

Producer's response to Paddy Heaney's Complaints

January 2008

Mr Paddy Heaney claims that 'The Killings at Coolacree' breached clause 24(2)(f) by allegedly misrepresenting his views on the allocation of land bought from the Pearsons.

The programme team was given access to the Land Commission records. Mr Heaney has not viewed these files. They reveal that contrary to Mr Heaney's claim, there was only one division of the Pearson's land by the Land Commission in 1923. From September of that year, the land was divided into 15 plots.

Mr Heaney says that British army soldiers got the Pearson's land in a first division, and when they failed at farming, the land passed to former IRA men. This is not true. As the records in the Land Commission show, at least two of the men who received land in 1923 were members of the IRA. Two Irish men who had served in the British army also received parcels of land at the same time. One of the former soldiers, John Multany, had a further claim to the land as a former farm labourer with the Pearsons (as per the 1923 Land Act). Far from 'failing' at farming, John Multany passed his plot to his son, who continues to farm the former Pearson land to this day.

Mr Heaney's broadcast comment ('When the land was divided by the Irish Land Commission, I think two, maybe three whose people were involved in the IRA received parcels of land there') is a true reflection of the information which the programme team uncovered in the Land Commission files. To include Mr Heaney's original statement – stating that British army soldiers received land in a 'first division', and it is only then that former IRA men got land – would have been a distortion of the truth.

This section of the programme, on the division of the Pearson's land, relied solely on fact, not opinion. Mr Heaney signed a release form granting the production the right to select material which they did so in a fair and balanced way. At all times the production team behaved in a professional and fair manner towards Mr Heaney.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Release form of Paddy Heaney