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# Make it Work - for *All* of us

by

**Dr John Alderdice**  
**Alliance Party Leader**

The Alliance Leader, Dr John Alderdice, has made it a practice to deliver his Annual Conference Speech to the Party, unscripted. This is the official transcript of the 56 minute address which he delivered to the Party's 26th Anniversary Conference, at the Balmoral Conference Centre, in Belfast, on Saturday 13 April 1996.

I am delighted to see so many friends from other political parties, and not just from Ireland, but from Britain and indeed colleagues from Europe and from Liberal International. You are very welcome and we are delighted to see you all here.

In October of this year I will begin my 10th year as Leader of the Alliance Party - a few more grey hairs in the beard, face a little bit rounder, girth a little bit greater, or so Joan tells me, frequently - but as I look around I see very many younger people coming to Alliance Party Conference this year and over the last year or two. It is a tremendous delight, not only to see so many young people coming along, but also making some tremendous speeches. I have enjoyed listening to a number of them both last night and this morning. Of course there are others of us, and I see some of the rest of you a little bit like myself, increasingly showing the ravages of involvement in political life.

Time is moving on for all of us, and time is moving on in Northern Ireland. Yet a very curious phenomenon has descended upon our political life. Here, in the almost intractable certainties of politics in Northern Ireland, there seems an uncertainty, a confusion and despondency that I don't really think I have ever seen before. People are very unclear about what is happening. They are confused and the kind of speech that I normally give to Party Conference seems unsuitable.

You know what I usually do. I speak about the principles of Alliance and some of our important ideals. I try to apply them to some of the broader issues that are around for us. You will remember that in previous years I talked about changes in relationships between men and women, and how that has changed the context of the family, involving massive changes for our society. I tried to show how we can apply, liberal, plural, tolerant principles to building a new society, a society based on that fundamental and important unit - the family. On another occasion I took up the issue of Information Technology - the remarkable revolution that it has engineered in our society - every bit as great as the Agricultural and Industrial Revolutions. I asked questions, and tried to give a few answers, as to how we might apply our principles to the changes this will bring in society, and indeed political life.

Last year I talked about the Economy, and how we have got a real problem here in Northern Ireland, with our dependency on government money, on government jobs and government appointed bodies running virtually everything - an arms length government at that. I tried to suggest how we could begin to create a society where initiative and enthusiasm is rewarded, where people can take control of their own affairs, and where at the same time we protect those who are vulnerable, and create a society enriched by diversity and proud of the fact that it can run its affairs with justice and equity - a society that has got something to give to the rest of the world.

Then of course at a later stage in my speeches I try to bring things together in terms of our own specific problems, often drawing on examples from other parts of the world where we have so many friends, like us working in difficult circumstances. Some of them indeed are working in much more difficult situations than ours, trying to create liberal, pluralist and tolerant societies

in their place. In other words I have always tried to **develop** our political ideas, stretch our understanding, see things from a broader perspective and enlarge our own horizons.

But this is not a Conference for such a speech. People are confused and uncertain at the moment. What we need is a degree of simplicity and clarity being brought to the situation. So I intend today to concentrate entirely on our own Northern Ireland political situation. I am not going to look at those other issues at all, not because they are not important - they are extremely important and indeed if we are able to successful over the next period of time, and are able to take some control of our affairs, it will be crucial that those policies and ideas that we have been working on and developing are able to put into place. I think that we have been very successful in our policy making . On the issue of women in our Party we have made some important strides forward, and we are going to go further in the next year or two. I am delighted to see Councillor Ann Gormley and Alderman Susan O'Brien and other women here who are taking leading positions in Local Government, and I want to see them taking leading positions in the Talks Process too.

We have made great strides in terms of Information Technology, and Nick Whyte and his colleagues deserve congratulations for helping this party take a lead in the use of the Internet over all the other parties - not just in Northern Ireland - but right throughout these islands.

