

# Pensioners' Parliament Report 2019



**NPC**  
NATIONAL  
PENSIONERS  
CONVENTION

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# NATIONAL PENSIONERS CONVENTION PENSIONERS' PARLIAMENT 2019

## OPENING RALLY 11 JUNE 2019

**RON DOUGLAS:** On behalf of the NPC, my name is Ron Douglas, National President, and I welcome you here to Blackpool. As a mark of respect to those people that are not here this year, can I ask you to stand for a minute's silence, please. Just before I introduce Fred Jackson, the Councillor standing in for the Mayor, can I have an indication from anybody that is new for the first time at this Conference. (Indicates) Well done, well done. (Applause) I hope you enjoy yourself. The stewards are around and who can help you and guide you to the events, tomorrow, particularly for those who are first year newcomers.

I would like to introduce Fred Jackson on behalf of the Council. We thank Fred and the Council for the support they have given us for many years because without their help I don't think we could have this Conference here. It's a great pleasure to introduce Fred Jackson on behalf of the Mayor. (Applause).

**CLLR FRED JACKSON:** Good afternoon. Thank you, Mr President, for the introduction. I am really delighted to be here representing the Mayor of Blackpool who sends greetings to you. On behalf of the Council we are delighted you have come once again to Blackpool on your 40th anniversary. It's always a pleasure to have you here. I know many of you have been before but there is something in Blackpool for everyone, whatever age you are and, although, like myself, you are

pensioners, you are still, many of you, are still very young at heart and there's lots to enjoy. So, I hope while you are here you will have an opportunity to get out in to the town and enjoy the delights of Blackpool: the number one seaside resort in the country. It is a pleasure to welcome you.

I was having a chat with Ron before and he was telling me that although you deal with political things, you are not allied to any political party so I presume that means there are people here from all parties, all political persuasions, but with the desire to improve the quality of life for yourselves, children and grand children as well, which I am sure you are just as interested in as the things that belong to pensioners.

I can't help being political because I am a Councillor! Obviously yesterday's news I think was something that none of us here wanted hear: a promise that was broken; a promise to preserve the free TV licences for all pensioners. Whilst it may be accurate that some of us can afford to pay that £150 a year, there will be a lot of people for which it was a promise that was broken and a promise that was broken in a very subtle way; the burden passed over to the BBC instead of the Government themselves.

I see the Windrush issues are on the agenda as well. When I was looking at the stalls outside, the concern that we all have for the National Health Service, and the worries we have about it being sold off to different groups (Applause), and particularly the

interest that Mr Trump in America has in wanting to take over the running of our health service, well, it's our health service; it belongs to us; it's ours, and I hope I am allowed to say that to you. (Applause).

I hope you enjoy your Conference. I hope you have a great time. I hope you do enjoy being here with us and I wish you all the very best for the future in all the work that you do.

Ron was saying about how pleased he was about the way we have allowed you to use the buses and trams in Blackpool and we are really pleased about that. We do want you to enjoy yourself and have that freedom. (Applause).

Thank you very much indeed, Ron, for the welcome, and thank you for letting me share with you. Enjoy yourselves. Thank you very much indeed. (Applause)

**RON DOUGLAS:** On behalf of the NPC, Fred, I would like you to take this cheque to give to the Mayor, to give whichever charity she thinks it would be best used for. As I said earlier we are grateful for the Council and the way they have supported us. I think it's only fair we should make a generous donation to the Mayor so she can support her charity of her choice. Thank you very much. (Applause)

**GILLIAN KELLY:** After that little demonstration I should say as much as I am used to public speaking, I'm not obviously familiar with microphones.

I was told, my brief was, to talk about something intergenerational. So I am going to tell you a story about how my grand daughter, who was then 19, and me, at the age of 73, became climate activists very unexpectedly. I have always been concerned about the

climate since may be the 70s. I have done in small ways whatever I could do: signed the odd petition and even written the odd letter. But I have always been a little bit sceptical about the effectiveness of marching, protesting and doing things like that.

However, I started to hear about the exploration towards fracking that was happening down the road here, in Preston New Road, just outside of Blackpool. And I discovered that fracking was really a very bad thing. It's a fossil fuel. At this point in time, it seemed completely crazy to me to be starting off a new fossil fuel industry that would keep us locked in for another 4 decades when we were being told that all new fossil fuels have to be kept in the ground, re natural gas, but what is being expanded for is methane and that highlights many, many more times the global warming than even carbon dioxide; the water table becomes endangered and there is a risk of leaking and it gives off a lot of pollutants. It was happening in Australia and America but there it was on huge tracks of large uninhabited or sparse pockets of land, but our country is so densely populated it seemed to me to be completely crackers. But I think there was Tina Louise Rothery that started off a move here of 'nanas against fracking'. I think she was invited to speak to you today but she is actually in court because she took part in a VERY imaginative, wonderful, effective action in front of the gates. She is an inspiration. She has been my inspiration.

The very first public action that I took was to go and support her when Cuadrilla, the fracking company took her to court for trespassing. I felt so strongly about what was happening was wrong because Lancashire County Council refused permission for

fracking and then the Government over-turned that. I went to support her and I became very interested in what was going on down the road. I decided to go. I was really nervous and anxious. Would I find it? Where would I park? Was it by the road side? What would it look like? All those things. But I got a friend to go with me and I met a very nice retired HMRC inspector who took us down the road. I started to go fairly regularly, just holding up a placard, just witnessing really.

I have a son who has been involved in a lot of activism. I talked to him and he said, "It's okay to get arrested, but it should have some significance", and I thought, yes. So, I took care not to be arrested because I didn't think I was the kind of person that got arrested any way. I saw people who were taking action in a much stronger way than me and I thought, 'oh, they are just a different species; I would never do that'. Then another thing happened: my son, who was then 47, had a very interesting life, but had no money. He took part in closing down an open cast coal mine in Wales. He told me on the phone. Then I had this knee-jerk reaction and I thought, "You have done all that? Yet, should you not be earning some money?" (Laughter). But, when I came off the phone I thought why should he? Who is going to do it, if not him? He has no dependents and he is very resourceful and very intelligent. We see what is happening to the planet, why should he not do that? Why should not any of us do that?

Instead of feeling my knee-jerk reaction, I realised he had done something very brave. He did another similar action in Germany and got pepper-sprayed. I got to know what it meant to put your body on the line for what you believe

and what you want for the future rather than the future you are being led by the nose towards. An organisation called Reclaim the Power, in July 2017, they had a month of action, support, where all the local residents went down at the fracking site. One evening, I was having supper with my whole family and somebody said, might have been me, "Would it not be significant to do an action with 3 generations of one family?" We said "Oh, yeah it would be", but we thought about it and we talked about the implications for my grand daughter, who was then 19, if she got arrested, if she got a criminal record. We said we would do it. My son booked us a slot and we planned this action where we locked ourselves into steal tubes within big boxes, 3 big boxes. There was me, my husband, my grand daughter, my son, and 2 other lovely friends.

At the time, because there had been actions everyday, the policing was 24 hours, so we could not speak in the early hours of the morning. Extra police had been drafted in so there would have been about 40 police. We did it in broad daylight. The 3 boxes arrived on this trailer. We moved towards them. Mayhem ensued, and somehow miraculously we all got our arms into these tubes where there's a little bar across the middle and you hooked yourself on with a carabena. Some of you may be very disproving by this time. But that was the best thing I ever did. I felt free. I felt anything is possible. Anything is possible. I had always, I think. I come from a very poor working class background. I think I had always rather cherished respectability and I suddenly discovered it does not really matter because what's happening to the planet, the stakes are so high. The stakes are so high. I am now giving talks here and there about what is

happening to the planet. Sometimes I think nobody will come and I look really stupid and say to myself well, what does it matter if I look or feel a little bit stupid? It's because the stakes are so high.

Now I am doing activism in a different way. I've got a group going up in the Lake District, where I live, that is snowballing. That has happened since the inter-Governmental Panel Report came out, the UN Report of the intergovernmental Panel on climatisation that came out last October. That said that we have, at most, 12 years to avoid extinction, basically. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is very cautious; very conservative. There are many countries and they all have to agree the wording and so on. So actually I believe we don't even have 11 years. I believe the changes that need to be made are absolutely enormous; mind-blowing.

Anything that any of us can do to avert this catastrophe is worth doing. I need my paper now because I have probably a few things: the computer models that predicted the rate at which climate change would happen really were put together in a linear sort of way, you know: this will happen and this will happen. But what the computer models didn't forecast was how the collapse of every system affects every other system. Of course, the ice is melting. We all know that but, as the ice melts, the warmth from the sun is not reflected back, but it's absorbed by the oceans and they are getting warmer and warmer and acidified because of the use of fossil fuels and they are also being trawled in the most appalling way; just totally scouring the bottom of the sea bed. Marine life is declining and it's in great danger. It alters the currents; and we enjoy some warmth from the Gulf

stream. We could have a very cold climate paradoxically in the future.

Right now, as I am speaking, huge swathes of the mid-West of America, our bread-basket are under water and no planting can happen. It's not really being featured very much in the mainstream media. But it's there. It's happening. Other people who live there are getting in touch. It's on Facebook. In India, it's 123 degrees of heat in Fahrenheit, and there's a great fear now that monsoons will not come. If the monsoons don't come, it means thousands of people will die or have to move or migrate. So, it is really serious. With global warming there are more deserts and more flooding; weather is very unpredictable, infrastructure gets destroyed. We have to repair it but if it goes on happening we have to repair it again. I don't want to ruin your afternoon, but this is really serious. It's really serious.

I am 75 now, and it's inconceivable to me, it's very difficult for me to get my head around being born in '44 - and some of you were born earlier than that - when everything seemed so stable, and to think that we may be looking at the collapse of civil society. We have also denurtured the soil by using artificial fertilisers. We have decimated insect pollination for food by using pesticides. It's forecast that there will be harvest failure in 5 or 6 years. I can't really overstate what's happening. I am not dramatic, or scare-mongering. There is reason to be scared. I saw what you said about future generations. Pensioners must stand along today's workers in defence of their job, pensions and a decent period of retirement, but it's also the right to do what we need to live. If you think what could be ahead, if we don't stop using fossil fuels, if we don't insulate our houses properly, if we

don't find some other method of transport other than all these millions of individual cars, we are really in trouble.

When I think of the future - time reference - if we don't act for my children, and my grand children, and because I have small ones as well, well I just want to weep. I just want to weep, because it will be terrible. Governments are not acting. I know that you - because I saw you outside and I heard you outside - I heard say what you wanted NOW. That word, "Now" is the word you need. All those other things that you are rightly campaigning for: justice, fairness, a decent slice of the cake, all those things, disability rights, all these things you are campaigning for, without a planet we don't even have a planet to suffer on. So, if we go down the road we are going, and we are going. The trajectory we are on will take us well over 1.5 degrees of warming Centigrade. It's 2, 3, 4 and 5 and life is not possible at 2,3,4,5.

I know you are good lobbyists so I would like you to incorporate this among the other wonderful issues you are working on and I would like you to make it priority. Because, we, our generation, we have had a really good life. We have had the best of it, have we not? We have had a pretty amazing time. And, so we have less to lose. I am not saying you should all go and lock your hands into boxes or get a criminal record, but I know that you can lobby. I know that you can make your voices heard because I have heard you. I know that you are the kind of people, because you are here, because you have made this journey, because you have joined together, you are the kind of people who can make a difference. So, I ask you to join me in making a difference. (Applause).

