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## **An Honours System for Ireland**

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# An Honours System for Ireland

David Barrett

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## Executive Summary

This report examines the case for the establishment of an honours system in Ireland. An honours system is a series of formalised awards given by the state. The report begins by examining the history of attempts to establish an honours system in Ireland and includes a discussion of the legal constitutional issues relating to such a system. It then identifies a range of different types of honours systems in different countries and finds that each of them has Irish counterparts. We then examine the kind of system, in generalised terms, that might be considered for Ireland. Following this we look at the specific cases of awards offered in the United Kingdom and Canada, going into the history and structure of awards in both countries to determine whether they offer any lessons for Ireland. Finally, the report returns to Ireland and offers recommendations on creating an Irish honour system based on international best practice. The report also provides a detailed appendix outlining the various awards offered by OECD countries, differing kinds of nomination forms and detailed graphics showing how an honour is awarded in various countries.

The report first examines the history of the Irish case, through parliamentary debates and a number of constitutional reports. These reports found that there is no impediment in the Irish Constitution to establishing an honour system. We then outline a methodology for examining awards in an Irish context, where restricting the awards we examine to state awards alone is justified.

The report notes that Ireland provides a wide range of awards informally, but that these do not have official state sanction. Nonetheless there are similarities between these awards and those provided by other countries. The report divides honours into four categories: civilian awards, exceptional merit awards, diplomatic awards and military awards. The report notes that there are multiple relevant Irish awards, but that nevertheless Ireland still lacks an honour that could show state recognition. The report also notes areas where this has caused problems for Ireland. The standard structure for awards in other OECD countries is also explored.

The report then analyses award systems more generally. We suggest for Ireland an internal recognition system that is focused on the recognition of individuals for their achievements.

Following the establishment of these general recommendations two case studies are chosen and examined. Both case studies offer policymakers similar lessons for the establishment of awards. Both Canada and Britain prioritised two particular areas – diversity and inclusiveness – and structured their award systems around these principles. In both cases pursuing these principles seems to have led to broad public support for the honours systems established. Finally, the report outlines policy recommendations for Ireland.

Appendices available at:

[http://www.ucd.ie/geary/static/publications/Honours System for Ireland Appendices .docx](http://www.ucd.ie/geary/static/publications/Honours%20System%20for%20Ireland%20Appendices.docx)

## 1. Introduction

Awards have long had a role in society. They provide status and are a mark of distinction for those who have achieved great things. Many societies have awarded symbols of merit or distinction over the centuries. A Roman Triumph, in acknowledgment of the conquest of a new nation, and the elevation of a commoner to the nobility in medieval Europe, share this in common: they aimed to show that someone had done something extraordinary. They also did not usually involve direct monetary gain.

Almost all modern states provide some sort of recognition for individuals who have performed extraordinary service, although the degree and frequency of these awards varies.

Bestowing awards may have consequences for the individuals involved and for wider society. Awards are of benefit to the people who receive them. Recipients of prestigious awards are more productive and command greater sales or earnings depending on their field (Curtis, 1997; Sweeney and Kato, 2010; Walton, 2010; Crown, 2011; Chan *et al.*, 2013; Rodionova, 2016). Research even suggests that they can live longer (Rablen and Oswald, 2008).

There is also evidence that awards do not need to be at an exalted level for them to be effective. Awards in the workplace affect performance (Gubler, Larkin and Pierce, 2016). Even when there are almost no incentives to get involved awards seem to help people feel valued and encourage them. Simply creating awards is found to encourage participation (Gallus, 2016). This means that awards can benefit wider society if they successfully promote a valuable activity. They seem to be effective at promoting interest in the individuals nominated for them.

Most developed countries have systems for conferring honours<sup>1</sup>. We examine the case of Ireland and provide comparative information on thirty-four countries. The countries chosen are those that are currently members of the OECD. These countries vary in institutional arrangements, culture, and geographic location but, like Ireland, share democratic norms.

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<sup>1</sup> This report will use the terms 'awards' and 'honours' interchangeably.

We also undertake two case studies – of the United Kingdom and of Canada –to examine both reforms in honours systems as well as the details of the processes involved in nominating for and conferring awards. Both sets of considerations have some relevance for Ireland. These case studies outline the history of their major awards; discuss the process one undergoes to receive an award and, who decides who receives them; and examine the characteristics of the individuals who receive awards.

## 2. Methodology

For this study, Ireland is compared with other countries in the OECD. These are the other nations from the developed world with which Ireland may be best compared and the comparison can draw on rich data across five continents. These countries are usually wealthy and democratic with high levels of human development.

In each OECD country a basic search was performed to determine whether or not that country has an honours system. All except Switzerland do. Once that was established the government websites for each country were consulted to learn the details of that award. For most countries this was usually associated with the individual or group that awards the honour – usually the head of state. The details of the honour system were then recorded. The data include the following details where available: the name of the award, who awards it, when was it established, what is it awarded for, how individuals are put forward for the award and who the award can be awarded to (including any restrictions on eligibility of individuals).

Upon cataloguing these data, awards were then categorised, so that awards that were similar were put together. A complete list of awards, by country and by category, can be found in the appendix.

This report focuses on awards given by the state. While there are numerous awards given by the private sector and by individuals, none of them come with state sanction. This is important: without an official state award, there is no way for a government and for the citizenry to honour achievements.

This research was also supported by elite interviews with a former senior politician with intimate knowledge of debates in the past on this subject, and with a senior civil servant in a government department. We are grateful for their cooperation.



### 3. The Situation in Ireland in Comparison

#### 3.1 History of Irish Reform Efforts

There have been several efforts to create an Irish honours system. Since 1991 the Taoiseach has written four times to the leaders of the major parties to discuss the matter. None of these efforts have succeeded owing to a lack of enthusiasm among opposition party leaders, the low salience of the issue and the perceived need for all-party agreement on the matter (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2015a, p. 20). The topic has attracted surprisingly little official Dáil discussion, and most previous efforts were abandoned before they were ever formally proposed.

The most recent governmental effort occurred when Enda Kenny wrote to the other party leaders to determine their level of support for the idea. This was on the urging of Derek Keating TD, who raised a parliamentary question on this issue after consistently advocating for it. As this is the most recent effort, occurring in 2015, it is worth exploring what was said in some depth.

Kenny implied that there was no objection to it, but that he did not consider it a priority:

*'The issue of a State honours system has been discussed many times in the past but there has never been all-party support to sustain its development. I believe that such support would be required if consideration of an honours system were to proceed. While I have no objections to all-party consideration of this matter, the timing of any such consideration would have to take into account other political priorities at the time.'* (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2015a, p. 20)

Sinn Féin also expressed support for the idea. Party Leader Gerry Adams stated that:

*'I think there is a good case to be made for a national award scheme. The Taoiseach has enumerated some of the awards that represent a recognition and celebration of people in sporting organisations, the arts and community activists. It is good that society reflects this. Members of the media deserve their just awards as well for the work they do. It is important to give credit and praise.'* (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2015a, p. 21)

Fianna Fail, the only other party to contribute to the debate, was more sceptical, although Party Leader Michael Martin did say that they were open to the idea:

*'I am unsure whether the Taoiseach is aware of the comment by Napoleon when he was stabilising matters after the French Revolution, that he would rule mankind with baubles. We need to be careful. I have always had an open mind but, as a republican, I have a view that there is always a question mark around the State bestowing honours on people.'* (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2015a, p. 21).

Bernard Durkan, a Fine Gael backbencher who contributed to the debate, was very concerned with the exclusivity of any award established. He did not consider that any award established should be awarded very liberally and that it should remain a rare and exclusive honour:

*'We must not allow a system to develop in which it becomes everybody's award. Rather, it should be because a particular contribution to society merits a unique award. It would be for that purpose only.'* (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2015a, p. 22)

Durkan's concerns are often expressed, although the perceived openness of the award was prioritised in both the United Kingdom and Canada, and in both cases such openness increased the legitimacy of the honour for recipients and citizens. This was consistent with previous efforts in this area, which almost never reached the form of a concrete proposal and usually were simply consultations. All of these efforts failed because of the lack of enthusiasm from opposition parties, regardless of what party that happened to be.

The most significant and concrete proposal was suggested by Ernest Blythe in 1930. He suggested that Ireland enter immediate negotiations with the British government to establish the 'Order of the Legion of St. Patrick'. As Ireland was still a dominion at this time the consent of the British monarchy was needed. This proposed order would have had three levels, with restrictions as to the number of individuals allowed to be at each (25 at the highest level, 50 at the next and 100 at the lowest), who would be appointed on the advice of the cabinet. As Cumann na nGaedhael lost the next election the topic was not pursued. The topic was brought up again in 1946. By this time the constitution had changed, and Britain's approval was no longer needed. The memorandum proposed a very similar structure to that of Blythe. There would be three levels to the honour. The highest would be limited to 25 members and would be called *An Chraobhruadh*. The next level would be called *An tOrdan Feibhe*, with a higher level restricted to 100 persons and a lower to 250. The award would be conferred by the President, but on the

advice of the government. De Valera lost the 1948 election and Costello opted not to pursue it further in 1948. After this the topic arose intermittently, with various Taoisigh opting not to pursue it when raised. This occurred in 1953, 1956 and 1959. In 1963 Lemass approved of the establishment of a State Decoration of Honour in principle, and the government consulted opposition leaders for their views. Labour indicated that they would need a discussion on the scheme proposed before agreeing in principle, while Fine Gael said that they did not feel the time was right. This established the precedent that all-party support was needed for the issue. It was not raised again until 1991 when Haughey proposed it again. Fine Gael and Labour were hesitant, and it was dropped once again. The same happened in 1994 and 1999. In 2007 Bertie Ahern proposed an honours system for the second time, and other party leaders were more enthusiastic. This time the effort was abandoned owing to suddenly adverse economic circumstances that Ireland was now facing (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2015a; Civil Service, 2017). Finally, in 2015, Senator Feargal Quinn proposed an Honours system. The award was similarly restricted in numbers, but, lacking serious government interest, there was little progress on the proposal. This bill is described in more detail in the discussion of Recommendations for Ireland.

