

E.R.

36/6

PS/Secretary of State (L)



cc: PS/SofS(B) - M
PS/Ministers (L&B) - M
PS/PUS (L&B) - M 30/2
PS/Mr Bloomfield - M 2 for 11/2.
Mr Burns
Mr Fell, DED, Netherleigh - M
Mr McAllister, IDB House - M
Mr Chesterton
Mr Elliott - M
Mr Mayne, DED, Netherleigh - M
Mr Spence - M
Mr Gowdy, IDB House - M
Mr Kirk
Mr McConnell - M
Mr Wilson, DED, Arches
Centre - M
Mr Wood (L&B) - M
Mr Deberry, RID, FCO
Mr Sheinwald, HM Embassy
Washington - Fax
Mr Snoxell, BIS, New York - Fa

FIGHTING MACBRIDE

There is an urgent need for a new written brief that our US posts can distribute as part of the fight against the adoption of MacBride. What they have asked for is a short, punchy account of our story on fighting discrimination, especially at work.

... Officials have produced the attached text. For maximum impact, it needs to be printed in the highest quality format possible in the time available (time considerations rule out colour), with telling photographs. We hope to have the material on its way to California in good time for proceedings in the State Legislature on 21 April, and we have already sent the text for typesetting. We are still pursuing photographs of the right quality.

2. The Washington Embassy believe our text to be of the kind they need. Subject to the Secretary of State's views, we propose to launch our pamphlet as soon as possible.

P N Bell
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27 March 1987

NORTHERN IRELAND: FAIR TREATMENT FOR ALL

Introduction

There are deep-rooted divisions in Northern Ireland society that arise from complicated historical and cultural causes. The majority are mainly Protestant and want to maintain the union with Britain; the minority are mainly Catholic and want unity with the Republic. Both communities face a range of economic and social problems; and both are threatened by terrorist groups, principally the IRA.

The present troubles in Northern Ireland began in the late 1960s when the civil rights movement demanded changes in the position of Catholics. There was discrimination in the past. The British Government accepts that fact, and has taken legislative and practical action to deal with it.

Real progress has been made in the past 15 years. All the demands of the civil rights movement have been met, and the Government is energetically tackling those problems that remain, particularly in employment. The Northern Ireland people, Catholic and Protestant alike, want more jobs, not attempts to deter investors.

This booklet describes what has been achieved in providing equality of opportunity in the workplace in Northern Ireland; and what we have done in other fields.

Discrimination

Discrimination for political, or religious reasons is illegal in Northern Ireland. There is established machinery for investigating allegations of abuse.

Equality of Opportunity in Employment

Historically Catholics in Northern Ireland did not receive the same employment opportunities as Protestants. Discrimination was not the only cause. Significant differences remain. But the Government is vigorously tackling the problem.

Discrimination in employment is illegal and the Fair Employment Agency (FEA) has been established to promote fair employment and investigate complaints. Its work is regarded as high priority and its resources were recently increased by 33%.

The Government itself is committed to ensuring fairness in its own recruitment procedures.

Fair Employment Agency and other reports confirm that change is taking place. This is evident when judged against the religious split in the working age population (ie 65% Protestant: 35% Catholic). (The overall population breakdown is 62% Protestant and 38% Catholic).

Progress can be seen in the following examples.

ONE - NORTHERN IRELAND CIVIL SERVICE

There has been an increase in Catholic employment of 21.5% and an increase in the proportion of Catholics at every grade level, particularly at middle management level.

	1980	1985
Protestant	69.3%	63.6%
Catholic	30.7%	36.4%

TWO - NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE AUTHORITY

Following an investigation by the FEA in 1983 the Fire Authority agreed to make changes in its appointments procedures and there has since been of a significant increase in Catholic appointments.

APPOINTMENTS	1983	1984	1985
Protestant	88%	62%	62%
Catholic	12%	38%	38%

THREE - AMBULANCE SERVICE

Recruitment in the ambulance service shows that the proportion of Catholics is increasing:

	1985(total complement)	1986 (Recruitment)
Protestant	74%	46%
Catholic	24%	54%

FOUR - NORTHERN IRELAND HOUSING EXECUTIVE

Catholic employment has increased significantly since 1973. The workforce is now broadly in line with the population breakdown.

	1973	1985
Protestant	over 75%	62%
Catholic	under 25%	37%

FIVE - BANKS

A 1986 FEA Report on Northern Ireland's principal banks showed increased recruitment of Catholics. The banks are co-operating with the FEA on further action.

	1970 all staff	1986 all staff	1986 (recruitment)
Protestant	80%	71%	57%
Catholic	20%	29%	43%

SIX - SHORT BROTHERS PLC

A 1985 FEA monitoring Report shows an increase in Catholic job applicants and appointments. Recruitment arrangements and procedures have been improved. A factory has been opened in West Belfast where many Catholics live. The Company is continuing to monitor recruitment patterns and practices.

Apprentice Recruitment			Adult Recruitment		
	Pre-1983	1984		Pre-1983	1984
Protestant	94%	76%	Protestant	above 90+%	83.4%-86% *
Catholic	6	24%	Catholic	below 10%	14%-16.6% *

* Covers several recruitment periods in late 1983.

(NB Catholics represent 25% of the population in the Greater Belfast Area).

Progress has been made, but not yet enough. Further changes are needed and the Government has published proposals for further action. The proposals include:-

- 1.- more effective monitoring and periodic renewal of certification as a 'fair employer';
- 2.- a new sanction of grant denial (Government grants will only be given to firms which have current certification as a fair employer).
- 3.- financial assistance for private sector employers to help develop fair employment procedures;
- 4.- a statutory duty on the public sector to promote fair employment.

The Government is intent on securing equality of opportunity in employment for all the citizens of Northern Ireland.

Housing

Northern Ireland now has some of the best public housing in Europe and it is all allocated solely according to need.

In the 1960s there were legitimate Catholic complaints about discrimination in public housing. Now it is in the hands of the independent Housing Executive which has been consistently praised by Catholic leaders.

Spending on improved public housing has increased three-fold since 1981. The latest schemes are well known for imaginative and sensitive design standards.

"When we started out in the Civil Rights movement in 1968, this was one of the worst-housed areas on these islands; now it's one of the best housed areas in these islands. There's been a complete transformation in housing... We have a brand new city now."

John Hume, leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party, the largest party among the minority, talking about housing in Londonderry, BBC TV, 23 March 1987.

Education

Free education is available to all; and free choice is available to all. Catholic and other independent schools are substantially funded by the British Government, and Catholic education is free.

Educational standards in Northern Ireland are recognised as among the highest in the British Isles.

Health

Hospital care and most other medical care is free for everyone in Northern Ireland. Standards are high - for example 615 major cardiac operations were performed on patients (free of charge) in 1986. There were 10.76 hospital beds per thousand of the population in 1985, compared with 6.91 per thousand in England.

Social Security

Northern Ireland has the same social security system as the rest of the UK. Benefits (eg pensions and unemployment benefit) are of course provided irrespective of religion. The needs of children and low-income families are a priority.

Voting

Voting in elections to the United Kingdom Parliament is on a first-past-the-post basis in Northern Ireland as in the rest of the UK. All other elections are by proportional representation which ensures that minorities are properly represented. Gerrymandering is now impossible: boundaries are decided by an independent boundary commission.

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