

4 July 1997

Rt Hon Betty Boothroyd MP
Speaker
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Madam Speaker a chara

As you are aware, Martin McGuinness and I stood in the May 1st General Election as members of Sinn Fein and succeeded in winning the Mid Ulster and West Belfast seats.

On 14th May, in a statement to the House of Commons, you announced that *"from the date of the end of the debate on the Queen's Speech, the services that are available to all other Members from the six departments of the House and beyond will not be open for use by Members who have not taken their seats by swearing or by affirmation."*

This is a radical departure from the situation which obtained during the election campaign, and previously. Our electorate were aware at the time of the election that we would not be speaking or voting in the House but expected us to properly represent them in every other respect. It is therefore of deep concern to Mr McGuinness and to myself that the additional restrictions announced by you only after our election, impinge directly on our capacity to represent and work for our constituents.

In your Statement you accept that there may be 'good reasons' why a Member might not take his seat. Without engaging in a treatise on the history of Britain and Ireland, I would invite you to accept that as an Irish republican I have very good reasons for refusing to take an oath of allegiance to a British monarch. It is a founding principle of our party that the Irish people have the right to determine their own affairs and the taking of such an oath would be entirely repugnant to our constitution.

The refusal to take the oath formed part of our election campaign, as did our intention, if elected, to avail of the normal facilities afforded to all Members of the House of Commons. I believe therefore that the effect of your Statement discriminates against my constituents on the basis of their political beliefs and that you should immediately reconsider the whole content of your Statement.

At no time have you given any reasons why you implemented these discriminatory and far reaching changes. Mr McGuinness and myself, on behalf of our constituents are clearly entitled to be given the full reasons behind your Statement. We would welcome an early opportunity to meet you in order to discuss the matters raised in this letter and in the meantime would be obliged to receive by return a full explanation of the reasons for implementing the aforementioned changes.

I am sending a copy of this letter to the Rt Hon Anne Taylor MP, Leader of the House.

Is mise

GERRY ADAMS



Speaker's House Westminster London SW1A 0AA

8 July 1997

Dear Mr Adams.

Thank you for your letter of 4 July.

My statement on 14 May, of which I enclose a full copy for your information, made clear the reasons why House of Commons facilities will not be made available to Members who choose not to take their seats. I draw your attention in particular to the second paragraph. Those who do not take up their democratic responsibilities as Members at Westminster should not have access to the facilities that are made available to assist Members who do.

My decision stands. But I shall of course be willing to see you and Mr McGuinness if you wish. I am sure you will understand, however, that my programme is fully committed to the end of July: any meeting would therefore have to take place after the summer recess.

Yours sincerely,

David Dookinoyd

Speaker

Gerry Adams Esq MP
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Éire
BT12 4PÒ



GERRY ADAMS MP
SINN FÉIN
PRESIDENT

8-8-97

Madam Speaker a chára,

I write further to your letter of 8 July 1997 and on behalf of my colleague, Martin McGuinness MP, and myself, wish to express our disappointment with your refusal to reconsider your decision.

We remain anxious to represent our respective constituents to the best of our ability, both in our constituencies and in Westminster and to that end are proposing to issue an application for judicial review of your decision, which we would have to do at the latest within three months of your statement. In order to explore all possible means of resolving this issue without having to apply to the courts as a last resort, we would be grateful if you could arrange to meet us before 13 August.

I must apologise for the extremely short notice, but unfortunately as you are aware, we have had to give other matters priority.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Is mise le meas,

Gerry Adams M.P.