

# NATIONAL ARCHIVES

## IRELAND



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## THE ALLIANCE PARTY OF NORTHERN IRELAND

1. The origins of the Alliance Party lie in the inter-communal violence of 1969-70 which prompted calls for a moderate non-sectarian party which might unite Catholics and Protestants. Founded in April 1970, Alliance drew its membership mainly from the professional middle classes: teachers, solicitors, doctors, social workers and clergymen. It was essentially a party of converts, from Nationalism as much as from Unionism. By offering a middle-of-the-road alternative to the two main currents in Ulster politics, it was in a position to take up where the tentative liberal policies of Captain O'Neill had to stop due to hard-line Unionist hostility. Protestants felt able to join it because it did not question the basic link with Britain, while Catholics were attracted to it because it was clearly independent of traditional Unionism. Alliance claims that recruitment in any given area is directly related to the incidence of extremist sectarian violence there. On balance, it says, it has attracted more support from working-class Catholics than from their Protestant equivalents, because the Catholic working-class has suffered more from the IRA than the Protestants have from the UDA. Many of Alliance's present 20,000 or so membership are Catholics; however, though Alliance leader Oliver Napier is Catholic, the party's leadership is largely Protestant. Despite its claim to attract an even balance of Catholics and Protestants, Alliance's eight Convention seats in fact all lie east of the Bann. Essentially, it is a party of the Protestant middle-class.
- 1.1. The Alliance Party has always been noted for its efficient organization. Within a few months of its foundation, constituent branches had been established in 44 of the 52 Stormont constituencies. Today, with 33 Alliance Associations (based on the 26 district council areas and the eight Belfast wards), it can claim to be the best organized party in Ulster. It is financed entirely by members subscriptions. It has a 22-strong central Executive, which is elected by, and reports to, a 250-member Alliance Council; the members of this Executive hold office for one year. Leading Alliance spokesmen over the last five years have been Oliver Napier (party leader and Minister for Law Reform in the 1974 N.I. Executive); Bob Cooper (deputy leader and Minister of Manpower Services in the Executive); Lord Dunleath and Basil Glass (both of whom speak frequently on security and housing matters). In the first three years of Alliance's existence, Messrs. Napier and Cooper were known simply as joint chairmen of the party's political committee. There is a full-time general secretary (at present John Cushman) and, since late 1973, a party organiser (Robin Glendinning), who also edits the monthly party newspaper, "Alliance". Manifestos appear promptly before every election, and there have been full annual conferences from March 1971 onwards. The party chairman at present is Denis Loretto.
- 1.2. The first major boost of morale for Alliance came in February 1972, when three Stormont MPs joined Alliance and, thenceforth, sitting as Alliance MPs, brought the party into the parliamentary arena for the first time. These MPs were Phelim O'Neill (who was elected Alliance parliamentary leader), a former Minister of Agriculture in Chichester-Clark's Unionist Government; Tom Gormley, Independent and former Nationalist MP for mid-Tyrone; and Bertie McConnell, Independent Unionist MP for Bangor. They joined partly because they opposed internment and partly because they believed in a non-sectarian party as the only means of progress.

- 1.2.1. During 1972 recruitment to Alliance took a sharp upward turn. One of the reasons for this was the enhancement of the party's image as a result of Bob Cooper's impressive performance in a marathon BBC debate on the North ("Ulster Tribunal").

In April 1973 the party gained more prestige with the decisions of Sir Robert Porter (former Unionist Minister of Home Affairs), Stratton Mills (Unionist MP at Westminster for North Belfast), Robin Bailie (former Unionist Minister of Commerce) and Tom Caldwell (Independent Unionist MP for Willowfield) to defect from Unionist ranks and join Alliance. Frustrated by their inability to push Unionism towards moderate centrist policies, they regarded Alliance as their only hope. Alliance leaders, while welcoming them into the party, nevertheless had certain reservations, and their admission proved quite controversial. Many Alliance officials feared that the MPs would expect automatic nomination as Alliance candidates at the coming Assembly elections, thereby causing much resentment among ordinary members whose allegiance had been to Alliance from the beginning. However, the problem was removed when the new recruits made it clear that they would make no such demands. On the other hand, their arrival made the party rather top-heavy with middle-class Protestants. It brought to eight the total of important recruits over the previous eighteen months, yet only one, Tom Gormley, was a Catholic and they were unlikely to bring much of the working class Protestant vote with them, which was the party's greatest shortage. In addition it was felt that Mills and in particular Bailie were too closely identified with the Unionist Party of the past. Subsequently Mills, sitting as an Alliance MP at Westminster, did not seek a seat in the February 1974 UK General Election; and Tom Caldwell, failing to gain the Alliance nomination for South Belfast in the Assembly election, resigned from the Party.

