

R E S T R I C T E D

3. The necessary administrative arrangements to ensure compliance with the new legislation and to achieve a coordinated approach where necessary have been or are being made by officials in the departments concerned. It would, however, be helpful for the Secretary of State now to write to his colleagues, to remind them of the political importance in Northern Ireland of successful implementation. They have of course been kept in touch through the relevant Cabinet committees with the development of the legislation, but a reminder of what is now required and its significance could be useful.

4. The Secretary of State for Defence is the major employer of UKCS and Northern Ireland. It seems not inappropriate that the attached draft letter should be addressed to him. It should also be helpful to send to colleagues - most members of 'H' Committee have UKCS staff in Northern Ireland and/or let contracts to firms there - the new Code of Practice. (One copy is currently attached; we shall supply the others separately.)

(SIGNED)

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Constitutional Political Division
OAB 6591
20 December 1989

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employer of civil servants), face obvious difficulties in some areas of fair employment practice, and I believe that the FEC will show understanding of those difficulties, including security problems, where they do exist.

I am sure that you and other colleagues will agree that the Government as a whole should be seen to be setting an example in implementing the new provisions positively and sensitively. It will be important that there should be in place in each department systems to ensure that we are meeting not only the letter of the law, but also its spirit, as best we can.

We have rightly given a very high political priority to the enactment of this legislation. As Douglas Hurd and you have said in the past, it is unacceptable in a civilised society that Catholic males should be more than twice as likely to be unemployed as Protestants in Northern Ireland, and it is understandable that that should be a source of grievance to the minority community. Even if we are not able in the event to improve the statistics very quickly, we can demonstrate our commitment to equality of opportunity for all by determined implementation of the new Act.

A new Code of Practice for Fair Employment, with a Foreword by the Prime Minister, is now being distributed. I am enclosing a copy with this letter. We shall be giving further publicity to the new arrangements at the start of the New Year.

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I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, the Lord President, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, all members of "H" Committee, the Minister for Agriculture, the Minister for the Civil Service, the Financial Secretary to the Treasury and Sir Robin Butler.

PETER BROOKE

[cc: As indicated in final paragraph and in covering minute.]