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Maurice Manning
Chairman
Seanad Reform Group

Re: Reform of the Seanad

WITH COMPLIMENTS

Michael Moroney
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27 September 2012

Senator Feargal Quinn,
SEANAD ÉIREANN,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

Re: Reform of the Seanad

Dear Senator,

Please find attached a paper I have prepared on 'Reform of the Seanad'.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Moroney PhD

SEANAD ÉIREANN NOT REPRESENTATIVE NOT DEMOCRATIC

Seanad Éireann, as currently constituted, is not democratic nor is it representative. Not alone do groups of politicians control the vote for 54 of the Senators but they also control the nomination process; no other citizen of the country has an input into the election of these Senators.

Can the election of a Second House, by giving the privilege of voting to small numbers of people in a few privileged groups, be right?

Seanad Éireann is not representative of the general population and is it not time to consider if it fulfills the requirements of a modern democratic society?

The Irish Free State Constitution of 1922 provided for the establishment of a second parliamentary chamber – Seanad Éireann (Senate) – consisting of 60 members. These members were to be chosen from citizens who had done honour to the nation by reason of useful public service or who, because of special qualifications or attainments, represented important aspects of the nation's life. Our forefathers envisaged the Seanad as a forum where the combined wisdom of experience and knowledge of an honoured meritocracy would have an opportunity to give voice for the good governance of the Irish nation outside of party politics. Due to circumstances, and as a transitional measure, one-half of the first Seanad was nominated by the President of the Executive Council and the other half was elected by the Dáil, but it was intended that succeeding Seanads should be directly elected by the people.

The Constitution of Ireland, 1937, laid down the format for election of our present 60 Senators to Seanad Éireann:

1. 11 nominated by the Taoiseach.
2. 43 elected from five panels representing vocational interests namely, Culture and Education, Agriculture, Labour, Industry and Commerce and Public Administration.
3. Six elected by the graduates of two universities:- three each by the National University of Ireland (NUI) and the University of Dublin (Trinity College) (TCD).

It would appear from this structure that the aspirations of our forefathers in the 1922 Constitution [that the Seanad should be composed of citizens who had done honour to the nation] were deemed to be fulfilled by providing for the election of six University Senators and the election of nominated candidates from a list of organisations and associations involved in vocational activities.

The six University Senators may be considered as, somewhat, complying with these aspirations but this is not the case for the 43 Senators elected from the five panels. Originally, Independent Senators were elected from the Nominating Bodies Sub-panel, but this arrangement has now been hijacked. As long as the Electoral Roll for these Senators comprises of new TDs, outgoing Senators, and members of county and city councils, no matter where the nomination comes from, the election process laid down is blatantly undemocratic. Politicians have always controlled the vote and they now control the nomination process.

Present Electoral System

Under the present electoral system two elections take place. The first one provides an opportunity to over three million voters to democratically elect 166 TDs. The second election, however, is the privileged choice of a small number of people in exclusive groups who elect 60 Senators.

An election for Seanad Éireann must be held within 90 days of the dissolution of Dáil Éireann but in the interim the election of deputies to the Dáil was been completed. The question might be asked – why are the two elections not held on the same day? Of course, leaving a time space between the elections allows unsuccessful Dáil candidates a second opportunity to fulfill their political ambitions and, at least, get elected to the Seanad.

TAOISEACH'S NOMINEES

The Taoiseach's nominees are his and his alone and political expediency dictates that he uses the opportunity to ensure that a solid base is provided in the Seanad to guarantee that government policies are carried out.

It is well recorded that, following a General Election, the newly elected Taoiseach is canvassed by and on behalf of candidates seeking one of the 11 political gift nominations. Whilst, on occasion, a few independent unaffiliated personalities have been thus honoured, in practice chosen individuals are invariably politicians mirroring the membership of the party(ies) in government.

