

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1813-21
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No. W.S. 465

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 465.....

Witness

Miss Mary O'Sullivan,
"Lorraine",
3 Durham Place,
Dun Laoghaire, Dublin.
Identity

Confidential Typist to Lord Mayor of Dublin, 1901 - .
Secretary to Lord Mayor of Dublin, 1918 - .

Subject

- (a) Activities of successive Lord Mayors
of Dublin, 1901-1922.
- (b) Labour Strike, Dublin, 1913.
- (c) Mr. Asquith's Recruiting Meeting,
Dublin, 1914.

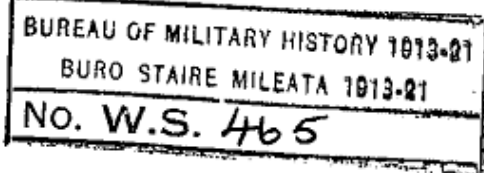
Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No. S.1619.....

Form B.S.M. 2.

ORIGINAL



Statement by Miss Mary O'Sullivan,
"Lorraine", 3 Durham Place,
Dún Laoghaire, Dublin.

I went to the Mansion House in 1901 when Mr. T. C. Harrington was elected Lord Mayor. I went straight from school and it was through Mr. Harrington's friendship with my family that I got the appointment of Assistant Secretary and Confidential Typist to the Lord Mayor. Mr. Hugh O'Neill, his brother-in-law, and a son of Dr. O'Neill, was Secretary, and was succeeded by Lorcan G. Sherlock who was in later years City Sheriff.

All the big parliamentary meetings used to be held in the Oak Room of the Mansion House under the chairmanship of Mr. John Redmond. I knew Mr. Joe Devlin best of the leaders of the party. He was very open and very courteous. Mr. Redmond and Mr. Dillon were rather austere and remote though very polite and courteous. Mr. Harrington was the first Lord Mayor who was elected to the post three years in succession.

In 1903 the pro-British crowd in the Corporation were anxious to present an address to King Edward whose coming visit was announced, and the Nationalist members, who with the Labour members, had a majority, opposed the motion strongly. A prominent pro-British citizen in Dublin informed Mr. Harrington who was a famous and a clever lawyer, that he would receive a judgeship and a knighthood if he would consent to receive the King. The citizen in question - whose name I do not wish to divulge - also offered him on his own behalf a very large

sum of money as a further persuasion. Mr. Harrington flatly refused all these offers although he was not a wealthy man. Mr. Joseph Downes who was prominent among those members who were in favour of receiving the King, officially, got a knighthood. A few others who expected similar rewards were disappointed.

I was freshly appointed to my post by Mr. Harrington's successors until 1918 when I became Secretary. I was appointed a permanent Corporation official in 1921 and held the post until I had to retire owing to ill-health in 1942.

One of the interesting conferences that were held in the Mansion House was that in connection with the Wyndham Land Act which was held very secretly in the Drawing Room. The doors were locked and no one was allowed to enter. No member of the Press was present. Captain Shaw-Taylor of Galway was the Secretary and some others whose names I remember were - Mr. John Redmond, Mr. John Dillon, ^{the} Lord Mayor and Lord Monteagle. There were about seven or eight but I can't remember who the others were. The Lord Mayor, Mr. Harrington, was Chairman of the meeting. They met every day for over a week and they adjourned for Christmas. I had no work to do in connection with this or any other conferences of that kind except in later years during labour troubles. I was present at numbers of them then.

There was nothing of outstanding interest until the Larkin strike in 1913, when the Lord Mayor, Dr. Sherlock, opened a fund which gave food vouchers to the wives and dependants of the strikers. I think Mrs. Sherlock herself looked after that, but I did a certain amount of work in connection with it.

Councillor James Gallagher followed Dr. Sherlock in January 1915, and remained in office till January 1917, when Alderman Lawrence O'Neill was elected. He continued in office till the dissolution of the Corporation in the summer, I think, of 1925. To my knowledge, he was the wealthiest Lord Mayor that ever entered the Mansion House but at his retirement he had lost a good deal of his wealth. He was the owner of a firm of auctioneers in the Corporation Markets and had a lot of property in Portmarnock as well, but owing to his devoting all his time to his official duties his business did not prosper so well in his absence.

