ORIGINAL

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STATEMENT BY WITNESS

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Witness

Thomas Leahy,
657 Dumbarton Road,
Partick West,
Glasgow.

Identity.

Member 'E' Company, 2nd Battalion, Dublin Bgde.
Irish Volunteers, 1914 - ;

Member of Irish Citizen Army.

Subject.

(a) His national activities, 1913 - ;

(b) O'Connell St., Dublin, Easter Week 1916.

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STATEMENT BY MR. THOMAS LEAHY

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ORIGINAL

STATEMENT BY THOMAS LEAHY

657 Dumbarton Road, Partick West, Glasgow, W.1.

I was active in the Labour Movement from 1912 and learned, through it, the way the workers of Ireland were being treated. With wages and working conditions and long hours of employment forced on them by the employers, somewhere and somehow, if these were not changed or improved, revolt against some employers must come. I attended all meetings, lectures and talks by James Connolly, Jim Larkin, P.T. Daly and other Labour Leaders and well-known leaders in the republican movement. Being a member myself of an English trade union with head offices in England - The Boilermakers and Iron Shipbuilders - to whom all payment from Irish Branches were forwarded and who opposed all advanced or national ideas of their members. The trade of shipbuilding not being of much interest to the then powers that be at that time and to Dublin in particular and work being very bad I, with other men and they craftsmen, was obliged to seek employment as shipyard worker in English and Scottish shipyards. I landed in Barrow-in-Furness, England, where I secured work as a rivetter. At that time I was a member of the Sean Connolly Sinn Fein Club, Summer St, Summerhill, who were doing good work in the way of bringing the independence idea and what it meant before the people in that area which was a big industrial one. When I got settled down and became employed at Vickers Ltd. I learned that there was a local Irish club in the town and, on making inquiries, I found it a very mixed crowd and more of a social nature instead of national minded. However, I soon got to know that there were some who were keen on the work for independence and anxious to help in every way the people at home during the labour struggles.

They organised collections, dances, concerts and forwarded results, which were very good, to Dublin from time to time, and when the Irish Volunteer movement started at home the following year, 1913, permission was sought and granted, a branch was formed

there by a very earnest group and an officer board elected to handle all affairs and to keep in touch with all forward movements for the fight for independence. All our actions and work had to be well guarded, for the Barrow-in-Furness people never forgot the Phoenix Park trouble of the '80s, for that was the home town of Lord Cavendish, and Dublin men in particular were not very welcome there. I soon found that out through conversations with men in the yards, etc. It also meant that we had to be extra careful in our movements.

However, we had about 200 men and women workers who were all very keen and kept in touch with movements in Ireland and Dublin that were taking place every day, and even the Debates then going through the British House of Commons on the Home Rule Bill were closely followed. When the Volunteers split from the Irish Parliamentary Party on the whole matter, it was decided by the majority of the Club, after a well attended meeting, to have no further dealings or touch with the Party. It then became clear to the active members in the club and Volunteer section that they would have to be extra careful in their movements and the making of new members, etc., for it must also be realised that all the Irish people were not over friendly especially to the Volunteer side when things were rapidly moving to war with Germany - when those of us who worke on important war work knew by the hustle and overtime worked in the yards that something was about to happen. When war was declared on Germany our positions became more serious, for those of Irish origin or recently into the town who were on gun and submarine work had to be extra careful in our everyday life. It soon became evident that something would have to be done. It was decided that those who could get home before restrictions on leaving the port came into force should do so and keep in touch with those with homes and families for years in the town who would help in every way by securing arms and

explosives and collecting money for purchasing of same.

The names of most of these people have left my memory 37 years ago, for I never thought I would be asked to make a statement of those events in which I took active part. In looking back to that time in Barrow, I can only recall the names of those who were outstanding in every way to further the movement, especially in the Volunteers and arms were Jack Cummins, William Joyce and Frank Fields. Fields was a time-expired British soldier with 21 years' service. He was mobilised as soon as war broke out, but refused to do so on the grounds of the actions of British soldiers firing on the unarmed people of Bachelors Walk, Dublin. He was arrested and posted to Russia; that was the last I heard of the Barrow crowd.

I had to make arrangements then to get out of the town before I came under notice, for I was on submarine work and active in the trade union side. I was very lucky in having a friend who was an under-foreman born in Barrow of Irish parents and a keen supporter of all that took place and who advised me to get home before being rounded up, being a keyman on the submarines. I believe those events in Barrow-in-Furness and those who worked to do all they could to further the fight for independence, even in enemy country such as Barrow, should get their place in history.

I got away from Barrow, about November 1914, through the work of my friend, William Kelly, whom I have already mentioned and got to Dublin where I soon found that events were making rapid progress, and had to secure work first for my family, which I did in the Dublin Dockyard, North Wall. I joined up in the Irish Volunteers, 2nd Battalion, "E" Company, Father Mathe Park, Phibsboro, where I first came in touch with Oscar Trayno Sean Russell, Capt. Tom Weafer (afterwards killed in action at Wynn's Hotel, Abbey St., Easter Week; also with Harry Boland,

Leo Henderson and his brother, and others who were to know more about each other in the near future under fire. We did not then realise.

Having begun my training, drilling, route marching and use of arms under Oscar Traynor, who was my section leader, I found him to be an earnest and diligent officer who expected the best from us, which he proved afterwards by his coolness and tact under fire and with a fine gesture of comradeship and military knowledge when the testing time to use it came. I was pleased to serve under his command; also with Sean Russell, who was likewise very earnest; the same applies to the brothers Henderson, not forgetting our very brilliant commanding officer, Thomas McDonagh, afterwards executed by the British.

Oscar Traynor spared no time or interest to make the 2nd Battalion the smartest in the Dublin Brigade, which was confirmed afterwards by his appointment to O/C. Dublin Brigade, by his system of attacks by A.S.U. units both on the British forces and Black and Tans; his method of raiding for arms and, where possible, the purchasing of same by each man out of his pocket money etc., which was encouraged by his own efforts.

After the public funeral of O'Donovan Rossa, the Fenian leader, events began to move more rapidly in my opinion, for the people got to learn more through that procession. The time it took to the cemetery, lying in state at the City Hall and the amount of armed men who took their place in public for the first time made a great impression on the people. Continuous work in drilling, use of arms, attacks on enemy lines, lectures, instructions, meetings at which we came to realise from our leaders that the time was near hand for all above preparations to be put into practice and effect.

As far as my memory serves me, the 2nd Battalion were

closer in touch about the effort to be made to strike by the extra hard work, observations and attendance to all detail work and possible urgent mobilisation, especially after a visit paid to battalion headquarters, Father Mathew Hall, Phibsboro', by Comdt. McDonagh, who was presented with a sword from the company and, after accepting it with great pleasure, he made a great impression on the entire company by a speech that left no doubt in our minds that the time was at hand for serious work. This presentation took place on the Thursday before the Rising, Easter Monday the 24th April 1916.

We were instructed to prepare for mobilisation orders for route march on Sunday, 23rd, together with the whole country taking their part, with members of the Citizen Army, Fianna Éireann and Cumann na mBan. Walking up Talbot St. on Saturday evening, 22nd April, after leaving Mrs. Holohan's shop in Amiens Street, where I usually called for papers and cigarettes, she seemed uneasy about something or other and advised me not to be from home for the weekend. I met my father and mother whom I had not seen for some time and whom I often visited. Father invited me to join him with mother and my family for the Easter Monday as he had heard that the mobilisation had been called off for the Sunday by Eoin MacNeill. I was surprised, but made no remarks about it to my parents who then went home with my promise to meet them for a holiday outing to Phoenix Park on the Monday, which I kept, but not with them and under different circumstances which surprised them afterwards when they learned the reason.

