

Confidential.

INSPECTOR GENERAL'S MONTHLY REPORT FOR OCTOBER, 1916.

I.

UNDER SECRETARY,

GENERAL
CONDITION
OF THE
COUNTRY.

I have to report that Ireland, apart from the political aspect, was apparently peaceful and prosperous during the Month of October, and as the attached Table of Indictable Offences shows it was comparatively free from crime.

The Ulster ship yards and factories as well as other industrial works throughout the Provinces were busily employed - many of them on Government contracts, and a Munitions factory was recently started at Cork.

With regard to Agriculture, the staple Irish industry, ^{The} reports from several Counties are satisfactory except as to the potato crop which is not up to the average. Cattle and agricultural produce continue to command high prices and farmers are said to be making substantial profits.

Trade is good and the relations between employers and workmen are generally amicable, though strikes on a small scale for increased wages occurred here and there, and there is a good deal of discontent among farm labourers who find it hard to live on their small wages. The very

high

high cost of provisions is everywhere seriously affecting the poor and persons with small incomes.

Recruiting for the Army and Navy showed no sign of improvement. During the four weeks to October 15th. only 1,279 recruits enlisted in the Provinces; it is evident that farmers' sons and shop assistants will not voluntarily relinquish their comfortable pursuits for the more arduous and dangerous life in the trenches.

Notwithstanding the general appearance of tranquility, however, the large number of persons under Police protection in the Western Counties of Clare and Galway is evidence of the continued existence of intimidation arising out of agrarian agitation; some agrarian unrest also prevails in parts of Sligo, Tipperary, and Westmeath.

A few cases of partial boycotting were reported which generally originated with disputes about land. They include a case where efforts are being made in County Cork to boycott Mrs. Bowen Colthurst merely because her brother-in-law ordered the shooting of Sheehy Skeffington and others during the recent rebellion. The boycott of persons in Tyrone because they voted at the Nationalist Home Rule Convention in favour of exclusion of Ulster Counties is apparently dying out.

Part II.

POLITICAL ACTIVITY.

Political unrest is probably more extensive in Ireland at present than at the time of the rebellion. The execution and imprisonment of the rebel leaders and internment of other dangerous Sinn Feiners evoked the sympathy of certain prominent Nationalists, and of many of the younger Roman Catholic Clergy, and the number of sympathisers has been augmented by dread of Conscription with the result that the revolutionists now have a strong following. Furthermore, the failure of the Home Rule conversations which were opened after the suppression of the rebellion has shaken the confidence of the Redmondites in the assurance of their leader that Home Rule will become operative at the termination of the War, and has given rise to a general restlessness.

The Irish Volunteers are prevented by Martial Law and the Defence of the Realm Regulations from resuming their open organization and it is therefore difficult now to estimate their actual strength.

Information has been received from a reliable source that new leaders have been chosen and that they are to be re-formed as the Irish Republican Army and controlled from Head Quarters in Dublin. Provincial delegates are to assemble in Dublin on the occasion of some large Gaelic Athletic Association Tournament to consider the future of the Irish Volunteers, and the abolition of control by County Boards; and to elect delegates to a general Convention in Dublin.

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The more extreme section propose that members should all be sworn into the Irish Republican Brotherhood. Others however object to this on the ground that the new body would be a secret society, and they would prefer co-operation with the Irish Nation League and the retention of the County Board system of control.

The Gaelic League and Gaelic Athletic Association are largely in sympathy with the Sinn Fein movement and reliable information has been received that their meetings are being used as a cloak for revolutionary work. There is a noticeable revival of activity in the Gaelic League which is about to raise funds by a general sale of flags throughout Ireland.

A recent Conference at Cork was attended by a large number of County delegates and appears to have been a gathering of Sinn Feiners.

John O'Hurley, Gaelic League Organizer, Limerick, and six other persons at Cork who were known to be travelling in furtherance of the revolutionary organization have recently been restricted as to their movements by the Competent Military Authority, and on several occasions excursion trains for Gaelic Athletic Association meetings have been withdrawn by Railway Companies at the request of Government.

If these measures are persevered with the progress of this organizing work will be to some extent checked.

A correspondent in America states that reports have been circulated among the Clan-Na-Gael that arms are being sent to Ireland via Spain and that another Irish rising

is imminent. He suggests however that these reports may be circulated to encourage further subscriptions.

