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Tuesday, November 4, 2008

DUP challenge to Adams on role in IRA

DAN KEENAN, Northern News Editor

SENIOR DUP figures have used an Assembly debate on the so-called Disappeared to challenge the role played by Sinn Féin president Gerry Adams during the Troubles.

The debate, on a motion tabled by the SDLP calling for those with information about the Disappeared to come forward, saw a series of allegations concerning Mr Adams and the IRA.

North Belfast DUP Assembly member Nelson McCausland alleged Mr Adams had joined the IRA in 1966 and had progressed through the ranks to become the Belfast commander, a position he held when some of the Disappeared were abducted, killed and secretly buried.

Mr Adams told the House he wanted to "deny and refute" the claims, which have been levelled at him before.

Mr McCausland alleged: "Adams joined the IRA in 1966, at the age of 18, and he went with the Provisionals in 1970.

The following year he was the IRA commander in Ballymurphy. He became second in command in the Belfast brigade staff and then in 1972 the Belfast commander of the IRA. Gerry Adams was in command of the IRA when McKee, Wright and Jean McConville were murdered."

He said he did not believe the denials of IRA involvement. Referring to a call by Mr Adams for an independent truth commission to be established he added: "Perhaps Gerry Adams will tell us what he knows about the Disappeared.

"Perhaps he will tell us what he knows about the perpetrators of these crimes, for they are the people who know where the bodies were buried and it is only their information that can see the bodies of the Disappeared brought home for burial."

Speaking on the motion, which he supported, Mr Adams simply said: "I want to deny and refute the assertion made by the member for North

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Belfast."

He told members republicans who had been involved in the conflict had already passed on information about the Disappeared.

"I want to acknowledge once again the grave injustice inflicted on these families and to express my deep regret about this," he said.

Earlier, in questions to the Deputy First Minister, Martin McGuinness, denied that he sought to turn a H-block at the Maze prison into a shrine to republicanism. Instead, Mr McGuinness said he wished to see a shrine to peace-building which would have relevance across the world.

DUP Minister for Culture Gregory Campbell is expected to publish development proposals for the former Maze site.

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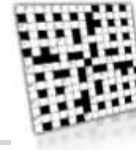
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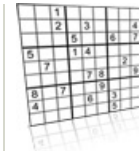
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