**RON DOUGLAS:** Our next speaker, I don't think he needs any introduction, is Dave Ward, general secretary of the CWU. (Applause)

**DAVE WARD:** Thanks very much for the invite. It's always a real pleasure to address the National Pensioners' Convention. You have been staunch supporters, some of our strongest supporters of the CWU campaigns: to save the post office, to defend the universal nature of postal services in this country and also to support the re-nationalisation of the Royal Mail. (Applause)

I will come in a minute to tell you where we are with some of those campaigns. But I also want to say I am really pleased to be here today because I think we are at a point where you represent the voice of millions of pensioners in this country. But I can see and I can sense that you also represent the whole of society. Many of the things that you campaign for, I think we are at a point where we need to connect those things more than at any time in my life on this planet because, I think, you know, when I see what is going on and when you see what is going on - and I am not convinced that Brexit is the defining issue of our time - I have a lot of sympathy, Gillian, with what you said. But, I want to talk about what I think is a defining issue of our time, and I think it's one of the reasons we are not dealing with climate change: and it's growing inequality. I want to take about it in a context of my own sort of feeling and my own experience, not in an economic context but what I see happening all around us.

First of all I want to talk a bit in the context of your own life and what I remember. I was able to get a job as a telegram boy in 1976 and when I

compare that to young people today, I see them having to get 2 or 3 jobs, and the combined total of what they earn in those 2 or 3 jobs is not enough for them to take a start in their life. I said here a few years back and I told you a story: I was born in Lambeth and when I got married I was one of the last generations who still got a council flat. I compare that to youngsters today, their start is more likely to be sharing a flat with 6 or 7 people, and all the things you want, you don't get or you will be living in with your parent. If I think about all the services that I remember what made your communities, all the things that you relied on, they are being broken up in front of us. Therefore the defining issue is growing inequality in this country between rich and poor.

It's not Brexit. Certainly it's not the Tory leadership battle, which to me seems a race to give the most to those that have already got the most (Laughter). What I see manifesting itself, is growing poverty for children, growing poverty for pensioners, growing poverty for people who are actually at work. This is something that I think is new in this country. I can't stand it when I hear people talking about how many people are employed today. The truth is they are employed on what I call - said it on the radio - 'crap jobs', where you can't get by. You can't bring a family up. You can't do the basic things in life. So this is not people who don't want to work; it's not people that are not putting it in. The old adage that used to be when I was young, my parents said to me, "Get your head down. Get a decent job and you will get on". That has gone for millions of people in this country today.

I don't think I have ever sort of noticed it as much as that in my life time; it's more now about what you start with or

what your parents or grand parents can give you than it's ever been. We have to do something about that. One of the things that I am here to talk about today is what the CWU are pushing for in a campaign, a New Deal for workers. Our argument is that we need to get together. There are some great things and there are some great unions still in this country today but we have to come together and fight for a New Deal for workers in this country. We have set out a plan which we put to the TUC, and we had it carried at the TUC. Ultimately, Gillian, I will borrow some of your stuff again: that plan has to evolve into action; not action that we can't deliver, but new and innovative action that can make a difference like we saw with the extinction rebellion campaigns the other week.

I want us to work with you, the NPC, to make sure we can deliver a New Deal for workers in this country. We have a number of plans on what that is about. When it comes to my only Union, The Royal Mail, and the Post Office, we have been campaigning for years now to try and save the post office. I have to be honest with you, unless we get a change in Government, that is going to be very difficult for us to do. But what we want to do in our campaigns is open up some new approaches to that campaign. I am interested in the fact that in recent years what is happening in Central Government; we have had Mayors of cities being elected. We had Labour Mayors of cities being elected, and we want to work with some of those Mayors not to close down post offices but to open up new ones. That's one of our latest campaigning initiatives that we want to work with local councils and we want to put councils and hold them to account along with these Mayors, along with Government to say "Do you know what

surely you can do a little bit better than just closing down the post office. Can't you come up with any plans for the future where once again the post office can become a central point for our communities"? I think it's do-able. I really do. We have the Labour Party to commit to introduce the post office in a new way, where it can be part of the investment structure of rebuilding this country; the front bench team in Labour have committed to that as something they are willing to do if they get elected.

We are saying that could be a place where we could get rid of all the loan day campaigns, but offer ethical loans to people, and we could host credit unions that are steeped in the tradition of the Labour Movement and trade unions that could help and that could be a central part of a post office going forward. We could do many things that could support local community. So, the challenge is to think of new ways of moving things forward in this country, not writing old industries off. We need people with those ideas backing their campaigns. We need you to continue to support us in that and we want to get in to a position where we'll open a post office and we'll get support right across the community for opening one, and when we do it, we do it, and this is what we'll say "This is what you do to rebuild the country, to rebuild communities". (Applause)

With Royal Mail workers you all know the relevance of perhaps the post to society today; it's not what it was 40 or 50 years ago, and we and our members understand that more than anybody. But you don't have to wipe out a whole group of postal workers. Over 130000 people walk the streets of this country. You can find new things for postal workers to do like they do in France where they actually help

deliver prescriptions. They have a much closer relationship with people on the front door. They are doing things that communities and councils want them to do to support people. They look after elderly people. They look in on elderly people. These are things that, if you were putting the values that you all believe in, and I think the vast majority of people in this country believe in, we can turn these industries around. We don't have to see these industries just disappear; we can modernise them in a way that supports all our people in this country.

I want to say about what we can do with pensioners in a sense of connecting our campaigns with ours. One of the things is I think it's time that you set out again a manifesto for pensioners in this country. I would expect unions like ours to back that manifesto 100%. I share your outrage at the BBC's announcement yesterday but I am not surprised by it. I will be honest, I am not surprised because it epitomises everything I have been talking about, not just in the UK, but in Europe and across the world. It's growing because the people that had the power are fewer and fewer, and the people that are weeding off that are getting larger in numbers. That means we have to have radical, bold change. The scale of the problems needs to be matched by the scale of our ambition to change things.

I suppose one of the things that I am very confident about is that when these attacks come, like that attack yesterday, sometimes I think - and I was saying it on the March to one of our younger members who are here - it's things like that which spur us on to say "We are not having it". (Laughter). We should limit the use of technology. People say about the need to slow down the planet and I agree with them.



People talk about the need to slow down the pace of life, and I agree with them. But one of the things we have to do is slow down the intensity of daily work and how technology is being used to create a work until you drop mentality in this country and elsewhere. (Applause).

The last couple of points I want to make are about how we bring people together, and how we reject the voices that are out there at the moment. When inequality is on the rise, and it is, other things tend to come with it. One of the obvious things that comes with it is that politicians start to point their finger away from themselves, and they start trying to divide people: those people from different ethnic backgrounds, people who may have been born in/outside this country, migrant workers who come over to this country to earn a decent living, in a society that should be sharing its values and welcoming people. Right across the piece they avoid the real solutions. They ain't got any, because it needs radical change. What they do is they get us against each other. The thing I have seen with intergenerational conflict is outrageous; the idea that Willetts, whatever his name is doing with the report, and other people who have come up with it, the answer appears to be that older people are getting too much and therefore you have to give something back to the younger people. That is not the answer. The answer is called the race to the top for everybody.

That's the only way you can do that, and I believe that the tide is definitely turning in this country on a range of things. So, I am optimistic, actually, when I see how many of you are out there, and how optimistic some of the rallies we have been to recently are, I

think people are starting to get it and starting to realise we have to bring about fundamental change now: change in the world of work, change in the way we look after our pensioners, with the dignity that they deserve, the dignity that I want when I get to that age. I am 60 in a few weeks, and I will get a deferred pension. We are where we can go away with confidence, where others are fighting for the same things. Our job is to connect those fights. Our job is not to have those fights going on independently. That is why I say the biggest connector of all is actually inequality. If we can find ways to connect these messages we'll bring about a much fairer society, and now is the time to make these connections. I commit as leaders, the Communication Workers' Union, we'll bring everything we have got to bring these forces together, to bring in the forces of good together, to make sure we bring about that change. Thank you very much (Applause).

**RON DOUGLAS:** Thanks, Dave, as forceful as ever. Thank you very much. Our next speaker is Adrian Favell from the University of Leeds.

**PROF ADRIAN FAVELL:** Good afternoon. Thank you to the NPC. I'm very glad to be here from Leeds. As you can see I am a 'prof'. I hope it's not going to be too much like a lecture. It's very nice to talk between Gillian on the environment and Zita on Windrush, and what I have to say has things to do with both subjects. I want to talk a bit about global Britain and about population and inequalities and these difficult questions that this country is waiting.

I should say I represent also the UK in a changing Europe, a programme of research on Brexit and the consequences of Brexit. But I will not

talk about the rights and wrongs of Brexit today but clearly there is something wrong today with UK PLC. Not everything is right, in our not very United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. We talk a lot about how immigrants and how ethnic minorities should integrate but one thing is for sure: the British white population is very far from being integrated, because inequality is one of the fundamental things that are causing this disintegration. But there is also, apparently, as we keep hearing huge divisions in values between old and young, North and South, urban and metropolitan populations and rural and regional populations or what gets simplified as a division between liberal cosmopolitans and conservative nationalists.

There is also a lot of anger and frustration out there spilling out on to social media, as we know. These kinds of problems are really pointing to a genuine disintegration in some sense of the country, I think. This fear and anxiety has spilt over a lot, I think, into the British minority population, black and minority ethnic population. And, they have discovered they can be immigrants again as in the Windrush scenario, where there was submission as deportation as unwanted or illegal immigrants. And, the EU population, long-term residents of this country, they have also experienced this kind of line crossing of becoming seen as immigrants, again when they thought they were long-term residents in a part of Europe.

One of the things apparent here is that Britishness on the whole, as a consequence of this, is kind of falling apart. One of the things that has happened with a certain kind of nationalism is that Scotland and Ireland are drifting away; the British

unity is up for grabs in a sense. The question of my research fundamentally is what happened? I grew up in the 1980s. It was a pretty miserable time I thought. But I left in any case and I went to live and work abroad in the 1990s. But during then something happened in the UK; not only did it start to come to terms with a lot of the ethnic diversity that had come from its colonial history with a black and minority ethnic population, but a changing kind of conception of Britishness was more mainstream and accepted, with people getting a lot more comfortable with it. But Britain was going through vast other changes; new sorts of migrations bringing all diversities to the society. It became, in any way, one of the most ethnically diverse societies on the planet; it's this kind of mix of cultural hybridity, diaspora had a changing notion of Britishness.

Britain in the 1990s, globally, even became cool. You remember the 1990s: we had Jamie Oliver doing Italian food. We had the Spice Girls. We had Noel Gallagher showing up at 10 Downing Street with Tony Blair. I don't know if you remember any of these, folks, but in the 1990s the British as a whole seemed to be quite comfortable with this at the time. We used to call this multi-culturalism and it gets referred to in academic literature as super-diversity as often that is a bit more accurate. The diversity is not just ethnic diversity of foreigners and British people but diversity across culture, ages, genders and social origins of different kinds; it was a kind of copiousness to British society at the time. Britain had become, in other words, a highly globalised society and seemed to be a dynamic society.

One of the things I'd also like to point to, and it's related to some of my core

research, it was highly Europeanised; the UK was the most Europeanised country in Europe in some ways as it was open to foreigners in the labour market. It became a very attractive place for an awful lot of places. What was driving this and why Britain was comfortable with this culture, as it was in the 90s and 2000s, is because there was a very strong institutionalised ethic in this country for non-discrimination. That is very much built into a lot of British institutions. Non-discrimination, by race, took many decades to establish a framework on non-discrimination on race that worked. Non-discrimination on gender, age and disability, is institutionalised in important ways, and the things we mobilise in very important ways. I think this Organisation is continually mobilising around the issue of discrimination.

