

# **OUR WORST PREFERENCE**

**Reforming the Electoral System**



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## Chapter Two

### STV: Fit for Purpose?

*A paper delivered to a seminar organised by the Irish Parliamentary (Former Members) Society on the "Reform of the Electoral System" which was held in Dublin Castle, 21 January 2010*



## 2. STV: Fit for Purpose?

### Introduction

There is no more appropriate body to conduct a review of the electoral system than those who not only have direct personal experience of the way it works but also enjoy the freedom as former Oireachtas members to assess its strengths and weaknesses with detachment.

That such a review is timely goes without saying and it is appropriate that we should hold it on the 91<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of the inaugural meeting of the First Dáil. There has been a growing unease about the appropriateness of the Single Transferable Vote as the means of directly electing Dáil Éireann and indirectly shaping the government.

That unease is justified. I have been asked to answer a blunt question. “Is Ireland’s electoral system suitable for a modern European democracy?” My answer is equally blunt: our electoral system is decidedly unsuitable for any modern European democracy, and is particularly unsuitable for Ireland. It is failing to provide us either with a functioning parliament or an effective government.

If our electoral system is permitted to continue unreformed on into the 21<sup>st</sup> century through a combination of indolence, indifference or inaction, then it will undo

what was achieved by the first Dáil Éireann in establishing our independence as a nation and will reduce us, once again, to the status of a province.

It was said by Cicero that the primary obligation of the state was to ensure the safety of the people. *Salus populi suprema lex esto*. Things haven't changed in their essentials since his time, even though the 'safety of the people' can be more broadly defined nowadays to include economic as well as physical security. On that score, the contemporary Irish state has failed. The Barbarians are not only at the gates, they have scaled the walls and are ravaging the city.

It will take a generation for us to recover from the banking catastrophe and while the electoral system cannot be held accountable for all that happened it can certainly be indicted as being directly responsible for producing a political system and culture that by any objective standards have proven unequal to the challenges they have faced.

### Three Requirements

A modern European democracy, the subject of this paper, should expect its electoral system to perform at least three basic functions so that the state can fulfil its side of the social contract which binds it to the people.

Firstly, it must ensure a broad proportionality between the popular support secured by each political party and the number of seats won in parliament. This is essential for the legitimacy of state institutions and the general acceptance

of their enactments by way of law, regulations and policy decisions.

Secondly, it must provide parliamentarians of the requisite calibre to create a functioning and effective legislature which is capable of framing law, originating policy and overseeing the executive.

Thirdly, it must enable the formation of governments that are representative, stable and effective. For that, they must be composed of high quality ministers who are collectively up to the task of advancing the national interest in the domestic, European and international arenas.

I intend to assess STV against each of these criteria – and in each case it will be found to be deficient. More than that, it will be shown that as an electoral system STV works contrary to the national interest.

I intend to draw on my experiences as a General Secretary, Government Assistant Whip and as former member of the two houses of the Oireachtas and the European Parliament. To add to that background I will also use the Labour party Annual Reports I wrote when General Secretary. In writing on a topic like this there is no substitute for having worked at the coalface, as you have done.

I'm also using a paper I delivered on PR to the Constitution Club in 1987. It contains a lot of research material gathered for an uncompleted project on PR, which I had started with Ted Nealon and Bertie Ahearn in the early eighties.

## Proportionality

Let me start with the requirement of proportionality.

The irony of the Single Transferable Vote system of election is that it is not, I repeat not, a form of Proportional Representation at all. It is what it says it is – a single vote that can be transferred from one candidate to another within a single constituency. It is neither a national nor regional form of election but one that is intrinsically local; in our case, one that is mainly county-based. Nor is it a vote for a party but a vote for a person.

On the other hand, all forms of Proportional Representation are based on political parties and provide a direct relationship between their national support in elections and the seats won in parliament. The objective is clear. In contrast, the Single Transferable Vote has no such purpose in mind, although its objective is equally clear. It was primarily designed in 19th century Britain to increase voter choice among the candidates standing for election as the local Member of Parliament. The best analogy for how STV was intended to function is, of course, a by-election or a presidential election in this country.