In Mr. Harrington's time and that of his successors for some years afterwards the allowance of the Lord Mayor was £3,500. It was reduced to £1,500 for a number of years and this was the sum received by Alderman O'Neill during his mayoralty. Since 1930, I believe, the allowance has been increased to £2,500 and is still at that figure.

The next interesting episode was Mr. Asquith's visit to Dublin in September 1914. I got the instructions about making the Round Room available for the recruiting meeting. Dr. Sherlock who was a Nationalist and a follower of Redmond, acceded to the request for the use of the Mansion House for this purpose, although I am convinced he was not in favour of recruiting at that time when the promise of Home Rule had not yet been fulfilled. I cannot say who approached him about it - it may have been a Castle official.

On the afternoon of the day fixed for the meeting, the British military took up posts around the building as it had been rumoured that the Volunteers intended to prevent the

meeting being held. I was not in the Mansion House after 5 p.m. and up to then nothing had happened. I was in a window in O'Connell Street when Asquith's procession passed. I can't remember whether it was the procession conveying him from the boat or that conveying him to the meeting. There were a number of motor cars preceded and followed by military. Redmond and Dillon drove in the procession. I think it was a suffragette who threw a hatchet at one of the cars and I believe I remember hearing that Asquith's daughter was in the carriage.

I was present at the meeting at the back of the platform. There were several speakers including Asquith, Redmond and Devlin. The Redmondite Volunteers in uniform were acting as stewards at the meeting. There was no incident that I can remember and everything passed off quietly. There was a crowded audience in the Round Room. All present seemed to sympathise with the object of the meeting and there was a strong force of military outside.

Councillor James Gallagher was very pro-British and was knighted during his term of office. He certainly on one occasion just prior to the rebellion refused the use of the rooms to prominent Sinn Féiners. Willie Pearse wrote a protest to the Lord Mayor (now Sir James Gallagher) asking him was he not aware that it was his brother, P.H. Pearse, the Headmaster at St. Enda's, that had applied. I forget whether the Lord Mayor sent a reply or not, but he did not alter his decision.

Every Lord Mayor gave the use of the Mansion House free for the Aonach when it was in their gift. At no time up to 1925 was a charge made for the use of any of the rooms for any purpose; even the light was not

charged for, but up to Dr. Sherlock's mayoralty the number of meetings held were very few. He gave the rooms more frequently but as the light then became a big item he made it a condition that each applicant should defray his light bill according to the number of hours the rooms were used and this custom continued up to the time that the Dublin Commissioners took over the Mansion House and started letting the rooms for a rental. I was in charge of that arrangement as there was no Lord Mayor till 1930 and I lived in his apartments, with only the caretaker and his family who lived in their own rooms downstairs.

I should mention that Mr. Harrington as Lord Mayor, never refused the use of the rooms to the Gaelic League for any of its functions. He was himself President of the Keating Branch during his mayoralty.

Alderman Lawrence O'Neill was elected Lord Mayor and entered into office on 23rd February, 1917. He remained in office until the abolition of the Corporation which I think took place in 1925.

He had been arrested after the rebellion but was released after a short time. From that on many important meetings connected with the Sinn Féin Movement were held in the Mansion House. As I was interested in them, I generally was present in the gallery as an onlooker. I can't say I have any particular recollection of Count Plunkett's meeting in April 1917, although there is no doubt but I was present at it. I don't remember whether the Irish National Aid Association held its early meetings or not in the Mansion House, but I do know that immediately after Alderman O'Neill's election as Lord Mayor both the meetings and offices were housed in the Mansion House, free of charge, even the cost of light and

heat being defrayed by the Lord Mayor who was a member of the Committee. I had no work to do in connection with that Association; ~~the clerical work being done by~~ *The Prisoners' Dependents Fund had offices in* ~~that Association;~~ *Warrington Street and* ~~the clerical work being done by~~ *Katty Barry (Mrs. Molony), Beatrice Brady, now Prioress of the Carmelites at Tranquilla, and Mary McCarthy (Mrs. George Plunkett),* ~~under the direction of Michael Collins~~ *Perhaps this item should be at end of statement: W. J.*

When the leaders were released from English Jails in 1917 they all assembled in the Mansion House and were officially received by the Lord Mayor who had previously called on them at Fleming's Hotel, Gardiner's Place. They were all photographed in the front garden of the Mansion House.