On the Economy it was a personal delight to me to see that under the leadership of Councillor Peter Osborne we published an excellent Economy Document, well received in all quarters. Just a month or two later, when the private sector published the Growth Challenge Document, it almost looked as though they had published our paper. That is just an indication of how much we are setting the agenda for other parties and for the province. When it comes to other issues like realistic and sustainable environmentalism there too, we are setting the agenda for others. But the agenda for today is a very simple one. People are confused and despondent and it is our responsibility to take leadership, provide clarity, and point the way forward in a difficult situation.

If you looked at it from the outside you would probably find it remarkable that folk here are so despondent. Yes we have a very messy electoral system being put in place. There is no question about that. And we didn't need to have it. The reasonable compromise was obvious. Give John Hume his referendum. Give David Trimble his election. And give all of us a fair system of voting - Proportional Representation. It was there in the 1920's. That is why the Unionists got rid of it. It was brought back in the 1970's because it was the best system, and I very much regret that the Government has foolishly acceded to those who wanted to play party politics with the process so that we have now ended up with a thoroughly messy and confusing system. Let me tell you what is most frustrating. When the government asked us for papers and asked us for advice, we gave them **good** advice and we told them the problems there would be if they opted for list systems, requiring registration of political parties and so on. Do you know that every one of the warnings has come true, because they

were ignored. It is a messy, foolish system, but it is the one we have got, and it is not the sole reason for the confusion in peoples minds.

After a quarter of a century of terrorism, we have had no bombs in Northern Ireland since the late summer of 1994. People looking in from outside would say "Isn't that remarkable. Isn't it tremendous". Of course there have been bombs in London, and I will come back to that later, but let's not forget that the dreadful grinding experience that was been ours for a quarter of a century **has** changed. There have been talks. Parties that never met before have been sitting down and struggling with the key issues. Not just at the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation in Dublin. We ourselves as a party sat down with Sinn Fein, not just leader to leader, but within weeks of the ceasefires party teams from Sinn Fein and Alliance, sat down, and month after month struggled hard with the issues that separate us. We sat down not just with republicans but with loyalists, and with all the other political parties in Northern Ireland, with all the parties in the Republic, with the parties in Britain. There were tremendous strides forward. Yet there is all this despondency. Why is it there? I will tell you why I think it is there. There were some very unrealistic expectations, and to understand why, we have got to go back to 1992.

Up until then the widespread view had been that it was unlikely that we could negotiate a settlement that would include everybody from Sinn Fein on the one hand, to the Democratic Unionists on the other. That had been the general view. That was the Alliance Party view and is still the Alliance Party view. But late in 1992 another view was brought forward by Albert Reynolds, and subsequently by John Hume. It said something like this. The real problem is the violence. If we can stop the violence, then people will settle down. They won't need to be so afraid of each other. They will be able trust each other, and gradually we will be able to move forward and get an agreement that everyone can live with.

I was initially a little bit surprised when I heard this argument, from this source, because it was exactly the same argument that I had heard from the Unionist Leader, Jim Molyneaux, for quite some time. He also said that the problem was the violence. If people stopped killing each other we could all settle down and everything would be fine. After all (said Mr Molyneaux) if the SDLP goes to Westminster, surely that must mean that they accept Northern Ireland as it is, and really all the fuss isn't necessary. The Albert Reynolds argument seemed to be that, if we could get rid of the violence, maybe the Unionists would waken up and discover they really were Irishmen after all. You can understand his confusion, after all he thought I was a unionist! He thought John Bruton was a Unionist! And if he thought John A and John B were unionists, one can understand how confused he is about the whole thing!