During this period, embedded in the development of a society at this time, was the acceptance of discrimination if you were foreign. Foreigners in this country, for example EU workers, had come to this country to get a job because it was possible to be treated fairly and equally; whereas it's not the case in a lot of west European societies. If you go and live in France or Germany the discrimination is a lot more apparent in your access to public services, or to work in that society; it's a less institutionalised way of treating people. I think this attractiveness of Britain changed because multi-culture was going on across the country.

Economists will tell you because the big picture here is that Britain was very successful on the back of this diverse migration and this global openness, in other words, that was developing. You might say that is an awful lot of immigrants changing our society but the actual rates of net migration during

much of this period was something like 300000 a year. The Government still gets itself into a twist failing to meet its target of 100000, but we are talking about 300000 people. That is 1% of the 35m visitors that come to this country every year: 35m people coming and going. You may say they are tourists and not immigrants. A lot of them are students and on temporary work contracts; a lot of people coming and going for business; a lot of transportation. In other words, global integration across borders porously keeping the society open in various sorts of ways. At the end, well, around the end of 2000, I did a strange thing and I came back to Britain; I had been studying Britain from the outside. I was a visitor and I had lived in a lot of other countries along the way. What had happened at the end of the 2000 to all the positive stories I have been telling you, is from the early 90s and earlier 2000s is how we have become nothing but a hostile environment? That's a hostile environment for anyone and everyone who we get to consider as an immigrant again, using that label despite all the mobility and despite the presence of foreigners in our society, as an every day fact in British society and culture.

There are a few obvious reasons why Britain has turned away from this particular period of positive change, I think, that it experienced in the 90s and 2000s. One is the benefits of this were not shared. The impact of a lot of the change in society was concentrated in particular places and benefited particularly people. Labour, during its reign in the 90s and 2000s redistributed and the EU put a lot of money into poorer regions in Britain. But the fact was that it was the margin of accumulation that was taking place in the centre and among certain social classes of people. The bigger picture

here of course is that that there was a global shift going on: shifting resources away from a kind of distribution across society towards metropolitan centres as global cities, as places that integrated in a broader global society, which tended to get the concentrated benefits from it and other places which tended to get left out.

My idea, at Leeds, and the research project I wanted to talk about as a consequence of all this was to take this story and take the long view on it and ask people what has happened through the course of their life as they have experienced these sorts of changes, that's the changes from the post war, end of empire, through the 1960s and into the era of Britain and things that are happening in the UK at the moment. That is to take people born in the 40s and 50s and to say how they have experienced this change and how have they come to terms with what has happened in the country? I believe Britain can handle it from a social point of view. We live with globalisation in unproblematic ways. We go on holiday and take cheap airlines, we live and work abroad and buy houses in other countries. A lot has been facilitated by the political scenario we have found ourselves in.

But I wanted to approach this as an oral history of people born in the 40s and 50s who can talk about how they have experienced this kind of change. There are a couple of hypotheses I/we want to explore, and, if I can give you a sense of what I think is important here: we don't think it's driven entirely by this kind of opposition of values between one set of people who are open to the world and another set of people who are closed to the world. We think that people on a whole can come to terms with these kinds of

issues. But one of the issues is, of course, relative deprivation. In Britain, as a population, we are in a position of more or less in the 80<sup>th</sup> per cent of a global distribution, at the richer end of society, if you were put all the people in the world in a long line, we would be around the 80<sup>th</sup> per cent on the whole. That is most people, if you compare yourself with people in Africa or other parts of the world.

But during this period, we have experienced a downward positioning in this redistribution and we have seen people in the top end, top 10%, getting massively richer, stripping away. It's a bit of a trunk in an elephant's graph. A lot of people are catching up: the Chinese and Indians and Brazilians for example have all seem massive growths in their middle classes with lots of resources and these are people who are turning up as tourists in the country. This is one of the areas where I think there has been a real consciousness that people are losing out and all they have left in some sense is to mark their sense in the British passport.

The second hypothesis: there has been a strong sense of loss of place. People like Theresa May like to contrast the people, the people with culture, presumably national culture, with the citizens of nowhere. The Metropolitan centres, where all the stuff is happening, that is where a lot of the new culture is happening, particularly the production of culture that creates money in new kinds of ways, and innovative forms of culture happens in these places. Metropolitan centres have been evacuated away from culture. There is culture in these places of course but you know it's a culture of, well, shopping malls, disappearing high streets, banks and post offices and drive-in cinemas and

stuff. All the stuff we buy and watch on TV has been coming from America a long time. It's a generic mobile culture that does not have the richness of a kind of lived culture, a culture of place.

So, what we will do in our research is look at certain places that have very rich cultures of place that have dealt with a lot of socio-economic change and spatial change which has evacuated them of culture, like Wakefield, Dewsbury, Preston, those historical places where the struggle to maintain place is extremely difficult. What do residents/how do they experience this loss of place over the decades as they see the cities struggling to maintain these kind of historical identities in some sense? A good example is Preston that has done wonders in terms of creating a local community around local commodity of change and promoting ID and connectiveness, which is very different to the national narratives we are getting. These are difficult issues and the only way to deal with these as a sociologist is to listen to people. These are the hypotheses we are throwing out. We like to talk to people. One of the reasons I came here was hopefully to make contact. If you are interested in the kind of arguments I am developing, may be you'd be interested to talk us.

The diversity question will not go away, whether we Brexit or not; Britain will not get less diverse and not de-globalise but it's what the quality of globalisation is, and what is at stake here. How do we deal with the changes? We think you are the experts; you have lived with change all your life. Change is not about ever moving; people are always moving; things don't stay steel; the river keeps flowing, and there is a long story here, a long history of change in Britain and

change for those people that came to Britain that lived their own lives through the experience of moving to Britain, or perhaps where their parents moved to Britain. This is part of the story. Do get in touch with us; we are at the University of Leeds. The project is called "Northern Exposure". We would be very happy to hear from you and get your contact details if you would like to talk to us. Thank you. (Applause).

**RON DOUGLAS:** Our next speaker is Zita Holbourne from PCS.

**ZITA HOLBOURNE:** Greetings everybody. Thank you very much National Pensioners' Convention for inviting me along here today to speak to you. I am going to speak primarily about the Windrush scandal.

I am Zita Holbourne, and I'm the National Vice President, and the co-chair of BARAC, and a co-founder of Windrush Day of Action and BAME Lawyers 4 Justice, which is a sister organisation to another organisation I cofounded, BME Lawyers for Grenfell. So, we are a coalition of organisations with trade unions with racial equality organisations and Windrush justice campaigns in cities and towns and societies and associations of lawyers who work together to campaign against racism and injustice in society and Human Rights issues. At the moment our major focus is Windrush, and has been for a number of years.

I want to go back a bit: the Windrush scandal did not just happen in a vacuum; didn't just break out a year or 2 years ago, but it's part of the hostile environment that has evolved over a decade and over a decade, so even before this decade, that hostility was building. Theresa May as Home

Secretary was the architect of much of that hostile environment. (Applause and uproar from the floor). From the scape-goating of black and migrant communities, and others, it's an attempt to shift the blame on migrant communities for the cuts, the poverty and the horrific misery that Government has caused for all of us.

Actually, our struggles are connected. The struggle that you may experience as an older person, the struggle I experience as a black disabled woman for example, are all inter-connected. What the Government want is for us to be divided and ruled so we can be separated, so we can other each other and point the finger and blame each other. When the Immigration Act was introduced I co-founded another Organisation - you can see I really like co-founding organisations! - and this was called the Movement Against Xenophobia. You may or may not have heard of it but you may have seen the billboard posts and posters in train stations and tube stations if you live in London and bus stations and garages which were big posters of people that said "I am an immigrant, a nurse, a builder, bus driver and this is how I contributed to British society".

We anticipated that the Immigration Act was going to divide communities; it was going to create an apartheid-like state. We anticipated that the Windrush scandal, as it's now being called, was going to happen because the Government were focused not only on trying to bar migrant communities from entering the UK including refugees, but we heard from the speaker about environmental issues and global change. I co-ordinate regular aids distributions and conveys to refugees in France. Most of those people that I work with are people that are fleeing the combined impacts on

climate change, persecution, conflict and poverty and all those 4 are inter-connected. Historically those people fleeing for their lives are coming from countries that Western countries like the UK have pillaged and stripped resources from, and now they are saying you can't come into our country, forgetting that they went into those countries and destroyed the resources that were there. (Applause).

The Government would have you believe that the Windrush scandal has ended and it is no more; everything is resolved. They said sorry and sorted it all out. But it could not be further from the truth. Can I ask anybody here that has been impacted by Windrush, from the Windrush generation? Those impacted by the scandal? I can see some hands going up. Some people here in this Conference will be directly impacted and I would urge you talk during the course of the Convention and find out how they have been impacted on and how you can support them in their communities. That's because we are talking about, yes, primarily, a group of older people, a community of older people that are impacted. But what has happened has had a knock-on impact on whole families, multiple generation families. Actually it will have a knock-on impact even on children who are not born yet into those families. I will come on to explain some of that.

There are the psychological impacts that people have gone through: you are losing your home, you are being evicted, having your job taken away from you because you are suddenly told after 40 years that you are an illegal immigrant for being in the UK, being criminalised. We know that the Criminal Justice System is a racist system. There are still deportations happening. Last year we campaigned

to try and stop the mass deportations in the wake of the Windrush scandal unfolding. For anybody that does not know, there are entire planes that are filled with people to deport them to a particular country or region. So, what the Government do is target what I would describe as people that are 'low-hanging fruit', people that are complying with the system, signing in with the Home Office, going through a process of appeals or naturalisation, and because they are known to the authorities, and they comply and come to the Home Office, they are literally being snatched to fill up these planes and deported en masse.

When I talk about this, literally we are talking about those that are detained, and sometimes they have around 2 weeks turn-around before they are actually deported. Imagine you go to sign in and you have your grand child in a pushchair. Some examples here are real examples of people I have worked and campaigned with for justice. You are told "We are taking you now". They haul in the social service to take away your child and don't even allow you a phone call to call a relative to pick up a child. Imagine the trauma of a child being snatched and given to a stranger. This is the inhumane way people are treated.

So, we stopped these mass deportations for about a year. In March this year there was mass deportation to Jamaica, and myself and many others campaigned and got about a third of the people off that flight. People were literally snatched in the night. One man, whose campaign I have been helping with, we got him an injunction the afternoon before he was going to be taken off the flight. But, in the middle of the night, guards barged into his cell, if you want to call it that,

his room, and snatched him; he was chained to somebody else, cuffed to somebody else, taken in a van in the middle of the night to a location that is not divulged to you. We had people texting us saying "We can see signs to Birmingham", so they knew they were going to Birmingham Airport - they guessed - and put on a plane and cuffed on either side to a guard. Imagine sitting like that on a flight. It's inhumane. If you have a criminal record you have the guards barge in and take you in an inhumane way, even if you have been to prison and served your time several decades ago and your crime is spent, and you are back in society contributing, you are still demonised in that way.

A lot of the people that have been detained are grand mothers actually, and grand fathers. They are people that are carers for their grand children when their children go to work. You might say to me they should not be caring for grand children in their retirement but should be relaxing and enjoying their life. I agree with that, but the reality is because of austerity and poverty that people struggle to make ends meet, to afford child care and so on. So there are a lot of grand parents that help with the care of their grand children.

When these grand parents are snatched and detained, what they will say is that it's worse than being in prison, being in detention, because if you were in prison you would know how long you were there for, how long your sentence is, or how it can be reduced. When you are detained in a detention centre for deportation, you don't know how long you will be there. There are people held there for months or a year and you don't know when you will get a piece of paper saying you are booked on a flight...but

all you will be told is that you are to be deported between this date and that date. Imagine how stressful and traumatic that is.

