

Hyde
Cheshire

12 May 2009

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

Dear Sir

I would like to make some comments to the Committee on MP's expenses. I am firmly of the belief that no one should lose out financially by his or her activities in public office and that our representatives should be properly reimbursed for expenses incurred in carrying out those activities.

Our MPs are elected to pass laws that govern the way we live, they determine the level of taxes we pay, the level of benefits we receive and the minimum standards that are acceptable for rented accommodation. In effect they determine the standards that we, the citizens, can expect to live our lives. Many of our young people now attend University away from home. These young people have to live and work in accommodation that may be offered by the Universities in terms of Halls of Residence or in property rented from the private sector. From the articles appearing in the press it would appear that our MPs would not find student accommodation acceptable for themselves.

I would not advocate MPs having to use hotels as these can never be 'home' and give the same relaxing atmosphere as a home nor do they offer the opportunity to personalise the accommodation. Also hotels do not afford the privacy I feel MPs should have while having to live away from their normal place of residence.

The Country finds itself in a period of economic slump, with the housing market and the building industry suffering. Would it not be a good time for the Nation to buy sufficient, decent one bedroom accommodation within easy travelling distance of The Houses of Parliament to provide 'second homes' for those MPs whose constituencies are outside London?

This system would have many advantages:

- It would be a very equal and transparent system with our elected representatives living in 'reasonable' standard of accommodation rather than in some of the more luxurious second homes the press would lead us to believe we, the taxpayer, pay for.
- It would send out a very clear message to where the MP's home is and prevent the practice of 'flipping'.

- If this accommodation was furnished and maintained by the state all questions around the expenses paid for second homes such as: furnishing; mortgage interest; maintenance and, dare I say it? the provision of bath plugs would be answered.
- There may be security advantages to this arrangement, especially if a large number of suitable homes could be found in one property.
- It would negate the need for newly elected MPs to find their own accommodation in what must be a very busy and difficult time for them.
- It would reduce the need for MPs to claim expenses and what must be the costly exercise of validating and paying these expenses.
- It would remove from MPs the duty to determine the level of expenses payable for the provision of accommodation in London.
- It would remove the ability of MPs to buy, improve and sell properties at public expense for their own gain.
- It would give some help to the housing market and building industry in these difficult times.

The principle of the State providing could also be applied to other needs of our elected representatives for example constituency offices and secretarial staff. MPs are elected to serve a constituency and no matter who is elected from what political party, or indeed no political party, the needs at constituency have to be met. It seems illogical to me that when an MP is removed from office and another elected the constituency office, and the staff employed, should change. In many areas of central and local government staff are employed to serve what ever political party is in power, why not apply this to MP's secretarial and office support?

I hope my suggestions are helpful to your committee and may go some way in reviving the electorate's faith in MPs and the democratic system in our country.

Yours faithfully

P Saunders