

TO: DAVID FORD

FROM: JOHN ALDERDICE

FOR FRONT PAGE OF ALLIANCE NEWS

PLEASE NOTE THAT THERE SHOULD ALSO BE SOMETHING ABOUT THE DEATH OF THE DAUGHTER AND MOTHER OF FORMER CLLR, FELICITY BOYD, AND THE AWARDS TO THE VARIOUS MEMBERS.

IF YOU WANT A FILLER YOU COULD INCLUDE THE NEWS THAT THE CITY COUNCIL HAS AGREED TO ARRANGE A MEMORIAL RECITAL ON THE MULHOLLAND ORGAN FOR HENRY DUNLEATH. YOU CAN GET DETAILS FROM ME.

THE DECLARATION GIVES US ALL A CHANCE

The New Year sees John Major and Albert Reynolds giving unprecedented time to the affairs of Northern Ireland. In the past we could depend only on transient, atrocity-based, interest from the Heads of the two Governments. Now they both assure us that from their first meeting in Downing Street, they agreed to make Northern Ireland a top priority. Alliance has warmly welcomed the Joint Declaration. The energy with which the two Prime Ministers have pursued its outcome gives reason to hope that Northern Ireland really is now at the top of the agenda, where it belongs.

The fact that both leaders are giving attention to the advice of the Alliance Party Leader, Dr John Alderdice, is further cause for hope. Many of you will have heard him call, at the 1993 Party Conference for them to 'kick-start' the process by moving into 'strand three' (the inter-governmental meetings). They responded positively, and in a number of meetings with each of them since last summer, Dr Alderdice has continued to advise and encourage.

Alliance is in a unique position to help the process along - pressing the Irish Government to recognize that the people of Northern Ireland must determine their own future, free of coercion - persuading unionists that Northern Ireland only has a future if all its people feel that this is **their** community, and that they are valued and protected in it - encouraging nationalists to place their relationships with unionists and others in Northern Ireland, above the achievement of

unification - refusing to allow the British Government to distance itself from its responsibility to find a resolution of this ancient feud, in which it is a participant, not merely an observer - insisting to all on the absolute priority of peace, reconciliation, and an honourable compromise.

Whilst everyone will continue, with varying levels of conviction to hope that Sinn Fein/IRA, and their Loyalist counterparts decide to bring violence to an end and pursue democratic methods, we cannot allow our future to be decided by the terrorists. That is why Alliance has not only offered to participate in the Taoiseach's proposed Forum for Peace and Reconciliation, but urged that it should go ahead without Sinn Fein if the violence does not end. That is why the Alliance Leader told the Friends of the Union that Northern Ireland cannot be protected by looking to the past, or wishing that the present was different, but only by helping to create a new Northern Ireland made in the image of all our people, not just the unionists.

The crucial issue now is time. The DUP will want to use the 1994 Euro-Election to wreck everything. It is a race against time to ensure that these extremists, who have done so much to damage our province, have no longer a viable platform on which to campaign. The concluding words of 'Governing with Consent' published in 1988, are no bad mission statement for us in 1994 - "We remain under no illusions about the difficulty of the task that is ahead. But the prize of achieving a political framework capable of offering an end to one of the most bitter inter-communal conflicts of the twentieth century is a considerable one. No-one should doubt the determination of the Alliance Party to see that prize grasped for the whole community in Northern Ireland."