Department of Local Government and Public Health.

MEMORANDUM

ON THE

CONDUCT OF THE GENERAL ELECTION TO DÁIL EIREANN HELD ON THE 27th AUGUST, 1923.

Presented to Dáil Eireann July, 1924.

MEM

Eire
in t
num
the
cons
pop
in a
ther
the
thou

on
the
on
the
the

Gov
of t
the
Wri
Und
was
Aug

Arti
Act
men

MEMORANDUM on the Conduct of the General Election to Dáil Eireann held on the 27th August, 1923.

Constituencies.

For the purposes of Elections to Dáil Eireann, Saorstàt Eireann is divided into thirty constituencies, which are described in the Eighth Schedule to the Electoral Act, 1923. The greatest number of members returned by any constituency is nine, and the smallest three. Except in the case of the two University constituencies, the number of members is proportionate to the population according to the last preceding Census, but so that in accordance with the terms of Article 26 of the Constitution there is not less than one member for each thirty thousand of the population, and not more than one member for each twenty thousand of the population.

Franchise.

The Register, on which the election was held came into force on the 8th August, 1923. The Register was commenced under the Franchise Resolutions adopted by the Provisional Parliament on the 19th September, 1922, and confirmed by section 61 of the Electoral Act, 1923. Women were thereby admitted to the Dáil Franchise on the same terms as men, i.e., adult suffrage.

Dissolution of the Dail.

The Oireachtas was dissolved by Proclamation of the Governor-General dated 9th August, by and with the advice of the Executive Council, and by Proclamation of the same date the Oireachtas summoned to meet on the 19th September, 1923. Writs were issued to the Returning Officers on the 9th August. Under Section 18 of the Electoral Act the date for nominations was, therefore, 18th August, and the date of the poll was 27th August.

The day on which a general election shall be held is, under Article 28 of the Constitution and Section 4 (1) of the Electoral Act, a public holiday, and shall also be a Monday, the poll commencing at 9 a.m., and closing at 7 p.m.

Instructions to Electors.

It was not considered necessary to give any special instructions to electors as to the manner in which they were required to mark their papers, as the local government elections in 1920, and the election to Provisional Parliament in 1922, had already been held according to the system of proportional representation. A Form of Directions for the guidance of the voter in voting (Form No. 8, Fifth Schedule, Part III., Electoral Act, 1923) containing examples of correctly-marked ballot papers was exhibited in each polling compartment.

Electorate.

The total number of electors in the contested constituencies (including the National Univeristy of Ireland), was 1,785,436. The number of ballot papers found on opening the ballot boxes was 1,093,996; accordingly 61·28 per cent. of the electors availed of the franchise. The total number of papers rejected as invalid and not counted was 40,047, *i.e.*, 3·66 per cent. of the total votes cast.

Any ballot paper

    (i.) which does not bear the official mark ; or

    (ii.) on which the figure 1 standing alone indicating a first preference for some candidate is not placed ; or

    (iii.) on which the figure 1 standing alone indicating a first preference is set opposite the name of more than one candidate ; or

    (iv.) on which the figure 1 standing alone indicating a first preference and some other number is set opposite the name of the same candidate ; or

    (v.) on which anything except the said number on the back is written or marked by which the voter can be identified ; or

    (vi.) which is unmarked or is void for uncertainty,

    is invalid and not counted.

It will be observed that headings (i.), (v.), and (vi.) are common to all classes of elections.

a

5

Particulars of the votes rejected, and the reasons therefor, are given in Schedule I. except as regards the county constituency of Wicklow, for which this information is not available. Of the total invalid votes 11,083 or 28·34 per cent. are attributable to headings (i.,) (v.), and (vi.), and the remainder 28,030 or 71·66 per cent. may thus be said to be due primarily to proportional representation. The chief cause of the latter papers being invalid was the placing of the figure 1 opposite the name of more than one candidate—to some degree analogous to the former case of "voting for more candidates than entitled to."

Counting the Votes.

The rules for the counting of the votes are contained in the Third Schedule to the Act. The system is that of the single transferable vote, that is, a vote capable of being transferred to the next choice when the vote is not required to give a prior choice the necessary quota of votes, or when, owing to the deficiency in the number of the votes given for a prior choice, that choice is eliminated from the list of candidates. In contrast to continental "list" systems, the single transferable votes has been found elastic, as it allows the voter to vote for one candidate only, or for all the candidates on the ballot paper in the order of his preference, or for particular candidates only. In order to make any analysis of the transfers of votes it is necessary to show the party or interest of the candidate to whom the votes were transferred.

An analysis for each constituency, of the second and third counts appears in Schedule II. It is considered that any analysis beyond the third count would be misleading from several causes. For instance if at the third count all the candidates of a particular party were elected or excluded, any votes available would be transferred to another party, and thus, while the voters may have voted with intelligence and understanding, it would appear otherwise in an analysis.

