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REPORT OF AN INVESTIGATION BY

THE FAIR EMPLOYMENT AGENCY

FOR NORTHERN IRELAND INTO

THE NON-INDUSTRIAL

NORTHERN IRELAND CIVIL SERVICE

December, 1983.

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## P R E A C E

This is a report of an investigation undertaken by the Fair Employment Agency into the Northern Ireland Civil Service with regard to the religious composition and patterns of recruitment and promotion of non-industrial civil servants.

The Agency's authority to undertake such an investigation in pursuit of its statutory duty to ascertain the existence, and if it exists, nature and extent of failure to afford equality of opportunity and to determine what action is necessary to promote equality of opportunity, is conferred by Section 12 of the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1976 which empowers the Agency to investigate the composition, by reference to religious beliefs, of the employees of an organisation and the practices affecting recruitment and the access to benefits.

Section 3 of the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1976, calls for equality of opportunity for persons of differing religious belief. In order to ensure that such equality exists the Fair Employment Agency is called upon to identify, investigate, and seek to remedy practices that create barriers to equal employment opportunity.

Investigations under Section 12 of the Act are different in nature from investigations of complaints of unlawful discrimination conducted under Section 24. In an investigation of unlawful discrimination, the Agency is acting in response to a single complaint and is obliged to make a finding as to whether or not there was unlawful discrimination. In contrast, under Section 12 of the Act the Agency acting on its own initiative may seek to establish whether or not equality of opportunity is being provided.

The Northern Ireland Civil Service employs some 31,000 in both industrial and non-industrial classes. The Agency decided to concentrate the investigation on the non-industrial grades and the



investigation thus covered the Administrative, Executive and Clerical Staff, the Professional and Technical Officers and other miscellaneous grades in the Civil Service. These grades covered 23,000 employees. It is self-evident therefore that by virtue of size alone the character of recruitment and promotion policies in this area of employment could not fail to have a major influence on the development of equal opportunities in Northern Ireland. In addition, however, it is a matter of fundamental principle, quite independent of considerations of size, that employment opportunities in Government service should be (and should be seen to be) open to all citizens without regard to their religious beliefs.

In view of these considerations the Agency determined to investigate the religious structure of employment among non-industrial civil servants in the Northern Ireland Civil Service, together with certain patterns of recruitment and promotion prospects. The investigation commenced in February 1980 and concentrated upon the situation in the Civil Service as of October 1980. For the purpose of establishing patterns and trends, wastage, recent promotions and length of service in grade over the previous two to three years were examined. To facilitate this analysis, dates of last promotion and length of service in grade were included in the data requested.

The investigation was carried out by officers of the Fair Employment Agency for Northern Ireland assisted by professional consultants in specific fields\*

The then Department of the Civil Service and the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance provided representatives to serve on an Advisory Group set up by the Agency. Several consultations with the Advisory Group took place and the Agency acted on the Group's recommendations in respect of salary levels, the classification of occupational grades and other bases of comparison.

To all those who assisted in the investigation the Agency expresses its thanks for the co-operation given in completing this task.



\* Specialists who assisted the Agency were:

Mr. R. Miller, Queen's University, Belfast who acted as general research consultant, supervised the electronic data processing of the material prepared by the Agency and carried out the analysis of the statistical material.

The Institute of Manpower Studies, Brighton, Sussex which, using its established techniques, carried out detailed analysis of sex, age, grade and other factors to produce in turn promotion patterns and projections to the year 1990.

Dr. M. A. Pearn, Saville and Holdsworth Ltd., Occupational Psychologists, Esher, Surrey, and formerly Deputy Director of the Runnymede Trust, who accepted the role of assessor of the investigation with special responsibility for ensuring its impartiality and thoroughness.

