

Alive and kicking

"REMEMBER the Dead but don't forget the Living".

This is the slogan for Poppy Day which takes place tomorrow followed by a Remembrance Service at 11 am on Sunday.

I am delighted to see the Prince of Wales and Governor Chris Patten wearing their poppies, and I hope all who read this will.

Old residents will know this slogan. I have used it for years in our campaigns for medical treatment at the British Military Hospital (BMH), improvements in the grants and pensions of retired servicemen, the last finally won in 1991.

However, the passport issue is still not settled. Passports were granted to servicemen after a two year battle in 1986, but not to their war widows or wives. Since then we have lobbied, written letters, and I have personally handed petitions to British Prime Minister John Major at No 10 Downing Street and Douglas Hurd — all to no avail.

I was invited by Radio 3 to question the Governor on his "Phone In", recently. I asked why he was not using his powers under the Nationality Act 1990 to recommend passports for Services in the interests of the Crown.

He replied that he had tried to use this power but received legal advice against using it.

The Governor said he fully supports my campaign and referred to the April concession of the "Chop" on these women's travel documents.

He said half of the women had settled for that.

With respect the 25 ladies of the original 52 who have come forward have far from "settled" for that. In fact the majority of them only came forward after I persuaded them to. This is not the protection they seek. It is their fundamental right to own a British Passport.

Frankly, they are disgusted. These women also "served the Crown" like their husbands.

Let us really "Remember the Dead and not forget the Living" before the 50th Anniversary in 1995.

In heaven's name Mr Patten who gave you legal advice? If you don't challenge it, I have legal supporters who will.

Jack Edwards
Chairman and Secretary,
The Royal British Legion
(Hong Kong & China Branch)