

Section 1: 1919

No. 1 Reprinted from *Minutes and Proceedings of the First Parliament of the Republic of Ireland 1919 - 1921*

Declaration of independence

Dublin, 21 January 1919

Whereas the Irish people is by right a free people:

And Whereas for seven hundred years the Irish people has never ceased to repudiate and has repeatedly protested in arms against foreign usurpation:

And Whereas English rule in this country is, and always has been, based upon force and fraud and maintained by military occupation against the declared will of the people:

And Whereas the Irish Republic was proclaimed in Dublin on Easter Monday, 1916, by the Irish Republican Army acting on behalf of the Irish people:

And Whereas the Irish people is resolved to secure and maintain its complete independence in order to promote the common weal, to re-establish justice, to provide for future defence, to insure peace at home and goodwill with all nations and to constitute a national polity based upon the people's will with equal right and equal opportunity for every citizen:

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

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

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

We solemnly declare foreign government in Ireland to be an invasion of our national right which we will never tolerate, and we demand the evacuation of our country by the English Garrison:

We claim for our national independence the recognition and support of every free nation in the world, and we proclaim that independence to be a condition precedent to international peace hereafter:

In the name of the Irish people we humbly commit our destiny to Almighty God who gave our fathers the courage and determination to persevere through long centuries of a ruthless tyranny, and strong in the justice of the cause which they have handed down to us, we ask His divine blessing on this the last stage of the struggle we have pledged ourselves to carry through to Freedom.

No. 2 Reprinted from *Minutes and Proceedings of the First Parliament of the Republic of Ireland 1919 - 1921*

Message to the Free Nations of the World

Dublin, 21 January 1919

To the Nations of the World!

Greeting.

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

Nationally, the race, the language, the customs and traditions of Ireland are radically distinct from the English. Ireland is one of the most ancient nations in Europe, and she has preserved her national integrity, vigorous and intact, through seven centuries of foreign oppression: she has never relinquished her national rights, and throughout the long era of English usurpation she has in every generation defiantly proclaimed her inalienable right of nationhood down to her last glorious resort to arms in 1916. Internationally, Ireland is the gateway of the Atlantic. Ireland is the last outpost of Europe towards the West: Ireland is the point upon which great trade routes between East and West converge: her independence is demanded by the Freedom of the Seas: her great harbours must be open to all nations, instead of being the monopoly of England. To-day these harbours are empty and idle solely because English policy is determined to retain Ireland as a barren bulwark for English aggrandisement, and the unique geographical position of this island, far from being a benefit and safeguard to Europe and America, is subjected to the purposes of England's policy of world domination.

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

For these among other reasons, Ireland — resolutely and irrevocably determined at the dawn of the promised era of self-determination and liberty that she will suffer foreign dominion no longer — calls upon every free nation to uphold her national claim to complete independence as an Irish Republic against the arrogant pretensions of England founded in fraud and sustained only by an overwhelming military occupation, and demands to be confronted publicly with England at the Congress of the Nations, in order that the civilised world having judged between English wrong and Irish right may guarantee to Ireland its permanent support for the maintenance of her national independence.

No. 13 NAI DFA ES Paris 1919

*Official Memorandum in support of Ireland's demand for recognition as a sovereign independent state.
Presented to Georges Clemenceau and the members of the Paris Peace Conference by
Sean T. O'Ceallaigh and George Gavan Duffy*

Paris, June 1919

Ireland's Case For Independence

IRELAND IS A NATION, not merely for the reason which, in the case of other countries, has been taken as pre-sufficient, that she has claimed at all times, and still claims to be, a nation, but also because, even though no claim were put forward on her behalf, history shows her to be a distinct nation from remotely ancient times.

For over a thousand years Ireland possessed, and fully exercised, Sovereign Independence, and was recognised through Europe as a distinct Sovereign State.

The usurpation of the foreigner has always been disputed and resisted by the mass of the Irish people. At various times since the coming of the English the Irish nation has exercised its sovereign rights as opportunity offered.

The hope of recovering its full and permanent sovereignty has always been in the breasts of the Irish people, and has been the inspiration and the mainspring of their political activities, abroad as well as at home.