- 1.2.2. In early 1973 some Alliance members expressed interest in forming a centrist coalition with disenchanted moderate Unionists and the Northern Ireland Labour Party, but the idea gained little ground. However, a common approach to Mr. Whitelaw's White Paper was hammered out by these elements, who cautiously welcomed the Paper (which provided for an Assembly and Executive). Alliance's own annual conference in March 1973 unanimously accepted the Paper's principle of power-sharing and declared its intention to make the Assembly succeed.

- 1.2.3. In May 1973 the party successfully fought its first electoral campaign in the Ulster local government elections. (Today, 63 Alliance councillors sit on the various district councils). In June 35 Alliance candidates contested the Assembly elections, and eight were successful: Napier in East Belfast, Cooper in West Belfast, Glass in South Belfast, Jim Ferguson in North Belfast, Derek Crothers in South Antrim, Hugh Wilson in North Antrim, Lord Dunleath and Bertie McConnell in North Down.

In September the party sent a four-man delegation to Dublin for talks with the Government, and during October and November it engaged in negotiations with the SDLP and Faulkner's "Pledged Unionists" regarding the formation of a power-sharing Executive. These talks resulted in the Alliance Party gaining two seats on the Executive, Oliver Napier becoming Minister for Law Reform and Bob Cooper Minister for Manpower Services. The two men were part of the Northern delegation to the Sunningdale conference in December 1973. Alliance contested three seats in the February 1974 UK General Election, but none of its candidates were elected.

- 1.2.4. When the Executive fell, with its accompanying sharp polarization between the centre parties and hard-line Unionism,

renewed attempts were made to unite Alliance, the Faulkner Unionists, NILP, NUM and others in a centrist coalition. Since both Alliance and Faulkner Unionists feared that they might thereby forfeit their separate political identities, neither group would commit itself to anything more than an electoral pact. The whole idea aroused little enthusiasms with Alliance leaders, however, who recognized that Catholic members of Alliance did not want to become publicly identified with Faulkner Unionism and its connotations. When Faulkner's UPNI resurrected the proposal a year later, following its poor performance in the Convention elections, Alliance was equally disinterested. Indeed, if any form of merger were now to be agreed between the two parties, it seems likely that it would involve the absorption of UPNI into Alliance rather than a link-up on full and equal terms between both parties. On the other hand, Alliance's attitude to the idea of a UUUC/Alliance coalition - suggested by some Loyalists as a means of satisfying Westminster's power-sharing stipulation but yet of maintaining a respectable anti-Republican stance - is clear and explicit. Oliver Napier stated recently that his party would not countenance any power-sharing arrangement which excluded minority representatives.

1.2.5. On 25.9.74 Mr. Napier offered to step down as a candidate in the coming UK General Election, in order to help the UPNI candidate Peter McLachlan win over William Craig in East Belfast - but provided that the other centrist candidate, NILP's David Bleakley, did likewise. Bleakley, remembering his own impressive poll in the February election, refused, so Napier withdrew his offer. Alliance fought five seats at the October General Election, but without success; however, its candidates came second in favour of the five constituencies contested and its overall share of the vote increased by 30% compared with the Assembly elections of June 1973.

1.2.6. In the early months of this year Alliance engaged in an energetic Convention election campaign. It fielded 23 candidates and, while not gaining the extra two or three seats predicted by Napier shortly beforehand, it nevertheless held on to its Assembly strength of eight seats, losing Jim Ferguson in North Belfast but gaining Jim Hendron on Basil Glass's surplus votes in South Belfast. As in the Assembly elections, its share of the total vote cast averaged 10%. It survived the erosion of moderate centrist support for UPNI, with eight successes as opposed to the latter's five; it is now unquestionably the strongest party of the moderate non-sectarian centre.

