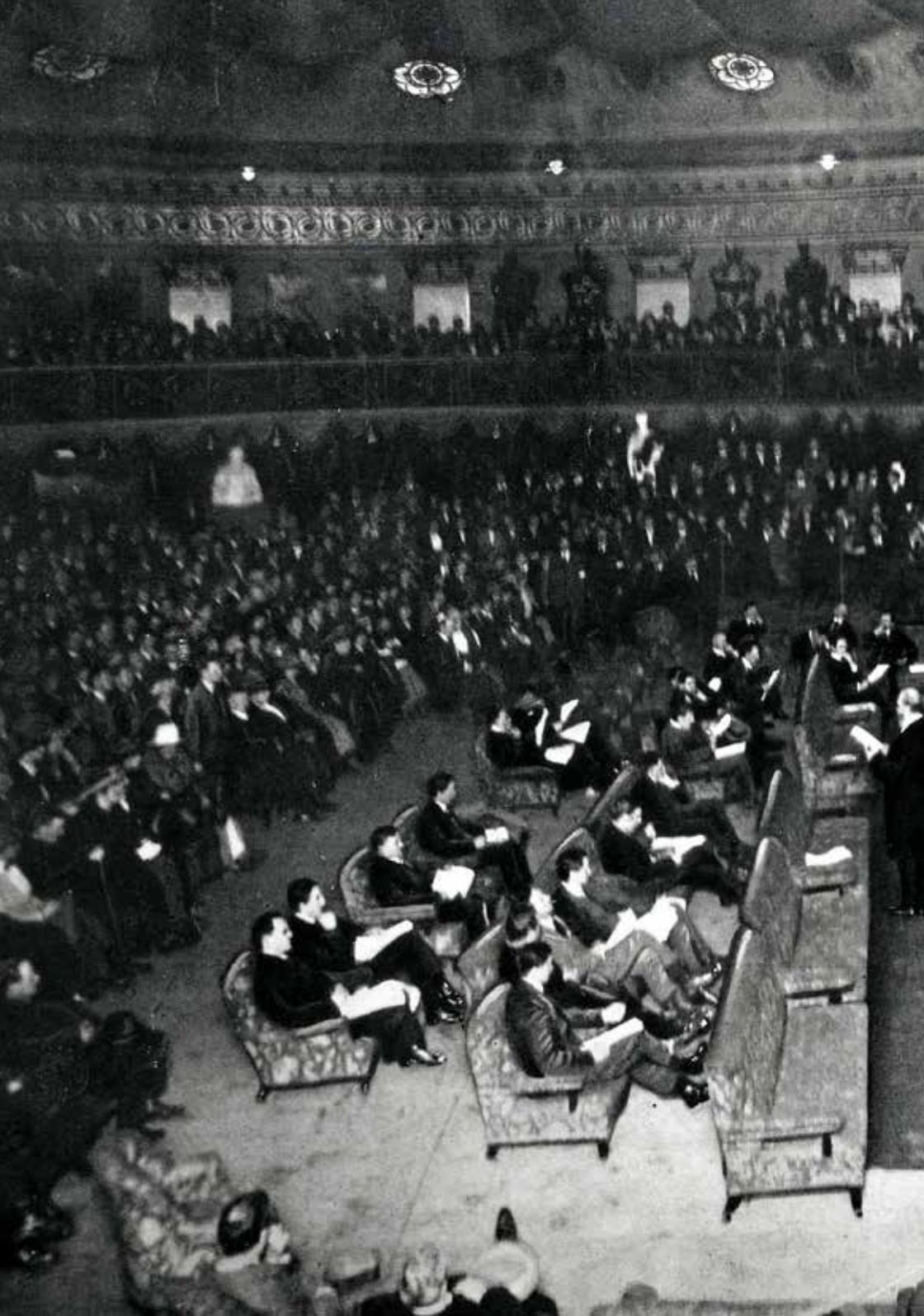
to the creation of the IRA as the state army, a new court system was also introduced. Sinn Féin courts were organised with judges, laws and even makeshift prisons and the IRA controlled parts of the country. Local government was also taken over by the new state. After the local elections in 1920, many of the local authorities, including in County Donegal, came under Sinn Féin control and swore their allegiance to Dáil Éireann. This gave the government another source of income as local taxes and fines were now paid to the Dáil and not the British government.



