

Campaign!

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

Let's save the welfare state on Saturday 10 April 2010

Pensioners, trade unionists, disabled people, carers, health workers and community groups have all joined forces in a new campaign to defend the welfare state and public services.

Just weeks be-

fore the anticipated general election, tens of thousands of campaigners are expected to take part in a march and rally through central London.

Dot Gibson, NPC general secretary said: "It is clear from the current political de-

bate that whichever party gets into Number 10, the public sector and the welfare state will be singled out for some drastic cuts - many of which will affect pensioners."

"This demo gives us a chance to tell the politicians that our essential public services must not be run down or sold off to the private sector."

For more information on the demo visit www.10410demo.co.uk

DEFENDING THE WELFARE STATE AND PUBLIC SERVICES

Since 1948, Britain has supported the principle that state pensions, health care, education and other public services are best provided by society as a whole.

This is now under threat.

- The state pension is totally inadequate, leaving at least 1 in 4 older people to live in poverty
- 7m households have a child living in poverty and existing benefits provide a very limited safety net
- Unemployment now stands at over 2m and welfare offers no solution
- 10m adults are disabled and face huge barriers to escaping financial hardship
- The NHS is slowly being privatised behind a smokescreen of choice and competition, and patients are suffering as a result
- Our public services are now facing massive cuts and further privatisation

The welfare state and public services are an essential part of any civilised society - pooling the risk across the population and providing support and services to us all.

Let's speak out now!

MARCH & RALLY SAT 10 APRIL 2010
ASSEMBLE 12 noon for 1pm
Temple Place, Embankment
RALLY 2pm
Trafalgar Square
Speakers, music and entertainment

Supported by: EMA, ERM, NPC, PCS, TUC, UCU, CFA, CWU, NPS, NAPS, NAO, NUJ, RMT, RAIL, RADAR, UNISON, UCU, ISSA, LibTwin, UNITE

100,000 copies of this leaflet are being circulated to pensioners, carers, trade unions, disabled people and other groups across the UK
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Make sure you sign the online petition at:
<http://petitions.number10.gov.uk/10-4-10demo/>

Smoke and mirrors in pre-Budget report

Millions of pensioners were left feeling angry and let down by the pre-Budget statement in December.

During his speech, the Chancellor Alistair Darling announced that the state pension would rise in April by 2.5%, but

failed to mention that he was only applying that increase to the basic pension and not to any SERPS or graduated pension contributions.

As a result, millions will see their net income effectively fall after they have met their costs of living.

Recent govern-

ment figures show that older people are spending as much as 40% of their income on food, fuel and council tax.

Syd Ashby, NPC vice president said: "This is a shabby way of treating pensioners and will be seen as all smoke and mirrors."

Pre-Budget in brief

- State pension to rise by 2.5% in April 2010 - £2.40 a week for those on a full pension, £1.40 for many women
- No increase in SERPS or graduated pension
- Winter fuel allowance frozen at £250 for the under 80s and £400 for the over 80s
- A new 50p per month levy on all telephone landlines
- £250m to be withdrawn from residential care services
- Age of entitlement to free bus travel to rise with state pension age

National Pensioners Convention

19-23

Ironmonger Row,
London EC1V 3QN
T: 020-7553-6510
www.npcuk.org



Campaign Dates

Defending the Welfare State and Public Services
10 April 2010

National march and rally in central London, with a range of guest speakers, music and entertainment. Organised by the NPC, trade union movement and other carers', disabled and professional organisations. Assemble at 12 noon at Temple Place, Embankment with a rally at 2pm in Trafalgar Square. More details available shortly.

Annual Pensioners' Parliament

8-10 June 2010

Winter Gardens, Blackpool. Question Time with MPs and debates on pensions, care, concessionary travel, age equality, sheltered housing, ageism and the media, pensioners across Europe, and the ageing society. Tickets priced £3.

Dignity Action Day misses the point

The government has designated 25 February as Dignity Action Day, and is calling on members of the public to give up their time to help their elderly relatives and neighbours.

Part of the official advice encourages people to offer to do the gardening for an older person, make them a dinner or take them out to the cinema.

But the NPC is concerned that

this approach seems to overlook the very serious issues about abuse, neglect and the quality of care older people receive at home, in residential care or in hospital.

As part of the NPC's ongoing care campaign we will be issuing a joint statement on the day along with Action on Elder Abuse and the GMB union to highlight the real issues that would provide dignity to older people.

Pat Healy, NPC vice president said: "Dignity isn't simply about being a good neighbour, it's about making sure that good quality services are available to those who need them so that they can continue to lead an independent and fulfilling life."

"Dignity comes about when we treat people with respect by looking after them properly and paying them a decent state pension."

Campaign to save cheques

The NPC has strongly criticised the recent decision by the Payments Council to withdraw the use of cheques by 2018.

Frank Cooper, NPC president said: "This is such a selfish decision, made by people who are clearly out of touch with the way millions of older pensioners manage their affairs."

"CHIP and PIN is simply not suitable for a large number of pensioners and this announcement provides no guarantees that cheques will be re-

placed with anything that meets the

needs of older consumers."

Following our statement, the Payments Council contacted us with a request to meet to discuss the matter further.

But what is clear, is that they did not consult with any pensioners' organisations before making their decision.

Question Time changes its tune

For over a year, the NPC has been running a campaign to secure a seat on the BBC's Question Time programme.

Up till now the producers have argued that the NPC was not well known enough to appear, and that our representative might not be able to cope under the pressure of the studio.

But after a renewed effort by a number of our

supporters, most notably the ASLEF union, the editor Gavin Allen has now issued the following statement:

"I'm aware of the work the Convention does and we'll continue to consider having a representative from it on the panel of Question Time."

There are a huge number of potential panellists but only a handful of non-party political places available

each series and a range of factors to take into account when choosing who occupies those seats.

Nevertheless I don't see any reason why the NPC should not be on the programme at some point in the future."

Whilst we still have yet to receive an invitation, it is clear that our continued campaigning has started to have an impact.

Watch this space for further details.

If you know of anyone who would like to receive this bulletin please send their email address to the NPC