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Your reference

Our reference

Date 3 June 1988

Dear John,

SHORTS

1. As promised in a telegram which we are sending today, I attach a copy of the Kennedys' letter to the Army Secretary, together with an accompanying press release.

Yours ever,

Shepard

S L Cowper-Coles

cc: S J Leach Esq, SIL Division, NIO(L)
M Warnock Esq, DED, NETHERLEIGH, BELFAST

Senate of the United States
Washington, D.C. 20540
June 3, 1988

**Senator Kennedy and Congressman Kennedy urge Northern Irish Firm
to Increase Steps to Combat Discrimination against Catholics**

**EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE UNTIL
5:00 PM, SATURDAY, JUNE 4, 1988**

Senator Edward M. Kennedy and Congressman Joseph P. Kennedy II today released a letter to Secretary of the Army John O. Marsh Jr., urging the Army to ensure that a pending National Guard contract with a firm in Northern Ireland is not used to perpetuate anti-Catholic discrimination. The National Guard is expected in the near future to sign a \$60 million contract with Shorts Bros., Ltd. in Belfast for the purchase of C-23 Sherpa aircraft. The workforce of the British owned firm is only 11% Catholic, despite an overall percentage of 40% Catholic across Northern Ireland.

While recognizing that the company had made some progress in addressing the problems of discrimination at Shorts in the five years since the last contract with the United States, the legislators said that "Shorts' workforce of 11% Catholic remains unacceptably low".

They urged the Secretary of the Army to obtain a strong commitment before signing the contract that the company will increase and expand opportunities for Catholic employment.

A copy of the letter is attached.

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 3, 1988

The Honorable John O. Marsh, Jr.
Secretary of the Army
Washington, D.C. 20310

Dear Secretary Marsh:

We are concerned about the serious problem of job discrimination in Northern Ireland, and we are writing to urge you to ensure that the National Guard's contract to purchase \$60 million worth of C-23 Sherpa aircraft for the Aviation Classification and Repair Activity Depots system (AVCRADS) from Shorts Bros., Ltd. in Belfast, is carried out in a way that encourages equal employment opportunities for Catholic workers in Northern Ireland.

In Northern Ireland, the overall jobless rate among Catholics remains twice as high as the rate for Protestants -- and in some areas, the Catholic unemployment rate reaches sixty percent. The Irish and British governments have recognized discrimination in employment as one of the major obstacles to peace and reconciliation between the two traditions in Northern Ireland. Both governments committed themselves to combating discrimination in the Anglo-Irish Agreement; over the past three years, the United States has appropriated \$120 million to the International Fund in order to promote reconciliation and employment opportunities in areas most affected by the 19 year old conflict.

Shorts Bros., Ltd. is a government owned company and, as one of the largest employers in Northern Ireland, both Shorts and the British government share a responsibility to address the problem of employment discrimination. Before signing a \$600 million contract in 1984 between the U.S. Air Force and Shorts, the United States government obtained a commitment from Shorts to pursue an affirmative action program to combat the discrimination within its workforce. It agreed to hire additional Catholic workers and to ensure that the benefits of the U.S. contract would be distributed more equitably between the two communities in the North. Since that time, the Catholic representation in Shorts' workforce has increased from 5 percent to 11 percent. Shorts now employs 800 Catholics.

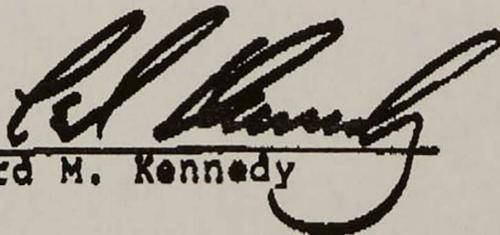
While we recognize that some progress has been made in addressing the problems of discrimination at Shorts, much more needs to be done. The minority community comprises nearly 40% of the workforce in Northern Ireland and Shorts' workforce of 11% Catholic remains unacceptably low. Higher recruitment levels of Catholics are needed for the main Shorts plant, and the company should honor its previous commitment to expand into the predominantly Catholic area of West Belfast. Shorts had originally indicated that the U.S. contract would enable it to provide 200 jobs in a West Belfast plant. To date, that plant only employs 75 people.

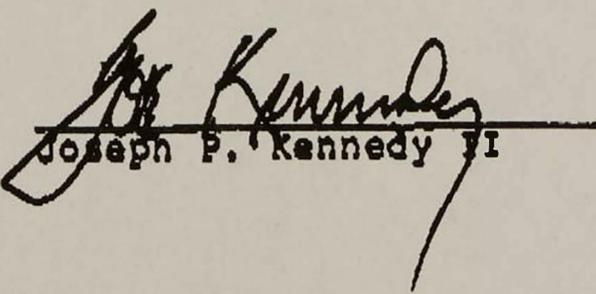
In addition, sub-contracting by Shorts to other Northern Ireland firms should be directed more into areas of higher employment opportunities for members of the Catholic community.

We urge you to raise this important issue with both the British government and Shorts Bros., Ltd. Before signing the new contract, we hope that you will obtain a strong commitment from the company that it will not only continue the efforts made to date but increase and expand them. The high level of discrimination against Catholics in Northern Ireland has contributed to the sense of despair in the minority community. It has fueled the campaign of violence in the region that has cost over 2,600 lives in the last two decades. We must increase our own efforts to promote equal opportunity when Americans taxpayers' dollars are being used to provide jobs abroad.

We look forward to hearing from you soon on this matter.

Sincerely,


Edward M. Kennedy


Joseph P. Kennedy Jr.