

E711

- Independent Offices -

From: CSPL - on behalf of public@standards.x.gsi.gov.uk
Sent: 15 July 2009 15:26
To: Inquiry
Subject: FW: Congratulations and good luck

-----Original Message-----

From:
Sent: 07 July 2009 12:35
To: public@standards.x.gsi.gov.uk
Subject: FW: Congratulations and good luck

Dear Sir,

I enclose below a copy of the email I sent to Mr Bercow at his suggestion, as he felt you might be interested in some of my views. I hope these will be seen as constructive, and definitely in the interests of helping Parliament to regain the respect of the public.

Regards
J Timothy

From: Jt [mailto:jt@jtimothy]
Sent: 22 June 2009 23:12
To: 'BERCOWJ@parliament.uk'
Subject: Congratulations and good luck

Dear Mr Bercow,

May I congratulate you on your election to the role of Speaker of the House of Commons, and may I wish you every success in what will undoubtedly be a difficult but extremely important period for British Politics.

I do hope that you will not be taken in by the opinions expressed recently by many MPs that the current lack of respect by the public relates solely to the expenses rows. These have been very significant in focussing public attention, but are really only the "straw that breaks the camel's back"

Look back at the history of public voting in general elections and it is obvious that there has been a steady decline in participation over the past 40 or more years. Election after election has seen a reduction in the proportions of electors willing to place their cross against any candidates name.

This has been regularly dismissed by MPs as voter apathy, and varied slightly crazy ideas have been put forward to overcome this perceived malaise, such as more postal voting, voting online, and reducing the voting age. Such suggestions only reflect the politicians' lack of understanding of the mood of the people. I suppose it is difficult for a group of people whose primary concern is to improve the lot of the people to accept the concept that they are not trusted, and are believed to be liars. It must be even more difficult for the political parties to accept that many if not most people do not think it makes any difference whichever party is in power.

I understand, and believe, as you do, that the vast majority of MPs are sincere, upstanding people, who wish to serve their country. But it will require more than just a change in the expenses system to prove this to

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the public. Too many MPs seem to forget that they are the servants, and not the masters of the people. This has been particular apparent in the governing parties since Thatcher's time or even before.

The loss of the respect of the public, brought on by apparent elected dictatorships, by excesses of spin and lack of openness, of double counting of announcements of good news, and the hiding of bad news have all contributed to a loss of confidence among the people. The voter apathy that MPs have complained about has been brought on by the very MPs who make the complaint. And yet, voter apathy plays into the hands of the two major parties, and helps them maintain a stranglehold on the political system. Now we have a system where at the last election it was possible for Labour to gain an overwhelming majority in the House of Commons on the basis of only 22% of the electorate voting for them. Twice as many people voted against them, and over 35% refused to vote at all. And yet, on this abysmal performance, Labour claimed a great victory. The situation could so easily have been reversed, and the Conservatives could have found themselves in a similar position, and indeed did just that (albeit with slightly better figures) during Thatcher's later "victories". I well remember Jack Straw, when trying to justify our involvement in Afghanistan, pointing out that the Taliban only had 45% support in that country, I bet he wished that the Labour party could have managed anywhere near that level of support in this country. And yet Our Government, with only 22% support felt able to wage war in Iraq and Afghanistan with no further reference to the electorate. Clearly they never had a mandate for such aggression.

Without the determination to tackle the lack of representation brought about by our antiquated electoral system, a clear set of rules to control spin and suppression of bad news, a clearer acknowledgement that Parliament is there to represent the people and not to dictate to them, and finally a complete review of the expenses system by an independent body together with an independent pay review body for MPs and an independent review of standards in politics, your chances of successfully reengaging the population with their politicians and their politics will be doomed to failure.

Nevertheless I wish you well, and hope that we will see a "reborn" political system with "reborn" politicians who can regain the respect and confidence of the British people.

And when you have done that for the British Political system, how about having a go at the European Parliament.

Best regards

J Timothy

High Peak
Cheshire

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