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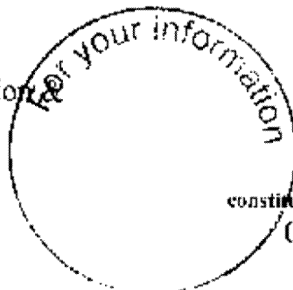
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The Rt Hon Vince Cable MP
Secretary of State
Department for Business, Innovation
Skills
1 Victoria Street
London SW1H 0ET

15 December 2010



Please quote our reference and
constituent's name in all correspondence

Our Ref: 2010/1421/sp

Dear Vince

Allison Henderson,

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I enclose for your attention some correspondence I have received from my constituent, Allison Henderson setting out her concerns about post office audit procedures and the accusations being levelled at sub-postmasters.

Allison Henderson's letter sets out her concerns in some detail and I was alarmed to hear about the level of prosecutions quoted in her letter. I would be most grateful if you could investigate this situation and let me have a response to these concerns as soon as possible.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

GRO

Norman Lamb

Member of Parliament for North Norfolk

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2.010/1421

Tel: **GRO**

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Norman Lamb MP

GRO

15th November 2010

Dear Mr. Lamb,

I am writing to you in a hope that you can assist the plight of the growing number of sub-postmasters that have been, and are still being wrongly accused of stealing money from their post offices.

I moved to Worstead from Hertfordshire in June 1997 and purchased the Worstead Post Office and have been running it trouble free since then. In February this year the auditors arrived without warning and informed me that there was a sum of nearly £18,000 missing from my office. This was quickly reduced to £11,990. As a result of this I was suspended from my position and am now facing a trial at the Norwich Crown Court accused of theft and false accounting.

I have never taken a penny from that post office but the prosecutors from the Post Office do not believe me, hence the trial. I was aware some time ago that the figures were wrong during a weekly balance – some £4,000 appeared to be missing. I tried to find the missing amount without success, and due to the fact that the PO helpline were less than helpful decided to roll over the figures hoping that an error notice would be issued from Chesterfield and the matter resolved. This did not happen and for some reason the figure just seemed to get larger.

Post Office Counters are adamant that there are no issues with any part of their IT systems and are demanding that I pay back the apparent missing money as well as face a trial. It is written into the sub-postmaster's contract that they are liable for any losses, however caused, but those contracts were issued in the days of hand written ledgers and were not re-issued to take into account electronic counting systems.

There are some 300 former post masters that have been, or are currently being prosecuted for similar offences. We are all (mostly) trustworthy business people trying to do what is right for the

community we serve and are being persecuted for it. There is also a train of thought that the Post Office is using these unexplained accounting issues as a way of closing offices "by the back door".

My office surprisingly escaped the last round of closures, but now instead of having to pay me a redundancy sum, my reputation has been wrecked and I face the prospect of a possible prison sentence, heavy fine, or some other criminal punishment plus having to pay the Post Office a large sum of money. Money that was never taken from the office, but just seemed to vanish into cyberspace. Since I closed my office, POCL have not ever attempted to re-open an office in the village, so their intentions must be questionable.

I would therefore be obliged if you could see fit to raise this matter with the minister responsible for postal services. I am not sure who that is, but was informed by an action group that is looking to take court action against the Post Office on behalf of wronged sub-postmasters that the minister concerned had already promised to look into the matter. Surely the Post Office does not believe that we are all thieves?

Yours sincerely,

GRO

Allison Henderson