On 9.6.75 Alliance's Alderman Ivan Canavan defeated his SDLP rival to become Mayor of Derry.

2. Alliance policies consist more of flexible suggestions than of definitive requirements. The party pursues a 'middle-of-the-road' course between the two major blocs, and demonstrates its impartiality by harshly and regularly criticising both. It condemns the UDA and UVF as much as the IRA, the UUUC as much as the SDLP. However, notwithstanding the faults of both UUUC and SDLP positions as it sees them, it would still like to see Ulster's problems tackled and resolved not by London or Dublin but by conferences at which these two (and other smaller) factions would come together. In December 1971 it suggested

such a conference of Ulster political parties, unassisted by London or Dublin, to discuss the province's constitutional future. A conference on these lines was held at Darlington in September 1972, and Alliance made two important proposals, designed to be broad and flexible rather than prescriptive:

- (i) a regional parliament or assembly (of unspecified size or constitution) should be established in Northern Ireland, to be elected by P.R. It would operate on a committee basis, that is, it would divide itself into a number of committees for each of its major functions and the chairman of each committee would be elected by P.R. by the assembly. Technically, it would have no executive, in the sense of a body accepting cabinet responsibility, but management functions would be exercised by a committee consisting of an assembly chairman and the chairman of committees. Re-election to the Assembly could be held every four years;
- (ii) instead of a Council of Ireland, an Anglo-Irish Council, with representatives from political parties at Westminster, the planned N.I. Assembly and the Dáil, should be created, but with advisory powers only. Its purpose would be to promote better understanding between North and South and also to carry out joint planning on economic, social and agricultural problems.

2.1. At Darlington, the party also reiterated its fundamental commitment to the link with Britain. Though it feels that periodic referenda on the Border are necessary, its own position on this issue has not changed over the last five years. While its opposition to traditional Unionism has always been very visible, Alliance has nevertheless found it difficult to balance its firm and frequently confirmed loyalty to the Union, on the one hand, with its attempts to win support from the Catholic minority, on the other hand, for its non-sectarian policies. It tries to formulate its loyalty to the Union in terms of sheer economic necessity, (and also rejects United Ireland, integration and VDI solutions on straightforward economic grounds), but the anti-Unionist minority still feels distrustful of any pro-Unionist party, no matter how attractive it may be otherwise.

2.2. Alliance's commitment to the Union differs from that of the UUUC, of course, in that it accommodates the notion of minority participation in government. This follows automatically from its premise that a solution to Ulster's problems depends on Protestants and Catholics working together. Alliance fully accepted the principle of power-sharing and also supported the Council of Ireland proposal; two of its members sat on the power-sharing Executive, Mr. Napier and Mr. Cooper (a Catholic and a Protestant).

However, when the Executive fell in mid 1974, the term "power-sharing" in Alliance speeches was replaced by the vaguer and less emotive phrase, "partnership"; and Alliance spokesmen also decided that, while they still believed in a Council of Ireland, it was now "impractical" to try to create one, since a majority of the Northern Ireland people rejected it. The party tried to woo hard-line Protestant support by stepping up its criticisms of the Republic for not repealing Articles 1 and 2 of the Constitution and failing to alter the extradition arrangements; and also by supporting the UUUC's stipulation that

any party contemplating participation in a future Northern Ireland government must recognize the legality of that state. Since "partnership" and "reconciliation" are very loose terms, yet to be defined in detail by the Convention, much of Alliance's detailed thinking in the last year has been concerned with security matters and with the restoration of law and order in the province.

