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CENTRAL PERSONNEL GROUP
NORTHERN IRELAND CIVIL SERVICE

PA
Special Adviser
file

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FROM: DOROTHY ANGUS

DATE: 21 AUGUST 2000

TO: MRS DEVLIN

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cc: Mrs Moore

SPECIAL ADVISERS

1. The enquiry from Dr Liz Fawcett to the Head of the Civil Service regarding Special Advisers (COR/51/2000) refers.
2. I attach input to a draft reply. Much of the language used in relation to the role of advisers has been taken from the model contract for special advisers. I have kept the reply about political activities at a general level and have not gone into the detail about the difference between political and expert advisers. If we are asked for a copy of the model contract, the Cabinet Office has confirmed that they have no objection to its issue since our model contract is based on one produced by them. Their model is in the public domain on their web site, although we have adjusted it slightly to our own circumstances.
3. We are looking currently at the recommendations in the Neill Report on Standards in Public Life as they affect civil servants and special advisers.
4. I hope the attached is what you require, but please let me know if you need anything further.

Dorothy Angus

DOROTHY ANGUS (MRS)

INPUT TO QUERY FROM LIZ FAWCETT ON SPECIAL ADVISERS

Your enquiry of 17 August about special advisers to members of the Northern Ireland Executive Committee refers.

Special Advisers to Ministers are appointed under an exception in the Civil Service Commissioners (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 (copy enclosed) which allows the principle of selection on merit in fair and open competition for appointment to the Northern Ireland Civil Service to be set aside where individuals are appointed for the purpose only of providing advice to Ministers. That legislation also places a limit on the number of special adviser appointments. The First Minister and Deputy First Minister may each have up to 3 special advisers at any one time and any other member of the Executive Committee and the Presiding Officer of the Assembly may have one adviser at any one time.

The special adviser contract follows the model used by GB departments. The role of an adviser is defined in the contract as "to advise their Minister in the development of Northern Ireland Administration policy and its effective presentation" Advisers are employed to serve the objectives of the Northern Ireland Administration. For that reason, their participation in party politics is limited by the terms of the contract, but it is recognised that they can discharge their role with a degree of party political commitment and association which would not be permissible for a permanent civil servant. In that context there may be liaison with the Appointing Authority's Party and other outside interest groups.

There are no particular guidelines in relation to the communications/press role of special advisers.

As regards the recommendations in the Neill Committee Report on Standards in Public Life, some of the recommendations on Special Advisers are already in place in Northern Ireland in that the number of Advisers is limited by legislation. The application of the other recommendations to the Northern Ireland Administration is being given careful consideration.