UNIVERSITY SENATORS

On graduation from the respective university graduates are requested to register on the electoral roll for the election of representatives to Seanad Éireann, but many do not do so. In the 2011 Election about 32% of the registered NUI graduates voted and the quota for election was 8,458; 29% of the registered TCD graduates voted and the quota was 3,890.

While University Senators require thousands of votes to be elected much has changed in our society since 1937. We now have many additional Third Level Colleges and graduates of these colleges are denied civic equality with their NUI and TCD contemporaries - namely the privilege of voting.

ELECTION FOR PANEL MEMBERS

The remaining 43 Senators are elected from candidates from 5 Electoral Panels which are considered to represent vocational interests. Each of the five panels has two sub-panels, The Oireachtas Sub-panel, and the Nominating Bodies Sub-panel. An aspiring candidate can be nominated from either one of them.

The Oireachtas Sub-Panel: A candidate who secures a nomination from four members of the Houses of the Oireachtas, [the newly-elected TDs and the outgoing Senators], may have his name listed in the sub-panel in any one of the five panels. The maximum number of candidates that may be nominated in this manner is 56

In this situation we have politicians being nominated by politicians to be elected by politicians.

Nominating Bodies Sub-panel: Organisations and associations representing different vocational interests can apply to be registered to nominate candidates to one of the five panels. Organisations registered on the three panels, Cultural and Educational, Industrial and Commerce, Administrative, can each nominate one candidate; organisations listed on the Agricultural Panel can each nominate two candidates; and the two nominating bodies for the Labour Panel can each nominate seven candidates. In the 2007 election, 90 bodies were registered and collectively they could nominate a maximum of 113 candidates.

Two Sub-Panel Systems

A by-product of this two sub-panel system is that an aspiring candidate is offered a double opportunity to get a nomination. Failure to get an Oireachtas Sub-panel nomination still leaves the possibility of a nomination from one of the organisations in the Nominating Bodies Sub-panel.

The reality of the current situation is that Nominating Bodies have come to realise that an Independent candidate is unlikely to procure sufficient votes to get elected and consequently they give their nominations to politicians who are favourable to their aspirations and who promise to look after their interests.

An Independent candidate has very little prospect of getting a nomination and absolutely no prospect of getting elected. In the 2011 election every one of the 43 Senators elected from both sub-panels of the 5 panels were politicians: 18 FG, 14 FF, 8 Lab, 3 SF.

VOTING

The most controversial aspect of the Panel election system is that 43 Senators are elected by 1,092 politicians; no other citizen of the country has an input into it. The 2012 Electoral Roll for the election of 43 members of the Seanad listed 1,092 politicians entitled to vote: 166 newly-elected TDs, 60 outgoing Senators and 866 county and county borough councillors.

Each of the 1,092 voters received 5 ballot papers by registered post, i.e., one in respect of each of the five panels. Thus, each voter had the privilege of casting five No 1's, five No 2's, five No 3's and so on down the list of names on each ballot sheet.

In a proportional representation system, every vote being important, it is not surprising that this election campaign results in candidates clocking up thousands of Kilometres criss-crossing the country endeavouring to canvas and fete as many county and city councillors as possible?

The number of counts it takes to complete the count for each panel exemplifies the importance of having some preference vote on a ballot sheet, and of having every sheet completed. In some panel counts it can take as many as 30 counts to complete the election.

In addition, to make use of the maximum votes available to it and to ensure that the greatest number possible of its members is elected, every Political Party Head Office sends instructions to every voting member of the party throughout the country on how votes on every panel should be cast.

SUMMATION:

Political Reform was a stated objective of all the Political Parties during the last General Election; some have opted for the Seanad to be abolished and others think that it can be reformed. We have been promised a Referendum as to its future.

IS THE HOUSE BEYOND REFORM?

IF NOT, THEN HOW SHOULD IT BE REFORMED?

Reform must secure a long-term sensible objective rather than be a response to political expediency.

How can the current institution be viewed as democratic and representative of current Irish society?

The retention of a Second House that is returned by the privileged votes of a small number of people in a few privileged groups cannot be allowed to continue.

