

World Alliance of British Expatriate Pensioners

Media release:

For immediate release:

British pensioners appeal to French for help

French President M. Jacques Chirac has been asked to help 460,000 British expatriate pensioners in their fight with the Blair government to achieve benefit parity.

France holds the Presidency of the Council of the European Union during the second half of this year. The angry pensioners want Mr Chirac to use his good offices to prevail upon 'this shameless Government of the United Kingdom to treat all of its hapless expatriate pensioners equally'.

Successive UK Governments have consistently refused to uprate the state pensions of 460,000 (54%) of its expatriate pensioners, living mainly in Commonwealth countries. The vast majority are British/European nationals. But Britain does provide parity treatment for the remaining 390,000 expatriate pensioners (living in some 35 countries), with the 11 million resident in the UK. All UK pensioners were required to contribute on an equal basis during their working lives when they lived in the U K. British expatriates resident in Israel, the EU, Bosnia Herzegovina, U.S.A. and other countries receive benefit uprating. But those in such countries as Canada, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Grenada, Trinidad do not. Spokesperson Wilson Dunn said "The fabled 'British Sense of Fair Play' has become to us just that – a fable. Britain is the only OECD country which discriminates against some members of its mandatory, contributory pension plan.

Some of the more elderly frozen pensioners are living on pensions as low as £3.16/week, unchanged on the last 30 or so years.

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Additional Information:

Copy of letter to French President Chirac:

Dear Mr President,

We urgently appeal for your help in redressing a grievous injustice which the Government of the United Kingdom is inflicting on hundreds of thousands of elderly European nationals, expatriates now living in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Zimbabwe - some 150 countries in total.

Your July 4 remarks to the European Parliament were noted and we welcomed the emphasis placed in your objectives, on using the growing strength of the EU to achieve social progress.

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pensioners were required to contribute on an equal basis during their working lives when they lived in the U K. British expatriates resident in USA, Israel, the EU, Bosnia Herzegovina and other countries receive benefit uprating. The fabled "British Sense of Fair Play" has become to us just that - a fable. Britain is the only OECD country which discriminates against some members of its mandatory, contributory pension plan.

We respectfully question the hypocrisy of the UK Government in presuming to sit in judgement in your Court, Sir, on matters pertaining to violations of Human Rights while they deny equal pension rights to their own expatriates.

It has been suggested that we retain counsel and take our grievance to the European Courts. Such a course, however, would involve expenditures of well in excess of £150,000 - .a very difficult funding problem for an expatriate, the starting pension for whom (for example) was of £10 per week in 1974, and is still receiving £10 per week in the year 2000. The UK Government displays arrogance and selfish indifference to the pleas for justice from so many of their citizens living abroad.

Following repeated failure of efforts by Commonwealth governments, we, as European Nationals are turning from the Mother Country which has consistently denied us justice, to you, Sir, as French President of the Council of the European Union and to your colleagues within the Union, to require that Britain complies with the rules of EU membership. We urge you to use your good offices to prevail upon the Government of the United Kingdom to provide benefits to all of its pensioners on an equal basis, as is the case with every other European Government.

Respectfully,

Mark Drake

pp. World Alliance of British Expatriate Pensioners

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English pensioners stranded in Britain because of pension freezing:

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For Background information on the frozen pension issue, please check the website:

www.britishpensions.com