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RECEIVED
25 JUN 2009

22nd June 2009

Dear Mr Cockburn,

Re MPs' Salary

I was alarmed to read in the Daily Telegraph that you are reported to indicate that MPs deserve a salary increase of £10,000. What is the basis for this conclusion and your belief that MPs' pay is 10 to 15% below what it should be? I would hope that such increases are not predicated on the fact that the MPs are probably about to lose a large amount of their ill gotten tax free benefits which they have hitherto enjoyed.

An MPs' pay bears no relationship to pay in the private sector. I challenge you to find pay of the existing level being offered for any job in the private sector bearing in mind that the MPs no longer have all night sittings, have fabulous pension provisions, very long holidays, need no qualifications, have no measurable accountability or responsibility and may participate in parliament's affairs as little as they choose and cannot be sacked. The time to worry about MPs' pay is when candidates are no longer lining up to take the job. MPs current pay must place them in the top 10% of earners in the UK. If existing MPs believe that they are underpaid I suggest that they take the same action that is open to all employees and that is to resign and take up the better offer. How many are resigning now- having been found to be unreasonably milking the system?

The private sector sets salary levels at the minimum level it needs to pay to get the level of skills or qualifications it requires. The argument that raising salary levels for MPs would provide the house with a higher quality intake does not hold water as there is no independent vetting procedure to determine the suitability of the potential MPs.

The time to review MPs' pay is when their numbers have been drastically reduced and their accountability is set out in measurable terms such that non or poor performers can be dismissed.

Yours truly,

R Edwards

cc Sir Christopher Kelly

E74

Sir Christopher Kelly Chairman
Committee on Standards in Public Life,
35 Great Smith Street,
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SW1P 3BQ

RECEIVED
27 APR 2009

22nd April 2009

Dear Sir Christopher,

Re the Investigation into MP's Expenses

I trust that you would welcome some input from an ordinary member of the public on the above subject. I am a retired Chartered Engineer who has spent his life in the private sector and my views are based on how private companies pay their employees and reimburse them for legitimate expenses incurred in carrying out their work.

Salaries are based on a scale to attract the right people in the job for the minimum salary it is necessary to pay to fill a position. The scale has a range each side of the mid point. The mid point salary is reached when the employee meets and performs to the requirements of the job. The range accommodates salary advances based on assessed performance. It seems to me to be totally unfair that a newcomer to the House with no experience gets the same salary as a long serving member who has proved his worth by his attendance record and the level of productive activity in the House and the constituency. As for the current salary level this appears to be more than adequate, at the mid point, bearing in mind that no qualifications are required, there are no shortages of applicants and there are no accountable responsibilities involved. Where else could one aspire to that remuneration with a similar job specification? Independent assessors could be employed to administer the salaries against agreed performance criteria.

Expenses for MP's bear no relation to what would be available in the private sector added to which it would appear that they also get more favourable treatment from the tax man. Private car allowance is 40p per mile but after 10,000 miles it would drop to 23(?)p per mile. Is that the case for MP's? Private individuals certainly could not claim for travelling to their place of work and if they were given rent free accommodation they would be taxed on the benefit. Instead of second homes MP's should be given a maximum allowance for an overnight stay from a list of approved hotels plus a maximum allowance for an evening meal. Receipts would be needed for such expenditure- again as the tax authorities demand for private citizens. There should be no such thing as an attendance allowance or any form of payment that is tax free.

It is absolutely crazy that so many MP's that live within comfortable commuting distance of Westminster are enabled to claim for travel and or second homes, especially as the days of extended House sittings are long past. They should

experience exactly the same conditions as their constituents. For those MP's who live beyond commuting distance, their journeys should not be reimbursable 100% but be subject to a deduction, or a tax liability, based on a reasonable cost of travelling to a local place of work agreed for each individual location.

As for pensions, the MP's are in a superior position relative to any other employee. Most of their constituents (other than public employees) subscribe to a money purchase scheme and there is no reason why MP's should not do the same with a contribution from the state based on the average contribution made by reputable companies. Until MP's get to understand the conditions faced by their constituents they are not inclined to realize the hardships they face. The existing scheme should be bought out based on the number of years service in the House. After all if this has been done in the private sector why cannot it be implemented for MP's? There is no doubt in most peoples mind that the index linked final salary schemes are not sustainable and the MP's should set the example for all public employees.

If all of this appears to be severe I can only say that as a professional engineer with demanding responsibilities and long working hours I never achieved the salary level of an MP and my retirement age was 65. My expenses were rigorously checked and receipts were needed for all claims. I was lucky enough to have a pension based on final salary (not index linked) but the company I worked for transferred everyone with more than 5 years to go before retirement onto a money purchase scheme.

I hope that this input will assist you in your deliberations. Feelings are running extremely high in the population at large and any scheme that appears to increase salary to compensate for loss of ill gotten tax free expenses will be very much resented.

Yours truly,

R. Edwards