

# ALLIANCE

## NEWS RELEASE

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Policing 1

EMBARGOED:- 10.00 A.M. TODAY (THURSDAY)

Thursday, 27th February, 1975

SPEECH BY OLIVER NAPIER ALLIANCE PARTY LEADER, AT A PRESS CONFERENCE TO  
PRESENT THE ALLIANCE PLAN ON POLICING:-

"The most urgent and fundamental problem in Northern Ireland today is the achievement of effective policing in all areas. In spite of the ceasefire large numbers of people in all areas of this Province are the victims of ruthless gangsterism. Crimes of all kinds, of savage murder, robbery, intimidation, knee-capping, extortion and vandalism are rampant in many areas. It is pointless to discuss future constitutional structures unless one is prepared to deal with lawlessness. More than anything else, what most people in Northern Ireland, regardless of political belief, want is effective policing to protect them from the thugs and the bullyboys operating in their own areas.

"For many months, I have attempted to get the Secretary of State to call an all-party conference to deal with the issue of policing. The Secretary of State refused to do so. For many months and on many occasions, I invited the other political parties to discuss with their fellow elected representatives, the massive policing problem which faces the entire community. The UUUC consistently refused on the grounds that they would not talk to anybody about anything until after the Convention Elections. The relevance of the Convention Elections to policing is obscure in the extreme. The SDLP also refused to discuss the issue as they apparently believe they cannot discuss policing with Northern Ireland parties until there is an agreement on a new constitution. How long it will take to achieve such a constitution, they apparently do not consider relevant.

"There are still those who express the view that what we need is an entirely new police force. This was even a view expressed at one time by the SDLP, but relinquished by them in the Stormont Castle talks. It is a view, not only totally impracticable, but can solve no problems and would create many more.

"There is another view, expressed by some UUUC spokesmen, *that there are* no problems with policing in Northern Ireland.



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"Where do these people live? The IRA is threatening to exclude the police from what they glibly call their areas. The UDA have stated once again that the RUC are unacceptable in 'loyalist' areas.

"There is an urgent need to face squarely the fact that there is not effective policing in all areas and that there are problems which require to be solved. Some of these problems lie in the political history of our Province and others in the arrogant demands of para-military organisations. But problems can never be solved without discussion and the refusal of the political power blocs of the UUUC and the SDLP to discuss the issue and the claims of the IRA and the UDA to have the right to exercise a policing role must be firmly resisted.

"As so many Northern Ireland politicians have persistently refused to discuss the matter, we intend to put forward, our proposals to the Secretary of State and to the general public. If even at this stage, political parties wish to discuss these proposals with us, we would welcome such talks.

"We will be seeking an urgent meeting with the Secretary of State to put these proposals before him and will ask the British Government to accept its responsibilities to achieve effective policing in all areas."

ENDS





# THE ALLIANCE PARTY OF NORTHERN IRELAND

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POL35/77(4)

Thursday, 27th February, 1975

## ALLIANCE PARTY'S PROPOSALS ON POLICING

### THE BASIC PRINCIPLE

There appears to be a very basic difference between ourselves on the one hand, and UUUC and SDLP on the other, on the whole question of control of the police. In our view, most of the problems of policing have arisen from control being in the direct hands of politicians. In our view, any future concept of policing control in the hands of politicians, whether based on one party government or on partnership executive, must be resisted. In our opinion, the overall direct control of the RUC must be in the hands of a non-political Police Authority which acts on behalf of the entire community. We believe that in future, all instructions to the police from Government must be transmitted through the new Police Authority. The Authority must be clearly seen in the public eye to be representative of all sections.

It is the job of Parliament to pass laws. It is the duty of the police to enforce these laws without fear or favour totally removed from direct political control or influence. We are opposed, therefore, to the police being an arm of government whatever the political complexion of that government.

