

# An Chéad Dáil Éireann



*The First Dáil*  
*1919 - 2009*

*90th Anniversary Celebration*  
*Céiliúradh 90 Bliain*





## Teachtaireacht ó Ionadaithe Shinn Féin san Oireachtas Message from Sinn Féin Members of the Oireachtas

Is onóir dúinn mar ionadaithe tofa Shinn Féin san Oireachtas an foilseachán seo a chur ar fáil mar chomóradh ar an gCéad Dáil Éireann.

Ar an 21ú lá Eanáir 1919 d'fhoilsigh Dáil Éireann an Faisnéis Neamhspleachais, an Teachtaireacht chun Saor-Náisiúin an Domhain agus an Clár Oibre Daonlathach. Tá na cáipéisí sin curtha ar fáil arís againn agus molaimid iad mar treoir do phobal na hÉireann i 2009.

January 2009 marks the 90th anniversary of the inaugural meeting of the First Dáil Éireann and, as Sinn Féin representatives in the Oireachtas, we are proud to make available this commemorative publication.

The inaugural meeting of the First Dáil Éireann followed the most momentous election in Irish history when Sinn Féin won a sweeping victory on a platform seeking the people's endorsement for the Irish Republic proclaimed in arms at Easter 1916. It was an unequivocal act of national self-determination and left the British government and the world in no doubt that the Irish people demanded their freedom.

Had the British government then abided by the democratically expressed will of the Irish people, Ireland and Britain would have been spared many decades of strife and suffering. Instead Dáil Éireann was suppressed. War was waged on the Irish people. Partition was imposed and we are still living with the legacy today.

But we also have the rich legacy of Dáil Éireann, the constituent assembly of the Irish Republic. It met for the first time on 21 January 1919 in Dublin's Mansion House. It issued a Declaration of Independence and a Message to the Free Nations of the World. It set out social and economic goals based on equality in its Democratic Programme. It formed a Government that included one of the first women Ministers in the world.

Those historic declarations are still relevant today and that is why we are republishing them.

The First Dáil Éireann was an all-Ireland assembly and the task of all true believers in democracy, as well as friends of Ireland everywhere, is to work together towards the day when the elected representatives of the Irish people gather in the national assembly of a reunited Ireland.



Caoimhghín  
Ó Caoláin TD



Martin  
Ferris TD



Arthur  
Morgan TD



Aengus  
Ó Snodaigh TD



Senator  
Pearse Doherty





## Chronology of Events

### January 1916 – December 1918

#### 1916

**January 19-22:** James Connolly, Commandant-General of the Irish Citizen Army, Acting General Secretary of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union is taken into the confidence of the Military Council of the Irish Republican Brotherhood which sets 23 April as the date when the Rising against British rule in Ireland is to begin.

**March 17:** Parades by Irish Volunteers in main towns across Ireland.

**April 3:** Pádraig Pearse gives orders for three days march and field manoeuvres on Easter Sunday.

**April 9:** German ship Aud sails for Ireland with arms for the Volunteers.

**April 21 Good Friday:** Aud captured and sunk. Roger Casement arrested at Banna Strand.

**April 23 Easter Sunday:** Order from Irish Volunteers Chief of Staff Eoin Mac Néill cancelling all action. Military Council meets in Liberty Hall and decides to proceed with Rising.

**April 24 Easter Monday:** Proclamation of the Irish Republic. Irish Volunteers, Cumann na mBan, Irish Citizen Army and Fianna Éireann members occupy key positions in Dublin

city. They hold out for six days and are heavily bombarded and encircled by British forces.

**April 29:** Provisional Government surrenders to British forces.

**May 3 – 12:** Executions of 15 leaders of the Rising (14 in Dublin and one in Cork). 1,836 men and five women interned without trial, mostly in Frongoch Camp, North Wales. 75 prisoners sentenced to penal servitude.

**May 29:** British Government Minister Lloyd George writes to Unionist leader Edward Carson confirming British plan to partition Ireland.

**July 1:** First day of Somme offensive on Western Front. Thousands of Irish (including 2,000 from Ulster Division) among 20,000 British Army dead in attacks on German lines.

**August 3:** Execution of Roger Casement in London.

**December 6:** Lloyd George becomes British Prime Minister with Carson and Tory leader Bonar Law in Cabinet.

**December 22, 23:** Over 600 internees released from Frongoch and Reading Prison.

#### 1917

**January 22:** US President Wilson states that principle of self-determination of nations would be basis for American participation in the War.

**February 3:** Count Plunkett, father of executed 1916 leader Joseph Mary Plunkett, elected on platform of Irish independence and abstention from Westminster in North Roscommon by-election.

**April 6:** US enters War against Germany.

**April 19:** Convention of nationalist organisations called by Count Plunkett in Dublin's Mansion House establishes National Council.

**May 9:** South Longford by-election results in Sinn Féin victory for Joseph McGuinness, a republican prisoner in England.

**June 11:** Lloyd George sets up Irish Convention, a forum to discuss the future of Ireland on British terms, with members picked by British government.

**June 15:** Irish political prisoners, including Eamon de Valera and Constance Markievicz, released from English prisons.

**July 10:** East Clare by-election won by Eamon de Valera for Sinn Féin.

**August 11:** Sinn Féin wins Kilkenny City by-election, candidate W.T. Cosgrave.

**September 25:** Republican prisoner Thomas Ashe dies in Mountjoy Prison as a result of being force fed while on hunger strike. Thousands attend funeral.