I got home that night feeling uneasy about the calling off order for to me it seemed a weakness of all our efforts. However after Mass on Sunday morning, I called at Mrs. Holohan's, Amiens St. and there learned the truth about the calling off of the route march, etc. Her son, Hugh, called with another Volunteer named Sammy Reilly after dinner, when we discussed the counter-

manding of the mobilisation which we did not understand at the time. We only hoped it would not kill the interest that was being taken in the Volunteers. After spending most of the day at my home, they agreed to come next day in case anything would turn up in the way of mobilisation or orders. They had not long to wait, for a knock came to the door about 10.30 p.m. When I opened it, it was Capt. Billy Byrne of E/Coy. of our Battalion - the 2nd - telling us to mobilise at Liberty Hall, Beresford Place, at once and bring one day's rations for route march, when we would get further orders. The other two made for their homes at once for their rations and to inform their people of the route march etc. We met again at the placed named and found a fair crowd of Volunteers and Citizen Army men, Fianna Éireann and Cumann na mBan being served out with rifles, guns, ammunition, trench tools of all kinds. Captain Billy Byrne then called on men with cycles to stand out for certain orders; both of us did so. We were then handed some small arms and received orders to proceed with officer in charge, who would issue our orders when we arrived at the place to be attacked, which we discovered to be the magazine fort, Phoenix Park. The guard were to be disarmed, their arms taken, and tied up in the guardroom. Personnel were to be attacked, the keys of arms and ammunition stores taken; some of the arms and ammunition were to be destroyed, and as many of the arms as could be taken by us were to be collected by motor car which would be in attendance for same. After playing about with a football for some time to put the sentry then passing the top of the wall off his guard, we sat down in a group and each man got his instructions and, if successful, to report at the G.P.O., O'Connell St., which at tha time we did not know was to be our headquarters.

We moved off in order, after saying a decade of the Rosary, and shook hands in case we should never meet again, through capture or death. In the attempt some of the men were to ask

that the gate be opened. They were then to take the guard by surprise and during this some others were to rush to the arms store, after taking the keys found on the guard. Those of us detailed to take the captured arms to the waiting car were to make our getaway the best way possible and report to the G.P.O. One man was shot dead on refusing to hand over the keys in the struggle for same. We got some rifles together with bayonets and got them safely in the car and made our getaway.

I made for the Liffey gate on the Lucan road side and there found a crowd of people discussing the noise of the arms at the Fort exploding and wondering at the cause. I was stopped and asked had I been in the Park and what was the trouble. Of course, I acted as much surprised as they, just saying I had been cycling along from Lucan and stopped where I had seen them standing, hoping they might have been able to give me more news. Having a war service badge in my coat lapel, served to those on important war work while in Vickers Ltd., Barrow in Furness, they took me to be on holiday, and I passed on my way to the city. When approaching James's St. I ran into a large party of British troops emerging from a side street. All seemed to be very excited and were shouting to people to clear out of their way and keep out of the park. I just dismounted from the bike and went into a small paper shop and asked for some cigarettes till the troops passed on, for had I been stopped I had no doubts about what would have happened to me in the angry mood they were in, as I was armed with two 45 Colt revolvers, and, having them in my possession, it may well have been my end. However, I continued on down Thomas St. and through High St. and around by the top of Dame St. I heard shots and firearms and sought cover by dismounting once again from the bike. It was the attack on the Castle by the Citizen Army men, who seemed to be doing well. I hesitated as to what action to take, being armed as I was. Not knowing the situation and having an order to report the Park attack,

I decided to carry on. Coming out on the quays after passing ou through the passage to SS. Michael' and John's Chapel, I noticed a policeman on Capel St. bridge shouting to the people not to go towards Capel St. as the Citizen Army ruffians had captured the city and were in the G.P.O. shooting the people down in cold blood etc. He beckoned me to proceed down Aston Quay as it was the safest at the moment. I proceeded along that way to O'Connell Bridge. The people gathered there seemed to be hostile by their remarks and, fearing I might be delayed, and anxious to deliver my report, I continued down Burgh Quay across Butt Bridge passing Liberty Hall right on to Amiens St. to Mrs. Holohan's shop. She was quite pleased to see me and informed me that the G.P.O. was now our H.Q. and to report there at once. Of course, I told her about our attack on the Magazine Fort and she was delighted.

The people about O'Connell St. when I reached it seemed dumbfounded and amazed and you could notice the change in most of them that at last the day had come when Irishmen and women were fighting for their freedom and the break from English rule. Many then and there went into the Post Office offering their service in any way of help or support. On arrival I was conducted to Comdt. James Connolly who, when told I had come from the Magazine Fort, at once informed P.H. Pearse, Tom Clarke and others. When I asked about my battalion and company I was informed they had taken up positions at Ballybough and Annesley Bridge, Fairview, where I had to report. On reaching same I was more than pleased to find Oscar Traynor, Sean Russell, Leo Henderson, Capt. Henderson, Billy McGinty, Pat Rossiter and his brother, Vincent Poole, Dan Courtney, Harry Boland, brother of Gerry, now Minister of Justice, John Redmond and others - I forget their names; they were very busy erecting barricades on both bridges and taking advantage posts such as corner houses facing the railway lines, where it was expected that English

troops from the north would be moving in on Dublin. Having got into work with the rest, Oscar Traynor gave orders when placing guards at the barricades, to allow no one through them going citywards as many had already done who were not friendly to us or the movement, as we found out by their talk and attitude towards us afterwards. After the first day we had to lift rails from the lines opposite because it was learned that troops were on their way and this was to stop them and engage them. When the time came to do so, he organised a party of us to call at the homes of men who were mobilised but did not turn out to collect their arms, ammunition, etc., which were needed, as our supply was not too plentiful. After receiving their arms, we got orders from the G.P.O. to retire from our post at Ballybough and Annesley Bridges, as it was likely to be surrounded. During our stay there we captured some British officers returning from the city and who were dressed as policemen from the military camp,'Dollymount. Harry Boland was given charge of them and, of course, they were taken with us to H.Q. After giving assurance to the shopkeeper who supplied the post with food and other goods we had requisitione in the name of the Republic, we packed up all our arms, material and food for the march to the city.

We had no information or news of the situation between the G.P.O. and our position and, at that time, the people were not over friendly to us judging by the remarks most of them passed. However, we met some who were friendly and helped us in many ways by clearing the street crossings and corners, together with handing parcels of cigarettes, food and other things to us as we passed. We did not know when we might come under fire from British troops who were then beginning to move towards the city. We reached Marlboro St. from the then Britain St. end, and we marched the whole length of same till we turned up a side street and heard heavy rifle fire taking place. Enteri O'Connell St. we were fired on by our own men, then in Clery's

and other large shops. One man named Billy McGinly was wounded but not seriously. After explanations were given firing stopped and we were given a right good welcome when they were told we were the Ballybough party. We then entered the G.P.O. after seeing the tricolour, our flag, flying over it, which gave us a thrill. Comdt. James Connolly, P.H. Pearse, Tom Clarke and other officers and men gave us a great welcome and congratulated us on the march from the last outpost. After a brief address we were then given orders to take over all shops and premises to the corner of Abbey St. from the Hotel Metropole. Entering the Metropole, we took some army officers prisoners who were staying there as guests home on leave from France. They handed over their arms and papers to our officer in command who, of course, told them they were prisoners of the Irish Republican Army now at war with England. They offered no trouble and stated they would give their word of honour to obey any orders given them, which they did, as we found out afterwards.

During this time the mobs from the back streets were busy smashing windows in the big shops and looting everything they could get their hands on. They were warned by P.H. Pearse that they would be fired on as they were bringing disgrace on the country and the Irish people. Of course, there were no police to stop them, they having been taken off the streets, so the mob were left to do as they liked until the firing started and bullets were flying all around the street.

Meantime, we were busy breaking our way through the buildings, erecting barricades and posting men at the windows and all advantage positions for defence, if attacked. Oscar Traynor, as far as I know and remember, gave the orders. The whole populace was very much dumbfounded and their long-suffering under the economic conditions and low wages for their

labour made them more determined to grab all they could. It was a pity to see them, especially able-bodied men doing this kind of thing, instead of being in the firing line with us. We got as far down the street through the buildings till we stopped at the corner of Abbey St. at Manfield's boot shop, where strong barricades were erected as the windows were directly facing the buildings down Abbey St. which were being taken over by the troops. These buildings were: Messrs. Tucks, Engineers; Dunlop's Rubber Showrooms; the Abbey Theatre; White's Delph Store and others. We discovered that snipers wer on the roofs and getting the range of our positions. We came under heavy fire. Oscar Traynor, Vincent Poole, Sean Russell and myself kept replying to their fire which was continuous, till a lull in the evening, but afterwards kept up from Trinity College and during the next day, Wednesday, 26th April 1916.