It's led to several families I know, children depending on their mother, for example, to help with the child care, they think to go to out work, or having to give up work because they have no child care, or reduce their hours, and that means their entire family unit is in dire poverty. That has a knock-on impact on the children, on their education. We had the Government telling people that it does not matter if you are deported and you have children because you could pair up by Skype. There was a grand mother who had 13 grand children and 6 children who were either British citizens or had status in Britain and she was told that she didn't have enough family connections in the UK to remain in the UK. How many grand children is the poor woman supposed to have before she has enough connection?

(Laughter). There was a woman who raised her children and grand children in the UK. Her husband was British. She was going through the final stages of naturalisation. So, this is a retired woman. Her husband died at the final stage of naturalisation and she was told "You don't need to stay any more because your husband is dead, so you can be deported".

This kind of thing is happening, and many people caught up by the Windrush scandal may have never gone back to their country of origin. So, parents and grand parents and aunts and uncles, you know, it was quite usual to do that, and they were told "This is the British Empire, the mother country. You are British". And, they grew up thinking they have British citizenship. They were allowed to leave the country to go on a holiday.

But, for a lot of people, it's going for a funeral because somebody had died back home and they'd gone for the first time in many years, or at all, so they had gone off. It's fine to leave the country with the documentation and passport they had, but when they went to come home, they were told "You can't leave". So, this would be in the Caribbean country from where they are deporting from. "You are in the UK illegally and can't go back". Imagine you left your home for 2 weeks; you don't make permanent arrangements; you may have annual leave from work, or somebody feeding your cat, whatever, but just you've just made temporary arrangement for the time you are away. So, if you don't have anybody to deal with your affairs and deal with that, you have lost your job, and your home is repossessed and thrown away are your lifetime and personal possessions and you've literally lost everything. There are load of people that are still in limbo.

The Government has published this compensation scheme now that's taken an eternity to publish and they are trying to pitch it as a wonderful scheme with scope. But, in reality, with the analysis our organisations have done, it's not fit for purpose. It's really difficult to navigate. Actually I can see on the agenda there is something about digitalisation. A lot of it is all on line. So, if you have not got the access to fill that on line and navigate that system, how are you even going to apply in the first place? There are cut-offs and restrictions and limitations. We think there should be absolutely no limitation, because how do you put a limit on somebody's life being destroyed or being exiled for 30 or more years, and your mental health and physical health deteriorating because of the trauma and stress you're going through, and being



isolated and separated from your family? People that are deported are stigmatised as criminal. Sajid Javid said in Parliament, "He should be in court, shouldn't he? He should be". (Laughter/uproar for the floor). Yes, it was in Parliament. "...this is a plane full of convicts that are going: hardened criminals, murderers and rapists..." and it included the least sentence somebody got: dangerous driving; a young boy. They were screaming head lines in Jamaica. So, people came back with a stigma attached on them, dependent on charities and in some cases destitute and, if you have nothing, you may have to turn to crime just to survive if you can't even eat or anything. There are around 20 people who have died because of the Windrush scandal because of their health degeneration and trauma and stress and some people took their own lives as well, both in the UK and after being deported. We've to think about that.

My union, the PCS, was the first union to call for a public inquiry, an independent public inquiry, not a Windrush scandal. We started a Government petition that has a 6 months' life. There are only 4400 signatures on it which in itself will send a message to the Government that people don't really care about this issue. It ends on 17 June but I would encourage you, if you can, to sign the petition in the next few days before it ends, to bring the numbers up so there's conduct in to an independent public inquiry, not a Windrush scandal. We also had motions that went to TUC Congress; BAME Lawyers have issued 2 Conferences: a Windrush day of action held earlier this year, and on 2 June, a Windrush Day of Action, and that is the Government who endorsed Windrush Day that we have been campaigning on for many years. But,

we think it's a kick in the teeth, an insult to celebrate the contribution of the Windrush generation whilst this injustice and racism still continues (Applause).

So, we called a National Windrush Day of Action and 7 cities are participating including Birmingham, Manchester, London, Liverpool, Leeds; they are taking part, and, if you are based in any of those cities, you can go along. We are going to be doing banner drops and marches and demonstrations in those cities. In London we'll do a banner drop, a March from Downing Street to Westminster Bridge and then a banner drop over Westminster Bridge, so we want people to come along. If you can't get to the city/are not based in those cities, we would ask if you are at events or want to do something yourselves in your town or city, to do some kind of demonstration or do a card saying 'Solidarity with Windrush Day of Action' and do some photos and then post them on to our social media.

I will end by saying if anybody thinks the Windrush scandal was not racist in intent, it was racist; it was driven by racism. And we need to stand up to all forms of racism, all forms of discrimination that everybody faces, whether you are a young person, an older person, LGBT+, disabled, or/and a woman, our struggles are connected. The discrimination and horrendous treatment we are experiencing, the adverse disproportionate impact of austerity lead to poverty for all those groups; discrimination and othering for all those groups, so we need to pull and come together and campaign on all the issues collectively because there are more of us than those in power. We have the power as long as we assert it. We need to do it, if not

now, but for the next generation, for our children and grand children coming through. Solidarity. (Applause).

**RON DOUGLAS:** Well done. Very good. The last speaker in this session is the General Secretary, Jan Shortt.

**JAN SHORTT:** Thank you. Good afternoon, everybody. First of all can, I start with my thank yous, otherwise I will forget. Thank you for being here. I know some people have had some quite difficult journeys because they have come from places where it's flooded. So, thank you for actually making it. In terms of speakers that we have had today, I know Dave has had to go and we knew he had to do that, as he is a very busy man, but thank you all for coming and making your contribution. I will start with Gillian. In terms of the environment, we had a motion passed at our Delegate Conference in March; it's the first time that we have ever had an environmental motion on our agenda. So that is something to be worked with. As a point of information, there is a climate change demonstration on 26 June in Parliament Square, and you are being asked to take along with you an alarm clock. It's an alarm clock, not your phone, but an old one, so when it rings it makes a lot of noise. Your alarm clock should be set for 2pm in the afternoon. They all go off together with the intention of letting the people inside that building know you are out there. So, if you can get along on 26 June, I have a poster that I can get produced for you and we'll get it circulated. Please do either take your alarm clocks or go without your alarm clock. I think you should take with you a set of ear plugs because it will be loud. That is something we can start to work on, get in motion. That came to our BDC. It will make a difference. It will also connect, as all the speakers

today have said, connect the dots, the dots between us: younger people, the environment, and the future for our children and grand children. So, if you can get along with that, thank you very much.

I also want to say thank you to Dave, who is not here, because he has been an absolute excellent supporter of the NPC. As you heard, he still will be and we'll find ways of connecting with him. We have had a lot of campaigns and demonstrations on closures for post offices but it's nice to know that there is a person that is looking forward to the future, and looking at a different way of managing post and what post operatives can do. So we'll look forward to working with him.

Thank you so much for coming regarding the research (to Adrian). I hope people in the room will be interested enough to come and speak to you. I guess we'll have your details if somebody wants to. If you are interested in speaking to Adrian afterwards it's a good project to get involved with. It's quite imaginative that one. What can we say to Zita, you know, for the truth of the matter that has gone under the carpet? We heard about this in the press and all of a sudden it's disappeared and we're supposed to think it's gone away. But we know, because we have a Minority Elders' Working Party, and I thank them for the work on the Windrush because it's been very important. I hope through you and the contact through you, we can work together with the Windrush people who were invited to come to Britain. They were invited by the current Government. They were invited because we didn't have a workforce. Right? They came and they worked. They paid their way. They paid every penny they had to in terms of their tax and national

insurance but now, because they have become an older person, all of a sudden they are not accepted. That is completely and utterly despicable and unacceptable. (Applause). So, that is the kind of round-up as to where we have been.

I want to concentrate on the last few weeks on what has been coming out in the press and particularly what came out yesterday. I have been absolutely appalled around last week's supposed respect for those veterans who went to war for this country. The celebration of D-Day is right and proper. Every news paper has it on its front page. The BBC 1 and BBC 2 and other programmes repeated that celebration. You had the media and members of different Governments standing there saying they respect the fallen. And they thank the veterans that came home. Okay. In the same newspaper (Indicates), is a 91-year old veteran, who was stuck in hospital because his Local Authority, and the NHS, could not decide who would pay for his care. He and his family had been promised care in his home but when his son went to a meeting which he was told how that care was going to be delivered, who would do it, and all that kind of thing. He was met with 5 officials saying, "You are not getting any care". Right?

This lovely gentleman, as a young man, went to war. He never knew if he was coming home. He came home. He got married. He had 2 children. He lost his wife. He cared and brought those children up as a single Dad. He has given them a good start in life. And now, when he needs it the most, he is betrayed. He had to sell his bungalow, worth £180000. His care comes to nearly £800 a week. I worked out, if he is lucky, that money will pay for 5 years of his care. It's because he has dementia. If he had cancer there would

have been no bickering; he would have had his care and it would have been free. That is on the same page of the same newspaper in the week we were celebrating D-Day.

In that same week, I am not going to say we welcomed him because we didn't, but we had a visit from Donald Trump (uproar from the floor), and in the same media, the same Government shook his hand and he said, "If the UK wants a deal with America, then the NHS needs to be on the table". There was uproar from a good number of MPs, and he retracted that. But we already know that Americans are here in full force looking at a private contract ready to take it over. That was just last week. Now come to yesterday: as Dave said, I am not surprised that we got the outcome that the BBC has given us. At ten to seven this morning I was interviewed on the phone by BBC Wales. I put out - and they asked me what I wanted to say to the Government and I said Number 10. I know Theresa May has run away, but, it happened on her watch, and I want her to tell us this week what she is going to do, because her frame of mind was that the money is there and the Government expects the BBC to maintain a TV licence for over 75s. They have not. So her expectations have not been met. She is no longer Prime Minister, but I want to know what she is going to do about it, and, likewise, those people running to be the potential new Prime Minister; I want them to say what their stance is. Now I know Michael Gove has said he will keep it. He will remain with it. Esther McVey said she will maintain it - (uproar from the floor) - but, not one other person has come forward and said.

Now, I didn't know about this, it was a colleague in my region that spotted it; I

had not known the Radio Times carried out its own consultation on the TV licence. It comes up with a different outcome. Their consultation had 48% over 75s, and 52% under 75. I will find my figures: 61% of those people that participated said it's the Government's responsibility. (Applause). 59% said it should not be restricted. So, they were against any form of means-testing either by age or income. 64% said all people over the age of 75 should have a free TV licence. Now that is completely different to the BBC who say that 52% of the people undertaking their consultation wanted some kind of research. They have decided that restriction should be pension credit. Now, in the interview, as they do, they ring you and get your voice levelled, and you get to hear what other people are saying. David Attenborough and Gloria Hunniford was on, and then the chairman of the BBC and he said "By using pension credit as a cut-off point, it might actually encourage more people to claim it." (Laughter from the floor). It was 7 in the morning. It's very early, and may be he had not quite woken up. I woke up instantly I heard that.

So, basically that was released yesterday. Then came the news that the House of Lords don't think that they have enough money; they are looking for a pay rise. (Uproar from the floor). So, you have somebody who can claim £305 a day plus any other expenses saying they can't afford to live. Well, I challenge every one of them: I will take their money and they can have my pension. (Applause). It's the same House of Lords that want to take away everything from future pensioners. We have all seen the House of Lords tackle intergenerational fairness. We are not having it because it's not fair. We

stand for every generation. We want our children and our grand children and may be those great grand children that somebody in this room may already have, have a decent life. They are talking about waiting 5 years after you have retired to get your bus pass; and waiting for 5 years after you have retired for the winter fuel allowance. They want to lump together your benefit and tax them. So anyone who becomes 67 between 2026 and 2028, you will retire at your birth-date; that will be faced in over the 2 years.

