

GURKHA JUSTICE

GURKHA JUSTICE! A TALE OF TWO HALVES

Settlement - retrospective of when you served but with minimum of 4 years service – brilliantly brought to a most satisfactory conclusion by the awesome and beautiful Joanna Lumley and her campaign. ‘If you are good enough to die for a country you are good enough to live in that country’. A simple yet powerful message easily understood by all. The first half of Gurkha Justice brought to an excellent conclusion.

Pension – the other but most important half that would constitute the full Gurkha Justice package. A much more complex issue entwined with technical intricacies which makes it difficult to grasp or be understood by the mass. Two important Judicial Reviews have already been lost inclining in perhaps all was deemed to be over; BGWS has managed to obtain a Judicial Hearing now set for 27th of Oct 2009. The BGWS case includes all Gurkhas irrespective of their discharge date (ie pre and post 1997). All is therefore not yet over. All Gurkhas and supporters are invited and requested to support this pension campaign the last crucial battle to win the war. Every person is now aware the final straw that broke the camel’s back in the settlement issue was the monetary figure crushed by Joanna Lumley and the Gurkha Organisations in the final meeting called by the Home Affairs Select Committee in the Porticullus House on 19 May 2009 chaired by Mr Keith Vaz. The Home Office figure of £1.4bn (one point four billion pounds) and 36000 Gurkhas when including dependants could rise to 100,000 was the wall crushed by the vital facts and figures provided by BGWS’ evidence which was instrumental in convincing the Board in accepting a rather realistic figure of 10 to 15 thousand Gurkhas expected which automatically brought the monetary figure down to around 300 million pounds. This led to the Prime Minister’s immediate announcement two days later granting settlement to all Gurkhas with a minimum of 4 years!

The MOD are now using the same scare tactics by quoting **RETROSPECTIVE PENSION** at the cost of £1.5bn (one point five billion pounds) and during a period of one of the worst global financial crises, with an overwhelming figure unemployed and job less. This is an important challenge which will bear heavily on the Judicial Review, hence in order not to waste precious time BGWS have taken on the services of Whitehouse Consultancy who are providing an excellent support and service in arranging meeting with MPs and Lords. These meetings are crucial to convince the Power House that we are seeking a sensible solution and the MOD are yet again playing foul tactics. In all the meetings the figures seem to be the epic centre of any discussion. The recurring theme of the figure £1.5 bn is beyond imagination for any Government to support and without addressing this, support cannot be justified. To that effect BGWS have proposed a forward moving solution with facts and figures. This will be promulgated to the mass as a document in due course.

An Early Day Motion (EDM) was also kindly tabled by Mr George Howarth (Lab) immediately after the meeting on the 23rd and as of 1 Jul 09 we have had 39 signatories. In this very short period of time it is brilliant support indeed. A 30 minutes and ninety

minutes motion for debate has also been put forward by Paul Holmes (Lib Dem) with outcome still to be decided (it is virtually a lottery – the luck of the draw).

BGWS does not march on emotion alone and is moving ahead with much discussion and advice from the legal team, consultants, members and now MPs. BGWS strongly believes that logical, well researched and reasonable argument should be interspersed with an offer of logical solution(s). It is vital to keep the momentum going and timing is of vital importance. We owe to ourselves and especially the burohs and their widows to get this right. The time has come for people to support BGWS wholeheartedly. BGWS have always supported GUF and unity although there is yet to be a proper coordinated structure. The last unity meeting on 17 May 2009 saw the usual inconclusive planning with personal interpretations. Momentum and timing has now become critical and in consultation with our solicitors, members and the Whitehouse Consultancy, it was realised that the judicial review date of 27 Oct 09 meant the luxury of time was no longer available. Parliament is going into recess end of Jul 09 and any lobbying has to be done well before then to be followed on return. A strategy was urgently required and it is fortunate that we were able to hire the services of Whitehouse Consultancy who have proved invaluable in mapping and charting our strategy. Our thanks goes to Mr Swaroop Chamling and Mr Joseph Starbuck for recommending the Whitehouse Consultancy.

Through the Whitehouse Consultancy, Parliamentary questions are being raised to the MOD via various MPs to garner support and keep the momentum going. This is an ongoing process. The Chairman, Mr Meg Gurung and PR Mr Prakash Gurung are doing daily runs in meeting MPs and the list below provides meetings completed to 1 July 2009:

Overview

These meetings have been arranged to brief a key stakeholders on concerns over the continuing discrimination which Gurkhas face in their struggle for equal pension rights.

