

Campaign!

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

Cowardly Chancellor cuts fuel payment

Cowardly chancellor, George Osborne angered millions of older people by choosing not to announce his cut to the winter fuel allowance in the Budget on March 23.

The chancellor's plan, confirmed later by the Department for Work and Pensions, is to reduce the allowance this year by £100 for the over 80s and £50 for the under 80s.

Subsequent statements from the government have also con-

firmed that the payment will then be frozen at this level until the next election.

In a statement to the media, Dot Gibson, NPC general secretary said: "It's absolutely outrageous that George Osborne didn't have the guts or common decency to make this announcement public."

"Up to 3m pensioner households are already spending more than 10% of their income on fuel bills. They need more money – not less," she added.

Over 25,000 pensioners died of cold related illnesses last year

BUDGET IN BRIEF

- From 11 April, the Basic State Pension (BSP) will rise in line with the Retail Price Index (RPI) figure for September 2010 of 4.5%, giving a rise from £97.65 to £102.15 per week for a single pensioner and from £156.15 to £163.35 for a couple. Next year it will be linked to the Consumer Price Index instead
- From 11 April, the Pension Credit Guarantee for a single pensioner will rise from £132.60 to £137.35 per week and from £202.40 to £209.70 per week for a couple
- Personal Tax Allowances have risen as follows:
Up to 65 - £6475 rises to £7475
65-74 - £9490 rises to £9940
75 + - £9640 rises to £10,090
- The Government will consult on introducing an automatic mechanism for raising the state retirement age in line with average longevity
- The winter fuel allowance will be cut to £300 per household for the over 80s and £200 per household for the under 80s

Does plan offer pensioners jam tomorrow?

After months of delay, the Government finally published its Green Paper on pensions on April 4.

The most striking feature of the proposal is that existing pensioners, and those that retire between now and 2016, will be excluded from the change.

This will create a two-tier pension system, with today's pensioners left to get by on one of the worst pensions in Europe and a means-tested system that fails to reach nearly 2m people.

The proposal for a flat rate £140 a week pension is also well below the poverty level, estimated to be around £178 a week.

In addition, the plan will also do little to address the reduction that many pensioners will see in their pension increases because of the recent change from the Retail Price Index to the Consumer Price Index.

Frank Cooper, NPC president said: "There's nothing in it for today's pensioners."

DGL Department of Government Lies

"The Government believes that people deserve dignity and respect in old age and that they should be provided with the support they need"
(The Coalition: Our Programme for Government May 2010)

"The £140 flat-rate state pension will not apply to existing pensioners"
(Budget March 2011)

PENSIONERS CAN'T TRUST THE GOVT **NPC**
NATIONAL PENSIONERS' CONFEDERATION

One of the new posters the NPC will be displaying outside DWP headquarters on 11 April as part of the Protect Our Pensions protests © NPC



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Campaign Dates

Protect Our Pensions Protests
Monday 11 April, protests are being organised outside main DWP offices in London, Norwich, Southampton, Newcastle, Walsall and Warrington. For more details contact NPC.

Question Time Demo

Tuesday 26 April,
12.30pm outside
Mentorn TV HQ in
Hammersmith. For
more details contact NPC.

NPC Pensioners' Parliament 14-16 June 2011

This year's Pensioners' Parliament will focus on the government's policies on pensions, care, the NHS and the Big Society and will include Steve Webb, pensions minister, Prof Alan Walker, and Mark Serwotka PCS. Booking forms available from NPC.

Webb to face angry Parliament

Pension minister, Steve Webb has confirmed he will attend this year's Pensioners' Parliament in Blackpool and take questions from the audience.

But Mr Webb is likely to have a hard job selling the government's message to pensioners, given that since coming to office there have been changes to the uprating of pensions, cuts to the winter fuel allowance and

less money going into local services such as home care and concessionary travel.

The event will have a change of format this year — opening with a rally which will include NPC patron, Prof Alan Walker, alongside Richard Murphy from the Tax Justice Network and Karen Jennings from UNISON.

Delegates will also be able to take part in sessions on the NHS reforms, the fu-

ture of social care, concessionary travel, age equality and what the Big Society means for older people.

Once again, The Bachelors will provide the popular entertainment.

Norman Jemison, NPC vice president said: "The Blackpool Parliament is the jewel in the NPC's crown - giving ordinary pensioners the chance to have their say on the issues that matter most to them."

NPC conference decides policy

Every two years, the NPC's national and regional affiliates meet to elect the Convention's officers and decide on policy.

This year the two-day Biennial Conference took place in Southport.

Frank Cooper and Dot Gibson were re-elected as president and general secretary respectively, and two new people — Norman Jemison and Marion Wil-

son, joined Pat Healy and Peter Rayner as the four vice presidents.

The important position of treasurer went to Barry Todman.

Delegates also agreed a number of policies on raising the state pension, introducing a National Care Service, opposing cuts to public spending and campaigning for a Dignity Code for older people in care.

They also agreed

to conduct a feasibility study into launching a national membership scheme, alongside affiliations from groups, and will report later in the year.

Marion Wilson, NPC vice president said: "The NPC's policies are determined by older people, for older people."

"This makes us unique in the age sector as having an agenda set by those we seek to represent."

End of the giro cheque?

On March 3 the Department for Work and Pensions announced it had awarded the contract for introducing a cheque replacement system to Citibank through its Paypoint network.

The contract will last until 2018.

The decision affects around 60,000 existing pensioners who still receive their pension in the form of a giro cheque, which they cash at the Post Office.

Whilst the details of the new system are still vague, it is likely that individuals will receive a plastic card which they will present at the Paypoint counter and then have to show identification before they receive their money.

The NPC also remains concerned over how third-party collections and the future of the Post Office network will be affected by the change.

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