

U.S. 916

**ORIGINAL**

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURD STAIRS MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 916

ROINN  COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 916.....

**Witness**

Denis McCullough,  
12 Oakley Road,  
Ranelagh,  
Dublin.

**Identity.**

Member of I.R.B. 1901 - ;  
Member of Supreme Council of I.R.B. 1909 - .

**Subject.**

Replies to Questionnaire prepared by Bureau  
on I.R.B. and other national organisations,  
1900-1916.

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

Nil

File No. ....S.62.....

Form B.S.M. 2

Copy of questionnaire sent to me, with letter 25<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1952  
Answers herewith. Duce

1. (a) Cumann-na-nGael was formed on the 1st October, 1900, and the National Council on the 6th June, 1903.  
(b) Were the two bodies separate and distinct, and what were their aims and objects?  
(c) Were you associated with the former, or both, and when?
2. The Fianna Eireann was founded in Belfast by Bulmer Hobson in June, 1902.
3. (a) How was it organised, controlled and administered?  
(b) Who were the officers?
3. "The Resurrection of Hungary", Part 1, by Arthur Griffith was published on the 1st August, 1904.  
(a) How soon after that date was the meeting held in St. Mary's Hall?  
(b) How did the idea of the Dungannon Clubs arise, and what is the origin of the title?  
(c) Who attended the meetings and what was the nature of the subjects discussed?  
(d) Where were the Headquarters and who were the executive and/or officers?
4. The Sinn Fein League was formed in Dundalk in April, 1907.  
(a) When did the previous meeting take place?  
(b) Have you any recollection of the persons, or the nature of the discussions which took place?  
(c) Why was the Sinn Fein League formed having regard to the existence of the "National Council"?
5. Bulmer Hobson is said to have been expelled from the I.R.B. because he advocated the admission of Redmond's nominees to the Volunteer Executive.  
(a) Were you present at this particular meeting?  
(b) If so, what actually took place?
6. The Military Council (comprising Pearse, Ceannt, Plunkett, Clarke, McDermott) was appointed by the Supreme Council of the I.R.B. in February, 1915.  
(a) What directions were given by the Supreme Council to the Military Council and what were the specific functions of the latter?  
(b) Did the Supreme Council decide that there was to be a Rising? When was this to take place? Was the Military Council appointed, inter alia, for the purpose of preparing plans for the Rising?  
If so, were the plans submitted to the Supreme Council?  
(c) Was the Military Council required to report back to the Supreme Council and did it do so?

- (d) What were the relations between the Military Council and the Supreme Council?
7. Joe Plunkett (a member of the Military Council) is said to have gone to America in August or September, 1915, with Plans for Rising for submission to the Revolutionary Committee of Clan na Gael.
- (a) Was this visit discussed by the Supreme Council before his departure and subsequently on his return?
8. The disappearance of Connolly in January, 1916, is said to have been arranged by the Military Council or certain members of it, in order to prevent him taking precipitate military action, or to come to some agreement with him.
- Can you give any information in this connection?
9. It is said that Connolly was not appointed by the Supreme Council to the Military Council in February, 1915, but that in actual fact, he was only co-opted a member some three weeks after his alleged disappearance, i.e. sometime in February 1916.
- (a) Can you throw any light on this matter?
10. (a) Was Roger Casement a member of the I.R.B?
- (b) If so, by whom, when, and to what Circle was he sworn in?

①

As far as my memory serves, the following are the answers to the questions set out in the list accompanying your letter to me, of the 25<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1952.

For the purpose of identification, I have numbered the questions & answers.

(1)(a) The two bodies were quite separate & distinct. Cumann na nGaedheal was founded as an open Nationalist/Republican organization. It was strongly supported by the IRB & many IRB men were members of C. na nG. Its programme was largely propagandist & educational, through lectures, speakers at public meetings etc.

