

Sir Malcolm Rifkind accused of being a 'politician for hire'



Channel 4's Dispatches programme and The Telegraph have reported this evening on enquiries made by their undercover reporters as to whether the former Defence Secretary and Foreign Secretary and Duddingston resident, Sir Malcolm Rifkind, was prepared to lobby on behalf of commercial companies in return for cash. The story is on the front page of tomorrow's edition of the paper and will feature in a programme on Channel 4 on Monday night.

Monday's Telegraph front page: Straw and Rifkind in latest cash for access scandal [#tomorrowpaperstoday](#) [#bbcpapers](#) pic.twitter.com/arA6aNR7Zq

– Nick Sutton (@suttonnick) [February 22, 2015](#)

Video footage of a covert interview has been released which will also form part of the programme 'Politicians for Hire' which will be aired on Channel 4 at 8.00pm. Claims are also made as a result of the joint investigation that former Home Secretary Jack Straw may have done the same.

Channel 4 said: "During meetings with our undercover reporters Sir Malcolm Rifkind described himself as 'self-employed' and claimed 'nobody pays me a salary'. For his services he discussed his usual fee of 'somewhere in the region of £5,000

to £8,000' for a half a day's work

"Sir Malcolm also claimed he could write to a minister on behalf of our company without saying exactly who he was representing.

"Sir Malcolm added that he could see any foreign ambassador in London if he wanted, so could provide 'access' that is 'useful'

"Mr Straw invited our two undercover reporters to his Parliamentary office. At a meeting he explained he could bring his name to the business. He also explained that he normally charges a fee of £5,000 a day for his work Mr Straw told our reporters how his lobbying activities as a senior politician were extremely useful to a private company, he already works for and declares an interest in.

"Mr Straw says he wouldn't take on the role while he remained an MP, but claimed he would be more helpful to our company if he were to become a Lord because of the different rules that apply there."

Sir Malcolm Rifkind is now Conservative MP for Kensington, earning £67,060 per annum in that [position](#), and although he is no longer a minister he is Chair of the highly influential Intelligence and Security Select Committee. Born in Edinburgh he is a former pupil of George Watson's College and the University of Edinburgh. He was formerly a councillor in Edinburgh and then represented the Edinburgh Pentlands

constituency from 1974 until 1997 when Labour's Lynda Clark won the seat with a majority of just under 5,000 votes. In 2005 the constituency was split into two: Edinburgh South and Edinburgh South West both of which are currently held by Labour MPs.

One of the few articles on his website during the last year is about the so-called 'Gagging Law' which would make the lobbying process transparent. Rifkind wrote for the Kensington and Chelsea Chronicle: "Some call it a gagging law. This is highly misleading. It is not intended to prevent charities, voluntary organisations or campaign groups from supporting or influencing public policy. It is designed to regulate and limit the spending of money intended to influence the outcome of elections.

"Some may believe that this amounts to a violation of the freedom of speech. This is a point of view, but it is not one to which I subscribe. People and organisations must be free to campaign on political issues, but excessive money in elections can amount to subversion of the democratic process."

Tonight some two months or so ahead of the next General Election there is one Conservative MP in Scotland, David Mundell MP for Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale.

During last year's Scottish Independence Referendum campaign Sir Malcolm accused the then First Minister, Alex Salmond of being less than statesmanlike. The Scotsman reported that Rifkind said: "Alex Salmond is asking Scotland to take a huge gamble with its future.

“Alex Salmond is a smart politician but he is not showing himself to be a statesman, frank and open with the Scottish public.” An SNP spokesperson retaliated: “A spokesman for the SNP said: “It is ironic Malcolm Rifkind is back in Scotland trying to tell farmers what is best for them – he was voted out as part of the Tory wipeout in 1997.”

In response to the allegations made by Channel 4’s Dispatches and The Telegraph, Sir Malcolm said:

“I have never undertaken nor would undertake any lobbying as an MP on behalf of any private organisation for which I was receiving remuneration.

“You suggest that I showed myself as ‘willing to act as an MP for hire’. That is untrue...There was no suggestion that I was being approached as an MP...Their approach to me was because of my previous experience as a Minister... Ambassadors tend to respond not because I am a current MP but because I was Foreign Secretary. I did look at their website. Due diligence is something one does when one has received a firm offer.

“No business meeting in my office was proposed. I said I would not be prepared to write to Ministers on behalf of PMR or any other company...The most I could do would be to enquire from them information...which was already in the public domain. I arrange my affairs so that around 75% of my time is spent on Parliamentary business... most constituency events are during the week rather than at the weekend.”

Sir Malcolm also responded to the BBC about the claims made in the joint investigation:

rifkind statement to the BBC over cash for access claims from daily telegraph/channel 4 pic.twitter.com/5VKzLvGa0z

– Robin Brant (@robindbrant) [February 22, 2015](#)

In response to allegations made against him, Jack Straw said:
“In response to the allegations Jack Straw says:
Having researched the company, I made enquiries in Hong Kong and was told the company appeared to be bona fide, but that the best way to carry out further due diligence was to meet with the individuals. If I had not received that response I would have cancelled the meeting.

“I would have made full official checks before accepting an appointment.

“I made clear from the outset that I was not available for any work until after I stood down as a Member of Parliament.

“Due to my other parliamentary commitments and to save time for further such work, I met the individuals in my parliamentary office. We had a general discussion about work I have done on a consultancy basis for another company.

“All of my outside paid work is fully and properly declared under rules that apply to MPs. I have also sought specific guidance from the Office of the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments (of former ministers) before undertaking projects.

“I am confident that I behaved, as I have always done, with integrity and that I did not breach any parliamentary rules in substance or in spirit.”