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24th August, 1971

Text of statement issued by the Northern Ireland Prime Minister, Mr. Brian Faulkner, M.P., regarding recent statements made on the situation in Northern Ireland.

305/14/18/3

Against the current background of wild and often illogical talk I want to make a simple and direct statement of a few facts.

Firstly, the State of Northern Ireland is not going to be brought down. Neither the United Kingdom Government nor the Northern Ireland Government will be shaken in their resolve to maintain Northern Ireland as an integral part of the United Kingdom by any campaign - be it outright terrorism or political blackmail. The sooner everyone fully realises that the better for all of us - and I mean all of us.

Secondly, above and beyond our divergent political aims is the over-riding importance of the welfare of this community. There are considerations of community life which far transcend the aims and activities of political parties or semi-political movements. At the moment that life is being blighted by economic and social illhealth, the germs of which flourish in an environment of instability, tension and fear. Can any of us progress, can any of us prosper, while the various factions of the IRA and their associates are allowed to infect the whole atmosphere in which we live?

Thirdly, internment is not aimed at repressing the Catholic community. The Government took the decision to introduce internment with great reluctance; we utterly deplore the necessity for it, but we are convinced that it is absolutely necessary. It is in itself a detestable instrument and it is no panacea for our problems. But the allegation that the internment operation was deliberately and maliciously one-sided is totally without foundation. The instructions given to the security forces were - and still are - that all dangerous men on whom they had reliable information which marked them out as definitely implicated in terrorist organisations should be arrested. This is a matter which has nothing to do with politics or religion. It is a straightforward matter of public order and safety.

I therefore deplore the efforts of those who are trying to use the internment issue to blacken the Government as being partial and repressive. I have said it before, but I wish to say it again in the plainest possible terms: the Government is not partisan in any way. Our concern is for the good of the whole community without distinction of party or creed. I said so on the first day I took up office as Prime Minister. And my words have not stood alone - they were quickly followed by action. Within three months, the Government had produced concrete and far-reaching parliamentary proposals aimed at assuring what most observers throughout the world felt was a very fair and useful part for the elected Opposition to play in the running of Northern Ireland. And I had made it clear that the Government was considering still further measures which would, in strengthening the parliamentary machine, continue this process.

Those are principal items of our policy - and they remain so. We will not be deflected from them because of the current attitude of the Opposition. Nor, I would emphasise, are we going to abandon these or other policies in the face of clamour from those on the other side of the political spectrum who cry 'betrayal' at every sign of change and progress in the community.

I am convinced that the Opposition are leading their followers up a blind alley. I would ask them these questions: Do they imagine that they can completely ignore the existence and the rights of a million fellow citizens? Are they really doing their followers a service when they surrender to extremists instead of taking up on

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behalf of their constituents the responsibilities of worthwhile participation in the affairs of the country? Do they imagine that they can make common cause with the extremists today and hope to escape their clutches tomorrow?

Surely what is needed in Northern Ireland today is constructive talk and cooperation between responsible people of all democratic parties. For, make no mistake about this, all democrats are threatened by the men behind the bomb and the bullet. Courage may be needed on all sides: but if so, courage must now be displayed. The Government is certainly willing to approach things in a non-partisan manner, seeking not to make short-term political capital but to serve the whole community and the common good.
