

# MPs' Expenses

## Preamble

The committee is right that this sort of furore reduces even further the esteem (so call it) in which MPs and (especially) ministers are held. Bearing in mind that most working people, and certainly retired people like myself, are not able to claim the sort of expenses outlined in the media it is inevitable that the office of an MP is bound to be held in ridicule and even opprobrium. Have in mind therefore that I (a Balliol graduate - like James Purnell [not to mention the blessed Robert Peston]) and my wife, a Liverpool graduate, have to live and run our home on a combined pension of about £16,000 p.a. No expenses for us!

My concern is not with salaries; indeed you specifically exclude them. What someone else is paid, and on what basis it is calculated is a problem that will never be solved. Just look at the equally bitter furore over Fred Goodwin's pension!! Rather it is with what might be called 'reasonable expenses' that we must address.

## Proposals

1. The term 'reasonable' will appear frequently in these notes. This is a very English term widely used in legal definitions. Its very vagueness is, I suppose, part of the English genius.
2. Clearly, satisfactory London accommodation must be provided for those MPs with constituencies outside the GL area. So NO second homes for London MPs!
3. The obvious solution is that a London base should be sought by (or on behalf of) the MP within a reasonable price band. This dwelling must be adequate for the MP plus occasional visits by his/her immediate family. This property would be owned and maintained by the State and let out (free of charge) to the MP with what we might call reasonable domestic contents. At such time as the MP ceases to serve the accommodation and original contents revert to the State. Clearly the MP is free to add other contents at his/her own expense.
4. This will avoid all criticism that the MP is personally enriching him/herself at the taxpayers' expense. Of course, all day to day running expenses would be covered.
5. The 'family' home of an MP would remain, as with the general public, at the expense of and at the personal interest of the MP. All reasonable expenses incurred in that home as part of an MP's parliamentary work would be reimbursable.
6. Secretarial assistance would be provided by the House of Commons either on an individual or 'pooled' basis, and not, as at present, at the expense of the individual.

Mr A R F Carter

Sittingbourne