The Royal Irish Constabulary do not believe that arms are being imported, and without such assistance the Irish Volunteers would not be equipped for another rising.

Information has also been received from a different source in America that there was nearly being an open rupture lately between the Irish and Germans over the Casement expedition, the Irish alleging that Germany made no genuine effort to fulfil her promise to help with troops.

This agent states that the Clan-na-Gael are impatient at the delay in starting reprisals for the execution of rebels, but that the leaders regard such action as impossible while the Defence of the Realm Regulations remain in force. He was told that no German funds will be given in future to finance the Irish movement.

It is reported also that the money collected by the Friends of Irish Freedom to arm the Irish Volunteers may not all be devoted to that purpose and that some of it has not been accounted for.

In Ireland according to Press reports the total amount subscribed to the Irish National Aid Association & Volunteer Dependents' Fund now exceeds £53,000. Of this sum £17,000 came from the U. S. A.; £7,000 from Australia; £1,000 from New Zealand; £100 from South Africa, and £230 from Argentina - total £24,330.

The subscriptions were opened about June 1st, and the promoters state that relief has been dispensed at the rate of from £1,200 to £1,400 per week, which would amount to an expenditure of between £25,000 and £30,000 to date.

The Royal Irish Constabulary report that over £22,000 has been subscribed in the Provinces, but so far as they know only about £3,500 has been expended in the relief of Irish Volunteers and their dependents outside the City of Dublin.

The Irish Nation League which is opposed to the policy of the Irish Parliamentary Party is not making any appreciable progress. It is backed by the Roman Catholic Clergy in Ulster and was formed to resist the proposed exclusion of Ulster Counties from the Home Rule Act, but only 1 of the 45 Branches is outside the Northern province, and the ^{total} membership does not exceed about 2,000. It is not supported by Sinn Feiners.

The principal Nationalist societies which are more or less Constitutional in policy were inactive.

The National Volunteers are still nominally about 100,000 strong, but so far as is known to the police only a few Branches have taken any steps as yet in response to the appeal addressed to them by the Joint Secretaries at Head Quarters to affiliate, and appoint delegates to attend the proposed Convention for the purpose of re-organizing the force on a "permanent fighting footing."

The dividing line between the Irish Volunteers and the National Volunteers in whose ranks they have always had sympathisers, is not a substantial one; both would resist Conscription, and I am strongly of opinion that any attempt on the part of the National Volunteers to resume the practice of military exercises openly, either with

or without arms, would be very dangerous and should be promptly suppressed. They have **already** commenced drilling in a small way at their hall at Queenstown.

Mr. Landon, M.P., prior to the reassembling of Parliament last month, addressed meetings in Limerick and North Tipperary advocating the formation of a new association called the Anti-Conscription League and succeeded in forming 2 Branches consisting of 70 members, none of whom are Sinn Feiners.

The United Irish League and Ancient Order of Hibernians (Board of Erin) displayed little activity, though meetings of the former society, which is the official electioneering agency of the Irish Parliamentary Party, were held at sundry places for the purpose of reorganization.

Mr John Redmond addressed a meeting of his constituents at Waterford on 6th October and was well received. In the opinion of the local police the meeting has retarded Sinn Fein, but it has neither advanced the cause of loyalty nor helped recruiting.

Mr. Redmond also attended a function at Sligo on 29th. ult. to unveil a monument to the late Mr. McHugh, M.P. It is said that his reception was not very cordial and that in his ^{public} ~~current~~ speech he avoided current politics. He is possibly regaining the confidence of his own followers, but he has little if any influence with the Sinn Feiners and their supporters.

A split is reported in the Ancient Order of Hibernians (Board of Erin) in Fermanagh in reference to the action of the

the Irish Party in agreeing to the exclusion of Ulster Counties at the Home Rule Convention. Eleven Divisions of the Order are affected. Six Divisions are suspended and five have seceded. The local Roman Catholic Clergy are believed to be at the back of this; it is however expected that the disaffected Divisions will give in.

The Ulster Volunteers displayed no activity, but party feeling in Ulster is said to be still very strong, though the political truce is well observed.

W. H. O'Connell

DEPUTY INSPECTOR GENERAL.

11th November, 1916.