The first meeting that stands out prominently in my mind was the Sinn Féin Convention of October 1917, when the appointment of the Sinn Féin Committee was under consideration and Eoin McNeill's name was proposed for Vice-President. There was an uproar of opposition by many prominent members on the platform. I particularly remember Mrs. Clarke making a scene in opposition to the election of Eoin McNeill. She did not speak at length but she shed tears and aroused the sympathy of the meeting. In spite of that McNeill was elected mainly because of Mr. De Valera's support. He said, "McNeill acted as a good Irishman according to his own lights, as I did". In spite of this incident the meeting passed off quietly and there was no disorder.

With regard to the Irish Convention that was held in Trinity College for the settlement of the Irish question, I want to mention that the Lord Mayor was a member but never accepted any expenses. I believe he was the only one of whom that can be said. None of those meetings were held at the Mansion House.

This portion to refer to the Prisoners' Dependents Fund. Mrs. Civil War.

During the hunger strike in Mountjoy in September, 1917, the Lord Mayor used to visit the prisoners regularly. He was very much distressed about their condition and talked about it a lot. He was trying to get them released unconditionally and was continually in touch with the Lord Lieutenant and Chief Secretary. The Right Honourable James McMahon was very good about giving any help or concession in his power. I used to go very often to see him on behalf of the Lord Mayor, chiefly to ask him to get prisoners released on parole from the English Jails. I always found him and his private Secretary, the late Mr. Walter Doolin, most courteous and helpful. This was in sharp contrast to other Castle officials. I have one especially in mind who now enjoys a prominent position in the Civil Service. I was sent - I think in 1921 - to try to obtain a passport for the first Mrs. O'Kelly to visit her husband - now President - who was ill in Paris or Rome. He treated me very rudely and did not give the permit asked for. He merely said, "I have already told Mrs. O'Kelly she cannot get it", and went on conversing with some other person in the room.

The Lord Mayor was constantly coming and going to Mountjoy and the Castle, as well as the Headquarters of G. O. C. of the troops. The 'phone was also in constant use about the position of the prisoners on hunger strike. The Lord Mayor was desperately worried about it. All his worry during that time and later brought him into bad health and he eventually got a bad nervous breakdown.

The next thing of importance I remember, is - the meetings held in connection with the Anti-Conscription campaign. A committee was formed with the Lord Mayor as Chairman. The members were the late

John Redmond and Joseph Devlin representing the Irish Party; T.M. Healy, later Governor-General, and William O'Brien, M.P. of the All-for-Ireland League; William O'Brien and Thomas Foran representing the Irish Labour Party; De Valera and Arthur Griffith representing Sinn Féin, with Thomas Johnson of the Labour Party acting as Secretary. There were two clerks, Robert ^{ROONEY} Robert, a Civil Servant, who had been dismissed after the rebellion, and another man who had been working in the A.O.H. office - I can't remember his name.

The meetings, as far as I remember, were held once a week in the Drawing Room of the Mansion House and they must have gone on for about a year. The Lord Mayor who was rather concerned as to how he would place the members, as he knew they were not all on friendly terms with each other, got over the difficulty of precedence by getting a round table placed in the centre of the room. When the members assembled for the first meeting the Lord Mayor simply said, "Now, gentlemen, take your seats". I was not present at that or any of the other meetings but he told me how well he had got over his difficulty. I know that the committee drew up a statement for presentation to the President of the U.S.A. and I have a faint recollection that the Lord Mayor was to take it to America, but when he had no assurance that the President would receive him in person, but would depute somebody else to take his place, he decided it would not be appropriate for him to go.

The Lord Mayor gave me a typed copy of the statement that was drawn up by the committee but unfortunately, owing to the breaking up of my home after my sister's death, it got lost. It is possible that Mr. Thomas Johnson may have a copy of it or William O'Brien.

