

The Rt Hon The Lord Lawson PC

House of Lords, London SW1A 0PW

November 25, 2009

The Rt Hon John Prescott MP
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

cc. Mr Speaker
The Lord Speaker

My attention has been drawn to your remarks in the Debate on the Address yesterday concerning the think-tank I have set up, the Global Warming Policy Foundation. According to Hansard (col 426) you said “I just wondered who is financing this body that Lord Lawson is setting up. We tend to find that such bodies are funded by the oil and coal industry and people like that.... It is fair to say that as this operation is being financed by the oil companies, we should perhaps look a little suspiciously at it.”

Your allegation is wholly unfounded, and it is clear that you were not interested in the slightest in discovering the truth before you spoke. Had you done so, you would readily have discovered that in the Press Statement we put out at the time of the launch on 23 November (a copy of which I attach) we stated explicitly that:

“The Foundation.... is funded entirely by voluntary contributions from a number of private individuals and charitable trusts. In order to make clear its complete independence, it does not accept gifts from either energy companies or anyone with a significant interest in an energy company.”

This very clear statement also appears on the Foundation’s website, www.thegwpf.org.

You sought to confuse the issue by referring to a wholly separate entity, Central Europe Trust Co Ltd, of which I have been Chairman since 1990, claiming that its clients are a number of oil companies. Central Europe Trust Co Ltd is an advisory firm which, over the years, has had clients in pretty well every industry, although its main focus has been telecommunications. It has not, in fact, had any oil company clients for many years now, and at the present time its only involvement in the energy sector is a small interest in wind and other renewables. But in any event there is no connection of any kind between Central Europe Trust Co Ltd and the new Global Warming Policy Foundation.

It is clear that your careless remarks were wholly untrue and intended to be highly damaging. Had they been uttered outside the House, they would of course have been actionable. I am a strong believer in Parliamentary Privilege, but your remarks were a clear abuse of Parliamentary Privilege. In the circumstances, I must ask you to make a public apology to the House of Commons at the earliest opportunity to set the record straight.

In view of the gravity of the matter, I am copying this letter to Mr Speaker. And since the majority of the Trustees of the Global Warming Policy Foundation, whom you have defamed, are members of the House of Lords, I am also sending a copy to the Lord Speaker.