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Submission to Committee on Standards on Public Life.

MPs Expenses & Pay Inquiry.

From S. Neave 10 aug 2009.

Pay has not deterred large numbers of candidates competing for each parliamentary seat. Since 1957 an average of 4.8 candidates have contested each seat. At the last election 5.2 stood for each seat. That is a tiny fraction of those who wanted to be MPs. In 2005 many Labour constituencies had a shortlist of 12, drawn from, in one case, 120 candidates. In 2005 the Conservatives had 60 candidates shortlisted for five constituencies, also 12 per seat.

And after the expenses row & awareness that MPs can no longer live like millionaires, many candidates of calibre still come forward. In mid August the Conservatives had 4,098 people chosen from a bigger list to contest 640 seats at the next general election, almost 7 acceptable candidates per seat. Calibre candidates are not put off by the salary; a GP was selected at Totnes from a shortlist of 3 drawn from 100 hopefuls. With the other parties, including independents, there are probably 14 people wanting to fight each seat. Clear evidence that candidates are not being put off by the pay & a clamp down on generous expenses. There is no argument for increasing pay to boost the number of candidates.

If current MPs had stayed in the jobs they had before being MPs they would have earned less than as an MP, even allowing for them rising up their previous occupation pay scale & moderate promotion. So, on average, there has been financial gain in being an MP. Indeed if they had stayed in their previous occupation few Labour MPs would have accumulated 2 or 3 houses as at least 82 have.

The biggest previous job category of current Labour MPs is lecturer/teacher/social/union worker. Current pay of experienced teachers is below £40,000 outside London. Not every MP would have become a head teacher, on an average £61,000. Even if they had, they would have reached the post only towards the end of their career.

Examining the period after 1976, most MPs who lose their seats fail to get high earning jobs. The notable exceptions are where initially they are able to trade on their public profile as a notorious ex MP. Mr Portillo is an example.

The judgement of MPs once in Government has been very poor, & their effect as backbenchers almost zero. The credit crunch & slump, induced by not controlling bank credit, & the Iraq war started on false evidence are oft quoted examples. There is no evidence that lower paid MPs would make worse decisions. What worse decisions could have been made!

CONCLUSION.

Most MPs are not specially talented.

Their decisions in Government are poor.

Their pay grade before joining & after leaving parliament is below an MP's current pay, so pay in the top 3½ bracket is undeserved.

Armies of acceptable people still want to become MPs so there is no evidence that pay is putting reasonable candidates off.

ACTION

Cut pay - relate it to a social worker grade, & stop MPs determining their allowances & other benefits. That would attract caring candidates rather than mercenary ones.

People not attracted by high pay would be better MPs, more concerned about spending other people's money wisely & not as greedy & self regarding as many MPs whose expense claims & conduct have revealed them as venal.

LOOK AT JPs.

28,000 people sit as magistrates, completely unpaid, & with minimal expenses, £7.34 a day for meals.

There is no shortage of JP volunteers from all walks of life & zero public outcry about their poor decision making.

28,000 PEOPLE DO NOT NEED THE MOTIVATION OF HIGH PAY AND GENEROUS EXPENSES TO DO HIGH QUALITY PUBLIC WORK. WHY DO MPs?

I urge you to cut MPs pay to that of good social workers, about £45,000 pa. Stop them making a profit from their expenses & allowances & cut their pension accumulation to 1/65 not 1/42 per year.

Please publish the names of MPs, their wives or relations who have made pay/expense submissions & check whether they used their researchers & other public resources such as the Commons Library to promote their personal interest.

Quite rightly those opposing their claims have no such resources.

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