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

No. W.S.

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 840

Witness

Patrick Sarsfield (P.S.) O'Hegarty,
Highfield House,
Highfield Road,
Rathgar,
Dublin.

Identity.

Member of Supreme Council of I.R.B.

Subject.

Irishmen in the London Civil Service in the Sinn Fein period, 1902 - .

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.49

Form B.S.M. 2

DOCUMENT B

IRISHMEN IN THE LONDON CIVIL

SERVICE IN THE SINN FÉIN PERIOD

22ND APRIL, 1953.

This document is in the handwriting of the author, Mr. Patrick Sarsfield O'Hegarty, and is signed by himself.

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NO. W. Sulvey To Market and Ma

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Most of the chaps I know here mener and formals - log class, another class, Pot office Subsig Class & Teleprophets, a som. Seen Dinain Classes, Cations + Excess Oppiess, a som, Kept and from us, a being members of what was the "The major establishment" - I dut beam whether the distriction between he mojor a humin establishments Strict holds. Alus: 75% y hum have Post-Othin Sockers, and they desped "in comment providing to their place of employment, that is, comment to the tentile y he caf & them employed in The tentire tetter Other is the central Planet Others at home of pleasant, and in the various destruct of them who have employed in The District Others. Mount Pleasant home he lades of them.

Any are present yourself. As a Suplementary Class in the No Secretary's Other I was a much of the James of James of James of James of James of the James of the James of the James of James the James of the James of James of the James of James of James of the James of James of the James of James of James of the James of James of the James of J

coming in lake, of his an home as a half of tund (3 and y dooping out momen) feel cike it. I was for a long him Treaming 12 5 AA, wending to Sailie Langue and Chorade, Sentry the Central Exembring Simi Peir, a Chamman y . Brand, 50 Mai 1 salden pot [be) - betreen these an real - before In 2, a selve pr. the office Lefon 10.15 n 10.20. me line has supposed the drawn of 10.4, last I was arbed new from until 1 Mr i - 11- did not really med to a, became noting else was sine. late. The Gove onie une took at me, Suizzicall, at 10.10 C 10.20 as the common he, as legal, and he would soy here, Hegang, I suppose I may hand dean he line. and it is not uncomment to the Ornepal Class, K.T. Home, E come - to speak to me almi a case, and find me out, and leave . merrage, and green ask me, when I saw har, where I wany. I for me were with enoughout, a enoughout that me, and anything orthogens that I ded no simply regarded as what might be expected from an historian. I can fortunde in my calledgues in the Telephone Prance y in familiary's omis, and especial in the how Chief, f.M. I. Obene, attender Si hadren and Lacur Laylong, and L.T. Home, Principal Clark, alborrants Amstani Senetary. Dui 1 kmm Wal. The himmen in The Office were only heated with hund indulgance - things handly cree as much is I fot lake on, as I must now never. L 1909, he Sendang the Department fent pe me on day, erse a bombohele. He had

before his a copy Sum fei , with a signed and left lyme arguing about programal force - well Robert Lynd. I admitted the authority, y course, a has from hed that he was afraid I come home to the dimined. [Henos Si Henry Babriegton South, or ex-Colonie-Somm]. I ale him up, Pointing out that I have Japa , as and continue simpulously to beck, the declaration of fences, that had made in entering the service, which has the only destanding orbad your. It said no forement and had in it service sometimes the was so as lines delayal, and Implied that I was derlayed only to English Prenment i hela and that I could be entirely depende on the a model and terrent as long or I was a cine servent. I added that to has brown the law I asked to be hought - tcoul and supported that of I had not them Show he no pusembin y opinion.

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the formament ded not propon I take any asken. · Can I produce this to Babinston Brushe when he . Lent for me in the following weeks. It shows him, but he remained in his demand for an undertaking boll me 1 home a me Opline has fine me the Tuplet clareder as unger that no notice at all be haben, but that he could not do that. Findly, I said thin that I and mot fine him had an undertaking, a) I want on I say that I had no dising he come but son y while again under by me have. He serge in this I said " let take that a un underlandy" Capiel I said " I don't fine it on some. and that ended I. I suppose that was markensellian in its expert, but it was not in feel, the places just slighted out in the argument and be how accepted it before I could enlarge mit. But) franks ded ent want to be soesed, having noted how wills use any member was unless he how a you, and haven noted particularly that - picting 70h - he my thing which sme have been open to in - in there out of four comes lad to a determination of above to their later. When I have from

There is 1545 of personal ple in fast over for (ander, and in it way of Conduct Reaps). It boso a long "beions of flower" record is not next in Bubuspon bruth's one hand, some that I had fin he required undertaking, and another some 1510 (any had The had three had made another symplast, on where had arbite was believed. (it have had Records on by bile, I that know had I cause to be appointed Postmoster of Queentime in 1513, unless it had been a had been and had there had meantime been a new function, and that somehad y conduct went in had examined.