**October 25:** Sinn Féin Ard Fheis in Mansion House adopts new constitution endorsing the 1916 Proclamation and stating its aim as "securing the international recognition of Ireland as an independent Irish Republic". Organisation expanded throughout Ireland.

**October 26:** National Convention of Irish Volunteers in Croke Park elects new leadership, including de Valera, Cathal Brugha and Michael Collins.

#### 1918

**February 1:** Sinn Féin defeated by Irish Parliamentary Party in South Armagh by-election.

**February 27:** British declare martial law in Co. Clare.

**March 7:** British issue censorship order to Irish newspapers followed by suppression of many of them.

**March 22:** William Redmond, son of John Redmond (died March 6), wins Waterford by-election for Irish Parliamentary Party.

**April 16:** British Parliament passes Military Service Bill to impose conscription in Ireland. Irish Parliamentary Party withdraws from Westminster in protest.





**April 18:** Mansion House Conference called by Lord Mayor of Dublin to oppose conscription. United front of Sinn Féin, Irish Parliamentary Party, Independent MPs and Labour Movement.

**April 19:** Sinn Féin candidate Patrick McCartan returned unopposed in Offaly by-election after withdrawal of IPP candidate.

**April 20:** Irish Trade Union Congress calls General Strike against conscription.

**April 21:** Anti-conscription pledge signed throughout Ireland.

**April 23:** General Strike against conscription.

**May 17:** New British Vice-Roy Lord French, orders arrests of Sinn Féin leaders on basis of British-fabricated 'German Plot'.

**June 21:** Sinn Féin's Arthur Griffith wins East Cavan by-election.

**July 4:** Sinn Féin, Irish Volunteers, Cumann na mBan and Conradh na Gaeilge banned.

**August 4 & 15:** Hundreds of hurling games and public meetings are held in defiance of British military ban on public gatherings. Many arrested and jailed.

**November 11:** Armistice ends First World War in which an estimated 50,000 Irishmen died.

**November 25:** British Parliament dissolved.

**December 14:** Polling Day in General Election. Women have vote for first time, but women under 30 still excluded.

**December 28:** Election results show landslide victory for Sinn Féin in Ireland.

# National Unity defeats Conscription

On 16 April 1918 the British House of Commons passed the Military Service Bill which empowered the British Government to enforce conscription – compulsory service in the British Army – for all men of military age in Ireland. The overwhelming resistance to this measure by the Irish people saw unprecedented political unity and the biggest withdrawal of labour in Ireland before or since.

The British attempt to enforce conscription dealt a fatal blow to the Irish Parliamentary Party. It withdrew its MPs from Westminster. It also withdrew its candidate from the Offaly by-election on 19 April, ensuring that Sinn Féin candidate Patrick McCartan was returned unopposed. This was the latest in the series of Sinn Féin by-election victories, a prelude to the General Election victory the following December.

Events moved rapidly in the days after the Military Service Bill was passed. The Lord Mayor of Dublin hosted a conference in the Mansion House on 18 April, bringing together the leaders of Sinn Féin, the Irish Parliamentary Party and the Irish Trade Union Congress. A pledge against conscription was agreed, stating that all would resist the measure "by the most effective means at our disposal".

On 20 April the Irish Trade Union Congress held an emergency conference attended by 1,500 delegates. It was decided to have a General Strike on 23 April. On Sunday 21 April hundreds of thousands of people throughout the 32 Counties signed the anti-conscription pledge. Preparations then began for the General Strike.

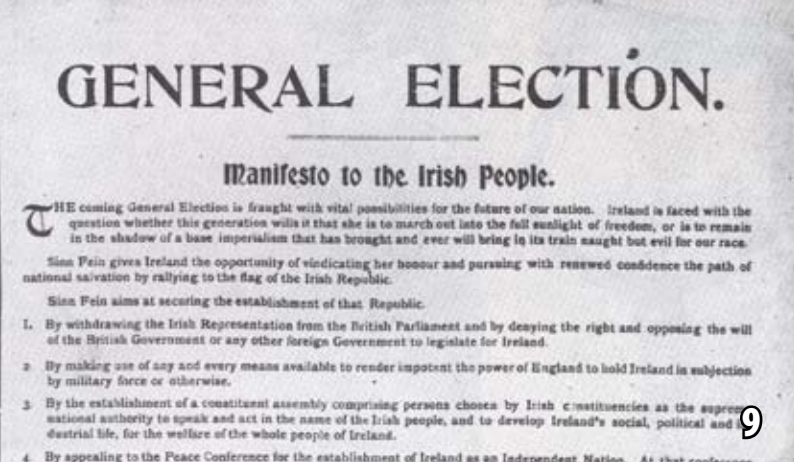
The Irish trade union movement had grown enormously since the 1913 Dublin Lockout. The largest union, the Irish Transport and General and General Workers Union, had 5,000 members in 1916. By the end of 1918 the ITGWU had 68,000 members. It was the backbone of the strike on 23 April.

Historian of the ITGWU, C. Desmond Greaves, has described the strike as "the greatest shut-down in Irish history". Factories, shops, schools and workplaces of all kinds closed. Workers paraded in towns throughout the country and the strike was effective in every county. It was incomplete in Belfast and surrounding districts yet 3,000 workers, many of them Protestants, attended an anti-conscription rally outside City Hall. In Ballycastle, Co. Antrim Orange and Green marched together with bands playing 'The Boyne Water' and 'A Nation Once Again'.

The British Labour and TUC issued a joint statement with the Irish TUC condemning conscription.