The system was invented in the 1870s by an Englishman, Thomas Hare, and is essentially the product of mid-Victorian liberalism and of the British constitution, which places the MP, not the party, at the centre of the political system. It became synonymous in the public mind with PR due to the activities of John Stuart Mill and the Proportional Representation Society.

As evidence that it is not a form of PR, however, it is sufficient to quote the Royal Commission on Electoral Systems, which said a century ago that STV owed its peculiar merits and defects to the fact that it was not in its origins a system of PR at all since it subordinated political parties to individual candidates. Of particular note is the fact that it was additionally intended by some to diminish, or even destroy, political parties. Little wonder then that some commentators have called it “personal representation” or “preferential representation”.

Only two countries in the world use STV as their electoral system, ourselves and Malta. This alone should encourage us to reflect. Being exceptional is sometimes a cause for concern rather than congratulation. We came to use STV by a series of historical accidents and not by deliberate design. For our purposes, the most important is that Arthur Griffith was a founder member of the Proportional Representation Society of Ireland and bought into the idea that STV was synonymous with PR. He saw Proportional Representation as a means of securing Unionist representation in an Irish Parliament and, as a consequence, so did Sinn Féin. In fact, De Valera, speaking as President of the Party at the 1919 Ard-Fheis, went so far as to commit an Independent Ireland to the use of PR.

On the day the Treaty was actually signed Griffith met senior representatives of the Southern Unionists in London and guaranteed them the use of PR as the electoral system in an independent Ireland. That commitment was honoured and the principle of proportional representation



was incorporated into the constitution of the Irish Free State, which, however, left it to the Oireachtas to choose whichever form of PR it wanted to use. When it came to framing the legislation the Dáil automatically assumed STV was synonymous with PR and enacted it into legislation without any real understanding or insight into its workings or implications. The debate on the legislation was perfunctory.

Unfortunately, Bunreacht na h-Éireann went a step further at the behest of De Valera and prescribed that Dáil Éireann should be elected by proportional representation on the Single Transferable Vote. As we know, this requirement can only be altered by amending the Constitution by way of a referendum, something that was twice tried and twice rejected.

It cannot be said that the public debate on either occasion was illuminating due to the adversarial nature of referenda and the fact that the British “first past the post” system was the only alternative being offered to STV. Its defects were so obvious and since it was also called “The Straight Vote” all the Labour Party had to do in 1968 was to campaign against it on the slogan that “The Straight Vote is Crooked”. It is, and Labour won.

But in opposing the British system so single-mindedly a great opportunity to examine electoral reform in depth was lost and this has had serious repercussions for it can be taken as a sound rule of thumb that electoral systems have significant political implications for the formation

and composition of governments. Different systems will produce different parliamentary results, even with the same distribution of votes between parties.

It is also true, however, that even within the same system the parliamentary outcome can be biased one way or the other by altering, for example, the size and location of constituencies. STV is particularly vulnerable to this form of manipulation. The number and location of the different sizes of constituency have the most serious implications for the size of the parties in Dáil Éireann and can determine who goes into government and who is condemned to opposition. This is no small matter.

Given that the constitution stipulates that Dáil Éireann is to be “elected on the system of proportional representation” it could be assumed that the fundamental requirement in drawing up constituencies should be to protect and give effect to the proportionality of the system as a whole and that this feature would be given precedence over what can only be regarded as secondary characteristics or mechanical concerns, such as county boundaries, continuity in the arrangement of constituencies or regard for significant physical features.

This is not the case at present because the Constituencies Commission in its 2004 report said it did not set out with a preconceived view as to the number and location of the different sizes of constituency but that it tried to suit the constituency size to the population and particular circumstances of each locality. This was a

profound mistake on at least three counts. First, it ignored the impact of constituency sizes on the proportionality of the result. Second, it simply re-enforced the localism inherent in the Irish political system, one of its greatest defects, and, third, it accentuated the clientelist nature of Irish politics, the other great defect.

