As Ireland approaches the centenary anniversary of its independence, this paper seeks to restore the reputation of those Senators that contributed to the founding institutions and legislative principles of the Irish Free State, many of whom were later maligned when the Senate was abolished in 1936.

This paper studies the character of the Senators, the weight of their influence, the underlying rationale of the Senate's authority and their exercise of power. It also provides an opportunity to recognise the contributions of those from the Unionist tradition and therein examine the complexities of Southern Irish Unionism. Focused academic research on the contribution of the first Senate to the establishment of democratic institutions has been neglected. The Senate played a decisive role in establishing, legitimising and consolidating many of the institutions of government, which remain with us today, in the midst of a bitter and divisive Civil War. The constitutional, political, and administrative achievements of the Senate in bestowing the legislative foundations of the State have not received the academic attention it deserves.

In particular, this paper examines:

(1) Senate legislative amendments to the Civil Service Regulation Act 1923 which shaped the robust ethical character of the Civil Service Commission; (2) the contribution of the Senate to the wholesale structural judicial reform which remains the basis for the judicial system through the Courts of Justice Act 1924; (3) the pragmatic organisation and administration of central government through the Ministers and Secretaries Act, 1924; (4) the reorganisation of a discredited local government structure through the Local Government Act 1925 and (5) the removal of patronage from the political system through the Local Authorities Act, 1926 which introduced the Local Appointments Commission.

The Senators' homes were destroyed and many other Senators were intimidated or kidnapped. The deliberate appointment process to the Senate by WT Cosgrave, President of the Executive Council, warranted the consolidation of the Anglo-Irish and Unionist traditions to the Irish Free State.

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