The Reverend Dr I R K Paisley MP MEP 256 Ravenhill Road BELFAST BT6 8GJ

February 1997

## LETTER FOR SIGNATURE BY PRIME MINISTER

At my short meeting with you and the other Northern Ireland Party leaders on 23 January, you raised, on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor of the Queen's University, Belfast, the issue of cuts in university research funding over the next three years. I undertook to look into the matter and to write to you.

As you know, the Government is firmly committed to maintaining control of public expenditure so as to reduce borrowing and keep inflation low. Northern Ireland must therefore play its part in contributing to this.

In his statement of 10 December 1996 on the Public

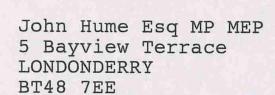
Expenditure Plans for Northern Ireland for the next three
years, Patrick Mayhew announced that in light of renewed
terrorist activity and public disorder, he had to restore
Law and Order as the Government's top spending priority in
Northern Ireland. Patrick's statement made it clear that given the
the additional resources provided for Law and Order
inevitably meant that less resources were available for Atom Seven
economic and social programmes. Difficult decisions
therefore had to be taken about those areas where reductions and hubble
should be made.

In regard to the funding allocated for Education in the Province, it was decided that resources should be concentrated on schools - and the classroom in particular - so as to maintain, as far as is possible, the real value of the existing schools budget.

It is against this background that university research funding was one of the areas where it was reluctantly decided that reductions were necessary. While I fully recognise that any decision to reduce research funding to the two Northern Ireland universities is unwelcome, I can assure you that the decision was not taken lightly.

The Northern Ireland Higher Education Council is currently undertaking a review of the funding of university research in Northern Ireland. This review is due to be completed in the Spring of this year, and will provide an opportunity for the whole question of the quantum of university research funding in Northern Ireland to be reconsidered for the 1997 Public Expenditure round.

I am copying this letter to the other NI political leaders who attended our meeting.



Robert McCartney Esq QC MP 10 Hamilton Road BANGOR Co Down BT20 4LE

David Trimble Esq MP 2 Queen Street LURGAN Craigavon Co Armagh BT66 8BQ

Lord Alderdice of Knock
55 Knock Road
BELFAST
BT5 6LB