When a vote is available for transfer it is credited to the candidate next in order of preference who has not been elected or excluded. Assuming that candidates are voted for in the following order :—

(1) A, (2) B, (3) C, (4) D, (5) E, (6) F, (7) G, (8) H, and that the vote for A is to be transferred, if B and D have been elected, and C and E excluded, the vote will be transferred to F. The analysis does not, therefore, show the candidates for whom second and third preferences were recorded, but the candidates to whom votes were transferred on the second and third count.

From Press reports of the election and the statements of the party organisations and candidates, it would appear that candidates might fairly be arranged according to five main groups, which in the analysis are described as parties A, B, C, D, and E, but the absolute accuracy of this grouping cannot be guaranteed.

The transfer figures show that the preferences recorded generally followed party lines, and that as between parties differing in fundamental aspects the percentage transferred was negligible. In such cases it is probable that the preference was recorded on personal rather than on political grounds. Allegations of un-intelligent "cross-voting" would not appear to be justified from the results.

Quota.

Any candidate credited with a number of votes equal to or greater than the quota is elected. The quota $= \frac{\text{number of valid votes}}{\text{number of seats} +1} +1$, that is the smallest number of which there can be as many complete groups as there are seats to be filled and no more. If the number of valid votes in each constituency was always exactly proportionate to the number of seats, it would follow that in a 9-member constituency the quota would be greater than the quota in a 3-member constituency. In practice, this seems to be corrected by a higher poll in the smaller constituencies. A statement of the Quota in each constituency is given in the First Schedule the highest being 7,102 (Cork Borough 5-members), and 6,856 (Kerry County 7-members), and the lowest 4,674 (Kildare 3 members), and 4,838 (Galway 9-members). Had Saorstát Eireann (excluding University constituencies) been one constituency the quota would have been 7,114.

Method of transfer and question of chance.

The element of chance is discussed in the Report on the conduct of the First Election to Seanad Eireann presented to Dáil Eireann, February, 1923 (P. Pro 2). Chance can only arise in relation to the transfer of the surplus votes of an elected candidate. The votes of that candidate are arranged in sub-parcels according to next preferences recorded for the candidates not elected or excluded, and a number of papers equal to the surplus multiplied by the number of papers in the sub-parcel and divided by the total number of transferable papers is trans-ferred to the candidate marked as next preference. These papers are taken from the top of the sub-parcel. There can only be chance in respect of such papers, and then only if those

papers are transferred from the candidate at a later stage as part of a surplus or on exclusion. The element of chance consists in the possibility of an undue proportion of next preferences for a particular candidate being sorted to the top of the sub-parcel. The extent to which chance is present could only be shown by a comparison of the results obtained by counting the votes according to the Rules in the Third Schedule to the Electoral Act, with results obtained by counting the same votes according to the rules prescribed for the First Seanad Election set out in the report above-mentioned. Under these latter rules, each vote is transferred at an ascertained value, in the case of a surplus, and at the value at which it was received in the case of an exclusion. Whenever such a test was made no difference was found as regards the candidates elected, but occasionally the order of election was varied.

The Effect of the Proportional Representation System.

If the General Election in 1923 had not been conducted according to the system of proportional representation, it is not possible to suggest what the result might have been. The nominations of candidates from each of the five main parties referred to introduced a complication for which the methods in the Ballot Act of 1872 provide no solution. Certain of these parties it is assumed were distinct in their particular policy, but unanimous in certain main questions of policy, and represented jointly a clear majority of the electorate in a single-member constituency. Therefore, unless provision had been made for the transfer of votes, the voting force of the majority would be "split" and a minority candidate elected. It is equally true that certain minority candidates who secured a "quota" would probably have failed to secure a majority in a single member constituency. It is certain that the same representative result would not have been obtained without some artificial restriction on nomination of candidates. The element of chance in this respect is certainly greater than is found in the transfer of the surplus of an elected candidate.

The principle of proportional representation is also applied to bye-elections, with the result that no candidate can be elected unless—

(1) in the first count he had 50 per cent. or over of the first preferences, or

(2) he has at the end of the count at which he is elected, more votes than the combined totals of all the other candidates.

With this method, it is not possible for a candidate to secure election by means of a "split" vote.

SCHEDULE I.

