



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Mr Tam McFarlane
Executive Council Member
Fire Brigades Union
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22 October 2013

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Please quote in further correspondence

Dear Mr McFarlane,

Thank you for contacting me recently regarding lobbying and the Government's Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Bill.

I know from the large number of letters and e-mails I have received that there is very serious concern about this Bill and the impact it will have on charities and civil society.

I agree this is a very bad bill. It is badly drafted, it has been rushed through Parliament without proper consultation and in places it is unworkable. It will do absolutely nothing to improve transparency of the lobbying industry yet it will gag charities and campaigners. It will add pointless and expensive administrative requirements to all trade unions and it will have a chilling effect on the quality of our national debate. It would also have done nothing to prevent the recent lobbying scandals and, with no code of conduct or sanctions for bad behaviour, it is actually a step backwards from the current voluntary register that already governs parts of the industry.

That is why I voted against this Bill on 9th October 2013 and why I am so disappointed that the Government have chosen to proceed with it.

In light of the widespread concern that has been expressed about this Bill by charities and campaign groups the Government did table modest amendments to the Bill - in particular to their proposals concerning third party campaigning. However, these amendments barely scratch the surface of what would have been needed to make the Bill workable.

That is why I supported further amendments to the Bill that would have introduced a universal register of all professional lobbyists with a code of conduct backed by sanctions and prevented the Government's proposed changes to third-party campaigning rules and spending limits.

Unfortunately the Government rejected these amendments and the Bill will now pass to the House of Lords where I hope it will receive the scrutiny the Government denied to MPs.



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There does need to be real lobbying reform to help make our politics more accountable and transparent and to help restore public trust. This Bill, however, will actually make things worse, not better. I hope, therefore, that the Government will now go back to the drawing board and seize this opportunity to bring about the real reform of lobbying that is so badly needed.

I have now written to the Cabinet Office about this issue and will contact you again when I have received a reply. Thank you once again for writing to me regarding this important issue.

With very best wishes,

Ben Bradshaw MP



**Ben
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