Most previous efforts to establish an honour system have foundered on a lack of interest or failure to receive all-party support for the idea. As an area where consensus is desirable this has effectively hampered all efforts to establish an Honour System. It also means that few practicalities have been discussed on the matter.

### 3.2 Legal Issues

The two major reviews of the constitution have explicitly stated that an honours system is compatible with the constitution, despite a prohibition on titles of nobility established in the constitution:

‘Article 40.2.1 ‘Titles of nobility shall not be conferred by the State.’

Article 40.2.2 ‘No title of nobility or of honour may be accepted by any citizen except with the prior approval of the government’ (*Bunreacht na hEireann*, 1937)

The review conducted by Lemass in the 1960s made no mention of these articles, and did not consider them (Committee on the Constitution, 1967). The later Constitutional

Review Group however explicitly addressed them and was clear on the subject, stating that:

*'The prohibition in this subsection on the conferring of titles of nobility follows immediately on the declaration of personal equality in Article 40.1 and is a recognition that such titles are not appropriate for bestowal by a democratic republic. From the distinction between titles of nobility and of honour in the second subsection it may be inferred that the State is not prohibited by the first subsection from conferring titles of honour. The State has not, however, conferred such titles. Whether it should do so, and in what manner, are matters for Government and Oireachtas to determine, if and when they see fit.'* (Constitution Review Group, 1996).

This means that the only formal analysis of Ireland's constitutional ability to introduce an honour system finds nothing unconstitutional about the practice.

### 3.3 Types of Honours

Ireland has no formalised honour system. This is not to say that the Irish state does not confer honours. Rather it means that the system has not been formalised and institutionalised, even if it does exist.

Ireland in fact has awards that mirror the forms of the general categories used in other countries. The system is simply organised on a very ad-hoc basis, with little real control that can be exercised by the government. It is worth exploring both these awards in general and with regard to their specific nature in Ireland. Examples from Ireland will be contrasted with those from other OECD nations.

In general, there are several kinds of awards that exist in most countries that have an honour system. These can be described as: civilian awards, exceptional merit awards, diplomatic awards and military awards. Almost every country that has an honour ranking system. In the following discussion international practice in relation to each of the four types of award is outlined, followed by a description of practice in the Irish setting.

#### 3.3.1 Civilian Awards

A number of countries confer state awards on ordinary citizens. The distinction between these awards and the Exceptional Merit Awards discussed later is that these awards are for less rare achievements, but still acknowledge something that society values, such as distinguished volunteer or work service. The French Medal of Honour for Labour is certainly the most commonly awarded of these (see appendix). It is awarded to approximately 300,000 individuals annually. This is in addition to a large number of other professional medals awarded by the state. Other countries have similar, although less commonly awarded, honours. An example is the Italian Medal of Merit for Labour.

In addition to these, professional awards for bravery are common for ordinary citizens, even if most ordinary citizens will never be in a situation in which they will merit one. These tend to follow similar criteria to those as for the equivalent military awards.

Some countries that do not have specific awards sometimes have very broad award categories. Australia, for instance, is very selective regarding upper echelons of the Order of Australia, which are strictly limited. However, the lowest class of the award can have an unlimited number of recipients. Additionally, ordinary citizens can nominate

individuals for the award. This means that the Order of Australia has been awarded over 35,000 times since its inception in 1975. In Britain lower levels of the Order of the British Empire are similar in their tendency to be awarded to ordinary citizens.

Awards for ordinary citizens are relatively rare in Ireland. They are usually related to social and community work. The most well-known of these awards is also among the most unconventional of them. The *Gaisce* award was proposed by Charles Haughey, but only formally created under Garret Fitzgerald's government (Houses of the Oireachtas, 1985). The award is given to young people aged between fifteen and twenty-five who perform a series of difficult-to-complete tasks. At the highest level these include community involvement, developing a personal skill, developing a physical activity, undertaking an 'adventure journey' over four days and undertaking a 'residential project' over five days. The organisers of *Gaisce* estimate that this should take a minimum of 78 weeks to complete and the award is conferred by the President. There are, however, lower levels with correspondingly smaller time commitments and degrees of difficulty. The *Gaisce* is an unusual award because it is not awarded retrospectively, by merit. Rather a candidate for the award must announce their intention to seek the award before it is granted.

Other awards are less well known but usually involve some kind of proven commitment to community service. Galway City Council offers the 'Mayor's Award' for community service. This is awarded to ordinary people resident within the boundaries of the City Council. The awardees are selected by nomination from other ordinary citizens and the prize, as the name suggests, is awarded by the Mayor. This is an initiative of the council and does not relate to any jurisdiction of the national government. In that sense it is similar to other initiatives that are created by private citizens and organisations.

The final national award for ordinary citizens is the National Bravery Award. This award was established in 1947 for ordinary citizens who showed exceptional courage. In almost every case this involved saving the life of another person. This is also awarded by the President and is quite similar to the various bravery awards given out by other countries. This is quite a common award type.

### 3.3.2 Exceptional Merit Awards

Every country that awards honours, without exception, offers some form of an award for exceptional merit. This is for extraordinary achievement in whatever form that the nation chooses to honour. This is usually defined broadly. It can include former politicians, authors, artists, sports people and academics all receiving the same award, sometimes even in the same ceremony. This is clearly for some kind of national celebration – the recipient is intended to be someone of whom the whole country can be proud.

They can be awarded in two ways. Firstly, they can be awarded unilaterally by the head of state or head of government (more usually the latter). Indeed, many countries have awards that are exclusively in the gift of government, such as Israel and, in Britain, the various chivalric orders. Secondly, the recipients can be chosen by a committee. This system is more common. The impartiality of these committees varies, but they are intended to make the award removed from government patronage. This approach seems to be particularly favoured by countries setting up a system for the first time, such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand when they ceased using the British honour system.

Ireland provides quite a number of these awards. They are not arranged systematically but do cover many areas. There are a number that are directly awarded by the state.

In 2012 the Irish Distinguished Services Award was established. This is an award for exceptional services to Ireland or the Irish diaspora. While open to Irish citizens the eligibility criteria include a stipulation that the award can only be conferred on individuals who live outside of the island of Ireland. It has been awarded 51 times, including to illustrious recipients – such as Nobel prize winner Mario Vargas Llosa, but remains little known to the general public.

The other method that the Irish state has of directly rewarding exceptional achievement is by granting Honorary Citizenship, something established in 1956. Naturally, this can only be given to individuals who are not already Irish citizens. In practical terms this is identical to making the individual a citizen of Ireland. Honorary citizenships are very rare – having been granted just twelve times. Notable recipients include the collector Chester Beatty and the former Irish football manager Jack Charlton.

There are methods the state has of rewarding exceptional achievements. However, it does not have direct control over them. University honorary degrees are one way the Irish state has of providing recognition. Another common method is through the county and city councils. It is possible to provide an individual with the 'Freedom of Dublin', or of Cork, or indeed of any local authority. The individual being honoured usually, but not always, has some link with that local authority. While this is a major honour, the freedoms of local authorities are not distributed evenly in the sense that they are awarded at differing rates. For instance, since the reorganisation of Irish local government in 1876 the freedom of Dublin has been awarded 78 times, while that of Cork has been awarded nearly 150 times. They are also not all equally prestigious, with those of larger jurisdictions attracting more notice.

A less conventional area of recognition is *Aosdana*, established in 1981. This is an exclusive organisation of artists, writers and other cultural figures whose membership may not exceed 250. New members are elected by the existing members, from whom a small number may be awarded the title of *Saoi*, an especially high honour. While funded and sanctioned by the state it, *Aosdana* is independent of it. The state has no role in selecting new members. This is an unusual structure for an organisation. The closest comparison may be the *Academie Francaise*, responsible for regulating the French language. New members of that body are also elected by the existing members, although the pool of candidates is not restricted to the Arts.

The final award that the state can offer is also more indirect, and also exists in other states. Ireland can honour citizens by putting them on stamps. This is something the state has done since 1929 and 405 individuals and groups have been honoured in this way. This is recognised as a preeminent honour. *An Post* said in 2010 that "In a country like Ireland that doesn't have an honours system, being on a stamp is the highest honour the public can bestow" (Sweeney, 2010). However, being depicted on a stamp may be more an acknowledgement of importance, than an honour in itself, particularly in the cases of controversial figures. This was the case with Che Guevara stamp in 2017, where the criteria for depiction on a stamp are that the stamp "should showcase some aspect of Irish life, culture or history, or Ireland's place in the world. Second, in the interests of heightening international awareness of our small country, both subject and design should appeal to stamp collectors and others worldwide" (Edwards and



McGreevey, 2017). This means that while depictions on stamps are often thought of as being an honour, that is not necessarily the criterion on which they are chosen.

