

Derby
29th April 2009

Sir Christopher Kelly
Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards
House of Commons
Westminster
London

Dear Sir Christopher

I write to offer my wholehearted support for you and your team in your endeavours to investigate and recommend on the issue of MP's expenses. People are deeply angry about the ongoing expenses disclosures and are saying that the existing system is both elitist and dismissive of respect for the taxpayer. It appears to have engendered a culture of greed at Westminster.

We all hope that any replacement schemes will not only be firm and fair; but devoid of parliamentary privilege, and not open to abuse. Many also suggest that all expenses details should be made available online for everyone to see.

Thank you for your solid stance so far against political pressure.

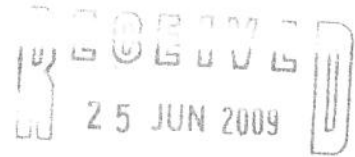
Yours sincerely

G Munton

Derby
20th June 2009

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The Secretary
Committee on Standards in Public Life
35 Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BQ



Dear Sir,

Re: **MPs Expenses**

I refer to your recent response to my letter of 29th April, (copy attached) and I confirm my consent to publish my submissions.

General Expenses. I believe that the public has been shocked to discover the sheer scale and generosity of expenses, which MPs have made available to themselves, and that this has in itself, quite apart from some MPs manipulating the system, caused deep indignation, anger, and resentment. The obvious censorship of the recent official publication of MPs expenses online has made things worse because it is devious and is probably in Contempt of Court. All this establishes a case for scrapping the expenses system altogether except for basic travel and overnight accommodation.

Second Homes Allowance. This has clearly been abused and in some cases in a fraudulent manner. Taxpayers money has been used to provide home improvements and to pay off mortgages with no subsequent reciprocal benefit or even repayment when the property is sold with all profit going to the MP. The second homes allowance should be scrapped, and instead hostel accommodation should be provided in London for MPs, perhaps the Olympic Village or equivalent. I understand that Dolphin Square was once used for MPs.

Self Regulation. Recent disclosures have proved to the ordinary voter that MPs cannot be trusted to write their own expenses or tax exemption "rules". For instance, MPs voted, a couple of years ago, not to pay income tax on second homes allowances. Whilst MPs will have to finally ratify it, all financial remuneration for MPs should be as recommended by independent outside bodies with no axe to grind or any conflict of interests. This should all be in the public domain.

While the following comments are probably outside the Committees brief, I would like to add them anyway if I may.

Accountability. The electorate sees Westminster as completely devoid of accountability, either individually or collectively. Voters could be forgiven for regarding it as an elitist and exclusive club rather than a group of their own representatives who are supposed to be working for them. A common complaint is “ if we did that we would be sacked instantly – why shouldn’t the same apply to them? “. Accountability to those who pay them their salaries and give them their trust should extend to more than a vote once every five years. The introduction of some proper accountability could go some way to restoring confidence. The same law as it applies to every citizen should also apply to every MP. Should an MP be instantly dismissed from Parliament, the next runner from his election should be called up. This would avoid the need for a by election and improve discipline.

Terms of Reference. Basically this should be similar pay, conditions, and pensions as the Civil Service, rather than the breathtakingly extravagant current arrangements, particularly pensions. There should be no second jobs. MPs salaries should include incremental points for recognised qualifications such as university degrees; previous track record and time spent working in the “real” world; length of parliamentary service and extra parliamentary responsibility. This could mean that a would be “career” politician having none of the above points would start his/her service on the basic salary plus travel and overnight accommodation expenses only. Reviews should be carried out by the independent outside body.

Referendums and Public Involvement. As the internet is used increasingly, online referendums should be used to involve the electorate regularly, it would be of a two-way benefit.

I hope these comments have been of some use and I would like to wish the Committee every success in its endeavours.

Yours sincerely

G Munton