

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

IRELAND



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TO HQ
FOR SWIFT

FROM LONDON
FROM THOMPSON

THE OPENING SPEECH IN THE SUPPLY DAY DEBATE ON SECURITY LAST NIGHT WAS MADE BY ENOCH POWELL. HE LARGELY CONFINED HIS REMARKS TO DISCUSSING MATTERS SUCH AS THE POLITICAL CONSTRAINTS UNDER WHICH THE SECURITY FORCES ARE SAID TO OPERATE, THE RECRUITING AND EQUIPPING OF THE RUC AND UDR, AND THE POOR COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN THE ARMY, RUC AND UDR. THE TONE OF HIS REMARKS AND THAT OF THE OTHER UNIONISTS WHO SPOKE LATER IN THE DEBATE WOULD BEEM TO INDICATE THAT THEY ARE FAIRLY HAPPY WITH SECURITY POLICY AT THE MOMENT. THERE WAS NO REAL SENSE OF URGENCY ABOUT THEIRVSPEECHES. THEY DID NOT PRESS FOR DRAMATIC NEW SECURITY INITIATIVES BUT CALLED FOR THE SUPPLY OF NEW EQUIPMENT TO THE LOCAL SECURITY FORCES AND FOR RECRUITMENT UP TO THE ESTABLISHMENT FIGURES. POWELL SAID THAT HE BELIEVED IN THE GOVERNMENT'S DETERMINATION TO DEFEAT TERRORISM IN NORTHERN IRELAND, BUT THE TERRORISTS HAD TO BE MADE TO BELIEVE IT ALSO.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE, REPLYING FOR THE GOVERNMENT SAID 'I AM SURE THAT THE WHOLE HOUSE IS GRATEFUL TO THE RIGHT HON MEMBER FOR DOWN, SOUTH (MR POWELL) AND TO HIS PARTY THAT WE SHOULD BE DEBATING THIS SUBJECT TONIGHT. IT IS RIGHT THAT THE HOUSE SHOULD SPEND A LITTLE MORE TIME ON THE QUESTION OF SECURITY IN NORTHERN IRELAND.

I DO NOT AGREE WITH ALL THAT THE RIGHT HON GENTLEMAN SAID, BUT I AGREE THAT TERRORIST VIOLENCE STILL CONSTITUTES ONE OF THE WORST PROBLEMS THAT WE HAVE TO FACE IN NORTHERN IRELAND. I DO NOT SEEK TO CONCEAL THAT STATE OF AFFAIRS, NOR DO I WANT TO GIVE AT ANY TIME THE IMPRESSION THAT HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT - AND PARTICULARLY MYSELF - ARE COMPLACENT ABOUT THE MATTER. IN THE GOVERNMENT BOOK THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS AN ACCEPTABLE LEVEL OF VIOLENCE. THERE IS NO QUESTION, EITHER, OF PURPOSELY HOLDING BACK THE FORCES. OF COURSE, IN SOME AREAS OF NI WHERE NOW, INCREASINGLY, THE BRITISH ARMY IS BECOMING THE BUTTRESS OF THE RUC, IT MAY BE BEING MISSED. IT MAY BE THAT IT IS NOT SO NOTICEABLE AND DOES NOT HAVE THE SAME HIGH PROFILE AS IT HAD BEFORE. WHERE THE RUC IS COMING TO THE FORE THIS IMPRESSION MAY BE GAINED.

AS FOR ARRESTS BY THE SECURITY FORCES, I CAN ASSURE THE HOUSE THAT THERE IS NO RESTRAINT WHATEVER. I WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THAT THE SECURITY FORCES MUST FEEL THAT THEY HAVE TO BE SURE. IF THEY MAKE A MISTAKE - AND THIS PARTICULARLY APPLIES TO THE BRITISH ARMY - THEY KNOW THAT THAT MISTAKE WILL BE EXPLOITED TO THE FULL AND THAT THE PROPAGANDA BACKLASH COULD DO THEM A GREAT DEAL OF HARM.

