

# NATIONAL ARCHIVES

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# Northern Ireland Office

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Great George Street, London, SW1P 3AJ. Telephone Enquiries 01-930 4300 ext. 276 or 277  
Stormont Castle, Belfast, BT4 3ST. Telephone Enquiries Belfast 63011

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Stormont Castle, Belfast  
3 May 1977

STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND, THE RT HON ROY MASON MP

The disruption which has been threatened by the Unionist Action Council led by Mr Paisley and Mr Baird has now begun.

Public reaction has been to carry on with normal activity; for workers to go to work and for management to keep business going. This is absolutely vital if we are to have any hope of maintaining economic and industrial stability and progress in the Province.

The rejection, by all sections of the community, of disruptive action is reflected in the determination of people to get on with their normal life. Roads have been kept open, traffic is flowing, electricity supplies are normal, petrol is being supplied as usual, children are at school and the wheels of industry are turning. The people of the Province are showing that they are not prepared to jeopardise the future of the Province by willingly joining those who are hell-bent on destroying it.

A determined effort is being made, by the use of widespread intimidation and terrorising of the community, to prevent people going about their normal business and attending their places of work.

In the House of Commons yesterday, I made it clear that the Government intended to be firm and resolute in the face of intimidation and provocation. The Royal Ulster Constabulary has acted with firmness and determination to ensure as far as is possible that people are not intimidated and prevented from carrying on their normal activities. They cannot be everywhere at all times.

Those who are leading this campaign, and especially those who claim to respect the union with Great Britain and the Parliament of the United Kingdom must be clearly aware of the consequences of their actions. The Provisional IRA, who are the principal enemies of this community, will welcome the diversion of the security forces from their vital task of combating crime.

The Government was yesterday given the full support of Parliament in the action proposed to deal with the threatened disruption.

I have said before and I repeat: the Government and the security forces will do everything in their power to protect and assist those who are threatened and intimidated. I have prepared the necessary resources to carry on vital services if that is required. Specialist servicemen are available to maintain minimal services essential to the life of the community and of individual citizens. I must however make it clear that action by Government alone cannot ensure the continuance of normal living standards. It requires the support of people who are determined to resist the intimidation and bullying which in the short-term could be widespread.

It must, however, be borne in mind that all sections of the community have publicly repudiated the actions which are being taken today by the followers of Messrs Paisley and Baird. That repudiation will be sustained.