



Spring 2011 Newsletter

NPC Wessex supports the:

PENSIONERS' MANIFESTO

All men and women shall be entitled to dignity, security and fulfilment in retirement that includes:

- **A basic state pension set above the official poverty level (estimated at £171 a week in 2009), which is linked to the higher of earnings or prices, and paid alongside other existing concessions, to provide some financial security for all.**
- **Free long-term and social care funded from general taxation and provided to the highest standards in order to maintain dignity and without the need for means-testing, rationing or a postcode lottery.**
- **Good quality local services funded through national income tax rather than council tax.**
- **Free UK-wide travel on all forms of public transport (buses, trams and rail) to encourage independence and greater mobility, as well as helping the environment and reducing demand on care services.**
- **An end to discrimination where it adversely affects the opportunities, goods and services available to older people**
- **A winter fuel allowance of £500 per pensioner household to help maintain a warm and comfortable home.**

YOUR HELP IS REQUIRED

Albert Venison, President and Colin Hadley, Chairman of Devon Pensioners' Action Forum have written to Detective Chief Inspector Robin Cross of the Serious Crime Directorate to ask him to carry out an investigation into the misappropriation of the National Insurance Fund.

Three former senior Government Ministers, James Purnell, Dawn Primarolo and Mike O'Brien have admitted that for years governments have been deliberately diverting money from the NIFund instead of using it to increase state pensions.

Mike O'Brien is on record as stating:

"If the (Fund's) surplus was to be used to pay higher pensions, income tax would have to rise to meet the difference. Labour would not win the election if it were to propose higher rates of income tax."

DCI Cross investigated and charged MPs with false accounting in relation to their expense claims. This showed that fraud carried out in Parliament is not above the Law of the Land. **Using the NI Fund for spending other than on the state pension and other stated allowance is misappropriation and fraud on a grand scale.**

If you think a criminal investigation is the right course of action please write to:

Detective Chief Inspector Robin Cross
SCD6 Economic & Specialist Crime Unit
New Scotland Yard
10 Broadway
London SW1A 0BG.

Comprehensive Spending Review October 2010

The main announcements affecting older people were:

Pensions

- From April 2011, the Basic State Pension (BSP) will rise by £4.50 per week for single pensioners taking it to **£102.15**. Women whose pension is based on their husbands contribution will receive an increase of £2.70 per week taking the pension to **£61.20**. (A 4.6% increase in line with the Retail Price Index [RPI] for September 2010)
- From April 2011, the State Second Pension, SERPS and/or Graduated Pension will rise by **3.1%** in line with the Consumer Price Index [CPI] for September 2010.
- From April 2012, the Basic State Pension will rise by the higher of prices (CPI) Average Earnings Increase or 2.5%.
- Changes to public service pension schemes will be introduced from April 2012, meaning that employees will have to pay an additional 3% of salary into their schemes and future payments will be based on Average Salary not Final Salary.
- Equitable Life Savers who lost half of their pensions when the insurer almost collapsed a decade ago will receive £1.5 billion in compensation. The average payouts are likely to be less than £600 each.
- State retirement age will rise to 66 for men and women between 2018 and 2020

Pension Credit

- From April 2011, Pension Credit will increase by £4.50 for a single person and £7.20 for a couple. The new rates will be **£137.10** single and **£209.60** couple.
- Savings Credit maximum award is being frozen for four years at **£20.52** single and **£27.09** couple.

Winter Payments

- The Winter Fuel Allowance is to be reduced in 2011 to **£200** for households under 80 and **£300** for the over 80s.
- Cold Weather Payments paid to those on Pension Credit when the average temperature falls below freezing for 7 consecutive days will be set at **£25.00**.
- Funding for the Warm Front programme will be cut.

Social Care

- An additional £2 billion will be invested in adult social care.

Disability Payments

- The mobility component of Disability Living Allowance to claimants in residential care will end from 2012-13.

- Those who fully self-fund their care will be unaffected.

Council Tax

- Council Tax Benefit spending will be reduced by 10% from 2013-14, and it will be up to Local Authorities to target the benefit at local priorities.
- Council Tax freeze for 2011-2012.