Constituency.	Number of Valid Ballot Papers.	INVALID BALLOT PAPERS.				Total Invalid.
		Want of Official Mark.	Invalid under Sec. 26 (4) of Electoral Act, 1923, Pars. (b), (c), (d).	Writing or Mark of Identification.	Unmarked or Void for uncertainty.	
Dublin Borough (North).	55,320	Nil.	739	139	25	903
Dublin Borough (South).	46,163	12	644	76	59	791
Cork Borough ...	42,611	5	592	22	16	635
Carlow-Kilkenny	40,161	101	1,251	592	143	2,087
Cavan ...	33,265	39	1,728	27	9	1,803
Clare	39,445	47	1,001	32	104	1,184
Cork, North ...	20,482	42	484	104	746	1,376
Cork, East ...	30,351	35	890	317	943	2,185
Cork, West ...	29,723	33	651	110	717	1,511
Donegal ...	52,730	29	1,473	81	152	1,735
Dublin County	57,363	23	1,152	60	86	1,321
Galway ...	48,375	53	2,177	108	616	2,954
Kerry ...	54,845	71	1,088	186	244	1,589
Kildare ...	18,692	Nil.	847	42	17	906
Leitrim-Sligo ...	45,646	129	1,578	72	449	2,228
Leix-Offaly ...	40,317	14	1,443	58	83	1,598
Limerick ...	50,810	46	1,328	85	79	1,538
Longford-West- meath.	35,408	32	1,403	32	179	1,646
Louth ...	24,506	33	784	95	67	979
Mayo, North ...	26,241	95	540	298	—	933
Mayo, South ...	32,054	28	594	158	253	1,033
Meath ...	23,218	9	814	564	106	1,493
Monaghan ...	25,607	18	980	20	75	1,093
Roscommon ...	31,197	7	46	49	1,292	1,394
Tipperary ...	54,687	12	1,928	52	61	2,053
Waterford ...	32,559	21	676	61	43	801
Wexford ...	38,072	4	1,199	71	66	1,340
National Uni- versity.	1,202	—	—	—	4	4
Totals ...	—	938	28,030	3,511	6,634	—
Wicklow ...	22,899	—	—	—	—	934
Total ...	1,053,949	938	28,030	3,511	6,634	40,047

SCHEDULE I.—continued.

(cut off)	Total Invalid.
5	903
9	791
6	635
3	2,087
9	1,803
4	1,184
6	1,376
3	2,185
7	1,511
2	1,735
6	1,321
6	2,954
4	1,589
7	906
9	2,228
3	1,598
9	1,538
9	1,646
57	979
—	933
53	1,033
06	1,493
75	1,093
02	1,394
61	2,053
43	801
66	1,340
4	4
34	—
—	934
34	40,047

Constituency.	Valid Votes.	Seats.	Quota.
Dublin Borough (North)	55,320	8	6,147
Dublin Borough (South)	46,163	7	5,771
Cork Borough ...	42,611	5	7,102
Carlow-Kilkenny ...	40,161	5	6,694
Cavan	33,265	4	6,654
Clare	39,445	5	6,575
Cork (East)	30,351	5	5,059
Cork (North) ...	20,482	3	5,121
Cork (West) ...	29,723	5	4,954
Donegal	52,730	8	5,859
Dublin County ...	57,363	8	6,374
Galway	48,375	9	4,838
Kerry	54,845	7	6,856
Kildare •	18,692	3	4,674
Leitrim-Sligo ...	45,646	7	5,706
Leix-Offaly	40,317	5	6,720
Limerick	50,810	7	6,352
Longford-Westmeath	35,408	5	5,902
Louth	24,508	3	6,127
Mayo (North) ...	26,241	4	5,249
Mayo (South) ...	32,054	5	5,343
Meath	23,218	3	5,805
Monaghan	25,607	3	6,402
Roscommon ...	31,197	4	6,240
Tipperary	54,687	7	6,836
Waterford	32,559	4	6,512
Wexford	38,072	5	6,346
Wicklow	22,899	3	5,725
National University ...	1,202	3	301

SECOND SCHEDULE.

ANALYSIS OF TRANSFER OF VOTES AT THE SECOND AND THIRD COUNTS.

