

### [Jack Straw to take job for firm he lobbied for in Commons](#)

Jack Straw privately lobbied Francis Maude, the Cabinet Office minister, on behalf of Senator International, which later offered him a position on its advisory board.

By Edward Malnick, Claire Newell, Lyndsey Telford and Luke Heighton

7:40AM GMT 23 Feb 2015

Jack Straw is to take a job with a firm which won a £75 million government contract after he lobbied a minister on its behalf, The Telegraph can disclose.

The former foreign secretary boasted to undercover reporters that he had helped the furniture firm “get on the ladder” and secure contracts to supply the Government.

•Sir Malcolm Rifkind to step down as MP and resigns from security committee

He privately lobbied Francis Maude, the Cabinet Office minister, on behalf of the company, Senator International - and will take an executive position with the firm after the next election.

Mr Straw’s relationship with Senator International has never previously been disclosed and it highlights a potential loophole in Parliamentary rules which allows MPs to lobby for companies they will later join.

The latest revelation comes after a joint investigation by the Telegraph and Channel Four’s Dispatches programme exposed Mr Straw and Sir Malcolm Rifkind, another former foreign secretary. Both offered to use their positions as politicians on behalf of a fictitious Chinese company in return for payments of at least £5,000 per day.

Mr Straw has been suspended from the parliamentary Labour Party and Sir Malcolm has been suspended by the Conservatives. They both now face an investigation by the Parliamentary Standards Commissioner.

It can now be disclosed that Mr Straw also told undercover reporters posing as representatives of a fictitious Chinese company that he had helped Senator International, based around five miles from his Blackburn constituency, for a number of years on an unpaid basis before agreeing to join its board when he leaves the Commons in May.

The job offer came after Mr Straw met Francis Maude, the Cabinet Office minister, to help the firm get “on the ladder for government contracts”, which he explained are a “big” target for a furniture business like Senator.

Senator was later awarded two contracts, one of which was worth up to £75 million over four years, according to the firm’s website.

It is also understood that Mr Straw aided the firm’s negotiations with HS2 after its London showroom was earmarked for demolition to accommodate the high speed line. Colin Mustoe, the firm’s chairman, told the Telegraph: “We’re doing loads of work but occasionally Jack is, tries to move things forward.”

In a discussion with undercover reporters from the Telegraph and Channel 4's Dispatches programme Mr Straw also disclosed he was "considering an offer" which he will "almost certainly take" to be an advisor to Senator.

During the meeting, conducted in his parliamentary office, Mr Straw explained that he has aided the firm on an unpaid basis for a number of years, as a result of which he is now being offered a place on their board.

He said: "I happen to have helped them over the last four years anyway. I mean, without taking a penny from that." "But as a result of getting the name out - it's a private firm - they've said would I be interested ultimately in going on the board." The work, Mr Straw said, was "about getting on the ladder for government contracts", which are a "big" target for any office furniture business.

Medium-sized companies were "missing out" as a result of the way government procurement worked, according to the former foreign secretary.

"Technically anybody could come in, but in practice it's really difficult," he said.

He examined the relevant regulations and then held a meeting to discuss the issue with Francis Maude, the Cabinet Office minister, whom he describes as a friend.

Mr Mustoe said Mr Straw did not help "with a government contract", but instead that the MP was acting on the company's concerns about the application process for government tenders.

Mr Mustoe said the firm, which had already secured various government contracts over a number of years, believed officials at the Office of Government Commerce were not checking that companies bidding for government contracts were truthfully answering questions about their policies on environmental and other "periphery" issues.

"Some people were winning contracts and I knew full well they didn't satisfy many of the criteria for which they had answered positively," he said.

Mr Mustoe said that he approached Mr Straw and Graham Jones, the constituency MP for the firm's Accrington headquarters, for their help after "finding it very hard to see somebody in authority".