

*Pw.P. Molyneaux*

JTA/ER/P.L.

18/12/87

The Rt. Hon. James Molyneaux, J.P., M.P.  
Leader - The Ulster Unionist Party,  
House of Commons,  
LONDON, SW1A 0AA.

Your letter of 16th December rather suprised me.

On the day of my election as Leader I said publicly that I would be writing to the other Party Leaders with the intention of opening the lines of communication. I followed this up writing to you shortly afterwards. In your kind reply of the 27th October you suggested making contact in mid November to arrange a private meeting and I confirmed this by return letter.

I must confess that when, by mid December, I had heard nothing further I had rather assumed that you had gone cold on the idea of a meeting and that nothing was likely to be forthcoming. Perhaps I was mistaken.

When asked by the press about my letter to Party Leaders, and in the present climate, when many people are keen for talks, I thought that it would be uncharitable and invidious to say that you had not taken up the invitation but that Nationalist Leaders had and therefore in order not to compromise anyone I said simply that there had been "some response from the Unionist side". Whatever others have said or have wished to believe I did not at any stage say that I was embarking "on a round of discussion with Party Leaders" - that would have been pompous indeed. I did, however, make no secret of the fact that I have been involved in a round of discussions with a range of people, political and otherwise. I would certainly be sorry if a misrepresentation of the position has put you in difficulties.

I would remain keen to hear of your views and position, at first hand, and not through the inevitable distortion (wilfull and otherwise) of media reporting and I would have absolutely no objections to your informing and indeed involving any of your colleagues in such a meeting.

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I very much appreciate your writing to me since it gives me an opportunity to correct any misunderstandings. Many a lesser man might have simply said nothing and harboured an unnecessary grievance.

I look forward to hearing from you, but, in the meantime, Best Wishes for Christmas and a more Peaceful and Prosperous 1988 for all our people.

Dr. John T. Alderdice  
PARTY LEADER