

Pension parity boosted up the political agenda in Britain by our “considerable campaign”

The House of Commons Work and Pensions Select Committee clearly gave due consideration to the evidence papers submitted in February by our consortium, the International Consortium of British Pensioners (ICBP). Consequently, after its line-by-line examination of the government's white paper on pension reform, the committee declared that pension freezing is “clearly an anomaly,” and went on to state, “We understand the frustration of UK pensioners living in countries where their State Pension is not uprated.” When the draft Pensions Bill was subsequently tabled in June, we were disappointed to discover that, in spite of the select committee's position, the government bill still included a clause upholding pension freezing. This propelled ICBP into high gear, doing everything we could to press for the elimination of that clause – Clause 20 – from the bill. We submitted another comprehensive evidence paper to the scrutinizing committee established to thoroughly plumb the bill, and lobbying began anew with as many ‘people of influence’ in Britain as possible.

On July 4, thanks to the high profile we had created, the scrutinizing committee debated pension freezing for well over an hour. Again, the impact of ICBP's ongoing activities was evident in statements made during that hour by various parliamentary committee members – statements acknowledging that all MPs have encountered our, quote, “considerable campaign,” a campaign that has propelled pension indexing “up the political agenda.” One member declared, “This issue is going to run and run.”

In the end, however, Clause 20 remained intact. The next step open to us is to push for further debate on the issue during the Pension Bill's third reading in the Commons, likely to take place in October – and that is exactly what we will be doing over the course of the summer and into the fall.