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PC/85/6/859/ES

Mr Lyon

cc: PS/Secretary of State (L&B)  
 PS/Mr Scott (L&B)  
 PS/PUS (L&B)  
 Mr A Stephens  
 Mr Bloomfield ✓  
 Mr Merifield 2 SEC 11  
 Mr Gilliland  
 Mr Buxton  
 Mr Reeve  
 Mr G Hewitt

CROSSMAGLEN GAA CLUB

You will have seen from telegram 322 of 28 May from Dublin that the DFA are, once again, attempting to act as intermediaries in our discussions with the GAA Club at Crossmaglen. This is a somewhat unhelpful, and indeed retrogressive step, given the efforts that we have put into developing direct contacts with the officials of the Club.

2. You will recall that earlier this year we successfully resolved the long-standing compensation claim which the Club had lodged against the NIO for damage to the pitch and loss of revenue. This settlement, of £150,000, was an amicable one and this has gone a long way towards removing the deep-seated and long-standing sense of grievance which the Club has harboured.

3. The only outstanding problem remaining is that of the right-of-way across the Club's car park. As you know I have every sympathy with the Club on this matter. The security forces must have an emergency exit to the base. At the moment this exit is at the rear of the base and vehicles using it cross the GAA Club's car park. To ensure that this exit is not impeded we have requisitioned a right-of-way across the car park, and this effectively sterilizes a large part of the car park as far as the Club is concerned. Moreover, as long as this requisition is in force they will be unable to proceed with some of the major development of their facilities which they plan to make using their new found wealth. Hence, it would be a useful step towards improving community relations if we could find an alternative access

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to the base.

4. However, from a security point of view the present access is perfectly satisfactory. There are no security reasons, therefore, for wishing to find an alternative exit to the base, and hence it would not be possible to use any of our emergency powers to acquire such an alternative access. Indeed, as you know the only feasible alternative access route - across ground currently owned by the Crossmaglen Committee for the Handicapped - is considered by the Army to have some very grave drawbacks, and <sup>it</sup> is by no means a foregone conclusion that they would agree to its use even if we could negotiate its purchase.

5. Nevertheless, we have given a commitment to the GAA Club that we would attempt to examine this option, and we have made a number of efforts to get in touch with members of the Committee for the Handicapped. The last formal approach was made in December of last year, when Mr Dunlop sent a letter by recorded delivery to Mr Pat Garvey, the Chairman of the Crossmaglen Committee for the Handicapped, stating our interest in the site and asking for a meeting. This letter, and subsequent telephone calls, have all been ignored. As you can see, therefore, our problem is not that we cannot get in touch with members of the Committee but rather, that we cannot get them to respond.

6. We explained this impasse to the Committee of the GAA Club, and asked them as respected leaders of the local community to use their best efforts to resolve it. We have reason to believe that the initial willingness of the Handicapped Committee to talk to us was thwarted by an intervention from the GAA Club who pointed out the "inadvisability" of co-operating with the "occupying forces". Clearly it does not lie within our powers to coerce or force the Committee to talk to us; we did hope, however, that the GAA Club might be able to persuade them to do so.

7. After a number of face-to-face meetings with the GAA Club,

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this reversion to using the DFA as a channel of communication indicates to me, at least, that we now have the GAA Club on the defensive. The solution to their problems now lies in their own hands and is entirely dependent upon their willingness to negotiate with us and to persuade other bodies in Crossmaglen to do the same. It is interesting to note that since we launched this initiative the GAA Club have been almost entirely silent, in marked contrast to their previous litany of complaints and grievances conveyed through a host of different channels, including the DFA. I would very much wish this state of affairs to continue.

8. I hope that this explanation of the current state of play is sufficient to enable you to respond to Dublin.



P COULSON  
Law and Order Division

4 June 1985