Objectives and Aims:

- Enquire whether they would be willing to take forward further supportive Parliamentary action, including Written and Oral Questions and perhaps a debate.
- Enquire into the possibility of a letter to the responsible Minister which we would be happy to assist in drafting.

Wednesday 17th June 2009

Name	Position	Time	Venue
Dorothy Luckhurst	Advisor to Robert Key MP, Conservative Member of the Defence Select Committee and Member for Salisbury	10:00	Portcullis House
Paul Rowen MP	Liberal Democrat Shadow Minister for Work and Pensions	11:00	Portcullis House

Wednesday 23rd June 2009

Name	Position	Time	Venue
Tony Baldry, Conservative	Member APPGs for Army and Nepal	10:00	Portcullis House
Dave Anderson, Labour	Member APPG for Pension Consensus	12:30	Derby Gate
George Howarth, Labour	Spoke in Settlement Debate 21 st May 2009	14:00	Central Lobby
Paul Holmes, Liberal Democrat	Member APPG for Gurkha Rights	15:30	Portcullis House

Tuesday 30th June 2009

Name	Position	Time	Venue
Michael Howard MP (Conservative)	Member of the APPG for Gurkha Rights; Constituency MP for Royal Gurkha Rifles and large Gurkha community	11:00	Portcullis House
Frank Cook MP (Labour)	Member of the APPG for the Army	12:30	Portcullis House
Julie Morgan MP (Labour)	Member of the APPG for Gurkha Rights; Member of the APPG for Veterans	14:00	Central Lobby
Clive Betts MP (Labour)	Member of the APPG for Occupational Pensions; Member of the APPG for Pensions Consensus	15:00	1, Parliament St
Mark Oaten MP (Liberal Democrat)	Member of the APPG for Gurkha Rights	16:00	Portcullis House
Sir Menzies Campbell MP (Liberal Democrat)	Spoken in favour of equality for Gurkha pensions	16:45	Portcullis House

Wednesday 1st July 2009

Name	Position	Time	Venue
Lord Gordon of Selkirk (Conservative)	Member of Foreign Affairs, Defence and Development Committee; Served with the Gurkhas	10:00	Peers Entrance
David Drew MP (Labour)	Member of the APPG for the Army	11:00	
Lynne Featherstone MP (Liberal Democrat)	Has tabled supportive PQs; Shadow Minister for Equalities	13:00	Portcullis House
Sandra Gidley MP (Liberal Democrat)	Member of the APPG for Pension Consensus	14:30	Portcullis House
Celia Barlow MP	Member of the APPG for Gurkha	15:15	Portcullis House

(Labour)	Rights; Member of the APPG for Pensions Consensus		
Mike Hancock MP (Liberal Democrat)	Member of the Defence Select Committee; Member of the APPG for Gurkha Rights; Member of the APPG for Veterans	16:00	Portcullis House

Meeting Schedule for Wednesday 6th July 2009

Name	Position	Time	Venue
Madeleine Moon MP (Labour, Bridgend)	Member of the Defence Select Committee	14:00	Portcullis House
Bernard Jenkin MP (Conservative, North Essex)	Member of the Defence Select Committee; Member of the APPG for the Army	15:00	Portcullis House Cathy
Oliver Heald MP (Conservative, North East Hertfordshire)	Member of the Work & Pensions Select Committee; Member, APPG for Occupational Pensions	16:00	Portcullis House Christiane
Ann Widdecombe MP, (Conservative, Maidstone and the Weald)	Vice-Chair of the APPG for Gurkha Rights; Large Gurkha community in constituency	17:30	1, Parliament St
Paul Keetch MP (Liberal Democrat, Hereford)	Spoke in Settlement Debate on 21 st May and former Shadow Secretary of State for Defence	18:00	Portcullis House

Meeting Schedule for Tuesday 7th July 2009

Name	Position	Time	Venue
Roger Williams MP (Liberal Democrat, Brecon and Radnorshire)	Constituency MP for Mandalay Battalion; Large Gurkha community in constituency; Spoke in Settlement debate on 21st May 2009	13:30	Portcullis House
Anne Milton MP (Conservative, Guildford)	Member of the APPG for Pension Consensus	14:30	Portcullis House
Chris Huhne MP (Liberal Democrat, Eastleigh)	Spoke in Settlement debate - 21st May 2009; Liberal Democrat Shadow Home Secretary; Member, APPG for Occupational Pensions	15:30	Portcullis House
Iain Duncan Smith MP (Conservative, Chingford & Woodford Green)	Spoke in Settlement Debate 21 st May 2009; Former Leader of the Conservative Party	16:30	Central Lobby

.....*pictures and details of future meetings to follow*