The National Council was formed subsequent to the publication of Arthur Griffith's "Resurrection of Hungary". Its purpose was to initiate what became known as the Hungarian policy - non-recognition of the British Parliament's right to make laws for Ireland, and of British institutions in Ireland generally, where practicable. This included the withdrawal of Irish

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Parliamentary representation at Westminster. I believe that it was intended that the Parliamentary members so withdrawn should form or be the nucleus of a full & true National Council. It was proposed to fight Parliamentary (and local) elections on this basis. ~~James~~ Charles Dolan, who represented North Leitrim in the British Parliament, was induced to resign his seat & fight it anew, on the abstentionist ticket. Although all the forces & funds we could muster from all parts of Ireland, were concentrated on Mr. Leitrim, we lost the election miserably. But we were in the "middle of the ~~ring~~ ring". Charles Dolan went to America, a year or two after this election & as far as I know, took no further part in National affairs. His brother, James Dolan - afterwards Parliamentary Secretary to Liam M. Cosgrave, in the first Free State Government, won the Mr. Leitrim seat for Sinn Féin in the 1918 election.

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At the time of Charles Dolan's resignation from the British Parliament, the Hungarian Policy had gained some very enthusiastic supporters in Maynooth, despite the strong opposition of the then President of Maynooth, the Rev. Dr. Mannix. Charles Dolan's brother, the Rev. Fr. Dolan, was one of the most enthusiastic of these young clerics in Maynooth & it was stated at the time, and I believe it to be true, that it was his influence, supported by his colleagues in Maynooth, that influenced Charles Dolan's resignation from <sup>the British</sup> Parliament.

(B) I was a member of the Belfast Executive of Cumann na nG. & I believe, acted as its Secretary for some time. ~~I was also a member of the~~ With Bulmer Hobson, I attended the Annual Conventions of the Organization in Dublin. At one of these, I remember very serious differences arising. Following the divorce proceedings in Paris between Major

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John McBride & Maud Gonne, an attempt was made, I believe by the P.R.B. group, to have John McBride elected as vice-president of the Organization & to exclude Maud Gonne from this office. The Women's Organization - ~~in 1913~~ <sup>in 1913</sup> ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> ~~represented~~ <sup>represented</sup> by delegates at the Convention, opposed this move fiercely. Attempts were made to "Noble" Hobson & myself, on our arrival at the Mansion House, where the Convention was being held, <sup>by P. J. Daly & other P.R.B. leaders in Dublin</sup> by giving us "orders" to vote for McBride & against Maud Gonne. We refused to accept these "orders" & eventually, as it did not appear possible to get a majority for the McBride motion, I believe a compromise was reached & both were made vice-presidents.

During the debate on this matter, I went to the foyer for a cigarette. McBride followed me out & assured me that he was no party to the move on his behalf & urged me to vote, as I thought right. I treasured his friendship always afterwards.

I was also a member of the National Council

5

but do not remember in what capacity, I attended meetings of the body in Dublin, but in the changing conditions of the time, am not clear as to how or why. Although Holson did not get on with Griffiths, I always did & was his strong supporter & adviser. All the years that followed, only confirmed my regard for him personally & for his great qualities.

2. (a) The Phoenix Bureau was founded, controlled & administered by Bulmer Holson, with occasional help from people like myself, in giving history & language lessons. I believe he also appointed its officers.
- (b) The Phoenix officers I remember were Sean Kelly; Seamus Mallon & later Archie Heron, and two or three others, whose names I cannot remember.
3. (a) The following year
- (b) When Griffiths' articles on "The Resurrection of Hungary" appeared in the United Irishman, and Holson & myself decided that we could do no more good with the C. N. S. Clubs in Belfast.



