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cc: PS/Mr Scott (L&B) -M
 PS/Mr Patten (L&B) -M
 PS/PUS (L&B) -M
 PS/Mr Bloomfield
 Mr Brennan -M
 Mr Barry
 Mr Merifield
 Mr Carvill
 Mr Hamilton
 Mr Abbott -M
 Mr Hewitt, Liaison
 Mr Bickham -M
 Mr Reeve

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SDLP CONFERENCE: ATTITUDES TO SINN FEIN

Mr Reeve's minute of today's date records the scathing attack on Sinn Fein launched by Mr Hume at this year's SDLP Conference. It is worth noting that, in a later debate, the party revealed a much more equivocal attitude to Sinn Fein and one which shows that they have already begun to think seriously about the problems which will arise at district council level, post-May 1985.

X// 2. In the section on constitutional affairs, Eddie McGrady introduced a motion rejecting "any pact, alliance or understanding" with Sinn Fein. Delegates were perfectly happy to denounce electoral pacts but were keen to reserve the party's position on the question of co-operating with Sinn Fein at council level. Fergus McQuillan from Fermanagh spoke for many when he said, "I condemn Sinn Fein but I'd prefer any one of them as chairman to the 'moderate' Raymond Ferguson". It was clear from the debate that a considerable number of the party's local councillors are quite prepared to work alongside Sinn Fein after May 1985, especially if the alternative is to allow unionists to take control. In the end, the motion was rescued when Mr McGrady returned to the platform and emphasised that he was not talking about a "modus vivendi" for the conduct of day-to-day council business.

3. The question of a working accommodation at council level between the SDLP and Sinn Fein was first raised publicly by Brian Feeney in September of last year. At that time, Mr Hume told us to ignore Feeney's remarks because it would be the SDLP's leadership who would determine party policy. Mr McGrady himself made it clear in conversation with PAB that Feeney's views were unrepresentative. Quite obviously, the Feeney line has prevailed and, despite the unease of Mr Hume and others, we can expect to see a fair degree of co-operation between the SDLP and Sinn Fein on council business following this year's elections.

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