English statescraft has long and persistently striven in vain to force the Irish people to abandon hope. The English policy of repression, spiritual and material, has never been at rest from the first intrusion of English power until the present day.

English policy has always aimed at keeping every new accretion of population from without separate from the rest of the nation, and a cause of distraction and weakness in its midst.

Nevertheless, the Irish nation has remained one, with a vigorous consciousness of its nationality, and has always succeeded sooner or later in assimilating to its unity every new element of the population.

The Irish people has never been intolerant towards its minorities, and has never harboured the spirit of persecution. Such barbarities as punishment by torture, witch-burning, capital punishment for minor offences, etc., so frequent in the judicial system of other countries, found no recognition in Irish law or custom. Twice in the seventeenth century — in 1642-8 and in 1689 — when, after periods of terrible persecution and deprivation of lands and liberty [handwritten insertion] the Irish people recovered for a time a dominant political power, they worked out in laws and treaties a policy of full religious equality for all dwellers in the island. On each occasion the English policy, becoming again dominant, subjected the Irish people to further large confiscations of property, restrictions of liberty, and religious persecutions. And when, notwithstanding the English policy of maintaining as complete a severance as possible, Irish Protestants became attracted to the support of the National cause, the Catholics of Ireland accorded political leadership to a succession of Protestant Leaders.

The Irish have long been a thoroughly democratic people. Through their chosen leaders, from O'Connell to Parnell, they have provided the world with a model of democratic organisation in opposition to the domination of privileged classes.

If Ireland, on the grounds of National rights, is entitled to recover her Sovereign Independence — and that is her demand — the recognition of her right is due from other nations for the following reasons :-

1. Because England's claim to withhold independence from Ireland is based on a principle which is a negation of national liberty and subversive of international peace and order. England resists Ireland's demand on the ground that the independence of Ireland would be, as alleged, incompatible with the security of England, or of Great Britain, or of the British Empire. Whether this contention is well or ill-founded, if it is admitted, then any State is justified in suppressing the independence of any nation whose liberty that State declares to be incompatible with its own security. An endless prospect of future wars is the natural consequence.
2. Because England's government of Ireland has been at all times, and is conspicuously at the present time, an outrage to the conscience of mankind. Such a government, especially in its modern quasi-democratic form, is essentially vicious. Its character at the best is sufficiently described by a noted English writer, John Stuart Mill :-

'The Government of a people by itself has a meaning and a reality; but such a thing as government of one people by another does not and cannot exist. One people may keep another as a warren or preserve for

its own use, a place to make money in, a human cattle farm, to be worked for the profit of its own inhabitants. But if the good of the governed is the proper business of a government, it is utterly impossible that a people should directly attend to it.' (Representative Government (1861), ch xviii).

Consequently, the people of England devolve the power which they hold over Ireland upon a succession of satraps, military and civil, who represent no interest of the Irish people; and recent events show that the essential vices of this government are as active now as in former times.

3. Because the English temper towards the cause of Irish national liberty produces atrocious and intolerable results in Ireland. Among the results are: a depopulation unexampled in any other country, howsoever badly governed; wholesale destruction of industries and commerce; over-taxation on an enormous scale; diversion of rents, savings, and surplus incomes from Ireland to England; opposition to the utilisation by the Irish people of the economic resources of their country, and to economic development and social improvement; exploitation of Ireland for the benefit of English capitalists; formentation of religious animosities; repression of the national culture; maintenance of a monstrous system of police rule, by which, in the words of an English Minister, all Ireland is kept 'under the microscope'; perversion of justice, by making political service and political subservience almost the sole qualification for judicial positions, by an elaborate corruption of the jury system, by the organisation of police espionage and perjury, and the encouragement of agents provocateurs, and recently and at present, by using for the purpose of political oppression in Ireland the exceptional powers created for the purposes of the European war. Under these powers military government is established, some areas being treated as hostile territory occupied in ordinary warfare; a war censorship is maintained over the press and over publications generally; printing offices are invaded and dismantled; the police and military are empowered to confiscate the property of vendors of literature without any legal process; persons are imprisoned without trial and deported from Ireland; Irish regiments in the English army are removed from Ireland, and a large military force, larger than at any previous time with full equipment for modern warfare, has been maintained in Ireland; civilians are daily arrested and tried by court-martial, and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment.