We are currently putting together a busting myth of the Lords' report, and that will be delivered with some strong words with a demand to have a look at it. They mention the report where they understood that there was more unfairness within the generations than between generations. So, having known that, what's the point of the report? (Applause). In terms of the TV licence, we need to ramp-up the action. I want to tell you that we have booked a coach for Thursday. It's a 56-seater and we'll go to Salford Quays, the BBC brand new, spanking, lovely media centre. We are going to go there with our banners and we are going to be noisy. (Applause). The coach will leave at 2 o'clock. It takes about an hour to get there and we'll be an hour/hour and a half outside the BBC, so probably back in to Blackpool just after 5.

We have not got too many details at the moment. I just want to tell you today, so you think about it in your hotels and your groups to see who wanted to go. If you go to the NPC stall tomorrow, we'll take your money, give you a receipt and give you all the information that we have got. I think it's important. I just knew in my heart of hearts, I had a gut feeling that once we moved to Blackpool, they would put

out this information in the hope we could not do anything. We are not. We are going to do something because we have to. (Applause). It does not stop there. We have a year before they actually implement that. So, in this year, Theresa May has already said this: "I don't like it. I've asked them to look at it again and find some other way around it". Forget all that. It's down to us, down to us here and our families and our friends to actually stick together and tell them it's not. When I was asked what I wanted to say to the Government I said, well, without swearing, "Yes, ah, they needed to think on because who are the largest group of voters?" (Applause).

Contrary to public opinion, older people don't forget. When politicians betray us, as they have done, we won't forget, so they need to think on and ask themselves: have they done the right thing? In the run up to all of this I want you to know that every political party stands behind us on the TV licence. We have total cross-party support for maintaining the free TV licence. We are going to use that next week to try and force a huge one-off debate in the House of Commons using the whips to make sure everybody is there and, if it is voted through, then they are done. (Applause). I need you next week; we'll be looking at how we can organise in the regions. We always said we would not actually take any action against the BBC. I think the gloves are off. So we'll try and work with regions to try and set a particular day and a particular time when we all trip up to our regional day centres: same day, same time; we'll get the message out to you. It's the impact we need, and the media we have got. One more thing on the TV licence: we have been in every national newspaper this

morning. The Daily Mail is here and wants to interview people on the TV licence. I know sometimes the Daily Mail has not been particularly good about old people, but when they come to you and ask you to do something, we don't say no. So, if you want to go and give your opinion please do and make sure that they understand that this is not just about THIS generation of 75-year olds but the next generation and the generation after that. (Applause).

There are 2 more things I need to say about this: I hope people feel that the flavour of this Parliament is slightly different and I hope you have enjoyed it; it will not suit everybody, but we have tried to take on board everybody's requests and we hope they all work out. The 2 things I have to say to you: I want to say thank you to – I put his name somewhere - Alan. Alan is the person that negotiates with Blackpool Council to get us the free tram rides. He has done now for 3 years. I think if Alan is in the room, I don't know if he is here, there you are (Indicates) (Applause) thank you, Alan.

The last 2 pieces of information: there are petitions. There is a petition on the Unite stand which is about transport. They want you to take away some of their petitions into their regions and get them signed. So if you do that, please. Their petition is about bringing buses and railways back into public ownership (Applause). There are all sorts of petitions on the NPC stall and one in particular regarding Mavis. Mavis has worked tirelessly on getting a law to protect older people. Go to our stall and sign your names. Thank you, Mavis, for the things you do.

Thank you again and we'll see you tomorrow in all the sessions.

**RON DOUGLAS:** Before you leave I have 2 announcements to make: the Thames Valley Secretary has asked me to advise his group if they will meet at the raffle stall so they can discuss who will go on each of the sessions and those that want to stay behind, or perhaps go to the toilet and come back, as there is a film show being held in this particular building organised by the Merseyside Pensioners, and, anybody want to see that film, they are welcome to come back and do all of that. Thank you for your co-operation today.

## **SESSIONS 12 JUNE 2019**

### **Housing: Older People and Fuel Poverty**

**Dr Vikki McCall, Stirling University**

The statistics show that the number of households headed by someone over 60 will reach 2 billion by 2040. Yet the House of Lords' recent report has highlighted how "woefully underprepared" we are for that development. We need 11000 – 18000 retirement homes just to keep at a current level, which in itself is not even sufficient.

Scotland and Wales have specific housing and ageing policies. Scotland has a minister for older people and Wales has a commissioner. England last had a strategy in 2008. This needs to change.

The housing and ageing programme at Stirling University started in 2014. It started with one question: What makes a good life in later years? Community researchers trained by the university go back out to their communities to work in this area of research. They found that housing was top of the list, as were travel, good health, money, living well, ageing well etc.

Age Scotland funded more research to focus in on housing and reinforced the idea that community, transport, support mechanisms and the area make a house more than just bricks and mortar.

Adaptations to housing and fuel poverty were two major worries that we found. 62% of people said they were okay paying their current bills, but were worried about fuel poverty, due to fluctuating prices and no long-term stability. Long term health conditions or disabilities led to less ability to access information and cope with fuel bills.

People who needed adaptations in their home didn't want them, due to design implementation, costs and stigma: ie. stair lifts, hand rails. But these are the number one thing to prevent a fall or further disability. It can help improve lives. Rightsizing from 55 years onwards and adaptations should be easily accessible for people. Ultimately, houses need to adapt to us, not the other way around.

Over the years, a defensive position taken by policy makers and housing developers, service providers and older people towards the issue of a 'house ageing programme'. A good home creates a good life, good health, good wellbeing. Pressure needs to be exerted to make sure it is a high priority due to the benefits it can bring.

We all need to think about the longer term or nothing will change, but the UK government also needs a Commissioner for Ageing. It is an issue that covers housing, health and care and needs a focal point that can deliver on these issues for today's and tomorrow's pensioners.

## **Ruth London, Fuel Poverty Action Group**

The UK has an excessively large number of people who die every year due to cold homes. Usually around 30,000 people die in winter and 1/3 of these are due to cold homes. You can't get fuel for free and it hits older people hardest as they aren't going to work during the daytime and getting free heating.

The cold endangers safety, and it affects mental health as well as physical health.

Exceptional weather events aren't exceptional anymore due to climate change. Summers in Europe are also a major health risk factor.

The causes of fuel poverty include: low incomes, poor housing, poor heating systems and rising fuel prices. These need to be addressed in a number of different ways.

We need better insulation. Even new builds aren't that well insulated as construction standards are low. Building regulations need to be upheld and contractors made to carry out works to regulation with retrofitted insulation to older homes. Unless it is done badly, insulation is win win. For health, the environment and for fuel poverty. However, in 2012 there were cuts in insulation projects and the amount of work carried out fell by 80% between 2012 and 2016.

Poor heating systems: Gas heating is a real issue due to climate change. Electricity costs more and there is not sufficient use of renewable energy at the moment to make a difference. The energy market is badly designed, maintained and run in this country. We need a basic minimum energy entitlement for each person to give people some security – A warm floor

policy because having a warm, safe and affordable home is key to an individual's health and well being.

## **Issues raised during the discussion**

- Houses are still not designed with older people in mind. For example, why are floor sockets not built at accessible points? More needs to be done around inclusive design. Key elements are beneficial to all people, not just older people or those with dementia.
- Homelessness is on the increase. The services in the community are being destroyed. More needs to be done to campaign against this. We as elderly people need to be heard. Social isolation has a big impact on health.
- A property democracy is needed and we need the best standards across all types of housing.
- Housing associations often act like housing developers and are no longer not for profit organisations. The Hackett report put emphasis on listening to residents, but this still isn't happening.
- Increasing numbers of older people – 2 million – now live in private rented accommodation. As a result, £21 billion in housing benefit goes to private landlords.
- Lancashire council removed all funding for care and repair aimed at keeping people living in their own homes for longer. To withdraw the service is nonsense and will cost more in the long run.
- Smart homes and age friendly cities. We shouldn't be scared of them as there are fantastic examples and people are more aware. If we don't move towards it then accessibility is going the wrong way. All should be accessible properties. Only £500 more per unit to increase

- accessibility to current standards. (Glasgow council).
- Scottish social housing model is stronger. Community strength and regulation is stronger in Scotland. House the most vulnerable in the best homes. Housing First (rapid rehousing) aims to get a fixed stable tenure and reduce transient housing. It is an historical issue and is a conscious issue. Right to buy was extended in England but was stopped in Scotland and Wales. Need to have Housing Associations in community control.
- Smart meters have been a disaster. It doesn't actually help bring down usage or bills, switching is also an issue. Controls are too hard to use, and eyesight and hand control are an issue. There are also privacy issues as to what information is being collected, stored and passed on.
- Electric heating works out more expensive than gas, but if there is a heat pump or district heating it can be cheaper. Warm Home Discount became a lottery.
- Extra care housing is an added choice which should be built as health and social care are integrated in to future the housing models. Housing 21 is a good model, but there are some bad examples too. Care & Repair is an integrated service to keep people in their homes longer, but there are big regional and postcode differences. Needs a centralised focus to prevent this.
- Green energy has to be accountable. We have buying power. So be informed
- Retirement villages should not be separate. We live inter-dependently and we need more support for intergenerational living.

- The social housing model is the heart of social purpose and dignified living.
- There is so much money in this country, inequality is the issue. Money for heating needs to be kept until we have a fairer system. We need to fight for age friendly communities and supported environments and end the right to buy and fight for genuine low cost and council housing.

### **Tackling intergenerational unfairness**

#### **Rhiannon Taylor, Cheshire Labour Party**

I've spent the biggest part of the last two years out on the doorstep speaking to members of the public with our community action team, on top of working on the snap general election, Allun and Deeside byelection for Welsh Assembly, and the recent European Elections. This has given me a lot of experience in a relatively short space of time of the issues people face on a day to day basis.

During this time, I've noticed a recurring theme. Between the ages of about 40 and 50 people appear to be hit less by government decisions. There are obviously notable exceptions to this rule for people with disabilities and those who find themselves out of work to name but a few. Either side of this age range we are all treated equally unequally. What really strikes me is that we are being affected by the same broad policy decisions at both ends of the spectrum. Whether it be the NHS, welfare, housing, or any of the other issues we face as a society, we are hit the hardest when we are young, and again when we reach retirement and beyond.



First, I'd like to talk about our wonderful National Health Service. People generally rely on the NHS the most when they are either younger, with young children to take care of, or when they begin to suffer with any of the myriad of illnesses associated with age. We all know that the NHS is in crisis, having been chronically underfunded for close to a decade now. According to the Guardian the NHS is already short of over 100,000 staff, including 10,000 doctors and upwards of 40,000 nurses.

There are more staff leaving the medical profession than joining it.

Experts from leading NHS thinktanks blame this on a number of political decisions, including poor workforce planning, an incoherent approach to workforce policy, restrictive immigration policies, and inadequate funding for training places.

A large number of young people have been put off training to be nurses since the NHS bursary was scrapped, meaning that they would have to take on intimidating levels of student debt in order to train to save our lives and support what is arguably our greatest British institution.

These staffing shortages are only being exacerbated by Brexit (as much as I hate to mention the dreaded B word). With European nationals returning to their member states due to not feeling welcome here and receiving increasing amounts of abuse, and EU immigration falling due to uncertainty over their future in this country experts predict that in the next decade this shortage of staff could reach up to 350,000.

That's 1 in 6 NHS jobs unfilled.

