



DÍOSPÓIREACHTAÍ PARLAIMINTE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

SEANAD ÉIREANN

TUAIRISC OIFIGIÚIL—*Neamhcheartaithe*
(OFFICIAL REPORT—*Unrevised*)

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SEANAD ÉIREANN

Dé Luain, 29 Meitheamh 2020

Monday, 29 June 2020

Chuaigh an Cathaoirleach i gceannas ar 2.30 p.m.

*Machnamh agus Paidir.
Reflection and Prayer.*

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Tháinig an Seanad le chéile ar 2.30 p.m. Bhí an Cléireach, Martin Groves, i láthair.

The Seanad assembled at 2.30 p.m. The Clerk, Mr. Martin Groves, attending.

Léigh an Cléireach Forógra Uachtarán na hÉireann ag comóradh Sheanad Éireann.

The Clerk read the Proclamation of the President of Ireland convening Seanad Éireann.

Seo a leanas an Forógra:

The Proclamation was as follows:

FORÓGRA AG COMÓRADH SHEANAD ÉIREANN

PROCLAMATION SUMMONING SEANAD ÉIREANN

De bhun comhairle a thairg an Taoiseach dom faoi alt 8 d’Airteagal 18 den Bhunreacht, déanaimse, MICHEÁL D. Ó hUIGÍN, Uachtarán na hÉireann, a shocrú leis seo gur Dé Luain, an 29ú lá de Mheitheamh, 2020, an lá a thiochfaidh Seanad Éireann le chéile ar chéadtionól tar éis an Olltoghcháin a bhí ann le déanaí.

ARNA THABHAIRT FAOI MO LÁIMH AGUS FAOI MO SHÉALA AN 27Ú LÁ SEO DE MHEITHEAMH, 2020.

29 June 2020

Pursuant to an advice tendered to me by the Taoiseach under section 8 of Article 18 of the Constitution, I, MICHAEL D. HIGGINS, President of Ireland, hereby fix Monday, the 29th day of June, 2020, for the first meeting of Seanad Éireann after the General Election lately held.

GIVEN UNDER MY HAND AND SEAL THIS 27th DAY OF JUNE, 2020.

Micheál D. Ó hUigín

Uachtarán na hÉireann

(President of Ireland)

Micheál Martin

Taoiseach

AINMNEACHA NA gCOMHALTAÍ A AINMNÍODH AGUS NA gCOMHALTAÍ A TOGHADH

NAMES OF THE MEMBERS NOMINATED AND OF THE MEMBERS ELECTED

Cléireach an tSeanad: Is iad seo a leanas ainmneacha na gComhaltaí a ainmníodh agus na gComhaltaí a toghadh:

Clerk of the Seanad: The following are the names of the Members nominated and of the Members elected:

NOMINATED MEMBERS
Mary Fitzpatrick
Lorraine Clifford-Lee
Erin McGreehan
Timmy Dooley
Regina Doherty
Aisling Dolan
Emer Currie
Mary Seery Kearney
Vincent P. Martin
Róisín Garvey
Eileen Flynn
UNIVERSITY MEMBERS

Seanad Éireann

National University of Ireland
Rónán Thomas Mullen
Michael McDowell
Alice-Mary Higgins
University of Dublin
David Norris
Ivana Bacik
Lynn Ruane
PANEL MEMBERS
CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL PANEL
Nominating Bodies Sub-Panel
Seán Kyne
Malcolm Byrne
Fintan Warfield
Oireachtas Sub-Panel
Lisa Chambers
John McGahon
AGRICULTURAL PANEL
Nominating Bodies Sub-Panel
Denis O'Donovan
Paul Daly
Niall Blaney
Tim Lombard
Paddy Burke
Oireachtas Sub-Panel
Victor Boyhan
Michael D'Arcy
Eugene Murphy

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Pippa Hackett
Annie Hoey
Lynn Boylan
LABOUR PANEL
Nominating Bodies Sub-Panel
Robbie Gallagher
Ned O’Sullivan
Gerard Craughwell
Paul Gavan
Marie Sherlock
Oireachtas Sub-Panel
Jerry Buttimer
John Cummins
Joe O’Reilly
Shane Cassells
Pat Casey
Pauline O’Reilly
INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL PANEL
Nominating Bodies Sub-Panel
Barry Ward
Aidan Davitt
Ollie Crowe
Oireachtas Sub-Panel
Micheál Carrigy
Catherine Ardagh
Frances Black
Mark Wall
Sharon Keogan
Elisha McCallion
ADMINISTRATIVE PANEL

Nominating Bodies Sub-Panel
Mark Daly
Fiona O'Loughlin
Martin Conway
Oireachtas Sub-Panel
Diarmuid Wilson
Garret Ahearn
Rebecca Moynihan
Niall Ó Donnghaile

In compliance with Standing Order 3, I have laid before the Seanad a copy of each of the certificates of the results of the polls for elected Members and a copy of the communication from the Taoiseach stating the names of the nominated Members.

Election of Cathaoirleach

Clerk of the Seanad: The next business under Standing Orders is the election of the Cathaoirleach. Under Standing Order 2, the Chair will be taken by Senator David Norris, who has the longest continuous period of service as a Member of the Seanad. Senator Norris was elected on the 14 April 1987 and has served continuously since then. I now call on Senator Norris to take the Chair.

Senator David Norris took the Chair.

Senator David Norris: My dear colleagues, first of all it is my very pleasant task to welcome you to Seanad Éireann and to congratulate those of you who have been newly elected, as well as those who have successfully earned re-election, including those who campaigned against the Seanad during the referendum on its abolition. I regard the appointment of Eileen Flynn from the Traveller Community, following the pioneering work of Rosaleen McDonagh, as a significant advance. I very much welcome the appointment of a Minister within Seanad Éireann. These are strange and difficult times but I am certain that Seanad Éireann will not be found wanting in response to this challenge. I would like to read part of a letter to me from the then Taoiseach, Deputy Varadkar, dated 25 May 2020. In it he stated:

During my time as Taoiseach, I have enjoyed visiting the Seanad to discuss things that are happening, to listen to your contributions and to answer your questions. Throughout our history, the Seanad has been a place where courageous and outspoken things have been said and where Governments have been held to account. I have often said that I believe the Seanad's true role is to be a check and balance on the Dáil and it is at its best as a revising Chamber providing a vital independent voice. We will need this more than ever in the months and years ahead.

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We have been exceptionally lucky in this country in the leadership given to the people in this time of crisis by our political leaders. In particular, I note the parts played by the former Taoiseach, Deputy Varadkar, the Ministers, Deputies Simon Harris, Simon Coveney and Paschal Donohoe, as well as the wisdom and decency displayed by the leader of Fianna Fáil, Deputy Micheál Martin, now Taoiseach. In contrast, we have tragically a moral imbecile in the White House and in No. 10 Downing Street, as Prime Minister, a man whose folly and vain-glory rendered him unfit to undertake his duties as Prime Minister for a full month during the height of the pandemic. This historic coalition marks a welcome end to Civil War politics so that in future one hopes that politicians will deal with issues rather than sentiment.

I welcome very much the substantial increase in female representation. I regret, however, the absence from Seanad Éireann of any person of mixed race. Most of all, I regard the ruthless exclusion of Sinn Féin, which won the most seats, from any discussion of Government formation as an affront to democracy.

Much deserved congratulations have gone to the front-line operatives in medicine and the public service. A public display of applause, however, is very easy. It is my hope that this will be followed by a real and tangible financial recognition of the importance of these activities.

A decade ago, I foretold the forthcoming financial crisis and spoke out publicly about it. However, like most others, I had no inkling whatever of the emergency that would be caused by the global spread of the coronavirus pandemic. Ten years ago, the world was presented with an opportunity to review our economic system. That opportunity was missed. I very much hope that on this occasion we will take up the challenge and radically recalibrate the financial basis of society. A decade ago, I gave a definition of money as the symbolic representation of energy. It is obscene that this resource is so increasingly unequally distributed. It is time that we recognised that this is a planet with finite resources. We must get rid of notions in our industry such as planned obsolescence which should themselves become obsolete.

In previous meetings of Seanad Éireann, I was frequently a lone voice raising concerns about population. The human element of this planet has tripled during my lifetime. This is catastrophically unsustainable. Disputes concerning resources, such as water rights and territorial interests, are leading to violence across this planet.

It is also my hope that the Twenty-sixth Seanad will at last tackle the question of its own reform. One issue close to my heart is the removal of the unnecessary Standing Order 41. This denies to the Seanad the right to discuss fundamental issues of financial importance. All parties have agreed that it would be wise to see movement in this area. This has been endlessly discussed and now the time for talk is over. It is our responsibility to act.

We should also get rid of the nonsense of fobbing in when half the Dáil, being Ministers, does not have to do so. In these times of pandemic, we have all been encouraged to work as much as possible from home.

I would finally like to thank all members of the staff of Leinster House, the Clerk and his assistants, the keepers of the Official Report, the ushers, the restaurant staff and my political assistant, Miriam Gordon Smith. New Members will find we in Seanad Éireann are a happy and constructive family, as is appropriate considering that the magnificent building of Leinster House was once home to a great Irish family, that of the patriot, Lord Edward FitzGerald. I wish you all well during this session.

I will now accept a proposer and seconder for a motion regarding the election of the Cathaoirleach.

Senator Lisa Chambers: I thank Senator Norris. It is a pleasure and a privilege to make my maiden speech in the House today. It is my pleasure and honour to nominate my colleague, Senator Mark Daly, for the position of Cathaoirleach. My maiden speech is not as I imagined, in these strange times and strange surrounds, but it does not lessen the delight and great honour of this occasion. It is fantastic to be here among so many great colleagues in this historic sitting of Seanad Éireann. I will point out that I campaigned strongly to retain Seanad Éireann during the referendum.

Senator David Norris: Good for you.

Senator Lisa Chambers: I strongly believe in the role of the Upper House. It would be a mistake to reduce the oversight this House provides and to concentrate more power in the hands of a few. We have an important democratic role to play in this great country.

I shall return to the task at hand and to my colleague, Senator Mark Daly, who I am delighted and privileged to propose for the position of Cathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann. As a Kerry man, Senator Daly and I will never be on the same side in Croke Park in December this year, but we are great colleagues and great friends. I have known Mark since before my election as a councillor back in 2014. Mark was first elected in 2007 and has been re-elected successfully on four occasions to this great House. I have no doubt that Mark will bring the same passion and work ethic to the House as Cathaoirleach that he brought to that Seanad seat. Mark has always been truly Fianna Fáil. He established the first ever Ógra Fianna Fáil in Kenmare at the age of 17. He was always eager and interested in politics. Mark formed a long-lasting friendship and apprenticeship with Brian Crowley, former MEP.

On my travels during this Seanad campaign I was quite often asked “You are not on Mark Daly’s panel are you?” I was very glad to say “No, I am not”. Mark is very well known for his ability on the Seanad campaign and has topped the poll on many occasions, including on his first outing in a Seanad election and much to everyone’s surprise. Even he would say it was to his own surprise also. Mark continued in that stead in every election since. Senator Daly believes in this House, the work that it does and the work it can do. Even in the last couple of months Mark has been a fount of knowledge and assistance to me and to other new Senators in taking up our roles.

I shall take this opportunity to touch on some of the issues close to Mark’s heart and the work he has done in his role as a Senator over the years. Members will be aware that Mark brought the Irish Sign Language Act through the House, which was signed into law by President Higgins in the eve of 2017. It was a huge achievement to bring the legislation through and the Irish Deaf Society, which has nominated Mark, is very grateful for that. Mark also championed organ donation legislation. He believed in that work and saw it to the end. We are all very much aware of Mark’s admiration for the symbols of the State and his work with the Irish flag, bringing the knowledge of its origins to second level schools across the country. Mark is very fond of family and is grateful for their support. I congratulate his family, some of whom are with him here today. Mark’s father, Sean, and his brother, Conor, are in the Chamber to watch Mark come forward. I also acknowledge the support of Mark’s mother Eileen, his brother, John, and sister, Elaine, and his beloved nine nieces and nephews for whom he cares greatly.

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As a friend and colleague I have known Mark for a number of years. I have no doubt that as Cathaoirleach of this House Senator Mark Daly will be objective and impartial and that he will bring to the role a dignity and work ethic we can all be very proud of. I look forward to working with him as a Member of this House in that prestigious and important role.

I thank Senator Norris for the opportunity to make this proposal. I nominate Senator Mark Daly for the position of Cathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann.

Senator David Norris: I thank Senator Chambers. Do I have a seconder for her motion? I do. It is the former Cathaoirleach, Senator O'Donovan.

Senator Denis O'Donovan: I formally second the proposal. I thank the Acting Chair. I compliment him on his tremendous oration. He brings with him some passion. I am glad to have served with him in the Seanad for many years. I am also glad that I was on the same side as him when the attempt to abolish one arm of our Oireachtas under the Constitution, the Seanad, was put to the people not too long ago. I wish him luck as ever. He is effervescent and a great asset to Seanad Éireann with his wit, wisdom, passion and very sharp brain.

Senator David Norris: Thank you.

Senator Denis O'Donovan: I am glad to second the nomination of Senator Mark Daly. One word I would use to sum up his campaign for the Cathaoirleach's position and his campaigns in many Seanad elections is "tenacity". The first time I encountered Mark, I was a Deputy. He arrived in my home town of Bantry, which is only through the tunnel and over the mountain from Neidín, or Kenmare. We sat down together and I discovered that he was not a county councillor. I told him that I wished him all the best, but that even for a young man, it was most unusual for a non-councillor to take on the mammoth task of travelling the country to win a seat on the Administrative panel. He surprised me then, and he has even surprised me today.

I wish Mark well. I am sure he will bring a new flair to the Chair of the Seanad. He is young and dynamic and has a different approach than old fellows like me. I am very happy to second Mark's nomination and to wish his family well. His father, Sean, is here, as are his brother, Conor, and his mother, Eileen, from Kenmare.

As a young boy, I went to my first Munster final in Killarney at ten years of age. More often than not, we would come back from Killarney - usually bumming a lift on the back of a truck or whatever - and have to put up with the chagrin of defeat as we came through Kilgarvan and Kenmare until we got back to Glengarriff where we sought refuge on the Cork side of the tunnel after the usual kicking that we got from Kerry. Some of the games were tight, but more often than not, we had our tails between our legs.

Our local situation is extraordinary. Neidín, Bantry and Glengarriff are close to one another and are in adjoining constituencies. When going to or coming back from Killarney, not only do we have Mark, who will shortly be the Cathaoirleach, in his native Neidín, where I am sure the people will be very proud of him, but 5 miles or 6 miles farther along the road is the kingdom of the Healy-Raes. From listening to the Ceann Comhairle on Saturday, I believe they have set up a new party. One then moves on to the real kingdom of Killarney.

This morning, I spoke to some of the staff of Leinster House. Most of them are Dubliners, which is understandable. I told them to beware because they could be facing a three-in-a-row. Deputy Norma Foley was appointed Minister for Education last Saturday, and I wish her and

her family good luck. Now, Mark Daly will become Cathaoirleach and the staff could see the Sam Maguire heading back to Kerry next December. Dublin and its six-in-a-row could be put on the back burner.

I wish to take this opportunity as the outgoing Cathaoirleach to thank the Clerk, Mr. Martin Groves, his assistant, Ms Bridget Doody, all the staff of the House, including Ms Aisling Hart, who was very patient and kind to me, my secretary, Ms Sheena Bourke, and all the ushers, the Captain of the Guard, the Superintendent and other staff of Leinster House who made me so welcome and feel so important as Cathaoirleach of the Seanad for the past four years. I respect that.

We are in an extraordinary situation. We are in the middle of the Covid pandemic. Let no one present be fooled into thinking that it is all over and done with. We have suppressed the disease, but we have not overcome it. We must always be vigilant of it until such time as a cure can be found, which does not seem to be in the offing at the moment.

3 o'clock

I welcome all the new Senators from my party, from Fine Gael, from the Independent benches and from Sinn Féin. It is a huge honour for Senators, including those who were nominated by the Taoiseach on Saturday night, to serve in this illustrious Chamber. It is an exciting day for all the new people and all the people who have returned. When I lost my Dáil seat in 2007, I was happy to find refuge here. I decided I would make it my home, and so far so good. I wish everybody well. I do not want to prolong the proceedings.

I am proud as a west Cork man adjacent to Kerry, and as a Munster man, to second the nomination of Senator Mark Daly. I wish him luck. Politics is uncertain, as I know too well having fought seven Dáil elections, six Seanad elections and a number of council elections. My race is run, but Senator Daly's is just starting. I have absolutely no doubt that over the course of the next two, three, four and possibly five years, he will put his own stamp of authority on the Chair you are currently sitting in, Senator Norris. Go raibh maith agaibh go léir.

Senator David Norris: Thank you very much for your kind words, Senator O'Donovan. You are too modest about yourself. You were, in my opinion, a quite outstanding Cathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann. I thank Members for their agreement.

Do I have any other nominations for the post of Cathaoirleach? I call Senator Paul Gavan.

Senator Paul Gavan: Go raibh maith agat, Acting Chairman. I will begin by welcoming everybody here, old colleagues and new. I congratulate Senator Norris on a very fine speech.

I propose that Seanad Éireann nominate my friend and comrade, Senator Niall Ó Donnghaile, for the position of Cathaoirleach. Senator Ó Donnghaile hails from the working-class Short Strand district in east Belfast. He is a former councillor for that city and was elected as the youngest ever mayor of Belfast in 2011. He has distinguished himself as a superb public representative in the Seanad. He has worked tirelessly as a member of the Joint Committee on Justice and Equality, the Joint Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, the Joint Committee on the Irish Language, the Gaeltacht and the Islands, and the Special Select Committee on the Withdrawal of the UK from the EU. He is also a member of the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly.

Senator Ó Donnghaile is a passionate advocate for social justice, a Gaeilgeoir, a Connolly socialist, a true internationalist and, above all, a proud united Irishman. Having been mayor of Belfast, he has excellent experience of chairing a chamber with widely differing political perspectives, and doing so successfully. What better qualification could a person have for the role of Cathaoirleach of the Seanad? When one considers the disappointments of our new Taoiseach's failure to appoint a representative from the North, a huge omission, would it not send a powerful message of inclusion to appoint a proud Belfast man to this important role? Indeed, in a decade that has already seen a significant beginning of a conversation on finally ending partition and is likely to see a referendum on Irish unity before it ends, surely this is an opportunity to show that this forum can play a crucial role in encouraging that debate. What better signal could we send than endorsing Senator Ó Donnghaile, who has been a consistent champion of a greater voice for our Northern brothers and sisters, as our new Cathaoirleach? He has built good working relations with colleagues from all parties and none and will bring a vitality and an energy to the role of Cathaoirleach that could only enhance that office, and indeed the Seanad itself.

Finally, while the role of Cathaoirleach is not a partisan one, the process of appointing a Cathaoirleach clearly involves political choice. The decision to choose Senator Ó Donnghaile would send a powerful signal that this Chamber has heard the clarion call for change that rang so clearly in the February general election. As my colleague, Deputy Pearse Doherty, pointed out on Saturday, it is important to remind ourselves that we have a choice. Every Senator here has a choice with this vote, and the record will show if they stand on the side of progressive politics or the side of more of the same. Before I finish I want to pay tribute to the outgoing Cathaoirleach, Senator Denis O'Donovan. I thank him for being a truly fair and impartial person in the Chair. He did the position absolutely proud.

Senator David Norris: I thank Senator Gavan. Do I have a seconder?

Senator Elisha McCallion: I thank Senator Norris for allowing me to speak. I am looking forward to working with all the Members in the term ahead. It gives me great pride and it is an honour to second the nomination of Senator Ó Donnghaile as Cathaoirleach. As the only other representative residing in the Six Counties it would be a fitting tribute, as has been pointed out by the previous speaker, to nominate someone from the Six Counties. We probably should have shared notes because he has said everything I was going to say. I have known Niall for more than 20 years in many different roles as he represented the people of the Short Strand and was the youngest ever Lord Mayor, and a fabulous Lord Mayor he was at the time. He has given me great advice and encouragement over the years and he is being a fountain of knowledge and information for me as I take up this role. I am delighted to second the nomination.

Senator David Norris: I thank Senator McCallion. Are there any other proposals? Senator Ó Donnghaile he will have an opportunity to speak later. I beg the Senator's pardon, he can speak now.

Senator Niall Ó Donnghaile: Having known the previous Seanad, and certainly looking at the current Seanad, I may speak now before the vote is taken because I certainly do not want to take away from anyone's achievement thereafter. With the permission of Senator Norris, I will dedicate my remarks to my late friend Bobby Storey, who will be buried in Belfast tomorrow. We are thinking of Teresa, his partner, and all of his family.

I thank Paul and Elisha for their very kind words on my nomination. I echo the tributes to

the outgoing Cathaoirleach, Denis O'Donovan. Denny was a great friend, chair and counsel in the last Seanad and he earned and commanded the respect and admiration of all Members in every party and none. He was also very attentive to us as individual Members. He joined me on a visit to Belfast in advance of the then Lord Mayor's address to the Seanad and he is certainly a political powerhouse and authority. He will be a loss to the position.

Unfortunately, Senator Norris, I did not campaign one way or the other on the referendum on the Seanad because I did not have a vote but the great thing about Seanad reform and the proposed Seanad reform Bill that should be before the House and should be lifted by the Government parties is that it would, in future, allow for the House to be totally and truly representative of the nation in its entirety. I commend, agree and echo what Senator Norris said on the urgent need for Seanad reform.

No matter the circumstances I believe in looking for opportunity, and despite the new Government's attempts to undermine the people's vote for change in February by excluding Sinn Féin from government my message to the people of this State is never give up because I assure them that Sinn Féin will never give up representing their demand for change. The British Government and the unionist parties historically tried to exclude Sinn Féin from government in the North and they failed. I assure the powers that be in this State that they are failing and will continue to fail in their attempts to exclude Sinn Féin. We are the biggest party on the island, in this State and in the North, and the will of the people will ultimately prevail.

I am deeply disappointed that the Government, and new Taoiseach in particular, failed to include other voices from the North in this Chamber, particularly unionist voices. It is fair to say that in the last Seanad, Seanadóir Ian Marshall made an invaluable contribution to representing unionist people of the North and his views on other topics were always insightful and of great help to this institution. I and others in the Seanad expected to see Ian back here and I am deeply disappointed that the Government decided to exclude unionists from this Chamber. The Seanad must be representative of the people of this nation and while I am disappointed at unionism's exclusion, I am delighted to welcome Senator Flynn to the Seanad. I know she will be a champion for our Traveller brothers and sisters and for the experience of Traveller women in particular. I wish her well and I look forward to working with her and with all other Seanad colleagues.

I am proud to be elected for a second term in this institution and I thank Sinn Féin for selecting me and all those who voted for me. I would also like to thank my party for entrusting me with the position of leader of the Sinn Féin group. It is a recognition of the political importance of the North that the team here is led by a northerner. The Sinn Féin Seanadóirí will make a constructive and valuable contribution to this Chamber, as we did in the last term.

During the last term, this Chamber became a national platform, where the concerns of the people of this nation were given a fair and full hearing. I hope this national approach will prevail in this term as well because the issues facing the people of all of Ireland require a national and inclusive response and a response that is led by an Irish Government that marshals all the talent and resources of all the representatives in this Chamber. Harnessing the collective energy of Government parties and Independents will make the task of ending partition and uniting Ireland easier. So too will it help with overcoming the impact of the Covid-19 crisis and Brexit, which we should remember, along with the other challenges such as inequalities in housing, renting, home ownership and health and across society in general. In this Chamber and in the Dáil, Sinn Féin stands ready to play its part in bringing the broadest and most fundamental

changes to the people most in need, wherever in Ireland they happen to reside.

As my colleague, Deputy Gavan, said, it would show great leadership if the first act of this Chamber today was to acknowledge the snub to the North over the course of the weekend and to entrust a voice from that part of Ireland in the role of Cathaoirleach. However, in acknowledging the political reality and dynamic in this Chamber, I wish my fellow nominee, Senator Mark Daly, well. He is also a proud and well-known united Irishman and he can rest assured that in his new role, the Sinn Féin team and I, along with others I am sure, will hold him to that proud record and stance.

Senator David Norris: As there is more than one proposal, the proposals will be dealt with in the order in which they were moved.

Cuireadh an cheist: “Go dtoghfar an Seanadóir Mark Daly agus go rachaidh sé i gceannais an tSeanaid anois mar Chathaoirleach.”

Question put: “That Senator Mark Daly be elected and do now take the Chair of Seanad Éireann.”

