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cc 700
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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

25 November 1981

VISIT OF THE TAOISEACH

The Prime Minister has seen your letter to me of 23 November. She is content to let the matter rest.

I am sending copies of this letter to Roderic Lyne (FCO) and David Wright (Cabinet Office).

M. O'D. B. ALEXANDER

Mike Hopkins, Esq.,
Northern Ireland Office.

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NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
GREAT GEORGE STREET,
LONDON SW1P 3AJ

cc Mr. Ingham

Michael Alexander Esq
10 Downing Street
LONDON
SW1

23 November 1981

Dear Michael

*Yes
Prime Minister
wonder to leave matter
on this basis?
23/x1*

VISIT OF THE TAOISEACH

Under cover of your letter of 9 November you sent Stephen Boys Smith a copy of a list handed over by the Taoiseach of alleged instances of sectarian practice by District Councils in Northern Ireland.

We have checked through the list and it is a reasonably accurate summary. There are a few very minor errors of detail, and certain omissions of cases that could have been included. But generally it is difficult to challenge it. Unfortunately there have been cases of sectarian practice by District Councils and the Irish know it as well as we do. (It should however be borne in mind that the majority of these cases have been brought to light and followed up by the existing machinery and safeguards.)

In these circumstances my Secretary of State sees nothing to be gained from responding to the list. We would only have to accept its basic validity. He therefore feels that we should let the matter rest.

I am copying this letter to Roderic Lyne (FCO) and David Wright (Cabinet Office).

*Yours sincerely
Julie Stephens*

M W HOPKINS

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20535

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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

9 November 1981

VISIT OF THE TAOISEACH

In the course of the plenary meeting during Dr. FitzGerald's visit to London on Friday, there was a brief discussion of local government. When, in the course of this, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland said that the Government were thinking of taking steps to strengthen local government in the Province, the Taoiseach drew attention to what he described as a number of proven cases of sectarian discrimination. In saying this, he handed over the enclosed list of examples and offered to produce more.

I am sending copies of this letter and its enclosure to Roderic Lyne (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and David Wright (Cabinet Office).

M. O'D. B. ALEXANDER

Stephen Boys-Smith, Esq.,
Northern Ireland Office.

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Some Examples of Sectarian Practices by Northern
Ireland Local Authorities 1973-81

Armagh

The Council was found guilty by the Fair Employment Agency of discrimination in the appointment of a wages clerk in the Council in September 1981.

Ballymena

The Commissioner of Complaints criticised the Council for its "sectarian stance" in refusing to publish Sunday sport items in its Calendar of Events. The exclusion of Gaelic words from the Calendar was also declared an "offence against Gaelic culture in general."

Coleraine

The SDLP accused the Council (1977-81) majority of blatant discrimination following a decision by the Local Government Staff Commission that the Council had not followed the procedures laid down in the 1973 Local Government Act in its recruitment of a tourism development officer.

Cookstown

The Ombudsman found the Council guilty of discrimination against two Catholics who had unsuccessfully applied for posts in the Council in August 1977.

In February 1981 the Fair Employment Agency told the Council to take a series of actions to correct what was said to be a "substantial religious imbalance" in their work force. According to the FEA report the Council salaried staff consisted of 13 Protestants and only two Catholics with none of the Catholics being employed in head office and one of the two of whom was only appointed after the FEA had commenced its

investigations. On the manual side the FEA noted that out of the 57 employees 42 were Protestants and only 15 were Catholics. The FEA discovered that since 1977 about 45% of those who applied for jobs in the Council were Catholics and 55% Protestants but only 33% of the Catholics were successful compared to 68% of the Protestants. In a heated discussion by the Council of the FEA report it was thrown out by one vote.

Craigavon

In December 1978 the Council was accused by the FEA of political or religious discrimination following the rejection of an application by Mr. Tim Duffy for the post of the outdoor recreation officer. In the appeal by the Council to Armagh County Court the Court decided that there was a case for the Council to answer and in June 1980 the Court of Appeal decided that Mr. Duffy had indeed been discriminated against.

In October 1980 the FEA backed a case in which it was claimed that because of the fact that an employee was a Roman Catholic he had only been allowed progress so far up the management ladder but was then effectively blocked. In the Court case the judge said that the FEA had established a prime facie case of not only discrimination but discrimination on religious grounds.

Fermanagh

In April 1975 the Council was instructed by the Local Government Staff Commission to reverse its decision not to appoint a Catholic as recreation officer.

Limavady

It is understood that there is only one Catholic (a female clerical employee) on the staff of the Council.

Magherafelt

The High Court ruled that the Council had acted unlawfully in not including Gaelic football in its summer recreation scheme.