### 3.3.3 Diplomatic Awards

Almost every country that gives out honours in the OECD gives courtesy awards to visiting foreign dignitaries (Israel is the exception). In many cases these are the only awards that it is possible for a non-citizen to receive. They tend to be highly ranked awards. Often, they are the highest honour that a state can confer, and they outrank any award that a state may offer one of their own citizens.

Monarchies often distinguish between awards that are given to visiting monarchs and visiting republican officials. The latter are usually given an award of lower rank than the former. Japan is the most prominent example of this.

There are two other kinds of diplomatic awards. The first type is given to foreign nobility. This is most usually given out by monarchies in the form of Chivalric Orders. However, this is not always true – for instance Portugal awards them, despite being a republic. These kinds of awards are among the oldest available in an Honour system, and no new award of this character has been established anywhere for over a century.

The final kind of diplomatic award is given to diplomats leaving posting in a country. They are often given a low-ranking award in recognition of their service, that usually is associated with fostering ‘friendship’.

Diplomatic awards are usually given with the expectation of reciprocity. They are given by one country during a state visit in the expectation that, when the state visit is returned, their head of government or head of state will be awarded with a similar honour. If this will not be, or cannot be, forthcoming, they are usually not awarded.

Ireland awards no official diplomatic awards. We have no formal mechanism to honour foreign dignitaries who visit the country or to reciprocate awards that other countries can offer. In practical terms this can result in Irish leaders not being offered awards that would be routinely offered to leaders in other countries. In 1932 the Irish ambassador to the Vatican warned that ‘grave offence’ would be taken if the papal nuncio was not given an honour when Ireland hosted the Eucharistic Congress that year. No award was offered to him and no diplomatic offence was seemingly taken in that case (Keogh, 1995).

Despite this lack of official recognition, the Irish state has found a number of ways of honouring such individuals in other ways. Some of these are direct and some are more oblique. The most obvious alternative that Ireland has is given out rarely. An invitation to speak to the House of the Oireachtas is considered an extremely great honour. It has only happened twenty times in Irish history and is generally only accorded to foreign leaders of the first rank, such as Ronald Reagan and Francois Mitterend. In recent years however, this has been used as a practical measure as well as an award. Theresa May turned down an invitation to address the Houses of the Oireachtas following Brexit, perhaps recognising that the invitation would be more likely to be an opportunity for Irish parliamentarians to ask her questions than an honour (O'Regan, 2017). Michel Barnier's address in 2017 was also primarily a practical mechanism of hearing from the EU's chief negotiator, rather than honouring Barnier himself (Leahy, 2017).

An alternative approach occasionally used for this purpose is the awarding of honorary degrees. Irish universities receive a considerable portion of their budget from the state, so can be considered autonomous semi-state agencies. They have awarded honorary degrees to individuals that are clearly dignitaries at the time. For instance, TCD awarded an honorary degree to Joe Biden while he was still serving as Vice-President of the US (Harty, 2016).

#### 3.3.4 Military Awards

Every country examined has some system for military honours. This is entirely distinct from the civilian honour system, but often runs in parallel with it. Several countries, such as Spain and Portugal, have military awards with corresponding and equal rank with specific civilian awards. More often however they operate under an entirely different classification.

Military awards come in two categories. There are awards for valour and other kinds of exceptional service, including injury or death in service. There are also awards for length of service without blemish. In general, the former kind of award outranks the latter.

Military Awards are the area in which Ireland is most conventional. Ireland provides a full and ranked award system for the military. This includes medals for bravery, for length of service and for involvement in specific campaigns. These are usually awarded

by the Minister for Defence to the awardee on the recommendation of senior military officers.

### 3.4 Goals of an Irish Honours System

If Ireland were to establish a formal honour system it should have a function that is not currently provided for. Accordingly, it is worth considering what the Irish informal honour system does not deliver. The inability of the Irish state to recognise distinguished achievement directly represents a significant gap. While the emphasis changes, all other OECD nations that have honours provide some mechanism for the recognition of extraordinary achievements for the nation. Ireland cannot do this barring very specific and indirect means in specific fields. Some areas of achievement cannot be acknowledged at all under the current system except for very rare generalised awards. This includes the Freedom of a City or Honorary Degrees that remain open to others. For example, distinguished academics are often awarded honours in other jurisdictions, but it would be difficult to confer such an honour in Ireland. The principal group for whom this is not true is sports people. They are covered by the Sport's Person of the Year award by RTE, although only one of these is awarded per year and this is not strictly a state honour. Individuals working in the Arts are also covered by membership of *Aosdana*, which the government cannot control directly and is aimed more at supporting worthy, but less commercially successful artists. This means that authors like John Banville or Anne Enright, who are internationally accoladed, go unrecognised here. Furthermore, popular musicians or others whose achievements are not considered to be high art receive no recognition at all. If the Irish state is interested in showing that it values all kinds of achievements it should make some provision for them.

The inability of the Irish state to recognise foreign dignitaries and distinguished visitors is also important. This is a capacity that exists in most other countries. This has caused problems and frictions with other jurisdictions in the past. While this is not a huge issue it remains a problem. Having bodies that receive state funding confer awards that resemble diplomatic awards cannot fulfil the same need. They do not provide the same message of respect and conciliation that receiving an honour directly from political leaders provides. This is a problem made more acute by the fact that other countries can provide both direct and indirect honours.

Aside from various voluntary service schemes and the National Bravery Awards, the Irish state has very limited capacity to recognise ordinary citizens. In most countries, national recognition of ordinary citizens with relatively achievable honours are rare, as discussed in the typologies of awards above. The main exceptions are France, Romania and Australia, which all have awards that are received by over 30,000 individuals. The proliferation of such citizens' awards is managed, at least in part, by the creation of multiple levels for the same award. This means higher levels can become more exclusive and lower ones more achievable.

Ireland does have a well-established military honours system very well. There are a variety of awards and clear criteria for receiving them.

This review suggests that there are two principal areas in which Ireland lacks capacity to confer awards: recognition of foreign dignitaries and honouring citizens and their significant achievements.

## 4. Kinds of Awards Systems

There are three basic kinds of award systems. They can be distinguished in terms of their primary functions as: internal recognition, old monarchical or nation-building systems. Each of these has certain characteristics that make them identifiable and they emphasise certain areas over others. This research paper will focus mainly on internal recognition systems, which are the most widespread in OECD countries and are the most applicable to Ireland in any case. The other systems are also described briefly below.

The classification of systems is driven by the goals of the system. Superficially similar awards often have very different intentions behind both their establishment and their current use. This means that who they nominate, how many individuals they nominate and why they nominate them may be different. It also affects the development of awards. These differences mean that it makes little sense to focus on the structure of the individual awards as the primary means of determining the difference between countries. Rather looking at the awards in context is more fruitful.

### 4.1 Internal Recognition

This is the most common type of honours system and is the one most often adapted. Most long-established republics have a system like this. Internal Recognition systems are primarily for acknowledgement within the country, in a civic context. These awards tend to have a simpler structure than other systems and were adopted later. Examples include Germany, with just one award, Italy with four, and Canada, Australia and New Zealand, each of which have one award that is frequently awarded, even though other awards exist in their systems. The main difference between internal recognition and nation-building systems is the purpose behind them and the absence of deep historical roots for the awards.

There are two kinds of internal recognition system, entailing all-purpose awards and specialised awards, respectively. Germany and Canada are very good examples of the former. Both have just one award that the federal government can offer (Canada recognises a number of British royal awards but does not award them itself). All possible areas in which a person might be deemed to have earned an award are encompassed in the one honour that the state can bestow. This is decided by a committee which receives nominations. This means that diplomats, sports stars and

distinguished academics are treated similarly. This makes awards easily identifiable and understandable.

The second kind of system uses clearly different awards for different areas. This is rarer but still common. A good example is South Korea. South Korea has an award system that was established in 1992 and has eight awards. It has one supreme honour awarded to Heads of State. Each of the other seven awards are split into five classes and are awarded for good work in different areas that the nation might value – arts, diplomacy, industry, rural development, sports, science and culture. These kinds of internal recognition systems also tend to be less exclusive. France – another country with an award system of this nature – has dozens of awards, but it also has awards which ordinary people might attain. For instance, the French Medal of Honour for Labour is awarded roughly to 300,000 individuals annually.

#### 4.2 Old Monarchical

Most of the world's monarchies use this system. Examples of it include Britain, Spain, Denmark, Belgium, the Netherlands and Sweden. It also includes countries like Portugal that spent most of their formative years as monarchies and retain much of the institutional set up of one.

Old Monarchical systems are distinctive in two respects. Firstly, by their continued use of noble orders, and secondly by the very large number of awards that they confer. This gives their honour systems an unorganised and organic aspect: their development appears unplanned.

Belgium and Denmark are good examples of relatively simple monarchical systems. Belgium has three extant awards, each with five classes, with the newest being established in 1900. The awards are arranged on a hierarchical scale, so it is clear who ranks above who. Historically, the Belgian system included awards that explicitly recognised service to colonial government, although most of these awards have been abolished. Furthermore, overly explicit aristocratic undertones in the three that remain have been toned down. All three are however named either after individual monarchs (the Order of Leopold, the Order of Leopold II) or after the monarchy in general (the Order of the Crown).