It was the wrong point of departure since there should be a preconceived view as to the number of different sizes of constituency in order to achieve a close approximation between votes cast and seats won. It has always been understood that the size of constituencies is the key variable affecting proportionality and this is particularly the case with STV since the larger the constituency the smaller the quota and the greater the possibility that votes and seats will be proportional.

That being so, it might be expected that the aggregate number of deputies elected in five seat constituencies would predominate and that recourse to three and four seat constituencies would be regarded as a departure from the norm. This is not the case. Indeed, the reverse has been happening. The number of five-seaters fell from 15 to 12 between 1980 and 2003, meaning that the percentage of deputies elected in the five seaters fell from 45% to 36% of the total membership of the Dáil.

The corollary is that the number of three-seaters has risen, from twelve to eighteen.

This development has adversely affected what Cornelius O'Leary called the "index of proportionality"

in his great study of Irish elections. Full proportionality between votes and seats is represented by the figure 100 and the index is derived by dividing the percentage of seats won by the percentage of votes won. An index greater than 100 obviously means that a party has won more seats than it was entitled to in terms of the popular vote.

An analysis of the eight general elections between 1982 and 2007 produces some sobering findings. Whereas the index in 1982 was 103, 102 and 99 for Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Labour respectively, it had increased substantially in the 1997/2007 period and in the 2007 election stood at 112, 112 and 119 respectively. This means that the three main parties had all won bonus seats, Labour most of all. In the case of Fianna Fáil, however, the bonus was sufficiently large to enable the party to form a government with others of its choice, the bonus being eight seats in toto, with five of them coming from the three-seaters.

It is indisputable that a different configuration of constituencies would have led to different outcomes in terms of Dáil seats and almost certainly to different governments being formed and it is disturbing that the Proportionality Index is not more widely used as an analytical tool to judge the fairness of the manner in which STV is working. If used it would certainly prove the point that STV is not a form of Proportional Representation at all and would remind us that if we genuinely wished to adhere to proportionality as a fundamental constitutional principle then we should jettison STV at once and replace it with some proper form of PR, such as the list system.

These forms of PR are not open to arbitrary choice on the part of a Minister or a Commission but are subject to invariable rules, which give consistent results over time and thereby ensure that electoral equity prevails. I don't believe that we have fully solved the problems evident in the 1969 or 1974 Electoral Acts and I am perturbed at the bias within the system as identified by the Proportionality Index. We have a problem here that will come back to haunt us unless it is addressed.

In summary, STV fails the first requirement of an electoral system suitable for a modern European democracy.

## A Functioning Parliament

The second requirement was that an electoral system should be instrumental in ensuring a functioning, effective and professional legislature. This need has become more acute in modern democracies because the political and economic agendas have become ever more complex both internally and externally. The range of state responsibilities has become more extensive and the economic affairs have become more important than political or diplomatic issues and now dominate the parliamentary agenda.

As a consequence of this greater complexity the job description of the legislator has evolved, with a greater, and growing, emphasis on committee work in which much of the legislator's time is devoted to economic matters. This, in turn, requires a different type of parliamentarian,

many of whom are perforce required to become expert in complex policy areas such as taxation, banking, energy, climate change, information technology, the international financial system, European affairs, and so on, if they are to do their work properly.

## The Role of Committees

In short, modern times demand the professionalisation of parliament and the emergence of a class of parliamentarian whose main preoccupation is the work of parliament as an institution, as distinct from providing lobby fodder in blind support of the party leadership. That type of parliamentarian is best provided by a form of list system, which, if used responsibly, can furnish the parliament with a far wider range of talents and expertise than is currently the case.

This, in turn, would particularly facilitate the working of committees, which are the engine room of contemporary parliaments, and the most distinctive feature of the European parliamentary system.

Their most striking feature is the clear-cut distinction between the work of the plenary sessions and that of the committees, as one quickly learns in the European Parliament. The skills required for the committee room are quite different to those that work in the chamber, and not all Irish MEPs have displayed a mastery of both. Dáil Éireann has been shown to be a poor apprenticeship for the European style of politics.

