

TRANSCRIPT OF RTE INTERVIEW 1.30 pm 8 DECEMBER 1983

Introduction: The Report has taken 3 years to compile and highlights evidence of massive discrimination against Catholics in the period up to 1970. David Ross of our Northern staff asked the Chairman of the Fair Employment Agency, Bob Cooper, if the Report had taken so long to publish because of pressure from within the Civil Service.

PC: No because we had an enormous amount of preliminary work to do compared to, for example, if we were doing a report on sex discrimination where the data was easily available to you there was no information whatever available on the religious affiliation of people in the Civil Service. So we had a massive amount of very preliminary basic work to do before we were able to look at the results.

DR: Then you got full co-operation?

BC: We would have no unhappiness whatsoever about the co-operation; there were I suppose a few individual Civil Servants who were

DR: But the report is a damning indictment of recruitment within the Northern Ireland Civil Service; were you surprised that the level of discrimination you found?

BC: Well, what we found is a very complex issue, I don't think we can incapsulate it in one sentence. What we found was that the proportion of Catholics up to 1970 was very low indeed; but during the 1970s rapidly increased so that for the last 4 years the proportion of Catholics in the General Service averaged 50% and that promotions for the last number of years had been done fairly and that therefore major changes had taken place; there are still problem areas; the major problem area is that Catholics are not entering or recruited at a high level and that has a major impact on the situation. The picture shows that for the whole of the Civil Service religion is statistically significant but that for the modern Civil Service religion is not a significant factor so you see its a complex picture.

DR: But isn't true to say that even at the moment there are very few Catholics at the very highest levels of the Civil Service? Are you

satisfied with that?

BC: Well, we are having to monitor, to look at what happens; one of the factors you are obviously finding there is the bulk of the Catholics are fairly young and the bulk of the high level are over 50 in other words people of the high level were being recruited at a time when very few Catholics were being recruited. At the level immediately below the top level, however, the proportion of Catholics have more than doubled over the last 10 years. Now if that is carried through to the top level that will bring about a very significant change in the relative proportion.

DR: As well as monitoring you call for an affirmative action programme - is that positive discrimination?

BC: No, no, it is examining what is happening, attempting to rectify within the terms of the law - positive discrimination is not within the terms of the law. What we want done is within the terms of the law, to rectify the present situation short of positive discrimination.