Aate 1 ph 6 Quention whent inident in September 1513 (6 at was then the great has broke out in Sugert 1914. On the morning of Schooling Conquet 8 a I went up to Coste, and on og rehun almi 1.30 form a mi orderig me t' undertake. at one homenong bulga an Amortant huveyor at Shrewsbury, botaller will a plane message to sing him baline, that he was waiting in the other for my call. I ded' so, and he said he wanted to compare the line of that I was to report entours. Pale him whether this was a ferrune new, of The assured me Ver, & I have agreed to go. I lett Core & the myll brain, and has heatefast with Tom Claube, It reached Shrewshers on the Monday. I said to Tom Mad I shee be doubts but that if it was not a gamene more I'd renju as return. This burnier of continuop inthis an area had not then begin. But after 1 por to . Shumbburg he Head Clark in the Surveyors' Ohis latitud · Wat) was to remain in Sighed here the end of the trees. I went down to London at the part opportunity and Saw Me Obline as he said forme that the War other has fine him L4 hours lifet me out of heland otherwise they and and me and him you into Sportie Island", and Mul Mer un femme med ik he northhales and Then every because of shalf being called up, I that it could not be beeped. He said he would saw me back when the war was even ("in about a van") and I had t be untout will that. Muthome, when I also saw, Sand that" the War Office how fore mad and done Some appalling things" So have it has. In James 1915 I was formally hungen t Welshook i hungmengshire, and spent the vot of the war loan there, under police surveillance and unable to more out yhe area whint

spend pumining for the Surveyor, who has to have a the surveyor who has to have a thought the Policy. I stone of the protestated about some prosession matter told me thing. In 1517 I was allered home the a forthings for the part them as a 1518 I was again allered home. I was at home when, easy in shopet, The I show y Commons canned a servention directly the Sort C impure, an oall of allegrams on all could servents, and, Judging to the debate that it would be put through, I formally very had, stating that I was not take as oall of allegrams and are allegrams to see take of faith in that we proteined allegrams too scalled I when I eached the searce.

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Proceedings clean of political or social learnings. On that point he sendone of att norman, he Dutic Sending to the 100, before the Hardinge Commission, is very illumically as repaired he method of approval. But what presented

hody and the Post open Surveyors' Brothshments. The power in London Isnew weer there were wary things done but by me pomelen agains the continicher of the Surveyor and the Freemanns. In the day the NO Surveyor was a Feedal Lord in the PU system. In This distinct - all held was foremy of these Deptiles - he was all prompte, more prompte in the matter of promotions has been family her times. and the Suryers as Treemomes worker haw in hours. The has, in opmin, was primarily a Freemann Jobbie has, it was prechial an religious only in a feembary fashion. They had now and again to promuse ann- Trimon of abolity, to get the work doing, that he menter of heel was shrifty timited by that built. He premare no avoilable and could be proppe up in the yor he was promoted. Or served recommends between 190 2 and 1913 I explained ale the L' Mr. London Schatterhunds Phanel - they was I come to me inte cases by did not tile and I un to expressed them. But they were weather to do anything. The Surveyor, in the Po Exte, were then weredity powerful, and if they presented that I was the between, although of seeme to be nother better gualified, even the Sentang in London would not were rule Main. But), it is rate, have onthis het pathings hand

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So much of the work in all Sections - G.A.A., Gaelic League, Sinn Féin, I.R.B. - of the Irish Ireland Movement in London was done by, and was dependent on support from, Civil Servants, mostly lowly and minor, that some account of them may be of interest.

When I went to London in 1902 and mixed around with other Irishmen I found myself for the first time in There was no contact with chaps from other counties. county organization or club, and everybody mixed with Everybody discovered, too, that we were everybody else. all very much the same and that the cement that held us together was not Cork, nor Clare, nor Kerry, nor Tipperary, but Ireland, and that the chaps from Belfast and Derry were just the same. The various accents didn't bother anybody, any more than they really do in Irish, but ${f I}$ remember being struck once when an Ulsterman remarked to me, sarcastically, "the back is heavy", and had to have Only a small fraction of the Irish it explained to me. in London, of course, was in the movement at all, but they were all good, not to say very good. Over there either of two things happened, either you became conscious of Ireland or you forgot Ireland altogether.

