

PRIVATE &
CONFIDENTIAL

A POLITICAL ACTION PLAN FOR ALLIANCE 1990-1993

In the present political climate it seems unlikely, despite the present talks with the Secretary of State, that political progress towards devolution on a power sharing basis will be achieved in the near future, so long as it is dependent on agreement being reached amongst the Northern Ireland political parties.

This being the case Alliance should direct its efforts towards the achievement of other definite, attainable political targets. Since Alliance's fundamental aim is to unite the community and defeat sectarianism, political success in defeating extremism at the polls would have a major impact, not only for Alliance but most importantly for the Northern Ireland community, making a political resolution more possible.

Two political targets meet the criteria of being significant, realistic, measureable and desirable.

- A. To win at least one Westminster seat.
- B. To win more seats than Sinn Fein at the 1993 Local Government Elections.

TO WIN A WESTMINSTER SEAT.

There are four seats in which there is a theoretical possibility of Alliance winning. In North Down, South Belfast, East Antrim and East Belfast, Alliance has in the past had a significant vote, and in the context of a split vote it is possible that a seat could be snatched. (In all cases from a unionist party.)

Since resources are limited it is wisest to concentrate on one at the next election. In South Belfast and North Down no clear experienced candidate has been identified. Recent election results have also been less promising. In East Antrim there is a good candidate who has taken 25% of the vote, but the association is weak on finance and manpower, and the seat is held by OUP which is maintaining its position. In East Belfast, there is good manpower and finance, a candidate who took 32% of the poll last time round, and a history of a near miss in 1979. The seat is held by the DUP who are on the slide.

It therefore seems clear that the best opportunity exists in East Belfast.

THE CONSTITUENCY

East Belfast Imperial Constituency has a very largely protestant electorate. It consists of the Victoria local government area, plus a major part of Pottinger and a small part of Castlereagh,

It contains much of the heavy engineering industry in the city, though this base has been eroded over the past fifteen years. The level of unemployment is not particularly high however, since the fall in heavy engineering jobs has been compensated by an increase in commercial and service industry jobs. There are still pockets of deprivation in the constituency but overall conditions for the people have improved markedly in the last ten years. There are a significant number of new owner-occupier developments.

The seat was originally a Unionist seat, with a significant Labour vote. Alliance built a base here in the 1970's on strong constituency work, winning much of the Labour vote. The DUP, whose headquarters is in the constituency, won the seat on an even three-way split in 1979 and consolidated their position in the succeeding election in 1983. Since then the Unionist Party has not contested a Westminster Election in the Constituency.

In recent years the DUP has been slipping in support, as has been the case throughout the province. The OUP has maintained its position at local government elections, despite major internal difficulties in the constituency. Alliance fell back reaching a low point in the 1986 By-Elections called after the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. After this time the previous Alliance Leader, Sir Oliver Napier, was replaced by Dr John Alderdice. His father had been a presbyterian minister in the constituency some years before and so he was known to many local people. His first election in 1987 brought a remarkable result, when as a political unknown he improved the Alliance vote to 32%, beyond its previous best performances.

The Unionist Leader, Jim Molyneux described the seat as a marginal after this performance.

At the time Dr Alderdice had only been living in the constituency for less than three years and was politically unknown. He had only been selected a couple of months before the election and had little background in constituency work. Since then he has become Party Leader, and in the 1989 Local Government Election he topped the poll in Victoria and won the council seat previously held by Sir Oliver Napier.

The Unionist Party has indicated that it will contest the seat next time around, but has no obvious high profile candidate. The Conservatives have organized in the constituency and had said that they too will fight, but have not yet tested the water, and have no candidate.

Since the DUP holds the Westminster seat but its support is slipping. This must now be seen as a vulnerable seat, especially in the setting of a four-way split.

