

23rd May 2009

Sir Christopher Kelly,
Chairman, Committee on Standards in Public Life

Dear Sir,

Parliamentary Corruption

The disclosures in The Daily Telegraph recently, bring Parliament and the country in to disrepute.

MPs have been milking the system for generations, probably centuries. It is only now, thanks to The Freedom of Information Act that we know exactly how much they have been taking us for. The greatest failing is that they do not understand the sheer contempt in which the general public holds them. They have exhorted us to think of the good of the country while feathering their own nests, at our expense. They have also imposed or tried to impose restrictions on us, but conveniently exempted themselves from the rules.

There are two points to this corruption at Westminster, which need to be addressed:

1. How do we going to stop it continuing, find out who are guilty and bring them to book? 2. How are we going to prevent it happening in future?

1. In the immediate term, in order to restore respect to the Commons, drastic action is needed:

>Parliament should be immediately prorogued.

>As an interim legislature, the Queen should rule with the assistance of

>the

Privy Council. Of course, excluding any past or present MPs.

>All MPs submit their expenses to scrutiny by independent accountants.

>They

will be empowered to go back through any expenses incurred at any time in public life, not just their term as an MP.

>Any excessive claims are to be repaid, with interest. They will also be

reported to HMRC for possible investigation.

>Any illegal claims must be prosecuted. All MPs found guilty of a crime

>will

be barred for life from public office and will lose all benefits.

>The role of the Fees Office and the advice given by them needs investigating.

2. I suggest the following rules are brought in to reform the Commons:

>Political Parties. Political parties are banned. MPs are elected on >their

personal merits and personal policies.

>MPs elect the Prime Minister. He then selects Ministers, who are >approved

by Parliament.

>Residency Qualification. MPs must have lived in their constituency
for
>at
least 10 years, prior to registration for election.
>All MPs must have at least 10 years experience in a 'real' job. This
>may
include periods of 'living on benefits'.
>An MP's salary will be set at three times 'average pay'. Ministers
will
>be
paid at a rate based on this.
>Accommodation in London will be provided for MPs who cannot commute.
Secretarial services will be provided. Any other resources will be
paid for out of their salaries.
>MPs cannot have a second paid job. They may do unpaid charitable
work.
>There must be a system of dismissing Parliament before the term is
complete.
>There must be compulsory voting. This will include a 'none of the
above
option'. MPs will be elected on a simple majority of the eligible
electorate. If there is not a majority, no MP is returned.
>Postal voting is only allowed for people who are unable to attend
their
polling station for medical reasons.

What must not happen is that MPs are allowed to resign or pay back
any disputed amounts and the affair quietly forgotten. Neither should
there be an immediate general election. That too would allow the
culprits to slip away. By proroguing Parliament MPs are still in post
and can be held responsible for any wrongdoings. Those that are
blameless will be able to continue their careers when Parliament
resumes.

Regards,

S Lawrence