

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
NO. W.S. 193

ROINN



COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 193.....

Witness

Senator Seamus O'Farrell,
17 Stanford Green,
Walkinstown,
Co. Dublin.

Identity

Member of "Éire Óg" Branch of
Cumann na nGaedheal from 1907.

Subject

National activities 1907-1916.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No. S.1247.....

Form B.S.M. 2.

W.S. 193.

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 193

8th February 1949.

An Rinnai
Bureau of Military History



R Chara,

I do not believe I can add anything of value to the facts about Easter Week, 1916, which are already known.

I was a member of the Executive Branch of Camanua na n-Parochial from 1907. This Branch afterwards became part of Sinn Féin. Its meetings were held in Camden St. Dublin, where the De Luxe Cinema now stands. The Hon. Sec. was Sean O'Dubhghall (who is still living) and amongst the members were Sean O'Muirghaigh, the late Peadar Macken (killed in Easter Week), Michael Hayes (now Senator), J. Atkins who lives now on S. Circular Rd. We were all very young at that time but we did our best to spread the

Soquel of Linn Fein.

about 1910 I went to work on the railway and was seldom very long in one place, having to move around from one station to another. While stationed in Kildare town myself and a shop assistant employed in Slattery's provision shop there (whose name I cannot at the moment * recall) hoisted a black flag on the tower one night when the loyal population were hanging out Union Jacks in celebration of some British event. We also managed on two occasions to plaster the whole town with small bills, printed in green ink and supplied from Dublin, asking Irishmen not to join the British Army, navy or police force. At that period I also began to write for the Linn Fein paper, especially the peasant in which I published a short series of articles under the heading "letters

* I now remember this man's name, it was Mc Cormick.

from a Young Man in the Country" I also wrote for the Irish Homestead, many of my letters on national economic matters being editorially commented upon by the late G. W. Russell (R. T.)

Because of the working life I had to live it was impossible for me to be a member of the Volunteers when they were formed, but from time to time I met most of the leaders, as for a couple of years (1911 to 1913) I was in Dublin where with the late Jim Larkin I assisted in the production of "the Irish Worker". Arthur Griffith's attitude towards Larkin and trade unionism caused the majority of the Dublin workers, especially the members of his union, to look on Sinn Féin and to some extent on the Volunteers as being opposed to their interests. This, in my opinion, was the reason for the formation of the Citizen Army. Connolly and some others believed that if an armed

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rising did occur and if it met with any success it might mean for the workers no more than a continuance of low wages with an Irish army and police force (without of a British) to act as strike-breakers at the request of the Employers' Federation. People like R. M. Fox who attempted to write the story of that period got their information at second- or third-hand from people who had an axe of their own to grind. The mysterious kidnapping of Jim Connolly on the eve of the Rising can only be explained by the fact that the leaders of the Volunteers and Connolly had not a common objective prior to the Rising. Connolly's suspicions well, I think, shown to be unfounded and he agreed to joint action by the two armed forces against the British.

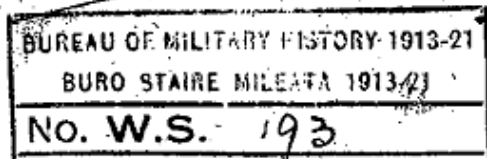
Being again out of Dublin early in 1916
 I returned only on Easter Saturday and was
 not aware of the preparations. But as soon
 as the Volunteers took up their positions I
 tried to get in touch with some of those
 whom I knew. At the rear of St Vincent's
 Hospital I made enquiries from the
 Volunteers there and was told that Countess
 Mervey was in St. Stephen's Green. I
 went there and met her. She crossed over to
 the College of Surgeons and gave me about
 a dozen copies of the Proclamation to get
 posted up. I turned the corner into York
 St. Going to my mother's home in Bude St
 to get posts made, when I overtook the late
 Francis Sheehy Skeffington. We walked along
 together discussing what had occurred.
 He suggested that I should go next day

about 4.30 p.m. to the rooms of the
 Irish Women's Franchise League where he
 hoped to have a few others who might
 form a civil police force "to put down
 looting". He did not indicate how such
 a body could effectively act in their
 parties, Selkington going towards Fort Belk's
 Bridge, I in the opposite direction. I got
 the posters put up, keeping one copy
 which I gave on loan some years ago
 to the National Library where it still is.
 Selkington was never to reach home.
 He was "arrested" and subsequently shot.
 The facts of that tragedy are well known.
 There was, of course, no meeting in the
 Franchise League rooms next day. —

What may not be known is that the two men, Francis Dixon and W. McDutye, taken and shot at the same time as Sheffington, were two of the tools previously used by the Dublin Employers' Federation in the attempt to "smash Larkinism."