IT MAY BE ARGUED TONIGHT THAT WE ARE NOT MAKING AS MUCH HEADWAY AS WE WOULD LIKE IN TACKLING TERRORIST VIOLENCE. I THINK THAT WOULD BE WRONG AND MISLEADING. WE HAVE TO LOOK AT ALL THE STATISTICS AND WE HAVE TO BE CLEAR ABOUT THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF VIOLENCE, WHETHER THEY TAKE THE FORM OF ATTACKS ON THE SECURITY FORCES SECTARIAN KILLINGS, OR ATTACKS ON COMMERCIAL PROPERTY. IF WE LOOK AT THE FULL RANGE OF FIGURES IT IS CLEAR THAT THE DOWNWARD TREND APPARENT SINCE 1972, CONTINUED GENERALLY IN 1976, AND THE SECTARIAN ASSASSINATIONS, WHICH WERE NOT GREATLY, IF AT ALL, AFFECTED BY THE SO-CALLED CEASE-FIRE IN 1975, THE OVERALL LEVEL FOR 1976 WAS LESS THAN THAT OF THE PREVIOUS YEAR.

THERE ARE SOME OTHER HOPEFUL SIGNS. THE QUANTITY OF EXPLOSIVES ESTIMATED TO HAVE BEEN USED BY THE TERRORISTS DURING 1976 WAS ONLY A FRACTION OF THE PRE-CEASE-FIRE LEVEL. WE BELIEVE THAT THE INCREASINGLY STRINGENT CONTROL OF EXPLOSIVE SUBSTANCES BOTH HERE AND IN THE IRISH REPUBLIC IS PAYING OFF, AND I CAN ASSURE THE HOUSE THAT THIS IS A FIELD TO WHICH THE GOVERNMENT CONTINUE TO DEVOTE GREAT ATTENTION.

I SHOULD ALSO RECORD THE STEADILY INCREASING EFFECTIVENESS OF THE POLICE. DURING 1976 1,276 PERSONS WERE CHARGED WITH TERRORIST-TYPE OFFENCES, AND THERE WERE MORE IN THE LAST QUARTER THAN IN ANY OF THE THREE PRECEDING ONES. THESE CHARGES INCLUDE 241 FOR MURDER OR ATTEMPTED MURDER. BUT EVEN MORE IMPORTANT ARE CONVICTIONS. IN 1976, 934 PERSONS WERE CONVICTED ON INDICTMENT, OF SCHEDULED OFFENCES.

DESPITE SOME BRUTAL AND WELL-PUBLICISED ATTACKS, MANY OF THE FAVOURABLE TRENDS THAT I HAVE DESCRIBED HAVE CONTINUED INTO THE NEW YEAR. GOOD ARRESTS, FOR INSTANCE, CONTINUE TO BE MADE. THE CHIEF CONSTABLE TELLS ME THAT AMONG THOSE CHARGED DURING JANUARY WERE 10 WHOM HE CONSIDERS TO HAVE BEEN ORGANISERS OF PROVISIONAL IRA VIOLENCE. AS HON MEMBERS WILL PROBABLY BE AWARE, TWO MEN HAVE NOW BEEN CHARGED WITH THE DESPICABLE MURDER OF GEOFF AGATE, IN LONDONDERRY, AND THE OPENING WEEKS OF THE NEW YEAR HAVE BEEN THE CHARGING OF LOYALIST PARAMILITARY GANGS WHO WERE OPERATING IN BALLYMENA, BANGOR AND ~~XXXXXX~~ COUNTY ARMAGH, RESPECTIVELY. THAT IS THE SORT OF POSITIVE PROGRESS THAT IS BEING MADE.

THE GOVERNMENT ARE CONVINCED THAT THE POLICY THAT THEY ARE PURSUING IS THE RIGHT ONE AND THE ONE MOST LIKELY IN THE LONG TERM TO BRING A FINAL END TO VIOLENCE. BUT WE MUST NOT DELUDE OURSELVES THAT THERE IS SOME OTHER MAGIC RECIPE, AS YET UNTRIED. THERE IS NO GUARANTEE THAT SOME OTHER SWEEPING MEASURES WOULD ACHIEVE THE DESIRED END, EITHER BY THEIR IMPACT ON THE TERRORIST OR THEIR EFFECT ON THE ORDINARY CITIZEN.