In committee, draft legislation is generally subject to detailed scrutiny and amendment or, at least, it should be, but it can neither be scrutinised nor amended unless the parliamentarian has the time and the talent to do both. Furthermore, it is at this stage in the legislative process that ministers and civil servants are not only most accessible to the parliamentarian but also most open to cross-examination in public on the purpose and content of the proposed legislation. Again, if parliamentarians have neither the time nor the talent for this specialist activity the ministers and civil servants will not be held accountable to the extent they should be, nor will the political process be as transparent as it should.

Human nature dictates that ministers and civil servants like docile committees. The more preoccupied the parliamentarian with constituency work the more docile the parliamentarian within the committee, presuming he or she turns up, and the happier the ministers and civil servants. Ideally, committees should have a complementary role in framing policy especially through receiving evidence and submissions from experts, representative organisations and concerned citizens. In an age when people demand to be heard and take consultation as a right the committees could play an indispensable role in linking the parliament with the electorate.

It's obvious that if the relationship between parliament and the people is to flourish then parliament needs a vibrant committee system and this, in turn, demands parliamentarians who can give it the time

and the attention it takes to make the committees work properly.

Unfortunately, the STV system does not allow the committee system to flourish. I think it highly ironic that those who praise it for the direct contact it produces between the deputy and the constituent, mainly as a client, do not condemn it for the lack of contact between the same deputy and the citizen, mainly in the guise of a participant in the democratic process. I have no doubt as to which role should be given priority: the citizen should take precedence over the client.

Finally, committees periodically engage in enquiries for the purpose either of informing the parliament on important matters of state or of informing the public on matters of concern. In some cases committees can be used to hold individuals, organs of the state or other public or private bodies to account when the public good has been impaired. The DIRT enquiry immediately comes to mind as an example of the role parliament can play in exposing malpractices.

But this particular role is rarely put to use for the good reason that it takes time to engage in research, to receive evidence, to attend the public meetings and to sit in private when drafting reports. It is not electorally rewarding, unless the committee hearings attract media attention or the findings make the news. In short, deputies are forced to forego the committee in favour of the clinic. Public life is the poorer for it.



The Oireachtas came late to the committee system. Indeed, it wasn't until the mid seventies that the committee stage of bills was moved out of the chamber and into committee rooms. In fact, there was an absence of committee rooms because they were largely unnecessary. Even now, the relationship between committee work and the Dáil or Senate proceedings is unresolved. Frequently, both take place at the same time and as the power of bi-location has not yet been mastered, even by the most active deputy or senator, one or the other will suffer, usually the committee.

When the Dáil or Senate rises at the end of a term the media will announce that deputies and senators have gone on holidays even when the work of committees continues, often on important legislation or policymaking. The reality is that the media does not itself know how to handle committee work as an integral part of the parliamentary working life and their general level of disinterest does nothing to encourage active committees and reinforces the rush to the clinic.

It is significant that neither the media nor academia have paid much attention to the role of committees in political life. To say that it is not properly valued is an understatement and it is a reflection on our political culture that more is not demanded of the parliament as a national assembly charged with advancing the common good by using committees as investigative tools as in other jurisdictions. Indeed, the obstacles placed by the courts on the investigative role of the Oireachtas as the guardian

of citizen interests is only too evident by the practice of refusing to turn up before committees when summoned or, if obeying the summons, of opting to remain mute before the members.

The Oireachtas has, regrettably, failed to address these impediments to playing the role of watchdog and guardian – a failure is due more to a lack of time than to a lack of interest. To my mind, STV has been the root cause of, or failure to develop, a vibrant committee system which would be central to the life of parliament and the public has suffered as a direct consequence.

The list system in contrast fosters the career parliamentarian, a rare enough animal in our circumstances, who accumulates experience over time in a particular field, becomes an acknowledged expert and so adds to the authority of parliament in dealing with both civil servants and government ministers. This is especially important in holding both to account and is crucial in exposing the reasons and reasoning behind the decisions taken by government and the civil service, the latter being all too frequently the real decision makers in our system, often by default, let it be said. In an age where transparency and accountability have become the watchword it is essential that parliament becomes the champion of both. It can't be said that the Oireachtas does either with distinction.

