

CASEMENT EXHIBITION PRESS RELEASE

An exhibition chronicling the final days of Irish patriot Roger Casement will be opened by Minister for Arts Jimmy Deenihan in St. John's Theatre & Arts Centre in Listowel, Co. Kerry on Saturday, February 11th next.

Entitled 'The Stations of Roger Casement' and completed by court artist and Kerryman Mike O'Donnell, the work is a selection of images detailing Casement's ill-fated landing at Banna Strand, his detention, trial, appeal and execution. It also comprises images surrounding the 1965 exhumation and repatriation of his remains which followed decades of correspondence at the highest level between the Irish and British governments.

The work is in the form of two 12 foot scrolls of canvas and each image is produced in ink. Images are informed by press photographs, newspaper accounts and diplomatic papers of the period. Barrister John MacGuiggan has been major adviser to the artist.

Roger Casement was born in Dublin in 1864 and eventually joined the British consular service. He was awarded a knighthood for his human rights work - having reported on human rights abuses in Belgian Congo and in the Amazon. However his support for the cause of Irish self-determination proved his undoing. On Good Friday 1916 he was arrested near Banna Strand by British authorities, brought to London, tried and executed for high treason despite much outcry from many public figures. His cause was thwarted by the release of alleged diaries which purported to show that he was a homosexual and therefore a criminal in the eyes of society. He was found guilty of high treason, stripped of his knighthood and condemned but not before giving one of the most famous speeches from the dock. Here he protested at being denied the right to be tried by his peers. Furthermore, in what might hold not inconsiderable resonance today, Casement said

'Self-government is our right, a thing born in us at birth; a thing no more to be doled out to us or withheld from us by another people than the right to life itself—than the right to feel the sun or smell the flowers or to love our kind.'

"The exhibition is an attempt to pay homage to Casement - his consummate self-sacrifice in the cause of Irish sovereignty. It might perhaps go a small way to redressing the imbalance of Casement's prosecutor F.E. Smith who, in noting the cooperation of Kerry witnesses for the prosecution, lauded the people of Kerry for their 'loyalty to the Crown'," said O'Donnell.

The work will be exhibited in Dublin later in the Spring and thereafter in London - re-tracing the final journey of Casement who was the only 1916 leader to be tried and executed outside of Ireland.

Dr. Colm O'Doherty, His Honour Mr. Justice Joseph Finnegan, Mr. John MacGuiggan S.C. and Professor Conor Gearty of the London School of Economics will speak at the Listowel, Dublin and London exhibitions.