Constituency.	Party from which transferred and Number of Count.	Percentage of Votes Transferred to Party.					Observations.
		A.	B.	C.	D.	E.	
1	A 2nd Count (S)	94.02	1.71	—	—	4.27	
	B 3rd ,, (Ex)	7.61	90.22	—	—	2.17	1 N.T.
2	A 2nd ,, (S)	*	2.49	42.68	40.28	14.54	
	C 3rd ,, (Ex)		5.85	83.14	7.11	3.90	115 ,,
3	C 2nd ,, (S)	22.89	3.44	61.80	2.86	9.01	
	D 3rd ,, (S)	24.46	1.08	1.08	70.97	2.41	
4	B 2nd ,, (S)	2.91	*	66.06	12.95	18.08	
	A 3rd ,, (Ex)	51.00		20.43	17.71	10.86	54 ,,
5	A 2nd ,, (S)	82.00	.74	6.68	9.44	1.14	
	B 3rd ,, (S)	9.22	61.78	21.51	6.03	1.46	
6	E 2nd ,, (Ex)	44.93	9.80	21.62	13.85	9.80	44 ,,
	D 3rd ,, (Ex)	43.76	9.40	2.49	39.65	4.70	58 ,,
7	A 2nd ,, (S)	75.98	1.29	—	15.53	7.20	
	D 3rd ,, (Ex)	11.95	40.85	—	38.50	8.70	26 ,,
8	A 2nd ,, (S)	48.80	.89	21.98	27.19	1.14	
	E 3rd ,, (Ex)	17.96	23.95	30.54	27.55	*	44 ,,
9	A 2nd ,, (S)	81.44	.98	3.82	9.96	4.80	
	B 3rd ,, (S)	4.88	90.24	2.44	1.90	.54	
10	B 2nd ,, (S)	2.21	93.81	2.11	1.55	.32	
	A 3rd ,, (S)	86.17	.83	2.53	7.53	2.94	
11	A 2nd ,, (S)	60.29	1.76	11.65	24.26	2.04	
	E 3rd ,, (Ex)	18.33	45.21	24.87	11.59	*	79 ,,
12	D 2nd ,, (Ex)	30.13	7.95	5.54	56.38	—	18 ,,
	D 3rd ,, (Ex)	17.69	7.77	9.12	65.42	—	28 ,,
13	B 2nd ,, (S)	3.37	76.51	8.91	11.21	—	
	A 3rd ,, (S)	66.81	3.09	11.41	18.69	—	
14	A 2nd ,, (S)	74.34	.51	2.18	.91	22.06	
	A 3rd ,, (S)	—	.49	7.44	2.89	89.18	
15	B 2nd ,, (S)	11.21	*	67.83	20.96	—	
	A 3rd ,, (Ex)	*	—	26.55	73.45	—	230 ,,
16	C 2nd ,, (S)	33.63	36.41	*	29.96	—	
	A 3rd ,, (S)	76.94	4.12	—	18.94	—	
17	E 2nd ,, (Ex)	36.90	41.17	6.42	11.23	4.28	18 ,,
	E 3rd ,, (Ex)	40.52	20.96	14.17	22.35	3.00	51 ,,
18	E 2nd ,, (S)	6.30	1.83	2.19	87.03	2.65	
	C 3rd ,, (Ex)	44.20	12.42	25.50	8.11	9.77	69 ,,
19	A 2nd ,, (S)	76.70	.49	2.98	4.02	15.81	
	A 3rd ,, (S)	77.04	.17	2.03	1.91	18.85	
20	A 2nd ,, (S)	89.50	.77	4.32	—	5.41	
	E 3rd ,, (S)	48.17	4.69	23.65	—	23.49	
21	A 2nd ,, (S)	80.77	.34	3.20	—	15.69	
	B 3rd ,, (S)	4.91	78.69	8.20	—	8.20	
22	A 2nd ,, (S)	64.18	1.14	10.38	15.23	9.07	
	B 3rd ,, (S)	2.53	86.40	4.23	4.18	2.66	
23	B 2nd ,, (S)	2.24	82.28	5.01	5.15	5.32	
	A 3rd ,, (S)	81.00	1.46	3.10	8.33	6.11	
24	B 2nd ,, (Ex)	23.98	54.59	10.20	11.23	—	10 ,,
	A 3rd ,, (Ex)	75.08	4.72	10.53	9.67	—	25 ,,
25	E 2nd ,, (Ex)	35.84	10.79	40.08	6.93	6.36	38 ,,
	B 3rd ,, (Ex)	7.58	78.86	4.37	5.40	3.79	22 ,,
26	A 2nd ,, (S)	76.02	5.54	4.49	13.65	.30	
	B 3rd ,, (Ex)	10.27	78.47	6.36	4.16	.74	30 ,,
27	A 2nd ,, (S)	68.33	3.96	17.08	8.97	2.36	
	A 3rd ,, (S)	88.51	.47	3.85	5.64	1.53	6 ,,
28	E 2nd ,, (Ex)	26.40	16.00	28.00	29.60	*	13 ,,
	A 3rd ,, (Ex)	45.43	10.94	11.91	31.72	—	13 ,,
29	B 2nd ,, (S)	9.92	*	62.60	27.48	—	
	C 3rd ,, (Ex)	66.87	—	—	33.13	—	542 ,,

NOTE.—* Denotes only one of this party contested the Election.
"S" A transfer of Surplus Votes of an elected Candidate.
"Ex" A transfer on exclusion of Candidate.
"N.T." Non-transferable, i.e., a Vote containing no further preference.