Are we asking too much of our politicians? Can we expect them to take the initiative which, for many of them, would be akin to asking turkeys to vote for Christmas?

Michael Moroney PhD.
27 September 2012.

SEANAD REFORM PROPOSALS

Open It, Don't Close It

"Any Bill to amend the constitution can only be initiated in Dáil Éireann. Therefore the intended reforming legislation will have to operate within the constraints of the existing constitutional order"

The history of the Dáil in determining the structure and operation of the Seanad is not encouraging.

- The Irish Free State Constitution of 1922 provided for the establishment of a second parliamentary chamber – Seanad Éireann – consisting of 60 members, chosen from citizens who had done honour to the nation or who, because of special qualifications or attainments, represented important aspects of the nation's life.
- The Constitution provided that the Senators should be elected directly by the people every third year. However, it then transpired that due to circumstances, and as a transitional measure, one-half of the first Seanad was nominated by the President of the Executive Council and the other half was elected by the Dáil.
- It was intended that succeeding Seanads should be directly elected by the people.
- The Seanad election in 1925 was the first, and last, direct election as provided for in the Constitution, but the choice of the electorate was limited to a panel of candidates nominated by the Dáil and Seanad.
- In 1928, following the recommendations of the Joint Committee on the Constitution of Seanad Éireann, the electoral system was changed so that the electorate now consisted of members of the Dáil and outgoing Senators.
- Subsequent Triennial Elections under this changed format were held in 1928, 1931 and 1934.
- Following somewhat unsatisfactory relations between the two Houses over a number of years, and a serious conflict following the change of government in 1932, the Seanad was abolished on 29 May 1936 under the Constitution (Amendment No. 24) Act 1936.
- In June 1936 The Executive Council appointed the Second House of the Oireachtas Commission to "consider and make recommendations as to what should be the functions and powers of the Second Chamber of the Legislature in the event of its being decided to make provision in the Constitution for such Second Chamber....".
- Following the report of the Commission, the Constitution of Ireland 1937 was passed by the Dáil on 14 June 1937, and adopted by the people in a plebiscite on 1 July 1937. It provided for the establishment of a Seanad more firmly under the control of the government. The ordinary citizen, who had a vote for the Dáil, was denied any input into the election of any of the Senators - the privilege to elect 54 Senators was vested in politicians only.

* The Constitution laid down the format for election of 60 Senators to Seanad Éireann:

1. 43 elected from five panels representing vocational interests namely, Culture and Education, Industry and Commerce, Public Administration, Agriculture and Labour. The electorate determined for these Senators was: newly-elected TDs, outgoing Senators and county and county borough councillors.
2. 11 nominated by the Taoiseach.
3. Six elected by the graduates of two universities:- three each by the National University of Ireland (NUI) and the University of Dublin (Trinity College) (TCD).

A new and much more exacting system for deciding on eligibility to stand as a candidate for any of the panels will be provided for, setting thresholds of experience and public standing, and involving an independent determination of eligibility by a body chaired by a High Court judge.

The present Constitution provides for a Panel System for the election of 43 Senators and the reality of the situation is that the system does not work. Instead we have got an institution where an 'Independent' candidate has very little prospect of getting a nomination and absolutely no prospect of getting elected.

There are five panels and each one has two sub-panels, the Oireachtas Sub-panel, and the Nominating Bodies Sub-panel.

In the Oireachtas Sub-panel, four members of the Houses of the Oireachtas, viz. the newly-elected TDs and the outgoing Senators, may nominate a candidate to any one of the five sub-panels, a case of politicians being nominated by politicians to be elected by politicians.

In the Nominating Bodies Sub-panel, all of the 90 bodies currently registered to give a nomination realise that an 'Independent' candidate is unlikely to get sufficient votes, to get elected, from the 1092 politicians on the Electoral Roll, and consequently they give their nominations to politicians who are favourable to their aspirations and who promise to look after their interests.