It is like all this talk about new Unionism. But friends, New Unionism seems to be the Spirit of Drumcree. New Unionism seems still to be Orangeism, marching with shrill intolerance down the unwelcome roads of the Lower Ormeau and Garvaghy. New Unionism as far as I can see, is Old Unionism with a New Sash. That is why there was always going to be enormous disappointment for those who thought that the only problem was the violence. The violence **was** a problem. Of course it was a problem. And

fear was a problem. And the lack of trust was a problem. But underneath there is a darker side. There are not just aspirations which are divergent, but aspirations that unfortunately have a lot to do with the wish to control and dominate a piece of turf. Unless we address the fact that there are those who want to control one part of this island, and others who want to control all of this island, and that those divergent aspirations are a real rock solid problem that has to be addressed, until people understand that, there is going to be endless disappointment.

However, back to 1992 and my subsequent conversations with Mr Reynolds. He said to me "Look John, if we can get the violence out of the way, I am sure we could do business. I know people like George Quigley. He is a very reasonable man, and I am sure we could settle things if only we didn't have this dreadful violence. You know something else, this violence is bad for business and I would like to get it sorted out." As far as it goes this is correct, but I don't think that was quite the Republican Movement's understanding of the process. I think it was rather different.

I think the Republican Movement's understanding went something like this. Violence divides Nationalism, and a house divided against itself is weakened. If we get rid of the violence, at least for the present, we can bring together the SDLP and Sinn Fein, all the rest of the Nationalist parties in Ireland, the Irish Government, Irish America and all together we can create a powerful Nationalist Consensus. This enormous political influence could then put pressure on the British Government to act as "persuaders" of the Unionists. You and I know that the republican interpretation of "persuader" is not quite the same as our understanding of "persuader", because at the back of it there is always the incipient threat of violence if they don't get their own way. So the republican agenda, it seems to me, was that they set the violence to the side, create a Nationalist Consensus, and Unionists will be forced towards a Joint Authority on the way to a United Ireland. That was the "alternative strategy".

Well, all seemed to go very well at the start. We had the ceasefire, which was followed by the Loyalist ceasefire. We moved to the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation. People like ourselves were prepared to be engaged in discussions. The world press landed on the scene to proclaim that a new dispensation had arrived. Mr Adams was able to go to the United States of America and meet with very senior people in every significant place. All seemed to be going very well indeed, but then we began to run up against the stone wall of historic reality.

When it came to the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation of course the Unionists decided not to participate. That was not surprising. For some people it wasn't even regrettable, but it **was** regrettable for me, and it was regrettable for many reasonable people in that Forum. Then it became apparent that there was indeed a Nationalist Consensus. The Nationalist Consensus had signed up for the Downing Street Declaration, for the Principle of Consent, for a view that violence was not a legitimate instrument, for a commitment that everybody's rights had to be protected, and **that** Nationalist Consensus was a long way from the republican agenda.

Indeed as we came to the final draft, and re draft, and postponed redraft of the Forum Report, it became clear that the Nationalist Consensus was closer to the Alliance Party position than it was to the Sinn Fein position.

But worse was to come, because the Republican movement had believed that internationalizing the problem was a great way of breaking the British Unionist stranglehold. They were convinced that when the international community came in, they would regard **them** as freedom revolutionaries, ready to change an old colonial imperialist system. When the international community did come in, in the guise of the Mitchell Commission, with highly respected people, (Mitchell himself being half Irish and half Lebanese - a perfect combination to send to an area of trouble!), when he came with his colleagues, and began to understand the complexities of the problem here, he came up with a very different answer.

I remember some years ago my colleague Gordon Mawhinney being out in Hong Kong. He rang me on the telephone. At that stage all sorts of difficult things were happening there, and I said to him "Gordon, how is it in Hong Kong?" and he said "John, it is just like Northern Ireland. It is very straightforward from 5,000 miles away!" When the international community came and looked at our problem, not from 5,000 miles away, but close up, and when Mr Clinton himself began to take an interest in our difficulties, he began to understand the complexities. When the Mitchell Commission made its report what did it say? It said that if we were going to go into talks, and people were going to have any confidence about those talks, they must know for sure that whatever the outcome of those talks, nobody but nobody was going to return to the use of violence to change the outcome. That is the key thing. Given the experience of the last 25 years it is not strange that people should have some doubts about the credentials of some of the parties that are participating, so there have to be commitments to boost confidence and the Mitchell Commission underlined a number of the commitments that there need to be. One of the concrete commitments that there needs to be, is that during the process of the talks, the decommissioning of weapons will have to be addressed, and the dismantling of the paramilitary organizations should begin.