The Danish system is much more complex, with nearly fifty awards. As in Belgium though, these awards are arranged in a hierarchical structure. The highest awards have

names with monarchical undertones, such as the Order of the Elephant (named for a royal gift of an elephant that the Danish king once received) and the Order of the Dannebrog. Lower awards have more neutral titles, such as the Medal of Merit. The Danish award system is also very old: the two highest awards were established in 1693 and 1671 respectively. Denmark also has a characteristic shared with Britain and most other monarchical systems: its highest awards are not generally open. They are restricted to nobility or foreign heads of state, and particularly monarchs.

For historical reasons, old monarchical honours systems have tended to provide models for newer systems, although in the second half of the twentieth century simpler systems have usually been preferred if they have not already been preceded by older more complex arrangements.

#### 4.3 Nation-Building

Nation-building honour systems are mostly found in central and eastern Europe, including: Romania, Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Hungary,. They share a number of traits with old monarchical systems. They are usually complex and have awards with very long pedigrees.

They differ from Old Monarchical systems in both the structure of the awards systems and their desired effects. Countries with nation-building systems usually have had long traditions as nation-states, even if that tradition was not continuous and much of their de-facto independence was destroyed after the Second World War. Typically, these systems do not confer aristocratic titles, given the demise of aristocracies in the former communist regimes.

Most of the countries with this system had a system of Soviet or Socialist awards that were removed when they become independent again after 1990. By re-establishing old award systems that predated communism they are affirming that their national heritage is not defined by their recent past. Rather, the honours systems, by alluding to the nation's past, are evoking a history that stretches back centuries.

Lithuania is a striking example. It has four honours, only one of which does not have antecedents from before 1945. Its highest award is the Order of Vytautas the Great, followed by the Order of the Cross of Wytis. Both of these are not generic titles but reflect aspects of Lithuanian culture and history.

A nation-building honours system is dependent on a long tradition and is thus path-dependent. It could not operate without history to build on. It may not therefore be a generalisable model.

**Table 1 – OECD countries included with each award type**

Old Monarchical	Nation-Building	Internal Recognition
Belgium Denmark Japan Luxembourg Norway Netherlands Portugal Spain Sweden United Kingdom	Czech Republic Estonia Finland Hungary Latvia Poland Slovakia	Australia Austria Canada Chile France Germany Greece Iceland Israel  Italy Mexico New Zealand Slovenia South Korea Turkey United States
10	7	16



## 5. Case Studies

### 5.1 Case Selection

It is important to examine honour systems in practice and to look at the experience of introducing a new system. Two countries are especially interesting to explore: the United Kingdom and Canada. They both have valuable lessons for Ireland. In both cases the major award – the Order of the British Empire and the Order of Canada – was examined because this was the only award that was awarded to more than a handful of individuals. The United Kingdom has been linked with Ireland throughout history, and much Irish political infrastructure is based on it. It also is the main honour system upon which other countries have based their own systems. Its influence makes it an important case.

Canada is a useful case because it is typical of many former British colonies. It developed a new system while maintaining many of the awards that had existed before and much of the cultural importance of the honours. This is in common with the experience of other former British colonies that introduced honour systems.

The United Kingdom and Canada share several similarities to Ireland that are useful for comparative purposes. Ireland shares a deeply entwined common history with the United Kingdom. We have a common cultural experience with Canada of being part of the British empire. Much of Ireland's institutional architecture resembles the Westminster model. This similarity is also something that we have in common with Canada. Ireland has a large diaspora in both countries.

### 5.2 United Kingdom

#### 5.2.1 History of UK Honours

The United Kingdom is an example of a country with a long-established honour system. It did however undergo substantial reforms during the twentieth century, reflecting new priorities. Why it did so is of interest to Ireland, as it tells us something about what was valued and of high priority in a country where this tradition is already established.

While Britain has a very long tradition of royal honours, honours as understood by a contemporary citizenry only became prominent at the end of the nineteenth century. At this time there was a great surge in honours being accumulated by the rich and powerful. This was because of a cultural shift in how honours operated that was

indirectly influenced by the industrial revolution. Throughout most of British history, honours, like titles, were effectively tied to the land. They therefore became associated with very large landowners who would have a large enough annual income to sustain the honour. With the advent of industrialisation, though, land was no longer the only way for an individual to achieve great wealth. Individuals from the banking and industrial sectors began to demand, and receive, great titles and the honours that went with them (Cannadine, 1992). By doing so they were effectively buying the respect and legitimacy as important figures that they felt they deserved, even if the actual traditions associated with these honours were comparatively recent (Cannadine, 1983; Hobsbawm, 1983).

British honours at the end of the nineteenth century were created and bestowed by the monarch. However, in practical terms the lists were drawn up by the two major political parties and then merely signed off by the palace. It is not possible to determine which of the two major political parties started the practice first, but by the 1880s both the Conservatives and the Liberals were engaged in relatively open selling of honours to their benefactors. This was usually part of the practice of making businessmen, still in business, peers, such as Arthur Guinness being made Lord Ardilaun by Benjamin Disraeli in 1880. William Gladstone, in 1891, agreed directly for the sale of two peerages in exchange for substantial donations to the Liberal Party (Hanham, 1960). Reassurances were given that if the party lost the election that the claims they had for the gratitude of the party would not be forgotten. By 1905 this had become slightly more subtle. Honours were not sold openly for cash. They were however given to party supporters:

*'of acceptable character and deserving in other ways; the reward usually came much later and was rarely explicitly promised; and the money went into a party fund, not to the pocket of the party leader. Officially, Prime Ministers and opposition leaders knew nothing of the transactions between Chief Whips and donors: they did not know where the money came from, or the connection - if any - with honours nominations. But for all this decorousness, there can be no doubt that this was merely corruption in refined guise: in practice, party leaders knew what was going on; the terms of trade were clear; great philanthropy combined with*

*great party donations did indeed have its rewards; and as such, titles were effectively bought for cash.*' (Cannadine, 1992, p. 312).

This blatant corruption, of the buying and selling of honours, reached its apogee during the premiership of David Lloyd George. Lloyd George became Prime Minister in 1916 as the leader of the wartime coalition, displacing H.H. Asquith. However Asquith remained as party leader and in control of the Liberal Party machine and funds in spite of his ouster, and moved his supporters to opposition (Douglas, 1971). Lloyd George was not a Conservative and did not have access to their resources, even though they were now a majority of his government. In order to credibly fight the next election, he needed funds. The existing practice of selling honours for cash provided a very easy means for him to do so. It had precedent. The royal family did the same in the seventeenth century (Stone, 1958). Lloyd George, by all accounts, detested titles. This, according to A.J.P. Taylor, 'is why he distributed them so lavishly' (Taylor, 1976, p. 257). He even had set prices as to what individual honours would cost: one could purchase a knighthood for £10,000, while a baronetcy would cost £30,000. A peerage would set an individual back by at least £50,000, and possibly more (Rowland, 1975, p. 48).

Ultimately this resulted in the first law regulating honours in Britain. The Conservatives were extremely embarrassed by the public scandal that resulted when this practice came to light, and when they formed a government alone they set about to provide at least some regulation and a commission, so that honours could not be explicitly sold for the personal gain of the Prime Minister of the time (Jenkins, 1990).

The Commission set up the Honours Scrutiny Committee, which was largely unimportant until later reforms (Harper, 2015a, p. 75). The new law intended to provide regulation was called the Honours (Prevention of Abuses) Act, 1925. The key provisions are below:

*'(1) If any person accepts or obtains or agrees to accept or attempts to obtain from any person, for himself or for any other person, or for any purpose, any gift, money or valuable consideration as an inducement or reward for procuring or assisting or endeavouring to procure the grant of a dignity or title of honour to any person, or otherwise in connection with such a grant, he shall be guilty of a misdemeanour.*

*(2) If any person gives, or agrees or proposes to give, or offers to any person any gift, money or valuable consideration as an inducement or reward for procuring or assisting or endeavouring to procure the grant of a dignity or title of honour to any person, or otherwise' in connection with such a grant, he shall be guilty of a misdemeanour.'* (Honours (Prevention of Abuses) Act, 1925, pp. 1–2)

The maximum punishment for these offences was to be no more than two years in prison, or a fine of £500. In practice the act has only been successfully used to prosecute one person – Lloyd George's honour broker Maundy Gregory in 1933, who continued to try to sell papal knighthoods to Catholics in Britain (Cook, 2006). However, the precedent, that honours should not be tied to favours given, was set.

In practice honours continued to evolve in the United Kingdom independently of the law and became extended to individuals in non-traditional spheres. The Lloyd George scandal effectively reduced most British honours to mere civil service appointments, that came automatically with years of service in particular posts.

It was around this time that the Order of the British Empire (OBE) became the main honour remaining in Britain. It was founded in 1917 in order to award non-combatants who contributed to the British war effort in the First World War. It was intended to be an award for non-traditional groups, such as artists, scientists, philanthropists, people in local government and for women. This was to avoid it becoming merely a lower form of existing awards, something which could degrade the OBE.

