

Don't Forget...

10 April Demo

12noon Temple Place

2pm Trafalgar Square

April 2010

Issue 39

# Campaign!

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

## Budget leaves a bitter taste in the mouths of pensioners

**O**n March 24, the Chancellor delivered his last Budget before the general election, but failed to announce anything that would ease the financial hardship faced by millions of older people.

**Pensioners find SERPS, Fuel Payment and Tax Allowances all frozen**

Frank Cooper, NPC president said: "It's quite clear that pensioners are being asked to pay for the mistakes of the banking sector through seeing a cut in real terms of their state pension increase, a freeze to their win-

ter fuel allowance and a charge for broadband that they don't want."

"The Budget does nothing to tackle growing pensioner poverty, the rising winter death rate amongst older people or the impact on older savers of falling interest rates, and will leave a bitter taste in the mouths of pensioners."

### Budget in brief

- State pension to rise by 2.5% in April 2010 - £2.40 a week for those on a full pension, £1.40 for many women
- No increase in SERPS or graduated pension
- Winter fuel allowance frozen for third year at £250 for the under 80s and £400 for the over 80s
- A new 50p per month levy on all telephone landlines
- Personal tax allowances frozen
- Default retirement age to be scrapped or raised
- Inheritance tax frozen for four years at £325,000

## Care White Paper ends means-testing

**J**ust weeks before the general election, the government has published its long awaited social care white paper.

Entitled *Building The National Care Service*, the paper outlines the case for a comprehensive national care system, free at the point of need, which would be paid for by society as a whole.

Signalling a major u-turn in government policy and an end to years of the failed care in the community programme, the white paper starts to tackle the era of means-testing and unfairness.

Dot Gibson, NPC general secretary welcomed the proposals: "Providing free care to all in need is a fundamental principle behind the welfare

state, and we must ensure that it really delivers better services to older people and doesn't just look good on paper."

"Whilst the system won't be in place until 2016, we could still do more now to give financial help to carers, improve the regulation of care providers and raise the standards and pay of care staff."



The Care White Paper proposes setting up a Commission to consider how a National Care Service should be funded  
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## National Pensioners Convention

19-23

Ironmonger Row,  
London EC1V 3QN  
T: 020-7553-6510  
www.npcuk.org



## Campaign Dates

Defending the Welfare State and Public Services

10 April 2010

National march and rally in central London, with a range of guest speakers, music and entertainment. Organised by the NPC, trade union movement and other carers', disabled and professional organisations. Assemble at 12 noon at Temple Place, Embankment with a rally at 2pm in Trafalgar Square. More details available shortly.

Annual Pensioners' Parliament

8-10 June 2010

Winter Gardens, Blackpool. Question Time with MPs and debates on pensions, care, concessionary travel, age equality, sheltered housing, ageism and the media, pensioners across Europe, and the ageing society. Tickets priced £3.

# Frozen pension plea rejected

Up to 500,000 expat pensioners have had their hopes of pension parity dashed as the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights finally delivered its verdict on their case on March 16.

After years of legal action, the 17 judges ruled by 11 votes to 6 that it was not discriminatory for the UK government to deny an annual increase in the

state pension to those pensioners living in around 130 countries outside of Europe.

The judgement declared that paying national insurance did not give an exclusive link to a state pension, but this view was disputed by the National Pensioners Convention who described the court's decision as "shameful and morally unjust".

Syd Ashby, NPC vice president said: "The cost of giving these UK

pensioners an increase in their state pension every year would be just £540m."

"Given that they have paid their national insurance for years it is absolutely wrong that they can be discriminated against in this way."

The court's decision now brings to an end all legal challenges and campaigners have pledged to continue to put pressure on MPs to alter the rules.

# Government miss fuel poverty target

The government will fail to meet its own target for ending fuel poverty, according to a new report from the Energy and Climate Change committee of MPs.

The report claims that millions struggle to keep themselves warm, and the spiralling cost of energy has only made the situation worse.

The latest figures suggest that, in England alone,

some 2.8m households fit the government's definition of fuel poverty because they are spending more than 10% of their income of energy bills.

MPs warned there was a danger further increases in fuel prices could land another 2.4m UK households in fuel poverty by 2016.

The vast majority of those classified as vulnerable include the elderly, the disabled or

children.

Pat Healy, NPC vice president said: "Last year we had a national scandal of over 36,000 pensioners dying from cold related illnesses."

"The government should raise the winter fuel allowance to at least £500, introduce lower industry-wide tariffs for older customers and force the energy companies to pass on reductions in prices."

# Council Tax rises by 1.8%

The government has announced that this year's annual increase in council tax will be 1.8%, taking the bill for an average Band D property to £1,439, up from £1,414 this year.

The average Band D council tax for 2010/11 will be £1,309 in London, £1,399 in other English cities and £1,484 in shire counties.

Despite this year's increase being the lowest since council tax was introduced in 1993; for millions of older people it still represents their biggest single household expense.

Peter Rayner, NPC

vice president said: "Council tax remains one of the least equitable ways of funding local services and has failed to deliver decent services for older people."

"We urgently need to move towards a system based on income rather than property."

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