- 2.3. Alliance has always preserved a careful distance between itself and Southern politicians. Its attitude to the Republic could be summarised as follows. It is happy to maintain good neighbourly relations with the Republic and, indeed, views, cooperation on security, agriculture, tourism, energy and other matters, built into a Council of Ireland structure, as highly desirable. To this extent it recognizes the 'Irish Dimension'. However, it feels that the mutual trust necessary for such a relationship is lacking as long as the Republic (a) claims constitutional sovereignty over Northern Ireland, and (b) refuses to extradite people who claim to be political offenders. It insists, therefore, that the Republic should recognize the present status of Northern Ireland and the right of the Ulster people to decide their future and also that it should amend its extradition laws. The first demand was satisfied in the Sunningdale communiqué. It also urges that the Irish Government should play its part to the full in defeating Terrorism. In an open letter to the people of the Republic on 27.12.1973, Oliver Napier called for full public support for the Sunningdale agreement and demanded the constitutional changes which, he argued, were necessitated by it. His action was generally criticised by Southern politicians, who felt that he was taking a tough line in a situation which required the utmost tact. In a second open letter on 14.6.1974, Napier repeated the Alliance demands and blamed attitudes in the Republic for helping to wreck the first attempt at a power-sharing government.

Alliance opposes any direct involvement by Southern politicians in the Northern situation. Napier's criticism recently of "outsiders" who interfere in the work of the Convention (a reference to Dr. Conor Cruise O'Brien's intervention) is to be read in this light.

- 2.4. Behind Alliance's attitude to the Republic lies its strict insistence on the 'Ulster dimension'. A key Alliance theme is that Ulster's problems can only be solved by Ulstermen in an Ulster context. The party recognizes an 'Irish dimension', as we have seen; it also recognizes a 'British dimension', to the extent that a majority of the Northern Ireland people, as evidenced in the 1973 border poll, wishes to stay in the UK; it even recognizes a 'European dimension', favouring the EEC as it does. But it places the 'Ulster dimension' above all of these. It believes that the creation of a common loyalty to Northern Ireland alone is a precondition of any long-term solution to the province's problems, and it is critical of all interventions from London or Dublin. This 'common loyalty' would not mean asking anyone to give up either the UK link or their aspiration for a united Ireland, but would simply mean an acceptance that, "irrespective of where we figure in the loyalty scale, we will all have something in common and we must build on that". Alliance criticises the SDLP for not sufficiently impressing on their supporters that they are Ulstermen first and Irishmen only after that; it also directs at the SDLP the same criticism that it levels at the Republic regarding Articles 1 and 2.

- 2.5. ○ A persistent feature of Alliance's political proposals has been its advocacy of local government reform in Northern Ireland. It has always stressed the importance of adequate local representation, and opposed the SDLP's civil disobedience campaign on this account. At the 1973 local government elections it was the only party to stand in all 98 electoral areas, with a total of 238 candidates. It believes that proportional representation must be used in local government elections in order to ensure widespread acceptance.

Alliance subscribes strongly to the principle of devolution, as expounded in the Kilbrandon Commission's report. In a discussion paper entitled "Devolved Government in Northern Ireland" which it presented on 12.5.75, it argued the case for devolution on the grounds that any future Northern political structure must incorporate a strong sense of regional identity. It proposes a devolved regional parliament and government for the province, to be financed largely by UK subventions.

In 1973 Alliance welcomed the implementation of the Macrory Report local government proposals, which abolished the existing local authorities and replaced them with 26 new district councils. Alliance has always felt that, in a regional parliament system of the type that it would like to see in Northern Ireland, <sup>major</sup> powers should be delegated to the centralised government rather than to local bodies. It therefore welcomed the reduction of local powers which was inherent in the 1973 changes.

The Convention must, in the Alliance view, endeavour to obtain a large measure of devolution to regional government. However, the devolved system which is worked out must be acceptable both to the Northern Ireland people as a whole and also <sup>to</sup> the UK government.

3. The field in which the Alliance Party has in general been most outspoken is that of security and policing. Alliance spokesmen unflinchingly condemn both Loyalist and Republican extremist violence, and attach what they regard as the moral ambivalence of politicians of other parties who are selective and partisan regarding the acts of violence they condemn. For the last year and a half, Alliance has had a working party exclusively for security matters, chaired by Lord Dunleath. It has tried consistently, both during the Assembly period and afterwards, to arrange inter-party talks on security through the Secretary of State. In early 1975 Mr. Napier made the proposal with renewed force, and in expanded form, when he argued that, since the forthcoming Convention would not have the power to debate matters such as security and the economic situation, some other arrangement would have to be made to ensure that decisions on these vital matters were not simply delayed until the province's constitutional future had been decided. Alliance met with no success on this, however. The UUUC and the SDLP did not want to commit themselves on security matters until the future form of government in Northern Ireland had been fixed, and in any case the SDLP insisted that internment be on the agenda for such talks. Only the Faulkner Unionists and John Taylor of the Official Unionists expressed any interest in Alliance's proposal. Alliance also tried, but with equal lack of success, to extract from all the Ulster political parties a common commitment to support the security forces.