The Seanad divided: Tá, 46; Níl, 6.	
Tá	Níl
Ahearn, Garret.	Boylan, Lynn.
Ardagh, Catherine.	Gavan, Paul.
Black, Frances.	McCallion, Elisha.
Blaney, Niall.	Ó Donnghaile, Niall.
Boyhan, Victor.	Ruane, Lynn.
Burke, Paddy.	Warfield, Fintan.
Buttimer, Jerry.	
Byrne, Malcolm.	
Carrigy, Micheál.	
Casey, Pat.	
Cassells, Shane.	
Chambers, Lisa.	
Clifford-Lee, Lorraine.	
Conway, Martin.	
Craughwell, Gerard P.	
Crowe, Ollie.	
Cummins, John.	
Currie, Emer.	
D’Arcy, Michael.	
Daly, Mark.	
Daly, Paul.	
Davitt, Aidan.	
Doherty, Regina.	
Dolan, Aisling.	
Dooley, Timmy.	

Fitzpatrick, Mary.	
Gallagher, Robbie.	
Garvey, Róisín.	
Higgins, Alice-Mary.	
Keogan, Sharon.	
Kyne, Seán.	
Lombard, Tim.	
Martin, Vincent P.	
McDowell, Michael.	
McGahon, John.	
McGreehan, Erin.	
Mullen, Rónán.	
Murphy, Eugene.	
O'Donovan, Denis.	
O'Loughlin, Fiona.	
O'Reilly, Joe.	
O'Reilly, Pauline.	
O'Sullivan, Ned.	
Seery Kearney, Mary.	
Ward, Barry.	
Wilson, Diarmuid.	

Tellers: Tá, Senators Denis O'Donovan and Lisa Chambers; Níl, Senators Fintan Warfield and Paul Gavan.

Question declared carried.

Faisnéiseadh go rabhthas tar éis glacadh leis an gceist.

Whereupon Senators rose in their places and remained standing while the Cathaoirleach proceeded to the Dais.

Senator David Norris: I welcome Senator Daly. As father of the House, I would like to offer him my hearty congratulations and my very best wishes for a successful session as Cathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann.

An Cathaoirleach: I thank the father of the House. Senator David Norris is, of course, a man we all admire, although not necessarily a man we all agree with all the time. While we differ on many things, and while I know he is a Joycean scholar, at one stage in his long political career he quoted the great Samuel Beckett with regard to being relentless and tenacious, a point also referred to by the former Cathaoirleach, Senator O'Donovan. Beckett said: "Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better." Many of us in this House have tried and failed and then tried again. Due to relentless campaigning on behalf of many, the Members of the Seanad have been chosen to represent the public and the people of this nation.

I begin by paying tribute to the front-line workers who gave of their time and of their lives, and sacrificed so much to save so many lives during the pandemic which we are still enduring.

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I pay tribute, as Senator Norris did, to the former Government and all its Ministers. Even my mother praised the former Taoiseach, Deputy Leo Varadkar, which is high praise indeed, and she also praised the Minister, Deputy Simon Harris.

I also pay tribute to Senator Denis O'Donovan, the former Cathaoirleach, who seconded me. I had the great honour, four years ago, of being the deputy leader of our group and of being allowed to second him. He outlined his long service to the State and, for that, on behalf of all the Members of the Seanad but also the people of Cork, I would like to thank him for his long service to Ireland and to his community. Senator Lisa Chambers, as leader of our group, proposed me, and I want to thank her. It is a long time since we first met, which was at a public meeting in Castlebar. It was not really a canvas because, at the time, she did not have a vote, but hope sprung eternal.

The Minister, Deputy Norma Foley, when she proposed Deputy Micheál Martin for Taoiseach, said that being from Kerry is a privilege and an awesome responsibility. She, of course, was quoting that great Kerryman, John B. Keane, the man of letters, of great plays and of great stories about great truths as well. That truth is beholden on us all in that we all bear a huge responsibility in being Members of Seanad Éireann, being involved in public life and representing the people of this country. That awesome responsibility is part of the idea of opening up the Seanad to new ideas, new possibilities and new opportunities. I would like to hear the ideas of Members on how we can do things better to serve all the people, bringing in not just groups and organisations, but the individuals who are impacted by the decisions we make and the decisions we fail to make, and we must look at both of those. I discussed this earlier with a colleague for whom I have great admiration, Senator Ivana Bacik. Please God, when we go back to the old Seanad Chamber we will be able to admire the Waterford crystal chandeliers as her grandfather, who came over from the Czech Republic, was involved in the founding of Waterford Crystal.

We stand on the shoulders of giants. Today, we remember all those who have gone before us and who have served in this House, people like Senator Higgins's father and W.B. Yeats, as well as the many others who have served in Seanad Éireann and done their communities and the Seanad proud in their work.

We remember, of course, the people who have gone before us, like my grandmothers, Margaret and Eileen. I come from a mixed marriage and this historic coalition is part of that mixed marriage. My grandfather, Charlie Daly, fought in the War of Independence and in the Civil War on the Republican side. On the other side of the family, my grandfather, James O'Connor's brother fought on the Free State side and died too soon. We think of this historic occasion and the people who have gone before. The last safe house my cousin on my grandfather's side, Commandant General Charlie Daly, was in before he was captured during the Civil War was in Niall Blaney's home place in Donegal. Harry Blaney, who has gone to his eternal reward, showed me the steps on the stairs where his boots were when the Free State soldiers were coming up the road and he had to make his escape. That was the last safe house he was in. He was one of the 77. While we remember those tragedies, we remember in that context the words of John F. Kennedy, when he addressed Dáil Éireann in 1963. He said "...we need not feel the bitterness of the past to discover its meaning for the present and the future." What this Chamber is about, and what this historic Government is about, is the future. Hopefully, we can build that future together. I will wrap up because Members have had a long day. We have a long journey ahead together and, hopefully, we will make this House work for all the people.

We all have moments when we think about giving up. I remember in 2006 lying there think-

ing, “You know what, I will give up on this Seanad race”. Senator Denis O’Donovan is right about a fellow running in a Seanad campaign who generally did not know what he was doing in 2006. I consulted widely and I learned a lot, but I was giving up. This was not going to work; it was undoable. I decided I would make one call and I made that call to Breandán Mac Gearailt, a Fianna Fáil councillor in Dingle. He did not particularly know me, although I had met him a couple of times, but he had run for the Seanad. I told him, “I am Mark Daly from Kenmare and I wonder if you can help me as I am thinking of running for the Seanad.” He told me to call down to him. It is an hour and 45 minutes to Breandán’s house from Kenmare and it was the best hour and 45 minutes I ever spent. I arrived around lunchtime and we had a cup of tea, then lunch, then more tea and more discussion, and we then had dinner. I do not know whether it was just to get rid of me or just to give me hope, but he said, “What is the worst that could happen? If you do not run, you will never know. If you run, you might lose, but you should try.” Thankfully, it did not befall me as Samuel Beckett had said. I did not try and fail better. Instead, I managed to succeed. I succeeded because of the shoulders of giants, namely, my father Seán and mother Eileen, my brothers Conor and John, my sister Elaine and my campaign team. It is very important to have a strong campaign team. My team has been with me since 2007 and has grown at every election. It has stopped at nine members. My nieces and nephews - Cara, Caoimhe, Clionadh, Cillian, Dylan, Sean, Lucy, Yvonne and Ruairi - have been outstanding. Sometimes they are not too enthusiastic but they are always there to eat the pizza, stuff the envelopes and do what needs to be done. Finally, in addition to my family, I thank Grace Coyle who has worked relentlessly for me and who will work hard for all of the Senators, as will I. I thank the Seanad for this great honour.

Would the father of the House, Senator Norris, like to say something?

Senator David Norris: No. I just wish to congratulate the Cathaoirleach on his election and wish him well. I am happy to repeat that message. I am sure that all of our colleagues wish him the same.

An Cathaoirleach: I invite anyone who wishes to speak to indicate. I am delighted that all the Senators are here and I congratulate them all for getting to Seanad Éireann. I will most certainly do anything I can for them.

I call on my good friend, Senator Ó Donnghaile from Belfast, and commiserate with him.

Senator Niall Ó Donnghaile: The Cathaoirleach just pipped me to the post.

An Cathaoirleach: If the Senator would like a recount, that is no problem. We will facilitate that.

Senator Niall Ó Donnghaile: Not today. As the Cathaoirleach said, many of us have come a long way and we have waited a long few months to get back to the Seanad Chamber and into our roles. As I said to the Cathaoirleach just before the vote, he has big shoes to fill but I know he will do so effectively and very willingly. The Sinn Féin team and I will work with him as collaboratively and as positively as possible to ensure an assertive, effective and representative Seanad. As the Cathaoirleach has rightly acknowledged, this is a crucial period for the entire Oireachtas as we navigate through the choppy waters of the decade of centenaries. He alluded to the complexities for all of us. There is no family in Ireland that does not have a complex and layered story and experience like the Cathaoirleach’s.

In a very personal sense, I am happy for the Cathaoirleach because I know what this means

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for him and his family. I wish him well and hope he enjoys his tenure. The Sinn Féin team and I look forward to working with him. Go n-éirí an t-ádh leat.

Senator Michael McDowell: Ar dtús, déanaim comhghairdeas leis an gCathaoirleach agus cuirim mo dhea-mhéin chuige as ucht a bheith tofa mar Chathaoirleach an Tí seo. This is an historic occasion for him and for this House. I do not believe I am breaking any confidences in revealing that he has sought support widely among Members in his determination to become its Cathaoirleach. It is important to remember that he told many Members that he was in the business of reforming the House. He has given that commitment and I hope he does not mind me saying that we will hold him to it over his term of office, however long that might be.

My family, like the Cathaoirleach's, has Civil War scars. In these years of celebrating centenaries, it is important that we, as a political community, approach the commemoration and remembrance of all those who gave their lives for what they believed in, on all sides, with tolerance and mutual understanding. I know that the Cathaoirleach is committed to exercising that value.

I will say one thing, if I may, which I hope will not be too controversial. With his Thomas F. Meagher Foundation, the Cathaoirleach has attempted to help every Irish school understand the national flag, the Tricolour, which is mentioned in the Constitution. I wholly endorse his efforts in that regard. It is very important that we understand where our flag comes from and what it represents. As a republican who believes in a united Ireland, I believe we should take a look at the Tricolour that stands beside the Cathaoirleach and remember that there are three panels on it, one of which is the orange colour. That means something. I mention that for a reason. In the run-up to this Government's formation - and I wish the Members of this Government well in everything they do - the Irish people were led to believe that a place among the Taoiseach's 11 nominees would be reserved for a representative from the Northern Irish community. It was widely understood that this person would be a representative of the unionist tradition in Northern Ireland. Without being negative or unfair to anybody here, and while congratulating the 11 nominees of the Taoiseach on their appointment to the House, it is a matter of grave regret to me that the commitment which was given to the public was effectively torn up.

The former Senator, Ian Marshall, served in this House for two years at the joint invitation of the Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil parties. He was a representative and a voice for unionism in Seanad Éireann. I deeply regret that his voice is no longer to be heard in this Chamber. It could have been different. I myself appealed to the leaders of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael not to make the decisions they have apparently made. The Taoiseach and the leader of the Fine Gael party have spoken about leaving no one behind in their nominations to this House, but there are 900,000 people on this island with whom we seek reconciliation. I will not put it more strongly than saying that it was a slap in the face to the former Senator not to be reappointed to the House. It was a slap in the face for moderate unionism that he was not reappointed. It was God's gift to immoderate and extreme unionists for a person to be abused in the way he was. He was invited to come South and showed the courage to participate in our affairs only to find himself expendable in the most shameful of circumstances. I hope the Cathaoirleach does not mind me saying these things but I feel very passionately about them. I met the former Senator today and I felt that I had to say what I have said.

The former Senator, Billy Lawless, will also be disappointed that he was not nominated again to serve the diaspora. I pay tribute to his efforts and those of the former Senator, Ian Marshall, to progress Ireland's interests as an island from their different perspectives. I know

the Cathaoirleach is also personally committed to serving the diaspora, as Billy Lawless did so effectively.

To conclude, I welcome the Cathaoirleach to the Chair and congratulate him on his energy, enthusiasm and relentless pursuit of the things that interest him in Irish politics. As an Independent Member of this House - and I believe I speak for most of my Independent colleagues - I wish him every success as Cathaoirleach. I join in the great pride he and his family must feel on his achieving this great constitutional office.

An Cathaoirleach: I thank the Senator and join him in praising Billy Lawless and his work on behalf of the diaspora all over the world, including the 40 million in the United States, including the undocumented, for whom he worked so hard. I also congratulate the former Deputy, John Deasy, who worked with him in that regard.

4 o'clock

I too share Senator McDowell's disappointment that Ian Marshall is not here with us today. He is a man who stepped up and showed great courage in coming down here and he got a lot of criticism from within his own community for taking that step. As we all know, such courage should be rewarded. I feel the same as Senator McDowell about representing people. This Chamber is about giving people a voice. I thank Senator McDowell for his kind words. I call on the Leader of the House to address the House and I apologise to her for getting my running order wrong.

Senator Regina Doherty: You should not apologise, a Chathaoirligh. This is your day. On behalf of the Government parties I wish you sincere congratulations on your appointment today. We very much look forward to working with you in the coming years.

I genuinely appreciate the welcome to this House that I received from the father of the House. I fully recognise that my cards have been marked for previous actions but I genuinely promise to use whatever influence I can to bring about the long-awaited Seanad reform that has been championed by many present and former Members of this House. I wish you congratulations today, a Chathaoirligh, on behalf of all of us. I look forward to working with you.

An Cathaoirleach: I thank the Leader. I have been getting the running order wrong. I call Senator Bacik.

Senator Ivana Bacik: I am proud to speak on behalf of the Labour Party group of Senators, my colleagues Senators Sherlock, Hoey, Moynihan and Wall, and to express our congratulations to you, Senator Daly, on your election as Cathaoirleach. I have served with you in a number of Seanad terms and while we have not always agreed on issues I know very well your tenacious persistence in campaigns that are close to your heart and your hard work in particular on behalf of the Irish deaf community and Irish Sign Language. I pay tribute to you for that. I think the Seanad will be a very interesting place with you as Cathaoirleach. I mean that in the best possible way.

I pay tribute to my good friend and colleague, Senator Norris. He took the Chair as the senior Member of the House. I was delighted to be re-elected on the Dublin University panel along with him and with Senator Lynn Ruane. I also join with other speakers in paying tribute to the outgoing Cathaoirleach, Senator Denis O'Donovan. It was a pleasure to have been in the Seanad with him as Cathaoirleach in the previous term.

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I know we will have an opportunity on the Order of Business to speak further but I wish to welcome our incoming Leader, Senator Doherty. Others have spoken about the strong leadership shown by the outgoing Government in the face of the terrible Covid pandemic. For my part, speaking on behalf of the Labour Party group of Senators, we offer constructive opposition. I think it is fair to say that Senator Doherty and some of her colleagues in government, having had a tough time in the general election, really served the country very well and showed strong leadership in bringing us to the point we are at now. We are not through the terrible pandemic yet but we have had a stronger and better response than many other countries which faced similar challenges. I know there are enormously challenging times ahead and we will continue to offer constructive opposition on the Labour Party bench and to continue to stand for the principles of equality, workers' rights and the rights of all who are disadvantaged in society. I will leave it at that for now.

I again congratulate Senator Mark Daly on his election as Cathaoirleach. I also thank him for his kind words about my grandfather. I think I speak for all of us in this strange Chamber when I say that we all very much look forward to being back in Leinster House in the proper Seanad Chamber.

An Cathaoirleach: I thank Senator Bacik. I call the former leader of the Fianna Fáil group, Senator Catherine Ardagh, who served the Fianna Fáil Party so well in the previous Seanad.

Senator Catherine Ardagh: Gabhaim comhghairdeas mór leis an gCathaoirleach. Is ónóir mhór í bheith mar Chathaoirleach ar an Seanad. I wish to congratulate you, a Chathaoirleach. I have known you for a long time. There were three votes in my house for one of your first elections: my dad, my brother and my mum. I think you probably got all of the votes at that time. It is a huge honour for you. Your commitment to Fianna Fáil and its councillors across the country is remarkable. It shows the work that you have put in over the years. You have earned this position today. I thank you very much and congratulate you.

Your legislation on Irish Sign Language is remarkable. You were dedicated to it from day one. It is one of the only pieces of legislation that got all the way through both Houses. It was a significant achievement for you. I also draw attention to your Thomas F. Meagher Foundation and your dedication to the Irish flag and explaining the true nature of it. Your commitment to Irish republicanism in its true form is commendable. Many people, including schoolchildren, look up to you.

I commiserate with and congratulate our former Cathaoirleach, Senator O'Donovan, who did a super job in the previous Seanad. I know you will also do a super job. It will be different and you will bring a new energy. I really look forward to working with you.

I congratulate the Leader of the House, Senator Doherty, on her role. I also congratulate my colleague, Senator Chambers, on her role as leader of the Fianna Fáil group in the Seanad. I wish everyone well. I am delighted to be here and I look forward to working with all my colleagues from across the House and getting to know everyone. There are many new faces. We have much work to do to support small businesses around the country and to support those who were left behind due to Covid. We did much to ensure the pandemic did not result in a massive loss of lives but much damage was done to people, especially those in nursing homes and those who were cocooning. Much legislation will be needed to ensure that we find solutions to the Covid disaster and that the economy gets back on track.

An Cathaoirleach: I thank Senator Ardagh. I also belatedly thank her for the three votes in her house. We spoke earlier about standing on the shoulders of giants so we also remember Senator Ardagh's father today. He was a great public servant and her family have been true champions of public service through the years. Senator Ardagh's name was also on the sign language Bill for the deaf community. I thank her for her support on that and for her kind words.

I am going out of sequence but I wish to call my great colleague from Cork, Senator Buttimer, the former Leader, who did outstanding work as Leader of the Seanad. We did not always agree. In fact, we very rarely agreed but we can always agree to disagree. That is what this Chamber is about: that we put out ideas, we stand up for our point of view and then we do our bit for the good of the people we represent. I thank Senator Buttimer for his leadership in the previous Seanad.

Senator Jerry Buttimer: Gabhaim buíochas leis an gCathaoirleach. Ar an gcéad dul síos ba mhaith liom mo chomhghairdeas a ghabháil leis mar Chathaoirleach nuathofa agus lena athair agus mháthair agus lena chlann. Cuirim fáilte roimh gach Seanadóir nua, go mór mór ar an lá iontach, stairiúil seo sa Seanad.

As the former Leader of the House who was elected on the same day as you in 2007, I congratulate you on your election to the office of the Cathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann and to pledge you my full support in whatever capacity that may be. You bring a wealth of experience to the position and I wish you and your family every success. It is important that we remember today and thank the Iar-Chathaoirleach, Senator Denis O'Donovan, for his work, his stewardship, his courtesy and his impartiality.

I also wish to pay tribute to the man who contested the position with you in the Fianna Fáil Party, Senator Wilson, who is a long-standing Member of this House. He was the Fianna Fáil Whip in the previous Seanad. He is a person of integrity. I thank him for that and wish him well also.

In particular, I congratulate our new Leader, Senator Doherty, on her elevation to the position and to sincerely wish her well. It is important in this new Seanad that we also remember and thank Members of the previous Seanad who were in positions of importance, such as the former Deputy Leader, Catherine Noone, and the Government whip, Gabrielle McFadden, who are not with us here today. Equally, I compliment former Senators Maria Byrne and Gerry Horan, who was a very good Chair in the previous Seanad.

I look forward to Senator Paul Daly bringing the new Minister, Deputy Cowen, to the House on matters of agriculture. I cannot wait for his interventions on the Order of Business. I look forward to you, a Chathaoirligh, being able to definitely tell Senator Paul Daly that the matter he raises is probably not relevant to the Order of Business. That will be your job.

Today is a day for you and your family, a Chathaoirligh, and for the new Members of the House. I wish you every success and thank the members of the Seanad staff for their courtesy in organising today. Mar fhocal scoir, I thank Orla Murray, the private secretary to the Leader, for her tremendous work. Enjoy your day, a Chathaoirligh. Beir bua.

An Cathaoirleach: Thank you, Senator Buttimer. When we meet again at the next Munster final, please God, the words of Samuel Beckett will no doubt be ringing in your ears about trying harder and failing better.

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I am going to call on the Green Party's Senator Róisín Garvey whose father I once canvassed in a Seanad election. It might be a dark family secret, but probably not in Clare, that her father, Flan Garvey, served Fianna Fáil in Clare for many years. It probably did her no harm when it came to general elections and council elections. Flan Garvey also served in Kerry. Anyone who has a Kerry connection obviously gets preferential treatment. However, that is only for today. After that, all bets are off. Martin Groves, the Clerk, is going to give me all the rule books. I will be studying them to see how we can expand the rules to their maximum ability. Senator Vincent P. Martin might be able to advise me on that one. Flan Garvey served in Tralee IT for many years and did great work for the people of Kerry. For that, we would like to thank him.

Senator Róisín Garvey: I am my own woman too, despite my father's best efforts.

An Cathaoirleach: Absolutely.

Senator Róisín Garvey: Ar an gcéad dul síos, déanaim comhghairdeas leis an gCathaoirleach. Go n-éirí leis agus ní bheidh mé ró-chrua air de bharr a chairdeas agus is comharsa béal dorais dom é i gContae an Chláir. Is as Eidhneach mé, baile beag bídeach i gContae an Chláir idir An Bhoirinn agus Aillte an Mhothair. Is onóir dom í a bheith anseo, go háirithe nuair a feicim na mná iontacha timpeall orm a bhí mar spreagadh dom go minic roimhe seo. Táim ag súil go mór le bheith ag obair ar son muintir an oileáin álainn seo, go háirithe dóibh siúd atá cónaí orthu amuigh faoin tuath.

I rith mo shaol bhí roinnt deiseanna agam agus bhí deis agam obair le páistí, le déagóirí, daoine faoi mhíchumas, teifigh agus an Lucht Taistil. Spreag siadsan mise chun seasamh suas agus chun mo ghuth a úsáid agus is é sin an fáth go bhfuil mé anseo inniu. Tá dúshláin mhóra romhainn - agus is breá liom dúshláin - ó thaobh sláinte, eacnamaíochta agus athrú aeráide de. Táim cinnte, áfach, má oibreimid le chéile go macánta, gur féidir linn tír shláintiúil, chothrom, ghlas agus dhóchasach a chruthú le chéile. Ba mhaith liom buíochas ó chroí a ghabháil le mo mhac Corrán, le mo mhuintir, le mo chairde, le mo chomharsana béal dorais agus le gach éinne a thug tacaíocht dom suas go dtí an pointe seo.

I am from a small village in County Clare, Inagh, between the Burren and the Cliffs of Moher. It is a huge honour to be here today and most humbling to see these amazing people around me, especially these women sitting close to me. Ar scáth a chéile a mhaireann na mná sin.

I am really looking forward to working really hard for the people of this absolutely beautiful island of ours and especially for the rural communities of Ireland. In my life, I had great opportunities and was very fortunate to work with many children, through Green Schools, teenagers, people with disabilities, refugees, asylum seekers and the Traveller community. They are the ones who have inspired me to always stand up to use my voice. It is for them I am here today.

We are facing massive challenges with health, economics and, of course, climate change. As a Green Party Member, I will do my best to work with everybody in the Seanad. If the 60 of us, along with our colleagues in the other House, work together for the betterment of this country and we do so honestly, then we can together create a beautiful, healthy, fair, green and hopeful country.

I thank from the bottom of my heart my son Corrán, my neighbours, my family and all the people who have helped and supported me in my life to get me this far. To quote a great Clare philosopher, John O'Donohue, "May I live this day compassionate of heart, gentle in word, gracious in awareness, courageous in thought, generous in love."

Go raibh míle maith agaibh agus go n-éirí leat, Mark.

An Cathaoirleach: I thank Senator Garvey for her work during the pandemic. I know that you were in your community delivering provisions, messages and water even to the members of your community. That is truly public service at its most fundamental. You showed that in your community, as a member of the council. No doubt that you will show it here too. I thank you for your kind words.

I call on the man from Listowel, the great Senator Ned O’Sullivan, one of the great servants of this House. He is also a great Fianna Fáil man and, as he would say himself, Fianna Fáil to the very ends of his fingertips. He has met every Fianna Fáil leader since the dawn of time. At one stage, Senator Ned O’Sullivan reminded me that he got three and a half quotas in a town council election. One would be fairly fearful of standing anywhere near him if one were opposing him on a ticket. He is a great friend and colleague. Being from Kerry, he would have to be. A Kerry man once said that a Kerry man with an inferiority complex is a Kerry man who thinks he is just as good as everybody else. Senator Ned O’Sullivan, you are probably better than most.

Senator Ned O’Sullivan: Aithníonn Ciarraíoch Ciarraíoch eile agus is cúis áthais domsa í mar Chiarraíoch, an Cathaoirleach a bheith tofa mar Chathaoirleach ar Seanad Éireann.

As the former senior Senator for Kerry, I congratulate the former junior Senator from Kerry on his elevation to the Chair.

