

Dear Sir Christopher,

I am taking the liberty of submitting my book *The Triumph of the Political Class*, published in 2007, to your Inquiry into MPs' expenses.

There are three sections of the book which I believe are specially relevant to your Inquiry:-

1. MPs Pay and Conditions (pp 208-215). This section provides a short history of Mps' pay and the additional costs allowance.
2. The Hounding of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards (pp 215-229). This section sets out how Elizabeth Filkin, the parliamentary standards commissioner, was driven out of parliament because of the rigorous way in which she sought to enforce high standards. I show how all three main parties colluded in the assassination of Mrs Filkin. This distasteful operations, which included a smear campaign against Mrs Filkin, was orchestrated between the Whips Offices of the (notionally) rival parties. The removal of Mrs Filkin set the scene for the systematic abuse of expenses and allowances in the years that followed.
3. The Emergence of Cartel Politics. (pp 92-94). This sections develops the proposition that members of supposedly rival political parties have far more in common with each other than ordinary voters. It is based on the brilliant analysis carried out by the political scientists Richard Katz and Peter Mair in their classic essay: 'Changing Models of Party Organisation and Party Democracy: The Emergence of a Cartel Party (*Party Politics*, Vol 1, Jan 1995 pp 21-35). This prophetic essay provides a valuable theoretical model for the cross-denominational pillaging of state resources by political parties, and also by individual MPs, which became the dominant fact of British political life in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

I am also submitting my Channel 4 Dispatches film, *Nice Work if You Can Get It* (1997). This film investigated elements of the allowances system (though its findings have been overtaken by subsequent revelations) and demonstrated the cross party collusion that protected the corrupt system of expenses and allowances. In particular the film focussed on the role of the House of Commons Commission, a cross party body of senior MPs chaired by Speaker Martin.

I also enclose the script of this documentary, with the section on the conspiracy to exempt Mps from FOI marked up. I tentatively suggest that your understanding of the problem with Mps' expenses would be enhanced if members of the House of Commons Commission, including Speaker Martin, were encouraged to give evidence.

I do not believe that it should be a difficult matter finding an alternative system of expenses. All large companies, as well as the senior civil service, and the armed forces, have tried and tested arrangements to ensure that staff who need to be away from home for long periods on duty do not loose out as a result. The key principle is always that individuals should not be able to profit from their expenses.

I also believe that is important that we try and prevent the emergence of an exclusive Political Class. That is why I am suspicious of attempts to restrict outside earnings. I think it is desirable that Mps should have parallel lives as doctors, lawyers, trade unionists, bankers etc. However, lobbying or paid advocacy is a clear conflict of interest and rightly banned.

The Communications Allowance is also wrong because it privileges standing Mps against their rivals. I believe that it is anti-democratic that an incumbent Mp should

have access to funds to boast about his or her achievements which are not available to challengers.

I am today sending a copy of my book, along with one dvd and script of the Channel 4 film, to your office. Should you require more copies, just let me know and I will gladly provide them.

Yours Sincerely

Peter Osborne

London