3.1. Nevertheless, the Alliance Party continues its detailed thinking on security matters, as it has done in the past. Its policing proposals, which are very much the key to its security policy, were first presented at the Darlington conference in September, 1972. It proposes a two-tier police force. The first tier would consist basically of the present RUC, with 4,500 fully trained men and women "upgraded to a Scotland Yard type role". These would deal with all major crime and the skilled investigation of serious offences. The second tier would consist of locally recruited police officers operating in their own areas to deal with minor crimes, traffic offences and vandalism.

In October 1972, Jim Hendron, then Alliance chairman, called for inter-party talks specifically to work out an acceptable system of policing. Further such calls came from Alliance spokesmen in 1974 and early 1975, but Mr. Rees, the UUUC and the SDLP all rejected the suggestion, for different reasons. Alliance is determined that policing should be lifted out of partisan politics, that it should be made a completely non-political issue. The RUC is discredited in Catholic areas, it holds, because of the way in which the Unionist Party in the past used it as a political weapon.

Alliance is identified with two further proposals in relation to the police force. For a long time - in fact, since the shooting of Cusack and Beattie in Derry in July 1971 - it has pressed for the establishment of an independent investigatory tribunal to deal with complaints from the public against the security forces. This would consist of two senior officers seconded from different police forces in Britain for a one or two year term, along with a third member, a barrister or solicitor of ten years' standing, who would act as chairman. The party finds it unacceptable that complaints against the RUC should be investigated by the RUC itself. Alliance's proposal for an independent complaints machinery was embodied in the Gardiner Committee's report. Secondly, it has called for a reconstituted and upgraded Police Authority, which would be in charge of all aspects of policing and not just of administration.

3.2. Alliance's general attitude to the police and army remains, however, one of consistent loyalty, tempered by several wide-ranging organizational criticisms. Alliance members feel, in fact, that too much importance is attached to the peace-keeping role played by the Army in Northern Ireland, and that in certain situations the RUC is considerably more effective than the Army. Alliance policy is, in fact, that Northern Ireland should eventually become self-sufficient in its peacekeeping requirement. It would therefore like to see the police force increase in size and efficiency, so that it could be deployed to greater advantage. The party makes frequent calls on the Ulster people to join either the RUC Reserve or the UDR. However, they reject Loyalist demands (made notably by John Taylor) for a 'third force': a local militia or home guard is already implicit in the UDR or RUC Reserve, they argue, so concerned Loyalists should join either of these.

On 18.4.74. Lord Dunleath's committee made the following specific proposals for reorganising and strengthening the security forces, to add to those already made:

- (i) recruitment of up to 15,000 part-time members of the UDR, 5,000 full-and part-time RUC reservists and 7,500 full-time police, more money for full-time and part-time security forces, including "danger money" for the RUC;

- (ii) regular troops to be used for border and coastal defence duties to prevent smuggling of arms, with some held in reserve to aid the civil power;
- (iii) locally recruited forces to take over town and country patrols;
- (iv) the establishment of a common security zone on either side of the border, with Irish and UK forces linked by radio. Powers of arrest and detention for interrogation would be common to both; Irish and UK patrols would undertake joint border supervision;
- (v) internment to be phased out;
- (vi) training facilities for UDR, RUC Reserve and RUC to be expanded.