In this post were the men from the Ballybough area, namely as far as I can remember, Oscar Traynor, Sean Russell, Vincent Poole, Dan Courtney, Walter Carpenter and his brother, Joe Connolly, Robert Killeen, George King, myself and others. It was there I realised the coolness and tact of Traynor under fire. During the next day, Thursday, we observed through stron field glasses taken from the British officers in the Metropole many British troops on the roofs of those shops and buildings. Poole opened fire on them and some were seen to fall from the roofs to the ground. On the opposite side of the street our lads were doing well up to that time. When they were being surrounded a priest came out of the building and started to paint a Red Cross sign on the wall of a chemist's shop our forces were in. We marvelled at him, for the bullets were falling all around the place he was painting the sign. During that time Poole kept us all in good fettle by his tales of his experiences in the Boer War; his advice and caution were very useful as we found out when the sniping would start. He seemed

to smell the different kinds of bullets and the direction they came from, and many snipers fell to his shooting during intervals and periods of rest.

The future was often discussed by us and what would be the outcome of it all; there were no regrets or complaints for what we had started. During one of the quiet periods Comdt. Connolly paid us a visit to see what all the firing at our post was for. After it had been explained to him about the snipers in Abbey St. and the D.B.C. lower down to the bridge, he warned us to be careful as that might be a ruse to keep us engaged while troops were creeping up or digging themselves in for a stronger attack on our position. This came true later that night. I was on guard while the other men were trying to snatch a brief sleep which was badly needed by all of us, for we had had little time to do so from the moment we took over this position, with breaking through walls, searching through the houses, erecting barricades and being on guard duty all that week, we were ready for a nap any time. I thought I saw a light appear at the window of the D.B.C. I waited before reporting to Traynor or Poole to see if it would appear again. It dawned on me by its nature that it was a cigarette being smoked, by its rising and falling. I took the risk to fire on it and all hands jumped to their post wondering was the great attack on, for the reply to my fire was terrific. By it we found out that the British troops had crept into the building from the corner of Eden Quay and had also taken Hopkins and Hopkins, Jewellers' shop. We got it hot from then onwards and our men from that side of the street began to make dashes over to our side, for the buildings started to take fire and very soon the whole place was a huge inferno with maddened horses rushing about that had escaped from burning stables. We remained at our post as did the men in the buildings up to the G.P.O. Suddenly we got

word from Oscar Traynor that we had to retire to the G.P.O. for instructions. When we arrived there we were paraded by the men in charge and afterwards addressed by P.H. Pearse, who thanked us/all in the place and for our stand and explained the reason for our recall. As the G.P.O. had been bombarded all day by artillery and was well on fire, we would have to leave it. The fire had taken a good hold on the buildings by that time and arrangements were then taking place for the evacuation.

I remember, when chatting to a small group of men and women about the position, a burst of fire came on and a young Englishman, who was a friend of Seamus McGowan and a supporter of the Citizen Army, got hit in the stomach and died in a few minutes. We had to leave his body after us, but before we did so, a few prayers were said for the repose of his soul. I believe his name and address were found on him and his people informed in England afterwards. To me it brought back the memories of the men in Barrow-in-Furness.

However, orders were given to make for a lane opposite in Henry St. in batches, at short intervals, for a heavy machine gun post was very much in action from somewhere about Jervis St. That was the first time we of the Manfield post had heard of the wounding of Comdt. Connolly, who had to be carried across the bullet-swept street together with the other wounded and all our arms and useful material to enable us to carry on. It was successfully carried out just before the roof fell in in flames. On reaching the lane we found ourselves outside a mineral water factory which we entered, and this gave a welcome respite to all especially to the wounded. It was then discovered that we would have to turn into another lane to reach the houses in Moore St. No time was lost in deciding what to do. The O'Rahilly asked for men with bayonets to rush the barricade or machine gun post held by the British troops covering the whole of the street. The idea was to cover our men who had to erect a barricade or

obstruction for all in the mineral water factory to cross into the houses in Moore St. In the rush and charge I stumbled and fell, due to having a heavy load on my shoulders. I found myself being helped to my feet by P.H. Pearse and Vincent Poole. Having got across the danger spot then under fire I found all my comrades of the post safe. At this stage, in looking round for entry to the houses, a Volunteer named Harry Coyle was killed by a sniper's bullet while trying to open the side door of a shop in the lane. He had come right through the whole week without any injury. However, I whispered a prayer in his ear and moved the body to one side.

An entry had been made by this time to the house and the wounded safely looked after, including Commandant Connolly. After a short discussion between the staff on the situation Oscar Traynor informed us that we had to get to the end of the street through the walls of the houses like we had done in O'Connell St. and, if possible, to link up with Comdt. Ned Daly in Britain St. who had taken Linenhall Military Barracks from the British. He then said to me "You are a boilermaker or shipyard rivetter and used to heavy hammers and we must get through those houses, so you can get started, and myself, Poole, H. Boland will help all we can and cover you from any hostile people in the house you get through". No one worked harder during that time there than H. Boland, Traynor, Poole, myself ar others like Dan Courtney and George King. We got as far up the street as we could and that was to an ice cream saloon, when we got orders to stop. This was Saturday morning, 29th April 1916. The reason, we found out afterwards, was because the people leaving the houses we entered - who, I must say at this stage, particularly the older - were very pleased to know what was happening and were pleased they were alive to see the attack on England for freedom, and many blessed us and said prayers for our safety before they left their homes which, in many cases, were the last for these innocent people, some of whom were shot

down in cold blood while advancing to the British lines with hands up as non-combatants. I remember P.H. Pearse coming into this room and seeing for himself what was taking place as regards the fate of those people. He instructed us to stop and have a rest till we got further orders. All of us were pleased at the order to rest and just threw ourselves on the floor from pure exhaustion. The next thing we heard on being wakened up was that there was a Truce or cease fire on. We could hardly believe such a thing was possible after working so hard to strengthen our new positions. However, after hearing the situation explained to us by Sean McDermott (afterwards executed), he asked us to accept the order of surrender, particularly for the safety of the people in the area and the wish of our leaders. It was a bitter blow to us all at Moore St. We were so confident that at least the fight could have lasted a while longer to give time for the country at large to reach Dublin to carry on. We took those orders with a sore heart, especially from Sean who seemed very troubled, before finally forming up in the street from the houses we were in. A discussion took place amongst us about handing up our arms, for to most of us they meant many sacrifices as we had to pay for them from our pocket money from time to time - both Volunteers and Citizen Army men. After a bitter argument about them, some decided to break them up, some to bury them in the yard of the shop we were in.

