

£200,000 new con by jailed Lib Dem donor who fled UK

From **Daniel Bates**
in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic

THE Liberal Democrats' biggest donor paid for a Dominican businessman's honeymoon while conning him out of £201,000 in an oil deal, the Daily Mail can reveal.

Michael Brown 'craftily' paid for Cesar Polanco to take a trip to the Bahamas with his new wife to win his trust.

But when Mr Polanco asked what was happening with the £1.5million oil deal they had signed together, he was fobbed off – before being told he could not have his money.

Brown was hauled before a court in the Dominican Republic, jailed for three months and ordered to pay Mr Polanco and others back the total amount.

But so far he is understood to have only made the first payment – meaning Mr Polanco and his father-in-law, who also invested in the deal, are still £135,000 out of pocket.

Brown fled to the Caribbean island in 2008 after being sentenced in absentia in Britain to seven years in jail for a multi-million pound fraud.

His victims have demanded that the Liberal Democrats give back the £2.4million he gave them but the party has refused.

Now it appears that Brown's flight

from British justice has brought him the same kind of trouble he would have faced had he stayed at home and faced the music.

Documents obtained by the Daily Mail show that he set up the oil deal with Mr Polanco and his company, Inversiones Inmar, who paid him a down-payment of £201,000.

Part of that was £37,000 his father-in-law Julio Espaillet put in. After receiving the money, Brown, who is living in the Dominican Republic under the false name of Darren Nally, 'craftily' paid for Mr Espail-

lat's daughter's honeymoon with Mr Polanco, 26.

Mr Espaillet angrily told the court in the capital Santo Domingo that all of Brown's promises were an 'illusion' and a 'front'.

In her ruling, judge Ileana Garcia agreed and jailed Brown for three months.

The Mail can also reveal this was not Brown's only brush with the law while in the Dominican Republic.

The authorities there were so concerned that they have twice banned him from leaving the coun-

try, once in November last year. Another similar order, which meant his passport was confiscated, expired in June this year.

It also appears that Brown has been involved in a telemarketing scam in which he calls people and tells them they have won a car or huge cash prizes, before asking them for money.

It was in February 2005 that Brown gave the Lib Dems £2.4million, the largest donation they had ever received, which helped the party to achieve its most successful

election result since World War II.

But his claims to be a successful businessman with ties to landed gentry fell apart soon after and in November 2005 he was arrested.

He was accused of convincing a string of investors into putting £60million into bonds that did not exist.

While on bail, he changed his appearance and fled Britain.

There appears little chance he will be hauled back to face justice as the UK has no extradition treaty with the Dominican Republic.



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Fugitive: Michael Brown with his wife Sharon in 2008

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