

Evidence to Sir Christopher Kelly's Enquiry.  
From Rt. Hon Michael Jack MP

Before considering any of the detailed questions posed I believe the enquiry must look carefully at the role of the Member of Parliament and then consider what are the appropriate resources required to do the job.

Such an approach should look at the pay package as well as the other forms of finance that will be required.

I have been in the House for twenty two years and without doubt both the volume and complexity of our work has increased. Add to this the growth in electronic communications and you will appreciate why resources have had to be increased to enable us to cope with this work. Today there is an expectation that MPs will involve themselves in a very wide range of issues meaning that we are often seen as a one person CAB/ombudsman service. It is against that background that I believe your enquiry must look critically at what we do as opposed to what we think we should be doing.

As far as setting the level of resources available to members I would strongly support an independent body undertaking this work but with proviso that the Government must accept the recommendations so made. However there must be a proper mechanism for consulting the House on these matters and I would recommend that the Committee on Members Allowances be tasked to carry out this role.

In the light of current events I believe the public will want to know how their money is being used. So in whatever way we choose to make funds available for MPs to carry out their duties it must be a transparent process. A paying body independent of the House would provide further reassurance in the respect.

Property purchase can give the advantage of value for money compared to rented accommodation particularly at times of low interest rates. It also gives more flexibility in enabling members especially those with young families the chance to find London based accommodation which meets their needs. In deciding if this form of funding remains I would be grateful if you would reflect on the fact that the average life for an MP is said to be two Parliaments and that the sale of the property will have to fund the repayment of the mortgage. This could be a substantial sum if the Member is not particularly well off.

Finally I would like to comment on remunerated activities outside Parliament. To stop this all together could deprive the House of members with for example continuing real world business experience. I hope you will reflect on the fact that Ministers do in fact have two remunerated posts, one as a Member the other as a Minister. Not that long ago Parliament decided that a Minister should receive full pay for both jobs. It is however important that any form of second employment does not inhibit a member from properly serving his or her Constituents.

I hope that these few observations will be of assistance.