There was a lot of money collected for the Anti-Conscription campaign and it all poured into the Mansion House. It remained in hands for a long time after the Conscription scare was over. I remember Mr. Dillon who must have been one of the Treasurers and succeeded Mr. Redmond as leader of the Party, was anxious about the disposal of that money and I was sent to interview him when he wrote to the Lord Mayor about it. I have an idea that De Valera was in America at the time and to the best of my recollection the late Fr. Corcoran, S. J., was consulted as to the best means of utilising the money. I have an idea that the money went eventually to the University to found scholarships.

Later in 1918 the Lord Mayor was very active about the prisoners in Belfast. He went up there a few times to try and settle up matters between them and the authorities.

I can't remember any activity in the Mansion House in connection with the elections that took place at the end of the year. When, however, the Dáil was set up after the elections the first meeting which was a historical one, was held there. There were no incidents at this. Other meetings were held later and very often at night, the members arriving from the country and coming to the Mansion House where they had to be well scrutinised before being admitted. This was often my task as the Lord Mayor was not too sure of the attitude of the house steward, whose duty it was to open the door. An important meeting of the Dáil was held on the occasion of the visit of the Irish American delegates to the Paris Peace Conference and when the Lord Mayor was giving a reception in their honour at the Mansion House, the military under the command of General Johnson raided the building. Fortunately, the raid took place before any visitors had arrived. They evidently

thought that many of the wanted men would have been there in advance and in fact Michael Collins was there and probably a few others. Michael took a brush from one of the attendants and started to sweep the Round Room with them, and he thus escaped arrest. Both ends of Dawson Street were held up by the military and nobody was allowed to pass. As a matter of fact I think I was the only one allowed to go through the cordon as I think I was known to some of the police who saw me constantly passing in and out from the Mansion House. General (?) Johnson who, I think, was disgusted at having taken part in the raid when he had found none of the wanted men, said to the officer under him, "Take your men away to hell out of here". Everything passed off quietly after that and the guests, numbering about 1500, were all received by the Lord Mayor and had a very enjoyable night and a very good supper. The expenses of such entertainments were always defrayed by the Lord Mayor himself out of his own private income as his allowance of £1,500 would not cover a quarter of the expense he incurred in such ways.

I remember an occasion when there was some meeting - possibly for some benevolent purpose - at which Lord French was to preside. Harry Boland happened to call on the Lord Mayor at the same time and he was of course brought into a different room. The space in front of the Mansion House was filled with D.M.P. and military who had acted as escort to Lord French. At this time - I can't now remember when it was - Harry Boland was a much wanted man and the Lord Mayor who was in conversation with Lord French was greatly concerned with how he could get Harry safely out of the Mansion House. At last he said to Lord French, "The ladies are anxiously waiting for you in the Oak Room", and when Lord French had parted with him he went in to Harry and said, "Come on, Harry, I'll see you safely through".

He went out with him through the cordon and brought him as far as Stephen's Green.

Occasionally one of the Dáil Courts with which Mr. P.J. Little and Miss Lily Brennan were associated, met in the Billiard Room of the Mansion House and that same room was used after the Truce by Mr. W. T. Cosgrave, the Minister for Local Government, as an office, while Mr. De Valera had the use of the "Drawing Room" at the same time.

On many occasions the military surrounded the Mansion House, back and front, to prevent meetings being held, yet many meetings were held during the night after the withdrawal of the military.

Certain special correspondence from the country and possibly from Dublin was delivered by hand to the Mansion House addressed to Ministers and members of the Dáil. I took charge of this and handed the letters to trusted messengers whom I knew well. This continued even during the Civil War and it was Aine O'Rahilly who acted as messenger then until her arrest. After that Mrs. McKean and Miss B. Brady - now Prioress of the Carmelite Convent at Tranquilla - neither of whom was known to me at the time - did that work. One day they came and said to me, "We came for the letters". I said, "What letters?". They replied, "The letters Miss O'Rahilly used to collect". I said, "Miss O'Rahilly got no letters here at any time". They went away and had to bring back with them somebody that I recognised. I then handed them the letters.