3.3. The question of explicit support for the security forces has been for a long time the chief stumbling-block in relations between Alliance and the SDLP. Alliance insists that SDLP politicians should act as responsible community leaders by openly encouraging support for the RUC and the Army among their followers and by calling for increased recruitment to the UDR and RUC Reserve. It argues that the present-day post-Hunt RUC is a vast improvement on the pre-Hunt RUC, and deserves the public's, and above all the minority's support. The tension caused by this issue over the years between Alliance and the SDLP was eased recently, however, when the annual SDLP conference in January 1975 decided to revise its policy on the security forces. On hearing this, Basil Glass immediately urged the SDLP to have talks with interested bodies about policing, as Alliance itself had done (with the Northern Ireland Police Authority and the Police Federation), and to publish proposals about it.

Alliance still differs from the SDLP, however, in its advocacy to the security forces of a "high profile" rather than a "low profile" attitude to violence: Dr. Derek Crothers and Bertie McConnell in particular have adopted this attitude.

3.4. The policy of internment has been consistently attacked by the Alliance Party. As early as September 1970 Alliance warned Major Chichester-Clark in a public letter against using internment; Napier, Cooper, Glass and others had all come out strongly and frequently against it before it was introduced in August 1971. The party feels that, regardless of internment's success in containing terrorism (and it questions even that), the political consequences of internment have been disastrous, causing existing inter-communal divisions to be greatly intensified. Alliance argues that the minority were alienated once and for all by the way in which internment was carried out, and that this undoubtedly increased support for the IRA. No community operating detention without trial, it holds, has the right to expect total loyalty to its legal system or security forces. Sceptical of the reasons offered for its introduction, the party challenged the Faulkner Government on numerous occasions to abandon internment, either to bring internees to trial or else to release them. However, Alliance's attitude on the course of action to recommend to the Government has changed noticeably over the last four years. Initially, it demanded an immediate end to internment and the release of all Republican or Loyalist detainees, hoping thereby for an end to the violence; later, however, it came to favour a careful "phasing out" of internment.

On 25.7.74, following months of detailed study by Napier, Glass and Cooper (all lawyers), the Alliance Party published a memorandum, its submission to the Gardiner Committee, which called for an end to internment but with a simultaneous strengthening of the criminal law involved. It suggested several ways of making the law more effective, the principle one being that the defendant's right of silence should be abolished, i.e. that refusal to give evidence, to account for one's movements or to recognize the court would be regarded as meaning that the defendant did not challenge the evidence given against him. The party cited the Republic's Offences against the State Act in support of its proposals.

On 13.1.75 Oliver Napier suggested to Mr. Rees that the conditions for peace inherent in the current IRA ceasefire would make the ending of internment very easy; internment was, in his view, "totally counter-productive to peace".

3.5. In the long term, Alliance favours the transfer of powers relating to crime and punishment to a new Northern Ireland parliament or assembly, once an acceptable form of government has been found. It stresses, however, that direct control of the police must never again be in the hands of politicians; in future, all instructions from the Government to the police must be transmitted through the reconstituted, non-political Police Authority, which must be clearly seen by the public to represent all sections of the community.

4. Apart from its preoccupation with security matters, Alliance has evolved concrete and progressive policies on a wide range of social and economic issues. These may be grouped together under three headings.

4.1. Housing. Since much of the party's future depends on young married couples living in housing estates (on the premise that most Ulstermen of 50 or over are already entrenched in one or the other political camp), it is not surprising that Alliance takes an active interest in housing problems. In early 1972 it proposed a target of 20,000 houses annually for the foreseeable future, to be achieved as follows:

- (i) long-term low interest house purchase loans to couples unable to secure a building society loan;
- (ii) formation of voluntary housing associations;
- (iii) a central housing agency, and a common public authority rent structure and rebate scheme;
- (iv) recreational facilities in all housing estates;
- (v) full integration of all housing estates and community centres;
- (vi) housing removal grants and resettlement grants to assist families moving from Belfast to development areas.

The cardinal point in Alliance's housing policy is that houses must be allocated on a non-sectarian basis and that housing estates must be mixed. It argues that both the Housing

Executive and the district councils distribute houses on a sectarian basis. In July 1974 it proposed that the centralised Housing Executive be disbanded and replaced by three autonomous authorities based on the existing regions of the Executive, with 60% appointed members and 40% elected from district councils. It also called for the formation of a special housing recovery commission for Belfast to deal with the problem of 100,000 sub-standard houses. However, the Housing Executive rejected these proposals.

