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Mr P J Smith

High Wycombe

23 April 2009

Sir Christopher Kelly KCB  
Committee on Standards in Public Life  
35 Great Smith Street  
London  
SW1P 3BQ

Dear Sir Christopher,

### MPs' Expenses

I can contain myself no longer, please accept my contribution to your review. I work for a trade association, whose funding comes primarily from members' subscriptions, a situation not unlike the relationship of MPs to taxpayers. We are a "not for profit" organisation and one of our big concerns is the proper application of members' funds. In the course of business, I represent the BSI on European and International Committees for which BSI provides some financial support. This funding ultimately comes from DIUS and is accounted for under strict rules.

There may be some MPs who are not exploiting the system, the problem is telling who. I have had some correspondence with my MP and it is clear that his view of "justifiable expenses" and mine are different. My views on MPs' expenses are:

They must be bound by the same rules as every other business or organisation. This means claiming for "actuals" with receipts for all expenses; no receipt, no payment.

MPs must not be allowed to set their own expenses. Nor should expenses be generous. There are plenty of organisations that collect data on every conceivable costed item, this data should be made use of to set allowable levels. Since the public expects value for money, levels should be set at a point below average.

Most organisations do not allow relatives to be employed or if they do, there are suitable management provisions. I would not disallow employment of relatives but all appointments must follow an open and competitive process and salaries must be set independently.

MPs must not be able to profit from accommodation allowances. If second homes are to be allowed, then there must be a 100% capital gains tax. I suggest that Travelodge or Premier Inn might well run a cost effective hotel for MPs on sitting days, which could be opened to the general public on non-sitting days.

Expenses for general household goods and groceries are not allowable.

MPs benefit from very good subsidised restaurants in Parliament, meal allowances should be set at levels that accord to these prices.

The travel expenses system must be such as to encourage use of public transport.

These cover my main concerns over expenses. On the subject of outside employment, this should be allowed. It is highly desirable that MPs have commercial experience so that they can understand the consequences of the legislation they debate. I subscribe to the view that a condition of standing should be a successful previous career. The current trend towards professional politicians will only attract self serving opportunists.

Yours Sincerely