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ON BEHALF OF	THAR CEANN
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Publication by N.I. Department of Economic Development of
"Religious Equality of Opportunity in Employment
 Guide to Effective Practice"

15 September 1987

Statement by the Tánaiste

h. Coakley
For our records
M. [Signature]

I welcome the publication today of the above "Guide to Effective Practice" in employment. The Guide, with its detailed advice to employers, seeks to ensure that the principle of equal opportunity will become part of the everyday reality of life in Northern Ireland. The challenge to everyone involved is to see that the contents of the Guide are given effect in the most positive and constructive way.

The problem of employment discrimination on religious grounds in Northern Ireland must be acknowledged and addressed. The statistical fact is that the unemployment rate for Catholics is twice that for Protestants. That this situation should exist in 1987 is profoundly regrettable; to allow it to continue would be intolerable.

The proposed remedies must match the scale of the problem and we will continue to provide an input to the process involved. We attach particular importance to the Secretary of State's commitment to introduce legislation in this area and we look forward to its adoption as soon as possible.

The Irish Government have made clear that they consider fair employment to be a priority area for attention in the context of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. We welcome, in this regard, the Prime Minister's personal assurance, in her statement accompanying the Guide, that the British Government will take whatever further steps are required to work for the elimination of discrimination, and the promotion of real equality of opportunity in Northern Ireland.