Letter from Liam Cosgrave, Minister for Local Government, Dáil Éireann, to Buncrana Urban District Council re: its official recognition by the UDC, 12 October 1921 (Donegal County Archives)

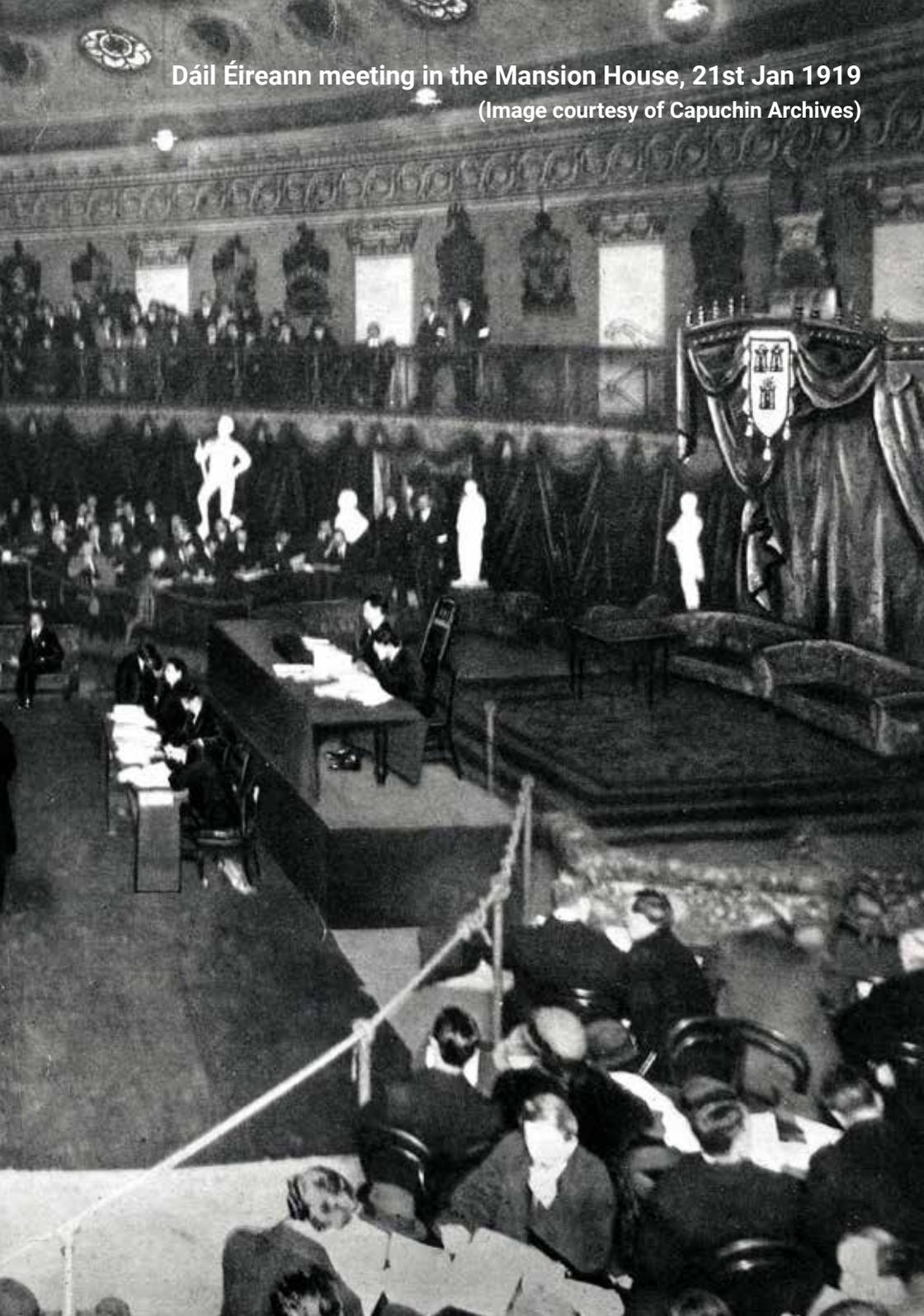


Letterkenny Urban District Council endorses Dáil Éireann, 3 December 1920 (Donegal County Archives)



