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Sir Christopher Kelly KCB,
Chairman,
Committee on Standards in Public Life,
35 Great Smith Street,
London SW1P 3BQ

25.6.09

Dear Sir Christopher,

Members of Parliament Behaviour and Attitude in their Public Life

I have been dismayed, in recent weeks, at the lack of professional perspicacity of our elected Members. I am not prone to firing off letters at the slightest whim but felt it was time for this member of the silent majority to make his views known to you. It disturbs me to think that a number of MPs who have been exposed as taking advantage of the system and "lining their own pockets at public expense" do not even think they have done any wrong. It would seem that the words "conscience" and "professionalism" do not appear in their vocabulary.

The people who are elected to serve on our behalf are actually members of the public, charged with the task of running our affairs to the best advantage for all the electorate. Logic tells me that, since they are members of the British public, they should abide by the Laws and Taxes of this country. There is no reason to allow tax avoidance of any kind merely since they are elected as MPs. Conditions of the job are somewhat different from the norm but, the model that industry adopts for senior executives is as good as any. The notion that the rest of the country's tax payers should seek to adopt similar practice to that used by MPs in "flipping", council tax seams and even feeding themselves from the public purse is ludicrous. So, why should MPs seek to set themselves up from the rest of us?

I believe there is a case to be made for increasing MPs remuneration, but perhaps this should be linked to the amount of time they spend in Parliament on behalf of their constituents? Equally, reasonable expenses for entertaining should be adopted in lieu of an allowance for food - we all have to eat and the rest of the population takes the money for their food out of earnings. I would suggest that a housing allowance for those outside the Greater London area is realistic but should be linked to a standard, perhaps set by an independent body such as an Association of Estate Agents. The idea which has been mooted for a gated, protected community in, for example, the

Olympic Village or Chelsea Barracks, has much to recommend it since it will represent a huge long term saving for the public purse and will ensure security.

Overlying all the happenings of the past few weeks is the lack of transparency and the extent by which many MPs have taken advantage of that failing. Having spent most of my professional career in public service and taken transparency as the norm, I am astounded by the cosy deals which The House has engineered for itself and sought to hide from the general public. The recent redacting and blacking out of essential information to make value judgements on, is a case in point. I believe that the only possible way towards restoring public confidence is to ensure that everything, bar the MPs addresses for security reasons, should be in the public domain.

Having gone over ground which I am sure you are only too familiar with, I will end my diatribe by suggesting that all the "cleaning of the stables" can only be effective if an independent auditing system, which is utterly transparent, is in place for the future.

Best regards.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sincerely".

A.V. Matthews