3. (B) continued, ~~we decided largely on~~

6  
we decided, largely on Hobson's initiative, to start a new Organization, which would have more life + vigour in it. We would support the new Hungarian Policy, but as a means to an end, but our new movement must be frankly separatist from the start. Our Manifesto set out our plans + our aims accordingly. The fact that the Volunteers of (1782) a Century earlier, had held their first ~~Constitution~~ Convention in Dunfannon + issued their famous declaration "that only the King, Lords + Commons of Ireland, could make laws for Ireland", inspired the name Dunfannon Club for our new Organization. We thus paid ~~our~~ tribute to Wyffith's Hungarian Policy, while, at the same time declaring that an Irish Republic was our final aim. All perhaps a little confused, in the light of the present day position, but sound enough in the <sup>political</sup> conditions that then prevailed in the country ~~politically~~!

3(c) The small number we had recruited as members, whose names are of no importance now. Hobson was Chairman + I was Secretary, both of the Belfast Club + of the Executive, when this was formed, when Dunfannon Club were ~~started~~ in Dublin, Glasgow, London + some centres throughout Ireland, mostly in Ulster, throughout the whole period of their existence. We were kept busy in Belfast, first in

3 (c) continued

Ordinary business meetings of the Club, arranging for our outdoor meetings in the city + suburbs. Making arrangements for the founding + subsequently the printing + publishing of ~~our~~ "the Republic". Arranging for the articles, cartoons + importantly for the few advertisements we could secure, to help pay for it. We also published pamphlets on anti-recruiting + other Nationalist subjects. We reprinted any suitable cartoons from the paper, as postcards; these lampooned the Irish Parliamentary party + attendance at Westminster; the R. I. C. + the British Army recruiting campaign. These pamphlets + postcards were sold to the other Clubs + small Nationalist groups throughout the country + some to newsagents here + there, who were favourably ~~very~~ disposed to our propaganda. The distribution of these kept me + some helpers busy, as they were distributed through the post. The receipts helped to finance our other operations.

We also arranged lectures + debates, in our own + other halls, both for propaganda purpose + to help raise money for our needs. The late James Larkin, I.D. + Senator Tom Johnston + some other labour men spoke at these for us + helped

3 (C) continued to attract an audience.

Padraic Colum, Maurice Joyce + one or two others, including Tom Kettle, (I think. He may have come later) from Dublin, also spoke for us. In addition we also supplied speakers for various occasions + functions, such as Manchester Martyr's Celebrations etc., mostly throughout Ulster + adjacent counties, and to Glasgow + London.

The subjects discussed at our meetings were of course national firstly - the value of an abstentionist policy as opposed to attendance at Westminster. Social questions such as the stay of emigration; revival of our industries + such like topics.

Lectures were usually on the same lines or on historical subjects. We did a little at the Irish Language classes, but the Gaelic League people who could have helped us in this, were a little chary of us, but in any case were doing this work much better in their own ~~organization~~ organization, of which most of us were also members.

3. (D) Bulmer Hobson + myself were the Executive Officers throughout. We had various people as treasurers, at different times. Some of these proved very unsatisfactory indeed, so that control largely reverted to us, with

3 (P) Continued

with different people as Committee members, at different <sup>times</sup>. I assume very few of them are alive now

4(a) The previous meeting took place only a few weeks earlier - I would say within a month.

(B) I remember only a few of those who were present at either of these meetings. One was Pat Lavelle (a solicitor who worked with a firm on the quays). Another was Gogan, who lived around Dunleavy & is still alive, I believe.

Discussion was mostly on the possibility & details of a possible amalgamation of the two bodies, the personnel of control of the amalgamated body, pending a convention & the incorporation of the "Republic" paper, which was our organ, with the "Irish Peasant" which had adopted or been adopted by, the Cumann na nGael.

(c) The Sinn Féin League was frankly a ~~so~~ completely separatist organization, approving of all means to achieve freedom, while the National Council had adopted "The King, Lords & Commons" as an immediate objective. In reality there was no difference, except of personnel, between them.

5. Bulmer Hobson was not expelled from the I.R.B., nor would I have approved of such expulsion. He resigned from the Supreme Council. Because of the bitterness of Tom Clarke particularly, & of Sean Mac Dermott, after his actions over the admission of Redmond's nominees to the Volunteer Executive, it would have been impossible for him to work with them. I understand & believe that he remained, at least for some time, as Chairman of the Dublin Centres Board of the I.R.B.