On a previous occasion during a raid by Black and Tans on the Mansion House I hid the letters just in time behind a press in the Study. They came to search the room but overlooked the back of the press.

I sometimes got messages by 'phone for the Lord Mayor especially during the hunger strikes and at the time of Tom Ashe's funeral. Some of these would be from the Castle and the Chief Secretary's Lodge. I always made it a point before delivering the message to the Lord Mayor to ring back to verify the 'phone message as we had the experience of a hoax being practised on the 'phone.

When Lord Mayor McCurtin was shot in Cork, Lord Mayor O'Neill went down to the funeral. He was protected while there by an armed force of Volunteers who were very glad when he had returned safely to Dublin as they feared he would be shot. He got numerous threatening letters warning him he would be shot. Some of them had coffins and skull and crossbones drawn on them. I opened several of them myself. The first I opened gave me a great shock and I took it down to the City Hall where he was attending a meeting as I was afraid he would be shot before he reached home. He burned all these letters lest they would fall into the hands of his wife and family.

The Lord Mayor was wonderfully brave. Some English officers came to stay at the Shelbourne Hotel. They asked the waiter where was the Mansion House and how could you get to it. The waiter who was sympathetic to the cause called to the Mansion House late at night and told Lord Mayor O'Neill on no account to stay in the Mansion House that night. As it happened he was alone, his family being at Portmarnock - of course the house steward and his wife were in their own apartments downstairs. He refused to leave but kept a revolver by the side of his bed. He had been warned by the Castle Authorities on the occasion of Tom Ashe's funeral that if there was a procession from the City Hall it would be fired on. He replied, "Very well. I will head the procession".

Incidents of terror multiplied during 1920 and the Lord Mayor would be preoccupied by some of them, such as the hunger strikes and raids on the Mansion House, but I can't remember anything outstanding apart from what I have previously recounted.

On no occasion to my knowledge did Sir Horace Plunkett come to the Mansion House to meet anyone and I am not aware that any peace negotiations took place there. Neither do I remember Sir Hamar Greenwood having been there. I knew Cope well. He came a few times to the Mansion House and I was in frequent contact with him by letter and 'phone. He was inclined to be very friendly and ready to do a kind act if asked.

I think it was in May or June, 1920, that Lord Mayor O'Neill went to America, sent by the Dáil to state Ireland's case to President Wilson - I am not aware that he gave evidence before the American Commission of Inquiry into the British administration of Ireland. He went entirely at his own expense; he was not very long away and I know nothing about the result of his mission.

During 1921 the Mansion House was very quiet and free from interference by the military although the country was very disturbed.

Some short time before the Truce a strange man who said he was an American, called several times to see the Lord Mayor who refused to see him as he was never keen to see strangers about whom he knew nothing.

He came another day and said he had an appointment at the Mansion House with a gentleman. I asked with whom and he drew himself ^{up} and said, "With the President of

the Irish Republic" and while I was quite proud of the remark, I still did not trust him and said in reply, "There is no such person expected here". He left very disappointed and as he was going down the gravel path, the Lord Mayor who was in the other Study looking out the window, saw and recognised him by his walk. He told me to call him back as he was the Lord Mayor of Cork, Donal Ó Ceallacháin. I had to apologise humbly and he laughed and said he realised my difficulty. I brought him into the Drawing Room where the Lord Mayor received him. About ten minutes afterwards Mr. De Valera, the President of the Irish Republic, wearing a moustache, called and as the Truce negotiations were about to start he was given the Drawing Room of the Mansion House as an office, and he continued to occupy it until after the Free State was set up. There was a constant stream of people coming to see him but I would not necessarily see them as he had his own Secretary and other attendants.

The Head of the British Army in Dublin came to the Mansion House to arrange the terms of the Truce. The building was thoroughly guarded by British military and a big crowd of spectators was always there, some cheering them and others booing them with the result that the Secretaries to McCready and the other big noises were very indignant.

Then the Truce came and that ended the "trouble" for the time being.

SIGNED

Harold Sullivan

DATE

4th Jan. 1951

WITNESS

S. W. Cosain

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