

PERSONAL



Northern Ireland Office  
Stormont Castle  
Belfast BT4 3ST  
Telephone Belfast (0232) 763255

Dr John Alderdice  
55 Knock Road  
BELFAST  
BT5 6LE

1<sup>st</sup> October 1993

*Dear John,*

I greatly valued our confidential talk in the middle of last month during which, on a strictly non-committal basis, we explored your party's position on a number of issues relevant to the political Talks. As I explained to you then, I am currently holding a round of discussions to explore and define areas of common ground or disagreement. The idea behind this is that, should we succeed in bringing about the Talks, we would already have available to us a relief map of the parties' positions so that we would not need to go over old ground and could immediately get down to substantive discussions.

If you agree, I very much hope that we can meet again within the next couple of weeks. There are a number of issues on which I should welcome further clarification. In Strand I, for example, you were prepared to contemplate a separation of powers involving a Commission as well as the Assembly - although you made it clear that you would not accept "external" Commissioners. I should find it helpful to hear any views you might have on the respective division of responsibilities between the Assembly and Commission; should the Commission, for example, be able to ratify legislation and/or to influence the administrative actions of the Assembly Committees or Heads of Department; should it have a role in appointing Heads of Departments? Might this assist in promoting consensual policies and protecting minorities? It would be useful to explore more fully your views generally on the relationship between the Assembly, Commission, Departmental Committees, Chairmen of Committees and

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Heads of Departments. This would include the merits of Chairmen being Heads of Departments.

I should also like to hear whether you have any more specific suggestions with regard to the role and status of North/South institutions. If I understood you correctly, you did not envisage such institutions having an autonomous position but rather that they would obtain their mandate (including legislation and finance) from the Assembly and Dail (and would report back to them). At the same time they might be given some degree of delegated authority over a narrow range of issues such as tourism. I should like, if you are content, to go on building up a clearer picture of how these institutions might work.

I should also be interested in your views on whether there might be ways of accommodating the concern underlying the concept of external commissioners in a different form, most likely within the Strand II or Strand III arrangements. There is a obvious disagreement between the SDLP and the other parties about the requirement for external involvement in Strand I institutions and I should like to explore whether there might be any scope for meeting the SDLP's concerns in an entirely different way, which would be acceptable to the other parties.

You also mentioned very helpfully the importance of security issues in any overall outcome. As I understood it you were opposed to the Mallon agenda but were prepared to consider the principles underpinning it. You floated the notion of an equivalent to Interpol. Again, this is an area which I am sure deserves further exploration; I should be interested to hear whether you have developed any further ideas since we met.

These are the main areas on which we might concentrate; no doubt we would also get into other issues as the discussion developed. If you are happy to have a further meeting perhaps you would get in

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touch with my office. As before, I would emphasise that I would regard the meeting as strictly confidential, exploratory and totally without commitment.

*Yours sincerely  
Michael*

MICHAEL ANCRAM MP  
Minister for Political Affairs

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MOFS/5778

Political progress.

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*Michael*

MICHAEL ANCRAM MP  
Minister for Political Affairs

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Dr John Alderdice  
88 University Street  
BELFAST  
BT7 1HE

6 September 1993

Dear Dr Alderdice

I understand that you have been speaking with Michael Ancram's Diary Secretary, David Gray.

I am writing to confirm that the Minister will meet with you on Wednesday 15 September at 4.30 pm in Stormont Castle.

Yours sincerely

*D Egglewell (hrs)*

PP M BROWN (MRS)  
Private Secretary to  
Michael Ancram MP,  
Parliamentary Under-Secretary  
of State



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2 Political meetings

Dr John Alderdice  
88 University Street  
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26 August 1993

Dear John,

Since we had a chance to chat informally in the last two months, I have been giving thought over the summer as to how best I can help as the Minister for Political Development in advancing the prospects of an acceptable political settlement following the ending of the round of Talks in November last year.

I know that you, and some others involved in those talks, have doubts about the wisdom of a high profile, formalised and public return at this stage to multilateral Talks of that kind. One reason for this, I sense, is the belief that it would be essential that any future round of Talks of that kind should have a positive outcome and should only be undertaken if the indications are favourable. Against that background it is, I believe, important that we maintain a dialogue on the central political and constitutional issues.

Whether or not it proves possible to achieve an early return to multilateral Talks, though not necessarily in the previous format, I believe it would be useful discreetly and at least bilaterally (though I hope involving all the six previous participants) to continue to explore and assess where all the parties now stand on the political and constitutional issues, what common ground could exist between them as a result of previous dialogue, and what possible scope there is for further accommodation and at what price.

In pursuit of this suggestion I am writing to ask if you or a nominated representative of your Party would agree to meet me to advance initial





discussion on this basis. These discussions would be exploratory, principally as a means of identifying the potential for such a process in the future, the basis on which it might take place and the prospect of it having a successful outcome.

I hope that you feel that such discussions would be useful and that your office could contact my Diary Secretary, David Gray, on 0247-460488 to find a suitable time when I could meet you or your nominated representative.

*Yours sincerely  
Michael*

**MICHAEL ANCRAM MP**  
**Minister for Political Development**