However, when we did finally reach the street it was then we realised the result and cause of the words of P.H. Pearse and Sean McDermott to surrender, for all about the street were the bodies of the poor people who had left their houses willingly to help us and Ireland, in my opinion. I was also shocked when turning round to see the bullet-ridden body of The O'Rahilly and some others. We pulled them to the side of the footpath for removal afterwards, for the British troops gave us no time, as they were shouting at us to get a move on or they would fire on us. They had a strong machine gun post at the

top of the street and on the roof of the Rotunda Hospital. Covered by their machine guns we formed up as best we could after leaving our wounded sitting up at the side of the wall to be removed by Red Cross ambulance afterwards. We then turned in to Henry St. (O'Connell St.) and, under their orders and when we reached Nelson's Pillar and halted for a moment, we saw for the first time the state of the late H.Q. of the Republic - in ruins and still smouldering - and the remainder of that side all in the same condition. Again we got another reminder from the British to get moving and I need not here mention their typical language to us to do so. Both sides of the streets were lined with troops, five or 6 deep, with fixed bayonets, machine guns, artillery and all forces at their command to receive our surrender. One of our group fixed a tricolour to his rifle and gave us the command "Eyes right to the G.P.O." before passing it. I learned afterwards his name was Sean McLaughlin, mattress maker by trade. He formed us up in ranks four deep and gave us the order to march towards Parnell Monument where the British field staff were standing. After being halted by them we got orders to advance in fours and lay down our arms and everything in our possession. Again our comrades gave these people a lesson. Before finally parting with their guns, etc., some of them smashed and left them useless before their very eyes. We were there ordered to line up along the edge of the footpath, the bayonets of the troops in some cases touching our backs, they were so close to us. Our names, addresses and occupations were taken down by a non-commissioned officer. When all the names were taken and all arms surrendered, we were then marched into the plot of ground outside the Rotunda Hospital with a strong guard covering us with machine guns and rifles, with orders to fire into us if we moved even to a sitting-up position. We found it very painful being so close together and the ground so hard.

All during the night more and more prisoners continued to be brought in from other places, who had been in strong positions, but accepted the order of surrender from our leaders. Some, we heard, were holding out and did not know what the position was in the G.P.O., or about the surrender, or hear of its being burned down by shell fire. When morning dawned it was cold and chilly and I found our group had been separated by the military. Of those of us from Moore St. I had lost sight of Oscar Traynor, Sean Russell, H. Boland, Dan Courtney and J. King; myself and Vincent Poole being the only two of the group left who had kept together during that ever glorious week. However, we met again in Richmond Barracks to which we were removed from the Rotunda. It was very hard on the women, who were cold and hungry after having worked so hard looking after the wounded, to be treated the same as the men.

During the first stroke of daylight on Sunday morning, April 30th 1916, several of the British officers walked through the crowd of us, jeering and insulting any of our officers they happened to see in uniform and using the usual foul English language. One very small prig made Tom Clarke stand up to be searched or something else, for he seemed to know him from the rest of us. Whatever Tom said to the officer, he just smacked him across the face with his gloves. It nearly caused a riot or bloodshed, for some of the lads jumped up to resent it, only for the intervention of Comdt. Ned Daly to ignore the whole thing. Both were afterwards executed.

A short time after we got the order to rise and move out into the street where we found a strong guard of soldiers, with officers on horseback, lined up to take us to Richmond Barracks. After a very tiresome journey through the streets and after receiving a very hostile reception coming through High St. and Thomas St., where the wives of British soldiers then in France or elsewhere stoned us from the windows of their houses and

marched arm in arm with the escort. They were allowed to do so. However, we finally reached the barracks where another hostile crowd of people were standing around the gate and their remarks and insults were many, of course. These people did not understand at the time what was being done and that they would afterwards reap the benefit. When the time came they redeemed themselves.

We were all brought into a large room and again searched before passing into it and everything personal or otherwise taken from us by the soldiers, even money, watches, etc. They informed us that they would be of no further use to us as we were likely to be shot and they hoped to be on the firing parties; most of these men were so-called Irish and in Irish regiments. We again gave our names. I observed, after we had sat down or lay on the floor, that we were thrown together, officers, men and leaders without distinction. We were served out with three or four large pails or buckets of water placed in different parts of the room without any means of getting a drink from them, unless you put your head into them, as no cups, mugs, etc. were provided. At this stage we were surprised to see Dublin Metropolitan Police come into the room with C.I.D officers and what were known at the time as G-men, some of whom were known to some of our lads, and who were considered friendly. However, they pointed out to the military officers all the prominent leaders and officers or those who had taken active part in the labour struggle in the past leading up to Easter Week. Vincent Poole and myself were lying down taking no notice, when one smart C.I.D. man put his eye on the two of us, but only removed Poole with the other leaders to separate rooms and tried them afterwards by courtmartial. After a short rest the remainder were ordered out to the parade ground and served with one day's rations consisting of four large biscuits and a small tin of bully beef between two men, but no

drinking water. When this was completed the order was given for the guards and prisoners to move off to the quays for deportation to English prisons from the North Wall. When the party arrived at the boat, another strong guard was waiting to receive us on board. During this time shooting was taking place across the river from Boland's Mill, the garrison of which, up to that time, had not laid down their arms and, of course, this made the escort jumpy and in a hurry to get us aboard the boat, which turned out to be one carrying cattle to Holyhead daily. Again, no provision had been made to clean the place after the last load of cattle had been shipped, and no drinking water was provided.

Speaking many months afterwards to a workmate of mine who had been over to Dublin for holidays from Southampton, and who happened to be returning on the same boat with other passengers, he said he recognised me amongst the crowd coming aboard and it was only then he realised he was an Irishman and would have liked to fight all the people on the deck when he heard the remarks made by them when we asked for some drinking water. Most of the soldiers refused to get any for us and some wanted it poisoned before it would reach us, such was the feeling against us at the time. However, we were pleased to have a few hours rest, for all were tired after the incidents of the day. We settled down, not caring what our fate was to be when we landed at Holyhead, where we arrived in the early hours of Sunday morning 1st May 1916. All were soon roused from the snatches of sleep we managed to get and were very glad to get away from the stench of the cattle. When we got on the railway platform there was a long line of railway carriages waiting to take us to the various prisons we landed in afterwards. During the sorting and counting of the prisoners we were divided once more into different groups never to meet again till many months afterwards in Frongoch Internment Camp, North Wales. I got

into the carriage allotted to me and I had for company Dick Mulcahy (now General), Arthur Shields (now film star), Tom Pugh, North Strand Road, Phil Shanahan, publican, first T.D. for north city after the 1918 election, Seamus Kavanagh, Sammy O'Reilly and, I believe, Hugh Holohan - the first time we met again since leaving my home at Buckingham St. on 24th April 1916 After boarding the train the people round about were very hostile to us by shouting and cursing at us and, only for the escort of soldiers, they would have attacked us. However, after a long and tiresome journey, we stopped at a small village called Knutsford and we were lined up and marched into the prison which was near hand. We were again searched and stripped of all that was left to us by the soldiers, who had done their work well before leaving Dublin.

After taking our names and all particulars, we were then allotted rooms or cells on the different landings, mine being B $\frac{2}{10}$ cell. That was the name we were called afterwards. On entering my cell I noticed that there was no bedding, blankets, sheets, etc., only a bare wooden board divided in three places, and a wooden pillow, or what was meant for one. We received nothing to eat or drink that night, having arrived late after the last meal was served for the day; that would be about 4.30 p.m. Next morning, about 7 o'clock, we were served with a mug of tea, or what liked to be known as tea, and a portion of bread with a small piece of margarine to spread what way we liked on it. We got one hour's exercise every day and were looked up for the rest and kept in solitary confinement. Some of the guards on the landing were decent enough after the first days. They were all military men and they gave us the news of the execution of all our leaders. That was the first we heard of what was happening in Dublin. They told us we would likely be sent to France to dig trenches to save the lives of British soldiers, as they could not feed us all.

We settled down the best we could, only meeting on the landing on our way to the exercise ground for the one hour round and round without a stop. Still, it was amusing how the news could get around between us. We would put out hands behind our backs at a bend in the circle and wave them towards one another and ask "Did you hear anything" before retiring from the yard. The Rosary was always repeated by a leading Volunteer and, if there was any setback at the front in France that day, the leader was taken away for praying for the downfall of the allies, etc., but it did not stop the Rosary, for a new man stepped up to lead off just as usual to say it, and they could not understand our attitude or the way we took the situation. One day we were halted and informed by the commandant that he had some letters for some of the prisoners and to just answer our names, as we were not allowed letters. I was surprised to hear my name called and when I left the ranks to learn about the letter, it was from my mother who, I learned, was then undergoing a serious operation in the Dublin hospital. After answering the commandant that it was from her, by the name signed on it, I was ordered back to the ranks, but did not receive the letter, but it made me feel very upset to know what she had said in it, and made me feel his attitude was a form of punishment.