What a nightmare! Oh not for you and me. We would quite happily dismantle the paramilitary wing of the Alliance Party. But just for a minute try to look at it from the perspective of the Irish Republican Army Council. They are sitting in the Forum. Well, they are not sitting in the Forum. Their colleagues are sitting in the Forum. Well, Sinn Fein is sitting in the Forum and they of course don't even know the telephone number of the IRA. However, they are speaking, and presumably listening, with "authority", they convey to the Army Council that the Nationalist Consensus appears to have become corrupted. They are no longer true Nationalists and if we get to All Party Talks things are going to get much worse, because the Unionists are going to be there, and the British Government is going to be there too. So, if the Forum takes a view of the Principle of Consent, which would be, in republican terms understood as a unionist veto, and an acceptance of partition, how much worse it is going to be if Ian Paisley, and all the rest of unionism and the British Government is there. Not an appealing thought for the IRA Army Council. Just as they see their arguments being unstitched in All Party Talks they are at the

same time expected to be dismantling their organisation. Hard to take when you have not been defeated? Hard to visualize any other options when you know you can't win. So here was the dilemma of republicanism.

But what about the dilemma of ordinary people? In the middle of all these expectations being raised there were a lot of questions around in the minds of ordinary people. It wasn't regarded as polite to speak about them publicly. To raise questions about the Peace Process was regarded as a kind of party pooping. But let us look at the questions that ordinary people were quietly asking themselves.

In the peace process in South Africa, we saw Mr Mandela and Mr de Klerk, the representatives of the two sides, shaking hands and telling us about the settlement they were going to achieve. In the Middle East, Mr Rabin and Mr Arafat were there, shaking hands, and telling us from both sides how they were going to work together. But there is not a non-Nationalist in sight when John Hume and Gerry Adams and Albert Reynolds get to the podium to shake hands together. How (asks the ordinary person) can you get a peace settlement when you have only got one side of the conflict there? Stretching out the hand is fine, but there has to be somebody on the other side grabbing hold of it, or you don't have a real handshake. There is of course an answer to this question. That part of the peace process was a genuine attempt to create peace between physical force republicanism and constitutional nationalism - an attempt to reach an understanding. But that is not the heart of the problem. I don't mean it is an unimportant problem. I don't mean that it is not important to address it. But it is not the heart of the problem. The heart of the problem is Unionists and Nationalists, those Irishmen and Irishwomen who see things differently and want to live in different political dispensations if they could only have their way, and tragically want to dominate those political dispensations, if they could have their way. So ordinary people were puzzled.

They were also puzzled about how to respond to those who were feted for being the **real** peacemakers when, for the last 25 years they were the same fellows who were supporting the killing. Ordinary people were puzzled to know how to react to those who would break the law and happily allow peoples legs to be broken as well. How to make sense of those who say that it is acceptable to have young people crucified up in West Belfast, but don't for goodness sake let the RUC in. Ordinary people are puzzled by those things. Ordinary people felt confused and uncertain, but it wasn't polite to ask those questions because "you might destabilize the process".

Then ordinary people began to hope that maybe it was going to be all right after all. Maybe if the ceasefire went on for long enough it would become so well embedded that nobody could return to the violence. Maybe the whole sorry nightmare would end, not with the big bang of a settlement, but just whimpering back into the shadows again. Then came the big "bang" at Canary Wharf and everyone was awakened out of that pleasant state of wishful thinking. The real problem was still here.