A DEMOCRACY FUNCTIONS BY THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE AND THROUGH THE RULE OF LAW. IT CANNOT BEHAVE LIKE A TOTALITARIAN STATE, NOR IS IT RIGHT THAT IT SHOULD. ITS SECURITY FORCES EXIST TO DEFEND THE RIGHTS OF ITS CITIZENS AND NOT TO LIMIT THEM. I AM CONVINCED THAT THE MESSAGE IS GETTING THROUGH TO THE MEN OF VIOLENCE, AND AS I HAVE EMPHASISED TIME AND TIME AGAIN THAT THEY HAVE SET THEIR FEET ON A ROAD THAT GOES NOWHERE. THERE WILL BE NO NEGOTIATIONS WITH THEM, AND THERE WILL BE NO AMNESTY: ONLY STEADY, UNRELENTING PRESSURE.

THIS PRESSURE COMES FROM THE MEN AND WOMEN ON THE GROUND DOING THE JOB, SUPPORTED BY THE RIGHT ORGANISATION AND EQUIPMENT. IN THIS RESPECT IT IS THE RUC WHO MUST SHOULDER THE MAIN RESPONSIBILITY FOR BRINGING THE TERRORISTS TO TRIAL.

DURING 1976 THERE WERE ABOUT 2,900 APPLICATIONS TO JOIN THE RUC, AND 581 RECRUITS WERE ACCEPTED. THIS IS THE HIGHEST RECRUITMENT FIGURE FOR ANY YEAR IN THE HISTORY OF THE FORCE, AND IT FOLLOWS THE 1975 TOTAL OF 505, WHICH WAS ITSELF A RECORD FIGURE. BUT DESPITE THE REAL AND APPARENT PRESSURES ON THE RUC, THE WASTAGE FOR OTHER THAN NORMAL RETIREMENTS OR RESIGNATIONS FOR PERSONAL AND VERY SPECIFIC REASONS IS NOT A SIGNIFICANT FACTOR IN NI.

IN TERMS OF A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL STRENGTH THE OVERALL WASTAGE RATE HAS REMAINED BROADLY CONSTANT AT AROUND 4 PER CENT. OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS. THIS RECORD COMPARES FAVOURABLY WITH OTHER FORCES IN THE U K. IT IS AN ENCOURAGING INDICATION OF THE MORALE OF THE FORCE AND ITS CONTINUING WILL TO SERVE THE WHOLE COMMUNITY. THE STRENGTH OF THE FORCE AT THE END OF JANUARY WAS 5,320, AND ALTHOUGH THERE IS STILL SOME WAY TO GO BEFORE WE ATTAIN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF 6,500 OFFICERS THE PROSPECTS ARE GOOD.

I DID LOOK AT THE FIGURES TO WHICH THE RIGHT HON MEMBER FOR DOWN, SOUTH REFERRED - THE 2,000 APPLICATIONS. HE COMPLAINED THAT DESPITE THIS WE TOOK ON ONLY THE NUMBER TO WHICH I HAVE REFERRED. THERE ARE DIVISIONS IN NI THAT ARE UP TO ESTABLISHMENT, AND IN THOSE AREAS PEOPLE ARE TURNED AWAY. IN THESE CASES THERE IS A FEELING OF DISSATISFACTION. THERE IS ALSO A RIGID SCREENING PROCESS, AND AS WE APPROACH THE LEVEL OF ESTABLISHMENT NATURALLY WE GO FOR MORE EXPERIENCE OR A BETTER TYPE OF PERSON.

IT HAS BEEN SUGGESTED THAT GREATER USE SHOULD BE MADE OF RESERVE CONSTABLES. I KNOW THAT THE CHIEF CONSTABLE IS CONSIDERING WHETHER THE EXISTING STRENGTH OF THE FORCE, INCLUDING THE PART-TIME AND FULL-TIME RESERVE, MIGHT BE MORE EFFECTIVELY ORGANISED TO MEET DEMANDS ON THEIR RESOURCES. BUT WE SHOULD REMEMBER THAT THE REALITY OF POLICE WORK IS THAT THE PREVENTION OF CRIME IS AS IMPORTANT AS DETECTION. THE VERY PRESENCE OF A RESERVE CONSTABLE IS A DETERRENT TO THE CRIMINAL, AND THE OFFICER IS THUS MAKING A VALUABLE AND EFFECTIVE CONTRIBUTION TO THE MAINTENANCE OF LAW AND ORDER. IF AT THE SAME TIME A REGULAR OFFICER CAN BE RELEASED FOR OTHER DUTIES - AND THERE WILL ALWAYS BE TASKS WHICH CAN ONLY BE CARRIED OUT BY THE REGULAR FORCE - THE CONTRIBUTION MADE BY THE RESERVE CONSTABLE IS EVEN MORE WORTHWHILE.