This means more maternity wards closing, more hospitals failing to meet targets for waiting times for life saving

cancer treatments, and more people left on beds in the corridors of accident and emergency departments. It means dangerous staffing levels on hospital wards, more operations cancelled, and fewer GP appointments available. In the UK we already have 1 doctor to over 350 patients, and when we look specifically at GPs the ratio is even greater.

Is it any wonder that it can be such a struggle to get an appointment when we need one? And now we have President Trump and his ambassadors stating that the NHS must be on the table in any future trade deals. Trump made it a feature of his campaign to lower medication costs in America, it would appear he wants to do this by subsidising American healthcare by taking money from ours. All of this just leads us further down the road towards privatisation of healthcare, putting more of our medical services into the hands of people like Richard Branson and his virgin empire, meaning that saving our lives can be bought and sold as a commodity to the highest bidder.

Then we move on to welfare cuts. Again, it is younger and older people who are disproportionately affected. At one end we have state pensions at such a low level that people are having to choose between heating and eating. I think we can all agree that it is just not acceptable that a reported 1 in 6 people who have paid into the system their whole lives now find themselves living in poverty, having to choose between being warm in the winter and putting a good meal on the table.

Then there's the women who lost years of state pension at a moment's notice.

Those women have made it quite clear that no one is arguing against equality

in the age at which we receive our pensions, but the way in which it was done has left women struggling to feed themselves, struggling to keep a roof over their heads, and struggling to cope with this new reality that none of us should ever have to face.

At the other end of there are thousands and thousands of young people relying on universal credit and all of its faults. When universal credit is first applied for there is a mandatory waiting period of 5 weeks. During this time people who are struggling to afford food or accommodation costs can apply for a hardship payment. This is a payment of universal credit at a reduced rate. But it is recoverable, meaning that it is, in effect, little more than a loan. This is then taken back out of the weekly/monthly payments you receive after the waiting period is over. Given that for a lot of people universal credit is already not quite enough to cover their essentials this then leads to more claimants having to rely on foodbanks to put food on the table for themselves and their families.

To make a bad situation worse, a low minimum wage (which, let's be clear here, is not a true living wage) and zero hours contracts mean that as of 2015 over 5 million people are both working and claiming in work benefits. We've even reached a point where some of these people are still having to rely on the good will of others via food banks to make it from one payday to the next. Foodbank use has skyrocketed in recent years. The Trussell Trust has released their end of year figures which show that in the last financial year alone the number of emergency food parcels given out reached a staggering 1.6 million. That's 1.6 million separate occasions when someone in this country could not afford the most basic essential.

To put that in context, in 2010 that number was 41,000.

Then there's arguably the cruellest system of them all – Personal Independence Payments. With their assessments in place for even the most severe cases we have some of the most vulnerable people in our society subjected to repeated questioning and assessments by people with no expertise or experience of the particular issues they are judging. I want to be very clear about what I say next. It is my opinion that this system is completely inhumane. There are a growing number of people with mental illnesses reporting being asked why they haven't killed themselves yet.

From my own experience of being in such a dark place I know all too well how easily that line of questioning can push someone over the edge from having dark thoughts to acting on them. And to be quite frank, any system that even vaguely suggests that we should risk someone's mental health to determine whether they're suicidal enough to get the support they are asking for is just not fit for purpose. We have rape survivors getting their benefits stripped because they can't face going and sitting alone in a room with a strange man and discussing their rape and its devastating effect on their mental health. This system does not work. We are being let down when we need the most support.

Now people of course have the right to appeal against these decisions, however in 2018 it was reported by Disability Rights UK that 4 in 10 people do not appeal their PIP decision because of either ill health or not feeling able to deal with the stress of the appeal process. Given how distressing the initial application

process can be this is hardly a surprise. Of those who do appeal, it is reported that around 72% of appeals are successful!

Another area where it is our generations who are most affected is housing. Young people are having to face to fact that a lack of truly affordable housing means that we will not own our own property until we reach at least our 40s, if at all. We are instead stuck in expensive rented accommodation, not able to afford to get a deposit together on low salaries while our rent is so high. Combine that with the fact that zero hours contracts make it close to impossible to get a mortgage and you start to see the problem. Even those who work regular full-time hours cannot get on the housing ladder if their contract states zero hours, because it is not stable employment.

There are companies who offer mortgages to those of us on zero hours, but because we're higher risk for the lenders they attach sky high interest rates to the mortgage, meaning that the monthly payments become unmanageable. This just leaves us trapped in the cycle of rented housing, where landlords can essentially charge whatever they want, because they know that we have no realistic alternative.

On the other side of things of course are the growing number of people who need to move to a new house because of illness/disability. There is a serious lack of affordable accommodation in much of the country for people as they reach this more vulnerable stage in life. It is worth noting at this point that politicians are not solely to blame for the problems we have with housing, the same scrutiny must be applied to the developers who will try any which

way to avoid building truly affordable properties.

Finally, I want to talk about transport. This is yet another area where we are all being let down. With fewer young people driving due to either cost or environmental concerns, and older people less likely to be able to drive because of ill health or disability, more of us are starting to look to public transport to get us from A-Z. Considering billions of pounds are currently being spent on HS2 at the moment you would expect that the existing transport system would at least be sufficient to support our everyday lives, but that is far from the case. Prices are forever rising, buses are being cut to more remote areas leaving people stranded with no access to public transport at all, and trains are increasingly unreliable. One of the big problems with the trains is the lack of accessibility for disabled people. Most of the big train companies operating in the north do not allow you to travel with a mobility scooter unless you have a mobility pass. If you are in a position to need a larger scooter, or a large electric wheelchair then that pass will be denied.

When I queried this with 2 separate train operators, I was eventually told that there was not legal requirement for them to make allowances for mobility vehicles, and making space for them would mean taking out another 2 seats and not being able to carry as many passengers. It is just yet another example of people's needs being completely disregarded purely for profit.

All too often we hear one generation blaming another for the problems we face as a society. Millennials like me are tired of hearing how we're too lazy

and we just don't work hard enough, that's why we can't afford to buy a house. But my generation have been guilty of doing the same thing the other way around and blaming the baby boomers for crashing the housing market. The truth is...neither of these things are true.

There are political decisions being made by some in Westminster who are completely detached from the real-world consequences of the decisions they make day in day out. It is time we put the blame where it belongs – on the recent governments who have forgotten that our well-being and our lives are their responsibility. We need to stop letting them pitch one generation against another. Stop letting them off the hook! It's time we held them to account. We need to come together and apply political pressure to force the issues that matter to us onto the political agenda. We need to organise across the generation gap, and campaign as much, and in as many ways as possible. In campaigns like this there really is a job for everyone. Whether it be out canvassing, on a street stall, collecting petition signatures, mobilising activists or maintaining a social media presence there is something for each and every one of us. From designing and writing campaign literature to marching in protests, there are a thousand jobs in between, at least one of which you can help with, and all of which are equally important. The change starts with us.

I hear a lot of talk about generational inequality, but let's be clear here today – the inequality we face is intergenerational. It's all of us. It's you as much as it's me. So let's make enough noise that they have to listen to us.

### **Neil Duncan-Jordan, NPC National Officer**

Throughout history, the aftermath of a financial crisis brings with it certain features: a distrust of elites and those who have previously been in power, the emergence of populist politics – particularly on the far right, rising inequality and austerity seen as the solution. This is the context in which the debate around intergenerational fairness is now being conducted.

More than any other period in our history, our society is being divided in terms of the generation into which you were born. The Silent Generation born during the war years, the Baby Boomers born between 1945 and 65, Generation X born the following 20 years and so on. But this simplistic approach makes a fundamental error – it assumes that all those born into the same generation have had the same life experience and outcomes. Like all age groups, health, wealth and income are not evenly or equally distributed across the generations.

In fact, there is a growing body of evidence to show that inequality inside generations is greater than that between generations – something the recent House of Lords' report into Generational Unfairness didn't even look at. The argument put forward by groups like the Resolution Foundation and others is that public spending on older people should therefore be reduced.

In the same way that a lifetime of low pay will inevitably lead to a poor retirement, inherited wealth perpetuates inequality in Britain today. Well over two thirds of property wealth belongs to the wealthiest third of the UK population. So whilst a 20 year old from a wealthy family might not be well off today, they are likely to be

considerably better off by the time they reach their 40s and 50s than someone their age from a poorer family. Those at the top inherit four times as much as those at the bottom.

There is no doubt that the austerity agenda has hurt all generations – and young people certainly have suffered since the 2008 financial crisis as a result of the lack of affordable housing, cuts to benefits, student debt and insecure employment practices. What is also true is that today's older generation had their own problems when they were young as well. For example, inflation in 1980 was 18%, unemployment in 1984 was 11.9% and interest rates on mortgages and loans were 17%. Ten years later, the recession hit again and this same generation then faced inflation at 9.5%, unemployment in 1993 at 10.7% and interest rates at 14.8%. This flies in the face of those who argue that today's pensioners have basically had it easy, whilst today's young are forced to struggle. Of course there are specific policy issues that would benefit younger people, but they do not come by reducing the pensions and benefits of the older generation.

In fact, the media, think tanks and some politicians have tried to create a phoney war between the age groups – by suggesting that older people have gained at the expense of the young. But this is a huge distraction. New research from Birmingham University has shown that families of all types and incomes are helping each other out in all sorts of ways. The reality is that those who put forward the idea of generational conflict are using it as a way of reducing the welfare state – not just for today's pensioners, but for tomorrow's pensioners as well. While we're arguing between young and old we're not looking at the real unfairness

and inequality in society between the wealthy and the rest of the population.

The UK has a situation whereby the five richest families are wealthier than the bottom 20% of the entire population. That's just five households with more money than 12.6 million people. We constantly hear that richer pensioners shouldn't get the winter fuel allowance because that's unfair. Actually the real unfairness is that the winter fuel allowance is only worth half of what the Chancellor gave away to the rich in the last Budget by way of tax cuts. We also need to recognise that everyone needs to feel they have a stake in our welfare state, so that they continue to both contribute towards it and receive support from it. If society feels the need, we should tax those at the top accordingly – but don't for one minute think the answer lies in introducing a complicated means-test. Ultimately, benefits that are just for the poor eventually become poor benefits, which no-one is interested in.

So the generational fairness debate is not about money – it's about ideology. Nowhere is this more evident than with the over 75s' TV licence. In 2015, the then Chancellor George Osborne forced the BBC to take over responsibility for funding the concession in return for granting its renewed charter. Consultants were employed by the BBC to come up with a number of options for the future and these included raising the age of entitlement to 77 or 80, reducing the value of the concession by half or means-testing it altogether. We know that they've just announced their intention is to withdraw the licence from 3.7m people next June, and instead only give it to those on Pension Credit. We know that around 1.3m people are eligible for Pension Credit, but don't claim it – so that

leaves just 900,000 that will get the concession.

On Thursday we will be organising a coach to the BBC's Salford Media Centre to start the protest and next week we will try and organise a series of regional demos outside local BBC offices. People are also suggesting a 'switch off' day and of course the option of having a 'can't pay, won't pay' campaign. Let's be clear that if we don't win this one, the winter fuel allowance will be next. The House of Lords committee has already called for bus passes and the winter fuel allowance to come in at 72 in the future. They want the triple lock on the state pension to be abolished and for pensioners to pay National Insurance even if they no longer work. So how does any of this help the pensioners of the future? It doesn't.

These debates are just the latest evidence of a dog eat dog approach to social policy that wants young and old to argue over the crumbs while the cake's already been eaten by the rich. We need to counter that by working together with younger generations to build solidarity and understanding around a shared agenda of decent jobs, pensions, benefits and housing because we recognise that what is good for today's pensioners, will also benefit the pensioners of the future.