Dáil Éireann meeting in the Mansion House, 21st Jan 1919

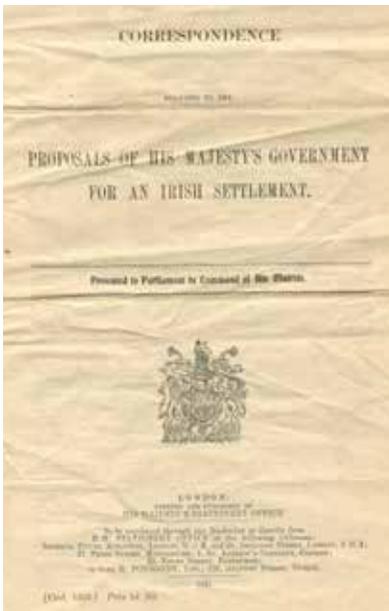
(Image courtesy of Capuchin Archives)



## The Second Dáil

In the midst of the War of Independence, the British Government still held out hope that a limited form of home rule would satisfy Irish demands for independence. Prime Minister Lloyd George introduced a fourth Home Rule bill in 1920. The resultant Government of Ireland Act 1920 partitioned the island of Ireland and created the parliaments of Northern Ireland and Southern Ireland. While unionists in the newly created state of Northern Ireland established their parliament in Belfast, the Act was ignored by Dáil Éireann and Irish nationalists who now sought a far greater form of independence.

A general election was held on 24<sup>th</sup> May 1921. A resolution of Dáil Éireann on 10<sup>th</sup> May 1921 held that this was to be regarded as an election to Dáil Éireann and that all those returned at these elections would be regarded as members of Dáil Éireann. The Second Dáil was established. Donegal was now represented by six TDs – P.J. McGoldrick (Buncrana), Joseph O'Doherty (Derry), J.P. McGinley (Letterkenny), Sam O'Flaherty (Castlefinn), Joseph Sweeney and P.J. Ward.



Official British Government document issued  
re: Anglo-Irish Negotiations, 1921  
(Donegal County Archives)

On 11<sup>th</sup> July 1921 a truce was declared and Anglo-Irish negotiations began, led on the Irish side by Michael Collins. On 6<sup>th</sup> December the Anglo-Irish Treaty was signed by Collins and the other representatives (known as plenipotentiaries) and their British counterparts. Following a bitter debate, the Treaty was passed by the Second Dáil on 6<sup>th</sup> January 1922 by a small margin - 64 to 57 votes. The Donegal TDs voted four to two in favour of the Treaty. Sweeney and Ward, McGoldrick and McGinley all voted for the Treaty while O'Doherty and O'Flaherty voted against. Within a few months the Civil War had begun.

## The 1918 Election: Members of the First Dáil

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### Joseph O'Doherty



Joseph O'Doherty

Joseph O'Doherty was born into a staunchly nationalist family in Derry in 1891. He was educated at St Columb's College and trained as a teacher at St Patrick's College, Drumcondra. He also qualified at King's Inns, Dublin, as a barrister. As a member of the Irish Volunteers, he was involved in planning the 1916 Rising and spent time in prisons including at Frongoch, Wales, in 1917. On release in 1917 he was elected a member of the Executive of the Volunteers.

In December 1918, O'Doherty was elected in the constituency of North Donegal for Sinn Féin, defeating the Irish Parliamentary Party candidate, Philip O'Doherty (who had served as MP for this seat since 1906). O'Doherty was re-elected to the Second Dáil in 1921. He opposed the Anglo-Irish Treaty, speaking vehemently against its solidification of partition in the Dáil.

*I know that the people in North Donegal at the present moment would accept this Treaty, and I think it is fair to the people of North Donegal that I should make that known; but they are accepting it under duress and at the point of the bayonet, and as a stop to terrible and immediate war.*

*Like my co-Deputy from Tír Chonaill I came to this Session of Dáil Éireann with a mind that was open to conviction against these prejudices that I had; no argument that has been produced by those who are for this Treaty has made any influence on me; I see in it the giving away of the whole case of Irish independence;*

*I am prepared to admit that the mandate I got from the constituents of North Donegal was one of self-determination; and it is a terrible thing and a terrible trial to have men in this Dáil interpreting that sacred principle here against the interests of the people.*