Under this two sub-panel system an aspiring candidate is offered a double opportunity to get a nomination. Failure to get an Oireachtas Sub-panel nomination still leaves the possibility of a nomination from one of the organisations in the Nominating Bodies Sub-panel.

The 2011 Election proves the point: the Electoral Roll for the election of 43 members of the Seanad consisted of a list of 1,092 people entitled to vote:

- 166 newly-elected TDs
 - 60 outgoing Senators, and
 - 866 county and county borough councillors.
- 1,092

Each of the 1,092 voters received 5 ballot papers by registered post, i.e., one in respect of each of the five panels. Thus, each voter had the privilege of casting five No 1's, five No 2's, five No 3's and so on down the list of names on each ballot sheet.

Every one of the 43 Senators elected from both sub-panels of the 5 panels was a politician: 18 FG, 14 FF, 8 Lab, 3 SF.

It is worth noting that in the list of organisations registered under the Nominating Bodies Sub-panel there is a disparity: two nominating bodies for the Labour Panel can each nominate seven candidates, organisations listed for the Agricultural Panel can each nominate two candidates and the remaining organisations can nominate only one candidate each.

The Taoiseach's 11 nominees are his choice and his alone and political expediency dictates that he uses the opportunity to ensure that a dependable base is provided in the Seanad to provide a guarantee that government policies are carried out.

Its members should be chosen by the entire electorate instead of the present restricted arrangement.

Under the present 'Two Chamber' system two elections take place. The first one provides an opportunity to over three million voters to democratically elect 166 TDs. The second election is the privileged choice of a small number of people in a few exclusive groups who elect 60 Senators.

If the Second Chamber is to be retained then the most important reform must be that every citizen entitled to vote in a Dáil election should also have a vote in a Seanad election.

University graduates would be free to choose between the reformed universities panel or any of the other panels.

It is only right and just that all graduates of recognised Third Level Colleges should have civic equality with their NUI and TCD contemporaries - namely the privilege of voting.

It is proposed that certain other Irish citizens living in Northern Ireland would be entitled to register on the same basis as citizens living within the state.

Is it proposed that everybody living in Northern Ireland will be offered the opportunity to register to vote in a Seanad election, or just a select few?

There are many people in Northern Ireland who do not consider themselves to be citizens of Ireland. If only one section of the population registers, or is permitted to register, does this not constitute bias and discrimination? It does not enshrine the principle of democracy and equal representation.

As part of the electorate will come from Northern Ireland, will it be possible for a Northern Ireland citizen to present himself/herself for election?

Recently emigrated (say within the last 10 years) would be entitled to register on the same basis as citizens living within the State.

Having one child who has been overseas for more than ten years and another one about to go, is it being proposed that one of them should have a vote and the other one not?

Michael Moroney PhD

Reform Proposal 1:

REFORM BY THE DÁIL

"As you are aware, any Bill to amend the constitution can only be initiated in Dáil Éireann. Therefore the intended reforming legislation will have to operate within the constraints of the existing constitutional order"

The history of proposed amendments to the Constitution by the Dáil with regard to the operation of the Seanad is not encouraging.

- The Irish Free State Constitution of 1922 provided for the establishment of a second parliamentary chamber – Seanad Éireann (Senate) – consisting of 60 members, chosen from citizens who had done honour to the nation, to be directly elected by the people in triennial elections.
- Due to circumstances, and as a transitional measure, one-half of the first Seanad was nominated by the President of the Executive Council and the other half was elected by the Dáil, but it was intended that succeeding Seanads should be directly elected by the people. The Seanad of the Irish Free State met for the first time on 11 December 1922.
- The first, and last, direct election as provided for in the Constitution, took place in 1925, but on this occasion the choice of the electorate was limited to a panel of candidates nominated by the Dáil and Seanad.
- In 1928, following the recommendations of the Joint Committee on the Constitution of Seanad Éireann, the electoral system was changed with the electorate now reduced to members of the Dáil and outgoing Senators.
- The elections in 1931 and 1934 followed the same pattern.
- The final sitting of the Seanad, as it then existed, was held on 19 May 1936. It was abolished on 29 May 1936.
- The Constitution of Ireland, 1937, laid down the format for election of our present 60 Senators to Seanad Éireann and politicians only were vested with the privilege to vote for the election of 54 Senators.
- 1. 11 nominated by the Taoiseach. [Political expediency dictates that he uses the opportunity to ensure that a solid base is provided in the Seanad to guarantee that government policies are carried out.]
 2. 43 elected from five panels representing vocational interests namely, Culture and Education, Agriculture, Labour, Industry and Commerce and Public Administration. Electoral Roll for the election of these 43 Senators lists newly-elected TDs, Senators and county and county borough councillors. [ALL POLITICIANS]
 3. Six elected by the graduates of two universities: - three from NUI and three from TCD.