Friends, I know it is not always very popular, but I prefer to stick with limpet tenacity to the solid rock of political reality, and I think it is one of the contributions that this party has made over the years. We have never

sought to gain popularity by spinning illusions to people on the one hand, or stoking up their fears to maintain a market share of the vote on the other. I believe that it is our capacity to stick with the reality of the problem, be it difficult, tough and unpleasant, that is one of our important contributions to politics in Northern Ireland. I believe that it is now crucially important that we help people to understand that many of their concerns were not unreasonable, and that everything is not now hopeless just because those on the extremes have discovered that they can't have it all their own way, and are slipping backwards into their old ways. Everything is not hopeless at all.

If we look at the situation in South Africa, they didn't achieve a settlement there by insisting on unanimity all the way. Not a bit of it. Don't you remember all the times when Chief Buthelezi and the Inkhata Freedom Party walked in and out of the talks, and the White Right who walked up and down, and who never came in to the talks at all? What the South Africans understood was that you can get a settlement if you have "sufficient consensus". That was their term. If you can get an overwhelming majority of the people on both sides to work together, you can negotiate a settlement, and the dynamic of working together can be so powerful that you can bring the whole community together, and marginalise those on the extremes who aren't prepared for an honorable compromise.

Let us look at the Middle East. Is someone seriously going to say to me that I should regard what Mr Arafat and what Mr Rabin were doing as simply a waste of time. If Hamas won't run with it, it is a waste of time? If hardline Jewish fundamentalists won't sign up for an agreement, it is a waste of time? Can that really be true? Of course not. And yet what we are being told in Northern Ireland is that there is no point in having talks unless absolutely everybody is there, and there is total unanimity. Don't people understand that one of the first rules of politics here, just like everywhere else, is that if everybody is saying one thing, there is political capital to be made out of saying something different. Every politician knows that, and some of the most disreputable of them capitalise on it. The truth is that there won't be that kind of unanimity but that doesn't mean we cannot move forward. We **can** move forward even with a difficult and messy electoral system.

Now let me say why I believe we can move forward and why have got the current arrangements. Alliance was in talks with all the other parties month after month for well over a year. Some of our meetings were publicised (as in the Forum). Many were not.

Through our discussions we became absolutely persuaded of two things. First of all, if there were not All Party Talks as soon as possible, the IRA ceasefire would breakdown. The whole process, the whole strategy since 1992 had not been of our choosing and it had not been of our making, and we hadn't actually believed very much in it, but we are not a party of dogma, we are not a doctrinaire party, and when we saw any opportunity whatever of making progress we were prepared to work it, and nobody has worked harder at it, even though it has not been our process. When Unionists said to me "Don't be going down to that Forum. It is only there to give a platform to Sinn Fein." My response to them was this, "I know, but



that doesn't mean that is all it can become. I know why it was put into place. I am not under any illusions. But it can be something different if we participate." I became convinced in talking to Sinn Fein and talking to Loyalists that unless there were All Party Talks soon, the process was going to run into enormous difficulty.

But you see I had the advantage of talking to all the folk on the other side as well, and I became absolutely clear in my mind that there was not a ghost of a chance of those All Party Talks, including Sinn Fein on the one hand and the DUP and Ulster Unionists on the other, if there wasn't an election. Unionists said of course that Sinn Fein needed an election because they needed to demonstrate their democrat bone fides. They needed to fight an election without having the ballot paper in one hand, and the armalite in the other. Of course, that is what they said. What did you expect them to say? But people seem not to understand that it was the Unionists themselves that needed a mandate. At every election they had ever fought they had stood on the basis that they would not talk to Sinn Fein. They would smash Sinn Fein. They would shout at Sinn Fein. But they certainly would not sit down with Sinn Fein. So **they** needed a mandate, they needed an election, they needed a way of bringing their own people along with them. We became convinced that if there was to be any chance at all of All Party Talks before the next Westminster election, which could be as far away as 1997, and of course there will be a Dail election around that time too, if there was going to be any chance of Talks before then, there would have to be an Election to All Party Talks. We put forward our proposals for that election, and it is now clear that there is a chance for All Party Talks to begin on 10 June.