Most of the chaps I knew were minor Civil Servants boy clerks, assistant clerks, Post Office Sorting Clerks
and Telegraphists, and so on. Second Division Clerks,
Customs and Excise Officers, and so on, kept away from us,
as being members of what was then "the major establishment"
I don't know whether the distinction between the major and
minor establishments still holds. About 75% of them were
Post Office Sorters, and they "digged" in convenient
proximity to their place of employment, that is, convenient

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to the centre of the city for those employed in the Central Letter Office or the Central Parcel Office at Mount Pleasant, and in the various districts for those who were employed in the District Offices. Mount Pleasant took the bulk of them.

I had no experience of the working conditions in these offices, but I gathered that they were hard and sometimes difficult in that a number of the supervising officers were anti-Irish, and made things as difficult as possible for the Irish boys. But Mount Pleasant was never referred to other than as Mount Misery, and I gathered that, outside that, the conditions in the other offices were tolerable enough.

My own personal experience of the London Civil Service was wholly favourable. As a Supplementary Clerk in the P.O. Secretary's Office I was a member of the famous Major establishment, with a seven-hour day and 27 working days' holiday in the year. And I found that my colleagues and my superiors expected an Irishman to be unusual and not to be bound by rules and regulations. I soon found that so long as I did my day's work well I could take almost any liberty. I was a very quick worker, and it was seldom that my day's work occupied me more than three hours in all; so that I soon formed the habit of coming in late, of taking an hour and a half for lunch and of dodging out whenever I felt like it. I was for a long time Treasurer of the G. A. A., member of the Gaelic League and Choisde, Secretary to the Central Executive of Sinn Féin, and Chairman of a Branch, so that I seldom got to bed - between these and reading - before 1 or 2, and seldom got to the Office before 10.15 or 10.20. line was supposed to be drawn at 10.4, but it was actually never drawn until I got in. It did not really need to

be, because nobody else was ever late. The book officer would look at me, quizzically, at 10.10. to 10.20 as the case may be, as I signed, and he would say "Well, Hegarty, I suppose I may now draw the line". And it was not uncommon for the Principal Clerk, L.T. Horne, to come in to speak to me about a case, and find me out, and leave a message, and never ask me, when I saw him, where I was. I got on well with everybody, and everybody liked me, and anything outrageous that I did was simply regarded as what might be expected from an Irishman. I was fortunate in my colleagues in the Telephone Branch of the Secretary's Office, and especially in the two Chiefs, A.M.J. Ogilvie, afterwards Sir Andrew and Second Secretary, and L. T. Horne, Principal Clerk, afterwards Assistant Secretary. know that other Irishmen in other offices were also treated with much indulgence - though hardly with as much as I got later on. as I must now record.

In 1909, the Secretary to the Department sent for me one day, with a bombshell. He had before him a copy of Sinn Fein, with a signed article by me arguing about physical force with Robert Lynd. I admitted the authorship, of course, and was then told that he was afraid I (He was Sir Henry Babington would have to be dismissed. I asked him why, Smith, an ex-Colonial-Governor). pointing out that I had kept, and would continue scrupulously to keep, the declaration of secrecy that I had made on entering the Service, which was the only He said no Government could declaration asked of me. keep in its service somebody who was so actively disloyal, and I replied that I was disloyal only to English Government in Ireland and that I could be entirely depended on to be a model Civil Servant as long as I was a Civil Servant. I added that if I had broken the law I asked to

be brought to court and suggested that if I had not, there should be no persecution of opinion.

He said finally that he would recommend my dismissal unless I gave him an undertaking not to repeat the offence, and he gave me till the following week to think it over. Before then something happened which gave me some more A Civil Servant in the Board of Education, ammunition. who was a Socialist, made a public speech in South London in which he attacked the Monarchy in no uncertain terms and advocated a Republic for England, by force if need be. The Home Secretary, questioned in the House, said that the Government did not propose to take any action. And I produced this to Babington Smith when he sent for me in the following week. It shook him, but he remained in his demand for an undertaking as the alternative to dismissal. He told me that both Mr. Horne and Mr. Ogilvie had given me the highest character and urged that no notice at all be taken, but that he could not do that. Finally, I said . to him that I could not give him such an undertaking, and I went on to say that I had no desire to be dismissed and that he might take it that I would not write that sort of article again under my own name. He seized on this and said "I'll take that as an undertaking", to which I said "I don't give it as such." And that ended it. that was Machiavellian in its effect, but it was not in fact, the phrase just slipped out in the argument and he had accepted it before I could enlarge on it. frankly did not want to be sacked, having noted how little use any member was unless he had a job, and having noted particularly that a political job - the only thing which would have been open to me - in three out of four cases led to a deterioration of character.

