

*Amie Forum
Meeting Group
file*

*Mr Swearing:
Not clear if you got
a copy. ✓*

*MR FERGUSON
D/12*



The Rt Hon David Trimble MP and
Mr Seamus Mallon MP
First Minister and Deputy First Minister
Parliament Buildings
Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3SW

D/12

4 December 1998



sm/1006/98

Dear First Minister and Deputy First Minister

We confess to concern that the establishment of the governance structures envisaged in the Good Friday Agreement – the Executive, the Civic Forum, the North/South Ministerial Council, and the East-West Council – is not yet assured.

We are only too conscious of the difficulty of the issues with which the political process has been wrestling. The purpose of this letter is to offer our full support for the intensification of effort which has been under way to achieve a speedy resolution.

Until the structures are up and running, the Agreement cannot begin to deliver the 'bread and butter' results for the economy and society to which so many look forward. Indeed there is a risk of a damaging vacuum, with resultant uncertainty as regards sense of direction and with decisions which should be urgently taken being delayed.

Northern Ireland's ability to capitalise in economic terms on the Agreement depends on a perception in the wider world that we have achieved political stability, thereby giving us a level playing field in the competition for inward investment. We feel that, until people see the arrangements for Government in place, there will be a degree of scepticism as to whether a corner has really been turned.

Notwithstanding whatever political progress is made, there remains of course the Drumcree situation, which has the ability to continue to mar Northern Ireland's image, with negative consequences for the economy and particularly for our tourism prospects. That was amply demonstrated again by the further headline – grabbing incident at Drumcree last night, which augurs badly for Portadown in the remainder of 1998 and beyond.

We wish you all success as you seek to move forward on the political front. If there is any way in which you think we might be able to reinforce or supplement your efforts, we shall be delighted to do so. If you feel that it would be useful to meet, we are at your disposal. Indeed, were the impasse set to continue, we would be keen that a meeting should take place at an early date.

Yours sincerely

(Signatures are attached)

[Handwritten signature]

(Chris Gibson, Chairman, CBI NI Region)

[Handwritten signature]

(Nigel Smyth, Director, CBI NI Region)

[Handwritten signature]

(Felix Mooney, Chairman, Hospitality Association for NI)

[Handwritten signature]

(Neville Morrison, Chief Executive, Hospitality Association for NI)

[Handwritten signature]

(Ann Shaw, Chairman Institute of Directors)

Linda Brown

(Director, Institute of Directors)

[Handwritten signature]

(Chairman, Group of 7)

[Handwritten signature]

(Bill Jeffery, Chairman Federation of Small Businesses)

[Handwritten signature]

(John Stringer, Chief Executive, Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce and Industry)

[Handwritten signature]

(Eamonn Oakes, Chairman, N I Committee, Irish Congress of Trade Unions)

[Handwritten signature]

(Tom Gillen, Deputy NI Officer, Irish Congress of Trade Unions)

[Handwritten signature]

(Janet Trewsdale, Chairman, N I Economic Council)

[Handwritten signature]

(Paul Gorecki, Director, NI Economic Council)

[Handwritten signature]

(Roy McNulty, Chairman, NI Growth Challenge)

(Frank Hewitt, Chief Northern Growth Challenge)