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-----16 June 2009

Sir Christopher Kelly
Chairman
Committee on Standards in Public Life
C/o Hilton Hotel
Lanyon Place
BELFAST

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Acc
22/6

Dear Sir Christopher

I shall be out of the country when you hold your public enquiry investigating MP's expenses in Belfast on 1 July so I have taken the liberty of writing to you offering my views on the subject. I know that I am reflecting the thinking of many members of the public on the idea of second homes so I shall restrict my comments to that issue.

The ultimate solution to the task of accommodating MPs on their visits to Westminster would be to provide hotel-like facilities of several hundred rooms of, say, four star quality where MPs would stay during their visits. I would suggest that such accommodation be privately run and that during periods when MPs are not in attendance the rooms be let at an appropriate rate to members of the public like tourists, civil servants and so on.

These facilities would take some time to provide. In the meantime MPs should be able to claim a night subsistence rate. Currently Northern Ireland civil servants can claim up to £120 plus a modest meals allowance per night irrespective of rank. This should be adequate for MPs.

Despite my declaration in my first paragraph I would like to comment on one other aspect of MPs income, namely second jobs. Surely the answer is to means test MPs salaries taking account of other sources of income apart from investment income and interest on savings.

I trust you do not object to my writing to you in this way and I offer my best wishes for a successful visit to Belfast.

Yours very sincerely

J B Millar