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until 3.10 PM*

G 96 Mr Bloomfield.

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Statement by the Chief Constable, Mr. R. E. Graham Shillington
at a news conference on Wednesday, 18th November, 1970

It has been my privilege this week to assume command of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and in so doing I am conscious not only of the honour but of the responsibility and the challenge. We have passed through hard times and it would be foolish not to anticipate further difficulties in the future. But I am confident that we will win through in the end and that the police and the public can once again live and work in peace, as I have no doubt the overwhelming majority of the people of this country want to do.

The past year or so has been one of unprecedented change and development in the Royal Ulster Constabulary; from the strength of our justifiably proud traditions we have confidently struck out on a new phase which, in keeping with the changing times in which we live, will increasingly be of immense benefit to the police themselves and more importantly to the public whom we serve.

My job is to consolidate the considerable achievements which have already taken place and to see to it that the Force which I command is one which constantly becomes more effective and efficient in its work and one which its members and the population at large can respect and admire.

In doing so one must fix priorities and our first priority must be to deal with people who are using firearms and explosives and causing a serious threat to life as well as damage to property and disruption of the life of the community.

For security reasons I am not prepared to go into details regarding the subversive elements responsible, but our intelligence is building up an increasingly clear picture of the situation. We are doing all in our power to convert this intelligence, where possible, into arrests of the culprits responsible.

Second only in importance is the problem of street demonstrations, riots and attacks on the Security Forces by petrol bombs, stones, bottles and such like weapons. Here we get a larger involvement of people including a big percentage of young persons and they result in a heavy drain on the Security Forces who could be much better employed in dealing with the gunmen and users of explosives.

I would like to see all responsible persons, and particularly parents, use their influence towards keeping the young people off the streets when there is trouble about. Too often, I'm afraid, they are being used by subversive elements for their own ends. And, as they unwittingly aid and abet these sinister agitators they run the risk of jeopardising their whole futures with court sentences; or worse, the risk of serious injuries. For remember, all who take part in a riot render themselves liable to the consequences.

Concurrent with these immediate problems very high priority must be given to recruitment and training. Upon this hinges much else; indeed many of our difficulties in the past arose from the sheer lack of manpower. With greater numbers we shall be able to assume the dominant role in peace-keeping and also see to it that the public has the protection from crime with it rightly expects and deserves.

Let me emphasise just what this increase in our strength means and the opportunities it offers in terms of a career to the young men and women of this Province. By the end of next month we shall have recruited 560 new policemen and women this year. In more dramatic terms it is as if we had created a new industry employing about 600 people. And we hope to do the same next year - and the next and indeed until we reach our target. Being a member of the Royal Ulster Constabulary is more, of course, than just having a job. It is a career, a well-paid one and I hope soon an even-better-paid one. Never before in the history of our Force has there been such an interesting diversity of work within the police service or opportunities for advancement. Both will become even more attractive in the years ahead.

I mentioned recruiting - and training. These young men and women coming into our ranks are people of a high standard both mentally and physically but in an age of changing techniques and attitudes and technological advance, they need a great deal of training, both practical and theoretical, particularly in their first two years of service if they are to become sound, efficient police officers. I think it is interesting to point out that by the end of 1971 we expect to have 1,000 men and women with under two years' service out of a total strength of 3,000 constables. I regret that the diversion of these police officers and their instructors to deal with street disorders not only interferes with their training but acts to the detriment of the service to the community.

When I say that a larger police force will enable us to play a greater part in normal peace-keeping I envisage a resultant withdrawal of the Army into a position where they would only become involved if major disturbances, clearly beyond the resources of any police force, were to develop. Here I would like to pay tribute to the Army for the wonderful job they have done in the past year in carrying out a most thankless and dangerous task; no one appreciates the thanklessness and danger more than the Royal Ulster Constabulary. But in doing the job, the Army has given us a breathing space to get our reorganisation under way and to build up our numbers. Regardless of that, there have of course been a number of situations during the past year which because of their violence were outside the capabilities of a civilian police force to handle. The increasing police involvement which I would like to see is dependent on the degree to which the vicious violence in the streets decreases.

I think we must all be more conscious than ever of crime in our midst, not just riot and disorder but ordinary crime such as stealing and house-breaking and the like which is the bane of law-abiding citizens.

It will be a vital part of my job to see to it that the Royal Ulster Constabulary returns to that high standard of prevention and detection of which it once boasted. Two years ago we were able to claim that in Northern Ireland not only did we have less crime than any other comparable area of the United Kingdom but we caught more offenders. That is no longer so. A large proportion, and at times virtually the entire Force, has been committed to dealing with disturbances and associated activities. Hundreds of thousands of police man hours have been expended in this way - to the advantage of the ordinary criminal. The community has paid the price: more crimes, fewer detections. The sooner we can give more attention to this aspect of our work the better it will be for everybody, except of course the law breaker. It is our intention, consistent with our other duties, to reach as quickly as possible a situation where the criminal is more effectively dealt with.

But preventing and detecting crime is not just something with which the police alone are concerned. The public has its part to play. I would like to see people doing very much more by way of exercising more care and taking sensible precautions and helping the police where they have knowledge of a crime or suspect one. It is quite astounding what could be done if only people made up their minds to do it, even in their own interests.

Indeed I should like generally to see a much closer relationship between the police and the public. While it is the intention to greatly improve our mobility and efficiency, and a considerable sum of money is being and will be spent for these purposes, it is also our view that there must be more policemen on the beat, out and about meeting and mixing with the public and being clearly seen to be looking after the interests of the public.

It is my hope too that we shall see a major improvement in the conditions in which the members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary live and work. Recently we have opened new stations at Portrush and Newtownards. Work has started on a new £ $\frac{1}{2}$ million headquarters for Londonderry and work on two other new stations in Belfast will commence shortly. These buildings will be followed by several others in the next $\frac{3}{5}$ years.

Finally I should just like to say this. The objective of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, as of any police force, is to provide a fair and impartial service to all sections of the community. It is a simple fact that no police force can operate successfully unless it has the co-operation and support of the general public. We have done much to achieve this over the last year and are doing more all the time in such fields as contacts with schools and community relations where we are forming a special department to deal with this important subject. The newly-formed Police Authority is proving most helpful in many ways.

We would welcome and I consider we are entitled to expect more response from the public. I am sure that the vast majority of the people of Northern Ireland are sick and tired of stone throwing, petrol bombs and street disorders generally. So I want to appeal to these people, whatever their class or creed: give us your support in carrying out the programme I have outlined. In return, as our numbers increase, I am confident that the Royal Ulster Constabulary will be able to offer you the best police service in the United Kingdom.

November 18, 1970