EAST BELFAST RESULTS 1975-1989

| | OUP | DUP | ALL | SDLP |
|------------------|------------|------------|------------------|---------------------|
| 1975 Convention | 16615 | 3606 | 6341 (19%) | NILP+UPNI = 7037 |
| 1979 Westminster | 15930 | 15994 | 15066 (29.5%) | |
| 1982 Assembly | 9041 | 15544 | 9003 (26.8%) | |
| 1983 Westminster | 9642 | 17631 | 9373 (24%) | 519 |
| 1985 POTTINGER | | | 1019 (8%) | 340 |
| VICTORIA | 6595(41%) | 5142(32%) | 3587 (23%) | 188 |
| TOTAL | 10142(36%) | 10973(39%) | 4606 (17%) | 528 |
| 1986 Westminster | | 27607 | 5917 (17%) | |
| 1987 Westminster | | 20372 | 10574 (32%) | |
| 1989 POTTINGER | | | 1296 (12% +3.8%) | |
| VICTORIA | 5342(39%) | 3212(24%) | 4189 (31% +7.9%) | |
| TOTAL | | | 5485 (24% +5.0%) | |

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE TO DATE.

A. THE CANDIDATE

The candidate moved in 1984 to live, and in 1988 to work, in the constituency. He is a Consultant Psychiatrist and has taken a part-time contract in order to give him the freedom and facility to work on his political life.

Since being elected Party Leader he has concentrated on building up the Party, and this has been quite successful. Party Headquarters has been completely renovated and re-equipped, and the money for this has been almost completely raised from within the party and supporters. The 1989 Local Government Election saw the number of Alliance Councillors increase from 32 to 38. This was a significant reversal of the downward trend of the previous ten years.

He has now made election to Westminster his major priority and is beginning to concentrate more heavily on the constituency. He uses a small office in his home which he has equipped with Word Processor, Fax, Photocopier, etc., to conduct his constituency work. There is back-up from Party HQ.

(For further details on the candidate see attached CV)

B. THE LOCAL ALLIANCE ASSOCIATION

On the decision of the East Belfast Alliance Executive Committee, a small team of activists has been drawn together from all areas of the constituency. It has been set the task of getting the Party Leader, Dr John Alderdice, elected to Westminster at the next General Election.

Initial discussions have taken place on a number of occasions in Belfast and London, with Mr Andrew Ellis, former General Secretary of the Liberal Party and Social & Liberal Democrats. He has undertaken to give advice on the conduct of the campaign,

Subsequent to this it was decided that there were four main areas of work to be commenced immediately - constituency work, organization, publicity and finance.

1.0 CONSTITUENCY WORK

1.1 There is already one constituency surgery for one hour each week. It was decided to try to establish a further centre, and an application has been made for the use of a Belfast City Council community centre. A decision is expected on this in the next two weeks.

1.2 A Meet-the-people campaign should be commenced, in which the candidate would go into an area on one night each week with a group of volunteers and knock doors; picking up constituency problems and getting known locally. A MTP Campaign Manager was appointed. He has drawn up a plan which rotates through the six areas of the constituency. The campaign has been under way for some weeks. It is generating a great deal of constituency work.

2.0 ORGANIZATION

2.1 A Constituency Organizer (and Deputy) have been appointed and a selection meeting called for 5 June.

2.2 No significant advances had been made in the use of new technology in election campaigns in Northern Ireland by the Alliance Party. The advice from Andrew Ellis was that the use of the Liberal Democrats computerized system would be of great advantage. It was decided to undertake this approach. A party member has purchased a large, high quality PC which will be available for this work. At least one further, smaller, IBM compatible PC is available. The Electoral Office has agreed to make computer tapes of the electoral register available to the PPC. The candidate has visited DECS in Wincanton and has been briefed on the system, and terms have been agreed. This system will be established within the next month. There are some years of canvass returns, constituency work, and other data ready to be fed on to the programme over the summer.

2.3 On nights when the candidate is not in an area for a MTP campaign local activists will use the last election canvass returns for a membership drive.

3.0 PUBLICITY

3.1 Since the candidate is also Party Leader, a high profile is being maintained and backed up by Party HQ.

3.2 Locally two projects are being undertaken immediately.

A Local Advice card with the names of the candidate and his council colleagues, and the details of the Advice Surgeries is being designed.

A Councillors letter giving details of the achievements of the councillors since their election last year is also being prepared.

Both will be circulated throughout the constituency before the summer.

4.0 FINANCE

Since the Association is one of the major dependable sources of income for the Party centrally, and since manpower will be needed to work on the campaign there is a limit to how much of the funding can be provided by the local association. Some initial approaches are being explored for funding, but so far no outside funds are available.

4.1 A small fund-raising committee will be established to oversee this aspect of the campaign.

4.2 Andrew Ellis advised that if possible a constituency office should be opened. Party HQ has made an application to the Rowntree Trust for funding for a constituency office.

