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## Gerry Adams addresses the Sinn Féin 'Think In' 2017

14-17 minutes

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5 September, 2017 - by [Gerry Adams TD](#)

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Sinn Féin party president, Gerry Adams TD, speaking at the Sinn Féin 'Think In' 2017 at the City North Hotel said:

A Chairde,

Dia dhaoibh go léir a chairde,

Ba mhaith liom fáilte mór a chur roimh gach éinne agaibh anseo ar maidin agus don dhá lá atá romhainn.

Tá go leor obair le dheanamh againn, so tá súil agam go raibh sos maith agaibh don samhraidh.

This is the annual in-house gathering of our party leadership, Assembly, Leinster House, European and Westminster teams and local Councillors.

It's an opportunity for us to discuss party strategy, policies and organisation and to map out our plans for the upcoming period.

So, let's talk about the journey and challenges ahead of us.

In this state the Fine-Gael minority government, propped up by their friends in Fianna Fáil, has carried on where the last government left off – creating crises in our public services and failing ordinary people.

This is the most dysfunctional government since partition.

They have brought forward the least amount of legislation of any Dáil; they have completely failed to deal with the crisis in the Gardaí; and in our health services and in housing provision.

They have no real strategy for dealing with Brexit.

Their allies in government, Fianna Fáil, now want to return to the Galway Tent politics that almost destroyed the economy.

If they can't deal with the challenges, then we will.

In a little over 12 months Sinn Féin brought forward more than 50 pieces of legislation. We intend to keep this momentum going in the time ahead – legislating on issues effecting citizens in their daily lives and providing an alternative to the unfairness of Fine

Gael/Fianna Fail rule.

In the North, both the DUP and the British government continue to refuse to agree that the Executive and the Assembly be restored on the basis of equality, respect and integrity for all.

They also disrespect and ignore the vote of people in the North in the Brexit referendum and are insisting on dragging the North out of the EU against the wishes of the electorate.

In fact, the DUP have torn up propositions being developed with Sinn Féin and others on Brexit in favour of the Tory government's little Englander approach.

At the same time politics are in flux and in transition.

Just as unionism now has less than 50% electoral support in the north and the notion of a perpetual majority is gone, the same is increasingly true of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael.

More and more people are standing up for their rights and for equality.

People are demanding change.

But Leo Varadkar's vision for society - his "Republic of Opportunity" - is one where those who fall behind, for whatever reason, are left behind.

The real message behind Taoiseach Varadkar's Republic of Opportunity is aimed at and is grand for those who have opportunities

but if you are struggling, if you are homeless, sick or poor, if you have a disability, if you are unemployed or badly paid then don't look to the government for answers or solutions.

You are on your own.

Leo's vision is for a mé féin system.

### ***Sinn Féin wants to be in Government***

That's the way it has been here for decades. There have been governments for the financial speculators, the bankers and the property developers.

Governments for prelates and hierarchies.

These governments are for the wealthy and for the elites.

What is needed now is a government for citizens.

Such a government would invest in world-class public services and develop a vibrant, sustainable economy that works for people instead of against them.

It would also be an accountable government.

A government grounded in basic, common decency which acts:

If somebody is in trouble, to help them.

If somebody has fallen, to pick them up.

If somebody is danger, to protect them.

That's the sort of government that is needed.

A government for equality.

And, make no mistake; Sinn Féin wants to be in that government.

We want to transform politics on this island.

We have no ambition to be part of the system.

Our ambition is to change it.

That means we must be in government – North and South.

### ***The Crisis in Housing***

Last week, Jack Watson, Jennifer Dennehy and Danielle Carroll, who were all homeless died.

Jack Watson died on the street.

Jennifer Dennehy died in a tent in a park.

And Danielle Carroll died in a hotel room.

I want to extend to their families and friends our solidarity and condolences.

But we need to do more than this.

Last week figures for Dublin revealed another rise in the number of families and children living in emergency accommodation.

