

# Alliance

The Alliance Party of Northern Ireland

Headquarters

88 University Street  
Belfast BT7 1HL

Tel: 01832 04772 Fax: 01832 33113  
E-mail: alliance\_party@compuserve.com

## P R E S S   R E L E A S E

9 January 1998

### **Alderdice accuses Mowlam of burying Mitchell Principles and undermining democracy.**

Alliance Leader Lord Alderdice has criticised the Secretary of State for her decision to meet with the leaders of Paramilitary organisations in the prisons. Speaking at the Forum in Belfast Lord Alderdice said:

"I have little doubt that Dr Mowlam believes that she is doing her best to maintain the ceasefires and sustain the Talks Process, but she is mistaken. The paramilitary organisations will not make or break their ceasefires on the basis of meetings with her. I do not believe that the mainstream loyalist paramilitary organisations were about to break their ceasefires formally. In any case both mainstream loyalist and republican groups have continued to use violence in the form of shootings and intimidation through their flags of convenience. But I do not believe that they are on the verge of breaking their ceasefires formally.

"What the secretary of State has done is to bury the Mitchell Principles. Under those Principles those who threaten or use violence should be thrown out of the Talks. Instead the Secretary of State, who cannot find time to be at the Talks, has thrown the process to the side in favour of paramilitaries. In so doing she has undermined democratic politics and even the democratic credentials of Gary McMichael. Her actions say to him, 'I am not interested in your voters but in your paramilitary masters'. Mr. Ahern was talking about moving the process to Austria or Finland, but the Secretary of State has pre-empted him and, while the political process continues at Castle Buildings, the peace process has now de-camped to the Maze. Even Gerry Adams may soon find himself playing second fiddle to Padraig Wilson.

"What are people to think when the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church and a leading Church of Ireland Bishop make plain their concerns in public about

ALD2/2/6/12/2/5

the attention being focussed on extremists and the Secretary of State's response is effectively to say 'I am more concerned to hear from Jonny Adair and Michael Stone than to hear from Sam Hutchinson and Jim McHaffey.

"I do not believe that the Secretary of State appreciates the implications of her own actions. She is concerned that the loyalists do not lose faith in the peace process. I regret to say that my Party has lost faith in her."

For further information contact Richard Good, Alliance Press Officer, on 0468 151972 (mobile) or 01426 245779 (pager).