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FORUM -
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MESSAGE:

*LEGATION IS
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STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

1997 No. 1046

NORTHERN IRELAND

The Northern Ireland
(Entry to Negotiations, etc) Act 1996
(Cessation of Section 3)
Order 1997

Made - - - - 21st March 1997

Coming into force 22nd March 1997

Whereas a draft of this Order has been approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament pursuant to section 7(6) of the Northern Ireland (Entry to Negotiations, etc) Act 1996(a);

And whereas it appears to the Secretary of State that the negotiations mentioned in section 1 of that Act are suspended;

Now, therefore, in exercise of the power conferred on him by section 7(3) and (4) of that Act, the Secretary of State hereby makes the following Order:

1. This Order may be cited as the Northern Ireland (Entry to Negotiations, etc) Act 1996 (Cessation of Section 3) Order 1997 and shall come into force on the day after that on which this Order is made.

2. Section 3 of the Northern Ireland (Entry to Negotiations, etc) Act 1996 shall cease to have effect on the day after that on which this Order is made.

Northern Ireland Office
21st March 1997

P.B.B. Mayhew
One of Her Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State

(a) 1996 c.11.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This note is not part of the Order)

Under this Order, section 3 of the Northern Ireland (Entry to Negotiations, etc) Act 1996 ceases to have effect on 22nd March 1997. Section 3 makes provision for a Forum constituted by delegates returned in accordance with Schedule 1 to the Act for the discussion of issues relevant to promoting dialogue and understanding within Northern Ireland.

£0.65p

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Printed in the UK for and published by The Stationery Office Limited
under the authority and superintendence of Peter Macdonald,
Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office and Queen's Printer of
Acts of Parliament.

WO 727 4/97 570/1 2844 343296 (112546)

ISBN 0-11-064320-8



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10 March 1997

NORTHERN IRELAND FORUM

The Secretary of State, Sir Patrick Mayhew QC MP, today laid before Parliament a draft of an Order withdrawing from effect the provisions of section 3 of the Northern Ireland (Entry to Negotiations, etc) Act 1996. Those provisions establish the Forum that has been sitting since June 1996, composed of the delegates returned at the elections of 30 May, from among whom participants in the multi-party talks are also drawn.

The Secretary of State has concluded, following the decision of the plenary session of the talks on 5 March to adjourn until 3 June, and taking account of all the circumstances, that the talks are suspended. He is thus obliged under Section 7(4) of the Act, subject to Parliamentary approval, to make the Order. Debates in each House on the Order are likely next week.

The provisions establishing the Forum would in any event have lapsed at the end of May. It will be possible for a new Secretary of State to bring before the next Parliament a further Order, reviving the Forum for a further period (of up to a year).

The Secretary of State said:

It appears to me that, in all the circumstances, the talks are suspended. Accordingly the Entry into Negotiations Act places a duty upon me to make an Order withdrawing from effect the provisions which established the Forum. That Order will be debatable in Parliament.

It will be a matter for a new Secretary of State, and a new Parliament, to consider the revival of the Forum. I do not doubt that my successor will wish to decide this question very soon, in light of the resumption of the talks on 3 June.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

The Forum was established under Section 3 of the Northern Ireland (Entry to Negotiations, etc) Act 1996. It is open to all 110 delegates returned at the election of 30 May 1996 in Northern Ireland, from amongst whom parties also selected participants in the multi-party talks. Sinn Fein were entitled to attend the forum (unlike the talks, to which they can only be admitted after an unequivocal restoration of the IRA ceasefire), but they have never done so. The SDLP initially participated, but withdrew after the civil disturbances of last summer.

The forum's remit is to discuss issues relevant to promoting dialogue and understanding within Northern Ireland. The Act makes clear that it is a deliberative body only, without legislative, executive or administrative functions. It expressly provides that the forum has no power to determine the conduct, course or outcome of the multi-party talks, although it may consider matters that the negotiations may refer to it (no such reference has so far been made).

The provisions establishing the forum lapse at the end of May this year (by Section 7(1) of the Act). The Secretary of State may however provide by order that they shall cease to have effect at an earlier point (Section 7(3)); and he is obliged to do so if it appears to him that the talks are concluded or suspended (Section 7(4)). He can by another Order revive the forum provisions, to any point up to the end of May 1998, when they will lapse for good.

