



FEDERATION OF SMALL BUSINESSES

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~~Mr Gibson~~ <sup>S. 29</sup> ..  
Handed over at Minister's  
meeting with FSB, 27/11.

*[Signature]*

FEDERATION OF SMALL BUSINESSES  
PILOT SURVEY  
BOYCOTT OF BUSINESSES

~~Mr Gibson~~

For Boycotts File

PA - 6/70/96

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**THE FEDERATION OF SMALL BUSINESSES -  
"BUSINESS BOYCOTTING" - SURVEY RESULTS**

The FSB, in response to a request from the NI Political Forum, undertook a survey of members to gauge the extent of boycotting and consider the views of members on the current position.

As the FSB has received conflicting reports on this via media and members it was decided at this stage to issue a pilot survey involving a small percentage of members in order to initially assess the situation.

A questionnaire was circulated to 120 small and medium sized businesses; these were selected at random throughout the Province. It may be helpful to bear in mind that the retail and service industry dominate the membership.

Reactions were as follows:

1. During the recent incidence of boycotting was your business actively boycotted?                      Yes [7%]                      No [93%]
  
2. If you were boycotted how would you best describe the situation you faced?  
  
Severe [0]                      Moderate [5%]                      Light [2%]
  
3. If boycotted what form did the boycott take? The following reasons were stated:  
  
(a) Fewer customers than would normally be expected.  
(b) De-listed as suppliers.  
(c) Customers from the Protestant/Catholic community taking their business elsewhere.
  
4. Is business returning to normal?                      Yes [6%]                      No [1%]

**THE FEDERATION OF SMALL BUSINESSES -  
"BOYCOTTING BUSINESSES" - REPORT**

Research has confirmed that businesses on both sides of the religious divide were indeed boycotted.

When asked 7% of members revealed trade had suffered over the past three months as a direct result of boycotting, predominance of religious persuasion in the town or village obviously dictating the intensity of the repercussions to trade.

Of those affected 6% felt that trade appeared to be returning to normal.

However 12% of the total surveyed indicated to us that should this campaign develop further there is no doubt that many could not survive it, at the very least they would be forced to relocate.

It was interesting to note that 7% of the small businesses indicated that they felt the continued media attention of the boycott was detrimental and served only to aggravate tensions within the community.

The FSB recognise and respect the right of each individual in our democratic society to purchase goods and services from where and from whom they choose, we also acknowledge that many may wish to exercise that right as a legitimate form of 'peaceful' protest.

However it has been revealed to us that sectarian elements are at work within various communities and residents are being openly discouraged, verbally and by letter, from patronising Catholic or Protestant shops.

## CONCLUSION

The Federation is extremely concerned at this sinister form of sectarianism; and oppose the boycotting of businesses, it will do nothing for the economic or political stability of Northern Ireland and is yet another reason for potential investors to go elsewhere.

It is obvious to address this issue a holistic understanding of the situation the factors involved and how they interrelate must be achieved.

Judging by the results of this pilot survey we consider that investment of further research into this area will be necessary.

Researched by:

Mavis Black

Press & Parliamentary Officer

FSB NI

November 1996