

THE FEC ... FAIR TO MEDDLING?

Ulster verdict on jobs body

A Protestant has won a record £77,000 in damages for religious and political discrimination. But what do the Northern Ireland public think of the Fair Employment Commission, and what future direction should Fair Employment legislation take? Three members of Queen's University put the options before the people and Colin Irwin reports on their findings.

THE British government likes to make the point it believes fair employment legislation in the province to be the best in all of Europe.

Many Americans, however, do not think the laws go far enough and would like strong affirmative action programmes for Catholics in line with the MacBride Principles.

One thing is for sure, discrimination laws are here to stay. They are changing the patterns of employment and these laws are controversial.

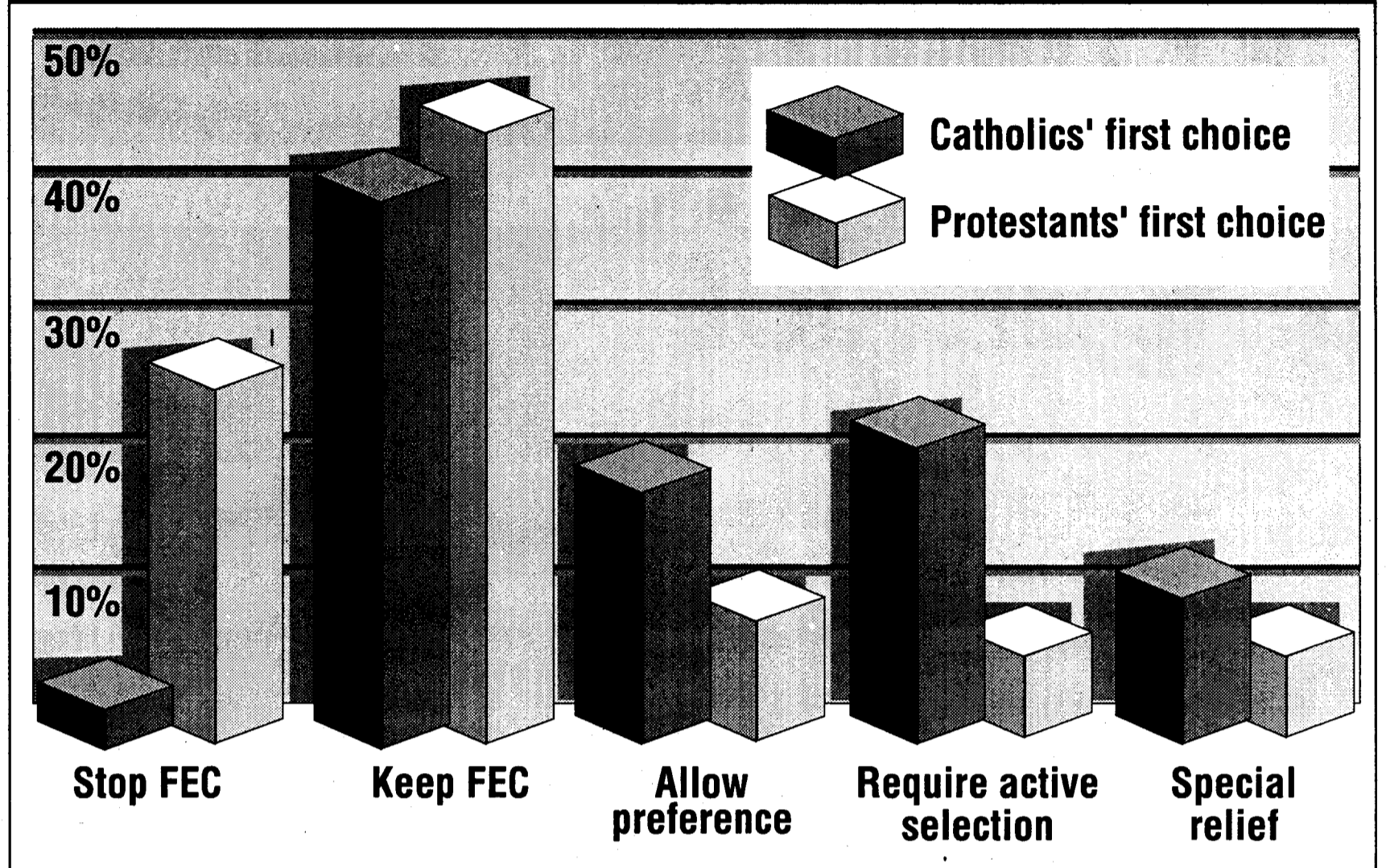
In the recent Rowntree poll a random sample of the population was asked to put five options for fair employment policies in their order of preference.

- Option A: Stop fair employment activities.**
Repeat fair employment legislation; scrap the Fair Employment Commission and allow employers to give jobs to whom they wish.
- Option B: No change.**
Leave current fair employment legislation and policies as they are. Don't cut them back, but don't extend their powers either.
- Option C: Preference to under-represented community.**
Allow employers to give the

It comes as no surprise that Catholics strongly support the principles of fair employment.

From 715 completed questionnaires, 28% of Protestants wanted to scrap the FEC while only 3% of Catholics

MAJORITY OF CATHOLICS AND PROTESTANTS WANT TO KEEP OR STRENGTHEN THE FEC



thought it should go. The largest group of people, 42% of Catholics and 47% of Protestants, wanted to keep it as is.

Everyone else, 55% of Catholics and 25% of Protestants, wanted the powers of the FEC to be strengthened. The clear consensus seems to be to keep the FEC, but with some improvements.

There was also a clear consensus on sharing. Eighty-two per cent would prefer a mixed religion workplace and only 12% wanted to work with people from just their own religion — 6% didn't know.

It comes as no surprise that Catholics strongly support the principles of fair employment.

But the result that will be most welcome at the FEC is the fact that a significant majority of Protestants are willing to accept laws to prevent discrimination in the workplace.

Curse of the mutant veg

THEY say we are what we eat. If that is true then we are all walking containers of toxins, sopped up unknowingly in our daily food intake.



NORMAN JENKINSON

We are chemical time-bombs, many of us with just the fuse lit, others about to explode to a point of no return, and others already detonated, the substances doing their damage at this very minute.

Others, the young, are still in the process of laying in supplies, building up towards the critical point.

We are consumers, not just of food, but of all those odds and ends of chemicals which makes the food we eat good to look at, good to taste, and, more importantly, good to sell.

gained a foothold, and they spray the vegetables with all the 'icides, just to make sure nothing gets in.

The bad news is that it doesn't happen that way. Chemicals, in the form of pesticides and hormones, and antibiotics, make their way into humans.

How they actually poison us we may not know for decades, but there is a strong lobby which believes that there is an epidemic of cancer diseases now, and that it is very likely to be caused by toxins we take in the form of residual chemicals in our food.

Statistics, of course, will prove me wrong, that there is no cancer epidemic, that heart disease is still the biggest killer here.



Is anything safe to eat?: Cartoon taken from cartoonist Martyn Turner's new book, The Noble Art of Politics (Blackstaff Press £5.99).

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