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Sir Christopher Kelly
Committee on Standards in Public Life
House of Commons
Westminster
London
SW1A 0AA

MP's Expenses

Dear Sir Christopher,

My experience goes back to being an advisor in the 1970's to the Conservative Opposition, and then Special Advisor from 1979-86 in the Conservative Government. I remain in contact with the House and MP's.

My suggestion is for a much more simplified system of remuneration for MP's, as follows:-

Secretary

One secretary per MP would be, legally in the employ of the House, salary, pensions, etc. The MP would, however, have total power to hire and fire. There would be no limitation on who the MP hires, whether a relation or not. The secretary could work in Parliament or in the constituency or a bit of both. Any further staff the MP wishes to have would be paid for entirely by the MP, or by the Party, or by a benefactor.

Expenses

No expenses. All expenditure to be paid for out of salary. If that is considered to be too harsh, then make an annual payment based upon the mileage of the constituency from Westminster; payment would be tax free, paid each year in full, MP to spend it as he wishes (travel, second home, or whatever) and no receipts or other paperwork required.

An example might be £10 per mile, giving a south east MP about £500 extra per year but a Scottish MP about £5,000 extra per year.

Salary

If the MP is to cover all expenses out of salary, then the salary needs to be sufficient, but the constraint is political. I suggest all salaries be increased by £10,000 per year to compensate for the loss of expenses.

Outside Employment

An MP can earn money outside of Parliament. The MP should not be required to give any information about his outside employment, neither time spent or salary/fees earned. The only exception is to declare any possible conflict of interest.

There should be no deterrent for taking up outside employment. Politically, as well as economically, it is highly desirable for back bench MP's to have outside, paid interests; it makes them better informed.

James Sexton

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