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Dunblane

Tel:
5th May, 2009

RECEIVED
7 - MAY 2009

The Secretary,
Committee on Standards in Public Life
35 Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BQ

Dear Sir/Madam,

MPs and Second Homes Allowance

As you will see from the attached, on 23rd April, 2009, I wrote to Sir Christopher regarding the above. So far, I have received no acknowledgement of my letter.

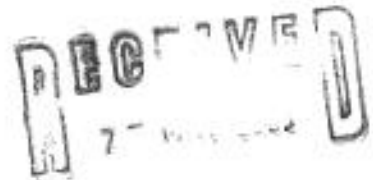
I do believe that my suggestion merits serious consideration by the Committee and would like some confirmation that my letter was actually received by Sir Christopher. If not, then I would be obliged if you would ensure that he does receive a copy.

As has been acknowledged by many MPs, the current system of recompensing them for their second homes can cause situations whereby all MPs are thought to be taking advantage of their positions at the expense of the taxpayer. My proposal, by transferring the responsibility for property transactions and the furnishing and refurbishment of accommodation away from the House and back to the Constituency, should eliminate that specific problem. Scrutiny at a local level should ensure a reasonable cap on expenditure, yet allow flexibility for individual circumstances. Who knows, if the constituency wishes to be well represented in London the MP might end up in superior accommodation to that which he or she currently occupies!

Yours faithfully,

I H.C. Stein
Encl.

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Dunblane

Tel:

23rd April, 2009

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

Dear Sir Christopher,

MPs Second Homes & Expenses

The Prime Minister has suggested an attendance allowance which some estimate at £25,000 per MP per annum. This suggests an annual bill in excess of £15 million pounds, and one paid in perpetuity, with no benefit to the State.

May I suggest an alternative. The State should acquire ownership of those houses in London which MPs currently occupy as second homes. Ownership should then be transferred to the MPs constituency with the Returning Officer holding the title in trust. The MP should live there rent free but paying Council Tax (with single person discount), utility bills and other living costs, out of their salaries. If an MP deemed the constituency house unsuitable he/she would make a case to the Returning Officer who would have the power to sell the existing property and buy another, but only after consulting within the constituency e.g. with the parties' agents. Maintenance of the property would be shared across the local authorities within the constituency, as would any refurbishment costs. The latter being split 75/25 between the constituency and the MP. Disputes could be taken on appeal to your committee, or to some suitable authority within Westminster.

With property prices depressed and mortgage interest rates at record lows, now is the perfect time to carry out such a transfer. Such a scheme has the benefit of being a one-off cost to the public purse with the capital recovering in time to the benefit of the national finances. MPs would benefit by being entirely removed from the burden of ownership.

Party politics and scrutiny by the local Press would surely minimize the likelihood of abuses of the system and help in achieving reasonable and politically acceptable outcomes for all concerned

Yours sincerely,

E 97

Dunblane

Anju Still, Business Manager
Committee on Standards in Public Life
35 Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BQ

RECEIVED
21 MAY 2009
Bel. 19th May, 2009

Dear Sir,

MPs and Second Homes Allowance
Thank you for your letter of 14th. May.

I am perfectly content that my submission to the Committee should be published on your website, together with my name and address, as required to ensure transparency. Anything which stimulates the widest possible debate, and proper coverage of all the options, is to be welcomed.

Following my previous submission to Sir Christopher the debate in the media has moved on to some extent. I would be grateful if you would forward the attached to Sir Christopher, as a further argument in support of my earlier submission.

Yours sincerely,

I H.C. Stein

Encl.

Dunblane

Tel:
19th May, 2009

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

Dear Sir Christopher,

MPs Second Homes & Expenses -

Further to my submission of 23rd April:

Those on fixed incomes deserve a minimum cost solution from your Committee

I have noticed that much of the debate, since I first wrote, still seems to centre around the idea of an annual payment for expenses. The sum of £20,000 is being bandied about as the magic amount. I would wish to counter this suggestion on the simple grounds of cost.

In the light of the fact that a minority of MPs are now exposed as 'innocent', by virtue of *not* claiming any expenses, it seems perverse for the taxpayer then to be made liable for £20,000 x 645 x in perpetuity, simply to allow the majority an annual sum of £20,000 to spend as they see fit. As I proposed in my earlier letter, the one-off devolving of the entire question of accommodation and associated living costs to the constituency would be a far cheaper option.

As a taxpayer whose major annual outgoing is the not-to-be-avoided Council Tax - currently being paid out of my savings because of the failure of Parliament to revise this most regressive of taxes - I have no sympathy for MPs in their current predicament. Yet, as Anne Widdecombe has pointed out, it is important that people of the proper calibre are attracted to stand for Parliament. Ideally, more people with experience of industry should sit in the House. The idea of MPs being herded into blocks of government owned flats is hardly going to attract those sorts of people.

Yours sincerely,

I H.C. Stein

RECEIVED
7th MAY 2005

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The Secretary,
Committee on Standards in Public Life,
35 Great Smith Street,
LONDON
SW1 3BQ

South Lanarkshire,
Scotland.

4/5/09

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: MP's Expenses

I have recently written to John Lyon CB indicating my concerns about this issue and he informed me that I could write to you as Secretary of the above named committee.

I appreciate that many MP's work very, very hard and that they are entitled to reasonable expenses, particularly if they have to have a second home/accomodation in the vicinity of London in order to attend parliament.

However, I have been quite astonished at the information which has now come into the public domain which clearly indicates that the present system of claiming expenses is unacceptable, unethical and in need of urgent reform. As a taxpayer, I would offer the following comments:

- MP's should not be able to profit from a second homes allowance in any way. If an MP buys a house and finances it via the second home allowance, any profit should come back to the taxpayer.
- If MP's need accommodation in London, whatever is agreed should be at a reasonable cost.
- Could the government purchase some housing which MP's could then use/book as required?
- MP's should be able to claim reasonable travel expenses but not first class, unless there is a particular and necessary reason.
- MP's should be able to claim for reasonable expenses but not items like patio heaters or adult films.
- MP's should provide receipts for everything they claim just like everyone else but who will check them and be able to challenge any claims which seems unreasonable? (bring back Elizabeth Filkin!)

- Who will ensure that MP's are accountable? Is it acceptable for other MP's or interested parties only to be part of an auditing system? Why not include someone from the Taxpayers/ Alliance or some other reputable organization who can be part of a committee/board which can address these issues?

I think all citizens of this country should be able to expect honest and ethical standards of people in public life such as MP's but, with unfailing regularity, we find that this is not the case. One would expect MP's to demonstrate the highest integrity but it cannot be assumed that this will automatically ensue. As Frank Skinner (Question Time – 29/4/09) stated, things are only changing because 'you got caught' and that is why the present situation is so deeply disappointing and disturbing.

Yours faithfully,

E Wilson (Mrs)