The same thing happened on another day; we were suddenly paraded on the ground floor without any warning to be looked over by C.I.D. men from Dublin who were searching the various prisons where any of our men were detained for any of the men who took part in the attack on the Magazine Fort in the Park, Dublin. They walked slowly up and down the ranks in frontand at the rere of the parade. After several turns up and down along with the Commandant of the prison, they passed out and we were ordered back to the cells, and was I pleased, for the man beside me was also in the attack. I learned afterwards that

two men were brought to Dublin for identification, but when they arrived, it was found out that they were not the men wanted and, of course, they had to be brought all the way back. Another day, we were paraded for a bath after demanding same for some time. When it was decided we were to get one, we were ordered to line up on the bottom floor with our clothes in our hands, between a guard of soldiers who kept jeering and asking us were we lousy, and other vulgar remarks. At this time we were standing naked and it was some time before we got back to our cells and we never asked for a bath after that experience.

Meantime, the silence was beginning to have its effect on some of the lads; some began shouting and dancing in their cells and the hunger was affecting them as well; so much so, that two or three became mental cases, and are yet, having never recovered. After several weeks with no change, till again we were informed, while at exercise by the commandant, that a visitor had asked to address us, namely, Alfie Byrne, then M.P. for North City Dublin. He got permission from the War Office in London to inform the prisoners that it had been decided to give us the treatment meted out to prisoners of war. It was a welcome change, and he was allowed to give us some cigarettes, papers and other welcome gifts such as pencils, writing papers and stamps. After a brief service in the chapel, he said he would be back later with more information. Things looked a little more cheerful after that. While at dinner in my cell I was taken down to the circle by the landing guard where I saw Phil Shanahan, Joe Twomey and one other man, whom I cannot remember. He had got permission from the commandant to make all arrangements to have papers, parcels and other matters sent to us on behalf of the men in each wing. That was the reason we all met in Phil's cell - to act as representatives of each wing. The commandant gave us four a surprise in the way of a feed. We had roasted chicken, bread and butter and bottles of mineral

waters together with cigarettes and some tobacco and a pipe for Phil. We did justice to all, while arrangements were made to receive all parcels and papers every morning. He was as good as his word and that night mattresses and bedclothes of all kinds began to arrive in the prison for all of us. The next day at exercise we noticed that the armed guard had been withdrawn and the commandant informed us he had official word for the change and we could break up our ranks and mingle together and make arrangements to sleep two and three in a cell, smoke, receive parcels and visitors. It was a great moment, for we had been looking at one another daily for months and could not speak or even make a sign to one another. When we realised the change, at once there was a rush to greet each other who had been separated after the surrender in Dublin, and many met again who were thought killed in the fighting. A council of both parties was formed to deal with the new situation as regards running and carrying out the new order and keeping discipline to the forefront, for we had claimed to be republican soldiers, and it was up to us to maintain that principle.

After a day or so, visitors began to be allowed in, and many were girls from a convent school near hand, and they never spared themselves for us, above all, in getting into touch with our families in Ireland and letting them know all our wants, etc. At the time, there was a very large number of the boys who were taken prisoner who had their uniforms on them - as all they stood up in. They were wanting to get them home as they were told they would have to hand them over and that other clothes would be provided. No one liked that, as the uniforms had been bought out of their own pocket money and, besides, they had a sentimental value to all of us; and we were determined that they would not be given up, even if we had to go naked. This was explained to the girls on the next visiting day and their help sought; so it was arranged between us that two or three would

be taken out at each visit and they would come in with a suit or trousers and jacket under their own clothes, and a group would be formed while one girl was removing her clothing, etc. and the uniform donned in its place. Likewise the same change with the owners of the uniforms going out, which were all delivered safely to the homes for which they were intended, thanks to the services of those great-hearted girls. It had another angle to it which nearly caused those visits to stop and the concessions we were enjoying to be removed. After the visitors were gone we had to parade to be counted by the prison officials before going back to cells, in case any had escaped or were missing. It was amusing to see the faces and listen to the remarks of those officials at the count; they could get the right number of men, but not of uniforms. They could not tell who had uniforms and, of course, they were not made any the wiser, and to stop any of those concessions for their stupidity and carelessness and the War Office getting to know about it, well, there would have been some questions for them to answer.

Meantime, more prisoners began to arrive daily; they were the wounded we had left behind in Dublin, and some we had never thought to see in life again - they were so bad. However, we were both pleased and delighted to come together again, even in an English prison. We settled down to the new life and enjoyed many hours exchanging experiences and tales of the fighting and the different posts in which we had operated. The girls continued to keep us supplied with books, writing pads, pens, pencils and all the latest news both from home and from the other prisons where our men were confined. No time was lost in setting up classes, lectures and discussions on future action when the time came, and especially on the military side, on which Oscar Traynor and Sean T. O'Kelly were very keen. Some of the trade union leaders took their share in instructing the trade union side, which was most important,

as these men never came into contact with so many trade unionists before.

One morning, the last of the wounded prisoners arrived from Dublin Castle; this would be somewhere in the month of July, and I was very much surprised to find that two of them were very close pals and next-door neighbours. All three of us had served our apprenticeships in the same firm - William Halpin, ship plater; Elliott Ellems, driller. We did not get much time to make any arrangements for the future or enjoy our new-found company, due to the fact that I with others was ordered to pack up all our belongings and be prepared to be removed to an internment camp in North Wales, called Frongoch. We did not get the chance of saying goodbye, but we did meet again some weeks after at the camp. About 100 or 150 of us were the advance party to the place, to have it prepared and also cleaned and ready for the other following in due course from the various prisons in which they were confined. This was a sore blow to the girls, who had done so much to make us happy and which all of us appreciated all our lives afterwards.

It took two officers and 200 soldiers as an escort to bring us to the camp, where we arrived after a long and tiresome journey of over 800 miles. When it was reached, we discovered it was an old distillery, long out of use, but put into use for the German prisoners captured during the war. They were removed from it to a camp in the Isle of Man. Three or four of them were in the Camp Hospital and left there till arrangements to remove them were made. Some of our men who could speak their language made them quite happy for the time they were amongst us and, of course, let them know who we were and what brought us to the camp. On one side of the road was the distillery and main offices, and on the other side, army huts with large bundles of barbed wire between the two camps. After being paraded and given orders as regards the running of the

camp, etc., we were warned that if we gave any trouble it would be met by the point of the bayonet or with buckshot as the guards were supplied with it and knew how to use it.

No time was lost in forming a camp council of our leading officers and trade union officials who were prisoners like ourselves. A camp commandant from our side was appointed to meet and convey all complaints we might have to be remedied. We settled down to the work in front of ut, getting the place cleaned up, beds sorted, which were sacks filled with straw, as were the pillows. The rooms were formerly large lofts for holding grain, which left plenty of play for the huge army of rats that invested the place. We carried out all the orders and work issued by our own council and were determined to let these people know we were trained soldiers of Ireland and ready to carry out all orders from our officers. Working parties were selected each day for the various duties that had to be done for our own health and social conditions. Classes were formed on every subject in every day life that would be expected of us under the law of the Re ublic. We hoped to confirm at the first chance after release all departments of government business, and instructions to fit men capable to take over these departments when required. Army drill and training in all its parts were the most important, for there was a lot of men with us at this time who had never handled arms, but were just rounded up in the mad rush for prisoners in Ireland. All these lessons and lectures were always well attended because they were delivered by such able men like Sean T. O'Kelly, Terence McSwiney, O'Mahoney, Liam O'Brien of the Galway University, Wm. O'Brien, Labour Leader, Liam Staines camp commandant, P. Daly, Dr. Ryan, Tom Derrig, Minister for Education, and a host of others I just can't remember after this long time.

In football, running, jumping and all kinds of sport we

took quite an interest as there was quite a good piece of ground at our disposal of which we took advantage to keep fit. Things were not so bad once we got the run of the place and the guards became friendly. They were always pleased to come to the concerts on Sundays in the dining hall. There was good talent and plenty of musical instruments of which many took advantage to learn. There was an Austrian priest in the camp serving the Germans and who had to go with them. We were promised a chaplain by the War Office to look after our needs. His arrival in due course caused some trouble because he was in khaki uniform and, of course, objection was taken to that on the grounds that he was a paid officer of the British and we had no desire to kneel to him, especially in confession. Until he changed that colour he was not approached for any service. After a week or two, he decided to surrender all his medals and rank and administer to us.

