

Submission to the Constituency Commission 2016/2017.

From Mícheál Ó Faoláin.

Given the very significant rise in population in the preliminary census returns of 2016 the addition of 1, or more likely 2, Dáil seats to the current number of 158 will be required.

As the Commission has to comply with Article 16 of Bunracht na h-Éireann the case for the addition of 2 seats is compelling. An increase of only 1 seat would leave the population per TD at 29,924 which leaves very little leeway in the event of even a slight increase of population when the final census figures are published. 160 seats also allows a little more flexibility in redrawing of constituency boundaries that certainly will be required as a consequence of the results of the 2016 census.

This submission is based on the assumption that the Commission will recommend that 2 extra seats will be added to the current Dáil number of 158. This will mean that the average population per TD in the next Dail will be 29,737. ($4,757,976$ divided by $160 = 29,737$.)

The extra seats will be more than likely allocated between Dublin Central, North County Dublin and generally Dublin north of the Liffey and either South County Dublin, Kildare or Cork City. In these areas at present the population per TD is significantly above the National Average.

This Submission is primarily concerned with the Constituency of Roscommon- East Galway. At the last redraw of constituencies, Roscommon - East Galway had a population of c 84,900. Circa 64,000 resided in County Roscommon and c 20,900 were from east Galway and the constituency returned 3 TDs.

As Galway City and County according to the 2016 figures has a population of 258,552 it would merit 8.69 seats. ($258,552$ divided by the National Average of $29,737$ equals 8.69 seats). The present constituency of Galway West has 5 seats and Galway East has 3 seats leaving .69 of the population or c 21,000 of the population transferred into the Roscommon- East Galway Constituency and this is in order proportionately speaking. While Galway West at the moment includes a large wedge of County Mayo comprising more than 10,000 of population the census figures now suggest that this figure should be reduced to c 6,000. This return of 4,000 of population to the present Mayo constituency would have the effect of having both Galway West and Mayo over the average population per TD but within the acceptable range of +5%.

The 2016 census figures indicate that Roscommon- East Galway would have a population of c 85,340. 64,436 from Roscommon and c 20,904 from east Galway. In this 3 seater the average population per TD would be c 28,449 a minus deviation from the National mean of 1288 per seat or - 4.33. This is just within the acceptable tolerance level.

However, as this is the largest of the 3 seat constituencies area wise in the country and to ensure predictability and stability and to assist in solving problems elsewhere my recommendation is that

the population be increased by the simple move of transferring the 3243 of population from West Urban Athlone into Roscommon- East Galway.

The small breach of the Westmeath County Boundary could be compensated for by the ending of the Westmeath/ Meath West breach. Longford /Westmeath without West Urban Athlone but with the return of North Westmeath from Meath West would have a populaion of 125,963. This equates to 31,491 per TD just fractionally outside the 5% diviation treshold but allowable under practice and precedent. It would also end a large county breach for a smaller one in the west of the county.

With this change the Roscommon- East Galway constituency would have a population of c 88,583 giving a population of 29,528 per TD just below the National Average but well within the acceptable limits. As Connaught seems to have a zero population growth trend an injection of population is needed from elsewhere . West Urban Athlone is in the province of Connaught and indeed was part of the Roscommon Constituency for General Election purposes up to the late 1970s.

In conclusion the links between the people of South Roscommon and West Athlone are not just based on Province. The links extend accross business, commercial, educational, cultural, sporting ,social and family ties and are very deep rooted. This fact coupled with the abolition of the Athlone Town Council in the recent Local Government Reform Legislation strengthens the case for this change. I also believe it would meet with approval of the people of West Athlone.

I commend these changes to the Commission for consideration.

ENDS.