Faced with almost universal opposition in Ireland and growing opposition from workers in Britain, the Government in London backed down. They postponed the 'Order in Council' that would have imposed conscription and it was never introduced before the First World War ended in November 1918.





## The 1918 General Election

The First World War formally ended on 11 November 1918 and on 25 November the British Parliament was dissolved. A General Election was called and 14 December was set for polling day. It was to be the most momentous election in Irish history.

In the aftermath of the 1916 Easter Rising, the execution of 16 leaders and the imprisonment of hundreds of Irish nationalists in jails throughout Ireland and Britain, Sinn Féin was reorganised and began to win widespread popular support. It won four by-elections in 1917 – North Roscommon, South Longford, East Clare and Kilkenny. In October that year Sinn Féin adopted a new constitution committed to the establishment of the Irish Republic.

The British government in April 1918 introduced legislation to provide for conscription in Ireland. This met with mass resistance, including a General Strike, the first in Western Europe against the war. The Irish Parliamentary Party withdrew from Westminster in protest. Never again would a substantial body of Irish nationalists sit in the House of Commons. In May the British government attempted to cripple Sinn Féin by arresting hundreds of republicans for involvement in the fabricated 'German Plot'. Most of these remained in prison during the General Election and until a mass release of detainees in March the following year.

The long-time leader of the Irish Party John Redmond had died in March 1918 and John Dillon took over as leader. He

vowed to contest the General Election and said his party "will not give a clear field, but will fight Sinn Féin with all the resources at its disposal". Of the eight by-elections in 1917 and 1918 the Irish Party had won three, so Dillon was not prepared for defeat. But when nominations closed it was realised that 36 former Irish Party MPs had failed to face their constituents, bowing to the inevitable success of the Sinn Féin candidates.

Sinn Féin held talks on election strategy with the Irish Trade Union Congress and Labour Party. Sinn Féin offered not to stand in a number of constituencies to give Labour a set number of seats, provided Labour candidates agreed never to attend the Westminster Parliament. Labour, which was divided on the issue, would not agree and ended up not contesting the election. In any case the vast majority of organised workers were republican supporters of Sinn Féin, taking their lead from James Connolly.

Sinn Féin contested 103 of the 105 single-seat constituencies in Ireland. The exceptions were Trinity College Dublin and North Down.

The Sinn Féin manifesto stated that the party "gives Ireland the opportunity of vindicating her honour and pursuing with renewed confidence the path of national salvation by rallying to the flag of the Irish Republic". It was committed to establish the Republic by withdrawing Irish representation from Westminster, using "any and every means available"

to make British rule impossible, establishing a constituent assembly and appealing to the Peace Conference to recognise Ireland as an independent nation.

The manifesto was heavily censored by the British authorities when it appeared in the newspapers but the full version was widely circulated. Press censorship was only one of the many forms of repression that the British used during the election. Hundreds of republicans were in jails – including 47 of Sinn Féin's 103 candidates. Raids and arrests were frequent as were bans on public meetings and among those arrested during the campaign were Sinn Féin Director of Elections Robert Brennan.

The constituency of Dublin St. Patrick's Division, consisting of the South Inner City, was contested by Constance Markievicz. She was in Holloway Prison in England and her election address to her constituents said:

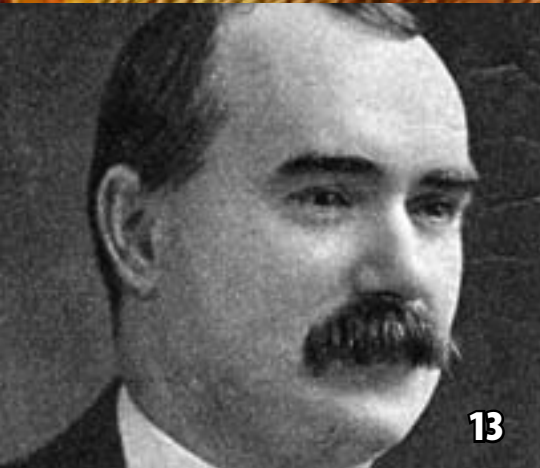
"I have many friends in the constituency who will work all the harder for me. They know that I stand for the Irish Republic, to establish which our heroes died, and that my colleagues are firm in the belief that the freeing of Ireland is in the hands of the Irish people today."

There was a two-week gap between polling day and the announcement of the final results on 28 December. Sinn Féin had won an overwhelming victory, taking 73 of the 105 seats in Ireland. Unionists won 26 and the Irish Parliamentary Party six. The majority vote for Sinn Féin was 70%. 24 of the 32 Counties returned only Sinn Féin TDs. Of Dublin's 11 TDs, all but one were Sinn Féin. Constance Markievicz was the only woman elected in Ireland and Britain.



Constance de Markievicz 1872-1927





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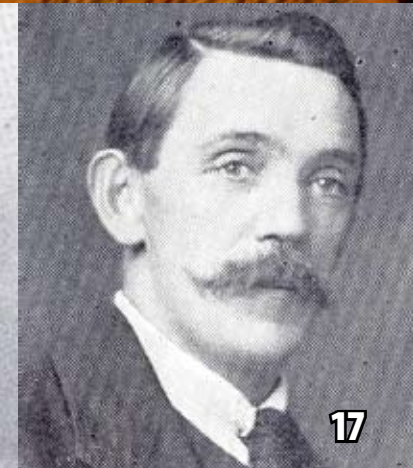
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## The role of the Trade Union Movement in the Struggle

As well as marking the 90th Anniversary of the First Dáil Éireann, January 2009 marks the Centenary of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union. Founded on 4 January 1909 the ITGWU became the leading organisation of Irish workers. Its growth reflected the resurgence of Irish identity and the desire for national independence as well as the worldwide rise of workers' unions that sought to unite the working class across all industries and services.

