

Miss Rocher
~~pse~~ remind
me of XMR. FLESHERDr
22/4Cost of Parliament

The Prime Minister discussed at her meeting with the Lord President, Lord Privy Seal, Chief Whip and Paymaster General this morning the figures for the cost of running Parliament which were attached to your minute of 19 April.

The Lord Privy Seal agreed that the figures were disturbing, and said that he had asked for a more detailed breakdown. He suspected that there were particular aspects of the increase which would give even more cause for anxiety. However, he and the Chief Whip said that it would be better if Parliament could be brought to express concern itself about the escalation of cost rather than this becoming an issue between Government and Parliament.

The Prime Minister commented particularly on the number of research assistants being used by Members. The Lord Privy Seal said that this was not principally a problem of paid research assistants: there were many unpaid assistants who gave their services voluntarily for the experience. They were of very little use, and increased demands upon the House of Commons services. The only solution to this problem which he thought that the House of Commons would have to come to in due course was to limit the number of people for whom a Member of Parliament could secure access to the House of Commons.

X | The Prime Minister also referred to the number of consultancies being accepted by Members, and told the Lord Privy Seal of the amendment which she had suggested to the reply to Mr. Gordon Brown.

F.R.B.

22 April, 1985.