

The Lords - in some detail.

There are 745 of them and, as we now know, some are greedy and unscrupulous. Not all of course.

Many Lords (and indeed, Sirs, as we have seen recently) were appointed such, after service in the City. In fact, a high position in the City is almost a guarantee of ultimate Lordliness, whatever the level of job competence.

Benefits are good in this work. There is a £174 overnight allowance, £87 a day for food, (the old age pension is £90 per week, by comparison), £75 a day 'costs', plus first class train and air travel. Also two PCs, a printer, and a PDA, free.

As for the work involved - the House of Lords sits for about 145 days in the year (slightly more than the House of Commons, interestingly.) And the Lords are frequently on trips abroad. As one Lord put it: 'simply reading the Economist just isn't enough to understand what's happening in the world.' So **they cover about 1.2 million miles a year. From Afghanistan to Zambia. It can only be encouraging to the tax-payer that our Lords put themselves about so much in our interests. Especially as their average age is 69.**

All this activity requires a support staff. There are 550 secretaries and researchers registered. Lord Taylor of Warwick has five secretaries and researchers. Eight Lords have four, 41 have three, 97 have 2 and so on. Not all these secretaries and researchers are paid although the Lords do get an 'office cost' allowance.

Many Lords assign parliamentary passes to members of their families - to work as secretaries and researchers. For example, it appears that the Lord Laird's helpers are Alison Laird, David Laird and James Laird. In fact, looking at the register, sons and daughters appear to be as many as the locusts on the fields. The fields planted by the tax-payer.

The annual cost of the Lords in 2007/8 was either £121 million or £210 million - both figures having been quoted by the government when questioned.... The actual figure doesn't matter though, does it? It will still be paid for by that generous and trusting fellow, Joe Public. Sine nobilitate.