

OPENING STATEMENT

On the 22nd of September 1982 I walked into the Garda Training Centre in Templemore County Tipperary as a shy insecure teenager and when I left there six months later I did so as a confident and highly motivated young man ready to fulfil my role as a member of An Garda Síochána.

I'm sure that I wasn't the only one who felt like I did on that day as we waited with anticipation to be sworn in as members of An Garda Síochána. After the swearing in ceremony a Senior Garda Officer addressed us and told us that we were now members of the Garda family and that we could only depend on each other for support and that it was our duty to take care of each other as members of the Garda family.

Therein lies the problem. That mantra led to the toxic culture of loyalty before honesty that has existed within An Garda Síochána since its foundation and still exists today. I'm sure that this culture of protecting the organisation and ones colleagues at all costs is not unique to An Garda Síochána but there is a major difference between blind loyalty to a colleague who has made a genuine mistake and a colleague who has engaged in criminality. Sadly, in my experience these lines are blurred.

In the aftermath of when I made a statement of complaint against a Garda colleague who said that "what Maurice McCabe needs is a bullet in the head" to when I subsequently made a complaint to the Garda Confidential Recipient Mr Oliver Connolly about the corrupt termination of lawfully issued Fixed Charge Penalty notices by Senior Garda Officers I went from being a respected

Garda colleague and an elected Garda Representative Association District Representative to being viewed as an enemy within in a relatively short amount of time.

In the aftermath of Deputy Clare Daly and Deputy Mick Wallace bringing our allegations into the public domain I was confronted by an Inspector and a Sergeant while I was in Cavan Garda Station carrying out enquiries into ticket fixing using the Garda Pulse System and they told me to get out of the station and not to come back. On another occasion I was subjected to a search by a Garda Sergeant who believed that I had Pulse documents concealed in bags of shredded paper that I had removed from a waste bin at the rear of Monaghan Garda Station to use as dog bedding as I had done for several years. This search took place on a public roadway, and I was on duty in uniform at the time.

The former Garda Commissioner Martin Callinan who received my initial complaint about the corrupt termination of Fixed Charge Penalty Notices on the 4th of April 2012 from Mr Oliver Connolly the Garda Confidential Recipient issued a direction in December 2012 prohibiting both myself and Sergeant Maurice McCabe from using the Garda Pulse system which literally meant that it was impossible for us to fully carry out our duties as members of An Garda Siochana. Martin Callinan subsequently described our actions as disgusting when he appeared before the Public Accounts Committee on the 23rd of January 2014. The comments made by former Commissioner Callinan on that occasion were a clear warning to other members of An Garda Siochana who might have been considering making protected disclosures that there was no

such thing as confidentiality and that their identities would become known just as ours had.

In February 2013 I was heavily criticized by a member of the Judiciary acting in a personal capacity for the fact that a Judicial colleague had been named in a national newspaper as having had multiple penalty points terminated for speeding. I retired from An Garda Siochana on the 1st of May 2013 as my position had become untenable. This member of the Judiciary subsequently asked me to withdraw a complaint that I had made in September 2012 under the Garda Siochana Anti Fraud Policy against a Senior Garda Officer who was a serial ticket fixer. I believe that this request that I ignored was at the behest of the Senior Officer that I complained of.

I very much welcome any legislation that offers protection to Bona Fide Whistleblowers, but the sad reality is that until there is a major culture change in Ireland relating to the treatment of people who report wrongdoing in the workplace life will continue to be very difficult for these people in the future until the acceptance of the role of Bona Fide Whistleblowers becomes the rule and not the exception.

John Wilson.