It would appear from the structure introduced in Constitution of Ireland, 1937, that the 1922 premise [i.e. that the Seanad should be composed of citizens who had done honour to the nation], was deemed as met by the provision for six University Senators and by the election of 43 nominated candidates from a list of organisations and associations involved in vocational activities.

The draft Bill put forward for consideration by the 'NO' lobby in the Referendum Campaign has no value as *any Bill to amend the constitution can only be initiated in Dáil Éireann*. Over the past 76 years 13 reports recommending changes and revisions have been considered by the Dáil and not one revision or recommendation has been enacted.

Reform Proposal 2:

ELECTORAL PANELS

A new and much more exacting system for deciding on eligibility to stand as a candidate for any of the panels will be provided for, setting thresholds of experience and public standing, and involving an independent determination of eligibility by a body chaired by a High Court judge.

Seanad Éireann, as currently constituted, is not representative of the general population nor does it fulfill the requirements of a modern democratic society. Not alone do politicians control the vote for 54 of the Senators but they also control the nomination process; no other citizen of the country has an input into the election of these Senators. The election of these 54 Senators is solely at the pleasure of politicians and no other citizen in the country has any input into it. The reality is that 43 Senators are elected by 1,092 politicians - the Seanad has been hijacked by the politicians for the benefit of politicians.

The reality of the situation is that, even from the time of the Irish Free State Constitution of 1922 the panels have ended up being abused. It has been demonstrated, time after time, that a truly Independent candidate has very little prospect of getting a nomination and absolutely no prospect of getting elected.

It would appear from the structure laid down in the Constitution of Ireland, 1937 that the 1922 premise [i.e. that the Seanad should be composed of citizens who had done honour to the nation], was deemed as met by the provision for six University Senators and by the election of 43 nominated candidates from 5 Panels of organisations and associations involved in vocational activities.

Organisations and associations representing different vocational interests can apply to be registered as a nominating body for candidates in the different panels. The Register of Nominating Bodies is revised in January-March each year and published in the "Iris Oifigiúil".

The distribution of the 43 Senators over the different panels is as follows:

1. Cultural and Educational: 5 Senators from the names of persons having knowledge and practical experience in National Language and Culture, Literature, Art, and Education; two at least to be elected from each sub-panel.
2. Agricultural: 11 Senators from the names of persons having knowledge and practical experience in Agriculture, Fisheries and allied interests: four at least to be elected from each sub-panel.
3. Labour: 11 Senators from the names of persons having knowledge and practical experience in Labour, whether organised or unorganised; four at least to be elected from each sub-panel.

4. Industry and Commercial: 9 Senators from the names of persons having knowledge and practical experience in Industry and Commerce, including banking, finance, accountancy, engineering and architecture; three at least to be elected from each sub-panel.
5. Administrative: 7 Senators from the names of persons having knowledge and practical experience in Public Administration and social services, including voluntary social activities; three at least to be elected from each sub-panel.

