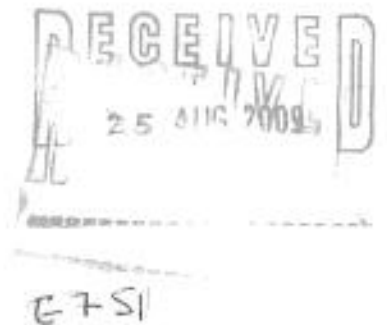


Worthing,



21st August 2009

Sir Christopher Kelly,
Committee for Standards in Public Life,
35 Great Smith Street,
Westminster,
London. W.1.

Dear Sir,

Members of Parliament's expenses

Whilst I appreciate that some comments contained in this letter are beyond your actual remit, the payment of salary and expenses are intertwined and the expense scandal would have been far less if the salary had been of a more realistic amount. As a tax payer and voter I have more than a passing interest in the mess which the members of the House of Commons have created for themselves and us. It demonstrated that if the rules can be bent they will be even by persons claiming to be honourable. The Daily Telegraph did everyone a favour.

The government must grasp the nettle of members being paid an adequate salary, say equivalent to that of a Brigadier. The salary should be commensurate with the importance of membership. MPs have the power to affect all our lives. However a brigadier works full time so a member who chooses to have another occupation including non executive directorships, professions (including journalism), estate management and farming, should be paid less. In many cases he would not get the job without being a MP. Staff and other expenses should not be allowable if part of those expenses are attributable his outside earnings. The member should also declare when he seeks election whether or not he will be spending time on his other income producing activities and must stick to it.

In return we as tax payers may expect MPs to work longer. A summer break of 84 days is a nonsense. Hardly value for money! The courts no longer have the Long Vacation. It is

not answered by saying that they are in their constituency. If members were capable of imaginative behaviour with their expenses then why should we expect they should behave properly in relation to the summer and other recesses. The country would then not be faced with the criticism concerning some legislation that the House did not have time to consider all the clauses in a Bill.

I suggest below a number of expenses to which each member would be entitled which hopefully can not be bent. Any expense claimed should be wholly and exclusively incurred in connection with their membership of the House as the elected representative of a constituency. There should be a presumption that a MP will reside within the constituency. It is nonsense for a MP to be able to reside with his family in Cornwall, have a house in London and represent a constituency in Cumberland and expect the taxpayer to foot most of the expenses involved.

Food. Each member (not his spouse or guest) should be entitled to eat and drink (but not alcoholic drinks) free in the House of Parliament restaurant on any day that the restaurant is open. This is no different from what many employers would give their staff.

Travel. They should be entitled to a free bus/tube pass for anywhere within the TFL area. They should also be entitled to free first class rail fare (or Business Class air fare) between London and their constituency. If they choose to live elsewhere than in their constituency or London then they can retain the London/Constituency pass or have one to their home provided it does not cost more. They would then pay the cost of travel to their constituency from their home. They would be entitled to 40p per mile car allowance for travel within their constituency. A candidate should declare when seeking election where he intends to reside.

Accommodation. Anyone whose constituency is (or owns or whose wife owns a property) within commuting distance of London should not be entitled to any accommodation expenses. Those entitled to accommodation expenses should stay in an hotel using those hotels on the Civil Service list and it should be booked through a central agency to obtain the best terms. Anyone staying in an hotel would be entitled to breakfast, but not dinner. He would not be entitled to stay in an hotel if the House was not sitting i.e. the weekend etc. There would be no allowable expense for accommodation outside London.

If a member is appointed to a government post and he or the Government believe he should have permanent and personal accommodation in London then he or the government should provide it and bear the cost. He does not need the accommodation by virtue of his membership per se.

Office accommodation. Office accommodation in London should be supplied free by the House authorities. Office accommodation in the constituency should consist of two

rooms in a self contained suite and the member entitled to claim the rent and other overheads. However, if he occupies accommodation belonging to his constituency party he should not be entitled to claim rent and only the other overheads if they are separately metered etc. Advice as to the level of rent to be obtained from the District Valuer.

The House authorities should provided computing skills training as when required and a multimember website where every member using a common template should be able to show their past and future activities. The electorate can then see quickly what their MP has been doing.

Staff. A secretary in London to be paid at a level according to the Civil Service salary structure proportionate to the hours/days actually worked. At the constituency office, he would be entitled to a part time secretary, say one half who would be paid proportionately at the local civil service secretarial rate. If the member chooses to pay less than the scale the support to be reduced and if more then he pays the extra out of his own pocket. No cross subsidisation should be allowed. He would be entitled to a researcher who if full time at 35 hours per week 48 weeks a year, should be paid the rate the civil service would pay a graduate trainee. He would also be entitled to pay an honorarium of £20 per week to his wife/partner to answer the telephone at home if his home telephone number is not published and £5,000 per annum if the telephone number is published and the member accepts and deals telephone calls at home from his electorate etc and not merely refers the caller to his office.

If the member employs any one of his family or of his wife/partner's family then he shall publish the fact and the details of appointment, including the salary. The member should not be allowed to employ at public expense any consultant.

Stationery. Paper including headed note paper and office furniture and equipment including computer equipment to be supplied free via central House buying agency, for the House and constituency offices. Telephone to be supplied free for House office, Constituency office, Cell phone and free broadband. He should be entitled to free postage. Website maintenance is advertising and should be paid personally or by his party. He should get his standing charge for his home telephone number only unless he has a separate line which he publishes and accepts calls.

Donations. Not to be allowed nor donations to good causes, dinners, entrance fees to functions, raffle tickets and the like. He should not appear to be generous by using the tax payers' money. He will be on an equal footing with the candidate from another party.

Allowances. There should be no money for which there would be no accounting and no pot for the MP to spend as he feels like it which does not come within the above items.

Disabled MPs. There should be appropriate adjustments for these MPs especially in relation to travel depending on the measure of disability

Proper record comparisons will show whether a member's expenses need investigation. Whilst it may appear, especially to MPs, that the above is mean, they would be receiving more salary but they have sacrificed the generosity of the taxpayer in relation to expenses by their behaviour.

Yours faithfully,

I H Lay

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several connected strokes, positioned to the right of the typed name 'I H Lay'.