IS THERE A WRONG TIME TO DIE FOR YOUR COUNTRY?

The War Widows' Association of Great Britain is continuing its campaign to ensure that all War Widows are treated equally and calls upon the Government to put right a despicable wrong.

A small and declining group of War Widows awarded the pension between 31st March 1973 and 5th April 2005 is being treated differently to other War Widows. They are asked to surrender their War Pension on remarriage or cohabitation. However those awarded their pension from the War Pension Scheme before 31st March 1973 or after 5th April 2005 from the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme are able to retain their pension on remarriage or cohabitation - is this just?

The first duty of Government is the defence of the realm. Our Armed Forces fulfil that responsibility on behalf of the Government, sacrificing some civilian freedoms, facing danger and, sometimes, suffering serious injury or death as a result of their duty. Families also play a vital role in supporting the operational effectiveness of our Armed Forces. In return, the whole nation has a moral obligation to its members together with their families. The Armed forces Covenant states “They deserve our respect and support, and fair treatment.” It goes on to say that “Special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most such as the injured and the bereaved”.

Therefore in this year when the nation commences its commemoration of World War 1, the War to end all Wars, it cannot be right that there is still a group of War Widows' who continue to be disadvantaged and experience discrimination.

The estimated cost to right this wrong is £70,000 per annum; as noted by Lord Astor of Hever in the Lords on 21st January 2014. Surely it is now time the Government to act.
Notes to Editors:

1. The War Widows' Association (WWA) was founded in 1971.

2. The achievements of the War Widows’ Association to date can be accessed at www.warwidows.org.uk.

3. Clarification on the current campaign -
   a. If your spouse died or left Military or War Service before 31 March 1973 and you also receive the War Pension Scheme Supplementary Pension you keep your War Widows’ Pension for life.
   b. If you were widowed after 5 April 2005 and receive Survivors Guaranteed Income Payment from the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme you keep your War Widows Pension for life.
   c. However, if your spouse died or left Military or War Service after 31 March 1973 and before 5 April 2005, at present you do stand to lose your War Widows Pension if you remarry or cohabit.
   d. The War Widows’ Association believes this to be unfair and outdated. It would only cost £70,000 a year to right this wrong (Lord Astor in Hansard on 21 January 2014)

4. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Defence (Lord Astor of Hever) (Con) stated in the Lords on 21st January 2014 that “The cost of not suspending pensions on remarriage or cohabitation to spouses who survive members of the 1975 Armed Forces Pension Scheme, is estimated to be £70,000 per annum in relation to the War Pensions Scheme.

5. The Service Personnel and Veterans Agency now Defence Business Service conduct checks on the relationship status of war widows every two years, looking at a random sample of about 5% of recipients. In 2010, this exercise cost some £50,000”.

6. His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales is Patron of the War Widows’ Association and Baroness Fookes DBE DL is the President.

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