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Press Notice

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Stormont Castle, Belfast
4 May 1977

STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND, THE
RT HON ROY MASON MP

The return to normal working continued today throughout Northern Ireland at an increased level. In accordance with the pledge which I gave, with the full approval of the Chief Constable, firm and positive action has been taken by the Royal Ulster Constabulary to ensure that people can get to work and go about their normal business.

But such measures would not have been effective had there not been great courage and determination on the part of all sections of industry and commerce to stand out against this stoppage. The numbers of people reporting for work today showed an increase on those of yesterday and I am certain that that will continue. The vast majority of people in Northern Ireland have demonstrated to the rest of the United Kingdom that their reputation for hard work and determination will not be thrown away by the actions of those who seek to use the methods of dictatorship. The response of the militants against this clear expression of the will of the people is apparently to try to inflict still more suffering on the community. It may be that provocation will again be attempted and that the UUAC will try again to provoke disorder in the streets to prevent the continuance of normal life. My clear view is that neither the police nor the community will be provoked. But, and I hope it is clearly understood, neither the community nor I will be pushed around.

I am assured by the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary that his Force with, where necessary, the support of the other branches of the security forces will do their utmost to ensure that the rights of workers to work will be protected. They will not seek to confront anyone and it makes no possible sense for anyone else to seek confrontation.

The police have done a first-class job in ensuring as far as is possible that people have the right to use the streets of their own cities and towns and the right to attend their places of employment. That will continue.