We did not need an election to talk to people. We were already talking to people, and we were already listening to them - that is maybe the big difference in what we were doing and in what some other people were doing - and now that we have got the election it gives another opportunity. It gives an opportunity for the **people** to have their say. That has been one of the big gaps over the last number of years, and it is going to be one of the big problems about All Party Talks. Who is going to be there? Is it a big secret? Not one of the political leaders who will be there has not been around in a leading position since the 1970's except for myself. Even my colleagues, Seamus (Close) and Sean (Neeson) have been around since the 1970's though you wouldn't think it to look at them! Even David Trimble has been around since the 1970's. He wasn't the leader of the Ulster Unionist Party then. He had other affiliations in those days, but he has been around as a significant player since then. And John Taylor of course was a Home Affairs Minister in the old Stormont Parliament. So when we get to the All Party Talks, the people who have failed to reach agreement for 25 years are going to be there. If they have got new speeches and new scripts I will be delighted to hear them, but I have not heard them yet.

I hear it said that things could be different if only the people could have their say. I hear it said that there are lots of people out there who want to demonstrate that they want change, who want to see things moving forward, who are pleading with their politicians. That there is a groundswell of opinion saying that there has to be a change. Well now the people have got their chance, and not just in an election. There is not just going to be a

vote for those who will represent the people. The people will also have a chance to come along themselves.

When we went to the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation in Dublin, one of the most valued components was not just the parties who were there, but the business people, church people, sportsmen, womens groups, young people, others who came along and told the politicians what kind of future they wanted. It was tremendous, and we, as a party that learns from experience, learned from that worthwhile experience. We put the proposition to John Major that there should be a Forum in Northern Ireland. Not an Assembly as David Trimble had proposed. Not the kind of arrangement that the DUP had put forward. But a Forum, called a Forum, like the Forum in Dublin, where the parties would be able to listen to the people, coming not with their views sieved and filtered out by somebody else, but coming as business people, as church people, as womens groups, as young people, as farmers, as community groups, coming along and saying to the politicians, "This is the kind of future we want".

This is a tremendous opportunity and I am delighted to hear that President Clinton has not only urged everyone to take part in elections, but urged all parties to take part in the Forum. Of course we are all going to hear some things we don't want to hear from each other, and most of us are going to hear things that we don't want to hear from the people who we purport to represent, but if we are going to get anywhere we have got to start listening to each other, and that Forum will be an excellent opportunity to do so.

Those two chances - the chance of an election and the chance of a Forum - are the best chances the people of Northern Ireland have had to have an entre and an input into the Peace Process. The best chance ever. But do you know, this it is not just the best chance, it may be the **last** chance. You see, by taking the problem outside of Northern Ireland, by getting the British Government so deeply involved, the Irish Government so deeply involved, by ensuring a heavy input from the United States, we have changed the dynamic of our process.

I would like to pay tribute to the leaders of those Governments who have played an enormous influence in our affairs. John Major has put more into this process than any British Prime Minister since Gladstone, and that is no small thing. He is not an Irishman. He doesn't come from here. Some people wondered when he became Prime Minister if he even knew where here was. But the fact is, that he has given an enormous, some would say an inordinate, amount of time to addressing our affairs. I don't agree with everything that he does. You know that, he knows that, every body knows that. But I have to pay tribute to the fact that he has stuck with us when many others wouldn't.