We had a dry canteen run by some person from outside in which we could purchase many little things when any money came from home to do so. We also had a barber's shop run by one of our own men who had a shop in Dublin, and who became official barber of the camp. On return to civil life he was known as The Barber of Frongoch. The same was the position of the boot repairer, Tom Traynor, who was afterwards executed by the British forces during the Black and Tan terror.

During the hot days of summer it was decided that we should get a chance of having a bath or swim in the river that ran just outside the camp, and approaches were made to the British commandant for permission, which was granted; but there was not enough water to cover one's body, never mind swim. The idea was to keep the guard always on duty so as they would get tired escorting us about over and above their regular duties. This applied when we asked to be taken out for route marches outside the camp. On these marches the guard consisted of old time

soldiers who were past their active life. Many times we became the guard ourselves, as they could not keep up the pace and carry their arms and keep their eyes on us; in fact, we often carried the rifles ourselves. Later on, they complained about the extra duty as escorts. How they got on we do not know, but I believe they were shifted and a new and younger crowd came to relieve them.

Meantime, the lectures and instructions were kept going and men became more efficient every day and they were able, when released, to carry out those lessons and instructions and all they had been through in the camp, which saved a lot of time afterwards when the new start was to be made to carry on the fight for independence. Had the British government known what taking place under their own guard and officials, we would have been hunted out of the camp, for it must be realised that men came together in that camp from all parts of Ireland; from towns, villages and places that would have taken years to bring together for the work which had to be done, especially in the training of the army of the Republic - men like Oscar Traynor, Kit Poole, a brother of Vincent, another ex-British soldier; also Dick McCormack and leading Volunteers who were well placed among the prisoners. Likewise, the work of the trade union officials was very useful in handling transport work at the railways and docks.

One day we were on parade as usual to hear any orders for the day from the British commandant. He informed us that parties of prisoners would be taken to London frequently for interview with a new advisory committee set up for the purpose of getting information from us on the mobilisation of Easter Week and what we knew about it. However, we had our own views on that and were advised by our camp council how to act when we reached London. The interviews were taken in the Governor's room at Wormwood Scrubbs Prison and generally lasted three or

four days, or weekends. After a few weeks they stopped. I believe they did not get the information they were after, but it was a break from the camp and a curse for the escort, who again had to to their regular duty over and above this extra one they were called on to do. Shortly after these interviews, men began to be released and sent home. Again trouble came our way, due to refusing to name men wanted for military service under that act in Scotland and England. We knew they were in the camp and had served with the Volunteers before and during Easter Week. We had no intention whatever in betraying these young men, and the camp council fought the military the whole road, and many concessions were stopped to force our hand. Men like Dick Mulcahy (now General) took up this case and not one of them was ever found, though many of them were anxious to save us all the trouble that was raging in the two camps by giving themselves up.

At this time we had another visit from Alfie Byrne, M.P., to the camp with letters to some he knew personally, from their people. He told us we would soon be going home, but we discovered afterwards that these visits were a means to an end; for, during the campaign of the general election, he spoke about all he had done for the prisoners, etc., but it did not get him any votes during the 1918 election. Shortly after that visit, notices were posted up around the camp informing us that releases were to take place, and every evening the sergeant of the guard called out the names of those who were for home, and in a week or two the camp had fallen down to about a couple of hundred men who were kept till Christmas. It made a great difference in the rooms, for they were lofty and cold. Myself, Dick Mulcahy and Arthur Shields (now a film star) had to close our beds together to try and keep warm, and many were the interesting chats on the future struggle took place after lights out. Little did I dream then I would be fighting against him in the Civil War when it came.

Nearing the end of the year, and no more releases taking place, we began to make arrangements for a good time at Christmas. We wrote home to our people to send us any extras they could afford, which they did. After working hard erecting decorations, cleaning the whole camp, and making every effort to cook the good things sent from home, we were suddenly informed we were to be released and to be out of the camp on a certain day. We could not believe it was genuine and the idea of leaving so much food and other things, costing hundreds of pounds, never entered our heads. However the camp council and our leading officers met the military of the camp and a satisfactory arrangement was come to, the military purchasing most of the goods. No time was lost in getting ready to get out of the camp. A special train was there to take us to Holyhead, and if we missed it, there would be no more for a week or so. The guard were also anxious to see us away, as they, too, wanted to be home for Christmas. We had no time to wire home to tell our friends to expect us or meet the boat. However, we got a good send off in a way from the guard and a few Welsh people who lived near the camp. Arriving at Dun Laoghaire we got a nice reception from a few people who had got news about our homecoming. It was with mixed feelings and surprise we saw the changes that had taken place, especially in the attitude of people towards what it was when we were being taken away. When I got home and my family had got over their surprise - I found them all well and in good health - I learned that the White Cross people had looked after them while I was away. The homecoming was very happy to all of us, and we thanked God for the pleasure of being together once more, especially at Christmas time.

After a week or so, I got employment in my old firm, The Dockyard Co., and after settling down once more I transferred to the Citizen Army, as it would be the first to get any reaction

that was to come by the new resurgent movement now under way. I was pleased to see the new spirit in the people. No time was lost in putting into practice the lectures, instructions and what had to be done, as laid down in the prison and camps. All of the year 1917 was taken up with reorganising, recruiting and taking part in all events towards the struggle to come and with opposition to attempts made to bring in conscription, and the moves of the Irish Party who were surrendering ground all the way on the Home Rule Bill. We also had to find work for our men. The young men had become more interested than formerly and were joining the Volunteers and Citizen Army, which was a good sign. They never spared themselves or thought time too long when asked to work for any purpose connected with the fight for independence. Many hard nights were spent by them in the Dockyard and railway shops, together with drilling and learning the use of arms or raiding for them. The political side was still looked after by the leaders, and meetings, lectures and concerts were organised for funds and, in many cases, broken up by the police. Arrests were quite frequent for the simplest act, or for helping in any way.

The election came along as the first chance to test the new change in the people, and the successful return of Count Plunkett brought about the release of the penal servitude prisoners. It also gave additional interest to the people and quickened the desire for more opposition to Britain and the moves of Lloyd George for the partition of Ulster. He had got together a body of men of different views to form a convention for a settlement of the Irish question, as these people called it. But we had our orders and, together with the active work of Sinn Fein, we continued to strengthen the interest of the people for the Republic and to have a definite case for the Peace Conference after the war in France, and to be ready to have the Proclamation of Easter Week endorsed by the nation.

At the first general election our work was cut out for us and we had to be prepared to do all work without question and, no matter what the provocation was, not to use arms at this stage and, of course, we endeavoured to carry out these orders, both military and civilian, but not to act as Volunteers if called on for cattle raiding, etc. We had to act against the Defence of the Realm Act which was operating from, I believe, April 1918 The passing of the Conscription Act on 16th April 1918, meant to us of the Citizen Army and Volunteers a declaration of war and was taken up and endorsed by the whole nation and by organised labour in particular, through the general strike which took place about April 1918. During this time myself and others were being instructed to take our places as election agents, speakers at meetings, organisers, etc. in the event of the official candidates being arrested. My job was in the North Dock Ward at that time. Alfie Byrne was the sitting member and Phil Shanahan the proposed. We had all our work cut out in that Ward, for it was the biggest industrial area in Dublin, composed mostly of the ex-British soldier element, whose wives looked on Alfie Byrne as a tin god; so, knowing what was in front of us, we got a very strong group of men and women to organise an election committee and Phil himself worked hard, not for himself, but for the Republic. As he often reminded his followers, he was a soldier and not a politician. Then was shown the wisdom and foresight of our leaders in lecturing to us while in prisons and camps on what work was ahead of us for victory and success.

