

Chief Minister:

I spoke at this morning's Executive meeting about my dissatisfaction with security action taken by the Garda in the Lifford area. Within the last 2 days 6 men were taken into custody but later released. It is my information that all of these people had been involved in recent bombing attacks in Strabane and at least one of them (Tracey) is a leading bomb maker with a considerable amount of explosives expertise. Another one of the group has shot dead a member of the security forces and the rest had been involved in planting the bombs which have blasted a number of premises in Strabane in recent weeks.

My main concern is that IRA men are openly walking the streets in Lifford without any apparent action being taken by the Garda. For example, I find it hard to understand why Martin McGuinness can have a meal in the Inter County Hotel, Lifford and not attract the attention of the Garda who use the premises socially. My sources within the RUC have told me that they have been able to identify the location of arms dumps on the Republic side as a result of intelligence picked up by them, but no action has been taken.

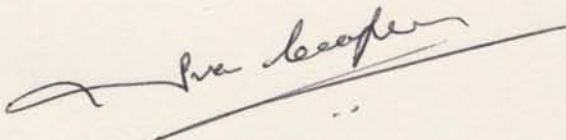
I have had the opportunity of making these points in the past to the Minister for Justice, Mr Cooney, and I know that Mr Paddy Hart, the Fianna Gael TD, has made similar representations. I believe that Mr Cooney is determined to stamp out IRA activity, but I question the loyalty and application of some of the members of the Garda working in the area.

Strabane has been bombed on 43 occasions and very little of the town's commercial area has not been crippled at some time or another. No other town in the North has suffered the way Strabane has and there is considerable feeling on the part of both Catholics and Protestants that an element of consent on the Lifford side on the part of the security forces is going to destroy the future entirely. My own opinion is that the Criminal Justice provision could be used extensively and well-known bombers taken out of the

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area for at least 12 months.

For your information, I am attaching the names of 5 of the people lifted by the security forces with a thumb nail sketch on their terrorist achievements set out.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Ivan Cooper", is written over a horizontal line.

IVAN COOPER
Department of Community Relations

31 January 1974