McDutye published a scurrilous weekly called "The Jokers" which had no other purpose than to slander Larkin. Arthur Griffith was not above making use of him for the same purpose. He got space in Sinn Féin for some of his abuse and replies to his attacks were more often suppressed than published. I know, because I took part in that controversy.

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Beyond carrying a few messages from
the Counties to the Post Office and to
North King St. I took no active part
in that famous Rising coming from
North King St. I was arrested on suspicion
by military occupying Morham's public
house at the corner of Queen St., near
the bridge. I was taken under guard to
the City Hall, Parliament St. and kept
there some hours, being subsequently
enabled to slip away through the
cooperation of the late Inspector Pat
Murphy of the Detective Division D.M.P.
whom I knew.



Seamus O'Farrell

2000

17 STANFORD GREEN
WALKINSTOWN
CO. DUBLIN

8th February, 1949.

An Rúnaí,
Bureau of Military History.

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About 1910, I went to work on the railway, and was seldom very long in one place, having to move around from one station to another. While stationed in Kildare town, myself and a shop assistant, employed in Slattery's provision shop there (whose name I cannot at the moment ^{*}recall) hoisted a black flag on the round tower one night, when the loyal population were hanging out Union Jacks in celebration of some British event. We also managed, on two occasions, to plaster the whole

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town with small bills, printed in green ink and supplied from Dublin, asking Irishmen not to join the British army, navy or police force. At that period I also began to write for the Sinn Féin papers, especially The Peasant in which I published a short series of articles under the heading "Letters from a Young Man in the Country". I also wrote for the Irish Homestead, many of my letters on national economic matters being editorially commented upon by the late G.W. Russell (AE).

Because of the moving life I had to live, it was impossible for me to be a member of the Volunteers when they were formed, but from time to time I met most of the leaders, as for a couple of years (1911 to 1913) I was in Dublin where, with the late Jim Larkin, I assisted in the production of "The Irish Worker". Arthur Griffith's attitude towards Larkin and trade unionism caused the majority of the Dublin workers, especially the members of his union, to look on Sinn Féin and, to some extent, on the Volunteers as being opposed to their interests. This, in my opinion, was the reason for the formation of the Citizen Army. Connolly and some others believed that if an armed rising did occur and if it met with any success, it might mean for the workers no more than a continuance of low wages with an Irish army and police force (instead of a British) to act as strike-breakers at the request of the Employers' Federation. People like R.M. Fox, who attempted to write the story of that period, got their information at second- or third-hand from people who had an axe of their own to grind. The mysterious "kidnapping of Jim Connolly" on the eve of the Rising can only be explained by the fact that the leaders of the Volunteers and Connolly had not a common objective prior to the Rising. Connolly's suspicions were,

I think, shown to be unfounded, and he agreed to joint action by the two armed forces against the British.

Being again out of Dublin early in 1916, I returned only on Easter Saturday, and was not aware of the preparations. But as soon as the Volunteers took up their positions, I tried to get in touch with some of those whom I knew. At the rear of St. Vincent's Hospital, I made enquiries from the Volunteers there, and was told that Countess Markievicz was in St. Stephen's Green. I went there and met her. She crossed over to the College of Surgeons, and gave me about a dozen copies of the Proclamation to get posted up. I turned the corner into York St., going to my mother's home in Bride St. to get paste made, when I overtook the late Francis Sheehy Skeffington. We walked along together, discussing what had occurred. He suggested that I should go next day about 4.30 p.m. to the rooms of the Irish Women's Franchise League, where he hoped to have a few others who might form a civil police force "to put down looting". He did not indicate how such a body could effectively act. We then parted, Skeffington going towards Portobello Bridge, I in the opposite direction. I got the posters put up, keeping one copy, which I gave on loan some years ago to the National Library, where it still is. Skeffington was never to reach home. He was "arrested" and subsequently shot. The facts of that tragedy are well known. There was, of course, no meeting in the Franchise League rooms next day.

What may not be known is that the two men, Francis Dixon and W. McIntyre, taken and shot at the same time as Skeffington, were two of the tools previously used by the

Dublin Employers' Federation in the attempt to "smash Larkinism". McIntyre published a scurrilous weekly, called "The Toiler", which had no other purpose than to slander Larkin. Arthur Griffith was not above making use of him for the same purpose. He got space in Sinn Féin for some of his abuse, and replies to his attacks were more often suppressed than published. I know, because I took part in that controversy.

Beyond carrying a few messages from the Countess to the Post Office and to North King St., I took no active part in that famous Rising. Coming from North King St., I was arrested on suspicion by military occupying Morkan's publichouse at the corner of Queen St., near the bridge. I was taken under guard to the City Hall, Parliament St., and kept there some hours, being subsequently enabled to slip away through the co-operation of the late Inspector Pat Murphy of the Detective Division, D.M.P., whom I knew.

(Signed): SEAMUS O'FARRELL.