It is worth noting that the name of the award would prove controversial in later years, with many feeling that that it signifies widespread suffering and oppression and a lack of remorse for the harm that the British Empire inflicted on those that it governed. Awards have been turned down on this basis in modern times. In Ireland this has led to vehement criticism of those accepting British honours, as it is felt that they are tacitly endorsing the activities of the Empire (Martin, 2018). While these concerns have been noted in reports on the British Honours system there has not been any effort to rename the order. Both major reports on its reform expressed some concern that doing so could devalue the award (Phillips, 2004; Kerlake, 2012).

In spite of these lofty intentions, the Order of the British Empire generally was an honour for the civil service by the 1940s. Even before this the other main group of

recipients were individuals from the colonies, tying the award up with the British Empire still further (Harper, 2017). In 1948 47% of OBE awardees were serving civil servants, versus a mere 12% who came from the voluntary sector (Harper, 2015b). It is not considered that the system was corrupt at this time, and Harper attributes this discrepancy between the civil service and everyone else to individuals being genuinely unaware of how to go about nominating someone for an award. This was true even of relatively prominent and powerful organisations, such as the Medical Women's Federation, who just wrote to the Prime Minister periodically asking for consideration for their members, with little success (Harper, 2015b, p. 655).

The system began to noticeably change by the 1960s, when it became controversial again. Harold Wilson used the Honours list drawn up by his office as an opportunity to reward individuals who represented how he wanted the country to move. This included honouring individuals like John Lennon and Paul McCartney in addition to senior civil servants. It also became politically controversial again. Harold Wilson's honour list was not used to reward Labour loyalists, civil servants or 'traditional' recipients. It was largely filled with individuals that Wilson did not know personally in comparatively modern professions. This led to an enormous backlash from cultural conservatives over the nature of 1970s Britain. In spite of the controversy though there was never any suggestion that there was any financial impropriety about the controversy (Harper, 2015a, p. 255).

John Major's government introduced a wide range of reforms in 1993, which largely form the basis of the modern honour system. This was in response to a civil service review and may have been the product of controversy over Denis Thatcher becoming a baronet (Harper, 2015a, pp. 326–327). Major's reforms were widespread. He abolished the automatic nature of honours for all posts for which the practice still remained, other than for senior members of the judiciary (so honours would not be seen as a favour for a politically valuable judgement). He abolished the British Empire Medal, as it effectively functioned as a working-class version of the Order of the British Empire. He also increased the number of royal investitures (the formal ceremony where the honour is received from the monarch) of honours and formalised the role of citizen nominations by introducing standardised nomination forms. The consensus of opinion in the House of Commons regarding these measures was broadly favourable, with the dissenting

voices usually arguing that reform did not go far enough. Few were as adamantly opposed as Tony Benn, who said that:

*'The patronage system is corrupt - everybody knows that - and it should be brought to an end. The system makes the country a laughing stock when people are bedecked in ribbons that have no meaning.'* (Hansard, 1993, p. 458).

There have been two major reports on the British honour system since these reforms, both conducted by the Civil Service. The most comprehensive is the report by Sir Hayden Phillips in 2004. Phillips is broadly supportive of honours and feels that the public is as well, stating that 'there is substantial support in principle and the award of an Honour is our way in the United Kingdom of saying thank you publicly to those who have "gone the extra mile" in their service or who stand out "head and shoulders" above others in their distinction' (Phillips, 2004, p. 3). In general terms though he felt that the honour system could be more open and transparent.

He also had more specific ideas. He suggested three main changes to Major's reforms, all of which are relatively minor and within the spirit of what Major was trying to achieve. Firstly, he suggested that there should be a better spread, in geographic, economic and ethnic terms, of honours awarded in the United Kingdom. Secondly, he suggested that those who chair the specialist committees that decide on the honours to be awarded should be completely independent of the government. Finally he proposed that honours should be further shifted away from the state service (the civil service, diplomatic service and military) in favour of the wider public at a ratio of 20% to 80% (Phillips, 2004, p. 3). These reforms were introduced the following year.

Following from the cash-for-honours scandal of 2006 another report was issued by the civil service, which was released in 2012 and written by Sir Bob Kerslake, then head of the British civil service. He pointed out that the thrust of all reforms to the honour system had been to depoliticise them. This means that, in spite of media commentary to the contrary, the honour system – the Order of the British Empire rather than peerages – is essentially apolitical. He also pointed out that, with the exception of figures such as Nobel Prize winning scientists, Oscar nominated actors and Olympic gold medallists, individuals are not given honours merely for their professional life, however distinguished it may be. The Honours Committee is looking for something more than simple professional success. In particular, length of service and service to the wider

community are important factors for honours. Aside from suggesting expanding the range of situations whereby honours could be forfeited the report made few specific suggestions (Kerslake, 2012).

The report did however contain some illuminating polling conducted by the British state. While the timespan covered by this polling is limited to 2007-2009 it is still useful and is the only data available. These survey data suggest that efforts to ‘open up’ honours and depoliticise them were having an effect. They found that the honours system, notwithstanding criticism, was broadly popular and becoming slightly more popular, if anything, over time.

When individuals who are aware or somewhat aware of the Honours system are asked how they feel about it they are clearly favourable. This can be seen in Table 2 below. In 2007 40% thought the Honours system was out-of-date. This had fallen to 34% by 2009. People also thought the award was open to all individuals (at 76% by 2009) and that they would be proud to receive one (at 77% by 2009). However, the survey results also suggest low levels of public confidence in the fairness and transparency of the award system, although even here there is some improvement, from 39% to 44%.

**Table 2: British Public Attitudes to Honour Systems**

	2007	2008	2009
The UK Honours system is out-of-date and should be replaced by a scheme more suited to the UK as it is today	40%	37%	34%
The UK Honours system is currently open to all. Everyone, from any background, can receive an award	75%	73%	76%
The UK Honours system is open and fair in the way that it is operated	39%	47%	44%
The UK Honours system is a unique method of recognising the achievements of ordinary people	71%	71%	75%
Honours are mainly awarded to people who deserve them for the service they have given to the country or their community	69%	72%	76%
I would feel very proud if I were to be nominated for a UK Honour	73%	76%	77%
I am proud that the UK Honours system exists	66%	69%	71%

### 5.2.2 Process of Honour Receipt

There are several stages that nominees must go through before receiving the Order of the British Empire. The graph provided by Hayden Phillips is in the appendix, but the process is also described below:

Firstly, individuals are nominated. This can be done by either members of the public or internally within government departments, who identify potentially worthy individuals. These nominations get sent to the Honours 'Unit'. This creates a live nomination. These individuals get evaluated for their contributions, which involves liaising with government departments and local officials both within and outside their area.

Once nominations are received they are considered by the Ceremonial Secretariat. There are eight Honour's sub-committees that look at nominees. These are: Agriculture, Commerce & Industry, Local Services, Maecenas (Arts), Media, Medicine, Science & Technology, Sport and State. The members of these sub-committees choose between the candidates. Upon being chosen by the sub-committees, nominees have their nominations go to the main Honours Committee. The main committee reassesses the sub-committees and examines any sensitive recommendations or omissions. It also ensures that the balance between the various sectors is satisfactory. These then go to the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister can take names off the list but any that they add must go through the Honour's Scrutiny Committee. This committee examines political appointments. Its membership consists of one member from each of the three main parties. Awards for diplomatic service, military awards and nominations from other Commonwealth countries also get added at this time. When individuals reach this point, they are informed and may refuse an honour – although only 2% do so. When all acceptances are received the formal submission is made to the Sovereign and newspapers make the official announcement of who has been nominated. At a later date investiture is arranged. This is usually at Buckingham Palace although a ceremony also takes place annually at Holyrood House in Edinburgh. An individual does not have to attend a royal investiture and can receive an award locally from the Lord Lieutenant. There are twenty-five investitures each year. Individuals abroad can receive the award from the Sovereign's representative there, such as the British Ambassador or in some cases the Governor-General (Phillips, 2004).



### 5.2.3 Honours Committee

The Honours Committee is not particularly diverse by the standards of the British state, although it is currently more diverse than it was when Phillips conducted his report in 2004. At that time, only two of the ten individuals on the main committee were women, and the average age was 60, with a range between 52 and 69 (Phillips, 2004, p. 21). The current committee also only has two women, responsible for community, voluntary and local government service, and state honours, respectively. It is also slightly older, with an average age of 62 from a range of 53 to 75. Increased diversity is evident in the sub-committees. When Phillips was writing two sub-committees had only one woman member – an ex-officio member. Now all have at least one.

While not ideal, this is partially a product of the usually older age profile of award recipients (a precondition for being appointed to the committee), and of the existing older skew of honours towards men, leaving fewer eligible women to take these posts.

### 5.2.4 Composition of Awards

As already discussed the Order of the British Empire has gradually become more oriented towards civil society, compared with its previous recipients, who were mostly civil servants. This is very clear. In 1948 47% of honours went to the Civil Service and 12% to the Voluntary sector. By 2008 only 7% of honours were awarded to civil servants, while 49% went to individuals in the voluntary sector (Harper, 2017, p. 645).

