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28th March 1972.

Text of final statement made by Mr. Brian Faulkner M.P.,
Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, in Stormont before
the prorogation of the Northern Ireland Parliament.

My colleagues and I have made absolutely clear why and how it was that we reached a state of total disagreement with the United Kingdom Government and I do not propose to repeat this today. We have, however, arranged that my own statement of Friday last, and a further statement issued later that day by the Cabinet as a whole, should be placed formally on record as a White Paper, of which copies are now being made available to hon. Members. As for what has followed upon that disagreement, others than we are responsible for it and must answer for it in another place.

I simply want to say this, as we in the present Government meet this House for the last time. For over 50 years the Government and the Parliament of Northern Ireland, and through them the people of Northern Ireland as a whole, have been given devoted service by servants of the Crown. We think of the men of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, of the Ulster Special Constabulary and of the Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve - all forces for which Governments have answered to this House - and of the sacrifices they have made. In all these forces there have served some of the most splendid, brave and patriotic men the United Kingdom is ever likely to see.

We pay tribute, too, to the Civil Service, which has always worked with loyalty and dedication and which has risen with such cheerful courage to meet the challenges and the dangers of these recent years. And, of course, we have very much in our minds the loyal servants of this House, in great positions and in small, who have sought with total impartiality to serve, irrespective of party, all those all down the years who have been sent here by the people. They knew what is in all our minds today - that there is only one authentic voice in any country and that is its elected democratic voice.

Before we adjourn today, I have no doubt that other right hon. and hon. Members may wish to be heard here. We in the Government, however, will have nothing to add as such. We have explained our position. We have taken our stand. We leave our record over the last few days and as a whole to be judged by the country and by posterity.

I conclude with this final word as the government of Ulster is about to pass, temporarily at least, into other hands. I have always been proud to lead the present team in Government, but never so proud as last week. We stood firm and we stood together. When we faced a hard and unpalatable decision no hint of any other interest than the interest of the whole country was heard at the Cabinet table. We did what we believed to be right, for that is the spirit in which Ulster should always be served.

Could I just express the wish and - since I believe in its power - the prayer that we will seek peace, but that it will be peace with justice in our native land? Please God.