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**From:** J. Sterling  
**Sent:** 18 May 2009 13:39  
**To:** Inquiry  
**Cc:**  
**Subject:** Review of MPs Expenses - Issues & Questions

Dear Sir Christopher

As a member of the public I would like to make the following comments in relations to the document produced by your committee in April 2009. I appreciate since this document was produced there have been a number of developments but I do feel it is important to continue with the review of MPs expenses in a calm and rational manner and trust your committee will be given the opportunity to complete the work it has begun.

My specific comments are

1.15.2 – H of C should certainly have an input as they do understand the nature of their role but they should not be the sole arbitrator of the rules, these need to be set but an independent body of which representatives from the H of C should be part.

1.15.3 – in light of what has emerged in the press I would have to say a resounding NO. And needs to be looked at.

1.15.4 – As an outsider it would seem that the 'Fees Office' have just 'nodded through' most things without looking in any detail, whether this is because MPs intimidate the civil servants one can not tell from this distance but it does make one wonder. Most private firms have electronic systems that would have stopped a lot of the spurious claims getting through, one wonders why the H of C does not use one of these, it would also save money in admin costs as well.

1.15.5 – Does not this depend on whether Second Homes continues?

1.15.6 – In the current climate I think any suggestion that MPs should have an increase in pay will not be well received and MPs should by now be well aware of this fact – if they are not then they are even more out of touch with public opinion than anyone can have imagined.

1.15.7 – As much as possible should be procured centrally by the H of C authorities, this by way avoids duplication, maximises bulk purchasing power

1.15.8 – I would like to point out that I worked for many years where I worked away from home and never got recompensed, it was just part of the job, both I and my family just put up with it.

1.15.9 – None, I don't agree with second homes, but if they are to be, then

home in constituency is home where family is, and then very small base in London, but please see later comment re accommodation. Switching it totally unacceptable and arguments about moving family into and out of London are utter nonsense.

1.15.10 – The practise of employing family should be stopped immediately, it is open to abuse – there are no reasons why it should happen, excuses like we work together are nonsense and should not be tolerated it has been shown to be a con and the public just do not think it is right.

1.15.11 – Everywhere else in the private sector you have to produce a receipt for all things so why should MPs think they should be treated any differently, they are not above the law.

1.15.12 – Quite clearly all the time, otherwise MPs will slip back into their bad bad old ways, wont they!!

1.15.13 – I think we do want MPs to have a wider experience than just being career politicians, perhaps before going into parliament you have to have had a 'proper job' first, not just a ministerial adviser. Being an MP should be your full time role, I am not sure how you can have enough time to do anything else, it is likely that the MP will do both roles poorly because he/she just does not have sufficient time.

Accommodation – I think parliament should purchase a hotel, this could be partly financed by selling all the second homes – as designated as on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2009, and the paid back expenses of MPs. So when an MP needed to stay over night they just booked themselves into a room that was standard in the hotel, they would all be treated the same, all rooms would be fitted to a decent standard with the necessary communications equipment and a small kitchen, they could each be allocated a reasonable overnight allowance to buy food for breakfast and supper and either spend that in the hotel, cook their own or use the H of C. When the H of C was not sitting the hotel could be used for either conferences or tourists to help raise money to fund it.

Second Homes should be ceased altogether they are open to so much misuse and exploitation.

#### Travel

3.34 – Why their families? Why do they go to Europe three time a year we have a whole set of separate MEPs for there, we appear to be paying twice. If MPs have staff in local constituency why do they need to come to London 24 times a year?

3.35 – MPs should just get the Commons Travel Card and that is it, if they want to use something else, ok but they pay for it out of their own pocket and not expect us the tax payer to pay.

3.36 – Do they pay tax on this money I wonder, doubt it somehow. Somewhere along the line MPs need to pay some of their travel costs.

3.37 – WHY, this is ridiculous. In the private sector partners don't get free travel up to be with their spouses, they stay at home or go to their own work and neither do their children.

#### Ministers

Why do minister need to be in London, there are an ever increasing number of offices scattered all over the country why do not minister base themselves in these with staff, e.g. Education have offices in Sheffield, Transport have offices in Southampton etc. There are video conferencing and audio conferencing technologies available. It would be good for the environment as well! Less travel.

#### Northern Ireland

Firstly they need to urn up,, then an allowance could be considered.

#### Openness & Transparency

It is key that the H of C have a transparent system. Trust has been lost and it will take a lot of work on the part of both your committee and MPs to restore that trust.

I hope you have found my comments helpful.

Yours sincerely

J. Sterling

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