Meantime, I kept to the job in the Dockyard, hiding prominent men on the run by having them employed as workers in the firm. One was a brother of Tom Ashe, who died through being forcibly fed while on hunger strike in Mountjoy Prison. His death created a very strong feeling of hatred to police and to the Castle authorities, and gained many recruits to the Volunteers and Sinn Fein Clubs. Another good soldier of

the Republic who was also employed there was Sean Flood, who could carry out duties without hindrance; also others whose names I did not know. The work went on - making train wrecking tools, hand bombs and everything that would be handy and useful when required. Several British naval vessels came to the Dockyard for repairs - as the firm was on the Government list for such - and several raids were made on these vessels for arms when most of the crew were ashore. Any other ships we thought had arms were searched also. One man named Pat Daly* was very daring in that line. He was over 6 ft. in height and very strong, and many a rifle and ammunition was brought to Phil Shanahan's shop in Foley St. It was there I got to know Dan Breen, Sean Treacy, Sean Hogan, Seamus Robinson, Peadar Carney (author of The Soldier's Song), Tom Slator and Jim Lawless, who were the driving force in getting things done throughout the country, notwithstanding curfew laws and raids by police. When the Dail Loan was floated, I was instructed to collect for it in my firm and right well it was taken by the workmen, who bought shares from £1 to £10, paying up weekly. I handed over all monies every week to Jim Lawless, who was responsible to Mick Collins, Minister for Finance at that time. Meantime, the Citizen Army kept on recruiting and drilling and had men working on all ships coming into the port searching for arms, etc. When the general election was declared to take place our committee got into working order and a finer crowd of willing workers was hard to equal. Jim Lawless was Director of Election in the North Dock. While canvassing in the slums it was awful to behold where human beings had to sleep, eat and drink. No wonder the working classes were always ripe for revolt against their conditions. However, our work had its reward, for Phil, of course, won the seat, the first and last time from Alfie, who still holds it in the Dáil. He fought very hard to retain it at that time. During one of our meetings

(* Pat Daly, known as Cocker)

down the Church Road, or East Wall, we met with a very hostile crowd who were mostly all Scotch people working in the Dockyard, and the followers of Alfie were also strong there. When I rose to open the meeting and to introduce Sean T. O'Kelly and Jim Lawless, also Phil Shanahan, we were met with a shower of sods and Union Jack Flags waving all around us, but it did not last long, as the precaution was taken beforehand for this, and a company of 2nd Battalion Volunteers were near at hand and, with batons, cleared the place of the objectors in quick time. We were allowed to hold our meeting without interruption after that. After the election was over and results known there was great rejoicing in the North Wall camp and a great blow to Alfie Byrne and his followers. When the results became known and the Irish Party defeated, it became clear that Lloyd George and his crowd would not take it lying down, we were told by our leaders to be on our guard for raids on our homes and arrests for the simplest move, and never to be caught out after curfew hours. Later on, when the members of the First Dail, who were not in prison, met for their first public session to form their government in the Mansion House, I attended with Phil Shanahan, Jim Lawless, Peadar Carney, Tom Slator and a few others I cannot remember, the time is so far away. I can still see that day as it took place before the world and looking around then, I wondered what were people thinking - was it about Easter Week and the glorious deed?

Shortly after that event we of the Citizen Army kept in touch with the Volunteers and came to an understanding for co-operation in all orders that might be issued. It was then decided to break away from the English and Scottish trade unions which had a very strong membership in their branches in Ireland, and whose industrial policy and conditions were governed from the Head Offices in those countries. These unions sent over to these Head Offices all money collected in this country with the exception of what was needed for local expenses.

No money was paid out until sanctioned and passed by the Executive. The fact that all printing matter such as secretaries' books, pence cards, monthly and quarterly reports came from England and Scotland proved that there was a very large amount of money leaving the country yearly. At least half of it, or some amount, should have been invested in Irish investments for their Irish members. However, it was decided by the Minister of Labour in the Cabinet of the Dáil at a meeting sometime in 1919, with Irish members connected with the I.R.B. and those of us acting in co-operation with them, to make the start to break this connection with the British trade unions and to devote our future to that work, as it was considered most important to the industrial side of the march of independence. A meeting was called of those men considered capable and with experience of organising and forming such a union in the engineering and shipbuilding industry. They were John Redmond, Lord Edward St., engineer; Councillor Patrick McIntyre, iron moulder, Arbour Hill; Joseph Twomey, fitter, Ballybough; Michael Slator, brass moulder, Ballybough Road; Rory Bent, engineer, Seville Place; John Rooney, coach builder address not known; Christy Farrelly, iron moulder; Michael Doyle, shipwright; Seamus O'Donohue, electrician; myself, boilermaker, Lr. Buckingham St., and two or three others whom I cannot remember. This group constituted the Resident E.C. Joint National E.C. was formed later when the union was launched, which was after a public meeting held in the old Abbey Theatre on Sunday, 20th June 1920. Fierce opposition was met from all the leading officials of the English and Scotch Unions who came over for this opening meeting. They accused us of trying to form a political and not a trade union and said they would oppose us everywhere and not allow their members to have anything to do with members of this Irish union or recognise our membership cards. They could not get over the challenge to them, or of Irishmen deciding to control their industrial affairs under the Republic in future.

After long and bitter opposition to the desire and explanation from the provincial E.C. on the stage, the resolution was put from the body of the hall that the union be formed and names taken to form the different sections within the union. There being no amendment otherwise, it was carried with an outburst of cheers, and stewards were appointed to take the names as the men filed out of the theatre. We found at the counting of the names handed in that there were over 700. We lost no time in getting to work, for we knew what had to be done to hold this first lot, and to get premises, print cards, purchase secretaries' books, make rules, and pay sick, mortality and maternity benefits, as we had pledged ourselves to do from the first week's income.

We informed the Minister, Countess Markievicz, and other members of the Cabinet who were, of course, anxious about the result and were quite pleased, and after a meeting, we were given a grant of £3,000. The first thing to be done was to secure a hall or decent premises. While waiting to hear of one, we collected our first contribution in the Foresters' Hall, Parnell Square, which was very successful.

At the meeting in the Abbey we had the support of Willie Gallagher, afterwards M.P. in the British House of Commons, who was over on a visit to review the Citizen Army, of which he was an honorary member. The review took place the same evening at Dolphin's Barn, fully armed, where he delivered a fine address to the men assembled. With him was J.R. Campbell, afterwards the centre of the Red Letter that brought about the general strike in England. During this time all the Sinn Fein Clubs were instructed to help the organisers throughout the country, and the same with local units of the Volunteers, as we expected, and we got bitter opposition from those unions from which we were breaking away and these were encouraged by their officials in this. No members of the Irish Union were paid, nor did they

seek any. They gave their services free and many times during the then prevailing conditions - curfew hours - were held up by Black and Tans when going to or coming from meetings which they had been asked to address.

The new E.C. was afterwards elected to office to take responsibility for the union. They were:- John Redmond, President; Councillor McIntyre, General Secretary; Joe Twomey, vice President; M. Slator, Treasurer; Rory Bent, John Rooney, and Thomas Leahy, Trustees; Tom Hannigan, caretaker. A fine large hall was secured and became the Head Office from that day till today - known as No. 6 Gardiner's Row, where all the different sections met and held meetings. It was also the centre of all the work done by the army headquarters of the Republic and Government. At a later period it was the meeting place of prominent people to meet the leaders for discussion for the ending of hostilities, or the Army Truce, etc.

