

National Officer's Report

Executive Committee 15 November 2016

Intergenerational Fairness Report

- The Work and Pensions Committee has published its report into Intergenerational Fairness and recommended the triple-lock on the state pension be scrapped after 2020 claiming it was "unsustainable" and "unfair" on younger families. Instead the basic state pension should be linked to just average earnings, but if inflation was higher some adjustment would be made.
- The committee also recommended that universal benefits such as the winter fuel allowance should not be increased any further.
- The MPs also rejected any notion of intergenerational conflict did not accuse any particular generation of stealing from their successors. However, the report did little to dispel this approach.
- There is some confusion over who actually agreed the report. Whilst the chair, Frank Field and all the Conservative members signed up to the recommendations, it is not yet clear if the opposition members Mhairi Black (SNP), Karen Buck, Neil Coyle and Steve McCabe (Labour) agreed to it. The government will respond in due course to the report.
- The NPC received some very positive media coverage on Sky TV, Independent newspaper, Radion5 Live and BBC News website. The statement is on the NPC website.
- The NPC and UNITE Uniting the Generations pamphlet has now sold out and a re-print has been ordered. In light of the recent Work and Pensions Committee report into Intergenerational Fairness the pamphlet is even more important than before. Copies are priced £1+P&P. EC members are therefore encouraged to get their affiliates to purchase copies for sale and distribution.

National Audit Office report into introduction of New State Pension

- The NAO has issued a critical report into the introduction of the New State Pension. Its main findings include:
 - 0.5% of GDP forecast reduction in spending on state pension and pensioner benefits in 2060
 - £2 billion forecast increase in net national insurance contributions in 2016-17 from introducing the new state pension in April 2016
 - 73% of people who reach state pension age in 2030 will be better off under the new state pension
 - 76% of people who reach state pension age in 2060 will be worse off under the new state pension
 - 18% of working age people know how much their state pension is likely to be

Cridland Review into State Pension Age

- The interim report into the State Pension Age by John Cridland was published on 13 October. Whilst he does not make any recommendations, the report does contain some useful findings:
 - There is gross inequality in life expectancy both between and within geographical areas, with the differences at birth between the lowest socio-economic group and the highest being 5.9 years for men and 4.4 years for women (England and Wales only)

- Only half of all years spent in retirement are in good health
- The UK already has one of the highest SPAs in the developed world, which is set to be 68 by 2044-46. This is matched by just Ireland and the Czech Republic
- Certain disadvantaged groups such as carers, those with a disability, the self-employed, ethnic minorities and women all benefit from the triple lock indexation on the state pension
- The majority of all generations – from the baby boomers, and generations X and Y – will continue to rely on the state pension for the bulk of their income in retirement
- The report then goes on to pose a number of questions which are open for further consultation up to the end of the year. Some initial ideas that might be considered include:
 - Early access to the state pension after a long working life - allowing those who have paid National Insurance for 50 years and started work at 16 to get their pension at 66
 - Early access to accommodate regional variations in life expectancy or to recognise certain manual jobs where people have a greater risk of dying younger
 - Early access to a reduced pension - allowing people to retire earlier, for example at 60, and receive a lower state pension for the rest of their lives
 - Carers approaching pension age could get more help from the benefits system

The NPC will be making a full response to the Review in due course.

Meetings with ministers and shadows

- The EC should be aware of the following arrangements:
 - Richard Harrington, Minister for Pensions (report of meeting circulated)
 - Alex Cunningham, Shadow Minister for Pensions (meeting secured)
 - Fresh requests have been made to both David Mowat and Barbara Keeley, Government and Shadow ministers for care

Biennial Delegate Conference 21/22 March 2017

- Initial paperwork has been circulated to NPC Regional Secretaries and contacts for national pensioner affiliates. If your organisation has not received this information, please contact the NPC asap. The deadline for nominating delegates, booking accommodation, submitting motions and nominating people to stand for officer positions is 30 November 2016.

Campaigning issues

- NPC Lobby of Parliament – The NPC annual lobby took place on 2 November. There was a successful photo opportunity with plenty of cameras, followed by an excellent rally in a packed committee room 14. All the speakers: Heather Wakefield (UNISON), Ian Blackford MP SNP, Kelvin Hopkins MP and John McDonnell shadow chancellor were well received. McDonnell stated that Labour would defend the triple lock and that the NPC's demands should be adopted by a future Labour government. It is vital that we now secure an early meeting with Labour's top team to discuss our concerns.
- Pensioners' Parliament 2017 – The first planning meeting took place last month. Discussions are ongoing as to the format, including how to get greater

participation from delegates. More details will be issued shortly, but any suggestions for speakers or topics should be sent to the NPC office asap.

- Position of pensioners prior to April 2016 – The NPC has raised with the Pensions' Minister the plight of those pensioners who retired before April 2016. We are now in discussions with officials from the DWP to clarify the cost and scale of including those individuals into the new state pension, if it would be beneficial. More details to follow.
- Attendance Allowance – The NPC has been receiving replies from MPs following our call for members to send our model letter. The decision to devolve Attendance Allowance to local authorities has not yet been concluded. It is therefore important that members continue to write to their MPs using the model letter.
- Autumn Statement – This will take place on 23 November 2016.
- Annual excess winter death figures – These will be released on the same day as the Autumn Statement. Already, there have been media stories running about rising fuel bills and advice to pensioners about keeping warm. The London Region is planning to release black balloons on the day to coincide with the figures.
- Action on Elder Abuse – Gary Fitzgerald from AEA has been out of action for 3 months, but is now back at work. He is planning parliamentary and media work over the next few months to raise the profile of the issue, however he accepts that the current online petition has failed to take off. He is also considering launching an All Party Parliamentary Group on Elder Abuse.
- Social Care Roundtable – The NPC and NHS Support Federation have agreed to stage a roundtable in Parliament in February next year on the issue of health and social care. More details to follow.

Diary Dates

- Autumn Statement and Winter Death Figures, 23 November 2016
- National Dignity Action Day, 1 February 2017
- Biennial Delegate Conference, 21/22 March 2017