Liverpool Irishman James Larkin spread his "divine mission of discontent" among Irish workers from 1907 when he came to Ireland as a union organiser. By the end of 1908 his experience organising dockers, carters and other general labourer convinced Larkin that an Irish labour union was needed.

The firebrand Larkin inspired workers with his confrontational energy. But it was the ideas of James Connolly that had the most lasting influence on the ITGWU and the wider labour movement. Connolly articulated the ideal of real Irish freedom – not only separation from Britain but social and economic equality as well. He emphasised repeatedly from 1896 to his death in 1916 that the struggle for national independence and the struggle for social justice were two sides of the one coin.

"Only the Irish working class remain as the incorruptible inheritors of the fight for freedom in Ireland," wrote Connolly. He described the working class as "the only secure foundation on which a free nation can be reared". And he declared famously: "The cause of labour is the cause

of Ireland, the cause of Ireland is the cause of labour. They cannot be dissevered. Ireland seeks freedom. Labour seeks that an Ireland free should be sole mistress of her own destiny, supreme owner of all material things within and upon her soil."

Determined to put this principle into effect Connolly returned to Ireland from the USA and in March 1911 he became Secretary of the Belfast Branch and Ulster Organiser of the union. He led Belfast dockers in industrial action that summer, securing improved wages.

In 1911 the ITGWU moved into Liberty Hall and established a weekly newspaper *The Irish Worker*. Another major landmark in 1911 was the founding of the Irish Women Workers Union by Delia Larkin after a strike by 3,000 women workers in Jacob's Biscuit Factory. This sister union of the ITGWU was to play a significant role in the years to come.

The supreme test of the ITGWU was the Great Lockout of 1913.

Dublin in 1913 was a city of dire poverty where infant mortality was higher than in Calcutta and Moscow. Over 40% of deaths in Dublin occurred in workhouses and other such institutions compared to 22% in similar conditions in England. Over a third of the families in Dublin lived in single rooms in crumbling tenement houses.

When the ITGWU succeeded in recruiting the workers in the Dublin United Tramways, the Company proceeded to dismiss all known union members. The union called a strike for 10am on 26 August 1913 – the Monday of Horse Show

Week when the wealthy of Dublin travelled to the RDS in Ballsbridge to attend the prestigious event. All trams came to a halt and the epic struggle began.

The Dublin bosses demanded that each employee sign a pledge never to join or associate with the ITGWU. In a remarkable display of solidarity workers refused to sign and were dismissed as places of work closed one after another. Over 20,000 workers were dismissed and locked out of their jobs.

The employers had the backing of the British authorities in Dublin Castle and the Dublin Metropolitan Police. The police and workers fought running battles and early in the strike two workers, James Byrne and James Nolan were killed by police. On 31 August the Castle banned a mass meeting in O'Connell Street and police savagely attacked the thousands who defied the ban on Dublin's first Bloody Sunday. The Lockout continued through the autumn and winter of 1913.

Five years to the day after its founding, the ITGWU organised the funeral of Alice Brady, a 16 year old girl who died after she was shot by a blackleg. The end of the Lockout in early 1914 was inconclusive but the result was not. Far from breaking the ITGWU the Lockout saw it consolidate its strength and when it recovered its membership grew hugely.

In November 1913 the Irish Citizen Army was formed as a defence force for the locked out workers and their families. After Larkin's departure for America in October 1914, Connolly became acting General Secretary of the ITGWU, Commandant General of the Irish Citizen Army and editor of *The Irish Worker*.

From Liberty Hall Connolly steered a revolutionary course for the Irish labour movement. When the *Irish Worker* was suppressed by the British authorities, Connolly put a printing press in the basement of Liberty Hall and began publication of *The Workers Republic* under Citizen Army guard. The banner 'We serve neither King nor Kaiser but Ireland' was raised on the building. In 1915 the participation of the Citizen Army at the funeral of veteran Fenian Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa signalled the closer co-operation between Connolly and the most advanced elements of the Irish Republican Brotherhood and the Irish Volunteers.

The Military Council of the IRB which planned the Rising co-opted Connolly as a member in January 1916. Liberty Hall became the hub of activity; it was there that the Proclamation of the Irish Republic was printed, the Military Council held its final meetings on the eve of the Rising and from there the main body of insurgents marched under Connolly's command to occupy the GPO on Easter Monday.

Without the fighting spirit of the Dublin workers forged in the 1913 Lockout led by the ITGWU, without the Citizen Army and certainly without Connolly there would have been no Rising in 1916. James Connolly and Michael Mallin, leaders of the Citizen Army, were among the 16 executed after the Rising. Constance Markievicz was sentenced to death and among the participants interned in the aftermath were ITGWU activists Helena Moloney, Winifred Carney and William Partridge who died in 1917 after harsh imprisonment. Senior union officials Thomas Foran and William O'Brien were also interned.

For the second time it seemed that the ITGWU had been lost in the flames. But for the second time the phoenix rose from



## *The Dail Eirann Opened in Dublin: A Sinn Fein Declaration of Independence.*



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### THE OPENING OF THE SINN FEIN PARLIAMENT IN IRELAND: THE DAIL EIRANN AT THE MANSION HOUSE, DUBLIN.

