

HOW IRELAND'S SHERLOCK BEAT THE MOBSTER WITH THE BAD HAIR

We're now mostly through the counting on Ireland's General Election held on Friday. The two center-right parties that lead the current government, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, have done well enough they're almost certain to remain in government. They'll be seeking a new coalition partner (likely either Labour or the Social Democrats) because their current partners, the Greens got absolutely hammered, returning just one TD (Teachta Dála, which is what we call members of Parliament).

The talk of the election is how Gerry Hutch – like Trump, a mobster with bad hair – almost won a seat in Dublin Center. In the same constituency as Sinn Féin leader Mary Lou McDonald (who took three rounds to get elected herself), crime boss Gerry Hutch got almost 10% of the first round vote.

He had gotten into the race just this month (remember, the election was only called weeks ago), possibly as part of a ploy to get out of jail in Spain on money laundering allegations. And – in part because he's still in a gangland war with another organized crime group – Hutch did little traditional campaigning (in Ireland there's still a *lot* of door-knocking).

Just a month ago, Hutch was sitting in Tahiche prison in Lanzarote, having been arrested in late October as part of a two-year investigation by Spain's Guardia Civil into an alleged money-laundering scheme involving the Dublin criminal and eight associates.

His initial bail application was rejected but this was overturned by the Spanish High Court which released him on

a €100,000 bond specifically to run in the Irish general election.

The truth is Hutch didn't need to do much in-person campaigning. His posts on social media, particularly TikTok, received outsize attention from the media and general public.

Much of the social media campaigning was done by people who didn't even know Hutch. Memes and Photoshopped images featuring the candidate, including a fake image of his election billboard outside the Regency Hotel, were shared far and wide.

Based on the same kind of buzz that Trump used (and that far right Romanian politician Călin Georgescu rode to success), all of a sudden he came in fourth for the four-seat constituency.

So all weekend long, everyone who remotely follows politics has been wondering, could he *really* win (and then only secondarily wondering, how did government fail so badly that a big chunk of Dublin's voters came out to vote for him). As counting proceeded, he showed up to the counting center, setting off a media frenzy. Hutch was willing to answer questions about his race and imagined political future. But as soon as one of the crime reporters asked him about a Special Court judgment that he had been in control of weapons used in a 2016 gang murder, he ran away.

Not long after, the slow process of eliminating candidates and reassigning both their initial votes and the surplus of those who had picked up enough to win ended, with the Labour candidate Marie Sherlock, originally fifth in voting, going from 500 votes behind Hutch to beating him after every else was eliminated by 800 votes.

Sherlock found a way to do what his mobster rivals had never done, beating him.

And that is how Ireland's PR-STV works, and is

supposed to work. You get a ballot with everyone listed in alphabetical order (that's the way it's supposed to be, but Limerick fucked up the alpha order this year, putting the Q's before the O's, which was unfortunate because the last eliminated candidate has last name O'Donovan). And you can list however many or few preferences you have:

- This is the person I most want to win
- These are people I'd be happy to win
- These are mediocre people who are inoffensive
- These are people I don't want to win
- These are people I *really* don't want to win
- These are people I want to beat at all costs

And any time a candidate for whom you voted is eliminated, your ballot gets stamped with the round in which that happened, and reassigned to your next highest candidate still in the race.

I went to the counting center, out at the clubhouse for the horse racetrack, for just one round of the process (count 10) yesterday. The second Fine Gael candidate had just been eliminated, so her votes were stamped and then divvied up using wooden cubbyholes (like you'd see to store kids' belongings in an elementary school classroom) with candidates' names below each cubby hole. Staffers then pulled big stacks of the new votes for the main Fine Gael candidate, counting the reassigned individual ballots by hand, with those rubber things you put on your finger to be able to turn pages quickly – and after he got almost 2,000 of her first round votes, he was declared the winner of the second seat.

And while the two parties that have done little to address Ireland's housing crisis will be back in government (thanks in part to a bunch of taxes Ireland was forced to collect from Apple, which the government used for a bunch of giveaways right before calling the election), a lot of really offensive people won't be. Though the far right had tried to band together to better compete in the election after having limited success in the EU Parliament election in June, every single fash-friendly candidate lost. Ireland's two noted useful idiots for Russia lost (one in the same constituency where Sherlock beat Hutch).

The most annoying outcome from the election is that Aontú, an anti-abortion anti-immigrant party that dresses up nicer than the fascists, picked up a second Dáil seat.

And I have to say, even though Ireland is trying to achieve more gender balance with quotas, in the local election many of the transfers (including those of the leading Fianna Fail candidate not to his female running mate but to another, non-party candidate) went away from women. Though before the whole Hutch story broke out, the head of the Social Democrats had to miss voting in her own (more comfortable than expected) re-election because she was busy giving birth.

Update: Jeebus I called the Social Democrats Liberal Democrats. I was distracted, not that stupid.