RECRUITMENT TO BOTH ARMS OF THE RESERVE IS CONTINUING SATISFACTORILY, AND THE TOTAL STRENGTH IS NOW 4,678 - THE FULLTIME RESERVE STRENGTH IS 889, AND THE PART-TIME STRENGTH 3,789. THE RIGHT MAN FOR THE JOB, SOUTH IS QUITE CORRECT. THERE IS A SLIGHT DIMINUTION IN THE PART-TIME RESERVE FIGURE, BUT THE OVERALL FULLTIME AND PART-TIME RESERVE FIGURES SHOW AN INCREASE IN STRENGTH AND CAPABILITY.

IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES THE POLICE CANNOT BE LEFT TO FACE UNAIDED THE MURDEROUS ACTIVITIES OF TERRORIST ORGANISATIONS. MILITARY SUPPORT IS STILL NEEDED TO ACHIEVE OUR LONG-TERM AIM TO RESTORE IN THE PROVINCE A SITUATION IN WHICH THE POLICE ARE SOLELY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF LAW AND ORDER AS THEY ARE IN THE REST OF THE UNITED KINGDOM. UNTIL THAT TIME THE RUC AND THE ARMY WILL CONTINUE TO FUNCTION IN PARTNERSHIP. WE SHOULD REMEMBER THAT INTELLIGENCE GATHERED BY THE ARMY HAS BEEN OF GREAT VALUE IN BRINGING TERRORISTS BEFORE THE COURTS.

WE CONTINUE TO HAVE ABOUT 14,000 MEN OF THE REGULAR ARMY STATIONED IN NI. THESE NUMBERS WILL BE REDUCED ONLY WHEN THE GOV ARE QUITE CONVINCED THAT THIS CAN BE DONE WITHOUT RISK TO THE LIVES AND PROPERTY OF THE PEOPLE.

THE GENERAL OFFICER COMMANDING KEEPS THE DEPLOYMENT OF TROOPS IN NI UNDER CONSTANT REVIEW. THE AIM IS ALWAYS TO HAVE MEN AVAILABLE - WHETHER IT BE THE SAS OR ANY OTHER UNIT - WHERE THEY ARE NEEDED MOST TO COMPLEMENT POLICE OPERATIONS. IN A NUMBER OF AREAS, FIRST-LINE SUPPORT FOR THE POLICE IS NOW PROVIDED BY THE ULSTER DEFENCE REGIMENT. THIS ENABLES REGULAR FORCES TO BE CONCENTRATED IN THE MOST VULNERABLE AREAS.

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THE ULSTER DEFENCE REGIMENT IS BEING STRENGTHENED IN LINE WITH ITS INCREASING OPERATIONAL ROLE AND PARTICULARLY TO PROVIDE A 24-HOUR COVER IN ITS PARTICULAR AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY. THE HOUSE WILL KNOW THAT THE GOV ARE RECRUITING AS A FIRST STEP AN ADDITIONAL 200 FULL-TIME MEMBERS. THIS RECRUITMENT HAS NOW BEGUN, AND WE SHALL DO EVERYTHING IN OUR POWER TO REACH THE TARGET AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. I HOPE THAT FURTHER RECRUITMENT BEYOND THAT FIGURE CAN BE ATTAINED.

THE RIGHT HON MEMBER FOR DOWN, SOUTH MENTIONED PARTICULARLY THE UDR AND THE RECRUITING CAMPAIGN FOR THE PART-TIME UDR. A HIGHER PROPORTION OF YOUNG MEN ARE JOINING THE REGIMENT. IN THE LAST ~~XX~~ 14 MONTHS NINE OF THE 11 BATTALIONS HAVE BEEN CALLED OUT FOR FULL-TIME SERVICE IN THE PROVINCE, AND THE RESERVE OF THE REGIMENT IS OPERATING AT WEEKENDS.

