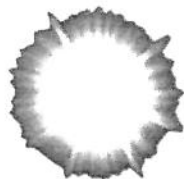


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- 8 JUN 2009



Sunlight Centre for Open Politics

Review of MPs Expenses
The Committee on Standards in Public Life
35 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BQ

ES34

04/06/09

Dear Sir,

I am writing on behalf of the Sunlight Centre for Open Politics which is a non-profit company advocating, transparency and openness in British politics. The issue that most people are discussing in the media changing the expenses system for Mps is different to the issue I would like to highlight. That is the basic rate that MPs are paid. This is mainly due to the fact that a lot of the British public do not understand how an expenses system work and instead have to rely on either a pay increase (depending on inflation) or bonus related pay.

For many British people money is not always the primary motivator for entering a job therefore we must ask the question what manner of work is politics? Take for example workers in the finance industry where pay has risen steadily for many years at several times the rate of inflation. Take for example in 2007, Sir Fred Goodwin was paid £4.2 million, of which £3million was a bonus reward where as for someone with similar age and experience working in a London school they were paid £46,333 per year in 2008. Big incentives such as those used in the finance industry only attract the kind of candidate. We don't need gamblers in politics instead we need people with a steady pair of hands.

I believe that the problem with many members having the idea that they have to become career politicians and seeing their time in the House of Commons as part of their career when instead it should be a vocation is the main obstacle to reducing member's wages. Careers are about personal ambition and advancement where as for an MP their time spent in the House of Commons is to represent their constituency and the nation at large should they so wish.

An MP is not technically employed they are elected. The office and the PA can be provided by the civil service or their particular party (funded from party donations). The question I would like to pose is how much an MP should be paid when they are providing this national service. Some suggestions on how to fund the new reduced basic wage could be; the MPs previous employer would be required to give financial support, large companies should be easily be able to afford this. Small business could receive assistance up to the level of the average British wage. The benefits would be the abolition of politics as a career, reducing the power of political patronage and the party system. More independents would also be elected giving the House of Commons wider commercial and public service experience.

It may be radical to suggest reducing MPs basic rate of pay but many are already divided by income, education and party whips. But pose the radical question what would have happened in 2003 if the House of Commons had been filled with independents unrestrained by party whips?

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A non-profit company limited by guarantee, advocating transparency and openness.

Yours Sincerely,

C. Galley
Research Director