Phillips in his report breaks down the awards in 2004. He takes a random selection of three hundred of the approximately one thousand awardees that year and examines them by sector. This can be seen in the pie chart below:

### Occupation of nominees

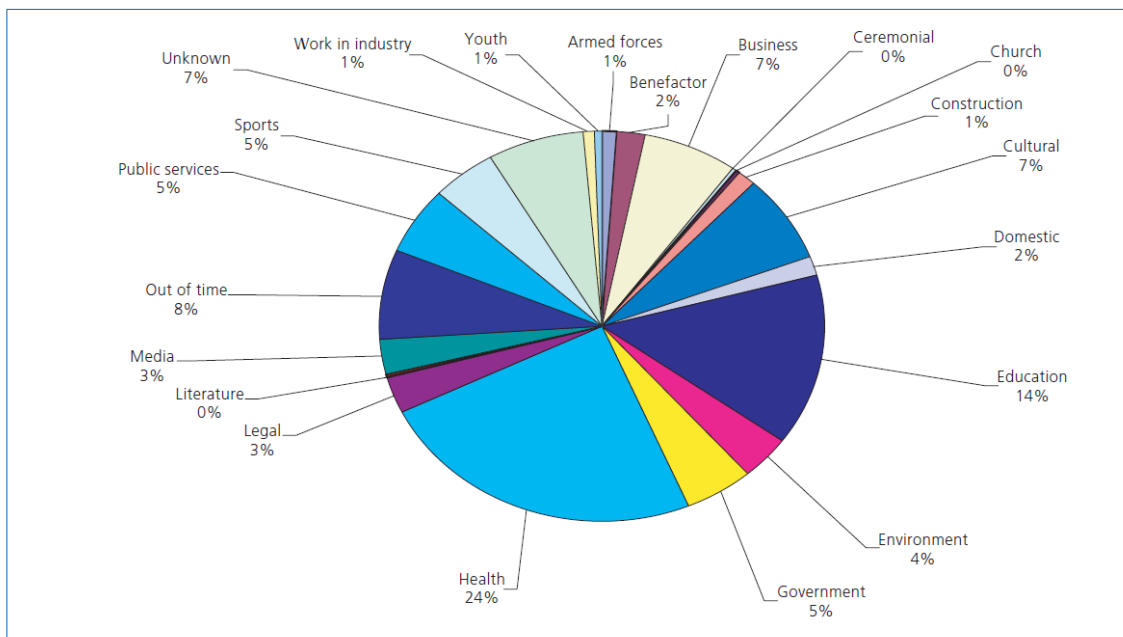


Figure 1 – OBE nominees by occupation in 2004 (Phillips, 2004, p. 62)

This shows that health is the most common professional area that awardees come from, with 24% having a background in the area, but it is far from the only area from which awardees are drawn. Education, which includes research, encompasses 14% of awardees, while cultural areas and business each have 7% of awardees each. This suggests that the nominees are reasonably diverse in the areas from which they are drawn. This also suggests that at least in this respect the committees are working well.

In other areas they have been less successful. There is a consistent skew of awardees towards those based geographically in the South East of England, and away from other regions of the country. In 2004, 29% of nominees came from this area, although it accounts for only 15% of Britain’s total population. By contrast North West England, with 14% of the state’s population, only had 8% of total nominations and the West Midlands, with 11% of the population had only 6% of nominations (Phillips, 2004, p. 62). Phillips does not have a strong reason as to why a skew of this nature is occurring and suggests that more effort be made to solicit nominations from under-represented regions.

Women and ethnic minorities are also underrepresented, particularly at high levels of awards. Despite being 51% of the population only 37% of those honoured were women, while only 21% of those above the very lowest level of the award were women. Ethnic minorities fared similarly badly, although in the absence of a direct question on

ethnicity it is more difficult to measure at the time Phillips was writing (a question of this nature is now included). Phillips measures ethnicity by using the names of awardees, while noting that many individuals, particularly in the Afro-Caribbean community, have names indistinguishable from Britons of European descent. This understates the true proportion of those from ethnic minority backgrounds. Nonetheless, in spite of 6.9% of the British population being a visible minority, a maximum of 6% of honours were awarded to members of this group, while only 3.2% of those above the lowest level of honours were in this category (Phillips, 2004, p. 74). This reflects the underrepresentation of these groups at Committee level. Finally, young people were also significantly underrepresented, although this is less problematic as young people are less likely to have the depth and length of service needed to be awarded an honour. This suggests that the British Honours is skewed in terms of the sectors of the population awarded, and, despite reforms, more work needs to be done on this area.

#### 5.2.5 What can Ireland learn from the United Kingdom?

The United Kingdom had approximately 1,000 new investitures into the Order of the British Empire when Hayden Phillips was writing in 2004 (Phillips, 2004). This is one new award for every 65,640 British citizens. In Ireland this would equal 72 awards annually. The United Kingdom is a good example of continuing reform, and how institutions such as Honour Systems can continue to remain relevant over changing circumstances. Britain's honour system, while always present in the modern era, was adapted on the basis of what was valuable to governments at the time. First it was used as a convenient source of funds for election campaigns. Then it was used as a focal point for stamping out corruption and as a means of keeping the civil service happy before coming to a new role: highlighting the kind of country that Prime Ministers wanted the United Kingdom to be. The current role of the system to reward extraordinary merit and achievement in an egalitarian way, is comparatively modern and the reforms were introduced nearly twenty years after Canada had created an entirely new system with these excellence, meritocratic and egalitarian principles.

Far from diminishing the legitimacy of the Honour System, reforms seem to strengthen its role in British society. The example of the United Kingdom suggests that, by staying in touch with what the public want in an honour system, one can achieve public support and honour extraordinary individuals with their due gratitude from the state. As can be

seen with continuous reform and increased public support, a system that honours outstanding behaviour, achievements and contributions, that ordinary individuals have at least some chance of receiving, and that is free from political interference, is what the public wants.

### 5.3 Canada

Canada is a good example of an honour system that was created entirely anew. It is not an existing system that was reformed as in the United Kingdom. The Order of Canada was an entirely new system created in a country where they also prevented citizens from receiving British honours. Before going into the specifics of the Canadian Honour system it is worth discussing the origins of it. Where does the Order of Canada come from?

#### 5.3.1 History of Canadian Honours

Canada, like the rest of the British Empire in the Nineteenth Century, was entitled to the use of British honours. They were not regularly awarded at first but demand for honours grew. But even as early as 1866 there was a proposal for a uniquely Canadian honour – similar to the Star of India or the Order of St. Michael and St. George for the Ionian Islands and Malta (McCreery, 2005, p. 9). Nothing came of this effort for a specific honour for the Dominion and this was the last effort for a specific honour for Canada until 1942.

This is not to say that honours were not an issue. British honours became more and more common, but they were often controversial and became entangled with a growing national identity that was distinct from Britain. Honours were not very representative of the population. Of the 183 knighthoods awarded to Canadians between 1867 and 1918 64% went to prominent members of the two main Canadian political parties. Many groups, such as French Canadians, Roman Catholics and women went almost unrepresented (McCreery, 1999, p. 48). The typical new Canadian knight was an anglophone businessman in Montreal, with close ties to the local Conservatives and many friends in both Ottawa and London (McCreery, 2017, p. 29). This made peerages controversial. Canadians were very suspicious of hereditary peerages believing that the dominion was, and should remain, more egalitarian than Britain. The award of a peerage to a Conservative newspaper magnate – against the expressed wishes and even formal advice of Prime Minister Borden – in 1917 was extremely controversial (McCreery, 2005, p. 19). Following a parliamentary debate this led to the Nickle resolution – named after its author William Folger Nickle, a Conservative MP with a strong dislike of honours – which made four statements:

1. *'No honour or titular distinction... shall be conferred upon a subject of His Majesty ordinarily resident in Canada except with the approval or upon the advice of the Prime Minister of Canada.'*
2. *The Government of the United Kingdom shall exercise the same authority as heretofore in determining the character and number of titles or honours to be allocated to Canada from time to time.*
3. *No hereditary titles of honour shall hereafter be conferred upon a subject of His Majesty ordinarily resident in Canada.*
4. *Appropriate action shall be taken, whether by legislation or otherwise, to provide that after a prescribed period no title of honour held by a subject of His Majesty now or hereafter ordinarily resident in Canada shall be recognised as having a hereditary effect.'* (Nickle, 1918, pp. 495–6).

While the Nickle resolution did not ban honours (and, indeed, never officially became law) it was seen as a constitutional policy statement and treated as such. It is still cited as government policy – the Canadian government used it to attempt to block the appointment of Conrad Black to a British peerage. It has also been used to block the modern receipt of knighthoods for Canadian citizens, with the government arguing that Britain does not have this power without consulting Canada first (McCarthy, 2001). The number of honours awarded after it fell dramatically – relating to both this and the Cash for Honours scandal that was engulfing David Lloyd George in Britain at this time (McCreery, 2005, p. 47). In 1921 William Mackenzie King became Prime Minister, a position he would maintain almost without interruption until 1948. Mackenzie King detested all honours. He had several reasons. McCreery, the main – and effectively only – authority on Canadian honours, summarised them as:

*'Mackenzie King disliked most honours because they were, in his time, tools of patronage and corruption that had been discredited during the First World War. Also, while a member of Laurier's Cabinet, Mackenzie King had come to see honours as divisive and destructive to the collegial atmosphere necessary for a smooth-running government. When one minister was recognised and another was not, this gave rise to tensions not only between the two men involved, but between them and the prime minister, who was responsible for compiling the honours list.'* (McCreery, 2005, p. 89)

In effect, this meant that the Nickle resolution had become a ban on honours. There was no Canadian order to replace the British honours. Barring a brief resurgence of the British honours system when Mackenzie King lost office in the early 1930s, for a very short time this effective ban on honours remained.

