

DRAFT STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE ON LAW AND ORDER

1. The Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973 provides that, after devolution, law and order and police matters will be reserved to Westminster for the time being. This means that the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will be accountable to Parliament at Westminster for these matters.
2. The White Paper on Northern Ireland Constitutional Proposals made it clear that Northern Ireland must be involved in matters which are of great concern to its people and which require a high degree of public co-operation and goodwill. In particular, the White Paper provided that a Northern Ireland Executive would act as an Advisory Committee to the Secretary of State on all reserved matters; and that there should be democratic participation in restoring to all parts of Northern Ireland the full benefits of a normal police service.
3. The Government's aims are to ensure the ending of politically motivated violence from whatever source; to ensure that there is effective policing throughout Northern Ireland so that the Army can be progressively withdrawn from its present rôle; and to bring about a situation in which public support for the police and identification with it are essential parts of effective policing. No single set of proposals is likely to achieve these aims overnight - time will be necessary. The full co-operation of the Government of the Republic is essential in this task.
4. As the Prime Minister has already made clear, the RUC will continue to provide the police service for Northern Ireland. Much has already been done to reorganise it. More is needed to expand the RUC and its Reserves in order to provide that policing becomes effective throughout Northern Ireland and to enable elected representatives to play a part in local policing. The Government will welcome any constructive suggestions to these ends and a group under the Minister of State, Mr van Straubenzee, is now at work.

5. The Government intends to reconstitute the Police Authority to introduce into it a number of elected representatives from the Assembly. District Liaison Committees with elected representatives will be set up and proposals will be put to District Councils shortly. The Government also propose to introduce new procedures for dealing with complaints against the police involving an independent element; those concerned will be fully consulted.

6. The Government believe that the Government of the Republic can make a significant contribution to the permanent ending of politically motivated violence. This is why this problem was identified in the White Paper as one of the points for discussion at a Tripartite Conference. The Government is in favour of such discussions, including the concept of a common law enforcement area and the question of extradition processes. A study has been put in hand of these questions. Normal policing must remain the responsibility of respective Governments. The Government will be ready to discuss such problems, and the role that a Council of Ireland could play in solving them, with a Northern Ireland Executive and the Government of the Republic.