

Funding the Future

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I seem to be one of the few people the BBC knows who is willing to talk about MPs' salaries, and so I did an interview on BBC Look North television on this issue last night.

I recorded the interview as it was taking place from my computer and of me talking in my home, meaning that the sound quality could be more balanced:

https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=m8kmf-18610a4-pb&from=pb6admin&share=1&download=1&rtl=0&fonts=Arial&skin=f6f6f6&font-color=&logo_link=episode_page&btn-skin=c73a3a

This is the transcript, which may be as easy to follow:

Peter: We asked all of our local MPs if any of them would come on the programme tonight and talk to us about their pay rise, but unfortunately, they weren't available to talk to us.

However, I'm joined by Professor Richard Murphy. He's from the University of Sheffield, and he's written about MP salaries.

Professor Murphy, good evening to you. Good to have you on the program. Thanks a lot for coming on.

Richard: Hello, Peter.

Peter: Does it surprise you that we haven't been able to get, get an MP to talk about this tonight?

Richard: No, not at all. Well, of course they're not gonna want to talk about their pay. No one wants to talk about their pay, but I suspect they're a bit embarrassed by being

paid near enough, 94,000 pounds a year, and some of them will be having some difficulty trying to justify that.

Peter: I am asking people at home tonight watching what they think is the right salary for an mp. What would that, uh, answer be from you? For the same question

Richard: I am quite happy that MPs should be paid £94,000 a year subject to some massive conditions. Remember, this salary is comparable to senior head teachers and many GPs as we've just heard, and hospital consultants and people like that. People who, who are heading major public services and can therefore make decisions.

A lot of business managers will also get this sort of sum of money and we, we might well want those people in parliament, but, and these are my very important buts, first of all this has to be their only job, and far too many of them are freeloading with other jobs as well.

Secondly, they cannot take freebies. It is unacceptable that they get free tickets to Sabrina Carpenter concerts. It's also unacceptable that they get so many bungs to support their work from large companies.

Peter: Okay. We don't wanna talk about that one. Mp Rachel Massow says she opposes the pay rise. She thinks that pay should be cut to be more in line with her constituents. Do you think that's a good idea?

Richard: No. Because I do think we want to make this a job that people who have real ability can do. But again, the problem we actually get, and your people who you just interviewed, reflect this. People don't hear that their MPs are competent because they do exactly what their party tells them. They vote as they're told. They don't exercise their judgment. So we have to free these MPs to actually use their own discretion.

Peter: So, yeah. So when it comes to things like winter fuel bonus and stuff like that. They might think one thing, but they, they, they say what the, the company line is, so they, they, they don't wanna jeopardize their promotion.

Richard: Precisely. And I think that's unacceptable. So we should have no whipping system. They should be able to say what they want as happens in the USA, by the way, for example. And we should not have our current first past the post system. We should actually have proportional representation with a wider range of views in Parliament as a result. That would then mean that our mps were really accountable to us, the electorate.

Peter: I've got an email here from Mo. He says, the pay should be much higher than we might attract high quality people, not like the rubbish we seem to have today. His words.

Well, a lot of the people who go into parliament seem to be pretty good before they get

there, and then they become completely dumbed down by the system. They are competent, but they daren't speak out. What we have to change is the way in which Keir Starmer, Kemi Badenoch, whoever it might be, can control their MPs so they say nothing of any use and don't represent us. If they did that, they're worth 94,000.

Peter: But they, they then jeopardize their career. It's like me saying something outrageous. Now you jeopardize your career.

Richard: No, they should not be in that position. We should have a parliamentary system that lets MPs be our representatives, not the representatives of their parties. That's what we need to make Parliament work.

Peter: So interesting to, uh, chat Professor Murphy. Good to have you on the programme.