

Sirs,

General respect for and confidence in MP's has been steadily falling for some time and, if nothing else, the recent expenses scandals have served to prove to the general populace that their cynicism has not been misplaced and is well founded. We have been treated to a continuing parade of MPs who claim to have made an unfortunate mistake or who admit to being lax in their accounting.

- Unfortunate mistakes: they seem to make a lot when claiming expenses but never normally admit they are wrong or have made a mistake when legislating or developing policy. Then it is the public that are wrong or don't understand a complex situation; how strange that the MPs are so prolific in their errors when claiming expenses but never make 'errors of judgement' when purporting to run the country.
- It is so easy to say - I made a mistake, it was an error of judgement, I am sorry, I take full responsibility, when they know nothing of any significance will happen and that is the end of the matter.
- Simply paying back money, often with bad grace, is just not adequate recompense to the taxpayer. If a member of the public makes a genuine mistake in calculating their tax returns or in their benefit claims they are pilloried, publicly shamed, disbelieved, fined and even face criminal charges for fraud. Their cries of 'it was a genuine and unfortunate mistake, I am sorry and take full responsibility' fall on totally deaf ears. Why should it be so different for MPs and why should they be allowed to get away with it simply because they framed rules that were easy to drive holes through, it is still tax-payers money that is being mis-used and knowingly so, they did not make mistakes.
- Some of these 'genuine mistakes' are so blatant and gross that one inevitably has to question the fitness of MPs to be entrusted with running the country at all.
- They claim to have broken no rules; what rules. Rules drawn up by themselves that are so loose you can drive a coach and horses through them without breaking them. They have taken advantage of the British public and public money and yet still seek to defend their outrageous actions.

On the vexed issue of MPs second homes. MPs do not need second homes, they only need accommodation near to Westminster.

- MPs should not be allowed to buy second homes and have mortgage paid for by the taxpayer. Even when all is above board they can still later sell at a huge profit and thus enrich themselves at the tax-payers expense.
- Any additional accommodation driven by parliamentary need should be rented only and then only from a landlord who is either the State or who is not known to the MP and with whom they have no connection whatsoever. A 1 or 2 bedroom flat should suffice. They do not need some of the grandiose homes that have been purchased on mortgages financed by the taxpayer in order to fulfil their parliamentary or constituency duties.
- If a MP wishes to buy and furnish a second home it should be financed wholly at their own expense.
- Expenses on additional accommodation needed to fulfil parliamentary needs should be limited to rent, fuel and (if unfurnished only) basic furniture items eg: bed, table, chairs, desk and even these should be subject to an upper cost limit or purchased for the MP without him or her becoming involved. A television should not be considered an essential item.
- Additional accommodation is supposed to be located such that the MP has reasonably quick access to the House of Commons. Why then are some of these second homes in other parts of the country and not even the MPs constituency?
- Why do husband and wife MPs both have a second home?

In the future MPs must not employ family members or friends in any capacity.

All sitting MPs, being tarred with the same brush, even if they could be trusted before, can no longer be trusted now. All sitting MPs must resign, if not now then at the next general election. Thereafter, having been tainted by association with this parliament, they should be barred from standing for any public office for at least 10 years.

In future MPs should have no connection or input to drawing up rules for their behaviour in any area. This should be the province of a completely independent body that does not include any past MPs among its numbers.

It is not just the MPs either; parliament has become institutionally corrupt and hypocritical. I do not believe for an instant that bankers are whiter than white and they certainly don't deserve the grossly excessive salaries and bonuses they award themselves. But how can parliament and MPs criticise them when at the same time they are using taxpayers money to enrich themselves via dubious expenses claims.

Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely; this is what has happened in parliament via the first past the post system. Overall majorities imbue the government with a form of absolute power, they can do virtually what they like; the law is no protection because if the government does not like the law it can change it because of its majority. It is high time that parliament reflected the wishes and actual voting patterns of the people via some form of proportional representation. If this creates a situation where no party has overall control then that would be a good thing for Britain because it would do away with political bigotry and de-facto dictatorship that has surreptitiously turned this once great nation and bastion of freedom and democracy into a police state in all but name.

The British people are fed to the teeth with politicians at all levels of government evading the issues that are put to them, avoiding giving a straightforward honest answer to a plainly put question, layers of easily seen through spin used to disguise the real issues or situation, being treated with contempt and only of any use as vote fodder, seeing their essential freedoms being eroded by a variety of means (eg: identity cards and electronic road pricing) on the completely spurious grounds of national security, when the real reasons are surveillance, monitoring, and hence ultimate control of individuals and the population at large. Government is there to serve the people, not to dictate to and ignore them when they say to government - you are wrong, we don't want this or that.

In conclusion I would remind you all of J. J. Rousseau: - The English people believes itself to be free: it is gravely mistaken; it is free only during the election of MPs; as soon as the Members are elected the people is enslaved. A general election under the present system would solve nothing; in all probability we would only replace a moribund Labour dictatorship with a Conservative dictatorship that has little different to offer and is still comprised in great part of the very MPs who have been implicated in and who have brought about this very situation in which they now find themselves. The only way forward is to have completely new faces who are committed to reform that will truly bring about government of the people, by the people, for the people, and which is also answerable to the people.

Yours faithfully,

A. Allen.