

## Gratitude of Gurkhas is only honour Lumley needs

ACTRESS Joanna Lumley was the celebrity face of a national campaign to ensure Gurkhas can live in Britain. One campaign, however, hardly warrants the award of an OBE, never mind elevation to damehood.

As the Government had to be forced kicking and screaming to make the right decision, it was pathetic to hear Gordon Brown's syrupy words of welcome to the Gurkhas invited into 10 Downing Street's gardens.

Was it only a few weeks ago that he displayed a stubborn attitude towards these people, when the cost of taking them in was put at an 'unaffordable' £1.4billion?

I hope Ms Lumley will decline any honour offered to her by the Government. The greatest honour she could aspire to is the grateful thanks and admiration of 'the bravest of the brave'.

*Des Morgan,  
Swindon, Wiltshire*

## Guilty politicians must pay penance for wrongdoing

ON the matter of MPs abusing the expenses system, what has happened to the old idea of paying a penance - that is, a punishment inflicted on oneself as an outward expression of repentance for any wrongdoing?

Speaker Michael Martin did the honourable thing and resigned, but as penance surely he should forfeit any right to a large pension or nice peerage. In my view, he has permanently sullied all previous service, however worthy.

In order to uphold Parliamentary standards, I suggest setting up a panel to consider whether any MPs should be deselected over the expenses scandal and to order by-elections if necessary.

Any discredited member should forgo rights to a peerage. Other punishments could include temporary suspension from the Commons, loss of privileges and reduced pension rights.

*John Mills,  
Oxford*

it's within the rules for us to vote out sitting MPs if they stand again at the next election.

*W Edwards,  
Upton, Wirral*

## Vote independent in June - and begin EU withdrawal

ALL three main political parties are intent on surrendering power to the EU, so the only alternative is to vote for independent candidates in June's European elections.

We have heard much about expenses abuses at Westminster but Brussels is far worse in this respect and impossible for any UK government to clear up. Hence the ultimate course is withdrawal.

The only people who benefit

from our EU membership are politicians, whose busy snouts are deeply immersed in the bottomless Euro trough.

*David Holman,  
Bruntingthorpe, Leics*

## Drug offenders need help, not just time behind bars

WHAT qualifications does Leo McKinstry have to state that persistent drug offenders are not victims of a medical disease but arrogant, vicious parasites ("Prison is the right place for criminals who are on drugs", May 14)?

He states that we face the unfortunate situation of drug offenders being given welfare handouts and therapy rather than

the prison terms they deserve. I agree that possessing drugs is an offence, and as an accredited addictions counsellor, I consider that addicts should face the consequences of their actions.

However, for them to get into recovery (which they so often crave), they should be allowed to hit rock bottom and undergo treatment, rather than come up against the purely punitive stance that Mr McKinstry would have society adopt.

Addicts must face the same penalties as all for breaking the law but must be offered help to prevent them reoffending.

*Simon Leigh,  
London*

Slash public spending to

## Letter of the day

# To those who've bent the rules - it's time to quit

ANY MPs who've bent the rules over expenses should be ordered to get on their bikes and pedal off, never to darken Parliament's imposing doorways again.

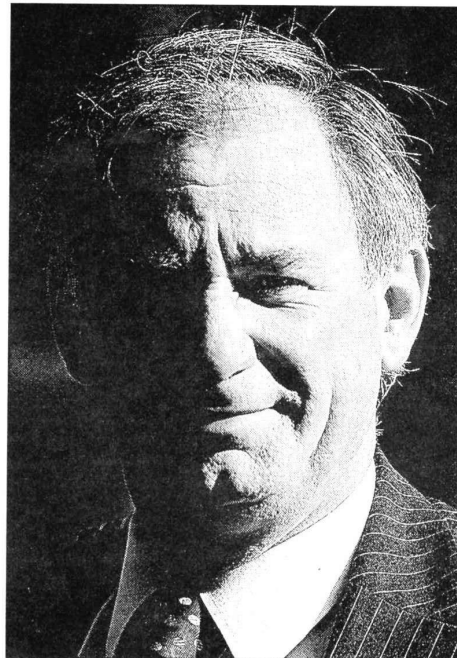
The shame is clear for all to see, with Labour officials expecting up to 60 of their MPs to be deselected and the Tories set to dump more than 30 of their number.

For wrongdoers to continue in office until the next election, collecting another year's salary followed by a severance payment of up to £105,000, is outrageous and more than voters can stomach ("Disgraced MPs to get £100k pay-off", May 22).

Something must be done before civil unrest erupts and an irate populace invades Parliament to assist MPs unceremoniously into the saddle and on their way.

Lastly, am I alone in wondering why Gordon Brown has slated Hazel Blears over Capital Gains Tax (which she's paid), yet defended fellow Cabinet ministers James Purnell and Geoff Hoon, who face similar accusations?

*John Gregson,  
Chester*



**UNDER FIRE:** But Geoff Hoon has PM's backing

## BEACHCOMBER



### 92 YEARS OLD AND STILL DUCKING THE MAIN ISSUES...

**F**RANKLY, I cannot see what all the fuss is about, and all those responsible for making it are merely exposing their own lack of imagination and understanding of the finer things in life. I mean, if a chap wants to dip into the public purse to reclaim the costs of building a duck island, it seems to me that there could be no end to the number of valid reasons for doing so. I have, accordingly, listed some of the main justifications for such a construction, in case any other MP is thinking of building one, or, indeed, has already done so and is looking for a good argument for not paying the money back in full.

1: Cricket. A duck island is a perfect place to study the breeding methods of ducks with a view to establishing procedures that will lead to a limitation on the numbers of ducks, thus ensuring that fewer of our cricketers are out without scoring. If a large enough duck island is constructed, it could also serve as a place of exile for those cricketers who score ducks, thus acting as a disincentive while also ensuring that they are not reselected. The resulting decrease in ducks will lift the team's performance, enhance the reputation of the country and improve national morale.

2: Anatine entitlement. Anatine, as you probably know, means 'pertaining to ducks', and the Government has certain responsibilities on that front. The total number of ducks in the world has been estimated at around 600 million, which is roughly one duck for every 11 people. There is, on average, one MP for every 92,000 people in the UK. Those 92,000 people, if they are not to fall behind the world average, are entitled to just over 8 363