

Campaign!

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

New government drags its feet over improving care

Two weeks after the general election, the new Coalition of Conservatives and Liberal Democrats has published a 36 page programme for government.

Despite claims of introducing a new form of politics, the programme uses an old trick of kicking into the long grass one of the most urgent concerns.

Social and long-term care in Britain is widely regarded as being in crisis and the cost, quality and availability of services need immediate reform.

Yet the Coalition plans to set up a commission to look into the issue.

Dot Gibson, NPC general secretary said: "The evidence already ex-

ists to show what the problems are with our care service and how they could be tackled." "What we need now is action not more talking."

The NPC is campaigning for the introduction of a National Care Service that provides care to all in need, free at the point of delivery and funded through general taxation.

Another headline grabbing proposal in the programme is the restoration of the link between pensions and the greater of inflation, earnings or 2.5% from 2011.

But such a move is now more of a token than an effective way of tackling pensioner poverty.

Over the last 30

years, the value of the state pension has fallen so sharply that re-linking to earnings is going to take decades to have any impact.

Ms Gibson added: "We desperately need a big increase in the state pension and then restore its link to earnings or inflation for it to really mean something."

"Otherwise even 10% of nothing is still nothing."

"Link to earnings could give just £1.45 a week extra pension"



*The new Coalition government says its programme will be guided by freedom, fairness and responsibility
© Cabinet Office*

What's in the programme for pensioners?

- Raising the basic state pension annually by the greater of either inflation, earnings or 2.5%
- Reviewing the date at which the state pension retirement age should rise to 66, possibly bringing it forward a decade to 2016 for men, 2020 for women
- Establishing a commission to look at the issue of long-term care
- Freezing council tax for one year
- Part privatisation of the Post Office
- Increasing personal tax allowances to £10,000
- Maintaining the current winter fuel allowance, free TV licences and concessionary bus travel

National Pensioners Convention

19-23

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Campaign Dates

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. There will be a host of guest speakers, a lively exhibition and entertainment from The Bachelors. Tickets priced £3.

NPC Lobby

27 October 2010

With a new intake of MPs elected on May 6, the NPC will again be organising a rally and lobby of Parliament. The rally will take place in the Westminster Central Hall followed by a lobby of MPs to be arranged. Please put this date in your diary. More details will follow shortly or see www.npcuk.org.

NPC launch new Supporter's Card

As a first step towards building a mass membership, the NPC is to launch a new Supporter's Card at this year's Pensioners' Parliament.

For some time the Convention has been considering the need for individuals and members of affiliated groups to identify themselves as also being part of the NPC.

Enabling people to feel part of a



How the new NPC card might look © NPC

bigger, national body also helps to raise its profile and will bring in much needed funding.

Frank Cooper, NPC president said: "The supporter's card is a stepping stone to building a bigger

NPC that I hope will be popular both inside and outside the pensioner movement."

Existing affiliated groups will be asked to sell the cards to their members at a price of £1.

All set for October lobby of MPs

The NPC has agreed to re-introduce its annual lobby of Parliament in October, following the recent general election.

Last year the event was suspended because of growing concern over the length of time it was taking campaigners to get into the House of Commons as a result of new security measures.

But the election has produced over

200 first time MPs who have no experience of the pensioner lobby.

Syd Ashby, NPC vice president said: "All MPs - especially those who have just arrived at Westminster - need to be made aware of the genuine concerns that older people have."

"On the day we will have to show them that we represent millions more who are looking for positive action on is-

ues like the state pension and care."

As part of the aim of strengthening the presence of the NPC inside Parliament, discussions are also planned with a cross-party group of MPs to set up regular meetings where pensioners' concerns can be raised.

Further information as to how the event is to be organised will be issued shortly to all affiliates.

Activists gather at Blackpool

Up to 2000 pensioners are set to gather in Blackpool on June 8 for the start of the three day National Pensioners' Parliament.

This annual event will kick off with a march through the town centre, followed by a Question Time session chaired by Rodney Bickerstaffe, which is expected to involve a minister from the new Coalition government.

Over the next two days, delegates will then take part in ten sessions covering pensions, care, transport, devolved government, age equality, housing, Europe, end of life care, the media and the ageing society.

The Pensioners' Parliament provides a totally unique opportunity for older people to have their say on a range of issues and help build the campaign for dignity in retirement.

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