On January 21st the 29 Sinn Fein Members of Parliament who are liberty, including Count Plunkett and Mr. John McNeill, held at the Mansion House, Dublin, a meeting of what is called in Irish the "Dail Eirann," or Constituent Assembly. Mr. Charles

Burgess was elected Speaker, and an inaugural prayer was offered by Father O'Flanagan. Then followed the roll-call, some speeches, and a Declaration of Independence, which was read in Irish, English, and French. The proceedings were quiet and orderly.

PHOTOGRAPH BY C.N.





the ashes. The revival of the union was a key element in the national resurgence which followed the Rising. In 1916 the ITGWU had 5,000 members. By the end of 1918 it had 68,000 in 210 branches. That year ITGWU members formed the backbone of the General Strike against Conscription which shut down the country on 23 April and ensured the defeat of the British government's plan to coerce Irishmen into the British Army.

At its inaugural meeting on 21 January 1919 the First Dáil Éireann adopted the Democratic Programme which reflected the progressive legacy of Connolly. Constance Markievicz became Minister for Labour. Rank and file union militancy intensified across Ireland.

In February 1919 the International Labour and Socialist Conference in Berne, Switzerland, admitted Ireland for the first time as a separate national delegation. The delegates were Thomas Johnson and Cathal O'Shannon of the Irish Trade Union Congress and Labour Party. They later joined the Dáil's envoys to the Versailles Peace Conference to press the case for Irish independence. In April the Second International, meeting in Amsterdam, supported "free and absolute self-determination" for Ireland and called upon the Peace Conference to recognise this right.

There was another national shut-down on May Day 1919 for improved wages and conditions. General strikes took place in 1920 and 1921 in support of hunger striking republican prisoners and against British executions.

The rank and file took the lead. One evening in May 1920 a Dublin docker and ITGWU member Michael Donnelly, who

had fought with the Citizen Army in 1916, spotted a ship bringing supplies to the British Army. He reported to Liberty Hall that he would refuse to handle the military supplies and the result was the national strike of dockers and railway workers against handling 'Munitions of War'. This lasted for over six months and was a major blow against the British military regime.

Militancy in the independence struggle was mirrored in the struggle for workers' rights and land rights. There were factory occupations, cattle drives and numerous strikes with union membership growing all the time. In Limerick the workers effectively took over the city in protest at British military tyranny, the most prominent of the 'soviets', as they were named, after the workers' committees in Russia.

ITGWU premises, including Liberty Hall, were frequently raided by Auxiliaries and Black and Tans and officials and members arrested. Many ITGWU members were in the IRA, including Councillor Tadhg Barry, Secretary of the union's Cork Branch. He was shot dead by the British Army in Ballykinlar Internment Camp in County Down in November 1921. By then, though, the revolutionary years of the ITGWU were drawing to a close. Different struggles lay ahead but workers would look for inspiration to Connolly who wrote after the Great Lockout:

"The flag of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union still flies proudly in the van of the Irish working class, and that working class still marches proudly and defiantly at the ahead of the gathering hosts who stand for a regenerated nation, resting upon a people industrially free."



## The First Dáil Éireann - Assembly of the Irish Republic

Dáil Éireann, the first democratically elected assembly of the Irish people, was the culmination of months of preparation, years of effort and many decades of struggle. The First Dáil Éireann unequivocally ratified the establishment of the Irish Republic proclaimed on Easter Monday 1916.

As founder of Sinn Féin in 1905 Arthur Griffith had long advocated a policy of withdrawal of Irish MPs from Westminster and the organisation of a national assembly in Dublin. Griffith was not a republican and envisaged a dual monarchy whereby the link with Britain would be maintained through the crown with the Irish Parliament exercising independence but not as a republic. Griffith's brand of Irish nationalism went beyond that of the Irish Parliamentary Party which was prepared to accept limited Home Rule within the British Empire; it did not go far enough for separatists who wanted an Irish Republic.

Before 1916 Sinn Féin was more a concept of Irish independence than a political movement. The 1916 Easter Rising transformed Irish politics and led to major realignments. Irish nationalist opinion had already been swinging away from the Irish Parliamentary Party of John Redmond before the Rising. Redmond's acceptance of very limited Home Rule, his acquiescence in the Partition of Ireland and his recruitment of thousands of Irishmen into the British Army had discredited him and his party. As the slaughter on the Western Front escalated, recruiting

in Ireland slowed down and the political credit of the Redmondites began to ebb away.

The response of the British government to the Easter Rising with the execution of 16 leaders, the internment of many hundreds of people and the imposition of martial law exposed as a fraud Britain's claim to be fighting for the freedom of small nations. The War Cabinet in London included those like Unionist leader Edward Carson and Tory leader Bonar Law who had used armed force while in Opposition in 1914 to block Home Rule for Ireland. The Redmondites were now politically bankrupt as the British government upon which they had previously relied to deliver Home Rule was gone and Ireland was subordinated to the interests of the British Empire and the war effort.

The succession of by-election victories for Sinn Féin in 1917 made clear that the Redmondite party was on the way out. The question was what would replace it in the leadership of Irish nationalism. There was a struggle within Sinn Féin between the nationalism of Griffith and the republicanism of those like Cathal Brugha and Rory O'Connor who wanted the Irish Republic as the unambiguous objective of the movement. These difference became apparent at the Mansion House conference organised by Count Plunkett in April 1917 in the wake of his by-election victory in North Roscommon. The issue was fought behind the scenes in the run up to the Sinn Féin Ard Fheis on 25 October.