*It is not peace they are getting; it is not the liberty they are getting which they are told they are getting, and they know it; and I will tell them honestly if I go to North Donegal again what they are getting.*

O'Doherty served as an abstentionist Republican in the Third Dáil and Fourth Dáil from 1923 to 1927. He was one of the founder members of Fianna Fáil. From 1928 to 1931 he was a senator in the first Senate and a TD for Fianna Fáil. His last period of office was 1933 to 1937 as TD for Fianna Fáil in the 8<sup>th</sup> Dáil. O'Doherty married Dr. Margaret Irvine, Medical Officer of Derry City. He died in 1979, the third last surviving member of the First Dáil, and is buried in the Republican Plot in Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin.

His daughter Brid O'Doherty wrote an article about her father in the *Derry Journal* on the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the First Dáil:

<https://www.derryjournal.com/news/joseph-o-doherty-td-the-proud-derry-man-who-stood-for-inishowen-in-first-dail-1-2133945>

In this article Brid wrote that:

*No matter how the republican campaign went in the South, the island of Ireland was formally divided for the first time in its history. Partition was a profound psychological shock for my father and his contemporaries.*

## Joseph Aloysius Sweeney



Joseph Sweeney

Joseph Sweeney was born in Burtonport in 1897. He studied for a short time at St. Eunan's College, Letterkenny, before transferring to the school run by Patrick Pearse in Dublin – St. Enda's College, Rathfarnham. He went on to study in UCD, but maintained his links with Pearse, joining his company of the Irish Volunteers, being sworn into the IRB by him and acting as a courier for him. In this capacity he got to know many of the leaders of the 1916 Rising and he was the only Donegal man to fight inside the GPO during Easter Week. As a result

he was arrested and imprisoned. On his release he joined the Dungloe branch of Sinn Féin and ran for election as a Sinn Féin candidate in West Donegal in 1918. He did not take his seat in Westminster but instead joined the other Sinn Féin TDs in Dáil Éireann. He was the youngest member of the Dáil.

Sweeney remained as a Donegal TD until 1923, serving also in the Second Dáil and Third Dáil. During that time he successfully combined politics with his military activities. He was appointed O/C of the West Donegal Brigade in the War of Independence. Under his command West Donegal was the most active area in the county.

Sweeney voted in favour of the Treaty and became Commandant General when he took charge of the Free State Army in Donegal. During the Civil War he was general in charge of the national army in the north-west. After the Civil War Sweeney rose through the ranks of the army and was appointed Chief of Staff in 1929. He retired in 1940 and died in 1980. On retirement, Sweeney was in receipt of a military pension and information on this can be found online at: [http://mspcsearch.militaryarchives.ie/docs/files//PDF\\_Pensions/R1/24SP2913JosephAloysiusSweeney/W24SP2913JosephAloysiusSweeney.pdf](http://mspcsearch.militaryarchives.ie/docs/files//PDF_Pensions/R1/24SP2913JosephAloysiusSweeney/W24SP2913JosephAloysiusSweeney.pdf) Joseph Sweeney is buried in Dungloe in the family burial plot.

## Peter Joseph Ward



Peter Joseph Ward

PJ Ward was born on 1st November 1891. He was a solicitor in Donegal town when he became a candidate for Sinn Féin at the General Election of 1918. He was elected, abstained from his seat as MP in Westminster and instead became a Teachta Dála (member) of the First Dáil. He was one of the 27 who attended its historic inaugural session on 21<sup>st</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1919 at the Mansion House.

Ward was an O/C for Fourth Brigade, South Donegal during the War of Independence. He was arrested in 1920 and spent time in prison. He was re-elected in the 1921 General Election and he and the other Sinn

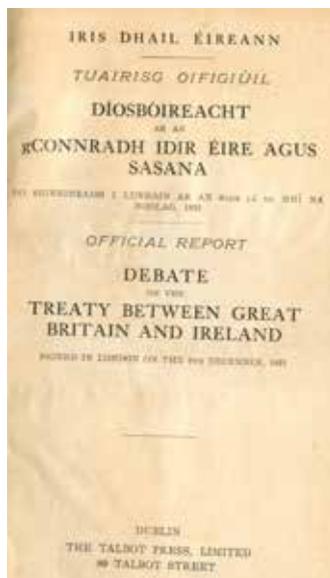
Féin members again declined to take their seats in the House of Commons, sitting instead in the Second Dáil. He was a member of Donegal County Council and its chairman in 1921 – 1922. There are several references to his IRA activities during the War in Bureau of Military History witness statements, including in the Witness Statement of Liam O'Duffy of Stranorlar, no. 1485.

