

SENIOR OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

(NORTHERN IRELAND CIVIL SERVICE)

From the
Chairman

~~Hon. Secretary~~

CONFIDENTIAL

Sir David Holden
Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Finance
Stormont
BELFAST
BT4 3SW

21 September 1973

Dear Sir David

My Association has been perturbed by the growing demands from politicians, both here and in the Irish Republic, for 'reform' of the higher reaches of the Northern Ireland Civil Service. We understand that what the would-be reformers envisage is the offer of premature retirement to senior officers in order to make room for the appointment of Roman Catholics.

My Association, which is non-sectarian and non-political, is utterly opposed to any proposition that appointments should be made on any basis other than merit. Generous inducements for retirement might not be unwelcome for personal reasons to a number of our members, and others might benefit from consequential appointments, so in purely individual terms our members would probably stand to gain. Indeed the Association would, I am sure, give it's blessing to any scheme of this nature which had no political connotations.

Our concern is therefore with the implications for the service as a whole and particularly with two aspects of the proposition. Immediately we would foresee a decline in efficiency, since experienced officials who had achieved their position in competition with their colleagues would be replaced by inexperienced newcomers or by people promoted on sectarian grounds. In the longer term, and even more seriously, we would fear the drift into a Civil Service where an officer's political and religious beliefs were determining factors in his career.

Rumours have circulated to the effect that a golden handshake arrangement may be contemplated to meet political demands. I trust you will enable us to assure our members that such rumours are totally without foundation and that there is no intention at any level within government of introducing a sectarian bias of any description into the appointment and promotion of civil servants.

Yours sincerely
J. Parke.

J PARKE

cc: Mr R Balmer
Mr R Smartt