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Statement by Mr. Brian Faulkner on his election  
as leader of the Unionist Party 23 March, 1971

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Gentlemen:-

I'd like just to say a word or two to you and then briefly, as I understand time is limited, I'll answer a question or two but I'm afraid it will have to be brief. And I hope that through you I am perhaps speaking to a larger outside world. I regard it as my most important single aim to restore confidence to the entire community in Northern Ireland, because I am utterly convinced that without that restoration of confidence all else is futile. The kernel of our immediate problems in Ulster is the law and order situation. Here we don't need new principles, what we need are practical results on the ground, practical results in the elimination of terrorism, in the elimination of sabotage and in the ending of riots and disorders. The basic principle must be that the rule of law will operate in all parts of Northern Ireland, so that the security which goes with the rule of law can be enjoyed quite literally by all our citizens. It is the responsibility at the present time of the army and of the police, to put that principle into effect, and my administration will give them every support. I want to emphasise with all the strength at my command, that I will not in this context expect harsh measures, I will not expect repressive measures, no law abiding people need fear, but, and I emphasise this, my administration will look for efficient measures and when the Governments at Westminster and at Stormont take decisions in these matters we will insist, not only upon effective action on the ground but on swift and decisive reaction by the security forces. I hope urgently to look at ways and means of improving the present security arrangements, I have in mind in particular the co-ordination of the efforts of the army and of the R.U.C. Now as to the Royal Ulster Constabulary let me say very clearly, that I am not prepared to allow our police force to be used as a political shuttle-cock in Northern Ireland. In my opinion our police force has been asked to endure far too much, especially during the past two years and have not had enough thanks from the Ulster community for all that they have done.

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I am convinced that the normal role for the peace force as a civilian force is the right one, but it must be obvious that whenever the force is asked to do dangerous work it is given the necessary protection. As to the army, anti-government propaganda has implied that what the Northern Ireland Government wanted, or what the Unionist-minded population of Northern Ireland wanted was punitive or jack-boot tactics by the army, and I want to say absolutely clearly that nothing could be further from the truth. What I believe is that the whole law abiding population of Northern Ireland is looking to the Government for, and what I shall aim at, is that law breakers and criminals shall be brought to book, and shall go through the due processes of the law and get the punishment appropriate. Only when the trouble makers have been faced with the fact that they cannot succeed, will the people of Northern Ireland really be able to breath more freely, really be able to lift their heads from a pre-occupation with law and order and look forward to a better future. The sort of future which was rapidly been fulfilled in Northern Ireland before our present troubles started. I hope that from the manner of my remarks, I am not giving the impression that there is a very serious break-down of law and order throughout Northern Ireland. I want to emphasise to the world at large that the problems that we have faced from terrorism have been directly effective in only a tiny part of the geography of Northern Ireland, and that the vast majority of our people are not directly affected by them. As to the future, the programme for progress, which the previous administration had being following and in which I was involved must be energetically continued in all its aspects. In accepting the job as Leader of the Unionist Party, and then Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, I do so because I am convinced that our progress depends upon the maintenance of a Parliament and Government in Northern Ireland. This community, the whole community, has derived very considerable benefits from this Parliament in the past, especially socially and economically. In my opinion direct rule would be an utter disaster.

I believe that many of our grave problems will be solved with determination and with courage, but with determination and courage not just from the Government but from many different groups throughout the Northern Ireland community. And it is my intention to hold early talks with all shades of opinions in this community, I want to listen to what they have to say, and I want to tell them of my thinking, and I lay great emphasises of the importance of keeping the whole community, and I emphasise the whole community, in Northern Ireland in the picture. The aim that I will have, will be to lead a Government which is frank with the people, a Government in which no punches will be pulled, a Government in which there will be no glossing over of difficulties. I believe it is vital to public morale, that the facts of every situation should be spelled out clearly to the whole public at all times. I will endeavour above all to encourage people to think clearly about our situation, because there are far too many blinkered dashes at this time towards impossible or unworthy goals. I fully realise that I am taking on a tough job, according to the World Press, I am crazy to do it. I would not do it, if I didn't have a deep confidence in the future of Northern Ireland and in our present constitutional position within the United Kingdom. I am profoundly grateful for all the help and co-operation that we have received from the United Kingdom Government and especially from the army. But I think that all the world would agree that our problems can only be solved by Ulster's own people. Could I say to the people of Ulster, that as an Ulsterman I will promise to do my best, and I can only appeal to all my fellow country-men to help me.

Thank you, Gentlemen.