# *We declare in the words of the Irish Republican Proclamation, the right of the people of Ireland to the sovereignty of their own nation, and to the unfettered control of their own destiny in the language of our first President, Pádraig Mac Phearsa, we declare* An Chéad Dáil ÉireannThe First Dáil



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The new Constitution adopted at the 1917 Ard Fheis was clearly republican and understood as such. The preamble endorsed the Proclamation of the Irish Republic of Easter 1916 and set Sinn Féin's aim as "securing the international recognition of Ireland as an independent Irish Republic".

The Sinn Féin Manifesto in the 1918 General Election followed on from this and stated : "Sinn Féin gives Ireland the opportunity of vindicating her honour and pursuing with renewed confidence the path of national salvation by rallying to the flag of the Irish Republic. Sinn Féin aims at securing the establishment of that Republic."

The Manifesto went on to state Sinn Féin's intention to achieve the Republic by "the establishment of a constituent assembly comprising persons chosen by Irish constituencies as the supreme national authority to speak and act in the name of the Irish people and to develop Ireland's social, political and industrial life, for the welfare of the whole people of Ireland".

The Sinn Féin Manifesto was endorsed in the landslide General Election victory. Already preparations had been made to convene Dáil Éireann. On 7 January 1919 a private preliminary meeting of the Sinn Féin TDs who were not imprisoned or 'on the run' was held in the Mansion House. In accordance with the Manifesto commitment the meeting issued invitations to all those elected for Irish constituencies to attend the opening of Dáil Éireann as the "independent Constituent Assembly of the Irish Nation".

The 7 January meeting appointed a committee to make arrangements for the inaugural public session of the Dáil and to draw up the key documents to be adopted by the assembly. James O'Mara prepared the provisional

Constitution of Dáil Éireann, a short document setting out that the Dáil had legislative powers, and would elect a Príomh-Aire (Prime Minister) who would select Ministers. The Declaration of Independence and Message to the Free Nations of the World was largely the work of George Gavan Duffy.

The Democratic Programme was a progressive statement of social and economic aims, reflecting the legacy of James Connolly and the key role of the trade union movement in the struggle for independence and quoting directly from Pádraig Pearse's *Sovereign People*. The initial draft was by Thomas Johnson of the Irish Trade Union Congress and Labour Party, amended by Seán T. Ó Ceallaigh. The Irish translations of the documents were by Seán Ua Ceallaigh ('Sceilg') and Piaras Béaslaí.

Of the 73 Sinn Féin TDs elected in December, 36 were imprisoned. Others were 'on the run'. 24 were available to attend the inaugural meeting of the First Dáil. Unionists and the remnants of the Irish Parliamentary Party chose not to attend.

At 3.30pm on 21 January 1919 the Mansion House was crowded with people from all over Ireland and abroad, including large numbers of journalists, as the inaugural meeting of the First Dáil Éireann opened. Count Plunkett proposed Cathal Brugha as the Ceann Comhairle for the day. Cathal Brugha then welcomed the attendance and called on Fr. Michael O'Flanagan, the radical republican priest who had built Sinn Féin in the West of Ireland, to say the opening prayer.

Cathal Brugha read the provisional Constitution of the Dáil which was adopted unanimously.

The Declaration of Independence was then read, with all those present standing. This Declaration followed directly from the 1916 Proclamation, the 1917 Constitution of Sinn Féin and the 1918 Election Manifesto. The Declaration's key paragraph read:

"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."

The Declaration was adopted with the TDs pledging to put it into effect.

Eamon de Valera, Arthur Griffith and Count Plunkett were then selected as delegates to the Peace Conference. The placing of Ireland's case before the post-war Conference was one of the main elements in Sinn Féin's programme. This was reflected in the next document adopted, the Message to the Free Nations of the World. It pointed to the "promised era of self-determination and liberty" and said that Ireland was "subjected to the purposes of England's policy of world domination". Looking to other struggling peoples it declared: "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."

The final document read and adopted was the Democratic Programme. This was based on principles set out in the Proclamation and articulated by Pearse and Connolly. It reflected the rise of the organised working class. Its key

section stated that the sovereignty of the nation "extends not only to all men and women of the nation, but to all its material possession; the nation's soil and its resources, all the wealth and wealth-producing processes within the nation and we reaffirm that all rights to private property must be subordinated to the public right and welfare". It declared "the right of every citizen to an adequate share of the produce of the nation's labour".

The Democratic Programme said it was the duty of the government of the Republic to ensure that no child should suffer hunger, cold or homelessness and should be provided with proper education and training. The Programme promised a new scheme of social welfare, replacing the British Poor Law system, and ensuring that the aged and infirm would be "no longer regarded as a burden but rather entitled to the nation's gratitude and consideration". The Republic also had the duty to "safeguard the health of the people".

The Programme pledged to build Ireland's economy and to reinvigorate industries which would be developed "on the most beneficial progressive co-operative industrial lines".

The historic meeting then drew to a close. The following day the Dáil met again and Cathal Brugha was elected acting Príomh-Aire while de Valera was in prison. Other Ministers were appointed at later sessions, including Constance Markievicz as Minister for Labour, one of the first women Government ministers in the world.