<http://www.bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie/reels/bmh/BMH.WS1485.pdf>

Ward reluctantly supported the Anglo-Irish Treaty. During the bitter debates, he admitted:

*I came here to this assembly opposed to this Treaty, as I believed then that the Dáil, by a big majority, would be opposed to it. It was not what we were fighting for; it was not the end—the ultimate end—of what I had in view when I joined Sinn Féin;*

He also stated:



Anglo-Irish Treaty debates,  
December 1921 – January 1922  
(Copy at Donegal County Archives)

*The election of 1918 may have been for self-determination; but when I stood for the election I had to fight a bitter one; I stood for the complete independence of this country—total separation from England—and the placards are still on the walls down in Tír Chonail. It was not for self-determination I fought the election, it was for independence; and it will come to pass yet that the Irish people, if given a free choice, will vote for independence.*

*I believed when I came to this Dáil, and I believe it now, that if this Treaty had been rejected practically unanimously by the Dáil we could have obtained unity; in this country and have the people behind us, and we could have won our case. I was opposed to the Treaty up to Christmas; I went down to my constituency, and I may say here that I know my constituents perhaps as well as any other man in*

*the Dáil; I have travelled throughout the length and breadth of my constituency; and I have been in practically every Sinn Féin Club during the two months before this Treaty was signed—we have twenty-four of them. At Christmas every Sinn Féin Club debated this Treaty amongst themselves; I went to the Comhairle Ceanntair and I endeavoured there—because I wanted to save them from themselves—to prevent them passing a resolution against acceptance and the Sinn Féin Clubs, by seventeen to three, asked that this Treaty be ratified under protest; and they stated that they could see no alternative. Now, that was the voice of my constituency.*

*I will only vote for this Treaty as a stepping stone to put this country into such a position at some future time— when the opportunity does come—that it will claim the total separation that it is entitled to as a separate nation.*

At the 1922 general election, PJ Ward was returned to the Third Dáil as a pro-Treaty Sinn Féin TD, and re-elected at the 1923 General Election for the new Cumann na nGaedheal Party. He resigned his seat on 1<sup>st</sup> August 1924. Ward died on 6<sup>th</sup> January 1970.

See also a blog by John Ward, grandson of PJ Ward:

<http://www.racontour.com/a-tough-call/>

## **The 1918 General Election: Donegal's Member of Parliament**

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### **Edward Joseph Kelly MP**



Edward J Kelly

Edward Joseph Kelly was born on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1883 in Ballyshannon. He attended school at St Vincent's College, Castleknock and college at the Royal University, Dublin, where he obtained a M.A. in 1904. He later taught history at the university. He was called to the bar in 1917, and worked in law from then on. He married Mollie Hickey of Clontarf, Dublin.

He was first elected as an Irish Parliamentary Party MP in January 1910 for the constituency of East Donegal, defeating the Unionist candidate.

He held onto his seat in the December 1910 UK General Election.

In the seminal General Election of 1918 he benefited from an electoral pact between the Irish Parliamentary Party and Sinn Féin. In the election Kelly obtained 7,596 votes to the Unionist candidate's 4,797. After his election, Kelly chose not to be a member of the First Dáil but to remain in the House of Commons representing East Donegal. He retired in October 1922 on the establishment of the Irish Free State. He died on 25<sup>th</sup> September 1944.

## Further Reading on the 1918 General Election, the War of Independence and the Civil War in Ireland and Donegal

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- *A Decade of Change: Donegal and Ireland: 1912 – 1923*, Document Study pack (Arlene Crampsie; Donegal County Archives, Donegal County Council).
- *Pledge Ourselves and Our People*, Irish Archives Resource, [www.iar.ie](http://www.iar.ie).
- *History Ireland*: <https://www.historyireland.com/20th-century-contemporary-history/the-first-Dáil-eireann/>
- Record of First and subsequent Dáil Éireann sessions: <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/Dáil/1919-01-21/4/>
- First Dáil Exhibition, RTE Archives: <https://www.rte.ie/archives/exhibitions/920-first-Dáil-eireann-1919/>
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## Archives referenced for this publication

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- Donegal County Archives
- Capuchin Archives
- National Library of Ireland
- Military Archives
- Oireachtas Archive (online)

## Acknowledgements

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- Capuchin Archives
- National Library of Ireland

County of Donegal.  
HUGH C. COCHRANE,  
Solicitor,  
Under-Sheriff.

