

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 392

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 392.....

Witness

Mr. Eamon T. Dore,
9 North Circular Road,
Limerick.

Identity

Member of I.R.B. Rockwell, 1912 - ;
Member of Irish Volunteers 1916.

Subject

National Events 1915-1920.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No. S. 1041.....

Form B.S.M. 2.

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1918-21

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STATEMENT OF EAMON DORE, 9 NORTH CIRCULAR ROAD,
LIMERICK.

I remember the occasion of supposed arrest of James Connolly in the early Spring of 1916. The action in this case was taken by the decision of the I.R.B. I knew from my connection with Seán McDermott and Tom Clarke that Connolly had been causing trouble, affecting a contempt of the I.R.B. and the Volunteers, or disbelieving the earnestness of intentions in these organisations.

I was told by Seán McDermott to meet Ned Daly on this date at Seamus O'Connor's office in Dame St. and I did so, understanding from him at the time that it was for some special action in connection with Connolly. Frank Daly (brother of Paddy Daly) was also detailed and was present when I met Ned Daly in the office in Dame St. about 12 noon. We three waited there for about an hour and a half when Ned Daly then decided to go out to find out how things stood, while Frank Daly and I remained. Ned Daly came back after about twenty minutes or half an hour, and told us that everything was all right now, and that we could go home.

From what I learned at the time and immediately afterwards about this matter, I gathered that it was Seán McDermott who took action on behalf of the Supreme Council, and probably in consultation with them, to have a showdown with Connolly. Connolly was to be invited or persuaded to accompany him to a house in the vicinity of Castleknock. I believe Murt O'Connell brought a dispatch there at the time, so he should know the house.

It was intended that if Connolly refused to go voluntarily he was to be arrested and brought there under guard, and it was for this reason that Ned and Frank Daly and I stood by in O'Connor's office. Apparently Connolly did agree to go with McDermott and so our services were not required in the matter. I should like to point out that this whole business was an I.R.B. matter and that the two Dalys and myself were there as I.R.B. officers rather than as Volunteers.

I was then a member of the Fintan Lalor circle of the I.R.B. Seamus O'Connor was the Centre up to a date about six or eight months before the Rising, from when Seán McDermott acted in this capacity. I know, of course, that Seán was also a member of the Supreme Council, but he also acted as our Centre from the time Seamus O'Connor left. Martin Murphy was treasurer of our circle.

About the time I am speaking of, or just before that, in or about nine months before the Rising, Seamus O'Connor announced one night at a circle meeting that information had been got out of the Castle that action was in contemplation against the Volunteers, or rather against individuals by the British authorities, to seize arms and ordering us to safeguard our arms. This information was to the effect that the British contemplated raiding the houses of certain individuals for arms, and we were ordered to stand by and if necessary defend our arms rather than surrender them. O'Connor said something to the effect that "this is just the usual sort of thing" or, in other words, made light of the warning, but at the same time showed that he himself was somewhat alarmed by it. It was soon after this incident that he disappeared from the circle and Seán McDermott took his place there. I mention this incident as showing I think that there was in fact a source of information inside the Castle and that

more than one communication was received from this source, the last ^{East} one being the famous document just before Easter Week 1916, which Joe Plunkett has been accused of forging.

Concerning the Plunkett document; Joe Plunkett was at that period suffering from serious tubercular glands, so serious that despite the Rising and the preparations for it, he had to have an immediate operation by Surgeon Charlie McAuley. It is not reasonable to suppose that a man in such a condition would concern himself in the details of forging such a document, even assuming that he wanted to do so.

My introduction to the I.R.B. was about 1912, when I was a pupil in Rockwell College. I was then only about 16 years of age and P.C. Mahony swore me in. He had to get special permission to do this on account of my youth. Mahony was, I believe, Head Centre for Munster at about the Easter 1916 period. Later he dropped away from the I.R.B. and became a Sinn Féin organiser about 1919. He is at present Co. Manager for Kerry and lives in Tralee.

During our period of internment at Frongoch in 1916 there were several I.R.B. meetings held there. Mick Collins, who at the time was not very well known to us, called the first one and, acting entirely on his own initiative, swore in Bill Reilly as a member. Now, Collins had been a member in London for some time, but he had only come into our circle a short time before the Rising and we, therefore, looked upon him as a newcomer. I discussed this matter of Bill Reilly's introduction as a member with Martin Murphy and some others at the time,

and as, in our opinion, Reilly was not a suitable type of man to bring in as a member of the I.R.B., nor should Collins have taken such action without the agreement of the other members there, Collins was called on for an explanation of his conduct.

