**SERJEANT SULLIVAN LETTER BY JEFFREY DUDGEON IN RESPONSE TO TIM O’SULLIVAN’S LETTER IN THE IRISH POLITICAL REVIEW OF JULY 2016**

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Dear Editor,

I have to take issue with the ‘Editorial Note’ to Tim O’Sullivan’s letter in July’s *Irish Political Review* (p. 23) on Roger Casement’s barrister Alexander Sullivan’s supposed greed.

I would dispute the implications of Serjeant Sullivan being “handsomely paid” for Casement’s defence, and of his only taking the brief on the condition of such payment.

He was offered the brief by his brother-in-law George Gavan Duffy after it had been declined by top Irish and London QCs Tim Healy and Sir John Simon, even though they were supposedly subject to the barrister ‘taxi rank’ principle.

Obviously he expected a fee for his considerable work which, for the trial itself, was £525. He also indicated later to Gavan Duffy, “Fifty guineas is quite enough for the appeal”. In the event, he actually waived this charge as the anticipated funds from America never materialised. Indeed, Duffy himself, was out of pocket by several hundred pounds at the conclusion of proceedings.

Duffy was certainly critical of several of Sullivan’s decisions in court but Casement, having chosen a conventional defence, against the advice of George Bernard Shaw, was in the hands of his barristers.

Sullivan, being a Home Ruler, had no time for Casement’s separatism, or him personally, and paid for such views with an attempt on his life. On a visit to Tralee in 1920 for a compensation case and when dining at the house of a local solicitor, E.R. Slattery, a large group of men broke in shooting at him several times. He moved to England the following year as a result of threats to his life.

In relation to the “suspicious disappearance of documents circulated privately by the British government’ – presumably the photographed pages from Casement’s diaries, or the typescripts – it is true to say that no recipient has ever since displayed them. They were however mostly shown to people, as was the case with John Quinn at the British Embassy in Washington, and not handed over. One exception was the American Ambassador in London, Walter Page, who was given copies.

Tim O’Sullivan is correct to write that Sullivan’s statements on what he remembered of Casement, his homosexuality, and the diaries were contradictory, and indeed unreliable. By the time Sullivan entered the controversy in the columns of the Irish Times in 1956, it must be said he was 85 years old. As the correspondence continued, he increasingly withdrew his earlier assertions that included discussion with Casement of famous homosexuals, until on 25 April 1956 he finally, and honourably, admitted that Casement, “told me nothing about the diaries or about himself.” I relate these episodes at greater length in the ‘Authenticity Controversies’ chapter of my recently republished book, *Roger Casement: The Black Diaries – with a Study of his Background, Sexuality, and Irish Political Life,* and in my July 2016 *Roger Casement's German Diary 1914-1916*.

It was not like Casement to be precise about his sexual status while Gavan Duffy was trying desperately to prevent any discussion of the diaries with him.

It is likely he know they were authentic, and of Casement's homosexuality, having the year before gone through several trunks of Casement papers, according to his Bureau of Military History statement (WS 381). It was a copy of a 1950 lecture on Casement to London-Irish Gaels. Gavan Duffy presumably destroyed all the papers as they never otherwise surfaced.

Yours etc

Jeffrey Dudgeon

26 July 2016