### WESTMINSTER GOVERNMENT

In our view, there are two fundamental and urgent matters which the Westminster Government must deal with and which can help enormously to create the proper atmosphere for effective policing in all areas. These are:-

1. To clarify the Northern Ireland Police Act to make it clear that the control and responsibility for policing rests with the Police Authority. The present wording of the Police Act, 1970, is, "It shall be the duty of the Police Authority to secure the maintenance of an adequate and efficient police force in Northern Ireland and to carry out all such functions as are conferred on them by this Act." This wording has been interpreted in many quarters as only conferring on the Police Authority certain relatively minor administrative powers exercised by watch committees in Britain. The Police Authority should then be reconstituted as has been promised time and time again by successive Secretaries of State. It is vital that not only is the Police Authority in control, but that the public sees that it is in control.

We are, however, opposed to having any elected representatives on the Police Authority. Politicians should be kept out of policing and the existing procedure of District Council Liaison Committees is quite adequate for keeping the police in touch with local problems.

2. There is an urgent and overwhelming case for the establishment of an Independent Complaints Tribunal. It is vital that the public have full confidence that any complaints made will be properly and independently investigated. Justice must not only be done, but it must be seen to be done.

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THE BASIC DEFECT

The provisions for the existing procedure in Section 13 of the Police Act (Northern Ireland), 1970, leave the police open to the allegation that they are to a large extent, judges in their own cause.

ALLIANCE PROPOSALS

1. A permanent Complaints Investigatory Tribunal should be set up, which by its constitution, would be entirely independent of either the Police Force or the Police Authority. It should consist of two senior officers seconded from different police forces in Great Britain to serve for a year or two-year term. The third member of the Tribunal should be a barrister or solicitor of at least ten years standing who would act as Chairman of the Tribunal. The Tribunal would employ on a full-time basis, special investigating officers who should have investigating experience preferably outside Northern Ireland.
2. Any member of the public who feels that he has a complaint against the Police has a choice of pursuing it in two ways.
  - (a) He can report it to his local police station where it will be investigated immediately. Naturally this would be likely to be the quickest method of redress.
  - (b) He can report it to the Special Investigatory Tribunal.
3. The Tribunal shall have full access at all times to files and records of the Police and it shall have the right to compel witnesses.
4. The Police shall have the power to report any complaints made direct to it to the Investigatory Tribunal where it feels that this procedure is desirable. Similarly, if an individual who has made a complaint direct to the Local Police Station is dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation, he can appeal direct to the Investigatory Tribunal.
5. The Investigatory Tribunal shall report the outcome of its findings to the Police Authority if it feels that disciplinary proceedings are necessary or to the Director of Public Prosecutions where it believes that evidence of a criminal offence exists.
6. There should be an appeal on a point of law only from the findings of the Tribunal to the High Court.
7. The Tribunal's findings should not be deemed evidence in any future criminal or civil proceedings.

GARDINER COMMITTEE REPORT

Paragraph 98 of the Gardiner Committee Report states, "We believe that the introduction of an independent means of investigating complaints against the police would be an important step towards restoring universal confidence in the Royal Ulster Constabulary, and we recommend that this should be established."

It is disappointing that the Government has maintained an absolute silence as to its intentions on this recommendation.

NORTHERN IRELAND GOVERNMENT

We favour the transfer of powers relating to crime and punishment to a new Northern Ireland Parliament or Assembly, based upon the principles set out in the recent Government White Paper. However, we are adamant that direct control of the police should never again be in the hands of politicians.

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THE CONVENTION

The Convention will not have the power to do anything about policing. It will be discussing only a new constitution for this Province. We would like, therefore, to take this opportunity to repeat that there is an enormous responsibility on every political party to sit down with fellow elected representatives to discuss the problems of policing. If this issue continues to be left in a vacuum, the opportunity which now exists to achieve proper policing in all areas will be lost and the results could be catastrophic.

THE R.U.C.

Many criticisms have been levelled against the R.U.C. No doubt there are some people in that force who for one reason or another, are unsuitable. But by and large, over the last few years since the political control was changed, the R.U.C. has conducted itself with great credit, inspite of over 50 of its members being murdered.

Furthermore, it is clear that the results in terms of successful investigations are extremely creditable, particularly when one has regard to the general state of the Province. We are convinced that the R.U.C. can be an acceptable police force in all areas, provided the Government and Northern Ireland politicians appreciate the problems and accept their responsibilities even at this late stage.

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