There was a sequel to this later. When I was

finally retiring in 1945 my personal file was sent over from London, and in it was my Conduct Record. a long "Serious Offence" record in red ink in Babington Smith's own hand, saying that I had given the required undertaking, and another dated 1910 saying that The Irish Office had made another complaint, on which no action was With these two Records on my file, I don't know how I came to be appointed Postmaster of Queenstown in 1913, unless it be that there had meantime been a new Secretary, and that somehow my conduct record was not examined when the promotion was recommended. But at any rate I got to Queenstown without incident in September, 1913, and was there when the Great War broke out in August, 1914. On the morning of Saturday, August 8th, I went up to Cork, and on my return about 7.30 found a wire ordering me to undertake at once temporary duty as an Assistant Surveyor at Shrewsbury, together with a phone message to ring Mr. Ogilvie, that he was waiting in the office for my call. I did so, and he said he wanted to confirm the wire and that I was to report at once. asked him whether this was a genuine need, and he assured me yes, and I then agreed to go. I left Cork by the night train, and had breakfast with Tom Clarke, and reached Shrewsbury on the Monday. I said to Tom that I still had doubts but that if it were not a genuine move I'd resign and return. This business of confining within an area had not then begun. But after I got to Shrewsbury the Head Clerk in the Surveyor's Office let it out that I was to remain in England till the end of the I went down to London at the first opportunity and saw Mr. Ogilvie and he said to me that the War Office had given him 24 hours to get me out of Ireland otherwise they would arrest me and "throw you into Spike Island",

and that there was genuine need in the North Wales and other areas because of staff being called up, and that it could not be helped. He said he would send me back when the war was over ("in about a year"), and I had to be content with that. Mr. Horne, whom I also saw, said that the War Office had "gone mad and done some appalling So there it was. In January, 1915, I was things." formally transferred to Welshpool in Montgomeryshire, and spent the rest of the War years there, under police surveillance and unable to move out of the area without special permission from the Surveyor, who had to have a week's notice so that he could advise the police. local policeman whom I facilitated about some Post Office matter told me this). In 1917 I was allowed home for a fortnight for the first time and in 1918 I was again allowed home. I was at home when, early in August, the House of Commons carried a resolution directing the Government to impose an oath of allegiance on all Civil Servants and, judging by the debate that it would be put through, I formally resigned, stating that I could not take an oath of allegiance and accusing the Government of a breach of faith in that no political allegiance was called for when I entered the Service.

It was lucky I was at home just then, for I was legally liable to conscription. They did, in fact, issue a summons here, but I wrote to Mr. Ogilvie and he stopped it. But they behaved very decently on the whole. My resignation was dated 13th August, 1914, and was accepted a couple of days afterwards. They worked out the pro-rata amount of annual leave due to me and paid me up to the last day of it. And, in 1919 or 1920, a chap walked into the Irish Book Shop and said to me "I believe you are the Mr. Hegarty who was Postmaster of Queenstown in 1913/14",

which I admitted. He handed me a warrant for £26. This, he said, is due to you for that year on an old revision which was held up during the War and has now been released, and they asked us to try and find you. I was at the time broke, and never was money so apt and so unbelievable.

But the Post Office always sought to keep its proceedings clear of political or social leanings. On that point the evidence of A. H. Norway, the Dublin Secretary to the P.O., before the Hardinge Commission, is very illuminating as regards the method of approach. But what prevented impartiality being applied here was the local Freemason body and the Post Office Surveyor's Establishments. The people in London knew well there were wrong things done but they were powerless against the combination of the Surveyors and the Freemasons. In those days the P.O. Surveyor was a Feudal Lord in the P.O. system. district - all Ireland was governed by three districts he was all powerful, more powerful in the matter of promotions than the Secretary here himself. Surveyors and Freemasons worked hand in hand. The bias, in my opinion, was primarily a Freemason jobbing bias, it was political and religious only in a secondary fashion. They had now and again to promote a non-Freemason of ability, to get the work done, but the number of such was strictly limited by that factor. If a Freemason was available and could be propped up in the job he was promoted. occasions between 1902 and 1913 I explained all this to the London Establishments Branch - they used to come to me with cases they did not like and I used to expound them. The Surveyors in the P.O. they were unable to do anything. system were then incredibly powerful, and if they persisted

that X was the best man, although Y seemed to be rather better qualified, even the Secretary in London would not override them.

But I, at any rate, have nothing but gratitude towards my Chiefs and colleagues in London, 1902 to 1913.

(Sd.) P. S. O'Hegarty, 22nd April, 1953.

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