

F.V.D.

CONFIDENTIAL

HMA
British Embassy, Dublin

DATE: 17 January 1994

cc: PS/S of S (L&B) - B
PS/Michael Ancram (L&B) - B
Mr Thomas - B
Mr Bell - B
Mr Deverell - B
Mr Watkins - B
Mr Williams - B
Mr Wood (L&B) - B
Mr Archer, RID - B

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N.I.O. LONDON

PUS (L&B) - B

JOINT DECLARATION: SINN FEIN PRESS RELEASE

1. As you will have deduced from my telegram no 23, sent earlier today, I strongly support the views in David Fell's minute of 14 January to you. Our reluctance to offer clarification of the Joint Declaration may look reasonable in London, but not in the Republic. As David Fell says, we are in danger of losing the high moral ground and the argument.

2. The line between clarification and negotiation is a thin one. While it is generally accepted here that it would be wrong to enter negotiations before a cessation of violence, people believe that if clarification is genuinely needed, we should be able to provide it. To the list of options which David Fell has identified we might add another, namely that we should continually call for Sinn Fein to specify exactly what it is they want made clearer. This should help put the onus back on them. We might also dismiss Adams's claims that the Declaration itself is full of ambiguities, or that the two governments are making contradictory statements. Neither is true, but the more he says them without correction, the more reasonable his demands for clarification appear.

(SIGNED)
D E S Blatherwick

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