21 January 1919 was, by co-incidence, the day on which IRA Volunteers in Tipperary ambushed an RIC detachment to capture a load of gelignite. Two RIC men were killed in the confrontation at Soloheadbeg. This is often cited as



# An Chéad Dáil Éireann and to the unfettered control of the Irish people of the land and the sea and in the language of our first President Pádraig Mac Phearsaigh we declare

## The First Dáil



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the opening engagement of the War of Independence. However there had been armed clashes and fatalities before this. Soloheadbeg should be seen in the context of IRA raids for arms and efforts to build up their forces which had been continuing since 1917. It was not until British military repression escalated later in 1919 that the war really began and the reasons were essentially political.

There is no doubt that the political routes for the Dáil to put its Declaration of Independence into effect were closed down by the British government in 1919. At the Versailles Peace Conference the Dáil's envoys were denied a hearing and the British government ensured that the case for Irish self-determination never became an issue. The victorious allies Britain and France dictated the agenda and the interests of their colonial empires were safeguarded. US President Wilson was weakened by opposition in America to participation in the League of Nations which he sponsored.

Ireland was under British military rule, prompting even the conservative Catholic bishops on 24 June 1919 to describe the British regime as "rule by the sword". On 20 August the Dáil approved an oath to the Irish Republic and to the Dáil which was taken by all TDs and IRA Volunteers. Then on 10 September 1919 the British government declared Dáil Éireann a dangerous association and suppressed it. The Government of the Irish Republic went underground and the armed conflict began in earnest.



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# An Chéad Dáil Éireann – Rolla na dTeachtaí

Co. Aondroma (thoir)	Lt-Col McCalmont	as láthair
Co. Aondroma (meadh)	Major H O'Neill	as láthair
Co. Aondroma (thuaidh)	Major P. Kerr-Smiley	as láthair
Co. Aondroma (theas)	Capt. C.C. Craig	as láthair
Co. Ard Macha (meadh)	J. R. Lonsdale	as láthair
Co. Ard Macha (thuaidh)	Lt-Col, A. Allen	as láthair
Co. Ard Macha (theas)	S. Ó Donghaile	as láthair
Co. an Doire (thuaidh)	Dr. H. Anderson	as láthair
Co. an Doire (theas)	Denis Henry	as láthair
Dún na nGall (thiar)	E.J. Kelly	as láthair
Co. an Dúin (thoir)	D. D. Reid	as láthair
Co. an Dúin (meadh)	Col. Sir J. Craig	as láthair
Co. an Dúin (thuaidh)	T. W. Browne	as láthair
Co. an Dúin (theas)	Jeremiah McVeigh	as láthair
Co. an Dúin (thiar)	D. M. Wilson	as láthair
Co. Fhearmonach (thuaidh)	E. M. Archdale	as láthair
Béal Feirsde (Cromac)	W. A. Lindsay	as láthair
Béal Feirsde	E. Carson	as láthair
Béal Feirsde	Joseph Devlin	as láthair
Béal Feirsde	Thomas Moles	as láthair
Béal Feirsde	Capt. H. Dixon	as láthair
Béal Feirsde	S. MacGuffin	as láthair
Béal Feirsde	T. H. Brown	as láthair
Béal Feirsde	T. Donald	as láthair
Béal Feirsde	R. J. Lynn	as láthair
Béal Feirsde	Mr. Whitlaw	as láthair
Co. Thír Eoghain (thoir thuaidh)	T. J. S. Harbison	as láthair
Co. Thír Eoghain (thiar thuaidh)	Árt Ó Gríobhtha	fé ghlas ag Gallaibh
Co. Thír Eoghain (theas)	Mr. Coote	as láthair
Cathair Phort Láirge	Capt. W. Redmond	as láthair
Iolscoil Áth Cliath	A. Samuels	as láthair
Iolscoil Áth Cliath	Dr. R. Woods	as láthair
Ráth Ó Maighne (Áth Cliath)	Sir M. Dockrell	as láthair
Iolscoil na hÉireann	Eoin Mac Néill	I láthair
Áth Cliath (Pembroke)	Deasmhumha Mac Gearailt	fé ghlas ag Gallaibh
Áth Cliath (Naomh Séamus)	Seosamh Mag Craith	fé ghlas ag Gallaibh
Co. na Midhe (theas)	Eamonn Ó Dubhgáin	I láthair
Co. na Midhe (thuaidh)	Liam Ó Maoilíosa	ar díbirt ag Gallaibh
Co. Cheatharloch	Séamus Ó Lionáin	fé ghlas ag Gallaibh
Co. an Chabháin (thoir)	Art Ó Gríobhtha	fé ghlas ag Gallaibh
Co. an Chabháin (thiar)	Pól Ó Gallagáin	fé ghlas ag Gallaibh
Co. an Chláir (thoir)	Éamonn de Bhaléra	fé ghlas ag Gallaibh
Co. an Chláir (thiar)	Brian Ó hUigín	fé ghlas ag Gallaibh
Áth Cliath (Cluain Tairbh)	Riseárd Ó Maolchatha	I láthair
Áth Cliath (Faithche an Cholóiste)	Seán T. Ó Ceallaigh	I láthair
Cuan na Mara	Pádraig Ó Máille	I láthair
Cathair Chorcaighe	S.S. Breathnach	I láthair
Cathair Chorcaighe	Liam de Róiste	as láthair
Co. Chorcaighe (thuaidh)	Pádraig Ó Caoimh	fé ghlas ag Gallaibh
Co. Chorcaighe (thoir)	Dáithí Ceannt	as láthair
Co. Chorcaighe (meadh)	Toirdhealbhach Mac Suibhne	fé ghlas ag Gallaibh
Co. Chorcaighe (thoir thuaidh)	Tomás Ó Fiachra	fé ghlas ag Gallaibh
Co. Chorcaighe (theas)	Micheál Ó Coileáin	as láthair