An Cathaoirleach: I am still the junior.

Senator Ned O’Sullivan: I want to wish you well. It is a signal honour for you and for your family, which served the national cause well. I am delighted that your father, Seán, and other members of your family are here today. It is a great honour for the county. I would say it is also a matter of tremendous delight for the many county councillors who have driven us all crackers over the last few days trying to get you elected. You are a young man. The word “tenacious” has been mentioned. You are a man I would never underestimate when it comes to a contest. You will be a great Chairman.

You are also following in the steps of a great and outstanding Cathaoirleach, my old and great friend, Senator Denis O’Donovan, at whose wedding I was honoured to be best man.

I must also mention my other dear friend in Fianna Fáil who had an interest in this position, Senator Diarmuid Wilson, our party whip. As decent a man as ever wore shoe leather in the Seanad.

You and I, a Chathaoirligh, did not always see eye to eye. There were one or two spectacular clashes on issues of national importance. We never fell out, however. I take great solace in the fact that we will not have any more spats because now you are elevated to a plane that takes you away from the ordinary, hurdy-gurdy politics. You will be presiding, greeting, chairing and adjudicating while I will be still down in the rag-and-bone shop of Seanad politics, toiling away.

I am commencing my fourth term in the Seanad. I was very pleased to be re-elected. This is going to be a great Seanad. The previous Seanad was great and had great stars. Many of them have returned - sadly not all - and we have new stars. They are people I am delighted to see. Many of them have served their time in politics, and this is their reward. Many of them are set-

ting out to higher things later on and they will get their grounding here. There are people from all sides. It is a very inclusive Seanad. Obviously not all elements of society are included but it is as inclusive a Seanad as I have ever seen. It is going to be very interesting. It is a very serious time for our country as we have the Covid-19 crisis to deal with. We have a new Government in formation, a Government I never thought I would see in my lifetime. It is a Government for change and of change. If someone had told me 20 years ago that Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael would be in the one Government, I would have said he was off his head. I welcome that change. Old friends who had separated and fractured over a tragedy of a civil war are working together again. It is a marvellous thing. My grandparents, who were de Valera people, would have been so happy to see this. I also look forward to working with our Green Party colleagues in government, and with the members of the Opposition. It will be no harm at all if there is a realignment in Irish politics; it is overdue. We now have a very strong centre. The left is very fragmented. They cannot agree with themselves half the time but they will become cohesive. We might be coming into modern European politics and I am not one bit afraid of that. I welcome it.

I digress a small bit. This is the Cathaoirleach's day. It is a great day for you. Well done and agus go n-éirí an bóthar leat.

An Cathaoirleach: I thank the Senator.

Senator Sharon Keogan: I want to be part of the congratulations here today to you, Mark. I have known you for many years. It is a proud day for you and all your family. I was delighted to meet your father, Sean, earlier today. He was extremely proud of you. You are one of the Senators I look up to greatly. Your work ethic on behalf of the councillors on the ground has been superb over the past decade. If I can be one quarter of the Senator that you are, then I certainly will make a good job in this House. I just want to be part of the congratulations for now. I want you to continue to work for the councillors in this country because they need support from this House. I look forward to working with you for the next four years, hopefully.

An Cathaoirleach: I thank the Senator. You are a ferocious campaigner yourself. Anyone who can get elected in two constituencies simultaneously in any election is not to be underestimated. I call Senator Mullen.

Senator Rónán Mullen: Gabhaim buíochas leis an gCathaoirleach nuathofa agus ba bhreá liom comhghairdeas a dhéanamh leis. Tá sé tuillte go maith aige. Is duine cumasach, Gaelach agus díograiseach é. Is cuimhin liom gur thóg sé ar ais muid ónár laethanta saoire uair amháin i mí Lúnasa chun ár gcuid dualgas a dhéanamh. I congratulate the Cathaoirleach. This is well earned and well deserved. You are a very hardworking Senator. I recall that you once brought us back in August from our summer holidays-----

An Cathaoirleach: I am sorry about that.

Senator Rónán Mullen: -----but quite rightly I hasten to add. I believe it was a first at the time. I have absolutely no doubt that you will do a great job. I congratulate your family who are rightly proud of you today.

I also welcome and congratulate the Leader of the Seanad, and I wish her well in her new role. I have no doubt that she will do an excellent job. She is a very talented politician. I am resisting the temptation, like others here, of reminding her of certain things she said about the Seanad during a referendum campaign some years ago-----

An Cathaoirleach: Can I congratulate Senator Mullen on his forbearance-----

Senator Rónán Mullen: I have often been reminded at home that every saint has a past and every sinner has a future. I have no doubt that Senator Doherty will be one of the finest Members, and that she will remind people on a daily basis of the relevance and importance of this institution.

An Cathaoirleach: I remind Senator Mullen there are no sinners in this Chamber.

Senator Rónán Mullen: Indeed. Our country, as we are all aware, faces tremendous challenges, particularly in public health and our public finances. We all want to do our best to serve our country. We always seek to anyway, but at this time particularly it is important that we all bring our “A” game to our job as public representatives. I wish all fellow Senators well and congratulate those who are taking their seats for the first time. It is a very important and exciting time for them. It is happening in very unusual circumstances. I also congratulate those who successfully sought re-election. I am very grateful to the electorate of the National University of Ireland constituency, which has honoured me with election on the first count and which has shown me for the first time in my life what a surplus looks like. I am very grateful for that.

There is a certain cultural drift in this country and throughout the western world, as we all know, even as we contend with real existential problems. With regard to the debates that may be ahead of us, and not just on public health or financial issues, there may be times when there is a strong drift in a particular direction culturally speaking. We are looking at a Seanad where there will be a very strong and overwhelming majority on many occasions, so at the outset, it is all the more reason that it behoves the majority faction, and everyone here as a legislator, to seek to generate an atmosphere and a context of debate that tries to avoid groupthink, demonisation, silencing and all the rest of it. We set an example in our own way in the Seanad to the rest of society. In a world where legitimate public expression is sometimes greatly threatened, I hope there will not be too much wokeness - or wokeishness - in this House. If there is, then I certainly promise to provide as much constructive opposition as I can.

I wonder whether it was groupthink or just some failure of perspective that caused those who had the very difficult task of putting our new Government together to overlook - as Senator McDowell eloquently pointed out - the significance of having a representative here from Northern Ireland, specifically from the unionist community. That was a major mistake, a major lack of political vision, a major failure of political responsibility and a huge oversight. I do not know how it can be rectified in the short term but it can be rectified in some significant way. This will not have gone down well in the North of this country.

Just as serious, and just as lacking in political nous, has been the exclusion of ten counties in the west when it came to the allocation of senior ministerial portfolios. Again, that has caused huge hurt, anger and annoyance there but not just in the west of Ireland. The *Western People* has said that this is a “Cabinet fit for Cromwell”. That article pointed out that Mayo had certain representation in “Dara Calleary and another by birth in Pippa Hackett”. It also mentioned Deputy Hildegard Naughton. The article also said “but the role of Super-Junior Minister is akin to being a non-playing substitute on All-Ireland Final Day.” I believe the *Western People* have got it just about right. Again, this is very regrettable. I wish the new Taoiseach the very best in his new role. I hope this is something he will reflect on. I hope that we in the Seanad will compensate in some way for that serious failure by the incoming party leaders of the new Government.

29 June 2020

I welcome from my own neck of the woods, first time and newly appointed Senator, Aisling Dolan, who has proven herself in a very short time to be a polaiteoir an-chumasach go deo agus go n-éirí go geal léi. We meet in challenging times but, hopefully, we can work well together for the good of our country, and I wish everyone well. I hope that in early course the Government will show a greater measure of political judgment and inclusivity than it has done in recent days in relation to the specific decisions I mentioned.

An Cathaoirleach: I thank the Senator for his kind words and for his statement of intent in making sure there is no groupthink within the Seanad. Respectful debate is healthy. While the Senator and I have never always agreed on everything, we can always agree that the Seanad is about diversity of views and opinion, and then doing what is best for all the people as best we can.

As a response to the previous speaker, I call Senator Seán Kyne.

Senator Seán Kyne: Ar dtús báire, gabhaim mo chomhghairdeas leis an gCathaoirleach as ucht an onóir agus pribhléid mhór a bheith tofa mar Chathaoirleach ar an Seanad. I will take this opportunity to congratulate Senator Mark Daly on his election as Cathaoirleach and I wish him and his family every success in the years ahead.

I agree with Senator McDowell and wish my fellow Galway man, Mr. Billy Lawless, success in his future endeavours. He is a good Galway man, Chicago man and Fine Gael man, although I am not sure in which order he would put those. His contribution to this House and politics will be missed. I know that he will continue his work in international affairs, as it were, relations between Ireland and the United States and what he has already put in place in respect of the undocumented. He has been a strong advocate for the right of Irish citizens across the globe to have a vote in presidential elections, which is part of the programme for Government.

I will take this opportunity to thank the members of the Seanad electorate - councillors and Oireachtas Members - who supported me. I also welcome my colleagues. I congratulate my successor, the Minister of State, Deputy Calleary, in the very important role of Chief Whip in the Cabinet. In my time there, there were no votes and the voice of the Chief Whip was as strong as any other. I assure the House of that. I am confident that the Minister of State will be a strong advocate for the west of Ireland and the important projects that we all support across that region, as will my colleague, the Minister of State, Deputy Naughton, and the Minister of State, Senator Hackett. From my experience in the Cabinet, it is a collegial environment and there will not be division. People talk about votes, but there has not been a vote. I expect all members of the Cabinet to work strongly for all parts of Ireland, including the west.

I am proud and privileged to take my place today as a Senator. I again congratulate the new Cathaoirleach and congratulate and commend the outgoing Cathaoirleach on his role. I also congratulate my colleague, Senator Doherty, on her nomination as Leader of the House.

An Cathaoirleach: I thank Senator Kyne for his work as Chief Whip. Given the numerical circumstances, I imagine it was a bit like herding mice at a crossroads on occasion. The Minister of State, Deputy Calleary, has an equally enormous task, given the make-up of the Government and the challenges facing the country.

I now call my Fianna Fáil colleague, Senator O'Loughlin.

Senator Fiona O'Loughlin: Is mór an onóir é a bheith anseo. Gabhaim comhghairdeas

leis an gCathaoirleach agus leis an iar-Chathaoirleach, an Seanadóir Denis O'Donovan.

It is not my first time to speak in the Seanad. I had that opportunity last year when, along with Senator Bacik, we hosted a session in the Seanad Chamber with the most wonderful young people from around our country. As part of the commemoration of Vótáil 100, they spoke about their ideals and vision for Ireland going forward. It is a privilege to address the Seanad for the second time.

As I travelled here this morning from my home in Newbridge, one of the very few physical journeys I have taken in the past four and a half months, I reflected on the circuitous journey taken from a kitchen table in Cappanargid in Rathangan, where I learned about the importance of politics, community, leadership and social justice, through the chambers of Newbridge Town Council, Kildare County Council, the Committee of the Regions in Brussels and, of course, Dáil Éireann to be here today. I think of all the people who were with me on that journey, some of whom are still with us, some of whom are not, in particular my mother Mary and my father Jimmy, who is not with us any longer. I also thought about all that I had learned through the world of education in Scoil Mhuire, Ballymany, Newbridge, and the realm of the Special Olympics throughout the island of Ireland and across Eurasia.

Today is a momentous day in many ways. It is a day when we have seen the re-emergence of business and society after a very difficult four and a half months. Of course, the difficulties have not ended. My first words in the Seanad must be for those who have lost their lives and the grieving families around the island. Our thanks go out to all of those healthcare workers who sacrificed a lot so that our nation would not lose more. One of the first calls the Seanad should make is for a national day of mourning on which we could share in the grief of those who have been bereaved in the past few months.

Last Saturday, a draft programme for Government became a programme for Government. It is a programme that is appropriate for our time and pragmatic while also being ambitious and visionary. Its ethos is one of renewal, recovery, building safe and secure homes and communities, caring for our young and our elderly, ensuring supports for business, which needs them badly, and educational opportunity for all, and holding honest aspirations for those on the island of Ireland. Senator McDowell was right in that we can never forget about all of those on the island.

My colleague, Senator Chambers, spoke about escaping being on the Cathaoirleach's panel during the Seanad campaign. I was that soldier. It is more than a small miracle that I survived to be here today. It was an experience to compete with the Cathaoirleach. I wish him well. He has the vision, courage, passion and tenacity to make a great Cathaoirleach. I first met him when he knocked on my door as a young man from nowhere, albeit only to a certain extent. I love all of Kerry, but I had seen him on television. I meant "nowhere" in the sense of the political world. I was packing hampers in my sitting room to help make Newbridge a fair trade town. The Cathaoirleach helped me pack bananas and tea into those hampers, which were for distribution to the businesses and schools of our town.

One of my proudest and most emotional moments in the previous Dáil was to work with the Cathaoirleach on the Bill that he introduced on recognising Irish Sign Language, ISL. The Bill was the essence of what I am about - equality, equity and supporting those who need support. That was when I really saw the deep you, the you that cares and will be empathic and compassionate for all.

Theodore Roosevelt said: “It is not the critic who counts ... [but] the man [and the woman] who is actually in the arena ... who strives valiantly”. We here are in a small arena of 60 Members, but also a greater arena of all whom we represent. Certainly, no one present has a timid or cold soul. I look forward to working with all Senators on many of the issues of importance to us. Indeed, I have worked with many of them before. I worked with Senator Wall in the Kildare County Council chamber. I look forward to working with him as well as with Senator Martin. It is wonderful that the thoroughbred county has three Senators in this Seanad. I also worked with many former Senators on various committees, in particular the Joint Committee on Education and Skills, of which I was Chair. I shared a stage with the father of the House, Senator Norris, two years ago when we celebrated the 25th anniversary of the decriminalisation of homosexuality with that wonderful woman and great inspiration of mine, the former Minister, Ms Máire Geoghan-Quinn. I thank the Alzheimer’s Society of Ireland for its nomination. I am a proud Irishwoman, a lass from Kildare. I am here to serve with humility, compassion and integrity. I am pleased and honoured to do so. Ní neart go cur le chéile.

An Cathaoirleach: Go raibh míle maith agat. We are all aware of the Senator’s great work on inclusion and in respect of the Special Olympics and the work she did over many years on that. It is fitting and appropriate that she would mention her parents, Jimmy and Mary, today as we are all grateful for the support of so many who got us to this Chamber. I thank her for her work on the Irish Sign Language Act 2017 when it went to the Dáil, ensuring sure that the inclusion she is passionate about came to fruition with what was essentially civil rights for members of the deaf community which, according to the justice committee, was suffering extreme marginalisation by virtue of the fact that it had no right of access to State services through its own language.

I call Senator Craughwell.

Senator Gerard P. Craughwell: Go raibh maith agat, a Chathaoirligh, agus comhghairdeachas leat. It is a great day for the Cathaoirleach and for his family. Without doubt, he is the best known Senator in Ireland and I am delighted he was never on my panel.

An Cathaoirleach: Can I interrupt? I thank Senator Craughwell for the praise but let us be honest, beginning with Senators David Norris and Michael McDowell, there is definitely a long list ahead of myself. I thank the Senator anyway.

Senator Gerard P. Craughwell: I am delighted the work I started in October 2014 has come to fruition. When I ran for the by-election in 2014 to fill a seat in this House, I brought Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael together to elect me. I am delighted that it has grown to what we have today and that we have managed to get a Government out of it. Sadly, we did not have Green Party members in the House at that time. If we did, I probably would have brought them in on the act as well.

We are in the middle of a pandemic and our front-line workers have been lauded by many people and it is only right that they are. The dangers front-line workers place themselves in on a daily basis was particularly brought home when Detective Garda Colm Horkan was shot and killed in Roscommon. This House should today pay tribute to Detective Garda Horkan and his family. The funeral was an extremely sad occasion and, indeed, we were very lucky that more gardaí were not killed on that night. I agree with Senator O’Loughlin that we should recognise the pain and hurt felt by families who lost loved ones and were unable to mourn them in the way that we normally would.

I congratulate Senator Flynn who ran on the labour panel and came very close to being elected. I am delighted she has been appointed to the Seanad by An Taoiseach. I would be less than true to myself and the principles which brought me to the Seanad if I did not mention the Taoiseach's 11 nominees. Untold damage has been done to North-South, to USA and to UK relationships. The failure of this Government to appoint a member of the unionist community and a Senator from the diaspora will have far-reaching consequences over time. I was against the appointment of Mr. Billy Lawless when it was made. However, having seen the work he did and the bridges he built, I believe a grave error has been made in not having a Senator for the diaspora, and it need not necessarily have been Mr. Lawless. I want to pay tribute to my former colleague, Mr. Ian Marshall, as well as to Mr. Lawless. Mr. Marshall had shown himself to be a mild-mannered, easy-going representative from the unionist community. He could work across communities and build bridges. Indeed, it was interesting to see Sinn Féin's reaction to the fact he was not called back. He was deeply respected by Sinn Féin and I deeply respect it expressing its dismay over the weekend. Mr. Lawless on the other hand was an amazing man with an amazing attendance record in the Seanad given he had to travel from Chicago. He will be a sad loss.

It would seem that when appointing the 11 the Taoiseach and his bedfellows favoured political loyalists at the expense of the marginalised. The appointment only goes to prove that political parties still see the Seanad as a resting place for those waiting to return to the Dáil or those who need to be blooded before they go there. The people of Ireland voted in a referendum to retain this House. There is so much good that we could have been doing in having legislation scrutinised, especially European legislation, and participating in various other public committees which I hope the Cathaoirleach will support over time.

The Taoiseach's 11 could do so much to represent the marginalised in this country. There was already a majority on the Government side. Was it beyond the capability of politics in this country to see the need to give the marginalised in this country a voice? These are people the Cathaoirleach has shown his commitment to, particularly in the Irish Sign Language Act 2017 which he brought in. Would it have been so terrible to have a few people here who could have spoken up for the marginalised? In the last Seanad, we had people like Ms Colette Kelleher. The Perjury and Related Offences Bill 2018 was brought forward by former Senator Pádraig Ó Céidigh. These people have shown that they can make a huge contribution to Irish society if they get the opportunity, but it would appear that it was party over people when it came to nominating Senators.

The people of Ireland voted to retain this House. They deserve an awful lot better than what they have got. A group of students said to me recently that if we cannot reform this House, it will die. I do not want this House to die and I believe all the Senators in this House have a serious contribution to make over the next few years, but by God we have got to answer what was underlying the 2013 referendum. That referendum called for reform. I will not draw attention to the Leader of the House, who I want to congratulate today, and her position at that time to which I am sure she was appointed. However, I hope she will work with those of us who want to reform this House and to make it more relevant to the 21st century.

Again, I congratulate you, a Chathaoirligh, and I look forward to working with you over the next 12 months or maybe a little bit longer.

An Cathaoirleach: I thank Senator Craughwell for his words about Detective Garda Horkan and his sacrifice on behalf of the State. I thank him for his work on reaching out to the

unionist community. I hope does not mind me mentioning it, but he attended an event I would find difficult to attend. It was an event for the Ulster Defence Regiment, UDR. The UDR was at one time the largest regiment in the British Army and the Senator was asked to be its guest speaker. Most people would shy away from tough talk at an event like that but he brought up the issue of collusion as there is no point hiding behind issues. Yet despite bringing up the issue, he got a standing ovation which speaks to the fact he was able to build bridges. He was also able to do that by going to east Belfast. I know he was at a meeting on a research report I was involved in on unionist fears and concerns about a united Ireland. I share Senator Craughwell's concerns about the lack of unionist voices in this House.

I call Senator Murphy.

Senator Eugene Murphy: Go raibh maith agat, a Chathaoirligh. Ar an gcéad dul síos, déanaim comhghairdeas leis agus lena chlann. Is lá speisialta é. Déanaim comhghairdeas freisin le Seanadóir Doherty agus Seanadóir Chambers. I hope the comments of Senator Craughwell that he will work with the Cathaoirleach for the next 12 months do not mean he is expecting an election in 12 months' time.

An Cathaoirleach: I thought he was going somewhere.

Senator Eugene Murphy: I hope not.

It is important today for people like me who served in the last Dáil - I am really privileged to have been elected to the Seanad - to thank the staff of the Seanad, the Clerk, Mr. Martin Groves, and his people for all their guidance over a very difficult time for us. I also thank the ushers, who have been so helpful to us today. We might know every nook and cranny in Leinster House but it is different here and I appreciate it.

I also acknowledge the many references to the Government's leadership on Covid, the drastic situation we were placed in and the shock and fear that still exists. I want to be very fair about this. I commend the Taoiseach and his Ministers, many of whom have been mentioned today. It would be remiss if we did not mention the former Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection, and now Leader of the House, for her role, which was crucial. I know she and her staff worked very hard during that period.

I am delighted to see Senator Lisa Chambers, the Leader of the Fianna Fáil group in the House. I wish her well and offer my co-operation to her, to the Cathaoirleach and to all the Members in very important positions. I also acknowledge Senators Diarmuid Wilson and Denis O'Donovan who challenged for the position of Cathaoirleach today. I know they will continue to make very valuable contributions to the House.

I join many people in saying Billy Lawless worked very hard for all of us and the Irish diaspora and I want to put this on the record of the House. I am sure the same applies to our good friend, the former Senator Marshall from Northern Ireland.

Our county of Roscommon has been shocked in recent weeks. As has been mentioned, there was the death of Colm Horkan, which was a terrible tragedy. The county is still in a great state of shock and it is only right that we remember him, his family and his Garda colleagues, who have been so helpful to many of our citizens in recent months.

I acknowledge that among the Taoiseach's 11 nominees is Senator Aisling Dolan who, with

me, is the Government representative in Roscommon and Galway. We will work for the benefit of the area. There are some very good people from my party among the 11.

I heard a discussion in recent days about the number of times the word “review” was used in the 125 page document. Today in the Chamber, the word “Kerry” has been used about 150 times. I am sure it is a very special day for all Kerry people.

I acknowledge there is quite a lot of disappointment that we did not get a senior Minister in the west but typical of Deputy Dara Calleary, he was out with his sleeves rolled up yesterday and has been today taking on the role of Chief Whip because he knows, as I and everybody here knows, that we are in a very difficult situation. We have a Government and we have to make it work. I hope when the Ministers of State are appointed that some of them will be from the west, north west and mid-west of the country.

I appeal to everybody in the House, despite our differences on some issues, to realise we are probably still facing a very uncertain future. Our people really wanted the Government to be formed. They want it to work and they want it to last. We in Seanad Éireann as much as those in Dáil Éireann owe it to those people to do it. This does not mean we cannot have great debates or differences of opinion but we must all put our shoulders to the wheel to get us out of this crisis. It is not over yet. It is necessary to open up but I ask people to be careful, please obey and remember they all have responsibility. We all have a responsibility to say this to the public.

It is a great privilege for me to be here. Even though I belong to a political party with the biggest number of Senators in the House, my contributions will always be for the good of the nation and the good of the people. I will share ideas and opinions with people but, more important from my perspective, I will listen to every opinion in the House and certainly what is good and what can be supported I will endeavour to do so.

An Cathaoirleach: I thank Senator Murphy for his words on working with everybody in the House. It would be remiss of me not to mention the fact that he is a neighbour of Grace Coyle and the Coyles and Murphys have been living in the same parish for many a long year and work together for the betterment of the community. Eugene is walking backwards for charity in his home community for a great cause, so if anyone sees Eugene accidentally walking backwards around the House it is because he is getting in some practice. Any support for Eugene in all of his endeavours on behalf of everybody will be greatly appreciated. As he mentioned Senator Aisling Dolan, who is from the other half of that large constituency, I will ask her to say a few words.

Senator Aisling Dolan: Comhghairdeas a Chathaoirligh. It is very strange to hear the term “Senator Aisling Dolan”. I am still not used to it. I congratulate Senator Regina Doherty on her role as Leader of the House. Everyone has paid tribute to the leadership we have seen in recent months with regard to Covid-19 from the Ministers who were in place. It was inspirational. As a new Senator in the Chamber for the first time it is an honour. Having gone through the elections I see very many familiar faces from knocking on doors. I thank them for their words of support and their encouragement. It has meant an awful lot. Having listened to the speakers today I realise there is so much we will achieve in the coming years. We will work together. Obviously, there will be robust debate and I very much enjoyed hearing that there would be. We will work to achieve for the benefit of all. Coming from Ballinasloe I will represent the west of Ireland. We will input to ensure the policies we pass here will benefit all in every town and village in Ireland. We will ensure we get a fair share of investment in those areas by working

with our colleagues here and in the Dáil.