Each of the five panels has two sub-panels, the **Oireachtas Sub-panel**, and the **Nominating Bodies Sub-panel**. Under this two sub-panel system an aspiring candidate is offered a double opportunity to get a nomination. Failure to get an Oireachtas Sub-panel nomination still leaves the possibility of a nomination from one of the organisations in the Nominating Bodies Sub-panel.

Nominating Bodies Sub-panel: The following table sets down the number of bodies currently registered and the number of persons each body is entitled to nominate. For the 2007 election there were 90 bodies registered and the maximum number of candidates that could be nominated was 113.

Panel	Number of bodies registered	Number of persons each body is entitled to nominate	Maximum number
Cultural and Educational	31	1	31
Agricultural	11	2	22
Labour	2	7	14
Industrial and Commercial	36	1	36
Administrative	10	1	10
Total	90		113

It will be noted that organisations registered for three of the panels can nominate only one candidate each; those registered for the Agricultural Panel can each nominate two candidates; and the two registered bodies for the Labour Panel can each nominate seven candidates. In total, the 90 registered bodies may nominate 113 candidates.

Oireachtas Sub-Panel: A candidate who secures a nomination from four members of the Houses of the Oireachtas, [newly-elected TDs and outgoing Senators], may have his/her name listed in the sub-panel of any one of the five panels. The maximum number of candidates that may be nominated in this manner is 56.

This is a case of politicians being nominated by politicians to be elected by politicians.

VOTING

The 2011 Electoral Roll for the election of 43 members of the Seanad consisted of a list of 1,092 people entitled to vote:

- 166 newly-elected TDs
 - 60 outgoing Senators, and
 - 866 county and county borough councillors
- 1,092

Each of the 1,092 voters received 5 ballot papers by registered post, i.e., one in respect of each of the five panels. Thus, each voter had the privilege of casting five No 1's, five No 2's, five No 3's and so on down the list of names on each ballot sheet.

In a PR (proportional representation) voting system every vote is important, the higher the preference the better. A candidate failing to get a No 1 vote will look for the next highest preference. It is essential to have some vote on every elector's ballot sheet. It is not surprising, therefore, that this election campaign results in candidates clocking up thousands of Kilometres criss-crossing the country endeavouring to canvas and fete as many county and city councillors as possible?

In addition, to make use of available votes to the maximum and to ensure that the greatest number possible of its members is elected, every Political Party Head Office sends instructions to every voting member of the party on how votes on every panel should be cast. Of the 1,096 votes issued 1,072 valid votes were cast in each panel.

Currently, newly-elected TDs, outgoing Senators and County Councillors and County Borough Councillors have five No 1s; if one is also a graduate of NUI or TCD a sixth No 1, and if a graduate of both NUI and TCD a total of seven No 1s.

The number of counts it takes to complete the election for each panel explains the anxiety of the candidate to have some preference vote on a ballot sheet, and the diligence of the electors in completing the ballot sheet. It can take as many as 30 counts to complete the election for some panels.

The Quotas to be elected are about:

Administrative Panel: 120
 Agricultural Panel: 80
 Cultural and Educational: 160
 Industrial and Commercial: 96
 Labour: 80

In the 2011 Election every one of the 43 Senators elected was a politician: 18 FG, 14 FF, 8 Lab, and 3 SF; 23 were nominated by the Nominating Bodies Sub-panel and 20 were nominated on the Oireachtas Sub-panel.

COMMENT

It is proposed that the 'Panel System' be retained - a continuation of the paternalistic vocationalism concept proposed in "Quadragesimo Anno" of 1931, whereby the control and ruling of the masses can be safely placed in the hands of the few enlightened ones.

The 1937 Constitution may originally have been perceived to fulfill the lofty ideals of our founders, honouring citizens who had done honour to the nation, but once politicians only were vested with the privilege to select and elect 54 Senators the founding ideals soon lost their integrity.

The present situation now is that we have politicians being nominated by politicians to be elected by politicians for 54 Seanad seats; no other citizen of the country has an input into it. A truly 'Independent' candidate has negligible prospect of getting a nomination and absolutely no prospect of getting elected.