The Department of Finance & Personnel, Policy Planning & Research Unit, who carried out extended analysis of the statistical material and provided additional analyses of the results of promotion boards.



investigation basically took the form of a snap-shot at a particular moment in time, with other supplementary information. Therefore a number of important questions are still unanswered, and can only be answered by the longer term monitoring.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

### 5.1 COMPOSITION

- (i) It is clear that before the 1970s the proportion of Roman Catholics in the Northern Ireland Civil Service was very low in comparison to their proportion in the total population.
- (ii) During the 1970s the numbers of Roman Catholics entering has increased substantially and in particular during the last five years of the decade there has been a major increase in numbers of Roman Catholics recruited to the Service. Indeed, for General Service grades during the last four years of the decade, the proportion of Roman Catholics has been marginally over 50%.
- (iii) In 1980 the proportion of Roman Catholics overall at 30.7% was less than the proportion of Roman Catholics in the working population but if 1975-1980 levels of Roman Catholic recruitment have been maintained, it is likely that this figure will have increased.
- (iv) There are wide variations between the proportion of Roman Catholics in different departments with a tendency for there to be a small proportion of Roman Catholics in mainly single establishment departments in East Belfast and North Down, and a much higher level in departments with branches throughout the province.



## 5.2 RECRUITMENT.

- (i) Over the period that the proportions of Roman Catholics being recruited have been increasing, the appointments of Roman Catholics have included proportionately more females and proportionately more appointments at lower grades than have the appointments of Protestants in the same period.
- (ii) Of the males appointed over the same period in the Protestant group, there were more men with 'A' levels and degrees or the equivalent, than there were in the equivalent Roman Catholic group.

## 5.3 SALARY LEVELS

- (i) The factors of sex, grade on entry, qualifications, have a major effect on the salary levels of staff. Religion has a lesser effect but is still a statistically significant effect for all the members of staff still employed in 1980.
- (ii) Religion, however, was not a statistically significant factor for those Roman Catholics recruited since 1968 and still in the Service in 1980.
- (iii) Studies of Promotion Boards which took place while the investigation was being conducted have shown that those examined operated fairly in practice and that there was parity of outcome at each stage between the religious groups.

## 5.4 SENIOR STAFF

- (i) Roman Catholics are not adequately represented at the key policy-making levels of the Northern Ireland Civil Service.



- (ii) While the proportions of Roman Catholics in the Assistant Secretary and above level has actually fallen marginally between 1973-1983, the proportion of Roman Catholics amongst Principals, Deputy Principals and Staff Officers have all shown marked increases.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 In the light of its conclusions, the Agency puts forward four main recommendations.
- 6.2 There should be established a monitoring system and related manpower modelling process which matches and extends (e.g in regard to wastage and mobility) the analysis which has been undertaken for this investigation. This is clearly the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Civil Service, but the Agency recommends that they should consult an independent body specialising in modelling and projections, such as the Institute of Manpower Studies, in order to undertake this task.
- 6.3 In view of the failure to attract suitable Roman Catholics with appropriate qualifications for appointments at EOII level and technical grades, more Roman Catholics with good academic qualifications should be encouraged to seek employment within the Northern Ireland Civil Service, particularly at the higher entry levels. This Report should encourage all good potential applicants to regard the Service as a worthwhile career.
- 6.4 The Northern Ireland Civil Service has advised the Agency that sexual equality is already accepted as a key element in the development of personnel policy within the Service. If women in general now have better career prospects than previously seems to have been the case, there will be benefit accruing to the Roman Catholic group since Roman Catholics are numerically stronger within the female group. The rapid implementation of this policy is a



matter for the Northern Ireland Civil Service to pursue in close liaison with the Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland.

6.5 Since it is clear that the location of offices has a major impact on religious composition of departments, the Government should bear this in mind when considering the siting or re-siting of Government Offices.

6.6 The Northern Ireland Civil Service in consultation with the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance should enter into discussion with the Agency in order to develop and expand the recommendations and work out an effective affirmative action plan. The particular disparity in relation to religious composition of the most senior grades merits special attention.

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