I very much support the calls for a minute's silence for detective garda Colm Horkan. It is very important people on the front line are acknowledged. We have seen the work done by our healthcare professionals. I work in NUI Galway. I am not there today, so they are missing me. I work in a health innovation hub with people who are in healthcare and on the front line. What they have achieved in recent months has been phenomenal. When it comes to gardaí we saw what they have done through the community call in all of our towns and villages. They were the ones who answered the door and helped, along with An Post and everyone else who stood up. I very much support the call for a minute's silence if other Members agree.

I thank Senator Mullen for his kind words. The former Senator, Michael Mullins, has given me a lot of tips along the way, including how to get to where I need to go. I also thank Senator Eugene Murphy. My colleagues and I will work hard to represent the west, in particular Roscommon and Galway. I thank the Cathaoirleach and wish him very well in the time ahead.

An Cathaoirleach: I thank Senator Dolan. It was a pleasure to meet her on that famous campaign she spoke about, at a fundraiser for the Cathaoirleach of Galway County Council. Sometimes we think we are shooting fish in a barrel but sometimes we can go to an event when canvassing in a Seanad election and misremember the name of a particular councillor and end up shooting ourselves in the foot instead of shooting fish in a barrel.

5 o'clock

Senator Mark Wall: I wish the Cathaoirleach well and I thank him for giving me the opportunity to say a few words in my maiden speech in the Seanad. It is a great honour for me to stand in front of Members today, to look around the room and to recognise so many famous faces that I have looked up to in recent years. The Cathaoirleach mentioned the great role that family plays in political life and I acknowledge the Cathaoirleach's family who are here today. I would also like to acknowledge my wife Michelle, and my sons Cathal and Eoin, who are looking in and I thank them for allowing me to participate in public life for the last 14 to 15 years. We all owe a debt of gratitude to our families for stepping back and being there for us when we want them.

I join with other Members in thanking the front-line workers. We have seen the Ireland we all want and dream of in recent months. Everybody working on the front line has stepped up to the plate and ensured that this dreadful pandemic has not affected communities in the way it could have without their great work. I would also include the community workers who have gone out of their way to ensure that the older people in our communities in particular are seen to and looked after, as the Cathaoirleach also mentioned. I acknowledge and thank them for their work.

For me, the Seanad and public life should be about the quality of life we can provide for working families and for those who get up every morning to go out to work. I hope to use my time here to ensure that childcare is at the centre of what we can provide for working families. When I canvassed in recent elections, throughout Newbridge, Athy, Monasterevin and Kildare town, that was the number one issue for working families. These families have to get up every morning and bring their children to crèches, often at 6.30 a.m or 7 a.m. I look forward to working with my Labour Party colleagues on a childcare policy that we can bring forward through the Seanad. I am sure that will be acknowledged by all Members as we look forward.

I also want to use this opportunity to thank all of the councillors, who the Cathaoirleach and other Members have also mentioned. Councillors played a pivotal role in the election of all of us here today and I particularly thank all of the Labour Party councillors and the many councillors I met in my travels throughout the country in recent times. I assure them I will continue to work with them over the coming months. It was said that it will be for 12 months but I hope it will be a bit longer than that.

I thank the people of Kildare for giving me this opportunity, which I will not take lightly. I want to ensure that I do my best for the people who elected me to Kildare County Council and who have given me this opportunity in the Seanad. I thank them sincerely.

I welcome the fact that other Members have said that we will work together. That is the best approach and the Cathaoirleach has mentioned that as well. I look forward to working with him and if us 60 Members can work together, this Seanad will be remembered as one of the most effective Seanad there has been in the history of this State.

An Cathaoirleach: Senator Wall mentioned the issue of family and of the sacrifice his family has made because of his time in public service and because of the fact that he is away so much. Many Members rely on their families, who give up a lot because of the fact that their loved ones are involved in public service. I call the great Senator Boyhan.

Senator Victor Boyhan: I want to use this opportunity to thank and acknowledge a few people. I congratulate the Cathaoirleach. I first met him during his first election campaign in Dún Laoghaire. I was a councillor there from 1999 onwards. I met the Cathaoirleach during every election campaign and I was always taken by his energy, enthusiasm and belief in something bigger and greater for the island of Ireland. People questioned that and suggested there were alternative motives for that but I never agreed. I thought he was driven, focused and determined and I know he helped many of the Members from Fianna Fáil who were elected in the last election. He gave them his assistance and support and he is a man who plays for the long game. Today he has reaped the reward, he is the victor and he is the Cathaoirleach. May he enjoy it because it is an important privilege for a few and I wish him well.

I congratulate the Leader. I have always been a great admirer of hers and I have never made any secret of the fact that from the day I came into the Seanad, in any engagement I had with Senator Doherty when she was a Minister, I got a response and people took up the call and followed through. People suggested she was a tough taskmaster and I congratulated her because that was what I wanted, that is the type of person that should be running a Department and that is the type of person who should be a Minister. Some of my friends here will recall that I suggested that the Seanad would be a great place for her and I am thrilled and delighted. Senator Doherty has proven herself. At a time when most people were hanging up and being dejected, angry and vexatious, she stuck with it and served the nation. People were in awe of her and some people did not quite know who she was as a Fine Gael Minister before that. I want to acknowledge that the outgoing Government was exceptional throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. It stood up, it led and it explained. It must have been nice for the members of the outgoing Government in recent days to see it all come back, to see Ireland reopen and to see our shops reopen. When something is good and has been successful, it is important that we acknowledge that as politicians, so I acknowledge that and I look forward to working with the Leader, Senator Doherty.

I thank Senator Buttimer for his leadership in the outgoing Seanad and I thank Senator

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O'Donovan, the former Cathaoirleach. I particularly want to thank the Captain of the Guard, the Superintendent, the staff and the family of Leinster House. They are the people who make all of this happen. That is really important. I thank the Clerk of the Seanad and all of his staff and I thank everyone in Leinster House who makes our work so much easier. That is important and is something we should acknowledge.

I particularly thank the Covid-19 pandemic front-line workers. They are the people who we all talk about. It is too easy to stand outside a hospital and clap people. That is important too but there will be obligations under the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Acts coming up regarding their pay and I hope all of us will push to acknowledge and reward the front-line workers of this country because we have become conscious of something more than ever before in recent months. We have become conscious that we have a good State. We can be proud of State services. They have to improve but they are important to us.

On behalf of the Independents who are in our group, I want to say that we will work constructively and positively with everyone but we will also call out bad government when it needs to be called out. We will work with everyone. We will tease out every line of every law that comes into this House because we have a revising role and we need to remind ourselves of that.

On politics and political parties, it was never envisaged by the forefathers of the State and of Seanad Éireann in how it was established - and it says nowhere in the Constitution - that we break out into political groupings. This has come about as a result of practice. It is not provided for in the Constitution that we would break out into political groupings. Perhaps that is something we need to look at.

Seanad reform starts here and it starts today. How we show respect for our mutual positions, how we deal with one another, how we avoid using language that incites hatred or discrimination and how we conduct ourselves as parliamentarians in the Houses of the Oireachtas represent reform. Let us go forward with a commitment that we will respect one another in our work, wherever we come from.

Each one of us is in this House legitimately. We have been elected or selected by An Taoiseach, which is his constitutional prerogative. It is important to say that. We are all the same in this House and it is important that we get that message across. Of course I am disappointed regarding Northern Ireland because we were led to believe a unionist would be appointed. I travel to Northern Ireland very regularly. I have family and friends who would describe themselves as moderate unionists. Many of them have contacted me in the past few days saying how disappointed and hurt they are. I appreciate that the Taoiseach had a difficult decision to make, and it was particularly difficult for this Government in that it had to set up a number of Ministries and choose 11 nominees, but this is important. It is disappointing. Along with a number of my colleagues, I met Ian Marshall in Leinster House today because that is the measure of the man. We had an exchange and he was positive, but I could not help feeling disappointed as I left that somewhere in this process we left out somebody who was articulate and capable, who made a case against Brexit in Northern Ireland and the UK, who made an outstanding contribution on agriculture and innovation and who, somehow serving only two years, was encouraged and asked by the Taoiseach to run for election. I took the time to google "Leo Varadkar" and "Ian Marshall" today. I could have printed off 35 pages of glowing reports on Ian Marshall by both Deputy Varadkar and Deputy Coveney, yet Mr. Marshall is not here. Then there is the matter of this wonderful diaspora. We need to look into this country again, reinvest, bring money in here and share our experiences. That is important, and we missed another opportunity there.

We bring our unique experiences, backgrounds and traditions to this job. We should never leave them outside. We are who we are. It is about being authentic to ourselves and being allowed and being given the space to be authentic in public life. I wish each and every one of the Senators well. In particular, I wish the new Government well. It has a difficult task, and there will be many challenges. The Ministers need time to settle into their Ministries. They will need time to look at the programme for Government and see how best they can bring it about. They will need time for the fiscal or job stimulus that is about to come.

I congratulate the Minister of State, Senator - most unusual - Hackett. For a number of reasons I am particularly proud. Her portfolio is in the area of agriculture, which is the area in which I got elected. One might ask what a fella out in Dún Laoghaire looking out at the sea is doing topping the poll on the Agricultural Panel. I will tell the House. It is about people, empathy and travelling around the country networking and supporting regional government, local government and the practitioners of local government, be they city or county councillors. I was born in Kildare and through circumstances came to Dún Laoghaire. I like to think I am both rural and urban, and both national and international, in my outlook. I look at international parliaments way beyond ours to learn. That is what I put that down to. The appointment of the Minister of State, Senator Hackett, demonstrates capacity and capability and the pathway from this House to the Dáil and from the Dáil back. I have no doubt there will be a mid-term review of Ministries and portfolios, and I hope other opportunities will come for other Senators to bring their expertise and experience to the Government.

I wish all of us well. I particularly wish you, the Cathaoirleach, Senator Mark Daly, every success for your term in office.

An Cathaoirleach: I thank Senator Boyhan. I remember meeting him on those famous campaigns but I can tell him one thing: I would learn a lot more from him than I would on my own experience. He is a master of the Seanad. His passion for Seanad reform and representing councillors around the country is well known and recognised by all.

I now call a man from Galway city, Senator Crowe.

Senator Ollie Crowe: It is an absolute privilege and honour to be elected to Seanad Éireann. I take this opportunity to thank my family, friends and supporters after a difficult general election campaign. The public representatives and the councillors across Ireland put their faith in me, and I will do all within my remit to honour the trust and belief they placed in me on 2 April.

As you said at the outset, a Chathaoirligh, to try and fail is understandable, and to fail to try is unacceptable. You have been a while on the road, and today is a very proud day for you, your family and Kerry, as has been mentioned throughout the debate. I was lucky enough to get elected to Galway City Council in 2009 and have met you a number of times along the road. I will tell one brief story. In 2010, when my brother was elected mayor, first citizen, of Galway city, there was a knock on the door at a remarkable hour in the morning. It was the man from Kenmare. What you have shown in the 13 years you have been in Seanad Éireann is an appetite for work. You have hunger and belief, including belief in yourself. You seem to have an excellent office. If I learn anything today, I should learn that work counts and work matters. Whether it is the Irish deaf community, sign language, your Republican values, the Irish flag or the Irish Kidney Association, you have left no stone unturned. I was talking to a man who has spent a lot more time in this House. He told me that when he met you in 2007 as you were canvassing for

election to the Seanad, you shocked him with the vote you got. One must have belief in oneself, and that is what you have. I wish you and your family well today.

I wish to take the opportunity to thank the Vintners Federation of Ireland for the nomination and for giving me the opportunity to run for election to this House. Today, as the hospitality sector opens up, in excess of 250,000 jobs are dependent on the hospitality sector. That is a vital message this House needs to send to the Cabinet and our Taoiseach, Deputy Micheál Martin. We must support the hospitality sector, our tourism sector and our hotels, restaurants and bars now more than ever. I certainly will put pressure on the Government to deliver what is required.

Finally, I acknowledge Senator Chambers, who has been appointed our Leader in the House. I congratulate her. I thank Martin Groves, Clerk of the Seanad, who has been very helpful to me since I arrived in early April. I also acknowledge the contribution of two fellow Galwegians - and two fine Galwegians they are. As mentioned previously, a Member of the previous Seanad, Billy Lawless, employs nearly 500 people in Chicago and has done huge work for the diaspora across America. I spoke to him recently. I wish him well in Chicago representing the undocumented Irish. I want to point out the significant work he does. Another fellow Galwegian, Pádraig Ó Céidigh, is an outgoing Senator. I acknowledge his contribution to me, the State and Galway.

A Chathaoirligh, enjoy your day and enjoy your term. It is well deserved.

An Cathaoirleach: I thank Senator Crowe. Of course, his brother Mike was mayor on that occasion. I think I arrived a bit late to the house. It was a public house. The good news is that the bar was shut. Senator Crowe was cleaning up. I think it was 1.30 a.m. or 2 a.m. but he was still there doing a bit of cleaning. My uncle Brian might have been there as well - I am not too sure. I think he had been there earlier. He might have gone home. After that I think one option I had was to get a hotel bed for a couple of hours and then get back up to Dublin for 9 a.m. I decided I would just drive the car back instead because of the motorways, which were built under a previous administration, thanks be to God. I started ringing people in America just to keep me awake on the drive home. There is only so much coffee can do. The people on the east coast were still awake, but by the time I got to Dublin I had to ring people in Montana, such as my friend Eric Kincheloe, to keep me going on that occasion. That was a great celebration.

I thank Senator Crowe for mentioning the former Senator, Billy Lawless. As we all know, Mr. Lawless is a great Galway man who has done great work for the diaspora.

I call my cousin, Senator Paul Daly.

Senator Paul Daly: I congratulate the Cathaoirleach on his appointment and clarify that we are political cousins, not biological ones. I came into the Twenty-fifth Seanad as a first-time Senator. The ball was at my feet in that I anticipated I was going to change the world. I was not long finding out that, irrespective of what I tried to do, what I tried to say or where I tried to go, it was almost as if I did not exist. The title, Senator Daly, had already been taken and it was as if he had exclusive rights to it. As they say, to every cloud there is a silver lining and I soon began to notice that some of his many great achievements and statements were being commented on in the media and being accredited to Senator Daly of Fianna Fáil. People gave me a bit of praise and for a while I wondered what was going on and then the penny dropped. Those who know me would know that I would be too shy to point out the mistake people were making.

An Cathaoirleach: That was very generous of the Senator.

Senator Paul Daly: The Cathaoirleach should not get carried away. This story is going to end. There was an occasion or two where there were statements or activities that I did not want to be associated with.

An Cathaoirleach: There were a few of those, all right.

Senator Paul Daly: For those, I thank him for helping me to get over my shyness very quickly.

I want to thank the outgoing Senators and, in particular, my good friend, Senator Buttimer, who mentioned me earlier and identified the fact there are two Senator Dalys. Senator Buttimer was a brilliant leader and I compliment him. I know what he said was in jest but I thank him for weaning me off the line I was on of demanding the Minister of Agriculture, Food and the Marine come to the House. I can assure Senator Buttimer's successor, who I congratulate, that I will not be pursuing that line in the coming term.

I will not list all those who were with us the last time and who are not here today but I thank my good friend and fellow county person, the Government Whip in the last Seanad, Gabrielle McFadden, who is not here today. She was a good Whip and a very good colleague on Westmeath County Council and in the Seanad. On the Fine Gael side, I wish to acknowledge my very good friend, the Leas-Chathaoirleach in the last Seanad, Paul Coghlan, who is not here with us. I acknowledge and compliment the outgoing Cathaoirleach, Senator Denis O'Donovan, a very good friend of mine. We are on the same panel and we have managed to remain good friends, which is unique. The fact we were such good friends, although we ran against each other in the election, demonstrated his impartiality as Cathaoirleach and how easy it was to get on with him.

I acknowledge Senator Diarmuid Wilson, who contested the position of Cathaoirleach of the Seanad in our party this morning. I welcome on board and wish the best of luck to our new leader, Senator Lisa Chambers, and compliment Senator Catherine Ardagh, the outgoing leader.

The Cathaoirleach has been elevated now, so I hope the media, depending on the occasion, will include the word "Cathaoirleach" and that I will also be given credit. With a bit of luck, when there are positives, they might still say Senator Daly and I will gain some glory from that. I congratulate the Cathaoirleach and note that it is a big day and a good day for him, his family, his parish, his party and, indeed, an aimn O'Dálaigh.

An Cathaoirleach: Go raibh míle maith agat. Political cousins is correct and I apologise for any embarrassment caused by any of my previous activities. I hope I will not repeat any of the mistakes of the past and will learn from them. I thank Senator Paul Daly for all his work on the agriculture committee. He was not just a voice on the committee, but a champion plougher as well. He brings vast experience and does great work holding Government and the Department to account when it gets things wrong. He is a great voice.

I call Senator Sherlock.

Senator Marie Sherlock: I congratulate the Cathaoirleach on his election today. Much has been spoken about Kerry today. As a Cork woman by birth, but now living in that great melting pot of Dublin Central, I wish him the very best in his work as Cathaoirleach.

I am very honoured and privileged to have been elected a Member of the Twenty-sixth Seanad as a Senator for the Labour Party on the labour panel. I am particularly delighted to

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be joined by my four colleagues. We have a Labour Party group in the Seanad which includes Senators Bacik, Hoey, Moynihan and Wall. I am determined to work with others across the Chamber to progress our agenda in terms of workers' rights, fairness and equality in society and in the economy and to urge others across the Chamber to work with us in progressing that agenda.

My colleague, Senator Wall, spoke about the importance of our families and supporters getting each of us to where we are today. I pay particular tribute to my own family. My father, Michael, is sitting in the gallery today. I pay tribute to all our supporters. It is really important to say that while there is still an overwhelming gender gap in this Seanad, I am heartened to look around, and Senator Garvey made this point earlier, and see so many young, dynamic and inspiring women in this Seanad, particularly those with young families, and to see young male Senators as well, trying to get that balance between rearing families and making a contribution to public life in this country. It is important to acknowledge that, to work together and to help each other to make that contribution.

I was elected on the labour panel along with ten other Senators. It is really striking that over the many years of the Seanad so much progress could have been made in the area of workers' rights and yet it seems that not enough progress was made. I urge the other Senators on the labour panel, who expressed an interest in the rights of workers to be on that panel, to come together and work on the many issues that now need to be addressed. We saw the High Court decision last week. There is an issue for so many workers who previously enjoyed a sectoral employment order in their sectors, including in construction, in electrical contracting and in mechanical roles. We now need to address that situation. There are issues with regard to bogus self-employment, the gender pay gap and many other workers' rights issues that this Chamber can make a real contribution to.

This House, the State, the Government and the Opposition face a huge challenge trying to get our country back on its feet after such a crippling number of months. We know we face a period of mass employment in which there will be job cuts. Over the next number of weeks and months, many households will wonder how they are going to pay childcare, mortgages and rent. We still have a huge housing crisis. The State needs to step up and help families and individuals to weather the crisis it will go through over the next few weeks, months and years.

The Labour Party will be bring forward Bills and many proposals to help those who need help most. I urge others to work with us in that mission. I wish the best of luck to the Cathaoirleach and I look forward to working with him.

An Cathaoirleach: I thank the Senator. We discussed the issue of the gender pay gap in the lobby before we came in here. Senator Bacik and Fianna Fáil Senators, including Senator Clifford-Lee, were very much involved in that issue.

I have been told we need to pass the motion on the Offences against the State (Amendment) Act 1998. I am sure Senator McDowell knows the urgency of that issue. Much as I would love the Senators to keep talking nicely about me for hours on end, I ask Members to keep their contributions as brief as possible. At the same time, I am not going to stop them and tell them to sit down.

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins: On behalf of the Civil Engagement group, I congratulate the Cathaoirleach on his election to the role. I know he is somebody who has great respect for

the Seanad and an ambition for the role that it can and does play. Indeed, he has an ambition for the even greater role it could play were we deliver the Seanad reform that is still on the agenda, whether or not it is included in the programme for Government. The Cathaoirleach has a proven record of commitment to rights and inclusion at home and abroad and I am sure those principles will guide him in the impartial performance of his duties. It is an exciting time for him and I know that he will step up and bring something unique, different and positive to the role.

I also want to acknowledge his very able and excellent contender for the role, Senator Ó Donnghaile. I pay tribute to the outgoing Cathaoirleach, Senator O'Donovan, who chaired the previous Seanad with exceptional grace and fairness. I look forward to hearing him add his voice to the general thick and tumult of debate, having shown great forbearance by not jumping in with his opinions in debates during his time as Cathaoirleach. We can look forward to hearing his voice in that way again. I thank the outgoing Leader, Senator Buttimer, for the constructive and collaborative approach he took to his role. I welcome the new Leader, Senator Doherty, who I am confident will continue in that same spirit of collaborative work.

I echo what colleagues have said about the importance of respectful debate and working together but I want to go a little further. It is my hope and expectation in this Seanad that legislative proposals which come before the House, be they from the Government, Opposition or civil society, will be engaged with in good faith, scrutinised and amended where necessary and, where they take us forward as a country and as a society, that they will be supported regardless of their point of origin. That is fundamental to our work. As part of that, I hope we will not see any return of the guillotine to stifle debate - it was a very positive thing in the previous Seanad that it was not used in this way - and that we move away from the inappropriate use of the money message to stifle the progress of positive legislative proposals.

I take a moment to congratulate all the Members who have been elected or appointed to this Seanad. I agree with other speakers that it is a pity we have broken with the established tradition whereby, in the 24th Seanad and 25th Seanad, five Independent Members were appointed from a cross-section of society, including business, the arts, civil society, the diaspora and from Northern Ireland. It is a pity that five Members with independent voices were not independently appointed to this Seanad, but I am very happy that the one appointed Independent Senator is Eileen Flynn. She will be an exceptional Senator and her appointment marks a very important moment for Travellers in Ireland. She is an excellent, strong activist and a great voice for justice across the full range of issues we will face in this Seanad. I welcome her appointment to the House. I also want to offer particular congratulations to our Seanad-based Minister of State, Pippa Hackett, who will be taking up the very important brief of biodiversity and land use. I look forward to working alongside her on that work.

I acknowledge the excellent Members from all parties and none who have not returned to this Seanad. Each party has excellent former Senators who are no longer with us, including two members of the Civil Engagement Group, John Dolan and Colette Kelleher. I assure the House that the work they began will be continued. I thank the Clerk, the staff of the Seanad and all the others staff across the public service and the health service whose work has been crucial as we try to navigate our way through the current global pandemic. It is very important, as was noted earlier, that we do not simply thank them but follow through in terms of real recognition, real supports and concrete measures that will support public workers across Ireland.

This 26th Seanad meets in difficult circumstances and at an incredibly important moment

in human history. We face extraordinary challenges and extraordinary opportunities. We are at the beginning of the UN's global decade of action campaign, with just ten years to deliver unimaginable leaps forward in terms of climate action, equality and sustainable development. We will need not simply to do more but to do things differently. It is a challenge that will require all of us to step up not only in terms of being awake to what needs to be done but being rigorous, compassionate and imaginative in doing it. I know that those skills are in this room. The work we do together in this House will sit alongside that of other parliamentarians across the world, of civil society and of the transformative social movements on environment, gender equality, anti-racism and workers' rights that are driving the climate change agenda and are part of the global decade of action. I wish us all well in facing the challenges and possibilities ahead and I look forward to working with all Members in that task.

An Cathaoirleach: I thank the Senator. I was honoured to serve with her in the previous Seanad and to serve with her father on the foreign affairs committee. He and I share the distinction of being under rocket attack together and being in Colombia together. He is a great public servant, as is the Senator.

Senator Niall Blaney: I thank the Cathaoirleach for his kind words earlier in reference to my late father and his many visits to the wee thatched cottage in Rosnakill, County Donegal. Our family goes back a century or thereabouts, which is a fair length of time. I am sure the Cathaoirleach will serve his position extremely well and proudly. It is a humbling day for him and a proud day for his father and brother, who are here to witness it. I acknowledge my two colleagues who contested our party election for the nomination to the role of Cathaoirleach. The dignity with which with all three candidates conducted themselves in that election and accepted the result says a lot about our party and how things augur for the term ahead.

I had not envisaged making a maiden speech today but here I am. I would like to dedicate my comments to my former director of elections, Councillor Dessie Larkin, who is no longer with us, and to former Senator, Jimmy Harte, who was a colleague of mine when we were first elected together to Donegal County Council. Jimmy had an accident in 2013, while he was a Member of this House, but I am glad to hear that he is doing very well and is hale and hearty.

I have listened carefully on this, my first day in the Seanad, to all that has been said by my colleagues. Over the weekend, I saw references in the media to something that several speakers referenced today, namely, that the west of Ireland is lacking representation at Government level. As someone who has been in politics for a while, although still a young man, I would say that sometimes one needs to take a deep breath and wait. In regard to the Government proposals that are coming forward on ministerial positions, it is true to say that we are just halfway through the process. I am confident that the western seaboard, particularly from Donegal to Limerick, will be well represented when all is said and done.

