

PAB/5419/RE

PS/Secretary of State (I&B)(M)

ALLIANCE PARTY MANIFESTO

cc: PS/Ministers (I&B)(M)
PS/PUS (I&B)(M)
PS/Sir E Bell ✓
Mr Bourn
Mr Brennan (M)
Mr Angel (M)
Mr Merifield o/a
Mr Gilliland
Miss Davies
Mr Palmer
Mr Buxton
Mr Coulson
Mr Boys Smith (M)
Mr Abbott (M)
Miss MacGlashan

1. The Alliance Party published its election Manifesto on 31 September. It broadly supports the Government's plans. The dominant theme is that the election is a watershed and the electorate must make a choice: "if the Assembly succeeds, Northern Ireland will be on the road towards political stability. If it fails, it is unlikely that in your lifetime the choice of devolution will again be on offer."

2. There are several points of interest in the manifesto;


- (a) It boldly states that "no power will ever be returned to Northern Ireland except through a form of powersharing whether 70% of the new Assembly vote for a return of power or not" But even if there is no initial agreement on powersharing, the Assembly can still do a useful job.
- (b) The call for a Bill of Rights is repeated, and Alliance want SACHR to be given wider terms of reference and stronger powers.
- (c) The document reiterates the Alliance policy of integrated education.
- (d) On the economy, Alliance propose increased public expenditure, a prices and incomes policy, personal tax credits for money spent on providing new jobs, and incentives for industry, especially exporters.
- (e) The need is stressed for action on agriculture, health and social services and housing.

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3. At the press conference to launch the manifesto Mr Napier said his party would do its utmost to make the Assembly work. The unionists had to make up to the fact that they were not going to succeed in transforming the Assembly. He hoped seats would be left for the SDLP in committees; but if they were not, it would be the SDLP's own fault.

4. In a TV interview that evening, Mr Napier said that if the unionist parties in the Assembly were to offer to share power with the SDLP and Alliance, Alliance would accept even if the SDLP refused. (Mr Napier was under pressure when he said this, but when I checked with him this morning he stood by it). His aim in saying this is no doubt twofold: to encourage the unionists to be generous in the hope that they might ensnare the Alliance and have their offer rebuffed by the SDLP; and to warn the SDLP that Alliance might in certain circumstances succumb to a system of government which is not based on powersharing. But it is a bait which the UUP and DUP are most unlikely to take.



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