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22 May 2009

Sir Christopher Kelly
Chairman
Committee on Standards in Public Life
c/o Houses of Parliament
LONDON
SW1A 0AA

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29 MAY 2009

Dear Sir Christopher,

MPs expenses, second home allowance & terminal payments.

I approach this from the viewpoint of what the ordinary self-employed person can claim against tax, or employee can reclaim back from their employer.

1. MPs know the location of their two main places of work when they put themselves forward for election. These places can usually be assumed to be their home in their constituency and the Houses of Parliament in SW1. Putting themselves forward is a voluntary act; there is no shortage of volunteers even for the selection process. These MPs do not have not unique talents
2. The self-employed cannot claim for the cost of travel to and from London if the contract is likely to last more than two years. Employees will not be re-reimbursed by their employers for commuting to and from London. Also if they decide to live in London during the week they pay the rent at their own expense. A personal friend does week in and week out – it was his decision to take the job and knew the costs involved. A self-employed client, for many years, went to London on a Monday morning, stayed with friends during the week and returned to Somerset late Friday. No expenses were allowable so none were claimed.
3. Relocation expenses. To the best of my knowledge the Houses of Parliament have not moved in recent times, so none of the tax free relocation expenses available to employees are therefore applicable.
4. Constituency home. Apart of convenience why do MPs feel the need to have a home in their constituency? It is often no more than a front, a lowly property they never live in for PR purposes or a mansion the address of which they keep secret from their constituents.
5. Second home. I see no need for them to have two homes. They have the option to rent in either place at their own expense.
6. Office expenses. These facilities can be supplied in properties owned by the Houses of Parliament.

7. Compensation for loss of seat/standing down at General Election. According to The Times MPs receive up to £100,000 (taxable) for loss of their seat. Neither the self-employed nor employed would receive compensation for the ending of a time limited contract either at their own volition or electorate.

8. Date of implementation. I believe that, to be fair for those involved needing to reorder their affairs, the date of change for the above should be only with effect of the next General Election. This gives them the chance to stand down or face the electorate knowing the new regime that lies ahead of them.

9. Summary. As you will have gathered from the above I do not believe that any of the expenses currently claimed should be allowed in the new parliament.

Yours sincerely,