I listened to colleagues talk about there not being Northern voices at the table here in the Seanad. I acknowledge that but, for me, as a republican and a northern voice here - some would refer to where I live as being north of the North - a very pleasing aspect of the programme for Government is the approach it takes in regard to Northern Ireland. For years, I and many other politicians battled to get recognition for Northern Ireland. For too many years, national development plans from North and South have ignored each other to the extent that health services, infrastructure and many Departments have failed because there has not been a joined-up approach. This is the first time a Government is aiming to move forward with a joint or shared approach. While we may not have the voices in Seanad Éireann this term, all voices and rep-

representatives, North and South, are going to have an opportunity to speak. A new unit is to be set up in the Taoiseach's office which will have a joint departmental approach both North and South to building our infrastructure, community and island - a shared island.

Like any republican, I have an aspiration of a shared future together. I am not necessarily comfortable with the term "united Ireland" because I do not think it is respectful of all traditions within the island under the auspices of the Good Friday Agreement. The Good Friday Agreement has taken a backward step since the Assembly at Stormont collapsed. That damaged the Good Friday Agreement but the steps in the programme for Government are an opportunity for all voices and representatives north and south of the Border to approach this island on a shared basis and ensure all Departments match up in order that all our people and traditions North and South are looked after. I am not a republican who classes himself as such by wrapping myself in a flag. I am the type of republican that republicans are meant to be, that is, someone with the point of view that there should be a shared approach - an all-island approach - and that there should be a voice for everybody at the table. This approach, with the new unit in the Taoiseach's office, allows for that and I hope this House embraces it. I look forward with optimism to what comes off that because I no longer want to see those national development plans that were created in the past with a blank for the Six Counties in Northern Ireland. We lost out heavily in Donegal as a result of those plans because, geographically, we are so attached to Northern Ireland. We are not totally cut off from the South but our geography leaves us quite cut off and those national development plans never recognised Northern Ireland. The N2-A5 project is one example which is thankfully addressed in the programme for Government. I look forward to working with our new party leader, Senator Chambers, the new Leader of the House and all colleagues in a cohesive way and in a manner that is about looking after all our people and their interests and moving our island forward in a shared way. That is exciting and I look forward to it.

An Cathaoirleach: I thank Senator Blaney. I also thank him and his family for their long service to the State and for his vision of a shared island, with which I agree. The language of politics is important and the words "united Ireland" spark fear in the hearts of many in Northern Ireland because they do not know what that would look like. The new unit in the Department of the Taoiseach is something we all welcome.

I call Senator Eileen Flynn.

Senator Eileen Flynn: I congratulate the Cathaoirleach on his new role and I look forward to working with him in the future. I am sorry; I am extremely nervous after hearing all the other speakers. I take this opportunity to thank the Taoiseach, Deputy Micheál Martin, and Deputies Eamon Ryan and Leo Varadkar for my nomination to be the Traveller representative here today. For over 30 years Travellers have fought to be around the political table and it is brilliant that there is finally a voice in Seanad Éireann from a member of the Traveller community, but also a unique voice for those at the very end of Irish society. I look forward to being that voice and to working with everybody. I hope we can all learn from each other and that I will be the person who breaks down the barriers for Traveller people and those at the end of Irish society.

An Cathaoirleach: I thank Senator Flynn for her contribution, and for being here and allowing her name to go forward for nomination. It is not an easy thing to do when one gets a phone call from the Taoiseach asking one to be the voice of an entire community that has felt such extreme marginalisation for so long. I thank Senator Flynn and we look forward to working with her and hearing her thoughts and ideas on how we can bridge that gap.

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Senator Timmy Dooley: I congratulate the Cathaoirleach on his election and elevation to this high office. He is well overdue based on his work rate and his commitment to public service. Like others, I have been contacted by many councillors throughout the country over the last number of days and it is clear from travelling and meeting with them that the Cathaoirleach has played a very important role in cementing the relationship between the Oireachtas and local representatives in county councils. He well deserves this accolade and position. Now the work begins and I know he has the tenacity, capacity, ability and grounding in public life through his contact with councillors to do a really good job. I wish him well and will work with him in doing that.

I also recognise the appointments of Senators Doherty and Chambers as Leader and Deputy Leader of the House, respectively. There has been much talk about the historic significance of the coming together of these three parties, and Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael specifically, to form a Government and the positivity from that. As I reflected on the appointment of Senator Doherty, I saw that one of the practical positives is that I will no longer have to face her across a television studio, where she was always a very forthright campaigner. It will be much easier to be on the same side rather than opposite her and I say that with the greatest possible respect to her. She is someone I have admired for a long time from the other side of the House.

We have talked about many different issues today, but there is no doubt that we are facing some very significant challenges. When we contested various elections over the last number of months, health and housing were to the fore and were the two most important issues on which the general election was fought. They are still there and have to be addressed, but since then we have had the unexpected bolt from the blue of the Covid-19 pandemic crisis. That poses very significant challenges for us and will re-orient how we do business from here on. It is going to challenge the public purse and the economy, as it already has.

In talking about the pandemic, it is important that we recognise the significant loss of life that has taken place. We need to reflect on that, not just for the people who have passed but also for their families, friends and relations who were not able to go through the normal process of a funeral. That has a significant bearing on the lives of so many.

Many lives have been shattered, not just of those who have lost loved ones but those who have lost jobs as well. Some sectors of the economy are attempting to open up today and sadly, many small businesses will not be able to face into the next level of reopening because they just do not see any possibilities for themselves. We will have to do a huge amount of work to recalibrate the economy and get people back to work.

We should also pay due recognition to all front-line workers. Many have mentioned the healthcare workers, who have worked extraordinarily hard at a difficult time. However, there are others in the front line who risked their lives as well, including: in law enforcement, such as prison guards and army personnel; water, sewerage and sanitation workers; those in the retail sector, such as retail and supply chain workers; transport workers, both public and private; electricians and plumbers; and the postman, who is often forgotten when we talk about front-line workers. We must embrace all workers in those sectors, some of whom are undervalued in society. We rightly place a lot of value on education in this country. We sometimes overvalue certain sectors of society, but when faced with a pandemic such as this we see the people we absolutely depend on when the chips are down. We must give recognition to that.

Like others, I wish to make a general comment on the notional lack of a presence in the

Cabinet for balanced regional development in terms of the positions. The reality is that Ministers are appointed. There is a former Minister and a former Minister of State here and they will recognise that their roles in those positions were not about bringing the goodies to their constituencies. As heads of Departments, they represented all the country. Our role and the role of Members of the Lower House is to make the case for the people we represent and to ensure a fair hearing is given to the needs of our various communities. I will be fighting hard on behalf of the constituency of Clare, which I had the tremendous honour to represent in the past. There are real challenges there. I acknowledge Senator Garvey's presence too. She is a good friend of mine and we have many connections. She will also be a champion of the issues.

There are issues in the mid-west. There is the continued importance of Shannon Airport. There is the attempt to find a resolution to our energy crisis, recognising that Moneypoint will no longer play the major role it did previously. The communities that have built up and survived around that area now need to find an alternative. I put a great deal of stock in the last Dáil on ensuring that a just transition was not just for the midlands. Yes, it is important there, but we must now look at a just transition not only in the energy sector but also the requirement for a just transition to assist people to transition away from the employment opportunities that no longer exist as a result of the pandemic. Certain small businesses, particularly in the tourism and hospitality sector, will never open again. They supported two, three or four workers each. I am often taken by the way in which there is a public outcry if 100 jobs are lost, and rightly so, but sometimes 100 small businesses that are employing four or five people each go out of business overnight and nobody talks about it.

We must reflect now on where we are and the challenges we face, and try to find solutions for the people we represent. First, that involves getting people back to work. However, we must not forget the crisis that existed previously, and still does, in the health service, with a greater number of people than ever still waiting, and the housing crisis, which has bedevilled the past two Administrations. We cannot again allow ourselves to ignore that situation. The most basic expectation of any man, woman or child is to have a roof over his or her head and to know where he or she is going at night. If we are to have any success in the term of this Oireachtas, attaching great significance to resolving those two problems would serve us all, and the country, well.

An Cathaoirleach: Thank you, Senator Dooley. I know you will continue to represent the banner county here and also through the European group which Fianna Fáil is aligned to representing Ireland in Europe. We all share your concerns and the belief that everybody should know where he or she will be laying his or her head at night. Everybody is entitled to have a roof over his or her head. I call Senator Pauline O'Reilly.

Senator Pauline O'Reilly: I do not know you very well, a Chathaoirligh, but from the few conversations we have had you strike me as an energetic, enthusiastic and creative person and I look forward to working with you. Earlier we discussed your idea about having children in the Chamber to talk about climate and the environment and I would love to work with you on that. I look forward to working with you and the Members of the House.

This is a proud day for me, my family - my parents are here - and for my children, Finn and Cara, and my husband, Conor. It has been mentioned a few times already, but it is important to acknowledge that they enable us to do our work. I have campaigned through successful and unsuccessful campaigns in the last couple of years and I have been travelling from Galway West to Dublin and staying here for a few days every week over the last few weeks while we formed

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a Government. That was not easy on my family but they did it with grace, so I thank them.

We all agree that it is a historic day. First, we are here instead of in the Chamber. It is also historic for the Green Party to have four Senators in the House. I also thank the Civil Engagement group of which we are a part. It is wonderful to be in such a richly diverse group of people. It is historic also because nine of the 11 Senators appointed by the Taoiseach are women, but it is important to point out that this was because many women did not get elected. Let us not overstate the fact that nine out of the 11 are women and instead look to how in future we can help to promote the idea that there must be full representation, or 50:50 representation, among the genders.

It also has been mentioned that we do not have representation from the North. I wish to address that, although in a way Senator Blaney stole my thunder. I was involved in the Government talks and on the Northern Ireland part in particular. We took great pains to do things differently and to examine having a national planning framework that looked at the entire island, as well as looking at a cross-Border approach to pollution and environmental matters. It is one landmass and we must look at it that way, but we also have diverse communities. That is why having that unit in the Department of the Taoiseach is very important. It is not just the voices of politicians. The words of the programme for Government refer to stakeholder engagement, which is stakeholder engagement across the traditions. We were quite firm in using the terminology of a shared island because it is important to bring people with us and that we all make those decisions together for the island. I believe there is a great deal in that section on Northern Ireland from which people can take heart.

Today is also historic because we have a Minister of State in our midst. It shows great vision by Deputy Eamon Ryan and the Government that Senator Hackett is appointed based on merit. If we can continue that I believe we can secure very strong Government. She is appointed on merit because of her long involvement with the agriculture sector as a farmer. Who better to be a Minister of State? We must also ensure that we continue the strong tradition of robust debate in this Chamber. We are not a mirror image of the Dáil; we have our own voices in the Seanad. I would love to work with all Members to ensure that this continues.

I thank the staff and particularly the Clerk, Mr. Martin Groves, who sat with me and discussed my eligibility for the labour panel. I do not come from a trade union tradition in the same sense as other Members on the labour panel. Trade unions are very important but many in our society are left out of collective bargaining. Senator Flynn spoke eloquently and it is hard to follow that, but there are many people who are not in trade unions and have no collective bargaining. Those voices need to be heard. Some 360,000 people in the Republic are carers. The majority are unpaid and are women. They do not belong to a trade union. When we talk about labour and workers, let us talk about workers in the broadest sense possible. Let us stop referring to people who get up early in the morning and instead talk about people who engage in our community, who care and who contribute in ways that are often forgotten and ignored.

6 o'clock

I intend to be that voice in this Chamber, as well as the voice for children who have no votes and no voices, to go back to the excellent proposal from the Cathaoirleach to bring the voices of children in.

The planet has no voice and no vote. I am heartened by the many speakers who have

brought up our global responsibility and our responsibilities on climate. While it was a very proud day for us to have four Green Party Senators elected, it is on the basis, not of pride, but of a grave responsibility. We were elected because the people of Ireland understand we are in a crisis and we need to follow through on that responsibility with action. I look forward to working with the Cathaoirleach.

An Cathaoirleach: Thank you. I look forward to working with the Senator on those issues that are so important to us all here in Ireland but also to the planet.

Senator Fintan Warfield: I congratulate the Cathaoirleach on his election and thank the former Cathaoirleach, Senator Denis O'Donovan, who knows how much I appreciated his support during the previous term.

I want to send my condolences to everyone in my party in Belfast who tomorrow will lay Bobby Storey to rest. The road to Irish unity and equal treatment across this island is marked by his contribution.

In contrast to the Dáil, there is a huge Government majority in this Chamber and, therefore, the Seanad does not reflect the change the people voted for in February. How could it, still unreformed after shelves of reports, years of committees and two referenda, and with no real mention of Seanad reform in the programme for Government? If anything sums up the programme for Government, it is just that - more of the same. However, there are more pressing issues facing our communities. As I cycled in from Inchicore this morning, I reflected on the fact the people of Dublin South-Central did not return one Fine Gael or Fianna Fáil Deputy, a clear message that the Establishment failed to deliver anything in housing or in health.

I will stand up for my family and friends, and all those who still live at home with their parents. Sinn Féin will stand by all the people who rely on a failed two-tier public and private health system. I will stand up for those who worked hard all their lives and contributed more than enough to earn a pension at 65. I will also proudly be a champion for the unity of our country and new common-sense constitutional arrangements.

The Covid emergency has shown people how quickly the system can change and adapt. The past number of months have only strengthened an appetite for change. I listened to commentators at the weekend say people would have had to grow up in a Fianna Fáil or Fine Gael household to understand the significance of this new coalition. Let me tell the House what others see - a Taoiseach who sat in Cabinets that constructed the world's most inflated property bubble and a Tánaiste who sat in Cabinets that forced the most crippling austerity on public services and communities. We now have a left-right divide in Ireland. We will hold the Government and the Leader of this House to account on climate action, affordable housing, a living wage, the trolley crisis and the pension age, and we will work with others to propose workable alternatives.

In conclusion, I also want to say comhghairdeas to Senator Eileen Flynn, who has been appointed. She played an instrumental role in the committee on issues facing the Traveller community, on which I was proud to serve. I know she will be a strong and independent voice. I offer her my support and any experience I have gained over the previous term.

An Cathaoirleach: I thank the Senator for his contribution and for his work in the previous Seanad on the issues and on holding the Government to account, which is the job and the role of Opposition.

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Senator Erin McGreehan: I congratulate the Cathaoirleach on his election. He is a very strong and true republican, just like myself. I come from a long tradition of true Irish republicanism. As that republican, I am incredibly proud to stand here today as a worthy Taoiseach's nominee, not just a party member, given some Senators want to put down these nominees. We are hard-working people. We are here with a voice and it is a voice worth listening to.

I am here to serve my country, my county and my people. The honour of being elected to this House has not gone past me. I was a little girl called Erin who was convinced as a child that she was called after the Oireachtas Éireann - Dáil Éireann - and that she was meant to be here, so maybe my parents knew more than I did. I was that little girl who stayed up late at night and who snuck into the kitchen to watch "Oireachtas Report", absolutely in awe of the speakers in both Houses. I listened to the debates completely in awe of the history, of how our forefathers fought for this country and of what they give us. They give us two proud Houses and I am part of that. I am so privileged to stand here with all others as an equal Member, not just a party Member. I am here to represent everyone. I take umbrage at the suggestion we are not all-inclusive.

I am from the Border region. I am from the side of a mountain. I know what it is like to live in rural Ireland. I went to college in Galway and I know what it is like to live in a rural city. I know what it is like to be a mother with a young family. I know what it is like to struggle with bills and to live with parents for a couple of years when trying to afford a house. These are all important things. I am so proud to be here with that voice today.

I look forward to working with the Cathaoirleach. I congratulate the Leader of the House, Senator Regina Doherty, and the leader of the Fianna Fáil group, Senator Lisa Chambers.

An Cathaoirleach: I thank the Senator. I have no doubt she deserves to be in this House. In fact, I am sure further public office awaits, no matter where that is. Although she acts locally as a councillor, she thinks globally and she is already inviting the possible future US President, Mr. Biden, who has ancestors in her part of the world, and maybe he might address our House at some stage. I look forward to working with the Senator on that.

Senator Annie Hoey: I offer my congratulations to the Cathaoirleach. I am very new to all this and so I do not have great accolades to go back on. I was struck by the fact that, this time three years ago, I was packing up my office and leaving the student movement where I had been the president of the Union of Students in Ireland, USI. I did not know what I was doing, where I was going or what was going to happen, so it has been quite an interesting three years. I am sure Members in the Upper House or Lower House got emails from me or were lobbied by me during the previous term. It will be much easier to catch them now that I am in the building as opposed to being on the outside.

We have a new Minister for Higher Education, Innovation and Science and I am very optimistic that, at long last, we will see action on higher education. I know another former member of USI in this House also and I look forward to working with them on higher education issues. I hope we see some action on that because I do not think it sustainable that it continues as it is.

I first went to college when the financial crash happened, and it was like going from technicolour to black and white in that everything suddenly changed. I am acutely aware that we are potentially on the precipice of yet another great recession. I hope the Members of this House and the Lower House are determined to ensure that young people are not left behind and that

we do not have a swathe of people once again faced with what happened ten years ago. It is extraordinarily difficult and people of my generation - my colleagues and my friends - are still facing the repercussions of that.

I reiterate the commitment of my Labour Party colleagues to work with Members across this House on the issue of workers' rights, ensuring collective bargaining and ensuring a fair day's pay for a fair day's work for all workers. We will also work for equality. I want to add my congratulations to Senator Eileen Flynn on her appointment. It is very important that we listen and learn from her and that we act on and support her in the work she is doing. It is very important, when people are speaking on behalf of a group, that we do not just allow them to speak and do the work, because we also have to come in and do the work. I commit to that and look forward to working with the Senator.

Many speakers have addressed the issue of diversity, who is in this Chamber and who is not in this Chamber. Other speakers have alluded to who is missing from this room. While gender representation has improved and 40% of Senators are women, there is still a lot more work to do. There are many types of people who are not in this room including people from the migrant community and people in direct provision. There are a number of categories of people who are not here. I ask that everybody in this Chamber commit to listening to those in their community and to ensuring that their voices are lifted up.

Of course, there can be no climate justice without social justice. My Labour Party colleagues and I look forward to working with people across the Chamber on that issue. As everyone has said, climate justice is one of the biggest issues we will have to face and tackle in the coming years.

If I were to be so bold as to sum up what everyone has said, we all want to work for a better quality of life for those in our communities. I look forward to working with everyone here to achieve that.

Many people have talked about their families and those who helped them get here. I thank my almost husband. We should be away on our honeymoon at the moment. I suppose I am fortunate that I am here instead, although I am still not married. Our time will come. I also thank my family. I am not from a political family. As I have said, it is accidental that I am here. I am very grateful for how quickly they learned what we needed to do to get me into this position over the last few years. I am also very grateful that they have accepted this new political realm into their lives.

I want to briefly recognise my sister who works in the area of disabilities and healthcare. She has been working extraordinarily hard throughout the Covid crisis. I hope this Government takes a long hard look at how we support people with disabilities and give them all the dignity we can. I have another sister who works in the arts sector and I am a former theatre person myself. Of course, the arts have carried us through this crisis. I do not think anyone could imagine coming through this crisis without the joy, optimism and creativity the arts have given us. I very much look forward to ensuring the arts are recognised in the way they should be.

That is all I have to say. I am extraordinarily grateful to be here. I wish the Cathaoirleach the very best. I reiterate the commitment of my Labour colleagues and I to working to improve the quality of life of every citizen of Ireland, both those who are represented in this House and those who are not. I look forward to working with those communities to try to help them and

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to lift them up so that in the next local elections and the next general election we might see a better reflection of the increasing diversity of the population of Ireland.

An Cathaoirleach: I thank the Senator for her remarks and for all the emails she sent to us on behalf of the Union of Students in Ireland. It is great that she is now here to lobby in person. I hope she will thank her sisters for their work and I wish her well on her upcoming marriage.

Senator Shane Cassells: I am delighted to have been elected to this House as a member of the labour panel because, as a proud member of the National Union of Journalists over two decades, I know the importance of our unions and their work in protecting workers' rights. This was bred into me from my very early childhood when I saw my uncle Peter head up the unions in this country in the 1980s and 1990s, negotiating wage deals and making sure that everyone got a fair crack and a proper living wage. This will be very important to me in our work in this Chamber.

As a member of the National Union of Journalists, NUJ, I was particularly delighted to see the media included in a full Government Department when the Cabinet was announced last Saturday. This is needed now more than ever. The industry needs great support because it is under attack from things like social media and fake news. During this pandemic and crisis, we saw the importance of reliable and trusted media sources. I am therefore delighted with this Department. It will be greatly beneficial for the people of our country.

To pick up on some of the comments made by Senators Craughwell and Boyhan about the role of this Chamber and their message that reform should start today, reform had been starting in the last term. Along with Senator McDowell, I was delighted to be part of a cross-party group comprising Members of both Houses which worked on a very important document on reform. I hope that we will see some of those recommendations implemented rather than buried by the Dáil as they were in the last term. I hope to see more than just lip service being paid to that document.

I also look forward to seeing the promises made in the programme for Government with regard to local government reform honoured, including those measures regarding directly elected mayors. Some damage was done to the local government network over the last ten years in the name of reform. I hope that the programme for Government will ensure that things such as the town centre initiatives and a "town centre first" policy will be properly funded and delivered upon. I will be holding the Minister, Deputy O'Brien, to account in that regard. Many businesses are tentatively opening their doors today and they are looking at a changed reality and a new world on our main streets. We should focus on our economy, our people's jobs and livelihoods and making things easier through measures on rates or other business supports. Whether in my town of Navan, in Sligo, or in Killarney, businesses need our help.

I know the Cathaoirleach will be reforming and dynamic within the current Standing Orders. He will bring his style of leadership to the Chair. I am proud to have known him since he first ran in 2007. In that campaign he had a distinctive calling card which used the Tricolour, but not as some kind of logo, marketing ploy or gimmick. He understood and had pride in the Tricolour. He has done immense work over the last 13 years in working towards a united Ireland. I am extremely conscious of that. He has also done a great amount of work in private with members of the unionist community. Many have talked today about the need for someone from the North or from the unionist community. From the South, the very bottom, of Ireland the Cathaoirleach has done a massive amount of work in the North of Ireland. He has gone to

Orange lodges and has met members of the community privately without letting anyone know. He has produced a document on working towards the united Ireland to which we all aspire. I look forward to working with him in the Chamber. All of us in Fianna Fáil are very proud of him.

Finally, as this is my maiden speech in this Chamber, I thank all who supported me in my election campaign. I thank my family, my wife and my children. I also acknowledge a very distinguished former Member of the Upper House, the former Senator, Donie Cassidy, who is sitting in the Gallery. He did a huge amount of work in helping me to get elected. I appreciate that. I thank the Cathaoirleach very much and congratulate him again.

An Cathaoirleach: I thank Senator Cassells. I remember him from that famous campaign in 2007 as well. I am delighted he is here with us now. I also recognise the former Senator, Donie Cassidy, who has forgotten more about winning Seanad elections than I will ever know.

Senator Lorraine Clifford-Lee: I congratulate the Cathaoirleach on his great victory here today. Many of our colleagues have made reference to his political career but I would like to stretch back to before that political career and make reference to his reality television career. Some in the House may not know that the Cathaoirleach was in Treasure Island on RTÉ, which was the far more innocent precursor to Love Island.

An Cathaoirleach: There was no love on that island, I can tell you that.

Senator Lorraine Clifford-Lee: The Cathaoirleach came third on Treasure Island. Thankfully, he has become better at winning elections since then and has not come third since, only first. He came first today and is now sitting in the Chair. I wish him the very best of luck. He is deeply committed to public service and I know he will do an excellent job. I am very proud that he was the Fianna Fáil nominee today. I thank our colleagues across the House who supported him in attaining the position. I pay tribute to his family and his supporters. None of us would be here, and the Cathaoirleach would surely not be in his new position, without our supporters and families. It is a very special day and I hope Senator Mark Daly and his family will get to celebrate it in these very strange times. I congratulate him once again.

I also commend the outgoing Cathaoirleach, Senator O'Donovan. Everybody who served with him in the last Seanad will know his ability and his commitment to public service. He was an excellent Cathaoirleach.

Senators Doherty and Chambers, the new Leader and Deputy Leader of the House, are two excellent colleagues. I am sure they will fulfil their roles with great enthusiasm and dedication. I look forward to working with both of them in their new roles. I am very honoured and delighted to be here today, having received a phone call on Saturday afternoon. It is a great honour to serve in this House once again. I am particularly happy to be a Member of the House that has 40% female representation. That is a first in Irish politics. While other speakers have referred to the fact that this does not represent full diversity, it is definitely a step on the right road, especially when one bears in mind that women have been most affected by this pandemic. We have seen domestic violence rates go through the roof. We have a shocking problem in this country of women dying in their own homes. We have the economic impact of this pandemic, in particular on women who were on the margins of the economy as it was. The additional emotional and other burdens of homeschooling and domestic duties that have been put on women have further set them back in their economic disadvantage. Over the coming months and years

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I would like the House to play a real role in discussing how we make Ireland a better place for women. We must re-establish screening services, which have been suspended, as they are vitally important to women's health. I will speak to the Minister for Health to see how we can get those vital screening services up and running.

