



Arthur Griffith

Art Ó Gríobhtha

1871-1922 | Cavan



Extracts from Arthur Griffith's speeches during the Treaty Debates

14 December 1921

We went there to get the best settlement possible consistent with the honour and the interests of Ireland. That is how we regarded ourselves. We believe we had got the best settlement consistent with the honour and interests of Ireland. An attempt has been made, not by President de Valera but outside, to make it appear that we went there with more or less definite instructions to take a Republic and nothing but a Republic, whereas we were sent there to do our best, in effect to make a bargain. In a speech at the Dáil on August 17th. Mr. de Valera, spoke of mutual give and take, said they were ready to meet and adjust this on the basis of mutual give and take. In the same speech he said. "If it was demanded of me that before going to negotiate with the British Prime Minister I would first of all have to renounce our independent right I would not have gone. If, on the other hand, seeing the claim that they are putting forward I made a demand before I went, that Britain ought to acknowledge our right absolutely then I might have been held to be unreasonable because then there would have been no question of, or necessity for, negotiations". Once you start negotiations you are going to give away something and you are going to get something. At the general election the question was put to the Irish people to say what form of Government they wanted how they wished to live so that they might have an opportunity of working out for themselves their own national life in their own way and the answer the people gave was unmistakable. "I do not take it", said the President, "for the form so much because we are not Republican doctrinaires as such. It was for Irish freedom and Irish independence". Well, we have brought back Irish freedom and Irish independence (No, no and question). Ireland is as free as Canada and Australia (No). I don't mind the members arguing with me. I object to being interrupted. We say and we contend that we have brought back a satisfactory answer. It is for the representatives to decide whether we have not but let them argue it out hereafter. If we were to bring back the full demand we would not have been sent at all.

www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/1921-12-14/3/#spk_104

Extracts from Arthur Griffith's speeches during the Treaty Debates (continued)

19 December 1921

Nearly three months ago Dáil Eireann appointed plenipotentiaries to go to London to treat with the British Government and to make a bargain with them. We have made a bargain. We have brought it back. We were to go there to reconcile our aspirations with the association of the community of nations known as the British Empire. That task which was given to us was as hard as was ever placed on the shoulders of men. We faced that task; we knew that whatever happened we would have our critics, and we made up our minds to do whatever was right and disregard whatever criticism might occur. We could have shirked the responsibility. We did not seek to act as the plenipotentiaries; other men were asked and other men refused. We went. The responsibility is on our shoulders; we took the responsibility in London and we take the responsibility in Dublin. I signed that Treaty not as the ideal thing, but fully believing, as I believe now, it is a treaty honourable to Ireland, and safeguards the vital interests of Ireland.

And now by that Treaty I am going to stand, and every man with a scrap of honour who signed it is going to stand. It is for the Irish people—who are our masters (hear, hear), not our servants as some think—it is for the Irish people to say whether it is good enough. I hold that it is, and I hold that the Irish people—that 95 per cent. of them believe it to be good enough. We are here, not as the dictators of the Irish people, but as the representatives of the Irish people, and if we misrepresent the Irish people, then the moral authority of Dáil Eireann, the strength behind it, and the fact that Dáil Eireann spoke the voice of the Irish people, is gone, and gone for ever.

https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/1921-12-19/2/#spk_14

Extracts from Arthur Griffith's speeches during the Treaty Debates (continued)

7 January 1922

Well, I have some principles; the principle that I have stood on all my life is the principle of Ireland for the Irish people (hear, hear). If I can get that with a Republic I will have a Republic; if I can get that with a monarchy I will have a monarchy. I will not sacrifice my country for a form of government. I stand in this exactly where every leader of the Irish nation stood from the time of O'Neill to Patrick Sarsfield. Owen Roe O'Neill said: "I do not care whether the King of England is King of Ireland so long as the people of Ireland are free." I do not care whether the King of England or the symbol of the Crown be in Ireland so long as the people of Ireland are free to shape their own destinies. We have the means to do that by this Treaty; we have not the means otherwise. I say now to the people of Ireland that it is their right to see that this Treaty is carried into operation, when they get, for the first time in seven centuries, a chance to live their lives in their own country and take their place amongst the nations of Europe.

https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/1922-01-07/2/#spk_218

Arthur Griffith

Junior Cycle



Find the answers to these questions in the extracts from Arthur Griffith's speeches.

1. What were Griffith and the others sent to London to do?

2. Who did Griffith say Ireland was as free as?

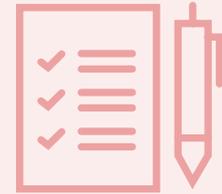
3. What evidence in his speech of 19 December 1921 shows that he supported the Treaty?

4. Who does he say will ultimately decide whether the Treaty is good enough?

5. What will happen because of the Treaty for the first time in seven centuries?

Arthur Griffith

Transition Year



Prepare a short report on Arthur Griffith.

Include the following information:

- ▶ Dáil membership, constituencies represented, Ministries (if appropriate).
- ▶ Background information.
- ▶ Any other contributions made in the Dáil.
This can be linked to the Treaty debates or on another issue.

SOURCES

Oireachtas member profile

www.oireachtas.ie/en/members/member/Arthur-Griffith.D.1919-01-21/

- ▶ To find Arthur Griffith's contributions in the Dáil, visit his member profile page and click **See all contributions from this Member.**

Dáil100 website

www.dail100.ie/en/people/

Dictionary of Irish Biography

www.dib.ie/biography/griffith-arthur-joseph-a3644

Arthur Griffith

Senior Cycle



Question 1

State whether Griffith was in favour of or against the Treaty and summarise his arguments using evidence from each of the three extracts provided.

Question 2

Analyse the contribution of Arthur Griffith to political life in Ireland with particular emphasis on his membership of Dáil Éireann from 1919 to 1922.

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