In my opinion, the career parliamentarian is the missing component in our democracy; and it is all attributable to the clientelist nature of STV. This is a serious defect because

electorates in modern European democracies are better educated and far more assertive than previously. It is self evident that they are better informed, are less forgiving of stupidity and incompetence and demand ever-higher standards of institutions and those in public office.

## The Decline of Parliamentary Parties

In sum, the relationship between the parliament and the people has changed with greater professionalism and expertise expected of parliament. Unfortunately, the way in which our political system functions has also been changing as a consequence of STV.

The individualist nature of the STV system has become more and more pronounced and candidates have moved centre stage in elections at the expense of parties. Party allegiances and running mates are sometimes reduced in election material, such as posters, to the point of invisibility. Certainly, local and European elections are a spectacular confirmation of the argument that political parties are becoming an endangered species.

The belief that deputies are elected on personal merit rather than party allegiance has major repercussions for the character of political parties in general and parliamentary parties in particular. From my observations, political parties are being transformed into personal cliques of individual deputies and candidates. This has a detrimental effect on the politics of ideas and ultimately on the capacity of the state to govern.

As for parliamentary parties, I expect that my experience as a General Secretary was commonplace. The Parliamentary Party was often a flag of convenience for individuals and was difficult to manage as a collectivity when dealing with national issues, which didn't go down well at constituency level. The deputy is at the centre of his or her universe and knows best, that is, about the most important requirement of all, how to get elected. In extremis, a deputy will resign the party whip rather than endanger the local power base; if engaged in a battle with the party leadership an estranged deputy can resign the whip.

This undermines the coherence of parliamentary parties and erodes the authority of the leadership, which invariably is preoccupied with the national and international agendas. In contrast, the nature of politics as experienced by the deputy is primarily local and clientelist and these considerations inevitably take precedence over the broader national agenda. People do not sing off the same hymn sheet.

The direct consequence is that STV produces a permanent tension between the local and the national, between the individual and the collective and between actions as against ideas. It leaves little room for research, reflection or review. This would be bad enough on its own, but the consequences of the individualisation of politics are much wider, as we know.

Incumbent deputies are engaged in a constant battle

to hold onto votes and to win new support but not on the basis of their performance as parliamentarians, or even as Ministers or as Opposition Spokespersons, but rather on the basis of favours done for constituents and local communities.

That in turn has given rise to the tyranny of the “constant campaign” and of the interminable round of clinics which eat up large chunks of time, the opportunity cost of which is less time for parliamentary duties, party responsibilities and, let it be said, less time for family life. The clinic seemed a great idea when it was invented but the sheer grind of running a network of them has forced a number of good people out of politics and ended the career of others, which the system could not afford to lose.

There is no need for academic research to confirm what we already know about clientelism. When I became a deputy thirty-five years ago the older hands suddenly took me seriously. I was no longer a mere Senator or, worse still, a General Secretary. In their kindness they advised me not to serve on any Oireachtas committee – and not to speak too often in the Dáil chamber. Instead, I was to be on the phone pestering civil servants (as Professor Basil Chubb famously put it) or out in the constituency holding clinics.

No greater indictment of STV need be framed. These should not be the priorities of a national parliamentarian. But they are more than that; they are the pre-conditions of survival. And those that don’t live by them perish. In my opinion, STV cannot provide parliaments suitable for a modern European democracy. It might have just about

adequate for 19<sup>th</sup> century proto-democracy but not for the demands of 21<sup>st</sup> century mature democracy.

## Government

This last point brings up the third requirement of the electoral system, namely that it should facilitate the creation of governments adequate to the task of governing in modern Europe. Now this raises two constitutional issues that go beyond the choice of the electoral system. In most European democracies the government is elected by parliament but in some cases Ministers must resign their seats on being appointed to government whereas, in others, non-parliamentarians may become Ministers.

The first procedure is clearly based on the precept that the legislature and executive should be separated and the second on the belief that the task of governing demands specialist skills that go beyond those of vote getting. They both raise issues that need to be addressed because our constitution does not separate the legislature from the executive, in fact, they are intimately linked. Neither does it make provision for bringing outside experts into government, with the exception of bringing in two senators (a device only used twice before and not encouraged by members of the Dáil).