On a final note, I am a proud republican. I am a proud Fianna Fáil person and I will not tolerate any suggestion that Fianna Fáil does not represent the ordinary working person as have always done. It might suit some people's agenda to push us to the right so they can occupy the left but I can tell them I will not stand for it.

An Cathaoirleach: I thank the Senator. I also thank her for her work in the previous Seanad. She was responsible for the justice portfolio, which is a huge portfolio to be responsible for. She was one of the co-sponsors of the Irish Sign Language Bill 2016 for the deaf community and she spent hours in the Seanad working on it. The Senator also did enormous work on the gender pay gap. A report from Europe today indicated that Ireland is simply not doing enough on it. It appears that equality still eludes us 102 years after women got the vote and we need to bridge that gap.

Senator Paul Gavan: Congratulations first of all, a Chathaoirligh. I wish you well in your post. I look forward to working with you, and to your new ideas, energy and input. I have no doubt you will do a fine job.

I also congratulate the new Leader of the House, Senator Doherty. I wish to put on the record again my gratitude to all of the staff here in the Seanad for their courtesy and patience.

Today, it strikes me as being appropriate to mention a few people who will not be in this Seanad but who did such tremendous work in the previous one. I wish to take a moment to speak about some of those people, on a cross-party basis. I will naturally begin with my colleague, Máire Devine. Máire made a huge contribution in the that Seanad. She is a true expert in the realm of health but also of workers' rights. She is a passionate Irish republican and a feminist. She will be sorely missed as she made a tremendous contribution.

A number of speakers mentioned Billy Lawless and I wish to mention him as well. He did such tremendous work for the diaspora and campaigned alongside all of us in Sinn Féin on presidential voting rights as well. Again, it is important to recognise his contribution. He was such a helpful, pleasant man who went out of his way to build relationships across all parties and made a huge contribution.

I wish to recognise in particular, Colette Kelleher, who did groundbreaking work on Travelers' rights, migrant issues and in challenging direct provision. Again, I hope we can continue to nurture the seeds of her work in this Seanad.

I wish to acknowledge Catherine Noone because she did vital work on the eighth amendment committee and took an awful lot of flak for that at the time. I think that work will stand testament for years to come.

It is not often that I agree with Senator McDowell, but he is absolutely right in what he said about the absence of Ian Marshall from this Seanad. That is said with all respect to all of the new incumbents. Ian was a vital voice for moderate unionism and for inclusion and I am genuinely staggered by the fact that the leaders of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael forgot this and somehow contrived to not bring him back. It is a huge shame.

I want to finish on a positive note. There are many new, very positive voices here from all parties today. I look forward to the next sitting of the Seanad. I particularly welcome the inclusion of Eileen Flynn, who will be a vital voice for equality and progress.

It is kind of nice that when we do get back to the other building we will see Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael on the same side of the Chamber. They are well matched. They suit each other. I appeal to all of us on the left, all progressives, to work together. That is the only chance we will have to make progress for workers' rights and for a better, more inclusive Ireland.

An Cathaoirleach: I thank the Senator. His championing of workers' rights, like all colleagues, is well known. His mention of former colleagues who are not in the Chamber with us today is appropriate on a day like this. He also mentioned voting rights, which is in the programme for Government. The most fundamental right of a citizen of any republic should be the right to vote regardless of where one is. I hope we will see progress on that issue under the programme for Government.

Senator Mary Fitzpatrick: We have known each other a long time, a Chathaoirligh. I was first elected as a councillor in 2004 and I know that any member of any local authority in this country worth their salt has your number. You are a tremendous campaigner, a tremendous worker and I think you will be a tremendous Cathaoirleach.

Apart from being a local authority member, I grew up on the Navan Road and in Cabra and you have done tremendous work for the deaf community. That is well recognised in my local community. You can be very proud of that.

I am a northside Dub. I am a GAA supporter and we are a stone's throw from Croke Park. An rud is annamh is iontach. It is not often we would wish a Kerryman well in this part of the city, but I really do wish you well and comhghairdeas. I look forward to working with you.

It is a huge honour for me to take my seat and stand here in the Seanad. I am very conscious that many have been here before me and that many see it as a stepping stone to other places. Like many people, I got involved in politics just to serve my community, to play my part and to make a contribution. It is a tremendous honour to be elected to any public office. It was my particular honour to have been elected to the largest local authority, Dublin City Council, and it is one that I took very seriously. I am very proud to represent my community but I am equally proud to be a voice for that community in this Chamber. I think this Chamber can do tremendous work. We are at a very difficult time for our country and for the globe. We have an ambitious programme for Government, but it is just that; it is a statement of intent. For that programme to have any meaning for the people that we aspire to represent, we have to take hold of it, own it and deliver on its promises. That is our collective challenge. We can do our work in slogans and sound bites or we can do our work seriously. We can take the programme for Government and make it a living document, and we can make it a programme that delivers for our communities and for our country.

It is a huge honour for me, from Dublin Central, to have been nominated by the Taoiseach and I appreciate the support of the other two party leaders, Deputies Ryan and Varadkar. It is a difficult time for our party and for other parties to decide to put our differences aside and to join with those we have opposed and criticised and to try to do better. That is what I have committed to do. I have committed to put my criticisms aside, to take them at their word and to believe that they want to do better. In this constituency of Dublin Central, which is represented by the

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leader of the supposed party for change, we have the lowest home ownership in the country. We have the highest number of homeless accommodation units in the country and zero social and affordable homes have been built in Dublin Central in the past ten years. That is an unacceptable record. It is unacceptable to the people of my community and my constituency. I am determined to take my place in the Seanad and make it relevant to the people of my community and my constituency. I am determined to stop that rot and reverse the crisis in homelessness.

More than 50 years ago, Brother Kevin Crowley set up the Capuchin Day Centre in Church Street. It is busier today than it ever was. That should be unacceptable to all of us. It is unacceptable that any of us would use our time in this Chamber in anything but a constructive way. You, a Chathaoirligh, have my 100% commitment and support to do that, as well as to work with all Senators of all parties and none to ensure that this programme for Government is delivered and that everyone in our country has a secure place to call home.

An Cathaoirleach: Thank you, Senator Fitzpatrick. Thank you for mentioning Brother Kevin Crowley, the Capuchin Day Centre and the sad reality that it is busier than it ever was.

I congratulate the Senator. I know you are going to make a huge contribution in this Seanad on behalf of your community. Some of them were outside the door, so excited were they, to greet you. I do not think anyone quite had the reception party for their arrival today that you had.

Senator Elisha McCallion: I am not from Kerry. Unfortunately, I have no stories to share with yourself. I did some work with you, a Chathaoirligh, in the Good Friday Agreement committee over recent times. I am not your cousin or your political cousin.

An Cathaoirleach: You are more than welcome to Kerry any time.

Senator Elisha McCallion: I do want to congratulate you on taking up the role today.

I am deeply honoured to be standing here today, representing the people of the North. Quite a number of people have suggested that there is no representation from the North. Of course, that is not right. Two of us here live in the North. It is deeply disappointing, however, as has been said by many other Members, that we do not actually have a voice for unionism in this Chamber. That has been reflected across the political divide here today.

I am from a very proud working class community in Derry, Galliagh. I was born and reared there and I proudly reared my own three children there. I am also very proud to be a Derry girl. We will be saying Derry more than Kerry, hopefully, in the coming months.

Derry has always been renowned for its history, not least in terms of its involvement in the Civil Rights Movement and the struggle for a new, agreed, united Ireland, call it what one wants. Derry is the home to two political giants, the late Martin McGuinness and John Hume. Both were the product of the city. They knew far too well the dire consequences of being discriminated against, being excluded from political life and denied the respect for their own culture. Both spent their lives in their own distinctive ways in trying to end the injustices of partition that affected the people that they both represented very well.

One of their greatest legacies, however, is that they helped to bring peace across Ireland, a peace that they gave to all of the people of Ireland, nationalists, unionists and those who aspire to be neither. They did that on the principle of the Good Friday Agreement. We now have a

new and evolving society. Change is in the middle of the momentum propelling it forward. Derry is located in the north west of the island. There is an invisible border between Derry and Donegal. Both are in the periphery of the two states. The people of Derry and Donegal have felt hard the negative effect of partition with decades, if not a centenary, of underinvestment and missed opportunities.

During my term, I will be a vigorous advocate for investment in the north west and for its people who have shamefully been let down by this State and others over the past 100 years. A few short months ago, the winds of change were blowing a gale in the ballot box when the people of this State called time on the domination of the politics of the past, of Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil. They voted for Sinn Féin in unprecedented numbers and elected other parties and Independents on a mandate of change. Unfortunately, we have both conservative parties back in power. The agenda for change, however, will continue to be demanded by Sinn Féin. We will lead in that crusade in a bid to improve the lives of ordinary people.

The real change that I, Sinn Féin and others seek is the independence and reunification of this country. It is clear to see that partition has failed Ireland. Partition has failed residents here in Dublin. Partition has failed residents in Belfast. Partition has failed your own constituents in Kerry, a Chathaoirligh. It has certainly failed the people of the north west.

A new Ireland is no longer just an aspiration. People across the length and breadth of this island are talking every day about what a new, agreed, shared, united Ireland will mean for them. It is about time we took a grasp of that conversation. That conversation will continue no matter what happens. We need to ensure that we involve as many people in the national conversation as outlined in the Good Friday Agreement.

I will spend my time in this Chamber advocating, under the principles of the Good Friday Agreement, for a border poll, for a unity referendum, again call it what one wishes. It is over 20 years since the Good Friday Agreement was signed. The people across the entire island, unionists, nationalists, republicans and others, deserve to have their say. I look forward to working with you, Chair, and all other Members over the coming term, especially those in this Chamber who are agents of change.

Go raibh míle maith agat.

An Cathaoirleach: Thank you, Senator, for your contribution. Hopefully, you will visit Kerry soon. I will be up in Derry at some stage again. I was canvassing there not so long ago. I will not say for whom as I do not want to be political on the issue. Senator Blaney talked about the new unit in the Taoiseach's Department working on the shared island. That is something on which we could all work together.

Senator Pat Casey: Can I give you my congratulations, a Chathaoirligh, on your success of being elected Cathaoirleach today. It is a huge honour for you and for your family. As previous speakers have said, I too know you going back as far as 2006 to that famous strategy of yours to win a Seanad seat in 2007. Some of us have tried to replicate parts of the campaign that you ran then. I had my final meeting with you in 2007 on that famous night in my own hotel, at the Pheasant Pluckers Ball, when you hung around for nearly two and a half hours waiting to speak to me to get my vote. It is that tenacity that other speakers have spoken about that you continue to show. People say that if one hangs on to something long enough it comes back into fashion. I am referring to your hairstyle, a Chathaoirligh, and Treasure Island. It looks as if the

curls are coming back while the hair might be a little lighter.

This is a significant year for me and my family. It is a huge honour for me to be elected to the Seanad. It is also the 60th year since our family business was opened by my father. It would actually be my father's birthday today. We are opening our doors again today. Today is an accumulation of many events for me, of many emotional events for my wife, Sonia, and my mother at home. Regrettably, our father is not with us anymore. My brother is at the hotel today, opening the doors for the first time after three months. We are opening the doors to a very uncertain future. We do not know what is going to happen. We are opening our doors with just 17 people because we just do not know. The tourism industry is probably the industry that will suffer the most because of the pandemic. This will have a significant impact on rural Ireland. Tourism is a major economic driver for rural Ireland. These are the challenges facing us as we move forward. We need to look beyond the immediate supports for business. We need to sustain them well into next year if we are to try to keep these businesses and small family businesses on track.

It would be remiss of me not to thank everybody involved for their work to date in beating the pandemic and in flattening the curve. This is not just the front-line workers; it is every worker who has played his or her role in getting us to where we are today. If they had not done that we would not be reopening our doors today. I put on record my thanks to everybody in that regard.

Housing has been mentioned by Members today. Having served for four years on the Joint Committee on Housing, Planning and Local Government, I have a full grasp of the housing situation. The solutions are not owned entirely by the left. I know from my work on the committee and from working very closely with Deputy Eoin Ó Broin that many of our policies are very close. It is indeed about trying to deliver social homes, but equally it is about tackling the issues front-on with regard to affordability. Affordability to purchase or affordability to rent for our citizens in the future is our greatest challenge.

I thank the Cathaoirleach. I wish you the best of luck and my support in the years to come.

An Cathaoirleach: I thank Senator Casey. I remember the pheasant plucker's ball, which can be very hard to say. I thank the Senator for meeting me all those years ago. I acknowledge his work on the housing committee in the previous Oireachtas. People do not always get credit. Committees are tough and one must be alert. Senator Casey - then Deputy Casey - was the person who spotted that a planning regulation was coming in on rural housing that was economic only, and he insisted that a social aspect be included. As a result it allowed people to live in rural Ireland and that might not otherwise have happened. I want to give the Senator credit for that, and also for his family's employment of so many people in the community of Glendalough, and for his hospitality when I was there.

Senator Malcolm Byrne: I congratulate you, a Cathaoirleach, on your election today. I am very confident that you will be impartial and fair, and that you will stand up for this House and for its voice to be heard within the Oireachtas and more widely.

I thank Mr. Martin Groves and all of his staff, not just for assisting us as new Senators but also for the conduct of the Seanad election in difficult times. It was an unusual experience for those of us who have been involved in elections to observe this election on a screen rather than to be present at the count. I thank Mr. Groves and his staff for their work over recent days in

difficult circumstances.

Like others, I thank those who have helped me. I have been through a couple of elections-----

An Cathaoirleach: Please, do not say “a couple”.

Senator Malcolm Byrne: -----over the past year. While we have the honour of being able to sit in a Chamber such as this, it is the volunteers and those who go out to knock on the doors for whom we are really grateful. In many ways they are the heroes of democracy. Without them we would not have the democratic society that we have.

I was fortunate to be nominated by the Drama League of Ireland when I was elected on the Cultural and Educational Panel. As Senator Hoey said earlier, the arts and music have been helping us through this pandemic period. That has to be recognised. The arts are facing a major challenge currently. Theatres are only beginning to reopen but they are still very much covered by restrictions. It is a very difficult period for professional and amateur artists. As part of the Government’s July stimulus package, we have got to recognise and support the arts, and not just as something that is a nice thing and part of our identity. We must recognise the potential of cultural industries, of which we in this country are all very proud, to generate employment and to create wealth for the State.

Members have referred to the ambitious programme for Government. During the discussions on the programme, I said that the challenge would be around delivery. Part of our responsibility as a Chamber is to hold the Government to account on the various issues, including the very important issue of housing, as mentioned by Senator Casey.

Senator Hoey mentioned that there will now be a Department that focuses specifically on higher and further education and research and innovation and looks at the possibilities presented by the convergence of new technologies and the opportunities for Ireland into the future. It will be very important when informing all our thinking that we engage in evidence-based policy making.

We hear a rich diversity of views from people with different experiences. We are all guilty at times of going into our own echo chambers and only listening to our own supporters. It is important that we listen to alternative views, even those we do not agree with. I have a problem with the idea of simply dividing us into left and right and using divisive language. The world is currently too caught up with the extremes taking over. Senator Clifford-Lee and others have mentioned the Cathaoirleach’s previous reality TV career. We know it is not always good to have someone from a reality TV background assuming a position of leadership, unlike in the Cathaoirleach’s case. The danger is in using what I would call “Trumpian” language that seeks to divide us into “us” and the “other” and in seeking to have some sort of harsh left-right divide, which is wrong. It is important that we listen to other contributions, even those with which we strongly disagree, to help us to formulate our policy on that basis.

We are moving into a situation in which we will not be able to call Ministers in, unfortunately. I congratulate the Leader on her appointment. I suggest that over the next period, before the Ministers come in, we should talk about some of the issues raised by Senators here. Time should be set aside to look at how we can function collectively as a Chamber. I have listened to the contributions of Senators. Senator Cassells spoke about the role of the media and how to tackle fake news on social media. We should have a debate on that issue. A number of Mem-

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bers have raised questions around the role of councillors, the Moorhead report and how we can empower local government. I ask the Leader to set time aside for that. We should also consider also how we involve and engage minorities. I am very happy that the programme for Government commits to addressing issues around trans rights and hate crime. We should look at how we can include people from minorities. We also need to discuss the question of Seanad reform. I would like to bring in legislation at an early stage to give effect to the seventh amendment to the Constitution. I hope time will be set aside to allow discussion on such a Bill in the very near future. By working together we can be very innovative.

I am delighted to see the Government has availed of the opportunity to appoint a Minister of State from this House. I congratulate Senator Pippa Hackett on her appointment. The Government can appoint two Ministers from this House but given the number of noses that were out of joint over the weekend I am not necessarily certain-----

An Cathaoirleach: Canvassing will not disqualify you.

Senator Malcolm Byrne: -----that is going to happen. The Government has a big majority, but it is still important that we hold the Government to account and that we listen to each other. I ask the Leader, in facilitating discussion over the coming weeks, to ensure we look at some of the issues that have been raised by Members. Perhaps she will set aside time to focus on those issues specifically and to look at how we as a House can collectively address some of those concerns.

An Cathaoirleach: I thank Senator Byrne for his work. I am aware that he is passionate about higher education because it is a field he has worked in. If anyone wants to know about Senator Byrne's long campaign over the past two years, I believe the only office he has not run for is President. President Higgins had better watch out.

I could be wrong, but I believe the final speaker is Senator Seery Kearney.

Senator Mary Seery Kearney: I congratulate the Cathaoirleach on his election. We do not know each other. I have only gone to Kerry on holidays. However, I look forward to working and serving with the Cathaoirleach. I also look forward to serving in the Seanad and serving the people of Ireland in all of their diversity.

I look forward to working with the Leader and Deputy Leader. It is a great honour to work alongside the skilled and talented representatives who are all across the House. I pay tribute to Senator Doherty for the exceptional job she did in her previous role as Minister, in particular the incredibly compassionate, decisive and leadership position she took throughout the crisis. I am proud to serve as her party colleague.

I am a new Senator who was nominated by the Taoiseach at the behest of our party leader, the Tánaiste, Deputy Varadkar. Despite what Senator Craughwell might assert, I strongly believe that I am here to serve the people of Ireland and be a voice for people hailing from all backgrounds. It is my privilege to do so.

I was interested to hear the comments about the coalition. It is a unique Government and coming together of three parties, particularly two of them. As I signed the roll today, we were each given a bag - a "party bag" - that contained the Standing Orders of the House and the Bunreacht. The latter describes how a Government comes about and a Taoiseach is elected, that being through a majority voting for him or her and giving him or her the legitimacy of the

Lower House. The parties came together despite their reservations, fears and histories and have proudly done so. In doing that, my party sought the contribution of members and councillors and allowed us to participate in contributing to the programme for Government. Our contributions and emphasis on representing the people are found throughout that programme for Government.

Regarding the coming together of two of the parties, I would like to think I will bring a unique insight to the House. I am a proud Dublin supporter. I am proud to be buzzing for the half dozen and I hope to deny Mayo and Kerry this year. However, I am also the daughter of a proud Mayo woman. I have brought the pride of my family from Killala in Mayo with me today. I am in the perhaps unique position of understanding the complexities of rivals working together in the same house.

Over the course of this Seanad, we will uniquely commemorate significant events in the history of the State - its foundation and the horror of the Civil War. Unlike many of my esteemed colleagues in the House, I have no person of note from either side of the divide in my family history. However, I have heroes who were ordinary working people who worked hard for their families throughout the State's history and prior to its founding. I hope that their voices will be represented as we commemorate those events in our State's history.

As I travelled to the Seanad today, it was moving to see the lights on in businesses that had been closed for so long and parents queuing up outside childcare centres to bring their children back to childcare. It was moving to see normal life, albeit social distanced, beginning to resume. We have honoured the front-line workers in all their different hues from the postman to the nurses and doctors, and rightly so, but it is also important that we honour the people who struggled in working from home, the parents who struggled with children with special needs, and the small businesses that had to close down and sacrifice in putting the health of our nation first. We must have a place where we can remember them while also finding a way as a nation to mourn those who have been lost.

I look forward to serving in what I hope will be a highly effective Seanad. I passionately believe in supporting the ambitious programme for Government. I look forward to continued support for SMEs, given the significant employment they provide in our communities. I also look forward to the work of the previous Government being built on in terms of implementing universal standards of childcare and building more housing. It is not true to say that housing has not been built. It has been increasing year on year, and will increase further over the period of the new Government.

We stand here to serve, enabled by the people in our lives who allow us to be here. I stand here with the support of my husband, David, who is upstairs looking down; my daughter, Scarlett, who sacrifices being with her mother while I am out serving the community; my parents, who have cocooned since March; our family and friends; and my Fine Gael family in the constituency of Dublin South-Central. I am honoured to be here and I look forward to working and serving with the Cathaoirleach, whom I wish the best in his role.

An Cathaoirleach: I thank the Senator. I welcome David to the Visitors Gallery and thank him for his patience.

If I have got the running order wrong, Members will have to show me some forbearance. There is a protocol for how this works and I have not quite figured it out yet, so if Members feel

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like they are not getting the right running order, I will admit it.

I call my good friend, Senator Conway.

Senator Martin Conway: On a housekeeping matter, I indicated very early on-----

An Cathaoirleach: I know.

Senator Martin Conway: -----that I wished to rise and congratulate the Cathaoirleach, but whoever decided on today's floor plan obviously did not give any consideration whatsoever to my specific requirements. I could not see the top table and whether the Cathaoirleach had noticed that I had indicated. As such, I apologise, but my lateness is in no way meant to be disrespectful of the Cathaoirleach.

An Cathaoirleach: Of course.

Senator Martin Conway: Speaking as someone who has been in the ring with him three times and succeeded on the Administrative Panel, it is a fantastic day for him. I know how he campaigns. I know the work he does. I completely understand how and why he gets elected with a resounding vote in every election.

It would be remiss at this stage not to pay tribute to the outgoing Cathaoirleach, Senator O'Donovan, and the outgoing Leader, Senator Buttimer, for the work they did in a difficult Seanad. There was no majority, and the absence of a majority created a different dynamic and type of scenario. The challenges we face going forward will undoubtedly be dealt with ably by the Cathaoirleach and our esteemed and fantastic new Leader, Senator Doherty.

There are new Senators who are in the Seanad for the first time today, people like my good friend, Senator Currie, and others. To them I say it is a great day. I remember the first day I walked through the gates of Leinster House. It was 25 May 2011, the proudest day of my life. Today is my third first day, as it were. It is a privilege to be a Member of Seanad Éireann. What a Senator can achieve is phenomenal.

I was the first ever visually impaired Member elected to the Oireachtas. In my third term, I am still the only visually impaired Member.

7 o'clock

I would have hoped at this stage that would have changed, but sadly, it has not. The one thing I really do commend you for, a Chathaoirligh, is the work you have done in terms of Irish Sign Language. We saw the result of that throughout the pandemic when there were signers at every important press briefing. You took on that issue. You championed it and drove it. I supported you from the Government benches at the time. I helped ruffle feathers because that had to happen, but it was the right thing to do. The one thing that defines this House is that when it is the right thing to do, although we may have our disagreements on how to go about it, we usually roll up our sleeves and work together to deliver in those terms.

I was the only Clare representative in the Seanad for the past four years. I acknowledge that Senator Timmy Dooley is here. I also acknowledge Senator Róisín Garvey, my neighbour, and her commitment to a better Ireland, a better rural Ireland, and a better way of living. I have no doubt her presence is going to be felt here very quickly as we move forward.

I have no doubt, a Chathaoirligh, that you will bring a new, different dynamic style of chairing this Chamber. You will espouse the absolute belief in every citizen being equal. You have demonstrated that in the work you have done heretofore. I have no doubt Seanad Éireann will continue to be a beacon to drive equality as we come out of recession and as we come out of the post-Covid-19 period where recovery will have to be just and fair. What we have achieved in terms of equality can be embedded in our future as we carve and shape our future as we move forward.

We have an enormous body of work to do. I have no doubt that will be done with integrity, with decency and with a determination that every single citizen in this Republic of ours - north, south, east and west - will be brought along in a way that has not happened in the past. The principles and founding principles that drive every Member of this House to be in this House is that they want to see a true, equal and just Ireland. We will work together to achieve that.

Again, Senator Daly, I am absolutely delighted for you. Congratulations and enjoy it.

An Cathaoirleach: I thank you for your support on the Irish Sign Language Act. You are the embodiment of the belief in this Republic that everybody should be allowed to achieve their full potential regardless of the circumstances of their birth. I apologise for not spotting you indicate earlier. I am aware that the Senator has worked on that.

