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cc Mr Stephens
Mr Wood

PS/Minister of State (L&B)

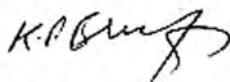
"MEDIA BAN"

It may be helpful if I place on record the main points I tried to make when this subject was discussed at today's morning meeting.

First of all, there is the point that we are not dealing just with statements which are offensive, but with the use of the media to deliver indirect threats. In that setting, the remarks made by Mr Adams immediately after the bombing of my house were a very good example, since in "reporting the views of the IRA" he was in effect using broadcasting as a means of making the IRA's threats to Civil Servants in general widely known.

Second, I made the point that on previous occasions the broadcasters themselves have been very strong on the line that if government thinks something unacceptable in the public interest it should do so by using the formal powers vested in it, rather than proceeding by "a nod and a wink". It is therefore a little inconsistent now for broadcasting journalists to get into a great state about the use of precisely those powers.

No such powers exist in law at the moment to deal with the press and the written word. But this certainly does not mean that editors should fail to use good editorial judgment in protecting themselves against the possibility of being manipulated by terrorist sympathisers who simply want to use their columns as a means of propaganda and even (at the most objectionable end of the spectrum) as a way of making threats known to the widest possible audience.



K P BLOOMFIELD

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