#### **Issues raised during the discussion**

- Legal advice would be needed for anyone deciding not to pay their TV licence. The NPC would help to provide guidance. Civil disobedience can work.
- It is important that pensioners speak for themselves, particularly those who are struggling the most. There are far too many elites in politics and people that don't understand.

- Class is the real social divider, not age or generation.
- We need to involve local trade unions and trades councils in our activities and campaigns, as a way of uniting the generations.
- Many of the universal benefits that pensioners now receive were given because the government recognised that the state pension was so low.
- The new auto-enrolment pension schemes are not going to benefit the pensioners of tomorrow. Low pay will also lead to low pensions in the future.
- The House of Lords' report into intergenerational unfairness used very poor statistical analysis and did not recognise that means-testing is economically inefficient. It's time the House of Lords was reformed as well.
- There is a need for a universal basic income/Citizen's Pension. The NPC's view is that this would currently be set at £220 a week for all pensioners, irrespective of their National Insurance record.

#### **Ageing Without Children Sue Lister and Ann Murray**

It is estimated one in five people aged over 50 have no children, which has been dubbed a demographic time-bomb. As health and welfare cuts bite, more older people than ever are relying on family to help them with their care or advocate on their behalf. But who will help that growing band of the population growing old without family support?

Ageing Without Children (AWOC) has been set up with the aim of doing four things: 1. To carry out further research into some of the common preconceptions about people ageing without children

2. To give people ageing without children a safe space to discuss their feelings
3. To work with people ageing without children and organisations across the spectrum to identify solutions
4. To ensure that the policy issues associated with ageing without children feature in ageing discussions.

Delegates in the session took part in the discussion and completed questionnaires which asked the following questions:

1. What are your current circumstances as an awoc (ageing without children) – yourself or someone you know
2. What are you going to do in the future – how are you going to fill your days?
3. What are the obstacles?
4. What are the solutions?
5. How would you like to be remembered – what is your epitaph?

### **Women’s Working Party Fringe: The impact of local government cuts on women**

#### **Anita Wright, President of the National Assembly of Women**

Watching the TV recently about the D Day landings and what families went through reminded me of a family singing a song “It’s the rich that gets the gravy and the poor that gets the blame” and “My old man”. These were songs about austerity and poverty which still resonate today.

In 2008, the banking crisis allowed all the problems to affect working families and children. The UN report of 2018 shows that UK is falling apart, the whole austerity package is affecting the fabric of society, and yet the UK is the 5<sup>th</sup> richest country in the world. Since 2010, the amount of money from central government to local

government has fallen by 48% and cuts in community budgets by 50% hitting local communities the hardest. Wales having a devolved government is different with a devolved budget having a buffering affect so the worst communities affected are in England and not equal overall.

Different mechanisms of distribution lead to deprivation factors where the worst hit are the poorest boroughs eg. Lambeth. The worst hit received 33% cuts whereas 10% of the richest local authorities received 9%. The Institute of Fiscal Studies has reported that the mechanism for money to Local Authorities is breaking up. Poorer areas like Blackpool, Tower Hamlets and Middlesbrough are the least able to raise funds through council tax and business rates so the least able to meet the needs of the poor communities.

This is territorial deprivation, where wealth is retained by a very small percentage of the population placed in offshore trusts and hedge funds. The distribution of wealth is different for men than women, as women are more likely to engage in society in different ways from men eg. domestic care work, care providers for children and relatives, extended family responsibilities.

Women also use local services more than men and a high proportion of women work in LAs. BAME communities more often need local services because of many factors. The government wants to get rid of funding to local councils so that they become independent relying on raising money through council tax and business rates. Cleaning services, waste collection, consumer protection as well as all other services will come from local budgets.

One example, charging to use public toilets has affected children, older and disabled people who need access. Local café's can be used but it is not always possible. In fact, 1 million jobs have been lost in LAs since 2010 so less people to do the work. Yet LAs are under enormous pressure since 200 new statutory requirements have been added in the last few years to the 1300 already existing.

The government will remove core funding to LCs and LAs by 2020 relying on them taking 20% of business rates to cover the loss. They will need more than that because high street stores and shops are empty and closing. According to the Institute of Fiscal Studies business rates and council tax will have a £7.5 billion deficit by 2025 and councils can only increase council tax by a certain percentage.

We need to join together, fight through our trades unions, the Labour Party, Peoples' Assembly and wherever we can to have an alternative. We did it after WW2 and need good, creative, solid ideas to do it again.

### **Issues raised during the discussion**

- There is a managerial mentality of councils including Labour ones managing government policy. They are managing the unmanageable. We need a new approach and politicians to fight for us. 1 in 10 councils will be bankrupt using all their reserves in 10 years.
- A flexible workforce means happier workers. Women can win good deals eg. shared parental leave. Many men won't take it because it affects pensions. Part time women give more on a part time contract, which is a benefit to an employer.

- On school funding, academies are funded directly from government. SEND money is not ring fenced so that money is being pinched by all sources.
- Prison services are in crisis due to privatisation. Some probation services are being taken back in-house, but are ill-conceived.

### **Why public transport is good for all**

Public transport is a fundamental provision for any country and needs to be organised for the good of society as a whole. Following World War II the railways were in a poor state and would have collapsed if they had not been nationalised. However, the public still didn't have any input into the running of the network and the rail budget was one of the first to be slashed. Even under privatisation the public is still paying and still without any input.

### **Pascale Robinson, Campaign for Better Buses/We Own It**

We Own It campaigns to keep public services for people, not for profit, and has recently been involved in campaigns to stop the privatisation of the Land Registry, Network Rail and NHS professionals, and successfully campaigned to bring the East Coast railway service and probation services back into public hands. It is now involved in the Better Buses for Greater Manchester campaign.

In Greater Manchester (GM) 80% of journeys are by bus, compared with 59% nationwide. Bus services in GM are now at risk because journeys are expensive and routes have been cut. 10% of outpatient appointments are missed because buses do not arrive. The fight for better buses aims to reverse this downturn by restoring public control of bus services, as the Bus Services Act 2017 prevents local



authorities from establishing new municipal bus companies, so at present public ownership of most bus undertakings is not an option. Reading Buses however were never privatised and so remain municipally owned with the ability to invest in the company. 30 years ago bus services were deregulated and most privatised with commercial services (about 60% of the total) not subject to Local Transport Authority control. The remaining 40% is subsidised by Local Transport Authorities. London buses were not deregulated.

Public ownership needs secure funding. About £1.49bn has been taken from bus operations by shareholders over the past 10 years. Buses should be part of an integrated network but in most places aren't. Bus company profits outside London are about 8%, but in London where they are regulated it's 4% showing that regulation will save public money.

On the railways publically owned Mersey rail has invested in new trains. The Tyne and Wear metro is publically owned, and the West Midlands is following the public ownership model. Our railways are the worst in Europe. Franchises should be taken into public ownership as they end. The £200m given to shareholders can then be reinvested.

The benefit of public control is that Local Transport Authorities could decide on fares, routes and timings. Good performance by the operator could be rewarded and poor performance penalised. In a competitive market using one smartcard for all operators could breach competition law so each operator has to have its own version. Lack of rural transport might be considered a breach of human rights.

Transport cooperatives might be an answer. Inherently public transport is a service across society as a whole. The Williams Rail Review is looking as though it might go for more competition leading to greater fragmentation. We are now paying 5 times more in subsidies to rail than previously. In Scotland a report calling for more public control of transport did not cover all of the country. Bristol is calling for public control of transport but really wants public ownership. If buses are renationalised the bus companies will fight hard for what they see as adequate reimbursement. The Transport Select Committee has asked for a National bus strategy to be developed.

**Peter Rayner, NPC Vice President**

The Bus Pass was the result of years of hard fought campaigning by the NPC and others. Although prior to the 2000 Transport Act some pensioners had a form of bus concessionary fare it was only 11 years ago when the 2008 Concessionary Travel Act introduced free off peak local bus travel in this country. The NPC fought for the Act to cover trams, trains and other modes of travel without success but the legislation giving the basic right remains at 09.30 to 23.00 weekdays and all days at weekends and Bank Holidays on the bus only, and then only in your own UK country.. The additions in other conurbations and counties are just that, something that they pay for to benefit their residents alone. The legislation applying to London is different and its residents get more generous provisions in addition to the basic England wide Bus Pass rights. Over the years the NPC has urged people to keep the pressure on Local Transport Authorities to maintain bus services, otherwise they would be cut and the value of the Bus Pass

decrease accordingly. That is now happening.

There is a view that devolution in England will help the situation, but caution is required because it could remove the nationwide provisions of the Act so that people outside a devolved area are not allowed even the basic free bus travel inside it. Fight the present generation of decision makers using their own weapons. Relying on compassion and proving an economic case is no longer enough. Today's management is fond of producing statements such as "meeting people's expectations", "improving customer experience" and so on. Remember them and use them when operators fail to deliver. Older people are part of the group known as "persons of reduced mobility (PRM)" and as such are entitled under the Equality Act 2010 to have equal access to goods and services. Thus accessible trains, buses, toilets and so on are a right if you turn up and go – not just if you give advance notice. So if there is no staff to assist, no accessible bus or maybe no bus at all in rural areas it can be an accessibility issue and worth challenging as a "provision, criterion or practice that discriminates".

Relevant legislation includes the Equality Act 2010, the TSI (Technical Specification for Interoperability) for PRM and the Rail Vehicle Accessibility Regulations. As an example Hungerford is a small tourist town with easy access across the railway by a controlled level crossing and a footbridge. There are ramps available to assist passengers on to or off the train, but neither the station nor the train are staffed except for the driver. The ramps have never therefore been used on a regular basis. Is this

discriminatory and a breach of the Equality Act?

Older people have a number of requirements that need to be acknowledged by the providers of transport:

- Staff need to be visible and available to offer advice and reassurance
- Signage and information needs to be clear and unambiguous – in places and at times that people need it so we know where we are going
- Lighting should allow us to see our way without fear of falling
- Design that enables us to find what we are looking for quickly and easily and without confusion – whether the departure gate or the station platform
- Managers and staff who have been trained to understand the needs of older and disabled people and who want to get it right

Older and vulnerable people want to see some urgency in these issues being addressed

#### **Issues raised during the discussion**

- We have a rural bus service with 1 journey per week driven by volunteers.
- We need to unite the whole of the country in one campaign otherwise we will struggle to maintain the Bus Pass.
- Pensioners from outside Greater Manchester are not allowed free travel on the trams there, only on buses. People from the former Metropolitan areas should campaign for equal treatment for those in the shires.

- People need to walk safely to reach public transport and the condition of pavements is poor.
  - In Scotland, only local services are controlled by the Scottish government, long distance services are controlled nationally.
  - Arriva in Liverpool allow travel to medical appointment with a doctor's note, whereas Stagecoach don't.
  - The Transport Act legislation does not specify who should pay for extra concessions granted to Bus Pass holders. It could be either the Bus Company or the Local Transport Authority depending on what is agreed. Devolution would involve totally different arrangements for funding and operating services, as is the case in Scotland and Wales.
- Yorkshire & Humber: 19 million people live in parts of the country where they get extras to their bus pass. The rest don't. A transport group has been established within the region and a recent conference saw over 100 people attend. We need to share best practice and our own vision of the way forward. We need to bring NPC groups together.
  - Oxford: A new service known as Pick Me Up has been established. It gives nearby pick up points and members can register through an app on their mobile. Charges are £2.50 per journey but bus passes can be used within designated areas.
  - Merseyside: Used to have constituency groups that discussed transport and cross over issues. Now have 3 Mayors, one for Merseyside, one for Liverpool and one for Wirral. They are now thinking of resurrecting the municipal conference to discuss transport and other common issues such as health.
  - Northern Ireland: The bus pass covers the entire island but services are concentrated in Belfast with few cross country. Park and Ride is being expanded in Belfast.
  - London: The Freedom Pass is fantastic and should be expanded to the whole country.
  - North Wales: There is now a concession for North Wales residents to use bus services into Chester.