I should point out here that by one of the articles of the I.R.B. Constitution, the whole organisation and its constitution automatically ceased when the Rising took place. Afterwards it could be reconstituted if the position required it and the original constitution adopted or altered as might be required by the new circumstances. Obviously, however, nothing like this should be done by any small caucus, and this was why Collins was reprimanded for his precipitate action. Martin Murphy called the next meeting at which Collins was taken to task. Mick apologised for his action to the two men, Eamon Price and Martin Murphy who spoke to him about the matter, and tried to explain it, and there the matter rested for the moment.

Mick and I had had a tiff before when we were in Stafford Prison, and in the case of his reprimand in Frongoch I think he blamed me for using my influence against him. I believe it was because of this that I was not invited to attend another meeting in Frongoch at which Collins, Dick Mulcahy and Frank Shouldice were present amongst others. Shouldice told me about this meeting afterwards, and that one of the things proposed and agreed to at this meeting, was that a policy of political action should be adopted by us on our release. This meant taking over the reins from the Irish Parliamentary Party, as advice from home indicated that the latter party was in rapid decline while our popularity was high in the ascendent.

I disliked this idea very much at the time and in discussion with Martin Murphy, Shouldice and others, gave my opinion against such a decision which, I felt, must only result in swamping the I.R.B. which was the only clear and genuine national organisation existing, in a sea of political intrigue and self-seeking.

Early in 1917, possibly it was January, as I remember that it was cold and frosty at the time, I met Dick Mulcahy and Michael Staines on the street - O'Connell Street, I think. Mulcahy asked us to come with him, and we accompanied him to Arthur Griffith's house in the North Strand. Mulcahy said that he was going down to Clare and, as he expected that people would ask him for advice and direction as to what course should now be followed in pursuit of national freedom, he himself wanted Griffith's advice as to what he should tell them. Griffith's reply to this was that we should concentrate our efforts on having Ireland's case brought before the Peace Conference which would follow the termination of the war.

Some discussion took place about this, and my comment on the matter was that the Peace Conference could mean nothing to us. I argued that if Britain won the war, she would never let us get a hearing at any such conference, and if, on the other hand, she was beaten, then our problem was automatically solved.

I mention this to show that there was considerable vagueness in the minds of responsible national leaders at that time as to what direction the growing national movement should bend its efforts with the best chance of forwarding its object.

Sometime about April 1916, I met Austin Stack at Daly's house in Barrington St. Limerick, and he announced that he had been informed by Tim Healy that the conscription danger was really serious. I asked him; "since when did we begin to be advised by the Tim Healys and their like".

This, I consider, was another indication that the men who hitherto had put their faith in the physical force movement were now won over to the methods and outlook of the Irish Parliamentary Party politicians.

So far as I can remember, the reorganisation of the I.R.B. began with the members who were released in the summer of 1916, but I think little was done except that they met together here and there. When the general release took place, members drifted back to their circles, but the absence of policy and general vagueness of the situation prevented any positive action.

About the middle 1917 I was present at a meeting of the Fintan Lalor circle at which Mick Collins and Eamon Price were present amongst others. At this meeting there was an election of Centre, and on a vote between Price and Collins Price was elected by a large majority. Collins was at that time Secretary of the National Aid Association. At the time Mick got this job on the National Aid, there were several candidates for the job, including Mick Staines, Joe ^{DERHAM} Denham and Eamon ^{MORKAN} Morkan, I think. The decision to select a man for the job by examination was made by Mrs. Wyse Power and some of the Sinn Féin organisation. Collins was the successful candidate.

About that time (middle of 1917) I knocked around a lot with Collins and others such as Fintan Murphy, Mick Staines and Dr. Jim Ryan. I did not drink then or now, but I went with the others into such places as Davy Byrnes' or Nearys' in Chatham Street in the evenings, where they had a drink or two, and we would then go to the Gaiety Theatre or some such place for the night.

It was while we were knocking around like this that we heard one afternoon that there was something on in the Mansion House. (This was Griffiths' Sinn Féin Convention, known afterwards as the Plunkett Convention). We got in because Paddy Daly who was on the door knew me, and passed in our party which included Mick Collins, Mick Staines and Jim Ryan. We arrived as a heated discussion was in progress between Count Plunkett and A. Griffith, with Gavan Duffy and Father M. O'Flanagan intervening. This discussion was concerned with a proposal to rename the Sinn Féin Clubs - Liberty Clubs. Plunkett argued that the name Sinn Féin was unpopular with certain sections of the people, particularly the physical force element, and that it was therefore desirable to rename the Clubs. Griffith took strong exception to the proposal and the discussion became so acrimonious that we left in disgust taking with us John Murphy of Banniscorthy and we retired to the Wicklow Hotel for a meal.

Our feelings about this convention, which incidentally was fully attended and included delegates from all over the country, was that this political activity was distracting attention from the physical force movement, although at this time there was very little activity on the physical force side.