Let me say something about John Bruton. He had an interest in Northern Ireland long before he came to his present position, and he sometimes took unpopular positions on Northern Ireland, in the Republic. I understand that his views are not entirely popular in all quarters now. But one of the pleas that I have made repeatedly to Irish Governments over the years is that they don't simply support the Nationalist viewpoint in the North, anymore than I want to see a British Government support the Unionist viewpoint in

the North. I want both governments to show concern, appreciation and sensitivity to all views in Northern Ireland, and I think that recent Prime Ministers in the Republic have seriously attempted to do that. I think it right for us to acknowledge that both Albert Reynolds and in more recent times, John Bruton, and indeed I have to say all the political leaders of responsible parties in the Republic of Ireland, at the Forum, and you have seen this morning particularly Mary Harney here, have played a sensible and concerned role and I want to thank them on behalf of the people of Northern Ireland.

I don't know what you thought about Bill Clinton before he came to Belfast. I know there were mixed views about his involvement, about himself, and about what he was going to do involving himself in Northern Ireland. We are not a major strategic question for the United States of America. Some people think we are a strategic question for the Presidential Election. That is an entirely different matter. But we are not a strategic question when you look at some of the other enormous issues that there are around the world. Bill Clinton and his people at the White House have given an enormous amount of time to us in Northern Ireland. As I said earlier today he made a very constructive and helpful statement, and I believe that there is a genuine interest there. An interest that has become fuller and more balanced as he has become more involved. I want also to pay tribute to some of those who have not particularly been working the political furrow, but who have been trying to help to build our economy.

I can't tell you how sad I was to hear about Ron Brown and Chuck Meissner. Ron Brown was a big man in the United States of America, and he was a big man in Democratic Politics. I first heard him speaking at a Liberal International Congress in Paris some years ago when he was Chairman of the Democratic Party. A man, not without his flaws, but a man who did play an important role in trying to encourage investment for us. Most of you knew Chuck Meissner a great deal less, but I knew Chuck Meissner. He came to my home on a number of occasions. We met very frequently when he was here, and also when I was in Washington. Chuck Meissner was a man who wrote the speeches other people made - a man who ploughed the furrow, and other people reaped the reward - a man who really developed an interest in our affairs, and our needs, and I think began to share our hopes, and we miss him. Thanks Chuck.

But you know, however much interest is taken by British Prime Ministers, Irish Prime Ministers, American Presidents, the European Union, our friends in other places, it still comes back to ourselves. And you may say to me, as I think our Party President, Addie Morrow, was saying last night. "John is it going to work?". I have to say this to you. "Yes it can work, but if it is going to work, we have all got to work at it".

I have to say to the Republican Movement at this time, you should know from us now, that when we said we would talk to you if you stopped the violence, those were not empty words. We were true to our word. Were you true to yours when you indicated that this was an end to violence for good? Were you true to your word? For goodness sake, for all our sakes, put an end to physical force republicanism, embrace democracy as the only, the

only legitimate politics and join the rest of us in trying to build a fair and peaceful society.

I say to Loyalists, like many others, I don't always know what to make of you. I know your past. I know some of the things in your present look good, and sound good. Build on it. Don't slide back as the Republican Movement has done, I hope only temporarily. Have a bit of courage. Continue to build. I have too much experience in Northern Ireland politics to promise that you will get the electoral rewards, but what you are doing is important, and I hope you will continue to challenge yourselves about your associations with some of things that are still going on in Loyalist organizations, and that you will continue to challenge those, not just in paramilitary groups, but in the so-called loyal orders. They have to change themselves too.

I say to the Church Leaders, "You have been great leaders, tremendous religious leaders, but as I read the scriptures the prophets didn't stand up to the Gentiles and say 'You have got to understand the sensitivity of the Jewish people you know. You have got to appreciate that the Jews have very legitimate concerns and rights in all of these matters'. They didn't do that. They stood up to the Jews and said to them 'You are a disgrace'. That is the difference between being a religious leader and being a prophet. I don't say to you that being a prophet in your own country is a very comfortable spot to occupy, but surely what we need are not just religious leaders, but prophets in our community".

