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E186

Poole Dorset

Dear Sirs

Thank you for allowing me to have my say on MP's expenses. Clearly the public's confidence in the MP's ability to set the rules in respect of their expenses has fallen to an all time low and therefore any change needs to re-establish the public's confidence in Parliament, both Houses.

My suggestion is very simple, there already exists a set of rules for expenses and allowances that have been developed over some time, I refer to those that apply to civil servants. These allowances are reasonable, without being over generous and payments are generally accepted as legitimate for taxation purposes.

I also recognise the requirement for MPs to work away from home and another analogy springs to mind and that is of the military who are posted from on duty station to another every few years. Many service men and women opt to establish a home life for their family and live in single living accommodation. For commissioned officers this is in the form of a Mess, which is very similar to a hotel, with dining rooms, bars, rooms and lounge rooms. I would propose that MPs have a smart hotel provided for them, with charges in a similar scheme to that of the Armed Forces, with payment at the bars and restaurants, albeit at very low prices. This hotel would be of a similar standard to that which a senior Army, RAF or Naval officer would expect at the rank of a Colonel, Group Captain or Captain RN, would expect, in other words very good. I appreciate that our MPs only sit for 150 days and therefore this hotel may be underutilised when the house is in recess. I suggest that during its long recesses that it made available to civil servants and armed forces officers who require short term accommodation in London. This would represent a significant savings to the relevant Government Department. I could make a comment about the limited number of days that MPs sit every year but I fear that is not your committee's remit.

I also take the view that MPs should be paid well, they do an important job, albeit with extensive holidays. I cannot help but think that MPs are in the current mess because they have disguised their real pay by the means these tax free allowances. Therefore they should have their pay fixed to either a grade of civil servant or armed forces officer; again I would look at a full colonel as being reasonable.

All special treatment for taxation purposes for MPs should be excluded by a specific Act, MPs should and must never opt themselves out of the taxation they impose on the public who pay them and put them in power.

I and many of my colleagues and friends are sickened by the lax interpretation of the existing 'rules' and the dubious claims that some MPs have made, for me MPs are no longer 'honourable'. In cases where civil servants or members of the Armed Forces make false or erroneous claims, they are subjected to significant disciplinary measures, which led to dismissal in some cases; few are allowed to just refund the money. A similar scheme should apply MPs and in most serious cases they should be sacked.

Members of the Lords should have the same expenses regime.

Boole Dorset

Finally MPs should remember there is no shortage of people who want their jobs, they will comment that we need to pay them well to get quality in the House, but they would say that wouldn't they!

Yours sincerely