

PM pledges lobbying will be carefully scrutinised

By David Singleton

The prime minister has weighed into the debate over transparency in lobbying, pledging that the Government will pay 'careful attention' to the issue.

Tony Blair declined to criticise any individual lobbying firms, but revealed that he expected to see a full parliamentary investigation.

Speaking in the House of Commons last week, Blair said: 'As I understand it, this is an area that the Public Administration Committee is going to look at. We will pay careful attention to the study it undertakes and to the conclusions it comes to.'

Blair was responding a question from Labour MP John Grogan. The backbencher had asked if the prime minister believed 'that lobbying firms such as Bell Pottinger and DLA Piper that do not sign up to the in-



Luff: APPC is 'elite group'

dustry's voluntary ethical code of standards... should seriously consider doing so?'

The prime minister's comments mean that a select committee inquiry into lobbying is almost certain to take place—significant given that the last detailed parliamentary examination of lobbying took place in 1991.

The issue has been gaining prominence in Parliament

after Grogan tabled an Early Day Motion calling on MPs to boycott agencies that do not adhere to the APPC code of conduct (*PRWeek*, 18 May). That motion has garnered 28 signatures, but was this week criticised by Conservative MP Peter Luff.

Luff, a former MD of Lord Bell's lobbying shop Good Relations, has tabled an amendment to the motion and said: 'I feel very strongly about this. The APPC is an elite group trying to give themselves market advantage. John Grogan has fallen for a line that is superficially very plausible but is actually about entrenching privilege.'

Luff stressed he had 'no link' with his former employer, adding: 'I deal on a regular basis with virtually every lobbying company in London. I never ask if they are an APPC member because they are always completely open.'