What are England's objections to Ireland's independence?

The one objection in which English statesmen are sincere is that which has been already mentioned — that the domination of Ireland by England is necessary for the security of England. Ireland, according to the English Navy League, is 'the Heligoland of the Atlantic,' a naval outpost, to be governed for the sole benefit of its foreign masters. This claim, if it is valid, justifies not only the suppression of national liberty, but also the weakening of Ireland by depopulation, repression of industry and commerce and culture, maintenance of internal discord, etc. It can also be held to justify the subjugation of any small nation by a neighbouring great power.

The proximity of Ireland to England furnishes another plea. But Ireland is not as near to England as Belgium, Holland Denmark, etc., are to Germany, Norway to Sweden, Portugal to Spain. In fact, it is this very proximity that makes independence necessary for Ireland, as the only condition of security against the sacrifice of Irish rights to English interests.

Another plea is that, England being a maritime power, her safety depending on her navy, and her prosperity depending on maritime commerce, the domination of Ireland is for her a practical necessity. This may explain why Ireland's harbours, the best in Europe, are empty of mercantile shipping, except for such shipping as carries on the restricted trade between Great Britain and Ireland.

Once more, Ireland protests that the interests of one country, be they what they may, cannot be allowed to annul the natural rights of another country. If that claim be admitted, then there is an end to national rights, and all the world must prepare to submit to armed interests or to make war against them. We in Ireland are determined not to submit.

We may expect to find the plea insinuated, in some specious form, if not definitely and clearly made, that the English rule in Ireland has been and is favourable to the peace, progress, and civilisation of Ireland. We answer that, on the contrary, English rule has never been for the benefit of Ireland, and has never been intended for the benefit of Ireland; that it has isolated Ireland from Europe, prevented her development, and done everything in its power to deprive her of a national civilisation. So far as Ireland at present is lacking in internal peace, is behind other countries in education and material progress, is unable to contribute notably to the common civilisation of mankind, these defects are the visible consequences of English intrusion and domination.

The Irish people have never believed in the sincerity of the public declarations of English statesmen in regard to their 'war aims,' except in so far as those declarations avowed England's part in the war to have been undertaken for England's particular and Imperial interests. They have never believed that England went to war for the sake of France or Belgium or Serbia, or for the protection or liberation of small nationalities, or to make right prevail against armed might. If English statesmen wish to be regarded as

sincere, they can prove it to the world by abandoning, not in words, but in act, the claim to subordinate Ireland's liberty to England's security.

Ireland's complete liberation must follow upon the application [of] President Wilson's principles. It has not resulted from the verbal acceptance of those principles; and their rejection is implied in the refusal to recognise for Ireland the right of self-determination. Among the principles declared by President Wilson, before and since America entered the war, and accepted by the spokesmen of the chief Allied powers, we cite the following:-

'No peace can rest securely on political or economic restrictions, meant to benefit some nations and cripple or embarrass others. Peace should rest upon the rights of peoples, not on the rights of governments — the rights of peoples, great and small, weak or powerful; their equal right to freedom and security and self-government, and to participation, upon fair terms, in the economic opportunities of the world.

What we demand in this war is nothing peculiar to ourselves. It is that the world be made fit and safe to live in, and particularly that it be made safe for every peace-loving nation, which, like our own, wishes to live its own life, determine its own institutions, be assured of justice and fair dealing by other people of the world, as against force and selfish aggression.

An evident principle runs through the whole of the programme I have outlined.

It is the principle of justice to all peoples and nationalities, and their right to live on equal terms of liberty and safety with one another, whether they be strong or weak. Unless this principle be made its foundation, no part of the structure of international justice can stand.'

