

## Britain Passes "Chiropractors Act"

### STORY OF A LEGISLATIVE CAMPAIGN

In 1990, I took over as chairman of the BCA Parliamentary Committee and began frequent meetings with the department of health. They advised that to gain legislation, three things had to happen: all groups of chiropractors had to support it; statutory regulation (licensing) should have the support of the medical profession; and registration would have to be preceded by a report making recommendations for legislation.

It later became clear that to achieve all this, a great deal of work would have to be done. In 1991, I sold my London practice and was employed by the British Chiropractic Association to help gain statutory regulation.

In England there are currently 900 chiropractors. About 575 British Chiropractic Association members have internationally recognized standards of training. The remainder are mainly McTimoney and McTimoney-Corley chiropractors with less intense training. Agreement was reached among the different groups, based on a leveling of standards to those equivalent to the European Council on Chiropractic Education (ECCE) within five years of registration (licensing) coming into force. The Chiropractic Registration Steering Group was formed, with myself as chairman.

The agreement of the medical profession was difficult at this time. I deliberately avoided formal meetings and was very grateful for the help of Lord Kindersley who held a private dinner party to which the senior members of the medical profession were invited. Fortunately, most of those present agreed with the principle that chiropractors should be qualified in order to practice. Some meetings were held with senior members of the medical profession following the dinner party.

Once the agreement of the medical profession had been obtained, I met with Robert Maxwell, chief executive of the King's Fund. Subsequently, the King's Fund agreed to sponsor a Working Party under the chairmanship of Sir Thomas Bingham, who is a very well-respected member of the legal profession.

This Working Party, consisting of chiropractic, medical practitioners and one lay person, met over a period of 18 months before issuing its report. The report recommended the statutory regulation of chiropractors (licensing) and set out a practical means of this happening.

The launch of the King's Fund Working Party report was timed to be just before the World Chiropractic Congress in London later in May. During the Congress, a lunch was held attended by Tom Sackville, one of the health ministers, who spoke to an audience of members of Parliament, peers and chiropractors.

This was followed up by a meeting I had with the health minister and opposition party health spokespersons. Through these meetings, the support of government and both main opposition parties was gained. There then followed a concerted campaign for chiropractors throughout the country to lobby their members of Parliament.

Last November, the "private members" bill ballot took place. This provides an opportunity for MPs

who are successful in the ballot to introduce any legislation they wish. There is a limited amount of time allowed for private members' bills and to be successful, they must have no opposition. Otherwise, they can easily be "talked out" and run out the parliamentary time.

My own MP, Tony Newton, Leader of the House and Lord President of the Council, was especially helpful. I met with David Lidington, who was already interested in chiropractic and had been successful in the ballot, and he agreed to introduce our bill. Lord Walton, a member of the King's Fund Working Party and former president of the British Medical Association and General Medical Council, introduced the bill in the House of Lords.

Unlike in the U.S., the act makes no attempt to define chiropractic or scope of practice. Essentially the act enables legislation which creates a General Chiropractic Council. This council then oversees the registration of chiropractors (licensing) and the promotion and development of the profession. The act provides for professional self-regulation.

We would like to acknowledge the financial help received through the WFC from the ACA and ICA, as well as the loan received from the ECU, which we hope will be converted into a grant. Our thanks also go out to Professor Klinger and staff at the Anglo-European College of Chiropractic. A visit to the college gave many key individuals an insight into our profession and its education, research, and training.

Many individuals have helped from inside and outside of the profession. The main work has been undertaken by the Chiropractic Registration Steering Group, with myself as chairman.

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