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18 August, 1986

Mr. Brendan Lyons,
Anglo-Irish Division,
Department of Foreign Affairs.



Dear Brendan,

I enclose a copy of a note I received from the British side of the Secretariat entitled "The Facts about the Increasing Equality of Opportunity in Northern Ireland". I suspect that, to a large extent, the information in the note was given to us at the dinner here attended by Mr. Fell, Assistant Secretary O Tuathail and yourself.

Yours sincerely,

Pádraic Collins

P. Collins

Encls.

cc Minister
Secretary
Mr O Tuathail
Mr Lyons
Mr Scannell
Mr Harney
Box

THE FACTS ABOUT THE INCREASING EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY IN NORTHERN IRELAND

1. Most assessments indicate that the amount of direct discrimination is steadily falling and is considerably lower than that which existed in Northern Ireland during earlier years.
2. The lead has been given by government - indeed discrimination is unlawful in Northern Ireland under the Fair Employment (NI) Act 1976 which also established a watchdog body, the FEA, to investigate complaints and to press for greater equality of opportunity.

3. NORTHERN IRELAND CIVIL SERVICE

Government has given a clear and unequivocal lead in respect of its own employees with the publication of an Equal Opportunities Policy Statement and the establishment of an equal opportunities monitoring system. Staff in the NICS, (which is the largest single employer in NI) are recruited and promoted on the basis of ability, qualifications and aptitude (ie the merit principle) without regard to religion, sex or any other irrelevant factor.

4. The first report of the NICS Equal Opportunities Unit, published in July 1986, shows 59% classified as Protestant, 33% Roman Catholic, 4% educated outside NI and 4% not known. If we ignore those educated outside Northern Ireland and the 4% not known, then 64.1% are Protestant and 35.9% are Roman Catholic. This compares with a population breakdown in NI of 62% Protestant and 38% Catholic.
5. The proportion of Roman Catholics in the Service has increased by about 6 percentage points since 1980, which is an increase of 1214 - or 21.5% - in absolute terms. The proportion of Catholics has increased at every grade level but most at the initial levels.
6. The increase in the proportion of Roman Catholics since 1980 is a continuation of the steady increase during the previous decade and the

numbers of Catholics at the higher grade levels can be expected to continue to increase as Catholic recruits move up the promotion ladder. There was a 30% increase in the numbers of Roman Catholics at middle management grades. Further monitoring reports will be published.

7. OTHER PUBLIC AND PRIVATE EMPLOYMENT

(1) Northern Ireland Housing Executive

A 1985 investigation by the Fair Employment Agency (FEA) showed that employment in the Housing Executive, which controls public-owned housing in Northern Ireland, with some 62% Protestant and 37% Catholic, was closely in line with the proportions in the Northern Ireland population. When the Executive was formed in 1973 less than 25% of staff was Catholic. Due to lower Catholic recruitment in earlier years there are still more Protestants in senior grades.

(2) Southern Health and Social Services Board

In a 1986 report the Agency found that there were some 49% Protestants and 47% Catholics employed by the Board. While there was some imbalance in specific employment categories the overall balance was reflective of the religious breakdown of the locally resident population. Regular monitoring takes place.

(3) Fire Authority for Northern Ireland

In 1983 one in three applicants for full-time posts in the FANI were Catholic but only one in eight were being appointed. Following a FEA investigation and implementation of an agreed affirmative action programme, appointments of Catholics have risen from 12% in 1983 to 38% in 1984, which is broadly reflective of the size of the Catholic population. Monitoring continues.

(4) The Ambulance Services of the Health and Social Services Boards of Northern Ireland

An investigation completed by the FEA in 1985 showed under-representation of Catholics in the Ambulance Services of all four Health and Social Services Boards: 74% of ambulance staff Protestant, 24% Catholic. The four Boards have agreed affirmative action programmes including revised recruitment procedures with the FEA to redress the imbalance.

(5) The British Broadcasting Corporation

In 1982 applicants were 65% Protestant and 30% Catholic and the success rate was 2.13% Protestant and 2.32% Catholic.

(6) Northern Ireland Electricity Service

The investigation completed by the FEA in 1982 into the NIES showed that Catholics were 4% of employees and 13.7% of applicants. Recent figures show 28% of craft apprentice applicants and 25% appointees in 1984 to be Catholic. An affirmative action programme was agreed with the NIES.

(7) Ulster Museum

A 1986 Report by the FEA showed that Protestants held 90% and Catholics 8% of warders (ie attendants) posts and Protestants 62% and Catholics 22% of other posts. The Museum accepted a FEA recommendation that determined efforts were needed to widen opportunities for Catholic applicants to warding posts and have agreed an affirmative action programme with the Agency.

(8) Banks in Northern Ireland

A 1986 FEA investigation of the banks in Northern Ireland showed that some 71% of employees were Protestant while 29% were

Catholic. Two of the banks employed a higher proportion of Catholics than might be expected and three had a higher proportion of Protestants. However there was a significant increase in the recruitment of Catholics in the last 10-15 years. Affirmative action programmes were agreed with the FEA.

(9) Building Societies

A report on nine building societies issued in 1986 showed an overall breakdown of 78% Protestant, 17% Catholic. Two of the societies were in line with religious composition of areas served but the remainder showed substantial Catholic under-representation. Affirmative action programmes have been adopted and are being monitored by the FEA.

(10) Belfast Telegraph Newspapers Limited

A 1983 FEA report on this newspaper showed that the company employed less than 20% Catholics in 1980. The company agreed an affirmative action programme with the Agency.

(11) Unipork

An investigation by the FEA in 1985 showed an imbalance in favour of Protestants at the company's Cookstown plant (89% Protestants) and an imbalance in favour of Catholics in the Enniskillen plant (63% Catholics). The population in both areas is close to 50/50. Affirmative action programmes including monitoring have been agreed with the Fair Employment Agency.

(12) Londonderry Area

The FEA investigated six companies in the Londonderry area in 1983 and found one major manufacturing company employing 62% Catholics and 37% non-Catholics, which was broadly in line with the

local working population; two companies in the Waterside had no Protestant employees; in one company in East Londonderry two-thirds of employees were Catholic and in another company in East Londonderry less than 20% Protestants were employed. Affirmative action programmes were agreed as necessary.

(13) Engineering Industry in Belfast

A 1983 report on nine unidentified engineering companies in Belfast showed that the industry was mainly located in Protestant areas and that there was a predominance of Protestants in the craftsmen engineering trades, and that there was a shortage of skilled Catholics. Affirmative action programmes were agreed with the various employers.

(14) Short Brothers PLC

Since 1983 there has been a marked increase in the percentage of Catholic applicants to Shorts. Catholic appointments have also risen: from 6% in respect of apprenticeships pre-1983 to 23.9% in 1984 and from well under 10% in adult recruitment in 1983 to 14-16% in 1984.