

SDLP - NORTH ANTRIM CONSTITUENCY

SEAN FARREN MLA

CASEMENT'S HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD HIS ENDURING LEGACY

Speaking on the occasion of the 90th anniversary of the death of Roger Casement North Antrim MLA Seán Farren said:

‘The enduring legacy of Roger Casement was his exposure of the abuses suffered by workers in the rubber plantations of the Congo in Africa and of Peru in South America. He was, in effect, a heroic human rights campaigner.

‘Casement fearlessly challenged the brutal and inhuman treatment meted out to these workers who were forced to labour under slave conditions by their so-called ‘imperial masters’.

‘In reports that have gone down as models of their kind Roger Casement exposed those brutal, inhuman conditions and shamed employers, among them the King of Belgium whose personal fiefdom the Congo was, to change those conditions for the better.

‘It was for these reports, which many in the government believed should be suppressed, that Casement became an international figure in the early 1900’s and for which he was later honoured.

‘But Roger Casement has other causes to which he became deeply committed. His commitment to the Irish language and to Irish culture is widely recognised and celebrated in the Glens.

‘Later his commitment to the cause of Ireland involved him in the Irish Volunteers where he had a close association another Antrim leader, Eoin MacNeill.

‘Casement feared the effect of bloodshed in a rebellion which he believed would be doomed to failure and, ironically, it was to try to stop it taking place that he returned to Ireland at Easter in 1916.

‘His arrest, trial and execution were in strong contrast to his own commitment to human and civil rights. In fact, the case against him was, even in British terms, paper thin, and many leading figures campaigned against his execution.

‘Roger Casement will be long remembered as one of Europe’s great champions of human rights of the early twentieth century as well as an Irish patriot. As a person with strong North Antrim links he has a special place in the history and in the memories of many in this part of Ireland.’
ends