

ALLIANCE LEADER DR JOHN ALDERDICE HAS DESCRIBED A STATEMENT FROM THE DUP LEADER DR IAN PAISLEY AS A BARE-FACED LIE, AND HAS DEMANDED AN IMMEDIATE APOLOGY.

DR ALDERDICE SAID:

"I HAVE IN MY HAND A COPY OF A STATEMENT FROM IAN PAISLEY IN WHICH I AM ACCUSED OF NOT BEING PREPARED TO MAKE MYSELF AVAILABLE FOR A MEETING OF THE FOUR PARTY LEADERS IN LONDON TOMORROW. I THINK IT ONLY RIGHT TO INFORM THE PEOPLE OF NORTHERN IRELAND THAT THIS IS A LIE.

MANY TIMES IN THE PAST IAN PAISLEY HAS ATTEMPTED TO MISLEAD THE PEOPLE OF NORTHERN IRELAND BY TWISTING THE TRUTH, BUT ON THIS OCCASION AT LEAST, THE STATEMENT ISSUED IN HIS NAME IS SIMPLY A BARE-FACED LIE.

WHILE HE CONTINUES TO DITHER ABOUT WHETHER TO ENGAGE IN TALKS OR NOT, I HAD ALREADY MADE CLEAR TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S OFFICIALS, IMMEDIATELY ON RECEIPT OF MR BROOKE'S LETTER, THAT I WAS PREPARED TO GO TO LONDON AT ANY TIME. WHETHER OR NOT IT WAS CONVENIENT TO ME I WAS PREPARED TO GO. I WOULD GO THERE ON THURSDAY, I WOULD GO THERE ON FRIDAY, I WOULD GO THERE ON MONDAY, I WOULD GO AT ANY TIME. THIS STATEMENT WOULD SUGGEST THAT DR PAISLEY IS ATTEMPTING TO COVER OVER HIS OWN RELUCTANCE TO NEGOTIATE BY TELLING BLATANT LIES ABOUT OTHER PARTICIPANTS.

IF DR PAISLEY WILL WITHDRAW THESE COMMENTS FULLY, AS DID MR BROOKE EARLIER THIS WEEK ON ANOTHER MATTER, THEN I WILL REGARD THIS SLANDER AS SOMETHING THAT HAS NEVER HAPPENED, IF HE DOES NOT, I AND MANY OTHERS WILL FIND IT HARD TO TRUST TO HIS INTEGRITY."