

MP: I won't take a wage rise this year

But expenses claim is set to be even higher for 2008/09

BY MARK HOOKHAM
P'Q~!!~Ah.U~.l.T.Qg

A LEEDS MP has pledged not to accept a pay rise, but warned that his expenses and allowances are likely to be even higher next year.

Fabian Hamilton, the Labour MP for Leeds North East, said he will follow the example of Gordon Brown and his Cabinet and waive the 2.33 per cent rise in his parliamentary salary.

The rise is from £63,291 to £64,766 and after tax is equivalent to £73.40 a month - which Mr Hamilton will donate immediately to St Gemma's Hospice in Leeds.

Explaining his decision Mr Hamilton said: "I think it is good leadership to say that I am being paid out of taxpayers' money but other workers are taking cuts and freezes, therefore I will do the same for the next year."

Earlier this week, Mr Hamilton was revealed as the tenth highest spending MP in the country - and most expensive in Yorkshire - after claiming £171,824 in expenses and allowances in 2007/08.

He said his claim was high because he was forced to pay £8,481 for a temporary employee to cover the work of a member of staff who was sick.

Allowance

However, speaking to the YEP, Mr Hamilton warned that his 2008/09 claim will be higher.

He said: "Next year my expenses will be higher because my personal assistant was on maternity leave for nine months. Because of that I had to claim the temporary secretarial allowance from March to December."

He robustly defended the work of MPs and his own expenses claims.

He added: "I actually do think that MPs do offer very good value for money to the public. We have a system of democratic accountability and direct connections between MPs and their electors that is the envy of the world."

"I know that the constituents that come to see me and want my help get a very good quality of service from my staff."

He said that he and his staff deal with "really, really difficult cases" in his new office in Roundhay Road.

Tory leader David Cameron used this week's Prime Minister's questions to urge Gordon Brown to convene a meeting of party leaders to discuss swift reform of MPs' allowances, saying he was fed up "with our politics being driven through the mud".

Mr Brown said he was happy to meet Mr Cameron and Liberal Democrat leader Nick Clegg but insisted reforms must await the review by the independent Committee on Standards in Public Life.

"I've asked them to speed up that review so it's completed as quickly as possible," he said.

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PAY FREEZE:
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