



CONFIDENTIAL - POLICY

QUEEN ANNE'S GATE LONDON SW1H 9AT

18 FEB 1998

The Rt Hon Ann Taylor MP
President of the Council
Privy Council Office
Whitehall
London SW1

File
18/2

TOP - JEH

C: JP
PB
AC

Dear Ann,

SINN FEIN AND THE OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Mo Mowlam wrote to you on 5 February about the possibility of amending the Parliamentary Oath and, perhaps, trying to persuade the Speaker to relax, at least in part, her restrictions on the Sinn Fein MPs' access to facilities at Westminster.

I am of course ready to debate the point but I have to say that I do see objections to deciding now to review the Oath of Allegiance. I am not convinced that changing the Oath would be an effective means of encouraging Sinn Fein to take further steps to fully join the democratic process. It seems to me more likely to simply lead us into accusations of unwarranted concessions. As Mo says in her letter, the Sinn Fein MPs were elected on an abstentionist ticket. Since they have made it clear that they have no intention of taking their seats there would be considerable public unease - which I would understand - at moves which would simply serve to grant them facilities.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, the Lord Chancellor, members of IN, the Attorney General and Sir Richard Wilson.

Yours ever,
Jack

JACK STRAW

CONFIDENTIAL - POLICY