I ASSURE THE HOUSE THAT ALL ARMS OF THE SECURITY FORCES CO-OPERATE CLOSELY WITH EACH OTHER. BUT THE TRAINING THAT IS ~~XXXX~~ APPROPRIATE FOR MILITARY FORCES IS NOT NECESSARILY EQUALLY APPROPRIATE FOR THE POLICE.

AS FOR EQUIPMENT, NEW RADIO SETS WILL BE SUPPLIED, I HOPE, IN SATISFACTORY NUMBERS LATER THIS YEAR.

MR JOHN CARSON (BELFAST, NORTH): IN WHAT AREAS IS THE UDR PROVIDING A BACK-UP FORCE FOR THE RUC?

MR MASON: I COULD NOT SAY OFFHAND IN WHICH AREAS THE UDR IS OPERATING, AND I DO NOT THINK THAT IT WOULD BE RIGHT, FOR SECURITY REASONS, TO SPELL IT OUT IN DETAIL. HOWEVER, I HAVE SPENT SOME TIME WITH THE ~~B~~ UDR AND I KNOW THAT MEN AND WOMEN OF THE REGIMENT, AT GREAT SACRIFICE OF THEIR TIME AND WITH UNDOUBTED PERSONAL RISK, ARE HELPING TO MAKE NI A SAFER PLACE TO LIVE IN. ALL ELEMENTS OF THE SECURITY FORCES ARE DEFENDING THE PROVINCE AGAINST CRIME AND BLOODSHED. THEY DESERVE THE WARMEST SUPPORT, NOT ONLY FROM THIS HOUSE, BUT FROM ALL PARTIES IN THE PROVINCE, WHO HAVE A CLEAR RESPONSIBILITY TO GIVE THEM THEIR WHOLEHEARTED AND UNAMBIGUOUS BACKING.

MANY OF ~~THE~~ THOSE WHO CRITICISE THE SECURITY FORCES APPEAR TO HAVE LITTLE CONCEPT OF THE PROBLEMS THAT THEY FACE OR THE DANGERS THAT CONFRONT THEM. ~~THEIR~~ THEIR WORK CALLS FOR STEADFASTNESS, LOYALTY AND COURAGE, AND UNYIELDING APPLICATION TO HARSH PROBLEMS. THESE ARE QUALITIES WHICH THE FORCES IN NI SHOW IN FULLEST MEASURE. I AM PROUD OF EVERY ARM OF THE SECURITY FORCES AND I AM CONFIDENT OF THEIR CONTINUING SUCCESS.

BUT TRIBUTES ARE NOT ENOUGH. EARLIER, I SPOKE OF THE SUCCESS OF THE SECURITY FORCES AND EXPLAINED THAT IT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE PRESENT POLICIES TO CRUSH BOTH THE MORALE AND THE RESOURCES OF THE TERRORIST. I HAVE ALSO MADE IT CLEAR THAT INSPITE OF THESE SUCCESSES THE GOVERNMENT ARE FAR FROM COMPLACENT. THE DEATHS AND ASSASSINATIONS CONTINUE, AND WORDS ARE NOT ENOUGH TO DESCRIBE EITHER THE POINTLESSNESS OF THESE APPALLING ACTS OR THE DEPTH OF SORROW AND DESPAIR FELT BY FAMILIES - INDEED, WHOLE COMMUNITIES.

NO LESS WASTEFUL IS THE CONTINUING SPECTACLE OF YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN COMING BEFORE THE COURTS TO RECEIVE SENTENCES THAT WILL PUT THEM BEHIND BARS FOR MANY YEARS - PERHAPS FOR THE BEST YEARS OF THEIR LIVES. TO THEM AND OTHERS WHO MAY EMBARK ON TERRORIST ACTIVITIES I CAN ONLY SAY THAT IF CONVICTED THEY WILL PAY THE FULL PENALTY OF THE LAW. TO THOSE WHO ENTICE THEM INTO THESE ACTIVITIES WITH A SPECIOUS PROMISE OF EARLY LIBERATION AND A HERO'S WELCOME BACK INTO SOCIETY I WOULD SAY, "THE SOONER YOU STOP TELLING THESE LIES THE BETTER IT WILL BE FOR YOUR YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR FAMILIES." THE SENTENCES OF THE COURTS WILL NOT BE SET ASIDE FOR POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS; THERE WILL BE NO AMNESTY; AND THERE WILL BE NO QUESTION OF SPECIAL TREATMENT FOR THOSE WHO CLAIM WITH UNSURPASSED ARROGANCE THAT THEY HAVE A DIVINE RIGHT TO MAIM AND TO KILL THEIR FELLOW COUNTRYMEN. SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS HAS NOT BEEN RECOGNISED SINCE 1ST MARCH 1976. I EMPHASISE ONCE AGAIN THERE IS NO GOING BACK ON THAT.