On numerous occasions Alliance delegations have transmitted to Northern Ireland or UK government departments complaints of many kinds about housing conditions (e.g., vandalism, lack of new houses, communications between the Housing Executive and tenants) which have arisen in their discussions with local tenant associations, especially in Belfast.

#### 4.2. Employment and protection of industry

Alliance's proposals to stimulate employment and protect industry include the following:

- (i) the formation of local development companies to initiate small projects either on a cooperative profit-making or non-profit-making basis. Alliance favours cooperative farming and industry in areas of high unemployment;
- (ii) public enterprise, harnessing public resources, to provide work in areas of high unemployment;
- (iii) modernization of existing Northern Ireland firms and granting of State subsidies to small industries in difficulties;

Alliance vigorously supported Government plans to assist the flagging Harland and Wolff shipyards and thereby to rescue the 10,000 jobs involved. It pressed the Government to proceed with its plans to involve the shipyard workers in management and control of the business. The Alliance position on Harland and Wolff is, in fact, symptomatic of its overall political stance in Ulster. On the one hand, the party attacked Enoch Powell's opposition, on 'laissez-faire' grounds, to State support of private industry, accusing him of indifference to the problem of preserving employment; and on the other hand, it criticised the SDLP for selfishly ignoring the problems of the shipyard simply because it employed a very small number of Catholics.

Alliance has consistently drawn attention to the socio-economic problems in Ulster which, it feels, are being neglected by the other parties during the current political crisis. At times Alliance does, indeed, appear to be the only party which retains an interest in such matters. Its own political attitudes are, to a large extent, moulded by economic rather than ideological considerations. It favours improved relations with the Republic for economic reasons, yet it insists on the fundamental link with Britain, also for economic reasons. It is similarly opposed, on primarily economic grounds, to integration and direct rule, VDI and other projected 'solutions' to the crisis. In early 1975 Alliance came out strongly in favour of remaining in

the EEC membership. Mr. Napier pointed out that Northern Ireland, as an underprivileged area, qualified for considerable financial aid from the EEC, and warned that the UK, and Northern Ireland, would be doomed to political and economic isolation if it withdrew.

4.3. Education. The main points in Alliance's education policy are:

- (i) progress should be made towards integration of schools "by consent of the majority of the parents from both sections of the community";
- (ii) adult education facilities should be re-examined;
- (iii) an educational system which dispenses with the "11-Plus" examination should be introduced;
- (iv) more nursery schools should be opened.

5. In the early months of 1975 Alliance launched an energetic Convention election campaign with more optimism about the Convention's chances of success than most other parties. Its campaign gave fresh airing to the major Alliance themes:

- (i) Alliance candidates committed themselves to power-sharing, or "partnership", as the basis of any future Northern Ireland government;
- (ii) the party restated its belief that the link with the UK was "in the best economic and social interests of all the people of Northern Ireland";
- (iii) it stressed the urgent need to restore law and order to the province, and attacked politicians of any kind who had dealings with paramilitary organizations;
- (iv) it wanted to see "effective and impartial policing" in all areas, along the lines it had proposed;
- (v) it supported the idea of a strong legislative assembly or parliament for Northern Ireland, elected by proportional representation. This would have real and effective powers to deal with the province's social and economic problems, and would have a considerable measure of control over law and order, criminal law and legal administration in the province.
- (vi) Alliance candidates demanded increased representation for Northern Ireland at Westminster, and favoured the introduction of a PR system throughout the UK. Within its own organization, the Alliance Party already operates along PR lines. All constituency associations select their candidates by a system of P.R. from a list approved by the Executive. The selection procedure is therefore long and involved, but is generally held to be fair and accurate.

- (vii) Alliance accepted the need for practical cooperation between North and South on many issues of common concern, not least in the field of security. It felt that better North/South relations would result in considerable social and economic cooperation. The Republic's constitutional claim to sovereignty over Northern Ireland, however, was a formidable barrier to such cooperation, as was the Republic's failure to agree to extradition for politically motivated offences.
- (viii) It wanted to see a Bill of Rights in the future constitution of Northern Ireland, which would guarantee equality of citizenship to every person in the province and would be legally binding.

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