

Mr. Keane's Stirring Appeal to N.A.&C.A. Delegates

"NOT NOW A QUESTION OF POLITICS": LAST CHANCE TO SAVE ATHLETICS

MR. J. J. KEANE, one of the founders of the N.A.C.A. (I.), of which he was many times President, President also of the Tailteann Games Committee, and Ireland's representative on the Olympic Council, and formerly on the International Federation, has issued an appeal to the delegates at to-morrow's Congress of the N.A.C.A.

He states:—

I was instrumental in the formation of the N.A.C.A. I have been intimately associated with all the negotiations for an amicable settlement with the North of Ireland, and during my time as President of the Association I did everything that was humanly possible to work in harmony with those in the North.

"Extreme Views."

UNFORTUNATELY no matter what concessions were granted, in a very short time claims for more favourable considerations were always introduced. The rank and file of the young boys in the various clubs in the North were always most anxious to retain a con-

Our Tailteann Games.

"In the first place we lose our Tailteann Games, for no athletes can come here from any other country when we are suspended, and the whole object of the Tailteann Games—a reunion for Irishmen all over the world—will be gone."

—Mr. J. J. Keane.

nection with the rest of Ireland, but, unfortunately four or five officials, who were more extreme in both their political and religious views, were able to exercise a controlling influence over the others.

Under these circumstances I began to lose faith in the prospect of retaining the North, and considered it was in the best interests of the rest of the country to devote all our attention to the welfare of athletics within the political boundaries.

Opportunities Lost.

IT is true that many opportunities have been lost within the last five or six years of making a further effort for an amicable settlement, and as a result we have arrived at a stage where no useful purpose could be served by giving the matter further consideration.

The position as it stands at the moment is that the International Federation has decided that the North of Ireland are perfectly within their rights in refusing to

work in with the N.A.C.A. and in affiliating with the British Association.

Now, it is not a case that this decision is a recent one—it was definitely decided four years ago—and it may not be realised here that every leniency has been extended towards the Free State in not exercising the right of the International Federation to take disciplinary action against the N.A.C.A. in this matter.

A Capable President.

IHAVE been in close touch with Mr. Edstrom, President of the Federation, both in the affairs of the International Federation and of the International Olympic Committee. I have always found him an exceptionally capable President, and I have often wondered, if he should ever decide to resign from his position, where another could be found to exercise the same tact and ability.

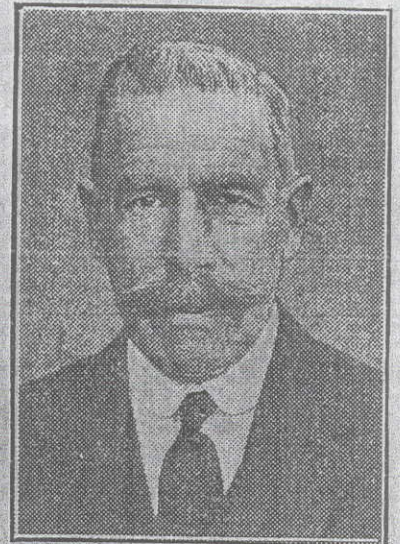
At all times where matters concerning Ireland were introduced at meetings of the Federation or the Olympic Council he was one of my greatest supporters, and for the last three or four years he has postponed bringing the Irish question to a head in the hopes that an amicable settlement could be arrived at domestically.

The time has come now when this matter can no longer be shelved, and the position as it stands must be faced.

Facing the Facts.

The facts are, the Congress of the Federation have decided—as they were bound to decide under the rules governing their Association—that the political boundaries are the limits of the jurisdiction of the N.A.C.A.

The question of sympathy with the cause of the N.A.C.A. simply did not arise, for there are other cases than ours on which judgment has been passed—Catalonia, the Saar, and Hungary, to mention a few—and those countries who



Mr. J. J. Keane.

refrained from voting on the motion at the International Congress merely did so because they were not interested in the matter, which was a foregone conclusion.

The die has been cast, and the only question which remains for us is what is to be gained or lost by fighting the decision.

If we decide to fight it the North will carry on with a free hand, the British Association will continue to recognise them, and the International Federation will not suffer in any way through the absence of an Irish delegation.

Therefore, our opponents have nothing to lose—can the same be said for us?

What It Means.

WE will be isolated, cut off from intercourse with any other country, and men such as Dr. P. O'Callaghan and R. M. N. Tisdall will no longer be able to make the name of Ireland ring in the ears of the world.

Moreover, there are hundreds of promising young boys throughout the country whose incentive to emulate these heroes will be gone, and with it the future of athletics in this country.

A Final Appeal.

IN conclusion, I would appeal with all the power and earnestness I can summon, to the delegates at to-morrow's Congress, to give this matter very careful consideration, since a hasty decision will be irrevocable.

Political considerations should not be allowed to interfere in this matter, for it is not a question of politics—it is a question of the future of Irish athletics.

Let the delegates bear in mind that the hard and fast decision of the Federation is based on political boundaries, and that when the political boundaries of this country are altered there will be no difficulty in altering the jurisdiction of the N.A.C.A.

One more point is worth bearing in mind, and it is this—that there is no longer a question of defending supporters in Northern Ireland, for almost all the influential Northern clubs have accepted the inevitable and joined forces with the new Northern body.



R. M. N. Tisdall.

Irish Independent. 2nd. Feb. 1935.