This would provide a major focus for the campaign, and an enormous encouragement and incentive for the team. It would ensure that the work which is being done is processed efficiently and would enable a coordinated campaign to maximize the possibilities of success.

WINNING MORE SEATS THAN SINN FEIN IN 1993

Since the early 1980's Alliance was in retreat and extremism was rising. This tide of extreme politics was stalled at the last two electoral contests in 1989, but it can be reversed not only by taking a seat from the DUP at Westminster but by winning more council seats at the next Local Government Election than Sinn Fein. This would deal a very major blow to SF.

In 1973 Alliance took 63 Council seats. In 1977 this increased to 70, but in the Hunger Strike of 1981 it was halved down to 38, falling in 1985 to 34. Two councillors were forced to resign for family reasons after the fall of the Assembly in 1986 leaving 32. In the last elections in 1989 Alliance increased its representation to 38, while Sinn Fein took 43. Alliance should aim to win more seats than Sinn Fein in the 1993 elections.

The most likely possible gains are in Belfast East and South, Ballymena, Lisburn, North Down, Castlereagh, Omagh, Antrim and Down Councils.

No full campaign plan has yet been established for the achievement of this target.

APPLICATION TO ROWNTREE

The application to Rowntree is for a three-year funding plan 1990-1993.

For the first period from 1990 up until the Westminster Election it would largely be for the establishment and running of a constituency office with a Research Officer and secretarial assistance.

For part of the time until 1991/2, and full-time after the Westminster General Election the Research Officer would work for the Association of Alliance Councillors in order to enable them to maintain a high profile and to campaign effectively to achieve the target of beating Sinn Fein. The staff would be situated at Alliance Party Headquarters during this second period saving considerably on costs.

An estate agent has been asked to supply full costings for such a project, and these are provided as an appendix.

As will be seen considerable reductions in the figures provided by the estate agent are possible, without any reduction in the effectiveness of the campaigns.

DR JOHN T. ALDERDICE

Leader of the Alliance Party. Consultant Psychotherapist. Aged 34 years. Married to a Consultant Histopathologist. They have three young children.

Educated at Ballymena Academy where he was Deputy Head Boy, he went up to Queen's University, Belfast, in 1973 to read medicine. He graduated in 1978, and after completing House Officer posts, he went into Psychiatry, gaining the Membership of the Royal College of Psychiatrists in 1982. He was thereupon appointed Senior Registrar in Psychotherapy, and after four years training was appointed Consultant Psychotherapist (the first holder of such a post in Ireland). A member of the Executive Committee of the Psychotherapy Section of the Irish Division of the Royal College of Psychiatrists since 1983, and Honorary Secretary in 1986-87, he was Co-founder of the Irish Forum for Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy and Honorary Secretary 1986-87. In 1987 he and a colleague established a M.Med.Sc.(Psychotherapy) degree Course at Queen's University, Belfast. He is a member of the Executive Committees of the Psychotherapy Section of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, and the Irish Paediatric Obstetric and Psychiatric Society, a Fellow of the Ulster Medical Society, and an Associate Member of the Association for Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy in the N.H.S. Author of a number of publications on eating disorders and psychotherapy.

He has had a long standing interest in politics. In 1978 he joined the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland. He was elected to the Ruling Council of the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland in 1979, and to the Executive Committee in 1984. He became Policy Convenor of the Party in 1985, and Vice-Chairman in 1987.

His first electoral contest was at the Local Government Election in 1981. The atmosphere was very polarized due to the PIRA Hunger Strike. Although he was not elected he was one of the few Alliance candidates in the election to increase the Alliance share of the vote in his constituency. He moved to East Belfast in 1984, where he soon became Chairman of the East Belfast Alliance Association, and in June 1987 he stood against Peter Robinson MP in the Westminster Election and took 32% of the vote - the highest ever percentage of the vote by any Alliance candidate in any constituency in a Westminster Election.

In October 1987 was elected Leader of the Alliance Party. He is also a member of the Executive Committee of the European Liberal Democratic and Reform Group of the European Community.

In the Local Government Election on May 17th 1989 he topped the poll in the Victoria Ward in East Belfast, in place of former Alliance Leader, Sir Oliver Napier, who had stepped down from his council seat,

In June 1989 he made a marginal increase in the party's 5% showing in the previous European Election in spite of the presence of a number of other non-traditional candidates.