Senator Lynn Boylan: Thank you, a Chathaoirligh. I also offer my congratulations on your election to the Chair. You were a great ally to me when we were doing the “Free Ibrahim” campaign and I hope we can continue to work together on such human rights issues.

I remember in 2009 when I was tallying in a community centre in Kerry and I realised then that there is no challenge more futile than a Dub trying to get elected in Kerry. That is my Kerry story for the record today.

It is an immensely proud day for me. I am from a working-class background, the daughter of a bus driver who grew up in Tallaght. I know there are kids now in Tallaght who are looking and saying that they too can take up a position in the Houses of the Oireachtas. It is for them that one likes to demonstrate and put forward that our Oireachtas is for everybody, and long may it continue that working-class people can aspire to be Members here.

It is a huge honour and I hope I can bring my experience from being both a Member of the European Parliament but also having been an ecologist. I have worked in forestry and in environmental education. There are some positives within the programme for Government that we can certainly work together on in this House and while they are unclear, they are positives. They include the increased investment in public transport and the introduction of carbon budgets. However, it cannot go unnoticed that the climate action plan in the programme for Government is wrapped up in the same business-as-usual economic policy. I am passionate about climate justice. Climate justice is not just about the historical responsibility of who created the emissions. It is not just about ensuring those who are in the global south will be protected from the worst impacts of climate change. Climate justice is about ensuring the inequalities we have in our society in this country are not exacerbated by the policies we take for climate action. I refer to those of us who are on the left. I believe in left and right politics because it is important we have that ideology and know where we stand on issues. I care deeply about climate change. I want a green new deal that offers hope and a better quality of life for all of our citizens, not just the same old citizens who benefit every time.

I witnessed during the lockdown people sneering at those who queued up outside Penneys to avail of cheap clothes and try to clothe their family on low incomes. The same people who sneered at those queuing to go into Penneys are the same people who balk when we talk about a wealth tax that would really address the high levels of consumption and consumerism.

Likewise, there is talk of electric cars in the programme for Government. That is all well and good, but working families are driving diesel cars they were incentivised to buy the previous time the Green Party was in government. They are now in a position where they are asking whether they are going to have to pay more to drive their car to get to work and are not in a position to upgrade to an electric vehicle.

Equally, renters who have looked at the programme for Government and heard all the talk about retrofitting are living in their D,E and G-rated households. What can they do? They can do nothing but suck up the carbon tax because they cannot change their living conditions.

What I hope to bring to this House is to work tirelessly with all of the politicians on all sides, and with the Minister, Deputy Ryan, when he comes into this House, to put forward proposals, but we must have climate justice at the heart of our climate action. We want to live up to our international obligations on greenhouse gas emissions, but we cannot leave huge sections of society behind. It is not just about the unfairness of doing that, it is also about the fact that we will lose any political will that exists among working-class communities across this island to buy into the need to take climate action. We must work with climate justice and social justice at the heart of any climate action. That is what I want to bring to the table. I look forward to working with all Members but I will remind them that we will have no climate action if we do not have climate justice.

An Cathaoirleach: Thank you, Senator Boylan. The House agrees that we need climate justice, not just here in Ireland but also through the world for those who are most affected by climate change.

I call my good friend, Senator Joe O'Reilly.

Senator Joe O'Reilly: Ar dtús báire, déanaim comhghairdeas leis an gCathaoirleach. Níl amhras ar bith agam ná go ndéanfaidh sé jab den chéad scoth agus go mbeidh sé díograiseach, ionraic agus féaráilte agus é á dhéanamh. Táim cinnte faoi sin. Guím rath Dé ar a obair.

I congratulate you on your election to this prestigious high office and I wish you well in it. I worked with you on the Joint Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement for a long time and found your work there impressive and committed. I wish you well in your present role. It is, of course, a big day for your family and I wish them well too.

Very briefly, I will race through a few references to people and then suggest a challenge or two that face this House. Senator O'Donovan merits mention today in positive terms for his good work. That is a universal view and does not need elaboration. My constituency colleague and friend, Senator Wilson, who contested for the office of Cathaoirleach also merits congratulations for that participation and for his personal integrity. His services and qualities will still be available to the House in other ways.

I am delighted my good friend who inspires me a lot through her work, Senator Regina Doherty, is the Leader of the House. People show their true mettle or lack of it in the face of adversity and Regina Doherty was confronted with personal and national adversity recently and

she shone through brilliantly. That is the measure of somebody. That is an indomitable spirit that cannot be repressed and is there for the right reason. I am delighted she will lead the House. I equally wish Senator Lisa Chambers well as Deputy Leader of the House every personal success in that role.

Senator Jerry Buttimer, my colleague and friend, set a very high standard as Leader last year. That is a universal view in the House. He showed erudition, fairness and a capacity to knit people and bring them together. That was very important.

I welcome our new colleagues. Many of them have spoken and it is very clear that they are high-calibre people. I also welcome those who are returning. For our former colleagues from the last Seanad, today could be a difficult and emotional day and I wish them well. They did themselves proud and that is what matters, that we do things right when we are meant to do them and whatever happens afterwards is a bonus.

There are a few serious challenges facing the House in the context of the national and international tragedy we have had recently. The challenge to the House is to be part of the solution, to propose solutions and to work in various areas to achieve solutions. One of the biggest challenges confronting the House is to address the question of how we care for our elderly, and how we provide facilities for our elderly in terms of accommodation, retirement villages, dispersed housing, satisfactory nursing homes and, very important, that we augment and improve the role of full-time carers on the carer's allowance, make it a much more attractive package and increase and put on a statutory basis home care packages throughout the country for every old or ill person who wants to avail of them. This is a fundamental challenge with regard to care of the elderly.

Another fundamental challenge, and it ties well into the fact we now have the green agenda at the forefront, is to provide in every town in Ireland digital hubs and facilities to provide communal local working, thus reducing traffic but not isolating people in their homes exclusively, so they can work in villages and towns in communal situations and not suffer personal isolation and a certain depression that could go with totally living at home. This is a very important challenge. I have been a great advocate for the broadband plan, and my good friend, Senator Dooley, will remember working with me on it on the committee that pushed it through. That plan is crucial for home working. This is another great challenge.

It is clearly a great challenge for the Seanad that we address the entire question of childcare and that we look at augmenting the State element of childcare and early childhood education, which can be accessed by everybody and that can be affordable for everybody.

Among the many challenges to which the Seanad must pose solutions, and for which we must be part of the solution, is Seanad reform. Real Seanad reform rests, as previous speakers said, in the quality of all of our work and on the quality of our collective efforts. That is Seanad reform; it is not about structures.

Another great challenge is to address the entire area of education and, in a very specific way, third level education and the various education sectors in the context of possible further outbreaks of Covid or other pandemics, and how we can put in place online learning and provide the infrastructure for everyone to avail of it, and how we can give young people the university experience, which is so critical and part of the formation of those who can avail of it.

There are many areas. It would be remiss of me not to mention, given my background, that

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there is a challenge to provide a REP scheme to incentivise farmers who want to do the right thing for the environment. It is in the programme for Government but it needs immediate action and to be given teeth, depth, quality and real money.

These are the issues on which we must be relevant. I am very confident that with the Leader we have in Senator Regina Doherty, and with her experience, that she will lead a movement towards making our contributions so relevant that they are taken up and something is done with them.

An Cathaoirleach: I thank the Senator for his forbearance. Childcare is a key issue that was highlighted during the pandemic.

Date for Election of Leas-Chathaoirleach

An Cathaoirleach: When is it proposed to sit for the election of the Leas-Chathaoirleach?

Senator Regina Doherty: We propose next Tuesday, 7 July at 2.30 p.m. in this venue, the Convention Centre.

An Cathaoirleach: Is that agreed? Agreed.

Minute's Silence for Detective Garda Colm Horkan and former Senator Terry Brennan

Senator Regina Doherty: Before I propose the Order of Business I suggest we have a minute's silence to honour the memories of Detective Garda Colm Horkan and our very much loved former colleague, Senator Terry Brennan.

An Cathaoirleach: Is that agreed? Agreed.

Members rose.

An tOrd Gnó - Order of Business

Senator Regina Doherty: The Order of Business is No. 5, motion regarding suspending temporarily Standing Order 29, to be taken at the conclusion of the Order of Business, without debate; No. 6, motion regarding the Offences against the State (Amendment) Act 1998; and No. 7, motion regarding the Criminal Justice (Amendment) Act 2009. It is proposed that Nos. 6 and 7 will be discussed together, at the conclusion of No. 5, and will conclude within 85 minutes, if not previously concluded, with the time allocated to group spokespersons not to exceed eight minutes and that allocated to all other Senators not to exceed five minutes, with the Minister to be given no less than eight minutes to reply to the debate.

An Cathaoirleach: I remind colleagues the Minister for Justice and Equality has been waiting in the anteroom since 5.30 p.m. and we must pass the legislation by this evening.

Order of Business agreed to.

Standing Order 29: Motion

Senator Regina Doherty: I move:

That, notwithstanding anything in the Standing Orders relative to Public Business, Standing Order 29 shall stand suspended until 31st July, 2020.

Question put and agreed to.

Offences against the State (Amendment) Act 1998 and Criminal Justice (Amendment) Act 2009: Motions

An Cathaoirleach: I thank the Minister for coming to the House and for her patience. It is the first day back and our business ran over time. I congratulate her on her elevation to the office of Minister for Justice. I know she will do a fantastic job and she did a great job during the Brexit negotiations.

Nos. 6 and 7 are motions regarding the Offences against the State (Amendment) Act 1998 and the Criminal Justice (Amendment) Act 2009. Both motions will be debated together but decided separately.

Senator Jerry Buttimer: I move:

That Seanad Éireann resolves that sections 2 to 4, 6 to 12, 14 and 17 of the Offences against the State (Amendment) Act 1998 (No. 39 of 1998) shall continue in operation for the period beginning on 30th June, 2020 and ending on 29th June, 2021.

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Helen McEntee): I congratulate the Cathaoirleach and I wish him well in his new role. I offer my warmest congratulations to all Senators, especially those who are taking up their seats for the first time. I wish them all well.

I acknowledge the huge honour that it is for me to serve the State as Minister for Justice. It is a somewhat daunting task but it is one I am looking forward to and I hope to make a difference in an interesting Department of State. With the volume of legislation in my Department, it seems I am likely to be a frequent visitor to this distinguished House. I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to my predecessor, Deputy Flanagan, who served the State with devotion and capability for the past six years, first as Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade - the Department I have just come from - and most recently as Minister for Justice and Equality.

As one of my first duties in this role, I propose the renewal of these vital provisions. The House is aware of the importance of these measures and I offer my thanks to it for facilitat-

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ing this session this evening. Senators will be aware that we face the extraordinary situation whereby these provisions will fall in the coming hours if the motions are not passed. The Offences against the State (Amendment) Act 1998 was enacted in the wake of the barbaric murder by the Real IRA of 29 innocent people in Omagh in August 1998. The awful carnage and grief of that event will never be forgotten by any of us. In the intervening years, the State has been relentless in its efforts to ensure that we have no more Omaghs. I pay tribute to the excellent work of An Garda Síochána and the PSNI in countering the threat posed by those engaged in terrorism. I look forward to working closely with the Garda Commissioner and I assure him of my full support.

I also express my deepest sympathy to the family and colleagues of the late Detective Garda Colm Horkan, who was so senselessly killed just ten days ago. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílis. As legislators, we have a duty to ensure that those like Detective Garda Horkan who serve on the front line, tasked with protecting us from this threat and who frequently risk their lives in doing so, have at their disposal appropriate measures to meet it.

Section 18 of the Offences against the State (Amendment) Act 1998 provides that certain sections of the Act must be renewed by the Oireachtas if they are to remain in force. Prior to moving any motion for renewal, the Act requires that a report on the operation of the relevant provisions is laid before the Oireachtas. This report was laid before the House by my predecessor, Deputy Flanagan, on 19 June 2020. I will not take up the limited time available to us this evening by going through each of the relevant sections of the Act in detail. The report that has been provided to the House gives great detail on the various sections, the offences and the other arrangements provided for. While I have no doubt that every one of us in this House looks forward to a time when these provisions will no longer be required, the reality of the current situation must be taken into account. When these motions were taken in the Dáil last week, my predecessor gave a commitment that these provisions will form part of an independent review of the State's security legislation.

As many Senators will be aware, the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland recommended a review of all our security legislation, and I believe it would be sensible to include these provisions within the scope of that review. Such a review is timely to ensure that our legislation in this area is up to date, and fully meets the needs of the criminal justice system. It will be an independent review and my Department is currently undertaking work to define its scope, which will inform the timescale.

In terms of the provisions before the House today, the Garda assessment is that there remains a real and persistent threat from republican paramilitary groups on this island. The threat level from these groups in Northern Ireland, in particular, is regarded as severe. We know these groups oppose peace and democracy; and regrettably they remain committed to violence and criminality. In the past year, there has been an increase in paramilitary shootings and attacks in Northern Ireland. The continuing attempts to murder and maim, such as the attempt earlier this year to smuggle a bomb on a Belfast passenger ferry to coincide with Brexit, demonstrate a scant regard for human life. The cowardly attempts to intimidate journalists and politicians demonstrate a contempt for an open and free democracy. The State will continue to confront those who act in opposition to the democratic wishes of the people on this island.

The report before the Houses provides data that these provisions have been utilised in excess of 70 times in the period under review. The total number of people arrested under the provisions of the Offences against the State Act 1939 is 146, with 40 people detained for offences

contrary to the provisions of the Offences against the State (Amendment) Act 1998. There have been seven successful convictions in the courts in the reporting period and a further 34 persons are currently awaiting trial.

It is the view of the Garda Commissioner that there is a clear need for the continuation of these provisions. We see the use of these provisions culminating in the most serious cases being brought before the Special Criminal Court, including cases of the gravest nature such as directing an unlawful organisation, and murder, with significant convictions for directing terrorism as recently as 2017.

These are significant cases, involving those involved at the most senior level in these organisations. In addition, in recent years there have been important convictions for membership of an unlawful organisation, where the court has been able to draw inferences using these provisions.

Many provisions of the Offences against the State Acts could have application to the international terrorist threat. We are thankful that Ireland has not suffered the kinds of attacks seen in other European countries, targeting innocent people going about their daily lives but the reality is that, as an open democracy, Ireland is not immune from this threat. Our security services continue to monitor the potential threat we face and continue to work very closely with their international counterparts in identifying and responding to that threat. It is the clear view of the Garda Síochána that the Act continues to be a most important tool in its ongoing efforts in the fight against terrorism. The report demonstrates that the provisions of the Act are used regularly. The State must retain in its laws the capacity to suppress terrorist groups, and we have a duty, as legislators, to ensure that is so.

On the basis of the information set out in the report and on the advice of the Garda authorities, I propose that the House should approve the continued operation of the relevant provisions of the Offences against the State (Amendment) Act 1998 to remain in operation for a further 12 months, commencing tomorrow, 30 June 2020.

I turn now to section 8 of the Criminal Justice (Amendment) Act 2009, which is also the subject of a motion before the House. It refers to four serious, organised crime offences that are set out in Part 7 of the Criminal Justice Act 2006. Section 8 of the Criminal Justice (Amendment) Act 2009 makes these offences scheduled offences for the purposes of Part V of the Offences against the State Act 1939 – that is to say, trials for these offences are to be heard in the Special Criminal Court subject to the power of the Director of Public Prosecutions, DPP, to direct that the offences be tried in the ordinary courts. This discretion for the DPP maintains an essential balance in deciding what cases are appropriate to be tried in the Special Criminal Court.

There is stark evidence of the willingness of organised groups to engage in murder, armed robbery, kidnapping, drug smuggling, counterfeiting and other serious offences. As public representatives, we have witnessed its devastating impacts on our communities. It is clear these groups have no respect for the laws of this land nor the safety of its citizens. By their behaviour, they demonstrate a callous disregard for everything that a stable and democratic society stands for. It is clear that if these people are prepared to take human life in pursuit of their aims, they will have no hesitation in subverting the system of justice. Accordingly, the State requires legislation that can combat those who would seek to subvert the system through the intimidation of citizens.

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The ongoing gang-related feuds in Dublin and next to my constituency in Drogheda have brought into focus the depravity with which they operate. These feuds have resulted in appalling and barbaric murders that have shocked the country. Substantial Garda resources have been deployed to these areas and this has resulted in significant convictions and ongoing seizures of drugs, firearms and ammunition. Most important, Garda special operations - Operation Hybrid and Operation Stratus - which were established to target feud-related violence in these areas, have had some success in targeting these groups and in preventing murders since their commencement. We are also aware that the activities of these groups are not limited to this State, nor are the efforts of An Garda Síochána, which has excellent relationships with its international counterparts. Of real concern is the evidence that there are links between organised crime and those engaged in paramilitary activity.

In all the circumstances, I consider it necessary to continue section 8 in operation for a further period of 12 months beginning on 30 June 2020. None of us wants to ignore the real threat posed to the State by these individuals, terrorist groups and organised criminal groups. Therefore, we must take appropriate and proportionate measures to meet the threat they pose. It is my view that the provisions should be renewed and, accordingly, I commend these motions to the House.

An Cathaoirleach: I thank the Minister for outlining the legislation to the House. I, too, pay tribute to the former Minister for Justice and Equality, Deputy Flanagan, who held not only Deputy McEntee's current portfolio but also that of foreign affairs and trade.

Group spokespersons have eight minutes and all other Senators have five minutes, which, by my calculation, if everyone decides to take up all their time, would bring us very close to the deadline for the passing of the legislation so it does not lapse. I, therefore, ask Members to stick to the time allotted for the debate.

Senator Lorraine Clifford-Lee: I will be very brief because I know we have to get the legislation passed as urgently as possible. I welcome the Minister to the House and congratulate her on her appointment. This is very important legislation. The Minister outlined the very real threats posed by gangland activities and terrorist organisations working on this island. These are threats to our security - the security of the State, citizens in this State and democracy. When I was first elected in 2016, one of the first acts I had to perform was to pass these provisions, and I have done so on several occasions since. I was quite shocked then to see Members of this House vote against these provisions, given how important they are for the security of the State. I hope all Members tonight will vote in favour of them or at least abstain, given the very real importance of the provisions.

Senator Barry Ward: I dtús báire, ba mhaith liom comhghairdeas a dhéanamh leat, a Chathaoirligh, faoin bpost atá agat anois. Tá súil agam go n-éireoidh leat sa Chathaoir sin. I also welcome the Minister to the Chamber and congratulate her on her appointment. We are very lucky to have somebody of her experience and skills to take over such an important portfolio, and I am confident she will do an excellent job to safeguard us all. The legislation she has outlined to the House is perhaps a very important part of that. I take on board entirely what she has said about the significance of this legislation and its importance in protecting society and citizens in this country. A number of agencies and non-governmental organisations have expressed concerns about the operation of the Special Criminal Court and the manner in which it operates. However, I recognise its importance, it has its place, and the Minister has given us very clear reasons that is the case.

As a practising criminal barrister, I am very attached to the notion of juries and very concerned about situations in which we do not have them. Juries are an important part of the criminal justice system and take important factual decision-making out of the hands of people who have seen it all before, perhaps jaded lawyers. Every judge will have practised for a long time as a lawyer at the very least and will have seen it all before. The important thing about juries is that they bring fresh eyes to a case and mean that the factual decisions are made by ordinary citizens. Juries are also an important link between the citizenry and the administration of justice. I do not for a moment underestimate the importance of juries. Notwithstanding that, the Special Criminal Court, and non-jury courts in general, have been an important part of criminal justice for over a century. The Special Criminal Court has its place, and it is extremely important we pass this legislation again, as the Cathaoirleach and other speakers have noted.

Having a Special Criminal Court operating in the way it does in Ireland is predicated on a number of things. Obviously, we have rules of evidence and fair procedures that are safeguarded by other courts and the decisions of the Special Criminal Court being reviewable to those courts up the line. There is also the fact that there is a functional legal profession which defends the rights of persons before the court. It is also important to have good and fair judges who apply the law in an even-handed way. In the context of this legislation, it is really unfortunate that in the past week we have seen Members of the Oireachtas openly, unfairly and unjustly criticise judges merely for the decisions they have made and simply, it seems, because those Members did not understand those decisions or did not agree with them. I was also disappointed to see a second party and the chairman of the Labour Party weighing in on that and supporting that decision. We, as legislators, must recognise the separation of powers in this country and the importance of an independent Judiciary and judges who exercise their powers without fear or favour and without wishing to curry popularity with politicians. The Judiciary is an extremely important institution within the State, and we must recognise that. The kinds of comments we saw last week and the kinds of campaigns that were launched last week are totally unacceptable.

Notwithstanding that, and I ask the Minister to take this under review in the coming year as we look perhaps at this legislation again, we should look at the manner in which the Special Criminal Court operates. At the moment the decision as to whether certain cases go into the non-jury court or not is made by the Director of Public Prosecutions and she will certify whether a case is appropriate for that procedure or not. She does so sparingly, in fairness to her, and carefully. Notwithstanding that, the DPP is not a disinterested party within the process, and it seems to me appropriate that that decision could or should be taken out of the hands of the prosecutorial authorities and perhaps put into the hands of an independent judicial authority, perhaps a High Court judge. An application could be brought by the DPP to the High Court as to whether a case is appropriate for treatment by the Special Criminal Court, a non-jury court, or not. I think that would deal with many of the concerns expressed by the NGOs I mentioned earlier.

As I said already, the protection of the rules of evidence for defendants before the Special Criminal Court is extremely important. However, where rows arise in the course of a trial as to whether a piece of evidence is admissible or not, in a normal jury trial the jury would be excluded for consideration of the admissibility of that evidence. If the evidence is excluded thereafter, the jury considers the factual matrix without having any knowledge of the evidence that was deemed inadmissible. By contrast, in the Special Criminal Court, a *voir dire* hearing, or that kind of evidential hearing, takes place not just before but for the decision of the judges who are also the jury, if you like, in the case of a Special Criminal Court trial. It seems to me

that we should also look at the evidential provisions in the course of the practice and procedure in the Special Criminal Court to see if there should perhaps be a separate judicial authority to make rulings in respect of evidential questions that arise in the course of a trial.

As I said, however, I take on board entirely what the Minister said about the importance of this legislation, the rationale for it and the fact the Special Criminal Court has a very clear place in the Irish criminal justice system. I would be grateful if she would consider some of the modifications I have suggested to hone the system and to create even greater safeguards for persons brought before that court in order that we could perhaps consider putting in place a system that is more transparently independent than the one that currently exists.

An Cathaoirleach: I thank Senator Ward for his kind words and for bringing the benefit of his knowledge to the debate. It is hoped he will be able to contribute to the review that is ongoing.

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins: I had intended to propose an amendment to this motion to require a review of the Offences against the State (Amendment) Act and the Criminal Justice (Amendment) Act. However, given the statements made by the outgoing Minister, Deputy Flanagan - and I acknowledge him as somebody who came very regularly to this House and engaged very respectfully and actively with it - on the intention to have a review over the course of the year, I have not tabled that amendment.

I do, however, wish to comment a little on the nature of the review and what might need to be discussed within it. First is the question of who might properly conduct the review - the Law Reform Commission or the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland. I congratulate the Minister on her appointment. Those are issues she may wish to give due consideration to. I have huge respect for both of those bodies, which make immense contributions to the State. A review could not, and should not, be confined to the consideration of a single examiner, but must have regard to the full landscape of the law, including individual rights and due process, and should consult relevant civil society and human rights groups. That would be important for the success and credibility of the review.

I wish to highlight four issues that will be important. The first relates to the definition of “terrorist activity”, which the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission has described as so impermissibly wide that it risks describing groups opposing dictatorial or oppressive regimes, anti-globalisation groups, anti-war or environmental protestors or even militant trade unionists as terrorists. That definition needs to be functional and it needs to be examined carefully so that we do not in any way stifle civil society activity, which is something Ireland has always seemed to support.

The second issue relates to specific analysis of the ordinary courts in the administration of justice in Ireland and their potential to effectively act in relation to offences listed in the Acts. The operation of the Special Criminal Court should only be allowed where our ordinary courts are shown to be unable to adequately administer justice. The Minister mentioned “appropriate” and “proportionate”. The real test is “necessary” and “proportionate”. As Senator Bacik rightly highlighted when she spoke on similar motions last year, the burden of proof is on the Government to actively demonstrate that there are no effective alternatives to non-jury trials. Are there, for example, other measures that might be taken to protect juries in sensitive cases? Moreover, it is important to note that many important criminal prosecutions relating to organised crime in this State have taken place in the ordinary courts.