Co. Chorcaighe (thiar)	Seán Ó hAodha	I láthair
Co. Chorcaighe (thoir theas)	Diarmuid Ó Loingsigh	ar díbirt ag Gallaibh
Doire Cholmchille	Eóin Mac Néill	I láthair
Dún na nGall (thuaidh)	Seosamh Ó Dochartaigh	I láthair
Dún na nGall (theas)	Peadar Mac an Bháird	I láthair
Dún na nGall (thiar)	Seosamh Mac Suibhne	I láthair
Co. Áth Cliath (thuaidh)	Proinsias Ó Laoidhléis	fé ghlas ag Gallaibh
Co. Áth Cliath (theas)	S. Gabhán Uí Dhubhthaigh	I láthair
Co. Fhearmanach (theas)	Seán Ó Mathghamhna	fé ghlas ag Gallaibh
Co. na Gaillimhe (thoir)	Liam Ó Maoilíosa	ar díbirt ag Gallaibh
Co. na Gaillimhe (thuaidh)	An Dr. Ciosóg	fé ghlas ag Gallaibh
Co. na Gaillimhe (theas)	Proinsias Ó Fathaigh	fé ghlas ag Gallaibh
Roinn an Chuain (Áth Cliath)	Pilib Ó Seanacháin	I láthair
Co. Chiarraidhe (thoir)	Piaras Béaslaí	I láthair
Co. Chiarraidhe (thuaidh)	An Dr. S. Ó Cruadhlaoidh	fé ghlas ag Gallaibh
Co. Chiarraidhe (theas)	Fionán Ó Loingsigh	fé ghlas ag Gallaibh
Co. Chiarraidhe (thiar)	Aibhistín de Staic	fé ghlas ag Gallaibh
Co. Chill Dara (thuaidh)	Domhnall Ó Buachalla	I láthair
Co. Chill Dara (theas)	Art Ó Conchubhair	fé ghlas ag Gallaibh
Co. Chill Coinnigh (thuaidh)	Liam Mac Cosgair	
Co. Chill Coinnigh (theas)	Séamus Ó Meaghra	as láthair
Co. Phortláirge	Cathal Brugha	I láthair
Co. na hIar-Mhide	Labhrás Mag Fhionnghaill	fé ghlas ag Gallaibh
Co. Loch gCarmáin (thuaidh)	Roger Sweetman	I láthair
Co. Loch gCarmáin (theas)	An Dr. S. Ó Riain	An Dr. S. Ó Riain
Co. Liathdroma	Séamus Ó Dóláin	fé ghlas ag Gallaibh
Co. Luimnighe (thoir)	An Dr. R. Ó hAodha	fé ghlas ag Gallaibh
Co. Luimnighe (thiar)	Conchubhar Ó Coileáin	I láthair
Cathair Luimnighe	M. P. Colivet	fé ghlas ag Gallaibh
Co. an Longphuirt	Seosamh Mac Aonghusa	fé ghlas ag Gallaibh
Co. Lughmhaighe	Seán Ó Ceallaigh	I láthair
Co. Mhuigheó (thoir)	Eamonn de Bhaléra	fé ghlas ag Gallaibh
Co. Mhuigheó (thuaidh)	An Dr. Ó Cruadhlaoidh	I láthair
Co. Mhuigheó (theas)	Liam Seers	fé ghlas ag Gallaibh
Co. Mhuigheó (thiar)	Seosamh Mac Giolla Bhríghde	fé ghlas ag Gallaibh
Co. Mhuineacháin (thuaidh)	Earnán de Blaghd	fé ghlas ag Gallaibh
Co. Mhuineacháin (theas)	Seán Mac an tSaoi	fé ghlas ag Gallaibh
Co. Ros Comáin (thuaidh)	S. N. Pluincéad (Count)	I láthair
Co. Ros Comáin (theas)	Énri Ó Beóláin	as láthair
Co. Shligigh (thuaidh)	S. S. Mac Fhlannchadha	fé ghlas ag Gallaibh
Co. Shligigh (theas)	Alasdar Mac Cába	fé ghlas ag Gallaibh
Co. Thiobraid Árann (thuaidh)	Seosamh Mac Donnchadha	fé ghlas ag Gallaibh
Co. Thiobraid Árann (thoir)	Piaras Mac Canna	fé ghlas ag Gallaibh
Co. Thiobraid Árann (meadh)	Séamus A. De Búrca	I láthair
Co. Thiobraid Árann (theas)	P. A. Maoldomhnaigh	I láthair
Co. Chill Mantáin (thiar)	R. C. Barton	I láthair
Co. Chill Mantáin (thoir)	Seán Etchingham	fé ghlas ag Gallaibh
Co. Uí Fáilghe	An Dr. P. Mac Cartáin	ar díbirt ag Gallaibh
Co. Laoise	Caoimhghin Ó hUigín	I láthair
Áth Cliath (St. Michan's)	Micheál Mac Stáin	I láthair
Áth Cliath (Faithche Stíopháin)	Tomás Ó Ceallaigh	I láthair
Áth Cliath (Naomh Pádraig)	Countess Markievicz	Fe ghlas ag Gallaibh





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**Sinn Féin**  
[www.sinnfein.ie](http://www.sinnfein.ie)

*21st January 2009*

*The Mansion House, Dublin.*

*Organised by Sinn Féin*