

World Alliance of British Expatriate Pensioners

Australia • Canada • New Zealand • South Africa • Zimbabwe

September 12, 2000

Monsieur Jacques Chirac
Président de la République française
Palais de l'Élysée
55-57 rue du Faubourg St-Honoré
75800 Paris

Monsieur le Président,

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.

Successive UK Governments consistently refuse to uprate the state pensions of 460,000 (54%) of its expatriate pensioners. But they do 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 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

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