

Meeting with Will Glendinning of CRC on May 4 1997

- 1 A policy of 'benign apartheid' will lead inevitably to 'malign apartheid'.
- 2 Government agencies do not see reconciliation as an issue for themselves in most cases.
- 3 There is a significant amount of prejudice among the middle classes.
- 4 There is frequently a very low level of discussion of sectarian issues when middle classes of different religions meet.
- 5 There are very major economic as well as social consequences of providing facilities/services etc., for "the two communities" independently.
- 6 There is a need for all branches of government to build in the issue of dealing with sectarianism to their programmes. E.g. in many rural areas the atmosphere on school buses is very tense; Employment training rarely prepares people who have come from a particular background for work in a different context; health Trusts do not specifically train staff to cope with clients from very different settings - these issues are usually completely ignored. Dealing with them will have a cost. This must be made available by Government.
- 7 The Catholic middle class is now economically very powerful. On a purely pragmatic level this has implications for 'Protestant Business'.
- 8 There will always be strong differences of culture in Northern Ireland. These are currently in conflict. There must be ways of enabling them to coexist.
- 9 Duncan Morrow is producing a report on the themes of 'equity, diversity and inter-dependence'.
- 10 Alliance is sometimes accused of wanting a "grey" society.
- 11 The "social inclusiveness" element supposedly underpinning P.R. funding is often taken to include a wide range of issues but relatively rarely tackles the lay sectarian issue. 'Inclusiveness must be a major theme for Alliance'.

CONCLUSION

Sectarianism is an issue for everybody in our society. By and large much low grade sectarianism is completely ignored. Agencies both governmental and otherwise must deal with it in an open and honest manner. Alliance is well placed to participate in this process. Will cautions against Alliance being too "ideological". There are people who will support anti sectarian policies on pragmatic grounds. We must not be afraid of positively welcoming and cherishing different traditions.