

**ORIGINAL**

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COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 817

**Witness**

Sean Saunders,  
19, Phibsborough Ave.,  
North Circular Road,  
Dublin.

**Identity.**

Company Captain Fianna Eireann, 1917-1921;  
Adjutant, Dublin Brigade. Fianna Eireann, 1920-1921;  
Courier, Department of Local Government,  
Dail Eireann, 1919-1921.

**Subject.**

Department of Local Government,  
Dail Eireann, 1919-1921.

**Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.**

Nil

File No. 8.2115

Form B.S.M. 2

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BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21  
No. W.S. 877

STATEMENT BY SEAN SAUNDERS,

19, Phibsborough Avenue, North Circular Road, Dublin.

After the results of the General Election of 1918 became known, I was instructed by Liam Langley, who was then O.C., 2nd Battalion, Dublin Brigade, Fianna, to report to the Local Government Department of An Dáil at 18, Clare Street. W. T. Cosgrave was the Minister. The staff at that time consisted of Seamus Kavanagh, Frank Kelly, Ene O'Hegarty, Typist, sister of Diarmuid O'Hegarty. Tom McArdle became Secretary of the Local Government Department of the Dáil in 1919 and was Secretary of the present Department of Local Government on his retirement a few years ago. Kevin O'Higgins became Assistant Minister of Local Government either late in 1919 or early in 1920. Mick de Lacey became Head of the Inspection Branch, and offices for that Branch were opened in Exchequer Street. The staff included Nicholas Dwyer with Martin O'Neill and Paddy O'Mara, couriers. At this time various local bodies throughout the country discontinued corresponding with the British Local Government Department and switched over their communications (including minutes of meetings etc.) to the Local Government Department, An Dáil. Arising out of this, a Registry Office was opened over Prosperity Chambers (next to Messrs. Brennan & Walsh's), for the storing of minutes. Ned Merriman was in charge there, assisted by Maurice Killeen (both now attached to the Department of Local Government in the Custom House).

The procedure was that at the end of each day all the correspondence was parcelled up and handed by me for safe-keeping over-night to a Miss Donnelly (sister of Simon Donnelly) who had a small business premises in Clare Street. The correspondence was re-collected each morning. Other depots used for a similar purpose belonged to Miss McCarthy, who occupied the ground floor of 18, Clare

Street, as a Newsagent and Tobacconist) now at 1, Lower Leeson Street), and to the Misses Butler, Antique Dealers, Ormond Quay. Arising out of I.R.A. activity and to subsequent British military action in the immediate vicinity, the Local Government Department was transferred to the General Council of County Council Offices in Parnell Square. Arising out of the fact that the I.R.A. were carrying out raids on offices of local authorities throughout the country for seizure of records relating to collection of Rates etc., the Auxiliaries raided the General Council of County Council Offices in Parnell Square, and the Department of Local Government was then moved to premises in Wicklow Street (opposite the Wicklow Hotel). (All Government Departments at the time were being run under the guise of business concerns, and Local Government functioned in Wicklow Street as Messrs. - & Green, Income Tax Advisers).

About six months before the Truce, General Collins established a general clearing house for all Dáil correspondence at a small business premises in Church Street run by Frank Harling, brother of and Seán Harling, Courier to President de Valera/(later a Clerical Officer of Department of Defence).

After the Truce the Local Government Department moved to 76 Harcourt Street, where it remained up to the establishment of the Provisional Government. I continued with the Local Government Department up to the outbreak of the Civil War in June 1922.

#### PRESIDENT DE VALERA

Had no Departmental Offices proper and carried out his Dáil business from a private house in Blackrock. He was living there under the name of ex-Captain Hayden, retired British Army Officer. His staff consisted of Kathleen O'Connell, Secretary and Typist, and Seán Harling, Courier.

DIARMUID O'HEGARTY - SECRETARY OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL:

The staff consisted of Eamon Price, Mick Lynch, Miss Mollie Ryan, Typist, Seán Harling (now a Clerical Officer in Revenue) and Liam Saunders (my younger brother) as Couriers. When Harling left to take up duty with the President, Alec Burke replaced him as Courier. The offices were situated on the top floor of 83, Middle Abbey Street (now occupied by the Foley Typewriting Company).

FINANCE:

Michael Collins was Minister for Finance; Director of Intelligence and Head Centre of the I.R.B. His Dáil Courier was Bob Conlon, now in the U.S.A. (Joe Reilly, subsequently Colonel Joe Reilly of the National Army and since dead, was Collins' Courier as Director of Intelligence), and later Aide-de-Camp to Presidents Collins and Cosgrave. The Department of Finance staff included Liam Langley, George McGrath and Miss Lawless, Typist and Secretary. The Department of Finance offices were situated over Hogg & Robertsons, Market Gardeners, Mary Street, Dublin.

HOME AFFAIRS:

The Minister was Austin Stack with offices in Earl Street. His Courier was Joe Jordan, arrested about 1920 and succeeded by M. Murphy.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS:

The Minister was Arthur Griffith.

AGRICULTURE:

The Minister was Art O'Connor. Seán Caffrey was Courier but he was subsequently transferred to the A.S.U., I.R.A., and succeeded by P. Byrne (now Registrar, Department of An Taoiseach).

TRADE AND COMMERCE:

Ernest Blythe was Minister. Jimmie O'Connor, now Secretary of the Military Service Pensions Board, was Courier. The offices were in Fownes Street.

PROPAGANDA:

Desmond Fitzgerald was Minister. The staff consisted of Frank Gallagher, Bob Brennan, Mrs. Kelly (then Annie Fitzsimons) and Erskine Childers subsequently Director of Propaganda. (Check with Frank Gallagher, Vide/Agenda "The Four Glorious Years" by David Hogan). Re. Courier.

LABOUR:

The Minister was Madame Markievicz. The Courier was Mick Markey and the offices were in North Frederick Street.

DEFENCE:

The Minister was Cathal Brugha. The Courier was Leo Craig, now attached to the Registry, Department of Defence. Brugha was Director of Lalors, Church Candle Manufacturers, Ormond Quay, Dublin, and Dáil Correspondence in connection with his Department was delivered to, and collected from, there.

ECONOMIC AFFAIRS:

The Minister was Bob Barton.

FINE ARTS:

Minister - Count Plunkett; Courier - Seamus Redmond.

EDUCATION:

Minister - J.J.Kelly (Sceilg).

FISHERIES:

Minister - Seán Etchingham.

Liam Mellowes was Director of Purchases, G.H.Q. Staff, I.R.A., with Paddy O'Hanrahan (now a C.O. in Department of Health) as Courier.

The majority of Couriers were Commissioned Officers,  
Dublin Brigade, Fianna, and Members of the Fianna Circle, I.R.B.

Signed: Sean Saunders  
(Sean Saunders)

Date: 19. 3. 53

19.3.53.

Witness: Sean Brennan Comdt.

(Sean Brennan) Comd't.

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