



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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MRS. MARGARET CARAHER ADDRESSED THE INQUIRY AS FOLLOWS:

I was at home in my own house with two friends when my sister, Loretta, Dr. Allen and my sister-in-law Maria came in. Loretta looked as if she had just been crying, she then said "I don't know how to say this so I will just come straight out and say it, Fergal is dead". I felt total disbelief and thought this is something that happens to someone else. Maria suggested that I go up to her mothers and I was in a daze. I worried about packing food for my son and did I turn the oven off. That evening we were in Peter John's house most of the night and neighbours and friends came and sympathised. I was advised to go home to my father's house and get some sleep but on the way I had to call to my house and pick up a few things. I was very aware of making myself not think about what happened. It was too much for me to deal with.

Up to the funeral when people asked I just kept saying "I'm fine, I'm fine" but on the day of the funeral I realised that I wasn't fine. At that time I felt really proud of Fergal and what he meant to all these people. I felt a real sense of belonging to the community, a strange sense of security. At first I avoided talking about Fergal to anyone to avoid facing it.

The next couple of weeks I was so busy with practical things, death certificate, financial matters and solicitor, Thomas Tiernan, that I didn't have much time to think about it. Also, we were all very worried about Miceal. We wanted him at least to pull through.

However, it was accepted among the family that we were going to do something. We weren't just going to let it go. I went to one of the first meetings with people from INC in Dundalk and we had a meeting about the Inquiry. I felt encouraged by the support from the INC, meeting with people who had experience with these kind of things. I felt out of my depth and intimidated at the thought of it. I also felt negative about it, because what we were up against and the slim chances of being successful. After a couple of meetings I began to get used to the idea, I knew I wasn't going to be left on my own, that if things came up that I felt I

couldn't handle there were people there to help and support me. I also felt that we were all in it together and learning from each other and from our own mistakes. It lifted my confidence and it was good to know that people hadn't forgotten Fergal and what happened.

Those weeks up to the Inquiry and especially the last week were very busy. There was a feeling of growing anticipation mixed with being a nervous wreck. It was a great help to be a member of the Cullyhanna Justice Group and be totally immersed in the day to day organising of the Inquiry. At one particular meeting we were all in the meeting room stuffing 3,000 envelopes with information about the Inquiry and it really lifted my spirits to see people believing in what we were doing and feeling maybe for the first time this is really going to happen.

And here we are. It is very overwhelming and emotional to see the jurists who have travelled from far and wide, given up their time, the observers who came here from all parts of the world to look for the truth regarding the shooting of Fergal and wounding of Miceal. Without the support of the INC and the legal team this Inquiry would not have happened. I will start with thanking them for all their time, their hard work and long hours. It is comforting to me and I'm sure to all of Fergal's family to see the relatives of victims who were killed or injured in similar circumstances attending the Inquiry and there is a special welcome for them in Cullyhanna at any time. And a sincere thank you to all the people from the surrounding areas who have worked so hard at; putting up posters, handing out leaflets, putting up the marquee, coming to meetings, organising the creche and first aid, doing secretarial work, organising stewards who worked around the clock twenty four hours a day and all the men and women who made cups of tea and sandwiches and meals over the last couple of weeks and especially Irene and Breige who cooked wonderful meals over the weekend. Inevitably, I am going to miss out someone, but with the amount of people who were involved it's impossible to mention everyone but their work hasn't gone unnoticed.

Finally, I deeply appreciate the support from the Caraher family, my close friends, and most especially my own family for both their practical and their emotional support. I couldn't have done this without them.

I feel that there was absolutely no justification for shooting Fergal. I feel angry, hurt and appalled. I am left without a husband and my son, Brendan, without a father. I don't want any other family to go through what we are going through.

Fergal's death isn't forgotten, he is still very much in our hearts, we are all proud of him, we miss him and we will do our utmost to see that justice is done.

Thank you,

Margaret Caraher.

Sunday 23 June, 1991.

MR. KAVANAGH: I think, in conclusion then, I have to tell the Tribunal that there are three more submissions, written submissions, which will come before you. They are from Father Raymond Murray, Father Malachy Conlon and a Mr. Mike Ritchie from the Committee on the Administration of Justice in Northern Ireland. So, that completes the evidence that we are in a position to put before the Inquiry.

CHAIRMAN: May I therefore, in conclusion, indicate from and on behalf of the Board our sincere gratitude for the way in which this Inquiry has been organised in order to facilitate our investigation and everyone may be assured that we will set about our task with diligence and with independence in order to seek the truth that everyone here today has come to hear about. I want to indicate that that task cannot be undertaken lightly. Neither can it be undertaken very quickly. I appreciate, more than anyone else, that justice delayed is justice denied. However, the task we have been set is a very great and onerous one because it isn't just looking into the events of December the 30th. The terms of reference that I read out at the beginning indicate a very wide ambit; namely, we are looking at the issues beyond what happened on the 30th, policy decisions and so on. We cannot come to conclusions with regard to that and the law as well within a short space of time.

May I indicate what I intend to do and that is we will adjourn this Inquiry today and within the next 28 days I would ask that anyone else who wishes to make representations should do so to the solicitor to the Inquiry and when I say anyone else, I mean, obviously, anyone from within the community, anyone outside the community, any of those authorities who have been named in this Inquiry who wish to make representations, they may now do so. It cannot be said we have not given every conceivable opportunity for people to be heard. At the end of that period we will then consider everything we have and, of course, by that time it will be voluminous. We estimate that it will take a further month for each individual jurist to write their own report and judgement. Therefore, we feel that the reasonable date by which - and this is the latest date by which judgements will be made available for publication is September the 1st and may I assure

everyone that each jurist will write it quite independently and there will be no discussions between them as to their conclusions and, as you know, they all live in different jurisdictions so that assurance, you may rest upon, will be kept. Thank you.

THE INQUIRY THEN CONCLUDED AT 2.10 P.M..