The third issue relates to compliance with UN law and recommendations, particularly in the context of Ireland taking a seat at the UN Security Council. The UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism has specifically criticised Ireland's Special Criminal Court, noting the seepage of the exceptional into the ordinary in ways that have not served the rule of law nor the protection of human rights well. At a time when we see a worrying new wave of authoritarianism across the globe, along with attempts to undermine and attack rule of law, we need to think very seriously about what message we are sending and what tacit signal we might send through our own policies and practices.

I thank Senator Ward for raising the issue of evidence, because that is an important example in that regard. It is concerning that during the operation of these Acts there have been attempts, thankfully unsuccessful, to seek prosecutions based on belief evidence without disclosure of underlying evidence. All of us can see and imagine what such practices could mean in a state that sought to quash opposition or oppress a minority. Faith in the rule of law and the fair operation of the law is one of our greatest defences against radicalisation and in the underpinning of democracy. Any erosion of due process carries risk.

In that context, I wish to briefly remark on a related issue and I hope that the incoming Government will not seek to undermine the rights of the public or organisations in relation to planning and development. It is vital that individuals and organisations will retain the right and opportunity to challenge and seek clarity on decisions made by Government or public authority where those decisions may be in breach of national or international law, including, for example, the EU birds and habitats directives. Moreover, financial obstacle or threat should never be deployed to make challenge solely a privilege of the wealthy.

Finally, I would like to give clear notice of 12 months that the renewal of this Act in June 2021 should not be assumed. I believe it would be irresponsible to have cases under way that might be vulnerable to the withdrawal of approval at that time. The separation of powers was referenced, which I also take seriously. As a Senator and a legislator, I will base my scrutiny and decisions at that time on the outcomes of the review on human rights law and on legislative rather than operational consideration. I want to make that clear.

I again warmly congratulate the Minister on her excellent performance in her previous role and on her new role. I look forward to engaging further with her on these issues.

Senator Ivana Bacik: I welcome the Minister to the House and to join others in congratulating her on her recent appointment and on her great work in her previous role. I am glad to see four great women nominated as Ministers but I am sorry there are not more women in Cabinet. In this incoming Seanad, 40% of Senators are women and that is a notable high, which I am glad to see. Many of us will keep pressing for greater participation of women in politics and greater recognition in Cabinet because we still have very poor overall numbers of women who have served in Cabinet.

Like many colleagues, I have spoken on various occasions in previous years in debates on these renewal motions. I am pretty sure we have never debated the renewal motion so close to the deadline. We are four hours away from the time at which the provisions will cease to be in operation, to use the words in both Acts, so we are treading very close to the deadline. I very much welcomed the proposal by the Minister's predecessor for a comprehensive review of security provisions and of these motions. That is very timely. Like Senator Ward, I have an

attachment to the principle of jury trial, as do most people who have practised criminal law or know something about it. Indeed, I practised in the Special Criminal Court so I know the way it operates. It should be an exception and it is an exception in our constitutional system. Under Article 38.3.1^o, it is an exception to the due process guarantee in Article 38.1, because special courts under the Constitution may be established by law in cases where the ordinary courts are inadequate to secure the effective administration of justice and the preservation of public peace and order. We would do well to remember that when we debate these motions every year and when the review is undertaken.

I want to address a point that Senator Higgins has made, and that both my colleague in the Dáil, Deputy Sean Sherlock, and I made when we debated these motions last year. This and one other point need to be highlighted in the welcome review that is to be undertaken. The first point relates to circumstances where special courts are being established and non-jury trials are being retained in respect of certain offences, through the renewal of the provisions such as those we are debating where such offences are scheduled offences under these Acts.. In such circumstances, the inadequacy of the ordinary jury courts to determine justice must be determined in accordance with law. This time last year, Deputy Sherlock tabled amendments in the other House seeking to copperfasten that requirement to ensure that more information would be provided to us as legislators each year in the annual report as to why the Government says that the ordinary courts were inadequate to administer justice. We get these reports every year. I read them again this year. The reports disclose very little information. They disclose basic numbers, which the Minister outlined, as to the number of times each year various provisions have been used. For example, section 2, the inference-drawing section, was used on 11 occasions in the past 12 months. Section 7 was used 20 times. However, a number of provisions were not used at all in the past 12 months, namely, sections 4, 6, 8, 12 and 17. I recall that last year, a number of those sections had not been used in the previous 12 months, either, namely, sections 6, 8, 12 and 17. That is in respect of the Offences against the State (Amendment) Act 1998

. In respect of the Criminal Justice (Amendment) Act 2009, we see a similar pattern. As the Minister stated, there were 72 arrests in the past 12 months for offences under this Act but some provisions were not used at all, notably section 71A, which provides for the offence of directing the activities of a criminal organisation. Patterns of usage and non-usage are disclosed in the reports but there is little substantive information as to why the Government says the ordinary courts are inadequate to secure the administration of justice. That specific point was the subject of our amendment, where we sought last year to obtain further information on this from the Government. The previous Minister, Deputy Flanagan, rejected that amendment, saying that Members would engage in their own research, consideration and knowledge, which will form their views as to the operation of normal courts and their capacity to administer justice. The amendment was lost. The difficulty with the previous Minister's response is that we, as Oireachtas Members, must inform ourselves on points when we are debating these motions every year and it can be countered that much of the information which would be useful to us is primarily within the domain of the Government, and not within the domain of us as legislators. There are alternative ways of going about this. In the case of the financial emergency measures in the public interest legislation, for example, there is a requirement for the laying of certain financial information before legislators when we are making decisions on renewal. That point about the basis on which the Government seeks to bring offences before non-jury courts is one I would like to see taken on board in a comprehensive review.

The second point also relates to the information contained in the reports we get each year,

specifically information about patterns of usage and non-usage. I have already pointed out that some provisions are typically not used over the previous 12 months. If one looks back over different years, one sees that certain provisions are almost never relied upon by prosecutors while others very frequently are. Legislators and whoever is conducting the review should be looking at these patterns to see whether the retention of certain provisions enforced for periods longer than one year should be considered. Conversely, where there is a clear pattern of non-usage of a provision over a number of years, the repeal of such provisions should be considered. These provisions are sunset clauses, in effect, but it raises the question of how useful such clauses are if there is very little substantive scrutiny each year. Perhaps we should be looking instead at a more considered approach to the specific provisions under review.

Having said that, I am very glad that a review is promised. That is very important. The review should consider the nature of the renewal procedure and, in particular, the sort of information legislators should have if we are to continue having these sorts of sunset clauses in place. It should also consider the taking of more decisive action in respect of specific provisions where patterns of usage and non-usage are disclosed. The Labour Party group will not be opposing these motions but we very much welcome the review and we very much want to ensure there is substantial scrutiny of these provisions, particularly in the light of the importance of the principle of jury trial. The Irish Council for Civil Liberties and many other human rights bodies have made very robust calls for the abolition of the Special Criminal Court, or for its less frequent usage. That also needs to be borne in mind in any review.

Lastly, I refer to Senator Ward's comments regarding a personalised attack on the Judiciary. I agree with the Senator that it is never appropriate for Members of the Oireachtas to make personalised attacks on judges. It is one thing to criticise a judgment or the outcome of a court case but it is quite another to make personalised attacks on judges. That is not appropriate in a democracy. I again congratulate the Minister on her appointment.

Senator Martin Conway: I welcome the Minister, Deputy McEntee, and congratulate her on her appointment. It is a fantastic opportunity to be taking over at the Department of Justice and Equality at this particular time of transformation. We have seen some transformation carried out under the auspices of previous Ministers, Frances Fitzgerald and Deputy Flanagan, but the best is yet to come in this regard. Further transformation will be possible as a result of the implementation of the recommendations of the report of the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland.

This is my seventh or eighth year as Government spokesperson on justice that we have had to, at this time of year, discuss putting this legislation through for another 12 months. Senator Bacik, who is here doing it as long as I am, is quite right that the timeline was never as tight as it is today, with only three or four hours left to get it through. In previous years, we always had a debate on whether the legislation continued to be necessary. While I totally accept that there are provisions of this legislation which have not been used very much - in fact, some have not been used at all - there are other elements and sections that are frequently used. The reality is that on the island of Ireland, we still have a significant threat from dissident republicans. It was only last year that we saw a journalist, Lyra McKee, murdered in this country by those dissidents. The terrorist threat certainly has not gone away, much as we would like that to happen. There is also the new threat of international terrorism, which we have not really seen yet in this country and we hope we never will. However, we must have legislation in place to ensure that if and when such activity presents itself, An Garda Síochána is equipped to react quickly to it.

In terms of the legislation itself, there is a commitment as part of the future of policing report recommendations that we would review all our security legislation. A significant development took place last Wednesday in Dáil Éireann when Sinn Féin did not press a vote on this particular legislation on the clear understanding from the previous Minister, Deputy Flanagan, which has been echoed here today by the new Minister, Deputy McEntee, that there will be a comprehensive review of it as part of the implementation of the future of policing report. I think it is appropriate at this stage that the legislation should be reviewed in any event.

Another facet of this debate is the threat arising from organised crime, particularly in our cities. We have seen the remarkable success that An Garda Síochána has had in terms of arrests and prosecutions of members of the Hutch and Kinahan organised crime gangs in spite of the fact that nearly 20 people have been murdered. It is also appropriate that we should acknowledge the activities of An Garda Síochána, in collaboration with the Criminal Assets Bureau, in the mid-west area which includes Clare, Limerick and north Tipperary, where there was a significant seizure of drugs in recent weeks. That success has done tremendous damage to organised crime in the mid-west. One hears often from An Garda Síochána, senior members of which I have engaged with regularly in my capacity as spokesperson for justice over the years, that gardaí have this legislation in their back pocket if they need it. They do not want to use it, no more than they wanted to use the legislation introduced to deal with the pandemic, but it was very useful to have it in their back pocket if it was needed. We have seen that the legislation we are discussing this evening was needed in the past 12 months.

I appeal to Members to support the legislation on this occasion in the fullness of the knowledge that there will be a review of it in due course. We would all love to see a day when we do not need this type of legislation in this country. Unfortunately, because of the history over the past 30 or 40 years in Northern Ireland, we have needed it. Our more recent history in terms of organised crime means we have needed it. I hope the day will come when we will not have to debate these types of provisions and, as has happened in this instance, the process of formation of a Government will not have to be escalated in order to ensure both Houses of the Oireachtas are in place to pass the resolutions relating to the legislation. On that front, there is tremendous respect due to all parties who rolled up their sleeves to make sure this very important deadline was met.

8 o'clock

I look forward to the review of this legislation. In the next couple of months, the Minister might come to the House and go through the nuts and bolts of what she is proposing in this regard and what the context of the review will be. It is part of the ambit of the implementation of the report of the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland and it would be useful to have the Minister here to discuss that report. It is a groundbreaking piece of work which was completed during the last Oireachtas term. I echo the sentiments of colleagues in wishing the Minister the very best of luck in what is an extremely important Department.

Senator Michael McDowell: I join other Members in welcoming the Minister, Deputy McEntee, and congratulating her on a very challenging but, I believe, very rewarding appointment.

It is much deserved. She did our country proud when she was spokesperson for the Irish State on Brexit. I was glad to acknowledge that in the previous Seanad and I reiterate my best hopes for her tenure as Minister for Justice.

I am one of the great fans of jury trials, and I am not saying that just as a cliché. The fundamental requirement that the people should have confidence in the system of justice requires jury trials. Some members of the Judiciary believe that jury trials are anachronistic but my own experience of prosecuting and defending for many years convinced me that jury trials are superior in commanding public confidence compared with judge-only trials. In any instances where judge-only trials have been implemented, controversy follows, while there is very little argument with the decision of a jury by anybody in Ireland.

Second, there was a time when the Minister's Department sought to limit jury trials for petty theft. I happened to be in the Attorney General's office at the time and I took the very strong view that if any of us were accused and convicted of stealing a box of eggs from a supermarket, it would be the end of our career. If that applies to Members of the Oireachtas and people in important positions, it equally applies to a child of 18 or 19 years of age who is accused of such an offence. There are probably 150 statutes on the Statute Book which disqualify people from holding particular positions, such as an officer of a credit union, if they have a conviction for dishonesty. I strongly believe in jury trial and that however inconvenient it may be for some, it is a real guarantee that justice is done.

I welcome and congratulate Senator Ward on his election to the Seanad. This place is now becoming well-stocked with barristers. It is amazing how many barristers have suddenly emerged this time around. Senator Bacik and myself were once the sole barristers but now I think there are five of us in this House, as well as solicitors. That is a good thing. Senator Ward said a few things with which I have some sympathy, one being that we have to be very jealous of jury trial. Senator Bacik quoted Article 38.3 of the Constitution and the "ordinary courts". The word "ordinary" means something in this context. The ordinary system must be jury trial. Only extraordinary cases can attract non-jury trial, in accordance with that Article.

The Article also refers to the determination, in accordance with law, that the ordinary courts are inadequate to deal with certain cases. While I may not have done anything about this when I was Minister for Justice, I have always thought in the back of my mind that to decide that a category of offences is automatically going to the Special Criminal Court, unless it is hauled back, is not consistent with Article 38.3. It must be case-specific. I doubt the efficacy of a system which would entail one judge determining whether a case should or should not go to the Special Criminal Court. Massive trials would have to be done in secret because if they went to a jury and all the dirty linen about a particular person accused of an offence, and the State's suspicions of his or her propensity to interfere with a jury, had to be laid out in public, God only knows how the principle of innocent until proven guilty would be interfered with.

There is a slight difference in emphasis between me and Senator Bacik on this next point, on which I agree with Senator Conway. I do not believe it really matters how often an offence is actually prosecuted. I will take the example with which we are dealing, namely, directing a criminal organisation. While it may be extremely difficult to prove, the fact that an offence or inferences relating to that type of offence exist does not mean we should look at it askance on the basis that it does not happen very often. That is only because it is very hard to prove. We know there are people directing a whole load of criminal organisations in this State. It is getting the evidence that is the crucial difference.

Some of the provisions in the Criminal Justice Act 2007 attracted some degree of controversy and I took a fair amount of flack as Minister for Justice in respect of some of them. However, one thing that Act achieved was to allow for apparently credible statements that had

been withdrawn or abandoned by witnesses to nonetheless be used as evidence in both jury and non-jury cases. The reason we did that, and I want to say this now because it attracted a fair amount of criticism at the time, was that we believed that as an antidote to intimidation and a situation where the Special Criminal Court would be the court of first instance, we had to deal practically with people being intimidated out of statements they had already made. A colleague of mine in the Law Library wrote an article at the time describing the section which made such statements admissible in very controlled circumstances. He attacked it in the very strongest terms. I will not use the terms he used in that article because I do not want to misquote him, but the Canadian Supreme Court had held that to make those statements inadmissible was so unreasonable as to be unconstitutional in Canadian law. It actually changed the common law to make them admissible without any legislative Act whatsoever. I know this is a bit of an arcane point but it has to be made.

The last thing I will say is this: by all means have a review but do not make it an impractical one. It is very easy to throw obstacles in the way of prosecution but we have to prosecute. If we do not prosecute because we erect more reasons not to or more obstacles to prosecution, we will throw out the baby with the bath water of jury trial and lose public support. The Minister should have her review. Her predecessor, who is a great man, has promised this review and I presume the Minister is committed to it as well. She should have the review, by all means. Senator Higgins said that nothing should be presumed about the extension of these provisions next year and that some of them could be modified. Anyone who believes that we will not need the Special Criminal Court in a year's time should take a look at what is happening. I saw an allegation today, though I do not know whether it is true, that a particular individual had been sourcing arms in Lithuania to bring into Ireland to kill Irish people. One only has to think of what happened to Lyra McKee and ask oneself whether it is naive or sensible to think we will not need a Special Criminal Court in a year's time.

I dearly wish we did not. However, I, for one, live in the land of reality and, unfortunately, whatever reforms or safeguards are introduced as a result of a review, it would be very dangerous to presume that these emergency provisions can be dispensed with a year hence. I see no sign of that.

An Cathaoirleach: We must conclude by 8.46 p.m. and the Minister must speak at 8.38 p.m.

Senator Niall Ó Donnghaile: Gabhaim buíochas leis an gCathaoirleach agus beidh mé chomh gasta agus is féidir liom. Gabhaim comhghairdeas leis an Aire as a ceapachán agus a hainmniú mar Aire Dlí agus Cirt agus Comhionannais. I congratulate the Minister on her appointment. Like other colleagues, I followed with great admiration her work in her previous role during a very challenging and difficult time. She served in that position with great distinction. I begin by echoing the condolences for Detective Garda Colm Horkan. I also wish to take the opportunity very quickly to send condolences to the family of young Noah Donohoe from Belfast who, unfortunately, went missing and whose body was recovered in recent days. Our thoughts go out to his mother and his many friends and family.

Our approach to this item has been stated in the Dáil. I hope the Minister will forgive me, and I do not like doing it, but I must read my notes from my telephone as we had some technical difficulties trying to get them printed. I ask her to excuse me for doing it. For too long the annual debate on the renewal of these emergency provisions has been characterised not by a proper examination of either provision or the provisions' effectiveness but by the historical political

marriage to this legislation by both Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael. For the record, we are not debating the continued use of the Special Criminal Court or the principle of non-jury courts. That is contained in primary legislation. What we are being asked to renew is emergency provisions. By its nature emergency legislation should be required to deal with an emergency. Whatever circumstances, and perspective on them, existed when these powers were first passed, those circumstances plainly do not exist now.

There is no emergency in 2020. What there is in communities throughout this State is ongoing issues with serious organised crime. These emergency provisions did not stop the heroin barons in the 1980s, John Gilligan and others in the 1990s and the Kinahans and their like in the 2000s getting mega-rich on the backs of ordinary, decent and many working class communities while the political class sat here nodding these provisions through, year after year, with little or no regard for what was needed to deal with serious organised crime. What we must put in place in the 21st century is 21st century law that will deal with 21st century criminal gangs. The criminal gangs are no respecters of national borders, operate on a global scale and very often operate entirely online. Do people seriously expect legislation which was mainly drafted in the 1930s to be able to deal with these modern challenges? As legislators, we owe it to the people who sent us here to examine what we are voting on. We owe it to the communities that are ravaged by the activities of international criminal gangs to put in place the necessary legal framework to allow the courts and the Garda to do their jobs effectively.

That is why Sinn Féin has called for a review of these powers. The current legislation has failed communities. Those failures are written in the blood of the young people killed in feuds and the lives lost to heroin and other drugs, and are seen each time a parent ends up trying to scrape together money to pay off a child's drug debt to try to save the child's life in the face of threats from thugs. The reason we called for a review is to create the space over the next year to put together primary legislation which is not couched in an emergency, is not reliant on an annual review and is not contaminated by annual political discourse, but which puts in place a 21st century legal framework aimed at keeping our communities safe. Surely we can collectively build a political consensus on that aim. Surely we can bring a proper focus on what is required in the Ireland of today, not fighting political battles over a legislative measure from another time. Indeed, it is worth noting that the Good Friday Agreement, endorsed overwhelmingly by the Irish people 22 years ago, demanded that the Irish Government initiate a wide-ranging review of the Offences against the State Acts 1939 to 1985 with a view to both reform and dispensing with those elements no longer required as circumstances permit.

I appeal to other parties and stakeholders to open the door to a better way through the review process, to abandon the notion of emergency powers, to move to the space of giving the Garda and the courts the tools to keep communities safe, to do it in a mature, sensible and grown up way, to take counsel from those on the front line and then go about framing effective legislation that can become the start of a new way of tackling the criminal challenges the Ireland of 2020 faces. We have called for that review and the Minister referred to it in her contribution. Other colleagues have also referred to it. While I appreciate that it was only announced recently and the Minister has only taken office in the last few days, perhaps she will be in a position to facilitate us, for the purposes of the record and our information, by outlining some of what she understands and hopes that review will be and what she intends to do with it as Minister so all the points raised by me and Members across the House and across political views can be taken on board. We can assist the Minister and work collaboratively and positively with the shared stated aim of trying to get legislation that works effectively, is human rights compliant and will

ultimately work to keep the communities that are suffering the most safe from the criminal gangs who are putting them under such threat.

Senator Pauline O'Reilly: I extend hearty congratulations to the Minister. From our small engagement on European affairs I found her to be serious, compassionate and intelligent. That arms her well for the job at hand.

I served on a jury, I qualified as a solicitor and I am now a politician, so I wish to say a few words from those perspectives. It is not just that justice is done but that justice is seen to be done. That does not only mean what happens in the courts but also what happens here and in the legislative process. We must take our responsibility incredibly seriously. We are accused of a form of auto renewal of legislation and it has become accepted practice that each year we automatically renew it. If we are to do our jobs properly, we must carry out the review. Certainly, there are very serious situations at hand where a jury is not always the best outcome. On that basis, and on the basis of what the Minister has outlined, we will accept her recommendation, but we would like to see that review take place.

Senator Sharon Keogan: I congratulate Deputy McEntee on her appointment as Minister for Justice and Equality. I am delighted to be here today, the day the renewal of certain provisions of the Offences against the State (Amendment) Act 1998 and the Criminal Justice (Amendment) Act 2009 comes before the House. I am passionate about fighting crime at every level of society. While the provisions under discussion today deal with highly important aspects of criminal justice, such as criminal prosecution in the Special Criminal Court, it is also important to do our part at local level to assist An Garda Síochána in building safer communities in which we can live, work and play. I have worked tirelessly to do that in all my years in political office.

In 2017, the communities of Duleek and Donore installed top of the range closed circuit television, CCTV, to help An Garda Síochána in the fight against criminality in the area. I became a victim this year as a result of criminality in our area and drug crime. In late 2018, the Data Protection Commissioner informed the data controller that because of number plate recognition software, our system was in breach of GDPR guidelines. This aspect of the monitoring system had to be disabled as there is currently no legislation in place that allows the Garda to use this software. It is unbelievable that number plate recognition can be used at toll bridges, airports, ports and multistorey car parks to take money from people, yet it cannot be used in the fight against crime. This is one goal that I wish to address with the help of legislators in the House. I have no doubt this law will provide a great tool to assist the Garda throughout the country in the fight against crime.

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Helen McEntee): I thank Senators for their time and for moving quickly given, as many have mentioned, we are close to the wire. I am very grateful to the House for its consideration of these two motions and I thank Senators on all sides for their contributions to the debate on both. Naturally, I welcome the support expressed by all of the speakers for continuing these provisions and I appreciate the shared commitment in the House to maintaining in place what is a robust legal framework for the Garda and the courts when dealing with some of the most serious offences that may threaten the State and the operation of the criminal justice system.

As I have outlined, the Offences against the State (Amendment) Act 1998 remains an essential tool in tackling the activities of terrorist groups across the island. We cannot be blind

to the ongoing threats that so-called dissidents pose to our way of life, and their disregard for peace and democracy requires a robust and proportionate response. While I too would very much welcome a time when these provisions are not needed, now is not that time. We continue to see the devastating impact that drugs have on families and communities and the devastating impact of the activities of the organised criminal gangs, which are wreaking havoc throughout our country. As legislators, I believe we have a duty to do what is necessary and reasonable to protect those citizens.

While I agree with many Senators and it is also my firm view that a jury trial should be preserved to the greatest extent possible, we have to accept this is not always the reality and it is not always possible because of the threats posed to our citizens due to those who seek to intimidate jurors or potential jurors. The renewal of these provisions sends a very clear message to those who wish to threaten or to intimidate that this State will not tolerate those wedded to violence or those who oppose peace, democracy and the rule of law. I am very grateful to Senators for their positive consideration of these motions.

In regard to the review, I again thank Senators for welcoming this commitment. I am fully committed to this review. As many will be aware, it has arisen from the report of the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland, which made a number of recommendations, one of which is a comprehensive review of the legislative framework within which the police operates in the area of national security. A scoping exercise is currently under way with regard to this, which will examine a number of areas encompassed by overall security legislation and, obviously, it would be sensible to include both of these provisions. Nonetheless, I take on board a number of suggestions and recommendations made by Senators and, hopefully, I will have an opportunity to return to this issue at a later date.

I wish all Senators and the Cathaoirleach well, especially Meath Senators and in particular those who have started for the first time today.

An Cathaoirleach: I thank the Minister I apologise again for delaying her for so long on her first day here. We will endeavour to do better the next time.

Question put and agreed to.

Senator Martin Conway: I move:

That Seanad Éireann resolves that section 8 of the Criminal Justice (Amendment) Act 2009 (No. 32 of 2009) shall continue in operation for the period beginning on 30th June, 2020 and ending on 29th June, 2021.

Question put and agreed to.

An Cathaoirleach: When is it proposed to sit again?

Senator Martin Conway: At 2.30 p.m. on Tuesday, 7 July 2020.

An Cathaoirleach: The House will meet again at 2.30 p.m. on Tuesday, 7 July 2020 in the convention centre.

The Seanad adjourned at 8.25 p.m. until 2.30 p.m. on Tuesday, 7 July 2020.