Under our constitution we have adopted the Westminster model whereby the government is elected from and by the Dáil and is responsible to it. The already limited choice of candidates from which the cabinet is to

be chosen is further restricted by the fact that half of the deputies are automatically excluded for the simple reason they are in opposition. Of those who are available, the Taoiseach is subject to further constraint because of the need to secure some form of regional balance between Ministers, another negative consequence of STV.

It would seem to most people that the primary requirements of ministers should be political nous and managerial capability but a system which mainly elects deputies for other qualities is not designed in the first instance for producing the sort of government which contemporary society requires and which modern electorates demand. Any co-incidence between the qualities needed for a successful vote-getter and a successful minister is quite fortuitous and this is a systemic weakness in STV. It could prove fatal if the political system were overstressed by economic depression, a public finances crisis, high unemployment and social unrest as a reaction to the state's failure to meet Cicero's law. That danger had increased perceptibly over the first decade of this century.

One solution, arguably, is to hand: the use of the Senate as a means of producing a stream of high-quality Ministers of State. This can be done in two ways. Firstly, the Taoiseach has the right to nominate eleven Senators. They could all be chosen with the national interest in mind. Secondly, the parties have a monopoly over nominations to the Oireachtas sub-panels and can elect anywhere between sixteen and twenty-seven members, a sizable quota of the Senate. They too could be chosen with

the nation rather than the party as the primary interest. Furthermore, the parties can influence the outcome of the elections in the Nominating Bodies sub-panels. There is no reason whatever why the Senate could not be transformed instantly into a powerhouse of expertise, experience and capacity - the very qualities which our government system so urgently needs. Not only could such a Senate fill the ranks of the Ministers of State (the Ministers and Secretaries Act permits this) but it could simultaneously supply quality members to Oireachtas Committees (and, indeed, its own Committees along the lines of the French Senate which is renowned for the quality of its reports).

Were this route to be followed, admittedly at the expense of more traditional party stalwarts, it would decisively redress the dearth of talent, which is threatening the political and economic sovereignty of the state.

All democracies are based on a contract between the governed and the governing. When broken the normal response is for the electorate to fire the government at the first opportunity. But if the contract is repeatedly broken due to the continuing failure of successive governments then the state itself will be in crisis. If the various crises facing Irish society are listed - a banking and financial system in ruins, the public finances in melt down, a health system that doesn't work, infrastructure that is grossly inadequate, an inadequate transport system, organised crime and rampant criminality - then it can hardly be contested that the state is confronting a first order crisis in terms of its legitimacy.



We are facing such a crisis. While there are many causes, the poor quality of the public service and regulatory agencies being the most serious, it is inescapable that the low calibre of the membership of the Oireachtas, and hence of the Government, and the failure of the Oireachtas to function as a legislative and deliberative body are at the core of the current crisis.

The electoral system is the root cause. It produces the parliamentarians. The parliamentarians produce the government. That neither is up to the primary task of safeguarding the common good is now self-evident. The argument for fundamental change has been made by the facts. If there ever was a case of *res ipsa loquitur*, then this is it.

## Conclusion

The final observation relates to the status accorded political parties within the electoral system. I believe it inherently dangerous whenever law and reality are divorced, which they are in the Irish political system. Political parties are the lifeblood of politics. They are the bedrock on which the political system rests. They organise and institutionalise political differences so that discourse can be conducted in accordance with civilised norms.

By channelling debate within themselves, and between each other, they moderate public feelings and

ease political passions. The debates on Northern policy in the early seventies were a graphic example of the value of political parties within the public order.

But the STV system of election is predicated on the proposition that they are secondary to the candidate. Furthermore, the constitution doesn't recognise them at all. These are dangerous flights from reality. Parties are so much part of the political reality that we take them for granted but the electoral system is based on an alternative reality in which parties don't exist at all.

In contrast, twenty-three of the twenty-seven Member States of the EU use the list system of Proportional Representation, which is based on parties; they have grounded their politics in reality. We have not.