By the Second World War this proved to be a problem. The war resulted in a need for honours to all sorts of individuals. This was particularly important owing to the need for reciprocity. More than 400 medals were awarded to Canadians in the war from other governments. Canada had no way to reciprocate these honours aside from requesting that the British give honours to these countries. This was controversial owing to the demand for honours within Canada. There was concern that civilian honours, for whom demand had built up, would exhaust the finite number of honours that Britain would award on behalf of Canada. This would result in military service in the war going unrecognised (McCreery, 2005, p. 80).

This led to considerable further discussion in Parliament, and ultimately a new committee report. This was extremely short. The entirety of it is below:

1. *'That his majesty's subjects domiciled or ordinarily resident in Canada be eligible for the award of Honours and Decorations, including awards in the Orders of Chivalry, which do not involve titles.*
2. *That His Majesty's Government in Canada consider a submission to His Majesty the King, of proposals for the establishment of an Order limited in number but not involving titles for which His Majesty's subjects domiciled or ordinarily resident in Canada alone shall be eligible.'* (Special Committee on Honours and Decorations, 1942)

Significantly, this proposed the creation of a uniquely Canadian honour for the first time in nearly eighty years. Several were proposed later, modelled on the Order of the British Empire, with five or six levels which Canada alone would have control over. None of these ideas went anywhere. This was mainly due to Mackenzie King's continued vociferous objections to the establishment of an honours system (McCreery, 2005, p. 79).

The idea of a Canadian Honour seemed to gain some momentum. Another committee, this time led by the Governor-General, proposed the creation of the Order of St.

Lawrence, with five levels and a completely impartial honours committee making all appointments in 1951. Despite being the most thorough effort yet, this failed to pass muster with the new Prime Minister. Louis St. Laurent was not opposed to honours in principle, but the creation of a national order that shared his own name was too politically hazardous (McCreery, 2005, pp. 99–100)

Throughout this time public opinion was moving towards honours. Gallup conducted a number of polls in 1942, 1953 and 1959 (the question was ‘There has been some argument about whether or not Canadians should be given titles (Sir, Lord, Viscount) for outstanding services to their country. What are your views?’). The results suggest a small shift towards the idea of honours in Table 3:

Table 3 – Gallup Total Polling Data, 1942, 1953 and 1959

	1942	1953	1959
Favour Titles	32%	32%	38%
Oppose Titles	55%	53%	46%
Undecided	13%	15%	16%

Gallup also indicated few partisan differences. 41% of Liberals were in favour, while 42% of Conservatives were in favour (Canadian Institute of Public Opinion, 1959).

A new Prime Minister and the centenary of the formation of Canada with the British North America Act of 1867 provided the impetus for the creation of the Order of Canada. Lester Pearson had been personally awarded an OBE when Mackenzie King lost office in the 1930s. He was very interested in the creation and confirmation of a Canadian national identity. A distinctly Canadian Honour system was seen as part of this, along with the establishment of the Maple Leaf flag and the adoption of ‘O Canada’ instead of ‘God Save the Queen’ as the national anthem. The bill to establish the award went through many revisions before enactment, but its primary goals were to recognise ‘ordinary’ as well as ‘great’ people, to encourage outstanding service and to avoid elitism. Disputes over the number of grades meant that a single level for the new order, with no membership restriction, was created. This was in order to make the award inclusive. The award was called ‘The Order of Canada’, largely because it was simple to translate into French (McCreery, 2005, p. 122). The new order was not created through an act of parliament. Rather it was established by Letters Patent and approved by the



Queen, This was to make the award more apolitical. The final award created had only one level, but three different kinds of awards and a restriction on the number of appointments that could be made each year. It contained no restrictions on the total number of members allowed. Most importantly, the new award was decided on by the impartial Honours Committee, with no political interference, and nominations had to come from members of the public. This, more than anything else, encouraged the opposition parties and the general public to support the creation of the honour (McCreery, 2005, pp. 117–131). The award has remained largely unchanged since.

### 5.3.2 Process of Honour Receipt

If one is to become a Member of the Order of Canada there are a number of stages that one needs to go through. The nomination process is outlined in graphical form in Appendix 6, but it is summarised below.

Nominations are first made by a member of the public (the nomination form is also included in the appendix). The nomination form asks for details, including a CV, of the candidate being considered for an honour, details of the person nominating them and the details of three individuals who can vouch for the person being nominated. The form is only four pages and stresses throughout the need not to inform either the person being nominated or the individuals who are to vouch for them ‘in order to avoid disappointment’ (Order of Canada Advisory Committee, 2015, p. 1). After receipt of the nomination the Chancellery of Honours, a civil service body, conducts its own research into each nominee where they consult those associated with the nominee and existing members of the Order of Canada. This process takes between six and ten months. These reports are collated and given to the Advisory Committee of the Order of Canada, which considers each nomination. The Advisory Council meets bi-annually and considers each nomination and is described in detail in the next section. Between 400 and 600 nominations are considered each year, and about 150 appointments are recommended. The Chair of the Council then informs the Governor-General, who in turn contacts each recipient to seek their acceptance of the honour. Those who accept have their names made public on either January 1<sup>st</sup> or July 1<sup>st</sup>. Finally those who accept have an investiture ceremony, where they receive the insignia of the Order from the Governor-General at Rideau Hall, the official place of residence for the Governor-General, or at la Citadelle, the secondary official residence in Quebec City (Order of Canada, 2011).

### 5.3.3 Honours Committee

The Order of Canada Advisory Committee is particularly important for the Canadian honour system. All nominations must be approved by this body. Its composition is therefore of particular importance. It consists of six ex-officio members, who are there by virtue of the offices that they hold, and six other members who serve three year terms. The six other members are chosen from among the existing recipients of the Honour. The six offices whose holders are on the committee are the Chief Justice of Canada, the Clerk of the Privy Council, the President of the Royal Society of Canada, the Chair of Universities Canada, the Chair of the Canada Council of Arts and the Deputy Minister of Canadian Heritage (a civil servant).

In 1967 the committee was not particularly diverse. Its twelve members had no women and almost all members of the committee were from somewhere on the Montreal-Windsor corridor (a relatively small area in Canada but densely and heavily populated, which includes Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Waterloo, London and Windsor and the areas between them. Canadian politics is often concerned with suggestions that this area receives undue attention relative to the rest of the country). The committee did contain two francophones though, an important consideration in Canada (McCreery, 2005, p. 137).

The Committee is more diverse at present, but still not reflective of the Canadian population at large. Two members have clear political connections even if they are themselves not affiliated to a political party: the son of a former Conservative leadership candidate, and the daughter of a former Liberal Prime Minister. There are four women, and six francophones. While visible minorities make up 22% of the Canadian population, suggesting that at least two members of the committee should be a member of a visible minority, there are no visible minority members of the committee. There is however one member of the Canadian First Nations, who are classified separately but make up about 5% of the population. By contrast Francophones are over-represented, making up half the committee and 21% of the population (Statistics Canada, 2017).

Nonetheless, despite these deficiencies, the 2017 committee is clearly more diverse and representative than the initial committee, although even this made some efforts at being representative. It would certainly appear that Canada has made more efforts in this area than the United Kingdom, reflecting the greater focus on egalitarianism that Canada has

in its honour system in general. This provides some lessons for Ireland, as it shows what a committee that places emphasis on diversity, without being strictly held to be representative, would look like.

#### 5.3.4 Composition of Awards

The Composition of awards has not changed substantially since they were first awarded. Awards are not particularly frequent. There have been a total of 6,972 recipients, of which 3,512 are living (Office of the Governor General, 2018). The latter is approximately one in 10,000 Canadians. Ninety-nine individuals received awards in July 2017. In proportion to the population, this is the equivalent of granting thirteen awards to Irish citizens. Since 1967 particular efforts have been made to give the award to a wide spread of the population.

Table 4, which shows the distribution of awards by profession, suggests that, with two main exceptions, the composition of the awardees has remained similar over the years. There is a wide spectrum of individuals honoured in both lists. This ranges from sporting figures to Inuit sculptors. The main difference between 1967 and the present in terms of the backgrounds of the individuals appointed is the decline of individuals in the public service, and the rise of figures from industry. In 1967 fourteen individuals were awarded the Order of Canada primarily for their contributions in public service. In 2017 there were only three individuals clearly identifiable with that area. Against that the number of individuals from the world of business and industry receiving the honour rose from three to ten.

In other ways the awards are less diverse. In 1967 only thirteen awards, or fourteen per cent of the total were awarded to women. This reflected the emphasis of the award on extraordinary public service, and there were fewer women in the public realm in 1967. By 2017 the number and proportion of female awardees had increased – although still not to half of all awardees. In 2017 thirty-six of the awardees were women, a little over a third of the recipients that year.

It is impossible to determine the number of minorities awarded the order of Canada in either year. These data are not released. However, they can be extrapolated. Hayden Phillips, in his review of the British honours system attempted to estimate based on the names of the awardees (Phillips, 2004). Using this method, visible minorities appear to

account for less than 10% of all awardees, well below the 22% their share of the population. Unfortunately, the mother-tongue of awardees is impossible to determine.

