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Participation by Ministers in St. Patrick's tide functions

1. Every year the Minister for Foreign Affairs receives a number of invitations to speaking arrangements in the United States and/or Britain in connection with the celebrations of St. Patrick's Day. In addition, some other members of the Government receive similar invitations directly. There are also functions in the United States and Britain to which an invitation can usually easily be arranged. The relative importance of these functions varies.
2. The attached table sets out the functions which, on the basis of recommendations from the Embassy in Washington, it is considered might appropriately be attended by Members of the Government. In some cases, invitations have already been received and in the other cases they can be sought by the Embassy.
3. It is considered that the content of addresses to be given by Ministers at these functions should be the subject of appropriate preparation and coordination. This might be undertaken after the Fianna Fáil Árd-Fheis. In the U.S. in particular Ministers may come under pressure from groups interested in one aspect or another of Irish Government policy and it would obviously be desirable to avoid statements or commitments which would conflict with what other Ministers were saying elsewhere. It is to be anticipated that Ministers would be approached by groups such as Irish Northern Aid (Noraid) and other groups favourable to the Provisional IRA.
4. Another matter for coordination is the rules of conduct for Members of the Government and other official representatives at St. Patrick's Day Parades in which Noraid, the Irish National Caucus or other similar groups take part, officially or unofficially. In 1978 and 1979 the then Taoiseach directed that Irish official representatives should leave reviewing stands when contingents from Noraid etc. were marching past. It is to be anticipated that in many parades in the United States there will be Noraid and/or INC participation. Should Irish representatives remain on the review

stand while these contingents pass by, there is no doubt that the change of approach will be noticed, at least in some cases. It is likely that Unionist and British spokesmen will attempt to interpret such a change of practice as a change of policy towards these two organisations in the United States and, by extension, to the Provisional IRA.

5. The U.S. authorities have informally raised with the Embassy in Washington the question of notification to the U.S. State Department of details of ministerial visits to the U.S. They would wish to be kept informed of such visits, particularly those involving the Minister for Justice or his predecessors in order to consider possible security aspects. It would be desirable therefore if all Ministerial visits to the U.S. could be notified in advance to this Department. It is understood that the Minister for Justice has been invited to visit Florida during March, and the IDA may approach Ministers to participate in promotional functions in Cleveland, Detroit, Miami, Boston and New York. It would be useful to know whether any other invitations to Ministers to visit the U.S. have been received and are being taken up.

6. In order to assist the organisers of St. Patrick's tide events in the U.S.A. and in Britain, it is desirable that decisions as to participation in the events listed in the annex be taken as soon as possible. The decisions required in the matters of concordance of speeches and uniformity of conduct towards the organisations mentioned in paragraph 4 should be taken in good time before the St. Patrick's tide programme of events begins.

Department of Foreign Affairs

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