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FROM: P N BELL  
BRITISH SECRETARY  
14 OCTOBER 1997

DESK IMMEDIATE

ASST 03 18/10  
SEC 15 OCT 1997  
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- cc: PS/Mr Murphy (B&L)
- PS/Mr Ingram (B&L)
- PS/Mr Worthington (B&L)
- PS/Lord Dubs (B&L)
- PS/PUS (B&L)
- PS/Mr Semple
- Mr Thomas
- Mr Steele
- Mr Blackwell
- Mr Daniell
- Mr Leach
- Mr Shannon
- Mr Stephens
- Mr Watkins
- Mr Woods (B&L)
- Mr Beeton
- Mr Brooker
- Mrs Collins
- Mr D Ferguson
- Mr Hill
- Mr Maccabe
- Mr Perry
- Mr Priestly
- Mr Warner
- Mr Fergusson, RID
- HMA, Dublin
- Mr Fisher
- Ms McGimpsey

C

*Mr Jones*  
21/10  
*Mrs McAuley*  
*Mr Stevens*  
LD 21/10

PS/SECRETARY OF STATE (B&L)

**AI SECRETARIAT CHRISTMAS PARTY: INVITING SINN FEIN**

We have already given colleagues advance notice of this year's Maryfield Christmas Party on 9 December. It is customary for David Donoghue and myself to invite representatives of all the parties taking part in the Talks. The Unionists and Loyalists have so far never come,

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but - except where individuals have indicated that invitations are "offensive" - we have always invited them. In my view, we should maintain this practice. But it would mean, this time, that we would be jointly inviting (a limited number of) representatives of Sinn Féin. Now that Sinn Féin are, following the restoration of their ceasefire and full membership of the Talks, a "constitutional party", I can see no justification for not extending an invitation which, almost certainly, they will accept.

2. Nevertheless, such an invitation, would not be without its downside: once news of a Sinn Féin presence became common place, it would intensify Unionist dislike of the Secretariat (which we are discussing later today); it could generate some security risk; it might even deter other guests - although I greatly hope not, from wishing to attend, as well as creating some management problems within the Secretariat itself. The Christmas spirit will not come entirely free this year.

3. To sum up, the case for extending a joint invitation to Sinn Féin is irresistible. But, given the likely reaction in some quarters, I wish to be certain that Ministers know all the implications, and are content that I should proceed with inviting a few leading Sinn Féin players along with other leading NI politicians.

*Signed:*

*P N BELL*

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