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FROM: D G McNEILL, PAB  
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Note for the Record

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- PS/Secretary of State (B&L) [1&2]
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- Mr Ledlie [5]
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**POLITICAL MOVEMENT AND THE PROVISIONALS  
SINN FEIN ARD FHEIS: ADDRESS BY GERRY ADAMS**

1. The following are some initial thoughts on Gerry Adams' address at the Sinn Fein Ard Fheis. I have taken the Irish Times abbreviated version (attached) as a fairly full account of what he said. A fuller analysis of the Conference is being prepared by Liaison staff.
2. Although the address does not say much that has not been said before its general tone, including the references it makes to international events, are different from the type of address which has been given in the past to a Sinn Fein Conference. It is a measured address setting forward a peace agenda - albeit an agenda on Provisional terms and it seems to studiously avoid opportunities for attacking HMG or the Unionists even on issues such as the Gulf conflict which could provide an opportunity for having a "go at the Brits" if that was desired.
3. The address as reported does not have any ringing calls to support the armed struggle or references to other forms of resistance on the international scene. Instead any references to violence are linked to it occurring in the absence of a political settlement.

4. Some of the main points highlighted in the address are
- (1) A statement that there should be no war in Northern Ireland but that there should be a political statement.
  - (2) A fudged denial of reports that Adams is involved in the preparation of ceasefire proposals. He refers to the press reports on these as fictitious but does not directly deny them.
  - (3) Confirmation of speculation that Sinn Fein is interested in a peace initiative.
  - (4) A perception that in some ways the Secretary of State is different from his predecessors but there is a query as to whether that difference is one of substance or one of style.
  - (5) A suggestion that there may be debate in Government circles on these issues and a welcome for that if it is so.
  - (6) A call for the Secretary of State to clarify his position.
  - (7) A call for the Dublin Government and the SDLP to advance the argument that they should adopt a policy of ending the union and actively seek agreement among the people who share the island of Ireland as to how this can be established.
  - (8) A suggestion that the search for such an agreement should involve the northern Protestants but if they don't agree a statement that their rights must be guaranteed.
  - (9) A detailed emphasis on the letter which Adams wrote to the Prime Minister in December.

- (10) A suggestion that the Gulf conflict may be preventing Government from addressing these issues but that the Prime Minister may turn his attention to them when the conflict in the Gulf is over.

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5. In general the speech represents at the very least an attempt by Adams to shift the focus of the Movement as a whole away from the armed struggle to the political struggle. There is of course the possibility that he is doing that at least in part to impress those people in the Catholic community who do not support some of the activities of the IRA. However, he has taken the opportunity recently to give the same messages to those people in public; therefore I would regard his address as a direct address to the Provisional Movement. It is significant that he has felt able to make such a speech directly to members of the Movement at an annual conference. It is too early as yet to say how the speech was and will be received by the Movement. However, it is clear that Adams is trying to swing the Movement in a different direction. The address reinforces earlier indications that Adams is trying to push the Movement in the direction of the political stage rather than the "armed struggle" stage.

(SIGNED)

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