
From: A: PAYNE
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To: Inquiry
Subject: Inquiry into MP's expenses

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I have been corresponding with my MP, Tony Cunningham about this issue, but would like to make comments/suggestions to this inquiry as well.

If an MP is to be elected to represent a constituency, I feel that it is only right that they should live in the constituency. If they are local, as my MP is, all well and good. They will know the area and local people and be aware of local issues. If, as sometimes happens, they are not local, that should not prevent them from standing, but it should be on the clear understanding, that living in the constituency is a requirement, and further, that if they need to move, it is at their expense, as it would be for most other of their constituents in similar circumstances.

One thing that needs to be made absolutely clear is, that an MP's main home is in their constituency. There can be no doubt about that. There must be no more "flipping" of homes!

As regards second homes, I understand that currently MP's who live more than 20 miles from the House of Commons qualify for a second home allowance. They need to live in the real world! I travel 19 miles to work each day, I know people who travel 25 -30 miles and would never consider buying a second home! The House of Commons is in our capital city and there are various options for public transport, so realistically traveling 60-70 miles should be no great problem, millions of people do it every day. For MP's who do need second homes, then if their salaries remain the same they will need to have some form of expenses to cover homes in London. However there should be a basic standard for this accommodation, e.g., one bedroomed flat with kitchen, bathroom and living room. If an MP wants something bigger then that is their choice and any additional expense is theirs. An alternative would be for the Government to provide adequate accommodation, for those who need it, on a rental basis, covering periods when Parliament is in session, so that the MP has no need to claim for accommodation.

As regards food, what ever job they do they need to eat (I presume), so buying food is not essential to their job as an MP and should not be something they can claim for.

I believe that Parliament is in session for approximatley 165 days per year, so if they have time to take on an additional job, that should be allowed, so long as it does not affect the ability to carry out their role as an MP and also that there can never be any conflict of interest, or possible future issues with "feathering their nests".

I understand that there are already plans for all secretarial staff to be centrally provided by the House of Commons and not paid by invididual MP's, which should prevent any future issues of family members being "employed"

Thank you for this opportunity to put forward these points for the work that needs to be carried out to restore the faith of the British public in our parliamentary system.

A: Payne

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