

E. R.

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PS/310/87/SW

cc PS/Mr Bloomfield
Mr Burns M
Mr Hodges
Mr Spence 4/6
Mr Chesterton M
Mr Elliott o/r
Mr Hamilton
Mr Bell M
Mr Hewitt

RS 3/16

Dr Quigley

N.I.C.S. ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

The Irish side of the Secretariat are most grateful for the very helpful and informative meeting which you and Mr Hodges attended in the Secretariat on this subject. As you ascertained during the discussion, the Irish were concerned more with the presentational impact of recruitment policy on the minority community rather than any substantial changes to existing practice. They also firmly ruled out any suggestion that statutory amendments were required to ensure either equality of recruitment to the Service or of promotion prospects thereafter.

2. The two main issues addressed concerned the "nationality qualification". The Irish accepted that it was the individuals right by birth to be registered as British rather than his or her perception of their nationality which was relevant. You reassured them that an applicant who qualified for British and Irish nationality could describe themselves either as British or Irish on the application form. You agreed to consider how this might be made even clearer to applicants, either on the form, or in the accompanying booklet and to let the Irish have a copy of an application form.

3. The question of extending recruitment to people born outside the United Kingdom was also discussed and you supported your argument for the present requirements by citing the high unemployment rate in Northern Ireland, the large number of applicants for non-specialist posts in the Civil Service and the fact that the balance of recruitment at present seemed to be running towards the minority community. You agreed however to look again at some way of dealing with exceptional or compassionate cases (such as those quoted by the Irish) which would be administratively sensible. At the same time, the implications for other nationalities would have to be considered.

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4. It was evident from the discussion that the Irish believe that there is equality of recruitment and of promotion within the Civil Service. Although they would like to see the promotion of Roman Catholics accelerated in the higher grades of the service, they appeared to be impressed by your arguments on the counter productive effects of any such action in the long term.

5. The Irish side of the Secretariat have asked me to convey their thanks to you, Mr Hodges and Mr Spence for your willingness to come and discuss this matter with them in such detail and with such frankness. They look forward to discussing the issues further at some future date.

PRINCIPAL SECRETARIAT

4 June 1987