Later in the Summer of that year, (1917) before the death of Ashe, I was in Limerick at Dalys' of Barrington Street, when Cathal Brugha who was working as a commercial traveller at the time, came in and stayed the night there. During the course of conversation a discussion arose over the I.R.B. Knowing that Brugha had left the organisation, I was anxious to find out why he did so, but as he was much older than I was I could not ask him directly. When however, the name (I.R.B) was mentioned, he got very excited and said that he was out to destroy it. He went on to say that if that organisation had ever been necessary, which he doubted, it was now unnecessary and even dangerous if it got into the hands of the wrong people. I remarked; "Are you sure that what you are doing is the best way to end it. Knowing the Irish mind, will not your aggressive action make members more determined to stick to it?. If you leave well alone, it may never become active again". He made some answer to this which included reference to personalities, to which I replied; "Will not your action push the organisation into the hands of those whom you do not wish to get control?" He got even more excited at this remark and striking the table with his fist, he said; "I don't care. If it is the last act of my life I will lead a crusade to destroy it".

It may perhaps help to throw some light on Brugha's attitude in this matter if I explain that Mr. Staines and I went down to see Fr. Albert in Church St. on Christmas Day 1916, but it was Fr. Augustine we saw there, as Fr. Albert was not available at the time we called. In discussion with Fr. Augustine, he said he resented very much that despite his friendship with the people in the National movement he was never allowed to know that there was

a secret society governing it of which we all appeared to be members. He said that membership of a secret society put us outside the Church and turning to me said; "Even your great Bishop Thos. O'Dwyer of Limerick could not absolve you if he knew you were members". He then said that several of the members of the I.R.B. who had been in the Rising had left that organisation and mentioned the names of two men who had been with him - Cathal Brugha and Brian O'Higgins, who he said had left it. About the end of June or beginning of July 1917 I attended a meeting at Flemings Hotel, Gardiner Place. While most of those present were I.R.B. members, it was not an I.R.B. meeting but was called in connection with the then impending Clare Election. Actually I was not invited there, but finding that there was something on - as I lived nearby, and knowing most of those present I went in. A discussion arose about Eoin MacNeill going down to Clare to assist in the election. Seán McGarry protested against this, but de Valera quashed all argument by saying that "if MacNeill doesn't go - I won't go". That appeared to overrule further argument on the matter.

Some little time before polling day, a meeting took place in Daly's house in Barrington Street, Limerick. This was a coming together for discussion, of people down for the Clare Election rather than a meeting. Tom Ashe was there, Blythe O'Muirthuille, Austin Stack, Seán McGarry, Peadar McMahon and Con Collins are all the names I can remember. Austin Stack asked why we were not all at our posts in Clare in accordance with de Valera's orders. And to this Seán McGarry replied; "Who gave de Valera authority to order us about?", which query started a

discussion on the desirability or otherwise of involving the I.R.B. in political activities. Finally the others all went off to Clare, but McGarry did not, he went back to Dublin.

The point about this is that some of us strongly resented what we considered to be an unwarranted assumption of authority by those whom we looked upon as purely politicians. We, at the time, looked upon such things as election campaigns as frittering away the energies of the National Movement.

I remember an occasion in the Spring of 1918. I was in very bad health at the time and had gone to Dublin from Limerick to attend the doctor. I went to stay at Vaughan's Hotel, Parnell Square, and while there that night I met Mick Collins, Gearóid O'Sullivan, Dermott Hegarty, Seán O'Muirthuille and I think Piaras Beaslai and Dinny Daly. I listened to a discussion between them about the prospects of some kind of military action that would compel the British to keep a large armed force in the country and so embarrass the British war effort at that critical period. At this discussion it was remarkable that there was no reference or mention of purely political action such as elections, but on the contrary it seemed to be accepted that the only hope was in some form of physical force. There was no spirit of defeat among the party; no feeling that the Rising had been our best effort, and while others might be content to counter enemy action when it occurred, this group wanted to ^{TAKE} be the initiative and were only in doubt as to what particular shape to give their effort.

Having then got married, though my health was very bad - my lungs were giving me a lot of trouble, I was somewhat out of touch with things until later that year (1918), when Dermott Hegarty sent his brother Paddy down to Limerick. Young Hegarty brought a message to me from Dermott to say that he wanted us to organise an intelligence group in Limerick. I got Hegarty fixed up in a job in Limerick, and from then on to the Truce of 1921 we collected and forwarded intelligence reports and instructions to and from G.H.Q. and Limerick.

Signed;

Ramon T. Dore

Date;

1.6.1950

Witness;

J. J. Dowling Col.

* This word should be "digs".

(See page 1 of Mr. Ramon Dore's statement
of 21/5/1951, W.S. 515).

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