

The Alliance Party of Northern Ireland

Alliance

Headquarters

88 University Street
Belfast BT7 1HE

Tel (01232) 324274 Fax (01232) 333147
e-mail alliance_party@cix.compulink.co.uk

" P R E S S R E L E A S E "

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Alderdice Criticises local MPs on Education Cuts

Speaking to the Annual Meeting of Newtownabbey Alliance, the Party Leader, Lord Alderdice, said that local MPs cannot avoid their share of the blame for recent education cuts.

Lord Alderdice said: "Across Northern Ireland, the effects of the government spending cuts are now being felt. This is nowhere more obvious than in education, where we face the prospect of 500 teachers being sacked, along with caretakers, cleaners, secretaries and crossing patrols.

"Unionist and SDLP politicians have been quick to attack the government for these cuts. But they should not be allowed to escape their own responsibility.

"On 3rd December last, the House of Commons divided over the question of cutting income tax by a penny in the pound. The Liberal Democrats emphasised the need for more spending on education and linked this to opposing the income tax cut.

"Not a single Northern Ireland MP supported them. The tax cut was carried by 316 votes (all Tories) to 35 - who were Liberal Democrat, SNP and Plaid Cymru, with a few Labour members.

"If Ulster Unionist, DUP and SDLP MPs are so concerned about education, where were they on 3rd December? Why did they not vote against the tax cut so that the money could be spent on education?"

"One penny on income tax is worth £1.7 billion pounds across the UK. Northern Ireland's share of £57 million would have saved all the jobs under threat. In fact it would allow a small decrease in class sizes as well as the expansion of nursery education and big inroads into the terrible backlog of urgent repairs to schools.

"It is easy to scream and shout in objection to Government policy. But Northern Ireland needs greater responsibility on the part of its politicians."

Further information: Richard Good 0468 151972
(pager) 01426 245779
or David Ford 0836 641095