Tom Clarke, who was a man of a very simple mind, loved & admired Hobson immensely, consequently, when Hobson was guilty of what Tom considered a betrayal, the rift was very bitter & Tom would not forgive him or trust him again.

Bulmer Hobson was the most single-minded Nationalist I knew in my time. He found it hard, however, to work under orders, as he had the supremest confidence (and still has) in his own judgement. A person of this temperament was bound to ~~find it~~ get at loggerheads, sooner or later, with those who were controlling the activities of the I.R.B. by methods which he did not understand & did not approve.

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6. I do not recollect that Tom Clarke was appointed to the Military Council. I do not think that he was a member & the fact that he knew nothing of the plans, when I saw him in the week preceding Easter week, confirms me in this opinion.

(a) As I have explained in my direct narrative, the Supreme Council did decide to have a Rising. The circumstances in which it might be called were set out with the decision, as I have also stated in my narrative. The fixing of the date & time was left to the Military Council. I presume that this should have been referred to the Supreme Council or at least to its Executive by the Chairman (myself); Neil Sean MacDonnath & Treasurer (Tom Clarke). It never was so referred.

(B) The Military Council was appointed for the purpose of making all plans & arrangements for the Rising, deciding the best date etc. & taking charge of all military matters in connection with it, using all the contacts etc. of the IRB to doing so.

(c) As stated above. They did not report back.

(D) Relations of complete trust, confidence & good faith. All liaison through Sean MacDonnath.

Y. Joe Plunkett's visit was to Spain, I understood & thence to Germany. He may also have gone to U.S.A. but I do not remember that. His visit to Spain & Germany was approved, financed & I believe, arranged through the S.C. of the IRB.

8. I have given my full knowledge on this matter, in my main narrative.

I am nearly satisfied, in my own mind that Connolly was a member of the Military Council, almost from its inception & certainly long before his disappearance. Owing to my absence in person during the middle & latter part of 1915, I am not too well informed or too reliable on this matter.

9. Roger Basement, to the best of my knowledge & belief, was never sworn into the I.R.B. & was therefore never a member of the organization.

in F. Ryan comd't.

12<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1953.

(M.F. Ryan) Comd't.

12th Dec. 1953.

Denis McCullough

(Denis McCullough)

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 916.

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(c) Was the Military Council required to report back to the Supreme Council and did it do so?

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7. Joe Plunkett ( a member of the Military Council) is said to have gone to America in August or September, 1915, with Plans for Rising for submission to the Revolutionary Committee of Clan na Gael.

(a) Was this visit discussed by the Supreme Council before his departure and subsequently on his return?

8. The disappearance of Connolly in January, 1916, is said to have been arranged by the Military Council or certain members of it, in order to prevent him taking precipitate military action, or to come to some agreement with him. Can you give any information in this connection?

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(a) Can you throw any light on this matter?

10. (a) Was Roger Casement a member of the I.R.B.?

(b) If so, by whom, when, and to what Circle was he sworn in?.

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were "in the middle of the ring". Charles Dolan went to America a year or two after this election and, as far as I know, took no further part in national affairs. His brother, James Dolan, afterwards Parliamentary Secretary to Liam T. Cosgrave in the first Free State Government, won the North Leitrim seat for Sinn Féin in the 1918 election.

At the time of Charley Dolan's resignation from the British Parliament the Hungarian policy had gained some very enthusiastic supporters in Maynooth, despite the strong opposition of the then President of Maynooth, the Rev. Dr. Mannix. Charley Dolan's brother, the Rev. Fr. Dolan, was one of the most enthusiastic of these young clerics in Maynooth, and it was stated at the time, and I believe it to be true, that it was his influence, supported by his colleagues in Maynooth, that influenced Charley Dolan's resignation from the British Parliament.