Meantime, the work of organising the union went on all over the country and branches were formed in Dundalk, Drogheda, Cork, Cove, Passage West, Limerick, Wicklow, Galway and Sligo. Its name was The Irish Engineering Industrial Union. In the firms, especially the Dublin Dockyard - were large numbers of craftsmen - including Scotsmen - also the staff and foremen, who did not like the change, or wanted to have anything to do between the men breaking away or keeping to the old union; but they quietly gave their support to the latter, and many Irishmen of long standing in those unions were the worst opponents we had to deal with, especially when any trade dispute arose over prices or wages operating on the Clydeside. They, of course, sided with these men and officials when they arrived from Belfast or the Clyde. At one time they were instructed to strike us out and refused to work with men in the Irish Union. When the firm was approached by our officials for the reason we were denied the right to work in our own city, they said that work was there

for everyone, that it was an inter-union affair and they took no sides and were only interested in getting the work done. We welcomed this attitude, for it showed us our friends and those who were working against us, and we were able to be prepared for any move. The first thing we did, and with great effect, was to organise all boys and apprentices. Almost all of them were in the Volunteers or Sinn Fein. Several of these were killed in action at the attack on the Custom House - one named Head, apprentice plumber; Sean Flood, apprentice plater, and a chap named Teeling, who was arrested, sentenced to hang, but afterwards escaped.

We met the same bitter opposition in Cork and Passage West where there was a large ship-repairing place and dry dock for that purpose. The workers there were mostly from Belfast, and Orangemen at that; the others were mostly from England and the Clyde. However, we also had good local men employed there who worked hard for the Irish Union, especially after a great speech delivered at an organising meeting held in Cork, at which Terence McSwiney, then Lord Mayor, presided. He said it was the duty of all Irish trade union men to be able to manage their own affairs and way of life; that by joining and strengthening the union they were also helping on the work of Irish independence. The work went on till it was firmly established and took its place in all the work of the time, notwithstanding constant raids, searches, breaking up of meetings, strikes by our own countrymen, and the attacks of former members with the support of their English leaders. The Union got full support at all times from Jim Larkin, Tom Foran, Tom Johnston and all the members of the Transport Union who never refused any help when asked. While all this work was taking place on the political and military side, the Irish Union was gaining strength and position and respect from the various firms in which their members were engaged.

During this time I served with the Citizen Army in raids for arms, attended meetings and was of service to Active Service Unit under Oscar Traynor, Dick McKee, Peadar Clancy, and Sean Treacy, while doing trade union work up and down the country. During the reign of terror and raids against the people's courts of the Republic, we kept in touch and were under orders for everything being done to further the work of the Republic, right up to the Truce in July 1921. Afterwards my duty lay between organising the Irish Union and the Citizen Army.

The Debates on the Articles of Agreement between our Government and the British were followed very keenly, up to the vote on same, by the members of our executive, who had come through a long and hard struggle in the Labour movement. The fight for independence subsequent to Easter Week and right up to the Black and Tan terror failed to break that friendship and loyalty to each other, but on the fatal vote for the Treaty we found ourselves in opposite camps. The Executive Council of the Union also felt the terrible effect of this, for it gave the English labour leaders the right to say "We told you so, you were a political union," etc. and it made conditions difficult for those of us who were still organising against those powerful unions which were trying to get back some of their members, and are still doing so to this day. I will never forget the day at 6, Gardiner's Row, when the news came through on the vote. Our E.C. had arranged a meeting that evening on other matters and advantage was taken after business to test members' feelings on it. When introduced, one could feel the cold and fear of a lost soul departing when the result was declared by John Redmond. Most of them supported the decision of Collins and Griffith on the vote; those of us who thought of ourselves as a Labour Union within the Republic came away with sad hearts, but determined to carry on as Connolly, Pearse, Tom Clarke and company would like us to have done - carry on the the complete separation of our country from England.

During the debates and discussions that followed and the final split in the army of the Republic, I was appointed as I.O. of the Citizen Army, while combining trade union work, til. I was arrested by former comrades and taken to Mountjoy Jail on April 12th, 1922, and detained there. Before that event I took part in the Civil War and was again under Oscar Traynor's command and Barry's Hotel, and the Hammam Hotel, O'Connell St. After the attack on The Hammam, I succeeded in escaping and getting away and for some time was on the run, till I was held up and arrested while again doing trade union work in Talbot Street. Having been brought to Mountjoy Prison and severely questioned about the whereabouts of my comrades, and refusing to answer, I was badly beaten up by the guards and interrogating officers and thrown into an underground cell till I was allowed up in the wings, and there again I met Traynor, Sean Hogan, Eamon Donnelly from Belfast, Dan Breen, Tom Derrig, afterwards Minister for Education. After a short time I was called out for trial or questioning by the then Governor, Paidin O'Keeffe, and others; some I knew, and others I did not. I was sent back to my wing and just before the cease fire I learned I was to be shot for taking up arms and being I.O. against the national army. The finding of the Court was not confirmed and, along with Dr. Ward, I was taken to the Curragh Camp No. 3. After a few months internment at this camp, where I found the commandant to be John Twomey, a brother of Joe of the Irish Union we helped to form. After many months there Dr. Ward and I were released and arrived home that day.

It being the first Monday in August, my release was quite unexpected by my family. I found that Jim Larkin had just been there with some help for them which, I could see, was badly needed. After a week or so, I found I could not get employment at the Dockyard as a rivetter. However, through a friend, I got employment at the Inchicore Works as a boilermaker, which was quite different from shipyard work. I remained there until

the amalgamation of the railways took place and, in the change over I, with several others, was dismissed. I again made application to the Dockyard for work and was again refused, on the grounds that my place had been filled, and if anything turned up I would be sent a message. I never received it. I could see that the English Boilermakers were again in control and did not want to have any more anti-union trouble, especially as I was one of the founders of the Irish Union - a crime I have never been forgiven for by these people.

Again I had to leave Dublin to seek work and this time I went to the Bristol Channel where I was not known. After getting employment with a Leeds firm, known as Clayton Brothers of Leeds, at tank erecting, which I followed for twelve months, I was challenged for my union card, as this site was a trade union one controlled by the Boilermakers' members. When I produced my Irish Union card it caused some sensation and a meeting was called at once to decide what was to be done about it, as I claimed to be a trade unionist, having served five years to the trade in Dublin. Word was sent to Newcastle where the Head Office was, and the next day one of the officials came to interview me - one whom I had known in my early days in his Union. After a discussion between the shop steward, myself and him, they agreed to let me start if I would join their union while in England, as my own card was not recognised in England. Having no alternative, and no redress or prospects in my native city, I joined up and have been a clear member ever since.

After twelve months on the site at Skewn outside Swansea, I came to the Clyde, having again failed to secure work in my native city. I was successful in securing employment after a few days and, shortly after, sold out my home in Dublin and brought all my family here, where I have had continuous employment ever since. My family had opportunities they would never

have got at home which enabled them to find good employment, and now all of them are married and have no regrets for coming here. They remembered the bitter lessons they had to suffer while I was serving Ireland. When I found I could not get employment to support my family - due to the aftermath of the Civil War - I had, therefore, like others, to seek work elsewhere. During my work here in the various shipyards up and down the Clyde on all classes of ships, naval and merchant, I have been successful in being elected senior shop steward by the members of the Boilermakers' Union from time to time, and have represented the Society's interests on many wage questions on the Clyde, in London, Newcastle, Edinburgh and other places, and became Production Chairman on those committees set up during the late war.

Meantime, I conclude this narrative of my experiences through the years, as I saw and came through them. My long absence from the country has kept me out of touch with many comrades, some of whom, I believe, have passed away, while others have crossed the western ocean. I have striven to tell, to the best of my ability, what I honestly believe is the truth, as far as my memory serves me; so I trust I will be excused any mistakes or wrong dates I have written about men or events in those stirring and glorious years, and trust that God in his mercy and own time will spare all those who fought the good fight for the Republic to meet again once more with all our people, north, south, east and west, under the flag of a United and Gaelic Free Ireland.

I trust I will be given a copy of these events as I have seen them, and the original, after correction, put into history.

Meantime, I am enclosing, for the use of the Committee,

my original internment form so that they may make a copy of it, as I have taken care of it all those years and would like it returned.

Trusting I have not been too long in writing out the above, as I had to keep at my work, and could only spend certain times doing so - due to putting in so much overtime now taking place in the yards.

Signed: Thomas Leahy
(Thomas Leahy)
Date: 10/3/1952
10/3/1952.

Witness: Joseph Kearns Comdt.
(Joseph Kearns, Comd't.)