**Table 4 - Order of Canada, awards by Profession**

Field	Number of Awards, July 1967	Number of Awards, July 2017	Percentage of Total, July 1967	Percentage of Total, July 2017
Arts/Music	7	7	8	7
Arts/Stage	6	6	7	6
Arts/Visual	4	6	4	6
Arts/Writing	5	4	6	4
Arts/Film	0	2	0	2
Communications	2	5	2	5
Education	9	9	10	9
Engineering	1	4	1	4
Health	7	10	8	10
Heritage	3	3	3	3
Industry/Commerce	3	10	3	10
Labour relations	1	0	1	0
Law	4	5	4	5
Philanthropy	2	7	2	7
Politics	4	2	4	2
Protective services/Military	2	1	2	1
Public Service	14	3	16	3
Science	3	4	3	4
Social Science	2	1	2	1
Social Services	4	0	4	0
Sports	3	2	3	2
Voluntary Services	3	4	3	4
Other	1	4	1	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source - (McCreery, 2005, p. 143; Office of the Governor General, 2017)

Nonetheless there have been efforts to ensure that the Order of Canada reflects the entirety of Canada: it reflects a variety of kinds of public work and the numbers of women and visible minorities have increased.

### 5.3.5 What can Ireland learn from Canada

Canada can be regarded as a useful example of innovative reform, albeit one resting on existing foundations. Canada, like Ireland, moved to reject the established British honours. They also, , had reason to feel that the British honours system was not appropriate for their needs, although not for republican reasons. Like Ireland, it also had a long history of efforts at establishing honour systems that did not materialise. Canada's later success at the creation of an honour system that enjoys popular legitimacy means that there are several lessons that can be learnt from the case.

Firstly, Canada examined the British case thoroughly on several occasions, and identified what were the main advantages and disadvantages of that case before proceeding. Furthermore, they identified what they wanted an honour system to achieve – rewarding excellence while not seeming elitist or political. These were the problems that most concerned them in the British system and their presence would deny the new Canadian system legitimacy. They were also conscious of Canada's diversity, with linguistic diversity being of particular importance to them. They then oriented the entirety of their new honour system around these goals.

Secondly, in order to achieve these goals, Canada made innovative modifications. They established an impartial committee to decide honours and allowed citizens to nominate candidates. This involved trade-offs: they chose not to have honours at the discretion of politicians and chose to value ordinary citizens instead. This meant that honours could no longer be distributed as political awards. All politicians could be awarded, but strictly on merit, like any other profession.

From an Irish perspective this shows the importance of both public support for and the legitimacy of the honours system, and of good planning. Ireland should prioritise a system that is likely to acquire public legitimacy and support. Canada achieved this by honouring a diverse range of candidates reflected the composition of the general population. These characteristics would also appear feasible in an Irish honours system.

## 6. Recommendations for Ireland

If an honours system were to be introduced in Ireland, it should be designed to overcome deficiencies in what is already recognised by awards in Ireland, to be broadly representative of the population, and to attract public legitimacy.

Having looked at Ireland and the case studies it is worthwhile to consider now what, if any, system might be considered appropriate for the Irish context. Ireland is not a monarchy and has not had any indigenous monarchy for approximately 800 years. It also has no indigenous nobility and a clause in the constitution that forbids the introduction of noble titles. A monarchical system is clearly inappropriate for Ireland. There have been honours created by the British crown for Irish subjects. The Order of St. Patrick was designed as the Irish counterpart to other national based orders in Britain such as the Order of the Thistle. However, the Order of St. Patrick is not indigenous to Ireland and is an honour created by another jurisdiction. A nation-building system also seems ill-advised. Ireland has been independent since 1922 and has had its current constitution since 1937. It escaped the ideological battles over communism and fascism that redefined the identity of nations in the Twentieth Century. Ireland is clearly an established nation with self-confidence and a sense of its own identity. There are no other nations making territorial claims upon it. There is little need to connect modern Ireland explicitly to an ancient past to show its long continuity and thus there is little need to introduce this kind of honour system.

Accordingly, an internal recognition honour system would seem the most suitable, with entirely new awards. In recent years there was a proposal to introduce an internal recognition award in the Oireachtas. Former Senator Feargal Quinn proposed a bill that would allow the creation of an honour called *Gradam an Uachtaran* as a private members bill, but it was never enacted (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2015b). This bill would have created the eponymous honour for exceptional merit in a wide variety of fields, with a restriction of no more than twelve per year, with no more than four of these not being to non-Irish nationals. The proposed recipients would have been chosen by an impartial committee comprised of holders of certain positions such as the President of the National University of Ireland and the head of the Royal Irish Academy. This proposal warrants some consideration. Taking the appointments out of the

immediate hands of the government is a good idea and should not be changed. This makes the award apolitical. This is in line with the practice in both the United Kingdom and Canada. It certainly satisfies the criteria of recognising exceptional achievement. By restricting the number of recipients, it also ensures that the award remains exclusive and thus prestigious.

The exclusivity of the *Gradam an Uachtaran* entail difficulties. It would be difficult for this honour to be used for the recognition of foreign dignitaries and visitors as the numbers might be too restrictive. It might even undermine such relationships as the Irish government cannot argue that there is no such award available. Furthermore, this award would also be, by design, out of reach for ordinary people. This was something that both the United Kingdom and Canada tried to avoid. This is important for public support for awards. YouGov, a British polling company, polled public support for the 2017 Christmas Honours. They found that few figures that were receiving an honour had the support of more than 50% of the public. Many of them had very little support. This was most pronounced among awards received by the more conventional recipients. For instance, the award for former Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg was only supported by 17% of the public, and that for former *Vogue* editor Alexandra Shulman had the support of just 10% of the population. By contrast Helena Jones, who received an honour for services to young people in Brecon in rural Wales, was supported by 52%. An additional 23% of the public did not support an honour for anyone who received one, and would not support an honour for any individual, under any circumstance (Dinic, 2017). As can be seen, honours that the public have some chance of obtaining are most popular. This suggests that there is a case for a broader list of recipients in order to have public support.

Most countries with simpler honour systems reward more than a handful of honours. Germany, with one honour, confers roughly 2,000 a year. Adjusting for population differences, the German rate of awarding would result in about 100 Irish honours awarded a year. Australia and the United Kingdom, as already mentioned also have broad scope to give out awards. There is a balance to be struck between the exclusivity of awards – maintaining their prestige – and keeping them in reach of ordinary people with great achievements. A compromise might be to create one award with multiple levels, so that high award levels could be conferred on Olympic medallists, Oscar

nominees and similar high-achieving individuals, while lower levels of award would remain achievable for others. Honours systems with multiple levels are standard in most countries. The usual number is five. This allows for differentiation between high honours and those achievable for the general population. Ireland should certainly consider such a system.

A challenge for reform in Ireland is that politicians have expressed preferences for an exclusive honour, as discussed in the Section 3.1 above. The problem with this system is that it fails to meet the challenge of being inclusive and diverse. An honour with multiple tiers allows the priorities of both politicians and the public to be met within the same system.

Consideration of the two case studies of honours systems in Canada and the United Kingdom points to a potential model on which to base an Irish Honours System. One award with three classes that covers a wide range of areas seem both to be appropriate and to follow best practice internationally. This would entail fewer categories than the Order of the British Empire, but Ireland is a much smaller country than the United Kingdom. Such a system could combine the benefits of exclusivity with accessibility; a system that honours the very greatest achievements while also ensuring that exceptional members of the public receive recognition. This can even be provided for in the legislation by imposing limits on the number of people who can receive higher classes of the award but imposing none on the lowest class. Allowing the public to nominate candidates for consideration, as in Canada, would help this further. Canada's entirely impartial Honours committee is also desirable. This means that recipients are more likely to resemble the country at large.

A significant limitation of the proposed internal recognition honour is that it seems inappropriate for foreign dignitaries. Introducing a separate award, with only one class, and for which only non-Irish citizens are eligible would solve this problem. This award could be awarded at the discretion of the government. Such an award might also supplant the existing Distinguished Services Award for individuals living outside Ireland.

This leads to the following recommendation:

- Two awards to be introduced



- The first award:
  - To be awarded for 'exceptional contribution', loosely defined.
  - To be chosen by an impartial committee. They may select candidates of their own choosing and must consider candidates nominated by the public.
  - .
  - To have three classes. No restriction on the number of awards in the lowest class, but limits should be considered on the higher-level awards.
- The second award:
  - To be available only to individuals who are not Irish citizens.
  - To be chosen by the government alone.
  - To have one class only with no numerical restriction.
  - This award might also serve as an award for visiting dignitaries.

The impartial committee follows best practice in other states. It helps build public legitimacy and support for the award at the comparatively small cost of taking the award out of direct government patronage.

'Exceptional Contribution' is a very broad criterion on which to base an award. This is desirable. It allows the committee to choose whoever is worthy, rather than narrowly define it by criteria that may become outdated or fail to capture an obvious candidate. For example, defining sporting excellence by Olympic medals would risk excluding excellent sports-people whose discipline does not compete in the Olympics.

Three classes of award are proposed. This allows a differentiation between truly unique accomplishments and those that are more commonplace. By putting a restriction on the number of awardees at higher levels the Honour would maintain the exclusivity that is valued by politicians while still maintaining public access.

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