



CAB/4/1425

Issued by the NORTHERN IRELAND INFORMATION SERVICE
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PRESS RELEASE

The following statement was issued by Ministers following today's Cabinet meeting:

On 22nd November the Government announced five important proposals - the appointment of a Development Commission for the Londonderry area; demonstrably fair methods for the allocation of public authority houses; the appointment of an Ombudsman and consideration of the need for other machinery to consider citizens' grievances outside the central government field; the abolition of the Company vote in local government elections; and a review of the special powers as soon as circumstances made this possible without danger to the interests of the community as a whole.

Since then the Government have given the clearest possible evidence of their determination to implement these proposals and there is no justification whatever for continuing agitation which is bound to make this task more difficult and to damage the best interests of the Province.

We are, of course, anxious to uphold the important right of free speech and to permit lawful, peaceful processions. But clearly there comes a point when agitation is not just expressing a legitimate point of view but is attempting to by-pass and discredit the ordinary processes of democratic government.

That point has now been reached in Northern Ireland and we will henceforth be guided in our decisions by the clear need to protect the interests of this country as a whole from the irresponsibility of the few. We have considered the possible further reinforcement of the regular police by greater use of the Special Constabulary for normal police duties and have authorised the Minister of Home Affairs to undertake any degree of such reinforcement which may be necessary to enable the police to fulfil the heavy responsibilities placed upon them.

Finally, we wish to express our complete determination to confront and bring to justice any person or body of persons who attempt to take into their own hands that lawful authority which is properly vested in the Government or the police.

6th January, 1969.