

decision to come to Northern Ireland

"It is well known that Northern Ireland was on the 'shopping list' of possible countries because of a family connection. Holian managing director Dr Paul Yong's daughter went to school here, and now studies medicine at Queen's University.

Politicians join peace picket at UDA

LEADING politicians from Northern Ireland and the Republic joined a "Stop the Killing" picket at the UDA headquarters in Belfast this afternoon.

More than 50 protesters, some bearing placards with the message "Give Peace a Chance", gave their support to the New Consensus peace group's demonstration.

It was the group's first ever picket outside a paramilitary organisation in the province and a follow-up to their recent protest at

Sinn Fein's annual meeting in Dublin.

Those attending included Alliance leader John Alderdice, leading Ulster Unionist officer Dr Christopher McGimpsey and Worker's Party leader Mr Seamus Lynch.

Five TDs scheduled to turn up were unable to attend because of business in the Dail.

Dr McGimpsey vowed the picket was simply the first of many the group have planned.

"There is certainly ostensible opposition to violence and we will continue as long as people continue to kill people in our names," he said. "We are saying that these groups should represent people by constitutional and democratic methods and judging by the turn-out many agree with us."

Mr Alderdice said he felt the picket would have the support of the majority of Ulster people.

"We have been tremendously encouraged over the last couple of years that across the political spectrum in the Republic and Northern Ireland there has been a stronger and stronger voice against violence," he explained.

Mr Seamus Lynch, joined campaigners in the rain outside the east Belfast HO.

East meets West... Miss Rebecca Ng, chief executive of the video division, Barney (UK), Dundonald, with technician Mr Lawrence Stewart, from Glengormley, with components for blank videos which are manufactured with other injection-moulded items at the factory. The factory will be opened officially tomorrow by Sir Eric McDowell, chairman of the Industrial Development Board.

Brooke offers parties a carrot in new initiative

SECRETARY of State Mr Peter Brooke today offered the political parties a clear fall-back position to protect their interests, if they accepted the formula agreed with Dublin for starting formal inter-party negotiations.

Mr Brooke, it is clear, is banking a groundswell of public support in the province for a new political dialogue to steer the parties to the negotiating table and rescue his 14-month initiative from collapse.

In an obvious move to convince the politicians that they can begin talks without pressure to take immediate decisions, he said: "Nobody would be asked to form a judgment on what the future would hold until they were looking at the total package."

Mr Brooke's formula means that the three strands of the proposed talks — an internal agreement for administering the province, Belfast-Dublin relations and implications for the future of the Anglo-Irish Agreement — may be discussed in sequence, without prejudice to the parties' eventual decision to accept or reject the entire package.

In reality, both the Unionists and the SDLP would retain a veto throughout negotiations.

Both Unionist leaders are reserving judgment at this stage amid suspicions by some at Westminster that, increasingly, their minds are looking to the outcome of the General Election.

But the initial reaction from Strangford MP Mr John Taylor and East Belfast MP Mr Peter Robinson suggests that both parties will consider the proposition seriously.

His aim is to deliver a statement to the Commons, one way or another, before MPs adjourn for their two-week Easter recess on March 28.

If the parties agree to accept the formula — and this is still far from certain — Mr Brooke would be able to move to begin the negotiations by mid-April.

The direct involvement of Prime Minister Mr John Major and the Taoiseach, Mr Charles Haughey, who both gave their approval to the still-confidential text, is a deliberate attempt to lever the parties to the table.

Although he rejected Labour criticism that his invitation amounts to an ultimatum, Mr Brooke again made clear today that he will make the text public, even if the parties refuse to accept the basis for talks.

Asked today what would happen if the parties rejected his plan, Mr Brooke said: "Well, we would then sit down and discuss."

"The one thing which I would do is to publish the document so that everybody can see what it was that failed to secure agreement.

"I hope that it will be possible for me to make a statement,

By **Desmond McCartan**

which the document is, in the House of Commons as a prelude to talks."

The document was intended to provide a formula "which I hope would be acceptable to everyone".

Mr Brooke said that the talks about talks could have gone on indefinitely "on some sort of domino basis".

"What I have done is to take responsibility myself for putting forward a document which I have sent to everyone simultaneously.

"I have said that it is not an amendable document and people must decide, on balance, whether they can accept it or not."

Asked about Unionist views on Dublin's role in future relationships, Mr Brooke said: "There is an absolute willingness on the part of the Unionist leaders, an expressed willingness, to get to conversations with the Government of the Republic under conditions which we have agreed in advance."

With the Cabinet also giving its backing to the proposals, Mr Brooke has embarked on a final effort to prevent failure of the initiative which he launched 14 months ago. Labour is worried that, if the parties reject the invitation, it will be a serious setback to political development in the province.

As Northern Ireland's political parties today set about dissecting Mr Brooke's document, initial impressions were that it contained no new elements and no surprises.

The Ulster Unionists, DUP, SDLP and Alliance have all pledged to give it close, constructive study before responding to Mr Brooke by Easter.

Members of the Ulster Unionists' executive committee were holding their quarterly meeting this afternoon and expecting to hear initial impressions from party leader Mr Jim Molyneux.

Before then, though, a note of caution was sounded by Glengall Street's chief executive, Mr Jim Wilson, who was concerned about the speed with which the Taoiseach, Mr Charles Haughey, was able to give an almost immediate "full acceptance" verdict after Mr Brooke made his Commons statement yesterday afternoon.

Mr Wilson said: "Any document which has been so readily accepted by Dublin will have to be read more than once by Ulster Unionists."

More reports on Page 15

the top 100 shares, nau dropped 6.9 points below its overnight close to 2493.7.

The index closed yesterday at a record high of 2500.6 points on the strength of speculation on base rate cuts and a strong rally in New York.

Belfast dealing

THE market continued to fire ahead in early dealings this morning, but fell back later on. Business remained fairly brisk.

TSB 162, British Telecom 342, Abbey National 273, Glaxo 1010, Hanson 247, Argos 292, BTR 418, Prudential Corp 260, Amstrad 85, Hunterprint 30, Unilever 745.

TV cutbacks

ANGLIA Television, one of ITV's most successful companies, yesterday announced the loss of 95 jobs, including some compulsory redundancies, in an effort to cut costs and keep its franchise.

■ FT Index

THE FTSE 100 Index at 1pm was down 3.8 at 2496.8. The FT30 Index was down 12.3 at 1986.2

London

BRITISH FUNDS

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| Consols | 24-3/8 | ■ + 1/8 |
| 2 1/2 | | |
| Conversions | 58-1/2 | ■ + 1/8 |
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| 5 3/4 87-91 | 92-15/32 | + 3/32 |
| 6 93 | | |
| Treasury | 114-9/16 | + 5/32 |
| 2 1/2 116 | 61-3/8 | + 3/8 |
| 5 1/2 08-12 | 93-3/8 | + 3/8 |
| 8 1/2 97 | 96-17/32 | + 3/16 |
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