Because the Electoral Roll is composed entirely of 1092 politicians the Nominating Bodies realise that an 'Independent' candidate is unlikely to get sufficient votes to get elected. Consequently they give their nominations to politicians who are favourable to their aspirations and who promise to look after their interests. In the Seanad 2011 election all of the candidates in both sub-panels of the 5 panels were politicians and 18 FG, 14 FF, 8 Lab and 3 SF Senators were elected.

The miss-use of the nomination and election system has ensured that the Seanad is firmly under the control of the political parties. The combination of Taoiseach nominees and political influence in the election of another 43 Senators will continue to ensure Seanad Éireann will reflect party strengths as determined in national and local elections.

The present election process is blatantly undemocratic, nor are the elected Senators representative of current Irish society.

The retention of a Second House that is returned by the privileged votes of a small number of people in a few privileged groups cannot be allowed to continue.

Reform Proposal 3:

UNIVERSITY SENATORS

University graduates would be free to choose between the reformed universities panel or any of the other panels.

Currently, on graduation from the two respective universities graduates are requested to register on the electoral roll for the election of representatives to Seanad Éireann, many do not register. In the 2007 Election about 35% of the NUI electorate voted and the quota for election was almost nine thousand; for the TCD graduates the valid poll was again about 35% and the quota was over four thousand. In 2011 election 30.7% of the NUI electorate voted and 29% of TCD electorate voted, the quotas were 8,458 and 3,890 respectively.

ELECTION 2007	NUI	TCD
Total Electorate	103,000 (approx.)	48,980(approx.)
Valid Poll	35,989	16,918
Quota	8,998	4,230
Number of Counts	21	8
ELECTION 2011	NUI	TCD
Total Electorate	110,000 (approx.)	53,583(approx.)
Valid Poll	33,831	15,557
Quota	8,458	3,890
Number of Counts	24	18

It is small consolation that NUI and TCD Senators require several thousand votes to be elected given that much has changed in our society since 1937. We now have many additional Third Level Colleges and their graduates are denied civic equality with their NUI and TCD contemporaries - namely the privilege of voting.

Currently, TDs, Senators and County Councillors have five No 1s; if one is also a graduate of NUI or TCD a sixth No 1, and if a graduate of both NUI and TCD a total of seven No 1s.

At the Fine Gael Ard Fheis on 13th October the Taoiseach said that the outcome of the Seanad abolition referendum was clear and that the Government plans to legislate for the Constitutional Referendum held in 1979. This referendum had been accepted by a substantial majority and now, 34-years later, it was intended to extend the vote in Seanad elections to all graduates of "any other institutions of higher education in the State". It was offered as "a small first step" towards the reform of the Upper House and ensure that it was "as effective as possible".

Reform Proposal 5:

POLLING DAY

Its members should be chosen by the entire electorate instead of the present restricted arrangement.

Extract from Article 18 of the Constitution

1. A general election for Seanad Éireann shall take place not later than ninety days after a dissolution of Dáil Éireann, and the first meeting of Seanad Éireann after the general election shall take place on a day to be fixed by the President on the advice of the Taoiseach.
2. Every member of Seanad Éireann shall, unless he dies, resigns, or becomes disqualified, continue to hold office until the day before the polling day of the general election for Seanad Éireann next held after his election or nomination.

Under the present electoral system two elections take place. The two elections are not held on the same day and the question might be asked – why not?

The first election provides an opportunity to over three million voters to democratically elect 166 TDs. The second one, however, is the privileged choice of a small number of people in exclusive groups who elect 60 Senators.

An election for Seanad Éireann must be held within 90 days of the dissolution of Dáil Éireann but in the interim the election of deputies to the Dáil was been completed. Leaving a time space between the elections allows unsuccessful Dáil candidates a second opportunity to fulfill their political ambitions and, at least, get elected to the Seanad.

The most important reform must be that every citizen entitled to vote in a Dáil election should have a vote in a Seanad election and that both elections should be held on the same day.