

FABIAN Hamilton was brought to task by 60 senior citizens at a packed meeting at the Beth Hamidrash Hagadol Leisure Club on Monday.

The Leeds North East MP had been invited to put his side of the expenses scandal and found himself fielding many questions about his own behaviour in the investigation.

In retaliation, Mr Hamilton blasted the media.

He felt that over the last few weeks the media had taken control of the agenda for the country's political and national life.

Mr Hamilton said he had been subjected to five days of harassment by a Sunday newspaper which claimed he spent thousands of pounds on 11 laptop computers.

"I am a busy man and I am quite willing to justify what I did, but what I don't have time to do is to speak for two hours to a Sunday newspaper who believes it has the right to my time," he slammed.

"They then published an article, the

Pop~rs making up stories

contention of which was that as I only employ two people as members of my staff why did I need to buy so many computers over four years?

"That would indeed look very bad - except of course I have six staff, one in London, five in Leeds, as well as myself, and the purchases would not have appeared unreasonable given the short length of time a laptop computer lasts.

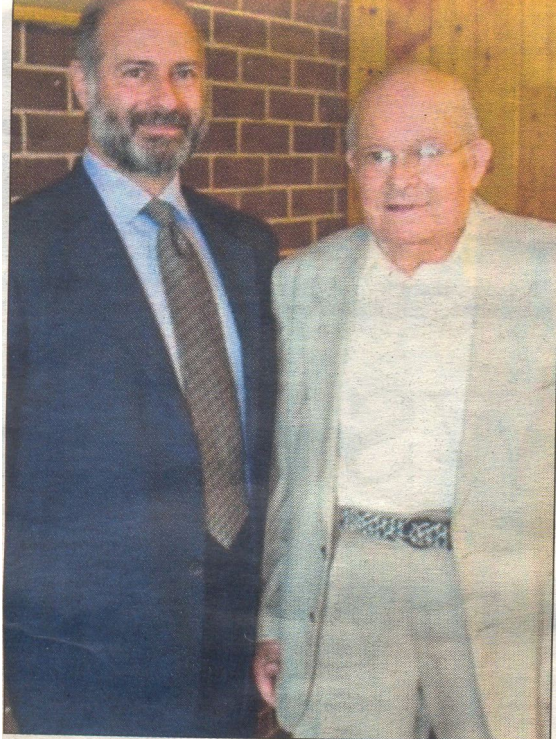
"However, the story clearly implied that these were bought to include members of my family:

"In order to serve their own purposes our national newspapers are making up their own stories.

"We have seen a lot of awful things about politicians recently:

"Some of which are true and some of which have been an abuse of the system.

"Many of my col-



UNDER FIRE: Fabian Hamilton MP, left, with BHH leisure Club Chairman Bernard Williams

leagues have been taken to task when they should not have been; there are many also who have been condemned for wrongdoings, and rightly so - they need to be dealt with if they have broken the law."

Mr Hamilton admitted that the *Daily Telegraph* expose was a good piece of journalism bringing unknown facts to the public eye, but added that if the newspaper was genuinely interested in exposing what they saw as a disgrace then why did they not do it in two or three days?

"They dragged it on for over a month and drip-fed the public with more horrible revelations about what MPs were up to," he said.

Although born in London, Mr Hamilton has lived in Leeds for 30 years and in York before that, so he regards Yorkshire as his home.

The DT investigation claimed Mr Hamilton told the fees office his mother's home in London was his main residence and spent thousands decorating and furnishing his designated second home in Leeds where his wife and children lived.

However, when his mother died in 2005 he 'flipped' his designated second home to a new London flat which he renovated at the taxpayers' expense.

Shortly before the flip he claimed for a new £4,400 boiler and £62 for decorating.

One Leisure Club member asked Mr Hamilton about the moral issues involved in claiming these expenses, where a large number of MPs had been engaged in the systematic milking of the expenses system in order to improve their own financial status.

"I admit it was not

I spent money morally

good 'enough to say that what I did was within the rules if the rules themselves were questionable," he replied.

"If you live some four hours away from London as I do then clearly you have to have somewhere to reside.

"I don't think what I did was immoral, the fund was there to allow me to pay for the costs of a second home, providing that I myself paid for my first home.

"It was always a case of getting prior approval and good value for money on any repairs; things that I regarded necessary for that home to function.

"So I wasn't spending taxpayers' money on trivia like duck islands etc.

"The reason I didn't offer to pay back the money I claimed was because I felt I spent the money properly and morally within the rules."