

PQ REPLY

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if he will make a statement about nominations to the forthcoming political negotiations, and about progress in setting up the forum established by the Northern Ireland (Entry to Negotiations, etc) Act 1996. *is not met, no invitation can be issued in respect of Sinn Féin.*

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW

*Letters have also been sent to the nominating representatives of all*  
I have issued invitations to nominate teams to participate in the negotiations, under section 2(2) of the Northern Ireland (Entry to Negotiations, etc) Act 1996, to the nominating representatives of the following parties:

*sum: we have now identified suitable premises for it at the Interpoint Centre in Belfast. I am placing a copy of the*  
Alliance Party *Library of the House.*

Democratic Unionist Party - DUP

Labour

Northern Ireland Women's Coalition

Progressive Unionist Party (PUP)

Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP)

UK Unionist Party - Robert McCartney

Ulster Democratic Party (UDP)

Ulster Unionist Party (UUP)

I am required by section 2(3) of the Act to refrain from inviting nominations in respect of any party if I consider that requirements set out in paragraphs 8 and 9 of the Ground Rules for substantive all-party negotiations (published as command paper 3232) are not met in relation to it. Paragraph 9 of the Ground Rules makes clear the

agreement of the British and Irish governments that the participation of Sinn Fein in the negotiations requires the unequivocal restoration of the ceasefire of August 1994.

After consultation with the Irish Government, both Governments are agreed that this requirement is not met and that for so long as it is not met, no invitation can be issued in respect of Sinn Fein.

#### Loss of earnings

Letters have also been sent to the nominating representatives of all parties returned at the elections, including Sinn Fein, about arrangements for the forum. With them is a draft of initial rules of procedure, on which we seek comment. The letters also deal with the location of the forum: we have now identified suitable premises for it at the Interpoint Centre in Belfast. I am placing a copy of these letters in the Library of the House.

delegations (and party support staff) will be able to claim subsistence and travel expenses at the standard Civil Service rates.

In addition, it is intended to pay the following to parties:

#### Party Allowance

a flat rate party allowance of £300 (or such lesser figure as may be agreed in the Business Committee) for each day in which the party concerned is involved in negotiations.

#### Party Research Grants

a party research grant in respect of vouched expenditure on relevant items of work, up to a maximum of £6,000 per quarter.