

Campaign!

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

Action demands fair pensions for all

Thousands of NPC members took to the streets on November 30, alongside public sector workers, to demand fair pensions for all.

Despite reports in the media, the turnout across the UK exceeded all expectations.

Britain has a terrible record on pensions.

Average company pensions in both the public and private sector are around £5000 a year and the basic state pen-

sion is one of the least adequate in Europe.

Since coming to power the Coalition government has already weakened our pension system by linking future rises to the lower Consumer Price Index rather than the Retail Price Index.

Over a 10 year period this would cut average pensions by somewhere between 15 and 20%.

However, the average company director still gets an occupational



NPC members take part in the pensions' protest in Birmingham
© Chris Smith

pension of around £175,000 a year.

Pension inequality is what the government should be tackling - not cutting the pensions of those who provide our vital public services.

The NPC has teamed up with PCS, Unite, NUT and UCU to produce this new pamphlet outlining the case for decent state and occupational pensions. Get a copy from the NPC (p&p only).



PCS NPC UNITE NUT UCU

Government fails to act on winter deaths

Last winter, over 25,000 older people died from cold related illnesses, according to the latest official figures from the Office of National Statistics.

The figure is virtually unchanged from the previous year, which showed that 25,400 older people had died.

To bring the shocking reality of freezing homes to the Chancellor's attention, Greenpeace and the NPC - in the first ever joint action - created a life sized ice covered living room, opposite Parliament.

In a joint statement the groups called for the Winter Fuel Allowance to be increased



NPC Treasurer, Barry Todman, takes part in the demo outside Parliament on the day the winter death figures were announced
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and more funding for home insulation programmes.

The NPC also accused the government of failing

to act to end the scandal of winter deaths.



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Campaign Dates

12 April 2012
Second Annual Jack Jones' Lecture
The National Pensioners' Education and Welfare Centre will stage the second Jack Jones' lecture in Liverpool, with TUC general secretary Brendan Barber. More details to follow. A pamphlet of the first lecture given by UNITE general secretary, Len McCluskey is now available from the NPC priced £1 inc p&p.

19-21 June 2012
NPC Pensioners' Parliament
The 2012 NPC Pensioners' Parliament will again take place in the Winter Gardens, Blackpool. It will include an opening march and rally, various discussion groups, exhibition stands, guest speakers and entertainment. Tickets priced £5 are available now from the NPC office.

Autumn Budget offers no comfort

The chancellor, George Osborne, confirmed in his Autumn Statement on November 29 that the basic state pension would rise next April by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) figure of 5.2%.

This will mean a £5.30 a week rise for a single pensioner and £8.50 for a couple.

However, no mention was made as to the increase in the second state pen-

sion; fuelling fears that an average CPI figure of 4.5% would be awarded instead.

A further announcement on this is expected on December 8.

The chancellor also announced that he would be raising the state retirement age to 67 by 2026 - ten years earlier than expected.

However, Parliament will have to agree to this change before it can happen.

Dot Gibson, NPC

general secretary said: "The biggest concerns currently facing millions of older people are the price of keeping warm, negligible returns on their savings and inadequate increases in their pensions."

"It was quite amazing that the chancellor therefore managed to ignore them all."

A full briefing on the Autumn Statement is available on the NPC website and on request.

Home care denies human rights

A groundbreaking study into the home care system in England by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has found disturbing evidence that the poor treatment of many older people is breaching their human rights.

Nearly 500,000 older people receive essential care in their own home, but for too many this care is not supporting

their dignity, autonomy or family life.

The report calls for the law to be tightened in order to give older people greater protection.

The evidence submitted to the EHRC revealed many examples of older people being physically or financially abused, treated as if they were invisible and not having any support with eating or drinking.

The study also

found that one in three local authorities have already cut back on home care spending.

Pat Healy, NPC vice president said: "It is shocking that hundreds of thousands of older people are systematically having their human rights breached in their own homes because of a lack of funding, poor training, and ineffective regulation."

CPI legal challenge fails

After weeks of consideration, the High Court has dismissed the legal challenge for judicial review of the government's decision to use the Consumer Price Index, rather than the Retail Price Index for the uprating of pensions.

By majority decision of two to one, the court stated: "If the Secretary of State is satisfied that a particular measure is a fair and genuine method for making the relevant determination, so that it can legitimately be said that it achieves the objective of protect-

ing the purchasing power of the relevant benefits

and pensions, he can adopt that method even if his reason for preferring it over other potential candidates is that it draws less on the public purse."

It is likely that there will now be an appeal against the decision, whilst the campaign continues.

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