And let me say to John Hume and David Trimble. "You are political leaders. You are very capable political leaders". John Hume is the most capable and articulate leader of nationalism, certainly in Northern Ireland this century, of that there is no doubt. He is a very capable political leader. He has been extremely successful for his constituency and I just don't mean Foyle. He has been successful for Foyle, but he has been successful for the whole Nationalist constituency. There is no doubt about that. And David Trimble is a young, certainly in Unionist terms, a young and articulate leader - a man of ability, there is no doubt about that. But when Vice President de Klerk came to the Forum in Dublin, he told us that they have been successful in South Africa, not just because they had political leaders, but because they had statesmen.

What is the difference between a political leader and a statesman? Well let me tell you what he told us. A political leader represents his community, but in negotiations a statesman not only puts forward his own party's propositions, and puts them forward with force and persuasion, we all do that, but he also understands the requirements of his political opponents. He understands that if his political opponents don't get something out of this, there isn't going to be a deal. That is what makes a statesman. A statesman not only understands this, but goes back and tells his own people the unpleasant realities they are going have to accept if there is to be a deal. Now that is a **real** statesman. He represents his peoples views, understands his opponents requirements, and persuades his own people to accept what is necessary to do a deal. I say to John Hume and David Trimble "Have you the courage and capacity to be statesmen in the next year or so? Because if not, there will be no agreed settlement. If you can measure up, and if you can work with the rest of us, we can do it".

Whatever about the parties, whatever about those who have been involved in violence and extremism, whatever all the different governments do, the key question over the next few weeks comes back to the people of Northern Ireland, and the people do feel uncertain and dismayed. But I have to say to them "This is our chance". I don't believe that given the enormous involvement of the British and Irish Governments and the International Community, if we fail to reach an agreement they will simply let us be, I don't believe they will simply withdraw. I don't believe they will return to a policy of drift. I tell you what they will do. I believe that the British and Irish Governments, although with differing responsibilities, will put into place what they believe are the most appropriate structures to create stability in our community, and I don't welcome a development of that kind. It is not just that they might get it wrong. I only have to look at the method of election that is being proposed, to know how wrong they can get it! But worse than all of that, it will not be **our** agreement. And if it is going to work, the best possible chance of it working, is if can we tough it out with each other.

I come back to Addie's question. "Can it work, John?" I suspect that there were people who said to Mary Robinson before her election, "Now Mary, you are a very nice woman". Not everybody in Southern Politics would have said that, but a lot of people would. "Mary, you are a very nice woman, and you can stand for election if you like, but just don't think you have any chance". Well, if you have read the book that has been written about her election, you will know that from the very start she wasn't interested in fighting an election like that. She only wanted to participate in the election if she believed she **could** make a change. What she did, and what she had to do, was to galvanize all sorts of people and groups in the community and in political life to come and work with her, and not to waste their votes, but to **use** their votes to make a change. And she did. She got elected, and she has made a change, slowly but surely and very very real change. That is the kind of change we can create here. We can make very real change, if, as people, we work together to do it. If, as parties, we are prepared to make the compromises. I am not going to give you an easy message saying that we can get agreement to everyone's satisfaction, because the truth is this, if some of us are not prepared to give up some of our cherished aspirations there **will** be no agreement amongst us. If we don't grasp this opportunity with both hands, and from both sides of our community, the focus of decision-making will move outside of our community, and others will decide our future. That is not what I want. I don't believe it is what you want, and I don't believe it is what the people of Northern Ireland want, but it is what will happen.

What about the peace? What about the future? Two years ago, at our Party Conference, six months in advance of the ceasefire, I said to you that I believed that by the end of this decade we would be turning the pages of history on our violent past. I still believe that. I still believe in that time scale - I believe that the process might not quite be what some expect! But I believe that Alliance is the Heart of the Process that will take us there.