FINALLY, A WORD ABOUT THE FUTURE. IT WOULD BE EASY, AND IT MAY BE TEMPTING, TO THINK THAT BECAUSE THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY TAKES EFFECT OVER A PERIOD IT IS WRONG OR DEFICIENT. SOME PEOPLE URGE THAT THE ARMY SHOULD WITHDRAW. I BELIEVE THAT THAT IS THE RECIPE FOR CIVIL WAR. OTHERS DEMAND MORE TROOPS, BUT SHEER NUMBERS ARE NOT THE MOST IMPORTANT CRITERION, RATHER, WE SHOULD MAKE AVAILABLE IN MEN AND RESOURCES WHATEVER IS REQUIRED AS NECESSARY. OTHERS TALK OF HARDER MEASURES. THERE IS NOTHING THE TERRORIST WOULD LIKE TO SEE MORE THAN FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO INTRODUCE ARBITRARY ARRESTS, PUNISHMENT WITHOUT TRIAL, PUNISHMENT FOR POLITICAL BELIEFS AND AFFILIATIONS, AND BLANKET REDUCTIONS IN CIVIL RIGHTS. THE RESENTMENT THAT THESE MEASURES WOULD AROUSE WOULD THAN IT IS TODAY AND PROLONG IT FURTHER INTO THE FUTURE.

THE GREAT STRENGTH OF THE PRESENT POLICY IS THAT IT RESTS ON THE LAW - ON PUNISHMENT FOR CRIMINAL ACTS PROVED BEYOND REASONABLE DOUBT IN OPEN COURT. OTHER MEASURES MAY BE NEEDED AT TIMES, BUT IN THE LONG RUN THIS IS THE ONLY WAY THAT LAW AND ORDER HAS EVER BEEN SUCCESSFULLY ACHIEVED IN A DEMOCRACY. IT IS THE WAY THAT IT WILL BE ACHIEVED IN NORTHER IRELAND. WE ARE DETERMINED TO SEE THE SECURITY PROBLEM THROUGH TO THE END, AND I TELL THE PEOPLE OF NI THAT THEY WILL NOT BE ABANDONED.

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AIREY NEAVE SAID THAT HE WAS INCLINED TO QUESTION WHETHER THE MESSAGE HAD YET GOT THROUGH TO THE IRA THAT BRITAIN WAS NOT GOING TO WITHDRAW. THE SEC OF STATE SHOULD HAVE THE HELP OF THE MEDIA AND NEW PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE TO GET THIS MESSAGE THROUGH. MASON CONTINUALLY SAID THE RIGHT THINGS. HOWEVER PEOPLE COULD NOT FEEL SURE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S DETERMINATION WHEN SEAMUS TWOMEY COULD SPEAK ON FRENCH TELEVISION FROM SOMEWHERE IN NORTHERN IRELAND. HE WAS MUCH IMPRESSED BY THE IMPROVEMENT IN RUC MORALE. HE ASKED FOR INFORMATION ON THE SUCCESSES OF THE POLICE IN DEALING WITH PROTECTION RACKETS AND COMMERCIAL EXPLOITATION. HE WAS DISAPPOINTED AT THE SMALL NUMBER OF NEW FULLTIME RECRUITS TO THE UDR. THERE HAD BEEN A SLOW DOWNWARD TREND IN THE REGIMENTS STRENGTH. HE DID NOT WANT ANOTHER TRICK CEASEFIRE. THE TERRORISTS SHOULD BE PURSUED UNTIL THEY WERE OBLIGED TO STOP THE BLOODSHED AND NO DEALS SHOULD BE MADE WITH THEM.

