

## **Chairmans Newsletter # 1 December 2012**

### **Newsletter #1, Dec 2012**

You will by now have read in your latest edition of "Justice" that at the time of the last CABP Board meeting, I took over from Brian Lechem as Chairman of the organisation. This was planned as Brian was going to be out of the country for some time and I had been asked by fellow Board members if I would take on the challenge and was pleased to accept. I am truly grateful to Brian for his leadership and huge contribution to CABP. Thankfully, he is continuing on the Board .

I have been involved with the struggle for the unfreezing of pensions since 2000 and have worked before with other ICBP Consortium leaders, so the transition is seamless.

Your Board has been working tirelessly on various issues recently. Yet, as we make contact with you only every three months through "Justice", it sometimes means that by the time news reaches you, it is a little out of date.

I am a great believer in open communication, so this is the first of more regular communications to our members with email addresses. It is quite lengthy because it is a bit of a "catch-up" as there has been a lot going on with ICBP. The next edition of "Justice" will encourage all members without an email address to give us the address of a friend or relative who might print out these Newsletters for them.

### **Recent ICBP Activities**

You will recall that Champollion is the media agency with whom we have been working in order to increase our exposure and contact with British politicians, the British media and the British public. In October, CABP Board member, Tony Bockman, who is also Chairman of ICBP (International Consortium of British Pensioners), spent some time in the UK, where he had several meetings with Champollion. At that time, we were strongly advised, including by the Canadian High Commission in London, not to go ahead with a campaign we had planned involving veterans around Remembrance Day. This took a lot of soul searching but we heeded the professional advice we were given. Alternative plans were put in place which will be communicated at a later date. Tony also honed plans for dealing with an online survey

which has resulted in over 2,600 responses which will provide a tremendous amount of information to assist in building UK support towards future UK campaigns.

He also met with BPIA's (British Pensioners in Australia) Brian Leggett who has moved back to the UK. Brian will become involved in future UK activities, together with Champollion specifically aimed at local media, to help ICBP to promote our message throughout the UK.

In late September, I was on a personal visit to family in the UK and took time to meet with a Director of HelpAge International to investigate the possibility of them being able to help us and I also met with the Champollion team. It was at that meeting that I was pictured with Tony Bockman holding the award that Champollion had received for their ICBP digital campaign. (Justice #4, 2012, page 5.)

Following Tony's visit to the UK, John Markham, ICBP's Parliamentary Affairs Director travelled to London to continue his efforts to promote our cause, primarily among Parliamentary representatives. During his visit he met with Dame Anne Begg, the Chairman of the UK's Work and Pensions Committee, and Oliver Letwin, the Cabinet Policy Minister, Lord Shipley offered John some advice from his extensive Parliamentary experience and suggested how we might become more aggressive in our approach.

A meeting was held with Greg McClymont, the Shadow Minister for Work and Pensions, at which the significance of the role of Parliament's Back Bench Business Committee [BBBC] was discussed. John later met with Natascha Engel, chair of the BBBC, who indicated her support of our cause. A review of her Parliamentary history shows she has had some experience in the Work and Pensions area which could prove useful to us. Stephen Phillips MP, a strong supporter of CABP, advised John that he believes the resistance to the recommendations from the Oxford Economic Report comes from the "permanent government," i.e. Treasury mandarins disinclined to support policies, which require financial expenditure. The report is seen by them as not being sufficiently robust.

John also advised that he has made useful contacts with the British Legion. Moreover, he met with Tim Otty who represented us at the ECHR. CABP is asking him for legal advice with regards to a submission to the UK Pensions White Paper, due out soon. It was Otty's view that we need some sworn statements from pensioners in the UK who are prevented from joining their families overseas due to financial constraints imposed by the UK

Government freezing their pensions on emigration. One pensioner in the UK has already offered help in this regard but we need to search out some more. If any member knows of someone in this category whom we could contact please email the National office, [info@britishpensions.com](mailto:info@britishpensions.com) and provide their details (with their consent).

John also recorded an interview for expats radio in which he robustly stated our case.

If you missed it, here is a link:

<http://expatsradio.com/money-matters-relocating/expat-frozen-pension-struggle-continues>

### **Recent CABP Activities**

During October and November, David Acheson, CABP Treasurer, has been working diligently to organise the official incorporation of ICBP. Originally, the organisation that later became named ICBP had operated under the umbrella of CABP and focussed specifically, under a "Consortium Agreement", on the legal case in the European Court of Human Rights. It was important to update this situation as it placed particular responsibilities on CABP's Board of Directors. Consequently, ICBP is now incorporated with its own constitution, directors and financial status, separate from CABP. It will be funded by member organisations who will be involved more formally in developing ICBP's budget and strategy for 2013.

I have been in touch with all senior Canadian politicians once again, urging them to engage the British Government. Also, I have pointed out an error in a response I received from a letter I had written to British Foreign Minister William Hague. Minister Hague had said that the Canadian Government had not raised the issue of frozen pensions since 2010. This cannot be correct as we are continually assured by Canadian Ministers that they always raise the "rozen pensions issue at meetings with their British counterparts. Minister John Baird's press statement specifically mentioned this after his September meeting with Hague. I have also urged our Ministers to work in tandem with their opposite numbers in the Australian Government whenever possible. A

joint effort at negotiation by the two countries could be so much more effective.

It may be "housekeeping" but it is important to report that a tremendous amount of work has been done recently in the National office to bring in an up-to-date database of members. We are now truly into the 21st century! Huge thanks are due to all involved who have spent many hours ensuring that this has gone smoothly.

Meetings have been held in Alberta and also in BC. We are finding that turnout at these meetings has been poor compared to previous years. However, those who do attend are always thankful because of the useful information they receive. I have been conducting the meetings in Alberta but, with my new responsibilities, I really do not have the time to continue. If there is an Alberta resident who would be interested in taking this on, please contact me so that we can talk about this:  
chairman@britishpensions.com

We learned with interest of the recent judgment obtained by Frank Yates from BC in which his late stepmother was awarded a higher widow's pension than originally established. We have been in contact with Mr. Yates. This might mean that some "frozen" widows, i.e. widows previously in receipt of a Category B pension through their late husband, may be able to claim a higher pension. We have been investigating how this might impact female members widowed prior to April 2010. We are seeking a legal opinion. We will publish our suggestions on how to proceed in the next issue of Justice, once we are clear about the legal ramifications for this group of widows.

You will see from the copy of Justice that you recently received that there is a new PayPal option for membership renewal and we are delighted to see that many members are finding this convenient to use (remember that we also have the option of credit card renewal).

Please check your membership renewal date above, and if you have not yet renewed for 2013, I would urge you to do this, using our on-line link:

<https://www.britishpensions.com/payment-options/>