

Campaign!

The NPC's monthly bulletin for activists in the pensioners' movement

Parties lay out pensioner policies

Over 150 pensioner activists from across the country gathered in Westminster on November 5 to take part in the NPC's annual lobby of Parliament.

As part of the launch of the Convention's Pensioners' Manifesto, representatives from the three main Westminster parties addressed a packed meeting and outlined some of the policies likely to feature at the general election in May.

Conservative MP Guto Bebb hoped that the triple lock arrangement on pensions would remain, as did Labour's Sheila Gilmore MP, but Lord Mike German of the Lib Dems went further to suggest that if

returned to government his party would legislate to enshrine the triple lock in law.

Interestingly, whilst Labour announced plans to means-test the winter fuel allowance for those with an income of more than £42,000, and the Lib Dems pledged to do the same with that and the free TV licence for the over 75s, only Mr Bebb said there would be no change to universal pensioner benefits such as the free bus pass.

On the issue of care, all three politicians supported the idea of an integrated health and care service, and Lord German felt that the proposed care cap of £72,000 was too high and should be reduced.



A packed committee room in the House of Commons hears MPs answer questions from campaigners
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Labour's Sheila Gilmore added that her party was committed to looking at the quality of care services that people received, as well as the treatment and pay of care workers.

None of the representatives gave a commitment to raising the level of the basic state pension, but Ms Gilmore did

suggest that a Labour government would consider reintroducing the Retail Price Index (RPI) to pensions if finances allowed.

Ron Douglas, NPC president said: "It is vital that up and down the country pensioners keep putting our concerns before their parliamentary candidates."

Fall in winter deaths due to mild year

Over 150 pensioners died every day last winter of cold related illnesses according to the latest official figures.

Between December 2013 and March 2014 there were 18,200 deaths.

This represented a large fall from the previous figure of 31,100 and was due largely to mild temperatures.

Dot Gibson, NPC general secretary said: "Government ministers can take no credit for the fall in winter deaths among Britain's pen-

sioners because they have simply walked away from the problem and started crossing their fingers."

"Of course any fall in winter deaths is welcome, but 150 pensioners dying a day can hardly be described as a cause for celebration."

"The government needs to roll out a more effective programme to insulate homes, build more suitable properties for older people, raise the winter fuel allowance and tackle the excessive profits of the big six energy companies," she added.



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Campaign Dates

Dignity Action Day
30 January: The NPC will be co-ordinating a UK-wide day of action aimed at highlighting the need for the Dignity Code to be enshrined in law to protect older people from abuse. Thousands of leaflets will be given out to the public and local authorities and MPs will add their names to the Code. More details to follow.

NPC Pensioners' Parliament 2015
16-18 June: Annual gathering in Blackpool with a range of guest speakers and sessions on various topics, plus entertainment and an exhibition area. A government minister will be invited to speak at the event and topics will include pensions, social care, dementia, loneliness, fuel poverty, public transport and the NHS. More details to follow.

Economist attacks basic state pension

Britain's fiscal problems are partly the result of over-generous spending on the old, according to the Economist magazine.

The unnamed writer suggests withdrawing the state pension from any household with an annual income of more than £65,000, abolishing the triple-lock and capping rises at 1% for two years.

Whilst recognising that the state

pension isn't generous by international standards, the article still goes on to say that it is more than what a jobless working age couple receives - and is therefore unfair.

This attack is the latest in a long-running campaign by a number of right-wing commentators to undermine the welfare state and to create an artificial conflict between the generations, by suggesting that

one group is suffering at the hands of another.

Since the late 1940s, National Insurance contributions from workers and employers have gone to pay for state pensions - so that those at work fund the pensions of the retired generation.

This idea smashes that principle completely; at a time when future pensioners are going to need the state pension more than ever before.

Millions missing out on meals on wheels

Millions of older people are being denied meals on wheels because of a postcode lottery in services.

Campaigners claim that one million pensioners suffer malnutrition, yet one in three local authorities have now stopped providing meals on wheels.

The National Association of Care Catering claims that 19 million community meals on wheels

are served in the UK each year, compared with 40 million only 10 years ago.

Hospital admissions through malnutrition increased by 217% when provision of community meals on wheels decreased over the 5 year period 2003-2008 and malnutrition in the elderly costs the UK £7.3 billion every year.

By contrast, investing in a Community Meal service has shown

that every £1 invested leads to a social return on investment of between £3.00 and £5.30.

Norman Jemison, NPC vice president said: "Meals On Wheels are a cost-effective lifeline, but it's also about the personal contact, relationships and the wider benefit that the service brings by keeping in touch and maintaining wellbeing."

www.thenacc.co.uk.

Longer life, but ill health

Estimates from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) have revealed that newly retired men in the UK can expect to live two years longer than those who retired a decade ago, but they also face an extra year of ill health.

A man who turned 65 in 2011 could expect to live another 18 years on average, of which around 7 years and four months would be in poor health.

For women, they can expect an extra 20 years after 65, and 8.6 of them in poor health.

Jan Shortt, NPC vice president said: "This evidence of growing ill health in retirement supports the need for a new approach to funding a health and social care system, if we are to make it fit for future generations."

"It also seriously calls into question the claim that we can keep raising the retirement age and make people work longer."

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