There are over ninety thousand households on local authority waiting lists.

And almost eight thousand people are living in emergency accommodation, including almost three thousand children!

One in three people experiencing homelessness in this state is a child!

How can this crisis be ended?

The answer is obvious.

The state needs to build homes for its citizens.

That's what Sinn Féin will do in government.

That means turning away from the mé féin – Galway Tent – politics that created the crisis in the first place and then made it worse.

Sinn Féin will not manage the housing crisis. We will end it.

Not on terms set by the market, or through tax cuts for developers as proposed by Fianna Fáil, or on terms set by those holding on to

land banks.

Sinn Féin will build houses.

We will deliver a social and affordable housing programme.

We will implement a plan to get the thousands of vacant properties back into use.

And Sinn Féin will introduce rent certainty and security of tenure by linking any increases to an index such as the consumer price index.

We will do this because we believe everyone has the right to a home.

### ***The Crisis in Health***

These parties which have been in government for decades now are responsible for the shameful and disgraceful state of our health systems.

Despite the huge efforts and hard work of health workers the reality is that our health service is a mess.

The reports of elderly people, children, and the very sick being left on trolleys, sometimes for days, are part of the every-day narrative of life for ordinary people in this state.

This week the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation revealed that the level of overcrowding in our Emergency Departments is at a record high.

In July waiting lists for surgeries stood at an all-time high of almost seven hundred thousand people.

Who is to blame?

Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, Labour are to blame.

Sinn Féin has the vision, the policies, and the political will to end the crisis in our hospitals and build the health service that people need and deserve.

This means ending the trolley crisis in our emergency departments through proper investment and resourcing of community care.

Sinn Féin is absolutely committed to creating a public health care system based on need and funded by progressive taxation.

Healthcare, like housing, should be a right for all citizens and not a privilege for the well-off.

That should be the starting point. The principle. The objective.

It's all about equality.

About the rights of citizens.

About a rights based society.

And the right to a home and to health care is a fundamental part of this.

So too there must be protection and support for families, farmers and businesses that are the victim of environmental disasters.

Last week with Seanadóir Pádraig Mac Lochlainn I visited Inishowen and Derry to see for myself the extent of the damage and to speak to flood victims.

Two years ago it was people in Carrick-on-Shannon, Clare, Galway and Louth who faced the trauma of coping with the damage and disruption caused by floods.

The government is in default on its international commitment to cut emissions that contribute to global warming.

The government has still not produced the Flood Risk Management Plans that are required under the EU Floods Directive which came into force in 2010.

Nor has it put in place insurance cover for families, businesses and farmers faced with the ever present threat of flooding.

The government has not matched the efforts of neighbours, of communities, of council workers, first responders. Daniel O'Donnell and his country and western friends have done more for the beleaguered people of Inisowen than the Taoiseach.

### **BREXIT**

Brexit is most serious social, economic and political threat to the island of Ireland for a generation.

The people of the North voted against Brexit.

The Irish government has a responsibility to defend that vote and to act in the best interests of all the people of this island.

The Taoiseach also has a responsibility to defend the Good Friday Agreement which Brexit threatens and to ensure that EU citizens living in the North continue to have their EU rights protected after Brexit.

The policy positions unveiled by the British Government over the past number of weeks, including leaving the Customs Union, will cost jobs, and undermine the two economies on this island.

The decision by the British Labour Party, to seek continued British membership of the single market and customs union during any transitional arrangement, is a welcome development.

The Irish government should insist, and the Taoiseach must make it clear at the EU summit planned for October, that failure by the British to make progress must mean that the Brexit negotiations are not ready to move to the next stage of discussions.

It is also time for the Irish government to accept that the best protection for the island of Ireland in any post Brexit arrangement is for the North to be designated Special Status within the EU.

Brexit has also reenergised and reshaped the debate about a united Ireland.

That demands a new approach aimed at unlocking unionist opposition to a new future by reminding them of the positive contribution they have made to society on this island.

