

## Submission to IPSA Consultation

Dear Sirs,

Please consider the following points when revising your recommendations.

1. **Interns.** I hope that you will stand firm with your recommendation to ensure that interns are fairly remunerated for the work they provide an MP. I was disappointed and shocked to hear some interns from the Parliamentary Resources Unit at yesterday's consultation meeting speaking in support of the status quo: no doubt they have been fortunate enough to have the financial resources and/or nearby family accommodation to make a full time, unpaid internship a viable proposition. Sadly, they represent a privileged minority.

I benefited from an expenses-only internship; however I had to rely on the kindness of a colleague, who offered me a spare room, as well as dipping into savings, to make this financially viable. Many are not so lucky, and this combined with the **expectation** that first-time candidates for paid jobs have done an internship (growing year on year) engenders a culture of closed-shop elitism, disadvantaging both people currently living outside London and people without robust financial backing.

Leaving arguments about equality aside, it is surely only fair that a day's work receives a day's pay. Many interns work full time with minimal supervision, and MP's benefit substantially from their work and political knowledge. Furthermore, I believe that the concept of 'internship' is actively exploited by MPs as a means of avoiding paying a member of staff to do work equivalent to that done by paid staff. This is observable, and I do not think it is remotely hysterical to consider this as a modern, comfortable slavery. Legally speaking- and also morally- it is clear that these interns ought to be paid, and I hope that you will use your powers to ensure that all interns are guaranteed the minimum wage, and that MPs who wish to legitimately expand the work of their office are given sufficient resources to offer opportunities for internships.

2. **Pensions.** I hope that you will flesh out your proposals for pensions to ensure that any reforms will not be detrimental to current conditions. I believe we have a legitimate right to expect guarantees that: a) any pension scheme will remain as accessible as it is now; i.e. it is offered to any new member of staff, regardless of who administers it; b) the incorporation of pensions into the MPs office costs will not mean that less money is available to pay staff. I am anxious to hear what your final recommendation will be on this matter.
3. **Redundancy payments.** Staff of elected politicians have a unique lack of job security, particularly those whose employer is in a marginal seat. The prospect of snap elections mean that one has to be especially careful when making financial plans and commitments: I therefore feel that a generous financial safety net for staff is essential. I welcome with some caution the proposal to centralise the administration of redundancy payments as it will ensure equality of practice and treatment, as currently staff of benevolent MPs can expect a far superior settlement to staff of less caring MPs.