The Order is formally titled the Northern Ireland (Entry to Negotiations, etc) Act 1996 (Cessation of Section 3) Order 1997.

END

Draft Order laid before Parliament under section 7(6) of the Northern Ireland (Entry to Negotiations, etc) Act 1996, for approval by resolution of each House of Parliament

DRAFT STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

1997 No.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Northern Ireland (Entry to Negotiations, etc) Act 1996
(Revival of Section 3) Order 1997

Made 1997

Whereas a draft of this Order has been approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament pursuant to section 7(6) of the Northern Ireland (Entry to Negotiations, etc) Act 1996(a):

Now, therefore, in exercise of the power conferred on her by section 7(2) of that Act, the Secretary of State hereby makes the following Order:

1. This Order may be cited as the Northern Ireland (Entry to Negotiations, etc) Act 1996 (Revival of Section 3) Order 1997.
2. Section 3 of the Northern Ireland (Entry to Negotiations, etc) Act 1996 shall come into force again on 3rd June 1997 and remain in force until the end of May 1998.

Northern Ireland Office
1997

One of Her Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State

(a) 1996 c.11.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This note is not part of the Order)

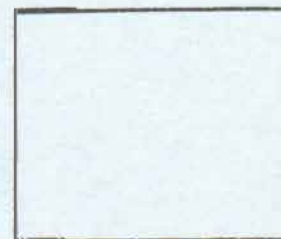
This Order brings section 3 of the Northern Ireland (Entry to Negotiations, etc) Act 1996 into force again on 3rd June 1997 until the end of May 1998. The section ceased to have effect on 22nd March 1997, pursuant to the Northern Ireland (Entry to Negotiations, etc) Act 1996 (Cessation of Section 3) Order 1997 (S.I. 1997/1046). Section 3 makes provision for a forum constituted by delegates returned in accordance with Schedule 1 of the Act for the discussion of issues relevant to promoting dialogue and understanding within Northern Ireland.

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PO 795 5/97 570/1 2844 343296 (112763)





NORTHERN IRELAND
Information Service

15 May 1997

NORTHERN IRELAND FORUM

The Secretary of State, the Rt Hon Dr Mo Mowlam MP, today laid before Parliament a draft of an Order to reinstate the Northern Ireland Forum from Tuesday 3 June 1997.

The Secretary of State said: "I am glad to start the process of reviving the Forum. There is a great deal it could usefully do in the field of promoting dialogue and understanding in support of political progress in Northern Ireland. I hope it will focus on such opportunities.

"We shall do all we can to have the draft Order approved quickly by both Houses of Parliament, despite the pressures on their time at present, so that there is no unnecessary delay in the Forum meeting."

The draft Order needs to be approved by both Houses of Parliament, before it is made by the Secretary of State. Because of the Queen's Speech debate, Parliamentary time is very short at present, but it is hoped to have debates before, or just after, the Whitsun recess.

NOTE FOR EDITORS

The Forum was established under Section 3 of the Northern Ireland (Entry to Negotiations, etc) Act 1996. It is open to all 110 delegates returned at the election of 30 May 1996 in Northern Ireland, from amongst whom parties also selected participants to attend the multi-party Talks. Sinn Fein were entitled to attend the Forum (unlike the Talks, to which they can only be admitted after an unequivocal restoration of the IRA ceasefire), but have never done so. The SDLP initially participated, but withdrew after the civil disturbances of last Summer.

The Forum was suspended on 22 March 1997 on account of the suspension of the Talks during the period of the General election and the Northern Ireland local government elections.

Its remit is to discuss issues relevant to promoting dialogue and understanding within Northern Ireland. The Act makes clear that it is a deliberative body only, without legislative, executive or administrative functions.

The draft Order is formally entitled the Northern Ireland (Entry to Negotiations, etc) Act 1996 (Revival of Section 3) Order 1997. It will have the effect of bringing Section 3 (the Forum) of the Northern Ireland (Entry to Negotiations, etc) Act 1996 into force again on 3 June 1997 and until the end of May 1998.