THE ONLY REALLY IMPASSIONED SPEECH OF THE EVENING CAME FROM MARTIN FLANNERY (LAB.) WHO SAID THAT HE HAD REPEATEDLY HEARD ALMOST THE SAME PEOPLE SAYING THE SAME THINGS SINCE HE ENTERED THE HOUSE THREE YEARS AGO. TERRORISM WOULD NOT BE DEFEATED BY SECURITY MEASURES. THERE HAD TO BE A POLITICAL SOLUTION THOUGH HE HAD NO IDEA WHAT THAT SOLUTION WAS. ALL THE PARTIES TO THE CONFLICT HAD TO BE GOT AROUND A TABLE. 'UCJAW-JAW' WAS BETTER THAN 'WAR-WAR'.

IAN GOW (CON) SPOKE OF HIS RESPECT FOR THE SINCERITY OF MR FLANNERY'S BELIEFS BUT FELT THAT WHAT HE HAD SAID WOULD 'GIVE COMFORT TO THE ENEMY'. THE IRA'S OBJECTIVE COULD BE REGARDED AS LEGITIMATE AND HONOURABLE BUT IT WAS IN NO SENSE PERMISSIBLE FOR THEM, HAVING FAILED TO ACHIEVE THAT OBJECTIVE THROUGH THE BALLOT BOX, TO RESORT TO THE BOMB AND THE BULLET. HE AGREED WITH ENOCH POWELL THAT THEY HAD TO DESTROY THE HOPE THAT LAY BEHIND THE TERRORISM.

JOHN CARSON CALLED FOR AN INCREASE IN SECURITY FORCE PRESSURE IN NORTH BELFAST TO COPE WITH SECTARIAN VIOLENCE. MANY PEOPLE IN NORTHERN IRELAND WERE CONVINCED THAT THERE WAS GOING TO BE WITHDRAWAL, IT WAS UP TO THE GOVERNMENT TO CONVINCE THEM OTHERWISE.

GERRY FITT SUPPORTED CARSON'S CALL FOR BETTER POLICING OF NORTH BELFAST. HE AGREED WITH FLANNERY THAT AN APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM ON THE SECURITY FRONT ALONE WAS WRONG. HE REFERRED TO CERTAIN LOCAL AUTHORITIES TEARING UP THE FAIR EMPLOYMENT ACT WHICH WAS INTENDED TO REMOVE SOME OF THE PROBLEMS THAT SPAWNED THE VIOLENCE. THE ARMY WAS NOT INFALLIBLE: TWO OF THE MEMBERS OF THE BLACK WATCH REGIMENT WHO HAD PLANTED FAKE EVIDENCE ON PEOPLE HAD BEEN IMPLICATED IN THE KILLING OF LEO NORNEY. FOR THE FIRST OF THESE OFFENCES THEY WERE SERVING SENTENCE IN SCOTLAND NOT NORTHERN IRELAND. THE GOVERNMENT WAS STILL PAYING THE BILLS FOR 'INCIDENT' CENTRES, WHY WAS THE NIO KEEPING THESE CENTRES OPEN?

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JIM MOLYNEAUX POINTED OUT THAT HE MADE MADE CONSTRUCTIVE SUGGESTIONS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF NORTHERN IRELAND DURING THE DEBATE ON THE SECOND READING OF THE DEVOLUTION BILL.

KEVIN MCNAMARA SAID THAT THE DEBATE HAD LACKED MUCH IN THE SPIRIT OF RECUXCILATION, PARTICULARLY FROM THE UNIONIST BENCH. ACTION ON THE ECONOMIC FRONT TO IMPROVE LIVING STANDARDS WOULD DO AS MUCH TO BRING ABOUT RECONCILATION AS FURTHER REPRESSIVE MEASURES.

DON CONCANNON WINDING UP FOR THE GOVERNMENT SAID THAT THE TROOPS WOULD REMAIN AT THEIR PRESENT STRENGTH OF ABOUT 14,000. THE GOVERNMENT DID NOT PAY THE 'PHONE BILL ON THE PROVISIONAL SINN FEIN INCIDENT CENTRE IN NEW LODGE ROAD. THERE WAS GOOD REASON TO BELIEVE THAT THANKS IN NO SMALL PART TO THE US AUTHORITIES, AID FROM THE US FOR TERRORIST PURPOSES HAD DIMINISHED IN RECENT MONTHS. PRISONERS WHO HAVE REFUSED TO ACCEPT PRISON RULES HAD ALREADY LOST BY THEIR ACTIONS 11 YEARS IN REMISSION OF SENTENCES.

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