TELEPHONE-NO. 6, STRABANE

BSJ  
Sheriff's Office,  
Lifford,  
Co. Donegal.

19th December 1918.

South Donegal Division.

Dear Sir,

Kindly let me know if you will act for the  
returning Officer at the count of the votes on  
Saturday the 26th Decr. 1918 at the Market House Hall,  
Donegal, to commence at the hour of twelve o'clock  
noon.

Could you arrange to be present at Ten  
o'clock to arrange preliminaries.

Yours truly,

H. Cochrane

You will be entitled to a fee of £1 : 1 : 0  
together with travelling expenses.

Mr. Patk. McDermott,  
Union Office,  
BALLYSHANNON.

Letter from Hugh C. Cochrane, Sheriff's Office,  
to Patrick McDermott, Union Office, Ballyshannon,  
regarding the Count of the 1918 Election

(Donegal County Archives)



OPENING OF FIRST SESSION DAIL EIREANN,  
at the Mansion House, Dublin, Tuesday, January 21st, 1919.

## The Message of Dail Eireann to the Free Nations.

Below is the English Translation of the Message

**"To the Nations of the World: Greeting.**

"The Nation of Ireland having proclaimed her national independence, calls, through her elected representatives in Parliament assembled in the Irish Capital on January 21st, 1919, upon every free nation to support the Irish Republic by recognising Ireland's national status and her right to its vindication of the Peace Congress.

"Nationally, the race, the language, the customs and traditions of Ireland are radically distinct from the English: Ireland is one of the most ancient nations of Europe, and she has preserved her national integrity vigorous and intact, through seven centuries of foreign oppression. She has never relinquished her national rights and throughout the long era of English misrule she has in every generation defiantly proclaimed her inalienable right of nationhood down to her last glorious resort to arms in 1916.

"Internationally, Ireland is the gateway to the Atlantic. Ireland is the last outpost of Europe towards the West. Ireland is the point upon which great trade routes between East and West converge: her independence is demanded by the Freedom of the Sea: her great harbours must be open to all nations, instead of being the monopoly of England.

To-day these harbours are empty and idle solely because English policy is determined to retain Ireland as a barren hubark for English aggrandisement, and the unique geographical position of this island, far from being a benefit and safeguard to Europe and America, is subjected to the purposes of England's policy of world dominion.

**HISTORIC NATIONHOOD.**

"Ireland to-day re-asserts her historic nationhood the more confidently before the new world emerging from the war, because she believes in freedom and justice as the fundamental principles of international law, because she believes in a frank co-operation between the peoples for equal rights against the vested privileges of ancient tyrannies, because the permanent peace of Europe can never be secured by perpetuating military dominion for the profit of empire, but only by establishing the control of government in every land upon the basis of the free will of a free people, and the existing state of war, between Ireland and England, can never be ended until Ireland is definitely swartained by the armed forces of England.

"For these, among other reasons, Ireland—resolutely and irrevocably determined at the dawn of the promised era of self-determination and liberty, that she will suffer foreign dominion no longer—calls upon every free nation to uphold her—

**national claim to complete independence as an Irish Republic—**

against the arrogant pretensions of England founded in fraud and sustained only by an overwhelming military occupation, and demands to be confronted publicly with England at the Congress of the Nations, that the civilised world having judged between English wrong and Irish right may guarantee to Ireland its permanent support for the maintenance of her national independence.

Image Courtesy of National Library of Ireland

This booklet was written and produced by:  
Donegal County Archives and Donegal County Museum,  
Culture Division, Donegal County Council  
and Dr Arlene Crampsie.



**Comhairle Contae  
Dhún na nGall**  
Donegal County Council

**Carltonna Contae  
Dhún na nGall**

**Donegal County  
Archives**

