

Dr HARBOON
MR JENNER 2/6
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Department of Finance
and Personnel

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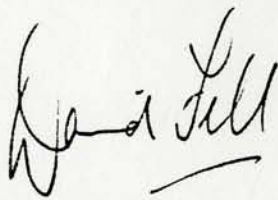
PSDED 529/85

1. PS/DR BOYSON (L & B) M
2. PS/SECRETARY OF STATE

c.c. PS/SOS (L & B) M
PS/PUS (L & B) M
PS/Mr Bloomfield
Dr Quigley ✓
Mr Stephens
Mr Brennan M
Mr Gilliland
Mr Merifield
Mr Chesterton M
Mr Mayne
Mr Wilson
Mr Watkins
Mr Reeve
Mr Woods M
Mr McAleer
Mr Bickham M
Mr Wolstencroft

SHORTS: ALLEGATIONS OF DISCRIMINATION

Further to my earlier submission of to-day's date regarding the Belfast Telegraph article on the above matter (which is the main headline in this evening's edition), I now attach for information a copy of the full text of Shorts' robust Press Release in response to the article.



DAVID FELL

25 June 1985

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SHORTS

PRESS RELEASE

6661W - 25/6/85

Secretary

Tuesday, June 25 1985

SHORTS REFUTE LATEST ALLEGATIONS OF DISCRIMINATION

Following recent allegations that Shorts is discriminating against Catholics in its hiring practices, the Company today issued a strongly worded statement refuting such allegations and again underlining its policies.

The Company stated that the policy laid down by the Board is that "the manpower policy of the Company is to appoint persons to positions solely on the basis of merit and capability without regard to religious belief or political opinion. In all aspects the Fair Employment Act (N.I.) 1976 shall be complied with". This policy remains unchanged.

In 1983, the Company agreed an Affirmative Action Programme with the Fair Employment Agency. That Programme was aimed primarily at overcoming the difficulties of attracting Catholic applicants for jobs and in furtherance of the Programme the Company has undertaken many actions, including

- 0 opening a new recruitment office in central Belfast
- 0 changes to recruitment practices and paperwork
- 0 widening the advertising of job vacancies
- 0 visits to schools
- 0 meetings with head-teachers in Catholic schools

cont/d...

SHORT BROTHERS PLC PO Box 241 Airport Road Belfast BT3 9DZ Northern Ireland
Telephone 0232 58444 Telex 74688 Cables Aircraft Belfast

- 0 circulation of literature on job opportunities
- 0 communication of employment policies within the Company and to the Trade Unions.

In addition, in view of its increasing workload, the Company has undertaken to open a 50,000 square foot factory in West Belfast on the former De Lorean site. Following negotiations with the Industrial Development Board, agreement has now been reached on the basis of new proposals which are acceptable to both parties. Production is planned to start this year and the Company totally rejects any suggestions that it has been attempting to delay or abandon the project.

On the recruiting front, the result of the actions the Company has taken has been to increase very significantly the percentage of job applications from Catholics. The Fair Employment Agency estimated in 1979/80 that 5-10% of Shorts' workforce were Catholics. The Company, in consultation with the Fair Employment Agency, set a target to increase applications from Catholics to 20% from March 1984. In the period April to December 1984, the actual percentage of Catholic applicants had increased to 26%, which matches the proportion of Catholics in the Belfast area.

The percentage of Catholics hired by the Company increased to an average of 17% in the period October 1983-March 1984 but reduced to an average of 14% in the period April-December 1984 although individual monthly peaks were as high as 21%. The Company's analysis shows that there is a time-lag between the trends of applications and of hirings, because of the need to process applications and interviews. However, the Company has noted a flattening-off in the percentage of Catholics hired, particularly in the semi-skilled and clerical categories. Analysis by the Company and Fair Employment Agency as part of the normal monitoring process has not revealed any specific explanation for this change in trend, but a number of further actions are being agreed to re-emphasise that equality of opportunity applies and is seen to apply in all cases.

cont/d...

Commenting on this subject, Shorts' Chairman, Sir Philip Foreman, said "I must stress again that Shorts' employment policy is completely opposed to religious discrimination. The Company has taken many steps to provide equality of opportunity to all, and we will take whatever further steps are necessary to ensure that this remains so. The full results will take time to work through but it is already clear that the Affirmative Action programme has resulted in a significant increase in Catholic applicants and appointees.

I would ask everyone to consider carefully the motivation of those people who seek to destroy prospects of new jobs in Belfast and I can assure everyone that the Company, with ongoing advice from the Fair Employment Agency, is doing all it can to ensure that all sections of the community have equal opportunity to get these jobs. That we are being as even-handed as possible is clearly evidenced by the fact that we have had at least as many complaints from Protestants as from Catholics about discrimination.

We expect to recruit a large number of new employees this year but I should point out that we have been receiving around 40 applications for every job and that the handling of so many thousands of applications is a major administrative task. Inevitably many people will be disappointed and there will be some anomalies.

This is the only statement Shorts will be making on this subject.

Contact: Derek S Jones or Tom Goyer on

Home:

or

respectively

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Dr. H. B. ~~Smith~~
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C. H. H.
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1. PS/DR BOYSON (L & B) M
2. PS/SECRETARY OF STATE

c.c.	PS/SOS (L & B)	M
	PS/PUS (L & B)	M
	PS/Mr Bloomfield	
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	Mr Woods	M
	Mr McAleer	
	Mr Bickham	
	Mr Wolstencroft	

SHORTS: FAIR EMPLOYMENT

INTRODUCTION

1. Ministers are aware of current discussions between Shorts and the FEA on a draft report by the Agency on Shorts' recruitment patterns, which show a significant disparity between Roman Catholic applications and appointments.
2. It is understood that the Belfast Telegraph, who appear to be in possession of the essentials in the draft report, will be carrying an article this evening. This is almost bound to be damaging. Ministers will wish to consider the line to take in response to any approaches from the media.

SHORTS' POSITION

3. A reporter from the Belfast Telegraph has already approached Shorts. Their line will be to point out the extent to which they have complied with the affirmative action programme agreed with the FEA in 1983, to acknowledge

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the recent trend of lower levels of Catholic recruitment, to note that neither the company nor the FEA has yet identified the reasons behind the trend, but to give assurances that, together with the FEA, they are seeking means to remedy the position.

LINE FOR GOVERNMENT TO TAKE

4. The Telegraph reporter has also asked the Department (i) whether it is aware of the FEA report and if so whether it has any comment; and (ii) whether the report was related to Dr Boyson's recent comments about the establishment of an official committee to advise Ministers on fair employment matters.
5. Clearly it is in the first instance for the company itself to handle press enquiries. However, the Department proposes to answer the Telegraph's first question on the following lines:-

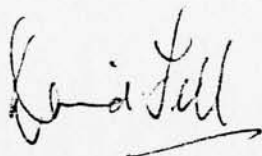
"The Department is aware of ongoing discussions between the FEA and the company, as part of the continuing programme of monitoring which forms part of the affirmative action programme agreed in 1983 with the FEA, and the Department knows that Shorts are co-operating with the Agency in giving effect to this programme."

6. The Department would propose to give the straight answer "no" to the Telegraph's second question, although it is conceivable that we may be pursued further on what did lie behind Dr Boyson's comments. In that event we would rely on the line already agreed - that we should refer back to the answer given in reply to the Heathcote-Amory PQ to the effect that a further statement about the Government's position will be made shortly.

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7. I recommend that Ministers and any other officials approached about this matter should also follow the line in Paras 5 and 6 above in response to any press enquiries.



DAVID FELL
25 June 1985

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