



# PACE

An Association for  
Protestant and Catholic Encounter

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17 September 1998

Rt Hon David Trimble MP and Mr Seamus Mallon MP  
Parliament Buildings  
Stormont  
BT4

Dear Mr Trimble and Mr Mallon

At our recent meeting of the PACE executive, I was asked to write to you regarding the composition of the Civic Forum which is soon to be established. It is not yet clear which groups and individuals are to be included in this non-elected body, but we assume that it will include those who have made a significant contribution towards the quality of life in Northern Ireland and particularly towards the building of good and wholesome relationships between the two religious and political traditions.

We feel strongly that those who have been involved in the work of peace and reconciliation over a long period of time should be represented on the Civic Forum. It is difficult to assess objectively the contribution which groups such as PACE, Corrymeela, Women Together, the Peace People, NICHS, All Children Together, inter-church groups etc have made, but we have all been doing our best to encourage harmony, good will and mutual respect and understanding against a background of sectarian hatred and violence.

PACE is the longest established peace and reconciliation group in the province, having been formed in 1968. Since then we have kept the lines of communication going between our two communities with regular meetings and cross-community projects, through our network of PACE groups. A significant part of our programme has been the organisation of a number of successful conferences on topics such as 'Fair Employment', 'Perspectives on the release of politically motivated prisoners', 'Law and Order', 'Education for Mutual Understanding' etc, many of these well in advance of government action.

We feel strongly that the new assembly provides an excellent opportunity for those, who want to see a happy and just society established, to pull together for the good of all. A well balanced Civic Forum can be of great assistance in this task. Those of us from the peace and reconciliation sector feel that we have a positive and strong contribution to make, and that we can provide significant input on the many topics at issue. We appeal to you therefore to include a strong representation from this section of our community.

We, on the PACE executive, take this opportunity to commend you both for the courage and statesmanship which you have shown during the difficult process of negotiation and the initial work of the assembly. Long may it continue. We wish you every success in your work.

Yours sincerely

*Sloan Bell.*

Sloan Bell  
Co-chairperson  
PACE Executive