Instead of concentrating on the negative aspects of our four centuries of shared history I suggest that we embrace the areas of agreement and of co-operation; of good neighbourliness and the common good.

I encourage everybody to join this public discussion and debate.

Sinn Féin is seeking the support of all parties in the Oireachtas for a committee on Irish Unity.

We will also be bringing forward a White Paper on Irish Unity.

And we want to see a referendum on unity in the next five years.

We believe that this is achievable and winnable.

We also believe that this should be government policy.

### ***The Crisis in the North***

Contrary to the bogus argument being put by some it is self-evident that Sinn Féin is fully committed to the power sharing institutions agreed in the Good Friday Agreement.

In the face of disrespect and inequality and an absence of integrity by some; the failure to implement previous agreements, and the Renewable Heat Incentive scandal, Martin took the right decision and resigned.

His stand was vindicated in the Assembly and Westminster elections.

The political institutions can only work if they are based on equality, respect and integrity.

Last week's proposal by the DUP Leader Arlene Foster for a parallel process is a non-runner, and she knew this.

But it did contain a welcome acknowledgement that the Irish language threatens no one.

I'm sure the crocodiles are delighted to hear that.

And it did include a promise of legislation.

Cuirim fáilte roimh an athrú sin.

This is welcome also.

But more than soft words are required.

Michelle O'Neill has called for a short time-framed period of exploratory talks to determine whether progress is possible or not.

If the DUP is serious let them engage in that process.

But so there is no ambiguity let me repeat what I said last week.

There will be no return to the Assembly or Executive without a stand-alone Irish Language Act and agreement on the resolution of other outstanding issues.

### ***Sinn Féin's Ten Year Plan***

Sinn Féin is currently finalising our ten-year plan.

This has been the focus of much internal discussion for the last year.

It is about preparing the party for the next ten years and to ensure that we are better able to achieve our strategic objectives.

At this event in this venue last year Martin McGuinness made it clear that we had a plan for orderly leadership change.

None of us knew that Martin would become terminally ill and that we would meet this year without him.

We don't have time to reflect on these mysteries of life and death this morning or on the loss of such a wonderful comrade and leader.

Suffice to say that we miss him deeply.

It is our intention to unveil at the Ard Fheis in November the plan that he helped to formulate.

I will be allowing my name to go forward for the position of Uachtarán Shinn Féin.

And if elected I will be setting out our priorities and in particular our planned process of generational change, including my own future intentions.

### ***Call to Act***

Finally, let me remind all of you that Sinn Féin is at our strongest electorally since the 1918 election.

Over half a million citizens have voted Sinn Féin in recent elections.

We had two outstanding elections this year in the North.

This is a credit to everyone in this room, and across this island who are members of, worked for, and voted for Sinn Féin.

It is also a huge responsibility.

Tá an jab atá romhainn soiléir.

We must continue working hard in our communities and in all of the political institutions.

We must convince more people that change is possible.

I also expect the referendum to repeal the Eight Amendment will be held soon and Sinn Féin will campaign strongly for a YES vote.

It's about putting women first.

The Eighth Amendment is a relic of the past.

It has to go. It must be replaced with compassion.

Sinn Féin will campaign enthusiastically and energetically for the eighth amendment to be repealed.

We will urge all of those who oppose inequality and discrimination to join us in this.

In conclusion let me encourage all of you to engage fully in the discussions and conversations we will have today and tomorrow.

I thank the team who put together this event so that will have the fullest debates on the most important issues and challenges facing Irish society today.

Enjoy it.

So sin é.

Dul i ngleic go hiomlán le na comhráite a bheidh againn inniu agus amárach.

Gabhaim buíochas leis an bhfoireann a chuir an comhdháil seo le chéile ionas go mbeidh díospóireachtaí again ar na dúshláin is tábhachtaí atá in Éireann faoi lathair.

Go raibh míle maith agaibh a chairde.