Experience shows that list systems of whatever variety produce parliaments and provide governments which are more up to the tasks set by their electorates than ours. Common sense tells us that our parliament is not up to the task of running the country, not because the moral failings of individual politicians but because history dealt us a bad hand. Nobody chose STV as the best electoral system having carefully evaluated all others. It was bequeathed to us by an accident and it has turned out to be the worst of all possible systems for our country, given the localist and clientelist nature of our politics.

So, the answer to the question, "Is STV fit for purpose?" has to be an unequivocal and emphatic "No!"

Our electoral system is, most definitely, not suitable for a modern European democracy. The pre-occupations of mid-Victorian liberalism are not those of the 21<sup>st</sup> century Irish electorate. We should join the mainstream of modern European democracies and adopt an electoral system that is attuned to our needs as a society and more in keeping with our national genius; we need one that is based on parties and not on personalities.

After all, it was the Irish who invented the modern political party, both here, in the UK and in the US. It was the open political party as much as the secret armies that won us our freedom. We should put the party to good use again and make it the basis of an electoral system that will furnish us with a functioning parliament and effective government; one that will lift Ireland into the forefront of modern European democracies.

Above all, the Oireachtas should be left to determine which form of PR is to be employed from time to time. For if representative democracy is to true to itself, then it means accepting that the collective intelligence and goodwill of the national parliamentarians are the best and ultimate guarantee of the public good.

There could be no better tribute to those who, in establishing the First Dáil, set us on the path to freedom.

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## Electoral Systems in Use in the EU

Party Lists (20)	
1)	Austria
2)	Belgium
3)	Bulgaria
4)	Cyprus
5)	Czech Republic
6)	Denmark
7)	Estonia
8)	Finland
9)	Greece
10)	Latvia
11)	Lithuania
12)	Luxembourg
13)	Poland
14)	Portugal
15)	Romania
16)	Slovakia
17)	Slovenia
18)	Spain
19)	Sweden
20)	The Netherlands

Single Transferable Vote (2)	
1)	Ireland
2)	Malta

Mixed Member Majoritarian (2)	
1)	Hungary
2)	Italy

Mixed Proportional System (1)	
1)	Germany

Plurality-Based Voting (1)	
1)	The United Kingdom

Two Round Run-Off (1)	
1)	France

## Prospective Member States' Electoral Systems

Party Lists (8)	
1)	Iceland
2)	Norway
3)	Switzerland
4)	Turkey
5)	Croatia
6)	Serbia
7)	Montenegro
8)	Albania

Separation of Parliament and Executive	
Must Ministers Vacate their Seats in Parliament following their Cabinet Appointment?	
Austria	No
Belgium	Yes
Bulgaria	Yes
Cyprus	No
Czech Rep.	No
Denmark	No
Estonia	No
Finland	No
France*	No
Germany	Yes
Greece	No
Hungary	Yes
Ireland*	No
Italy	No
Latvia	No
Lithuania	No
Luxembourg	No
Malta	No
Netherlands	Yes
Poland	No
Portugal	Yes
Romania	No
Slovakia	No
Slovenia	No
Spain	No
Sweden	Yes
U.K.	No
* Indicates non-party-list State	

*Summary: Government and Parliament are separated in 7 Member States; in the other 20 they are joined.*

Composition of Cabinet	
Does the Cabinet have to be composed of Members of the Legislature?	
Austria	No
Belgium	Yes
Bulgaria	Yes
Cyprus	No
Czech Republic	Yes
Denmark	No
Estonia	No
Finland	No
France*	Yes
Germany	Yes
Greece	Yes
Hungary	Yes
Ireland*	Yes
Italy	No
Latvia	Yes
Lithuania	Yes
Luxembourg	Yes
Malta	Yes
Netherlands	Yes
Poland	Yes
Portugal	Yes
Romania	Yes
Slovakia	Yes
Slovenia	No
Spain	Yes
Sweden	No
U.K.	Yes
* Indicates non-party-list State	

*Summary: in 19 Member States the cabinet is drawn from the parliament.*

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