(b) I was a member of the Belfast Executive of Cumann na nGaedheal and, I believe, acted as its secretary for some time. With Bulmer Hobson I attended the annual conventions of the organisation in Dublin. At one of these I remember very serious differences arising. Following the divorce proceedings in Paris between Major John MacBride and Maud Gonne, an attempt was made, I believe by the I.R.B. group, to have John MacBride elected as Vice President of the organisation and to exclude Maud Gonne from this office. The women's organisation - Inghiní na hÉireann - who had delegates at the convention, opposed this move fiercely. Attempts were made to "nobble" Hobson

and myself on our arrival at the Mansion House, where the convention was being held, by P.T. Daly - the I.R.B. leader in Dublin - by giving us "orders" to vote for MacBride and against Maud Gonne. We refused to accept these "orders" and eventually, as it did not appear possible to get a majority for the MacBride motion, I believe a compromise was reached - both were made Vice Presidents. During the debate on this matter I went to the foyer for a cigarette. MacBride followed me out and assured me that he was no party to the move on his behalf and urged me to vote as I thought right. I treasured his friendship always afterwards.

I was also a member of the National Council but do not remember in what capacity. I attended meetings of the body in Dublin, but in the changing conditions of the time am not clear as to how or why. Although Hobson did not get on with Griffith, I always did and was his strong supporter and admirer. All the years that followed only confirmed my regard for him personally and for his great qualities.

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(b) The Fianna officers I remember were: Seán Kelly, Seamus Mallin and later Archie Heron, and two or three others whose names I cannot remember.

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(a) The following year.

(b) When Griffith's articles on "The Resurrection of Hungary" appeared in the United Irishman, and Hobson and myself decided that we could do no more good with the Cumann na nGaedheal clubs in Belfast, we decided, largely on Hobson's initiative, to start a new organisation which would have more life and vigour in it. We would support the new Hungarian policy as a means to an end, but our new movement must be frankly separatist from the start. Our manifesto set out our plans and our aims accordingly. The fact that the Volunteers of a century earlier (1782) had held their first convention in Dungannon, and issued their famous declaration "that only the King, Lords and Commons of Ireland could make laws for Ireland", inspired the name Dungannon Club for our new organisation. We thus paid tribute to Griffith's Hungarian policy, while at the same time declaring that an Irish Republic was our final aim. All perhaps a little confused in the light of the present day position, but sound enough in the political conditions that then prevailed in the country.

(c) The small number we had recruited as members, whose names are of no importance now. Hobson was Chairman and I was Secretary, both of the Belfast Club and of the executive when this was formed. When Dungannon Clubs were started in Dublin, Glasgow, London and some centres throughout Ireland, mostly in Ulster throughout the whole period of their existence.

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(d) Bulmer Hobson and myself were the Executive Officer throughout. We had various people as treasurers at different times. Some of these proved very unsatisfactory indeed, so that control largely reverted to us, with different people as committee members at different times. I assume very few of them are alive now.

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the personnel of control of the amalgamated body, pending a convention and the incorporation of the "Republic" paper, which was our organ, with the "Irish Peasant" which had adopted or been adopted by the Cumann na nGael.

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6. (a) As I have explained in my direct narrative, the Supreme Council did decide to have a Rising. The circumstances in which it might be called were set out with the decision, as I have also related in my narrative. The fixing of the date and time was left to the Military Council. I presume that this should have been referred to the Supreme Council or at least to its Executive, viz. the Chairman (myself), Secretary (Seán MacDermott) and Treasurer (Tom Clarke). It never was so referred.

(b) The Military Council was appointed for the purpose of making all plans and arrangements for the Rising, deciding the best date etc. and taking charge of all military matters in connection with it, using all the contacts etc. of the I.R.B. in doing so.

(c) As stated above. They did not report back.

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9. Roger Casement, to the best of my knowledge and belief, was never sworn into the I.R.B. and was, therefore, never a member of the organisation.

Signed: Denis McCullough

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness: M.F. Ryan, Comd't.

12th Dec. 1953.

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