Speaking on behalf of the American people at New York, on the 27th September, 1918, President Wilson said:-

'We accepted the issues of the war as facts, not as any group of men either here or elsewhere had defined them, and we can accept no outcome which does not squarely meet and settle them. These issues are these: Shall the military power of any nation or group of nations be suffered to determine the fortunes of peoples over whom they have no right to rule, except the right of force. Shall strong nations be free to wrong weak nations, and make them subject to their purposes and interest? Shall peoples be ruled and dominated, even in their own internal affairs, by arbitrary and irresponsible force or by their own will and choice? Shall there be a common standard of right and privilege for all peoples and nations, or shall the strong do as they will, and the weak suffer without redress? Shall the assertion of right be haphazard and by casual alliance, or shall there be a common concert to oblige the observance of common rights?

No men, no group of men, chose these to be the issues of the struggle. They are the issues of it, and they must be settled by no arrangement or compromise or adjustment of interests, but definitely and once for all, and with a full and unequivocal acceptance of the principle that the interest of the weakest is as safe as the interest of the strongest. . . . The impartial justice meted out must involve no discrimination between those to whom we wish to be just and those to whom we do not wish to be just. It must be justice that plays no favourites and knows no standards but the equal rights of the several peoples concerned.'

If England objects to the application of those principles to the settlement of the ancient quarrel between herself and Ireland, she thereby testifies:-

1. That her international policy is entirely based on her own selfish interest, not on the recognition of rights in others, notwithstanding any professions to the contrary.
2. That in her future dealings with other nations she may be expected, when the opportunity arises, to use her power in order to make her own interest prevail over their rights.
3. That her particular object in keeping possession of Ireland is to secure naval and mercantile domination over the seas, and in particular over the North Atlantic and the nations which have legitimate maritime interests therein; ruling Ireland at the same time on a plan of thoroughgoing exploitation for her own sole profit, to the great material detriment of Ireland, and preventing the establishment of beneficial intercourse, through commerce and otherwise, between Ireland and other countries.

It is evident that, while Ireland is denied the right to choose freely and establish that form of government which the Irish people desires, no international order can be founded on the basis of national right and international justice; the claim of the stronger to dominate the weaker will once more be successfully asserted; and there will be no true peace.

It must be recognised that Ireland has already clearly demonstrated her will. At the recent general election, out of 104 constituencies (Trinity College, Dublin, having the power to elect two representatives), 73 returned Republican Candidates, and 6 returned representatives who, though not Republicans, will not oppose the free exercise of self-determination by the Irish people. Nor is there the slightest likelihood that this right will at any time be relinquished.

Here it may be necessary to anticipate special pleas that may be put forward to the effect that Irish independence may properly be conceded gradually or that a 'breathing space,' as it is called, ought to

intervene. The Irish people will regard any proposal of this character as deceptive and dangerous. They are thoroughly capable of taking immediate charge of their national and international affairs, not less capable than any of the new states which have been recognised since the beginning of the war, or which are about to be recognised.

The effect on the world of the restoration of Ireland to the society of free nations cannot fail to be beneficial. On the part of the nations in general, this fact will be a guarantee of the new international order, and a reassurance to all the smaller nations. On the part of England, if justice to Ireland be not 'denied or sold or delayed,' the fact will be an earnest to other peoples, especially to those whose commerce is borne upon the Atlantic Ocean, that England's naval power is not hostile to the rights and legitimate interests of other countries.

Ireland's voice in the councils of the nations will be wholly in favour of peace and justice. Ireland will have no possessions and no territorial claims outside her own well-defined geographical bounds. Her liberty cannot infringe on that of any other people. She will not make any war of aggression or favour any. The prosperity to which, in remembrance of her unexampled progress during a brief period of legislative, but not executive independence (1782-1798), she looks forward confidently, will contribute to the prosperity of all countries in commercial relation with her.

The longest agony suffered by any people in history will be ended, the oldest standing enmity between two people will be removed. England will be relieved of the disgrace she bears in the eyes of all peoples, a disgrace not less evident to the remote Armenian than to her nearest continental neighbours.

In proportion as England gives earnest of disinterestedness and good-will, in like proportion shall Ireland show her readiness to join in with England in allowing the past to pass into history. The international ambition of Ireland will be to recreate in some new way that period of her ancient independence of which she is proudest, when she gave freely of her greatest treasures to every nation within her reach, and entertained no thought of recompense or of selfish advantage.

