

# The Alliance Party of Northern Ireland Alliance

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## “ P R E S S R E L E A S E ”

19 May 1997

### Alliance Leader Upbeat After Meeting with Blair

Alliance Leader Lord Alderdice emerged this afternoon from a meeting with Prime Minister Tony Blair and Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Mo Mowlam at Number 10 Downing Street in very upbeat mood.

Lord Alderdice said:

"That was a first class meeting. I found it very encouraging. The Prime Minister is both engaged and informed as far as Northern Ireland is concerned. He is setting his mind not only to how to resolve the immediate problems surrounding the parades issue but also to the far more fundamental issue of finding an acceptable settlement.

"I was very happy to be able to give him positive feedback on his speech in Northern Ireland last week. I believe that his openness in telling everyone clearly that officials would meet Sun Fm but within certain parameters reflected an honesty that makes it a real confidence building measure.

"He also injected a sense of realism into the talks process by making clear that it is devolution that is on the agenda not a united Ireland and not independence. That realism can do nothing but good for it means that politicians and people focus on the realistic prospect of power-sharing devolution.

"Finally I urged the PM to maintain the momentum which his new government has created. We have a timeframe within which to operate. The legislation gives the Forum and the Talks a maximum period of one and a half years to deliver. I believe that this should focus minds and energy.

"I am encouraged to believe that the Prime Minister is as impatient to see progress as I am and as I believe the vast majority of Northern Ireland's people are.