



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

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Dear Colleague

Things cannot go on like this. The attached memo explains why.

You may wish to join us by writing to Sir Michael Spicer, as Chairman of the 1922, to request an immediate poll.

Letter to Colleagues

We wrote to you all last year. Since then our group has met a few more times. Things have got worse, and are now critical. We complained about the party being run a by a little gang, and the last few months have shown that the conduct of that clique is unsuitable and out of control.

It is time to confront some unpalatable truths and take action otherwise not only is Parliament going to be destroyed, but if we get into government we would soon find it almost impossible to govern.

In short, Cameron and Osborne think they own the party; they have no base of support either inside or outside Parliament; they are running everything with a small clique of KGB-like staff who think they can boss MPs about; they are using the expenses saga to demolish Parliament, destroy MPs, and build up undemocratic power for themselves; we are being fed a constant diet of policy drivel; and nobody knows what we stand for because everything is just being done to satisfy the tabloid press. The country has no respect for Cameron – they just hate Brown.

A key element in all this is Osborne. Cameron has made a big mistake in making him shadow chancellor. Not only has Osborne never had a proper job, but having another privileged person beside him undermines Cameron's own position. What's more Osborne is a megalomaniac. As if controlling the Treasury were not enough, he wants to run the election campaign, and is already planning how to take over from Cameron. All the press tell us that he and his office are the worst briefers against the rest of us. We thought Brown was too much, but....!

None of us is allowed to be involved in policy-making. We are all excluded and just get nonsense from on high from people like Steve Hilton. Some of us as frontbenchers have never ever had a meeting with DC about our responsibilities. So what will it be like in government? All we get is junk like the 'post-bureaucratic age' and we read that we are going to offer £1m for good policy ideas from the public. Pass the sick bag...

The whole expenses issue has turned into a hideous Dutch auction. The rich kids with multi-million pound trust funds intend to sit there with the salary and pension of a cabinet minister while the rest of us struggle to pay our bills. The new intake, unless they are rich, will soon regret they ever got elected. DC keeps on calling for the implementation of Kelly. He'll be in number 10 while the rest of us face an unworkable tax on our second home, no pension, and a 20% cut in income. We thought Conservatives objected in principle to retrospective rules? What really stinks is that he just dumps on his own MPs in order to get another cheap headline. This will boomerang on him.

The other problem with the gang is that they don't let anyone else get a look in. We should be a party of big characters and big ideas. Instead, most of the shadow cabinet are totally anonymous. They are either chums who are allowed to say something, or else outside the gang and so dare not utter a word. It is pathetic.

Parliament is there to approve or disapprove of what the government does – not the other way round. If party leaders control parliament itself, then British politics is dead. We as MPs are being by-passed and humiliated. There is no proper engagement with the parliamentary party. It is clear that Cameron holds the 1922 in complete contempt. It has gone too far. Being told to shut up because there is an election looming just won't wash. Tuesday's briefing meeting was the final straw. How much more facile rubbish is going to be forced on us?

It's all very well saying that MPs should not rock the boat – disloyalty and all that – but we have been pilloried for not acting over the years to stop the expenses fiasco from developing. Rather than wait until the outcome in government is obvious and we (if any of us are left) all get blamed for letting it happen, we should act now. That is the real lesson of the expenses scandal.

Cameron must remove Osborne and the whole clique of arrogant advisers and build a proper team around him based on MPs, or he must accept that there is no confidence in him and how things are going. So we should replace the top two and their chums with a respected team based on colleagues such as Hague and Clarke.

Unlike Labour, we have the mechanism. We should use it - now - otherwise we and the country will suffer the consequences later.

1. "No confidence" vote

To secure a confidence vote, 15% of Conservative Members of Parliament ("in receipt of the Conservative Whip") must submit a request for such a vote, in writing, to the Chairman of the 1922 Committee. This can be done either collectively or separately, but the names of the signatories would not be disclosed (Rule 4). The Chairman in consultation with the Leader would determine the date of such a vote "as soon as possible in the circumstances prevailing" (Rule 5).

If the incumbent Leader wins the support of a simple majority in any such vote, they would remain Leader and no further vote could be called for a period of twelve months from the date of the ballot (Rule 6). If the Leader were to lose such a vote (again, on a simple majority basis) they must resign, and they may not stand in the leadership election which is then triggered (Rule 7).

2. Nominations

Nominations for the leadership are invited by the Chairman of the 1922 Committee, acting as Returning Officer for all stages of the election. Candidates must be proposed and seconded in writing (Rule 11). The names of the proposers and seconders is published (Rule 14). When nominations close ("at noon on a Thursday") a list of valid nominations is published (Rule 15).

If there is only one valid nomination, that person is declared elected (Rule 16). If only two valid nominations are received, both names go forward to the general membership of the Party (Rule 17). If more than two nominations are received, a ballot is held within the Parliamentary Party on the Tuesday immediately following the closing date for nominations (Rule 18). An exhaustive ballot system is used to select two candidates to go forward to the general membership of the Party, as described below.

3. Parliamentary Party ballots

A ballot paper is produced and issued to all Conservative Members in the House of Commons (Rule 19), who indicate one choice from the candidates listed (Rule 20). Proxy votes are possible (Rule 21). The ballot is conducted in secret (Rule 22).

If there are three candidates in the first ballot, the two who receive the most votes go forward to the general membership (Rule 24). If there are more than three, the candidate receiving the fewest votes withdraws and a second ballot, under the same rules, is held the following Thursday (Rule 25). If there are no more than three candidates in the second ballot the two receiving the most votes go forward to the general membership. If a third ballot is required, it is held the following Tuesday (Rule 32). This process is repeated as often as necessary on alternate Tuesdays and Thursdays (Rule 33). When a ballot with only three candidates is reached, the two candidates who receive the highest number of votes go forward to the general membership.

Candidates may withdraw their names at any time, 'up to 24 hours of the opening of the ballot' (Rule 27), but no new nominations will be accepted after the first ballot (Rule 28). The latter rule represents a significant departure from the previous system.