

Meeting with Malachai O'Doherty, Journalist on 21 July 1997

1. The use of violence by the IRA has always been tactical.
2. A major issue is the division of our society into "two communities".
3. The speeches given by John Hume at his last half dozen Party Conferences are sectarian, bordering on the racist. He speaks directly about ethnicity and he equates Protestantism with Unionism. It is important that Hume is taken on, on this territory.
4. There is a very great diversity **within** Nationalism, **within** Unionism and **within** Catholicism and **within** the Protestant Churches. We should be emphasising these many different strands of opinion as an antidote to the two communities approach.
5. It is imperative that with Sinn Fein having got to the talks the Alliance Party emphasises the need for the SDLP and the Irish Government to stand up to Nationalist extremism and work towards an accommodation with moderate unionists.
6. The issue of mixed schooling is important but it must be presented in a way that does not make it sound like a panacea and it must not be seen as a purely middle class preoccupation divorced from the reality of real discussion.
7. Alliance needs to project a clear vision and to have a distinctive ideological base. The idea is that of a modern party for the new millenium, which is committed to the best aspects of modern Europe. Malachai suggests that we should be more aggressive in promoting issues apart from the constitutional and sectarian issues such as gender equality and perhaps gay rights. We could be more aggressive in attacking the Churches. The Republic has already become much more secular and we are likely to follow. He perceives Sean Brady as being particularly unimpressive. The Catholic Church is a fairly easy target to attack. Protestant Churches could be criticised much more assertively on their connection with the Orange Order.
6. Perhaps the Churches could be challenged to go beyond talking in generalities and asked to produce joint position papers on real issues including policing and political structures as well as being asked to make real efforts to break down the barriers between themselves. Perhaps Alliance could send some of its policy papers to the Churches, welcoming constructive criticism!
7. Politics are ultimately about power and we must always be realistic and pragmatic in regard to this.

## CONCLUSION

Malachai feels strongly that we in Alliance must be seen to be more than moderate or "nice" people in Alliance. He believes the Hume analysis is deeply sectarian and is open to attack. We need to present ourselves as a lively Party which is committed not only to cherishing diversity in Northern Ireland but is very strongly committed to a raft of modern issues relevant to a new era.