

Women's Network Exchange

NPC Women's Working Party
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A Happy New Year to everyone. We hope you survived the bad weather. If you are going to be at the Women's TUC conference in March do come and see us at our stand and come to our fringe meeting on Defending The Welfare State.

apurshouse@npcuk.org

Marion Wilson

19-23 Ironmonger Row, London EC1V 3QN

Let's speak out now!

Pensioners, trade unionists, disabled people, carers, health professionals and community groups have joined forces in a new campaign to defend the welfare state and public services.

The NPC is co-ordinating the group in its plans to stage a major demonstration in central London just weeks before the anticipated general election. Tens of thousands of campaigners are expected to join the march on 10 April starting at 12 noon at the Embankment followed by a rally at 2pm in Trafalgar Square with speeches, music and entertainment.

Pensions, health care, education and many public services have already been cut and privatised; it is clear from the current political debate that whichever party gets into Number 10, the public sector and the welfare state will be singled out for drastic cuts, and the impact will be felt by those who need them most.

Taking part in the demonstration is our chance to tell the politicians that our society and its essential public services must not be run down or sold off to the private sector.

This is a great opportunity to speak up before it's too late.

DEFENDING THE WELFARE STATE AND PUBLIC SERVICES

MARCH & RALLY
SAT 10 APRIL 2010

ASSEMBLE 12 noon for 1pm

Temple Place, Embankment

RALLY 2pm

Trafalgar Square

Speakers, music and entertainment

www.10410demo.co.uk



Since 1948, Britain has supported the principle that state pensions, health care, education and other public services are best provided by society as whole.

This is now under threat.

- The state pension is totally inadequate, leaving at least 1 in 4 older people to live in poverty
- 7m households have a child living in poverty and existing benefits provide a very limited safety net
- Unemployment now stands at over 2m and workfare offers no solution
- 10m adults are disabled and face huge barriers to escaping financial hardship
- The NHS is slowly being privatised behind a smokescreen of choice and competition, and patients are suffering as a result
- Our public services are now facing massive cuts and further privatisation

The welfare state and public services are an essential part of any civilised society - pooling the risk across the population and providing support and services to us all.

Let's speak out now!

For more details visit: www.10410demo.co.uk

To sign the online petition: <http://petitions.number10.gov.uk/10-4-10demo/>

Were you born in April 1955?
If so you may feel rather hard done by. You will be one of the first women to have to wait until you are 65 to receive the state pension. Now changes to the bus pass regulations may mean the same delay in receiving your free pass.



Lunchtime Fringe Meeting
Thursday 11 March
TUC Women's Conference
Eastbourne

Defending the Welfare State and Public Services

SPEAKERS:

Sharon Holder, GMB National Officer
Janice Godrich, PCS President (invited)
Dot Gibson, NPC General Secretary

MORE QUESTIONS THAN ANSWERS!

June Clarkson and Janet Shapiro look at depression in older women

Tackling the topic of how far older women are affected by mental illness has raised more questions than answers. Most statistics, quoted for both sexes, are reliable only for those referred; but we know, through talking to friends, that many women do not consult a doctor when depressed. Depression is a chronic illness and should be recognized as such. Appropriate treatment is essential for the quality of life that women deserve. (Sources for article in box below)

Older people with mental health problems represent a large proportion of all healthcare:

- 40% of GP attendees
- 50% of general hospital patients
- 60% of care home residents are older people with mental health problems.

The proportion increases with age:

- After the age of 65, one in six people develop clinical depression and one in twenty people develop dementia.
- Depression affects one in five older people living in the community and two in five living in care homes.

Poverty amongst older women in the UK is at a scandalously high level

- We could save many older women from depression just by raising the basic state pension.
- Many women at risk of depression find stimulating social activity helpful, particularly adult education courses. Yet these have recently become more expensive and less accessible.
- The older you get, the less interest the nation takes in your education and the smaller the resources that go into it.
- The NPC's Pensioners' Manifesto for the coming general election calls for a state pension above the official poverty level and also campaigns for adequate funding for adult education.

Women are more likely than men to suffer from ill-health in old age

- Women are more likely to report symptoms of common mental health problems and more likely to have been treated (29% of women compared to 17% of men)
- Apart from hormonal changes after the menopause, depression may be brought on by the traumas of bereavement and retirement.
- These traumas are made worse by poverty, and isolation caused by poverty.
- Other factors are the stress of being a carer and the side-effects of some prescribed drugs.

The Healthcare Commission was not satisfied with services available

The Commission reported ageism and inadequate provision, and concluded that "There needs to be a shift towards providing care based on needs, rather than age".

- Some mental health care, such as out-of-hours appointments, alcohol and crisis services, were being denied to those over 65.
- There is an unjustified 'reluctance' to accept referrals for over 65s or for those with dementia.
- Despite the fact that over 65s make up a quarter of mental health inpatient admissions, four out of the six mental health trusts studied made decisions based on age.

● Women's Mental Health: Into the mainstream, Department of Health Publications PO Box 777 London SE1 6XH
www.doh.gov.uk/mentalhealth

● Adults In Later Life with Mental Health Problems, Mental Health Foundation quoting Psychiatry in the Elderly (3rd edition) Oxford University Press (2002)

● Better Or Worse: A Longitudinal Study Of The Mental Health Of Adults In Great Britain, National Statistics (2003)

● Improving services and support for older people with mental health problems. Age Concern England

● www.mhilli.org/documents/Inquiryfinalreport-FULLREPORT.pdf
Lifelong? Only if Life's short. Ian Searle. Times Higher 7-13 January, p27.

● Campaigning Alliance for Lifelong Learning www.callcampaign.org.uk

● Health Commission Inquiry, Equality in Later Life
www.cqc.org.uk/_db/_documents/Equality_in_later_life.pdf

Megan Dobney

Megan was appointed as the Regional Secretary of the Southern and Eastern Region of the TUC (SERTUC) almost four years ago. This is the largest of the TUC's six English regions with over two million members. Her background is in the printing industry. Megan studied typographic design at the London College of Printing and was for almost 30 years an activist in printing trade unions: first the National Graphical Association (NGA), then following union mergers, the Graphical Paper and Media Union (GPMU), and Amicus. In the 1970s and 1980s the trades covered by the NGA and its successors were overwhelmingly male dominated and Megan has always been an activist in the equality structures, campaigning for a louder voice for women members, as well as an elected member of the unions' executive committees.

