

The reform of the Statute for Members

I would say that the most difficult part of this challenge was not with the Council of Ministers and the capital cities, although that had its moments. The most difficult part was in the House itself.

Nominally everybody will speak the language of reform but in practice people will find various deviations in order to protect actual or presumed interests. Even the language was very interesting. I began to realise, because people speak in codes, that when colleagues would talk about the dignity of Members this was coded language for 'hands off, don't go there'.

So I got a lot of 'dignity of Members' stuff which I bulldozed out of the way intellectually because I did not accept that this was valid, and on the Bureau I wanted to do some work – because you had to do detailed work, the travel allowances, my God they were so complicated when I looked at them. I wanted to make progress and I figured that if I asked someone else to take charge of that it might not travel very far. So I gave many hours, with the assistance of the Secretariat of Parliament, working on a sub-committee of the Bureau, achingly, painfully and slowly on the expenses regime to try to produce a package that would be part of the package to do with the Members' Statute, and that broadly speaking would seek to operate on the principle of the recovery of actual expenses incurred.