Housing

- From April 2011, Housing Benefit will be capped at £400 a week for a four bedroom house, £340 for a three bedroom, £290 for a two bedroom and £250 for a one bedroom property.
- Funding for the Supporting People programme will be set at £6billion.

Transport

- The eligibility for concessionary bus travel will be linked to the changes in Pension ages.
- Reimbursement arrangements will also be reformed whilst maintaining the statutory entitlement to concessionary bus travel.
- Bus subsidies to operators will be reduced by 20%.

Comprehensive Spending Review - continued.

Local government

- Local councils will have their funding cut by 27% over the next 4 years
- Government Offices for the Regions are being closed.
- Local Area Agreements have been abolished.

NPC statement put out following the Spending Review.

Britain's biggest pensioner organisation, the National Pensioners Convention (NPC) has described today's Comprehensive Spending Review as a recipe for unfairness in retirement.

Dot Gibson, NPC general secretary said: "All the evidence shows that the richer you are, the longer you live - so making people work longer is a direct attack on the poorest in our society. Plans to reduce the increases in the state pension by using the lower Consumer Prices Index rather than the Retail Price Index will, over time, increase the number of pensioners living in poverty, whilst the money committed to care funding won't be anywhere near enough to meet the growing demand. It's a recipe for unfairness in retirement and the burden will fall on those who are least able to bear it."

"The contribution older people already make to the economy every year in unpaid caring, voluntary work and child minding is well over £30Billion, yet none of this is recognised by today's statement. If pensioners have to work longer they will simply be unable to help others. So much for the Big Society."

"The older generation was around at the beginning of the welfare state and they know that it is not meant for poor people; it should be for everyone to prevent them from becoming poor. But the government is seeking to privatize responsibility and blame individuals for the structural failures of our economy. It's time we stopped pointing the finger at the so-called undeserving poor and started taxing the undeserving rich



Pat Turner, Executive Member and delegate from our Unison Southern Gas affiliate, was part of the NPC delegation that attended the European Day of Action 29th September 2010 in Brussels. The peaceful demonstration organised by the European Trade Union Confederation was attended by more than 250,000 activists from all over Europe. Among the demonstrators were many young people who are worried about their future.

The theme was “No to Austerity - Priority for Jobs and Growth”



Diane Pearce, Margaret Whitfield and Pat Middlewick members of our Southampton Pensioners' Forum affiliate, seen here at the "Pensioners' Parliament" held in Blackpool 8/9/10th June 2010.

The Pensioners' Parliament is one of the most important activities in the NPC's calendar. There is nothing else like it in the country.

Report of End Fuel Poverty Coalition Campaign Meeting 10 November 2010

Warm Front Programme

Budget for this year is £350m. Budget for 2011/12 is £110m. Budget for 2012/13 is £100m. The intention is that after this winding down period there will not be any government funded schemes for improving energy efficiency in people's homes in England.

Social Price Support (replacing social tariffs ?)

The amount spent on this by the energy companies will be £250m in 2011/12 and £310m in 2012/13. The money to pay for this will be raised through a flat levy on bills - every household pays - including the fuel poor.

Review of Fuel Poverty

There is to be an independent review starting before end of year into definition of Fuel Poverty (eg spending 10% of income on fuel costs = fuel poverty). Other EU countries do not use same definition.

The Green Deal

The Energy Bill has been introduced in the House of Lords and the 2nd reading is scheduled for January. There is a massive push to roll everything out very quickly including smart meters. Energy Companies will provide the Green Deal: a system where households will borrow money for energy efficiency improvements which they will then pay back over time. The deal with the Energy Company is passed on to the new owner if the house is sold.

NPC Wessex Region welcomes Individual Members

Application Form - Individual Membership Fee £5.00 per year

Name:

Address:

Telephone No:

Email:

I give NPC Wessex Region permission to hold the above details in a data base. I enclose a cheque for £5.00

Signed:

Date:

Please send this and cheque to:

**M. Fawcett, Treasurer, NPC Wessex Region, 22 Springfield Road, Kidlington,
Oxfordshire OX5 2JE**