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63/93



FROM: MRS DOREEN BROWN  
CENT SEC PLANNING UNIT

DATE: 15 SEPTEMBER 1994

cc PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - B  
PS/PUS (B&L) - B  
PS/Mr Fell - B  
Mr Carvill  
Mr Thomas o/r - B  
Mr Hill, DENI  
Mr Legge - B  
Mr Steele - B  
Mr Watkins - B  
Mr Williams - B  
Mr Wood (B&L) - B  
Mr Maxwell - B  
HMA Dublin - B  
Mr Caine - B

PS/MICHAEL ANCRAM (DENI, B&L) - B

*Mrs Kenny*

GAA FINAL

1. The purpose of this note is to provide information about the arrangements for Michael Ancram's attendance at the All-Ireland Gaelic Football Final between Down and Dublin in Croke Park, Dublin, on Sunday 18 September and to set out the main issues in the Government's current relationship with the GAA.

Arrangements for Sunday 18 September

2. The Minister is scheduled to arrive at Dublin Airport at 14.05 and will be met by officials. The party will then travel under escort to Croke Park with the Ambassador and Mrs Blatherwick.
3. There are two matches on the day. The first match is the Minor (under 18) Final. This is scheduled to begin at 1.30 pm, and

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DB/1605/HF

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the match and presentation should be complete by around 3.00 pm. The Senior Final begins at 3.30 pm following a number of pre-match ritual parades and the introduction of veterans from previous Finals. The scene is similar to a FA Cup Final and includes the introduction of the teams, followed by the Irish National Anthem.

4. The GAA have still to confirm to us the arrangements for hospitality during and after the matches, but we expect them to be similar to those of last year. Because of the number of VIPs attending the Final, GAA Headquarters Staff usually try to stagger arrivals and entry to the Hospitality Suite. Light refreshments and drinks will be available and the Minister will probably spend around 15 minutes in the Hospitality Suite with members of the GAA Council before proceeding to the VIP box. The Ambassador and Mrs Blatherwick will accompany the Minister in the VIP box.
5. At half time during the main match the VIPs may retire to the Hospitality Suite again for refreshment, though many choose just to remain in their seats for the interval. Following the presentation of the Sam Maguire Cup at the end of the match there will be a reception in the hall immediately below the main stand. GAA officials will escorts guests to the reception.
6. The Taoiseach and his guests are given hospitality in a quiet corner of the room; for everyone else, buffet style arrangements apply and there are no formal presentations. At this stage the Minister can meet other important guests.
7. We expect the GAA to provide a list of the main guests who will be in the VIP box. We will try to find out, before the event, who will be sitting adjacent to the Minister.

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8. The further information about the arrangements will be available for the Minister on arrival at Dublin Airport, and will also be sent to the Embassy in Dublin as soon as it is available.

Current Issues

8. The main issue at present is the GAA ban which bars members of the security forces from membership of the GAA. The ban has its origins in the troubles in the early part of the century. Until the 1970s it was in many ways an anachronism in the GAA Constitution, but within the recent conflict it has again come into prominence.
9. Apart from Nationalist ambivalence about the security forces and their role in Northern Ireland, two issues have tended to influence the debate within the GAA. The first was the question of Crossmaglen and the continuing presence of the Army in part of the ground owned by Crossmaglen GAA Club. This however has become a less prominent issue in recent years and it is significant that the recent OP RECTIFY work to enhance security at the army base in Crossmaglen passed off with less controversy than might have been expected; the GAA in Crossmaglen were not foremost among the protestors. The second source of concern was the continuing allegations of harassment by the security forces of GAA members travelling to and from matches, etc.
10. The past and current Presidents of the GAA (Peter Quinn and Jack Boothman) would like to see the GAA Constitution amended to remove the ban on members of the security forces. It is a fact that many in the GAA now believe that the ban should be removed, if only because it seriously affects the image of the GAA as a modern twentieth century sport. The issue was expected to arise at last April's GAA A Congress but was in fact taken off the agenda to enable senior officials time to work with the hostile Counties with the aim of ensuring the smooth passage of a motion abandoning the ban at next year's Congress.

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11. The Minister has agreed to host a dinner for Mr Quinn and Mr Boothman after the Final, by way of thanks for the invitation to attend and to discuss aspects of the relationship between Government and the GAA, particularly the ban on security force membership. The formal invitations can be issued shortly after the Final.

(signed DAB)

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