No. 22 NAI DE 2/269

Dáil Eireann Report on Foreign Affairs
(Copy)

Dublin, 19 August 1919

The following members of Dáil elected to serve on the Committee on Foreign Affairs, namely:-

A. McCabe, T.D., Liam de Roiste, T.D., J. McBride, T.D., J.A. Burke, T.D., T. MacSuibhne, T.D., M. MacStain, T.D., and, D. FitzGerald, T.D.

Two meetings of this Committee were called but both proved abortive, as only three members put in an appearance in the first case, and two members in the second case. I hope the Committee will become a useful one and I desire to receive suggestions from the members, and to keep them in touch with our activities.

Since the last meeting of An Dail the Peace Treaty with Germany, which was the particular work of the Conference in Paris, was signed, and the more important members of the Conference returned to their respective countries. Persons of lesser importance remained in Paris to complete the work of the Conference on the negotiation of Peace Treaties with the other belligerents. M. Clemenceau, of course, remains, and all outstanding claims are in his charge, for the time.

It is now definitely established that M. Clemenceau has declined to take action upon the resolution of the American Senate requesting that the case of Ireland should be heard before the Conference. Mr. J.A. Murphy who is in charge of the American Delegation in Paris, wrote to M. Clemenceau on the 22nd ult., protesting against his decision. For certain reasons which will be communicated verbally, the Ministry instructed their representatives that it was not desirable to press for a reply to their demand for a hearing once the more important members of the Conference had left.

Messrs. Walsh, Ryan and Dunne returned to America to engage in the campaign which was initiated there by the President of the Republic. They were replaced in Paris by Mr. J.A. Murphy, and he is still working in close co-operation with our representatives in Paris. He intends, however, to return to the United States, the business of the Delegation being completed.

The Ministry considered that in view of the international importance of Paris it was essential that the services of Messrs. O'Ceallaigh and Duffy should be retained there for the time being. These envoys have expressed a desire to be allowed to return as soon as convenient, but, there is a difficulty in securing a suitable person to replace them. For the last month or two they have been mainly engaged in endeavouring to secure the support of the French Press and indirectly to influence the French Government from Ireland's point of view. Mme. Vivanti has left Paris for Switzerland and Italy and is meeting with great success in her propaganda, particularly in the latter country. Victor Collins and Mrs. Gavan Duffy have also returned, and there now remain in Paris only Messrs. O'Ceallaigh and Duffy. Erskine Childers went recently to assist them. Mr. Childers' services were considered likely to be extremely useful owing to his acquaintance with influential persons in Paris.

Notwithstanding the difficulty of constantly maintaining our propaganda in France, the more serious papers and reviews are now publishing well-informed and sympathetic articles on the claims of Ireland.

America.

Members of the Dail are of course aware how the President's visit to America has been received. He has addressed immense meetings in all parts of the States, and his efforts to float the loan are meeting with such success that he has recently asked the Ministry to allow him to increase the amount of the issue at his discretion.

The President is particularly anxious that attacks against President Wilson and the American administration should not be made by the Irish Ireland papers, or by responsible Republicans. The press in America has recently been very favourable and has given the President's visit considerable attention. The news items appearing in the Irish papers regarding his visit are for the most part very meagre, and afford a remarkable comparison to the cuttings which we have received from the American Press.

A complete revolution has taken place in American opinion, and Ireland has been made an important factor in American politics. The presentation of Ireland's case has had the effect of weakening the Anglo-American friendship which is also suffering as a result of Trade jealousies.

Switzerland.

Apart from Mme. Vivanti's visit, little has been done in this country. As Geneva is the Headquarters of the League of Nations, the importance of having a diplomatic representative there is obvious, but, it is very difficult to secure the services of a suitable person. Owing to the situation of Switzerland, it is a very useful centre from which to organise propaganda among the people of Central Europe.

Foreign Trade.

This comes more particularly within the province of the Director of Trade and Commerce but, it may be mentioned here that Consuls have now been appointed to the following countries:- United States of America, Argentina, France and Italy. The appointment of a Trade Consul for Switzerland has been decided.