

MR MASEFIELD-B

cc PS/SofS(L&B)-B
PS/Ministers (L&B)-B&M
1. PS/Sir K Bloomfield-B
Mr Burns-B
Mr Barry DOE(NI)-M
Mr Chesterton-B
Mr Innes-B
Mr Bell-B
Mr McConnell PAB-B
Mrs Brown DOE(NI)-M

2. *in Spence*

LETTER OF 30 OCTOBER FROM THE ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES
OF NORTHERN IRELAND (ALANI)

1. You sought advice (your minute of 3 November - attached) on the handling of the ALANI letter. As you surmised, the same letter has, we understand, been sent to all MPs (less Mr Adams). As the terms of the letter indicate, it was evidently drafted and agreed before the publication of our discussion paper (on 12 October).

2. The letter rehearses in fairly familiar terms the problems posed by the presence of Sinn Fein (and others) in council chambers. Interestingly, Sinn Fein is not named, but there are clear references to the party. ALANI asks that "action should be taken by the government to ensure that the advocates of political terrorism are denied any further participation in the democratic process". Insofar as that may mean "ban Sinn Fein from councils", that is not the Government's stated intention, and the proposed declaration would be unlikely to achieve it. But it is our aim to prevent councillors (not just Sinn Fein ones) voicing support for terrorist violence. (We certainly could not, however, prevent councillors from refusing to sympathise with casualties of terrorist violence, which is another of ALANI's stated concerns.) The discussion in the letter of a "Declaration of Allegiance", "Renunciation" (of support for violence) and "Proscription" is close to the thinking in our own Discussion Paper. The letter ends by asking MPs "to press the government to introduce legislation as a matter of urgency". In other words, this is a lobbying exercise.

3. ALANI have recently written to us at official level, saying that they will be unable to respond to the Discussion Paper until after a meeting planned for 18 December. In view of the need for rapid decisions about the way ahead, we have told them that we must have comments by the stated deadline (30 November) and they are considering whether to hold a special meeting.

4. In the circumstances, I agree that a Private Secretary response would be appropriate. A draft is attached, together with a draft note to No. 10.

D C KIRK

CPL

6 November 1987

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PS/SECRETARY OF STATE

Mr King has asked me to thank you for your letter of 30 October and for the letters you sent to the Prime Minister and other members of the Government.

The Government agrees entirely that the presence in district council chambers in Northern Ireland of those who support terrorist violence while exploiting the democratic process poses serious problems. The Northern Ireland Office has therefore published recently, as you will be aware, a Discussion Paper, "Elected Representatives and the Democratic Process in Northern Ireland", as a basis for comment by interested parties. In the light of responses, the Government will decide what action should be taken. Because of the importance of this issue to the future of local government in Northern Ireland, Mr King looks forward to seeing any further comments your Association may wish to put forward on the specific proposals in the Discussion Paper.

Charles Powell Esq
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London SW1

Mr Kirk

PS/SECRETARY OF STATE

Thank you for your letter of 2 November, enclosing a letter of 30 October from the Association of Local Authorities of Northern Ireland. As you say, the letter has evidently been sent to all MPs (less Mr Adams) and was apparently drafted before the publication (on 12 October) of our discussion paper, "Elected Representatives and the Democratic Process in Northern Ireland", responses to which were invited by 30 November. Since Ministers have yet to decide on the way ahead, we have sent a short Private Secretary response (copy attached) and Mr King does not believe that any separate comment by the Prime Minister is required.