

Campaign!

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

Knives out for pension triple lock... again

In her parting shot as pensions minister, Baroness Ros Altmann has called for the triple lock to be scrapped, so that in future the basic state pension would rise in line with the higher of either earnings or inflation (CPI).

A number of financial commentators were quick to support her idea, calling the current arrangement "unsustainable", and the right-wing think tank, the Intergenerational Foundation again claimed that younger people were paying for the pensions of their parents and grandparents.

What they didn't point out was that this was also the case when today's pensioners were at work.

The Department for Work and Pensions were quick to confirm that the triple lock is guaranteed until 2020, but there is no doubt that the likes of Ros Altmann and others will be using their influence between now and then to alter things in the future.

That means that the triple lock

could become a vote winner or loser depending on which party is prepared to commit to keeping it.

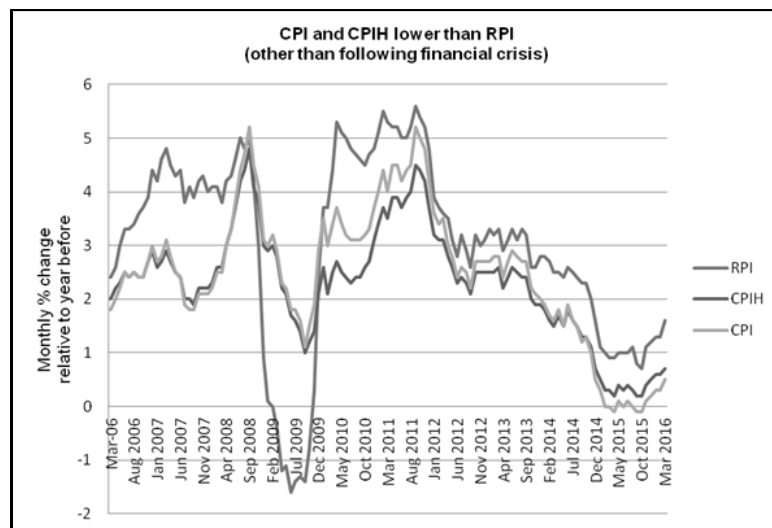
Interestingly, the TUC will also be voting on whether to support the triple lock or not at its forthcoming conference.

Official figures show that the basic state pension would have actually been £1.15 a week

higher in 2015 if the triple lock had not been in place and the pension had instead risen in line with the higher of the Retail Price Index (RPI) or 2.5%.

The triple lock is not therefore the problem.

The problem, as Ros Altmann knows, is that our basic state pension remains one of the worst in the developed world.



The state pension was severely undermined when the Coalition government replaced the RPI with the generally lower CPI
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Ofgem fails to tackle energy market

Ofgem's so-called "shake-up" of the energy market has done very little to address the real problem facing older people in Britain, the NPC has warned.

Every year, tens of thousands of pensioners die needlessly from cold related illnesses - largely due to the fact that the

UK has a terrible combination of poor housing stock which is difficult to heat, low pensioner incomes and ever rising fuel bills.

But Ofgem's recommendation that customers receive prompts on their bills or letters from suppliers urging them to switch is unlikely to help, given that the majority of pensioners have nev-

er been online or don't even own a computer.

A more effective way of helping those struggling with their bills would be to automatically put them on the cheapest deal.

Better still, why not start a discussion about bringing the energy industry back into public ownership.



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Campaign Dates

One-day Transport Conference

22 September: St Pancras Church Hall, Euston. The popular transport conference will look at the future of public transport with a range of guest speakers. Tickets £5 inc lunch, but space is limited. To book contact the NPC office.

Older People's Day
1 October: NPC events across the UK. Briefing available on the NPC website.

NPC Lobby
2 November: Demo 12 noon Old Palace Yard, Rally 1-3pm Committee Room 14, House of Commons. Details to follow.

Winter Death Demo
Late November: Black balloon release to mark the winter deaths among older people. Details to follow.

Cost of care in a home reaches new high

Those facing the prospect of needing to go into a care home now face average fees of £30,000, according to a study by one of the UK's biggest care agencies.

Prestige Nursing claimed the fees were rising ten times faster than pensioner incomes, and even the wealthiest fifth of pensioners with an income of nearly £20,000 a year were unable to pay care home costs without also relying on their savings.

Under the current system, anyone with savings will have to spend all their money before getting any support from their local authority, and many will end up having

to sell their homes in order to pay their care bills.

In an interesting development, former Conservative health minister, Dr Dan Poulter has called for a new health and care tax to be introduced - perhaps through raising national insurance - as the most effective way of putting badly needed funds into the care system.

The well respected health charity, the King's Fund has also backed the idea of a new approach to care fundings.

Jan Shortt, NPC vice president said: "Tax-funded health and social care is the only way to ensure everyone gets the support they need, free at the point of delivery."

DWP to tell people they won't get a pension

The government has agreed to write to more than 100,000 people who are set to miss out on the new state pension, because they have less than 10 years' worth of National Insurance contributions.

Following criticism from tens of thousands of women who were not notified earlier of the changes to their state pension age, the Department for Work and Pensions has now agreed as a one-off exercise to contact those affected before the end of the year.

The letters will go to individuals within nine years of state pension age whose records suggest will have fewer than ten qualifying

years of contributions by the time they retire.

The Institute of Fiscal Studies also warned many workers expecting to receive £155.65 a week from the new state pension will be disappointed and suggested ministers may have misled the public by exaggerating the simplicity of the new scheme.

Its analysis suggests more than six in ten people reaching the state pension age over the next four years will receive less than the £155.65 per week headline rate.

For future generations of pensioners the outlook is even worse, with everyone born after 1970 getting less than under the old system.

Paxman insults pensioners

Former Newsnight presenter, Jeremy Paxman has become embroiled in a public spat with Mature Times magazine, after he described older age as being all about "incontinence and idiocy".

Mr Paxman said the magazine was being "cheeky" to describe anyone of his age as mature, and described the older generation as "virtual corpses".

The magazine's editor, Andrew Silk

hit back saying Paxman was in denial about now being over 65, and de-

scribed him as "Jeremy Clarkson without the charisma".

What's interesting about the furore is that it highlights the way in which older people are often portrayed - either as little old ladies huddled over a one bar fire trying to keep warm, or 90 year old parachute jumpers.

Either way, ageism is still rife in the media.

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