### **How do we solve the social care crisis?**

#### **Heather Wakefield, Visiting Fellow Greenwich University**

We know that around 70% of councils' budget is spent on social care, with 80% of the providers being private companies taking profits. More and more people are having to pay for their own care by selling their homes. We are the 5th richest country in the world but we are not able to provide care for those who need it the most. At least one and a half million people, according to the latest estimate are not getting any care at all and it is going to get worse. The NHS should be free at the point of use and a long term community based plan is needed. Social care could be funded by 1p on income tax. We must find the political will to make it happen.

Care being intergenerational is critical, and provision must be tailored to the individual, reflecting diverse needs. Most Local authority services can't be provided by users, but we need a democratic system and a local ongoing dialogue. Public money is going to

shareholders, this has fragmented services and we are looking to bring services back inhouse, saving money, providing good terms and conditions and being able to deploy staff in a way that makes sense, so that people have regular carers they know – these are privatisation and diversity issues.

The NHS is ageist, and home carers so underpaid they earn half of district nurses. A voice must be given to all groups. We need to get cracking with democracy and accountability.

### **George McNamara, Independent Age**

The social care green paper was not arriving and was hiding behind Brexit. Inequality of income means more people living in poverty. 40% of Pension Credit is not received because the system is complex and intrusive. The government will cap the amount you will have to pay for residential care, but this only applies to the care you receive, it does not apply to the accommodation and food costs. This results in many pensioners having to sell their own homes.

Billions is saved each year by unpaid carers, many of these being family members some who are still at school and look after disabled parents. The system should be suitable for everyone who needs care. We should campaign for free personal care for over 65s who need it. We are keeping our social care system afloat with informal carers. The NHS will be flooded. The care and support of carers and those they care for is essential for a good quality of life. Currently carers assessment is almost pointless, and we are not enabling dignity and respect.

The amount spent on social care must be spent wisely. We must remember

the difference between the age cohorts from the 60-year olds to the 90- year olds and beyond. We must recognise divergence and keep up the political pressure and campaign for the charter for Social Care.

We can't depend on any political party. We need to work to rebuild the care service and welfare state. We need loud and noisy campaigns. Care to be under the NHS, currently under Local Authorities, and providing other services people need. But we also need to retain essential links with Local Authorities. We need to look at the bigger picture, including tax avoidance.

### **Issues raised during the discussion**

- The CQC is failing. If a school fails, there is a "hit squad" but in Social Care nothing seems to happen on a report on low quality. Local Authorities are not taken seriously. There is acceptance of a homogeneity of care users, but this is not an accurate view, for example 1 million over 65s are ageing without children's support.
- Homes are closing, and people's health and wellbeing put at risk. Extra Care homes are excellent, but both Local Authorities and the NHS are broke, and so homes are being closed.
- We need a Commissioner for Older People: Ageism in the NHS is rife, for example treatment and support in mental health. Older people need a champion.
- Carers don't have enough time, the administration is broken, carer slots are cancelled, and respite for home carers is not working.

## **Tackling digital exclusion** **Derek Walker, Wales Co-operative Centre**

We need to understand how many people are denied participation in society due to digital exclusion and what we can do about it?

Some research from Lloyds Bank shows 3 types of customers:

1. Digital First: They use the internet on a regular basis for emails, online, bank, shopping with ease. Stream video and music etc. a computer or smart phone. They make up 60-70% of audience, 62% of population.
2. Digitally competent: They go online fairly regularly, but prefer face to face / phone, but are okay online. They make up 20-30% of audience, 25% of population.
3. Digitally disengaged: They have very few IT skills and may have never/rarely been online. Little inclination or digital skills. Their number remains constant. They make up 10% of audience, 12-15% of population

If people don't feel disenfranchised and have the skills but choose not to use them, then that is a valid choice. However, there is an issue of age connected to that of usage:

55-64 – 1 in 5 are not digitally included

65-74 – 1 in 3 are not digitally included

Over 75 – 1 in two are not comfortable online / with technology

Age is the key determinant of Digital Exclusion. Language, ethnicity, gender (women), are all confounders. Money is also a driver. They don't have the money for the kit, for broadband, phone contracts. Rural connectivity can be poor and unable to stream films / music etc, but being digitally

excluded means people can't access the cheapest goods and services and can be left behind. If you want a driving licence, passport etc, many of these are online only, but the drive to put public services online, digital first, can be detrimental.

For example, Universal Credit is only available online and many who need the services aren't able to access them. A digital barrier prevented them accessing the benefit and little digital assistance is provided. Face to face contact is kept at a minimum.

You can also save £750 a year if you are online, particularly with utility bills. 6% savings if you can shop around online for these services.

Health benefits of being online – wellbeing, reduced loneliness, reduced depression. 2 million over 65s suffer from loneliness. The correct access online can help alleviate this through cheap connections. Skype, facetime. Keeping in contact with overseas family.

It is understandable why people may not want to go online, but technology is here, and it will only progress. Uber is now the biggest taxi company in the world. 70% of taxi business in USA. It didn't exist a few years ago and doesn't own a single taxi.

There are some myths about technology:

- Young people know what they are doing. Not true. They don't have the real-world skills.
- Old people don't want to get online / the demographic will change. Not true. People do want to get online and if younger people don't have the skills, when they are older, they will be excluded too.

The answer is to train front line workers. Health services, library service, social care. They can support people who don't have the skills. Lend kit to them. Reach as many people as possible. The Good Things Foundation – LearnMyWay provide online centres in community venues, where staff / family can help you get basic digital skills. They are online courses but take place in the community centre.

Digital Heroes is an intergenerational project whereby schoolkids and scouts get trained to help teach other people how to use tech and online. Older people in turn pass their skills and info on to the younger people. This is a great way to connect all ages. AS a result of these projects falls have been reduced in the care home, anti-psychotic drug use in the home has reduced and staff morale has improved.

### **Issues raised during the discussion**

- The ticket collector on the train said the delegate was the only person who had a paper ticket – it was a shock that everyone else had them on their phone.
- We need to understand whether people stubbornly resist technology or is it that they don't have any idea how to even start? There are villages with no banks, post offices, and these people are totally excluded from society not just online.
- Should there be free IT training for all pensioners and disabled people?
- People are losing their banking rights and services and this is an injustice. It can cost more to access money through loss of free ATMs. The development of community banks is a good idea so people have banks and services which the

banks are removing from rural locations.

- You cannot put everything online as there will be people left behind. There has to be a range of support. Not just online.
- Public services need to provide support for online whether it is due to dyslexia and blindness etc. There should be disability access audits of the online access to services. They try to work with social enterprises to loan out kit or to use recycled kit from offices, but this is just a small way to reduce the costs, as they can be high.
- People can be taught these things, but the cost of training is very high. The continuing costs per year for anti-virus, new programmes etc. Policy makers need to agree to subsidise those who can't afford it in order to stop people being left behind.
- This is a class issue. Deprivation is a key driver for access for online and information. Accessible places ie community centres and libraries are closing. It is not easy to access these facilities. Trade unions need to do more to make people digitally aware. Many events are online application only.
- Affordability is key. There isn't an easy answer. But accessing wifi for free is a big thing. Working with schools /businesses to share their internet, especially outside of office hours. Yes places are closing, but there are kit boxes that can be shared, often using recycled computers / tech. connectivity, affordability and skills are the 3 main issues, but skills are what we as an organisation are really looking at.
- Social justice of digital exclusion is about how much money you have got. Trade unions need to have a variety of options to be properly

inclusive and union reps need to support their members in the workplace. They are keen as there is demand. Not everyone works at a desk with a computer and they are missing out on information in the office (health and safety, events etc).

- Would Jack Jones have wanted this? People are being bullied in to being computer literate. There is no choice. It is wrong what is going on. What happens if the internet goes down? A convenient way for people to lose information on us.
- We are seeing the privatisation of information. Are we working with software companies to maximise the opportunities for older people? Computers are being used in the home in many ways. What are we doing to ensure if those systems go down that harm is minimised? Dementia patients and monitoring: Is this acceptable to tag people or is it too far? There are huge ethical issues to consider.
- Superfast broadband is left to private companies who are slow in rolling out the services, particularly in rural areas where connectivity is poor. Estonia paid for free internet access for everyone. Why can't we do that in this country?

## **CLOSING SESSION 13 JUNE 2019**

### **Bianca Todd, Ron Todd Foundation**

Last year I was angry about pensioner poverty, social isolation and loneliness. This year, I am still angry! 2 years on from Grenfell and there are still people without home. 40 years ago, NPC was founded by Jack Jones. The Ron Todd Foundation is inspired to be here and learns from the depth of knowledge and experience in the NPC. The NPC gets things done and I hope to see more people next year.

### **Emma Lewell-Buck MP**

I am the MP for South Shields, prior to coming into Parliament I was a child protection social worker and the lead member on our local council for adult services. I would like to start by thanking Jan, my friend and your formidable General Secretary for asking me to be here today, it is an incredible honour, I am humbled to have been asked to speak at your Pensioners' Parliament and from what I have seen you are putting the Parliament I sit in to shame.

Just last week we celebrated the immeasurable sacrifice and service of our brave Normandy Veterans, people to whom all of us owe so much. I know that I was not the only one who shed a tear and felt enormous gratitude knowing I will never be able to repay the debt we owe them. And for a brief moment, for the first time ever I found myself agreeing with Theresa May when she faced those veterans and said, "Thank you".

However, less than one week later though and it was back to business as usual for this Government, when the result of outsourcing their social policy duties to the BBC resulted in up to 3.7 million pensioners over the age of 75 at risk of losing their television licences. When over two million of these pensioners live alone and many say their television is their only respite from the agony of loneliness, how much lower can this Government get.

But this should come as no surprise when you look at what the Tories have done to you since 2010, pensioners have been under attack by the Tories from every angle. People such as yourselves here today have seen the Government slowly take bit by bit what little you are afforded by the state

whilst dismantling wider support, community and social care services.

Let's start with your pensions, under the Tories the annual rise in the State Pension has actually fallen in real terms than under every year of the last Labour Government. Only last month they sneaked in a policy change which would mean pensioners with a partner below the retirement age of 65 would now need to apply for Universal Credit instead of Pension Credit which could see them lose up to £7,000 per year.

When the Coalition government sped up plans to equalise the state pension age, millions of women born in the 1950s were not given any notice.

As a result, those women affected were forced to either work well beyond their retirement age or lose out financially. In short, the Chancellor at the time and the Government broke the contract these woman had with the state and stole their pensions. At the time I warned the Government that the matter would end up in the Courts and they would lose, so it is no surprise that we are now awaiting a High Court judgement.

Far from equalisation of state pensions, this generation of women had paid less into the pot because of the gender pay gap and, had spent time looking after their families and home, but also legally weren't even allowed to join company pension schemes until Labour changed the law in the 1990's.

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development analysed pension data from its 35-member countries, which include vastly different economies such as the UK, Greece, Mexico, Poland and Chile amongst others, we hold last place on

that list, one of the richest economies in the World has the lowest state pension of any OECD country with our pensioners receiving a paltry 29% of a working wage for their years of contributing to our countries wealth.

Pensioner poverty now stands at over three hundred thousand, I know from my own experiences in social services that when children and families are struggling, in poverty, or at risk of harm that because of children having regular contact with school teachers and health services or if their neighbours don't see them out and about alarm bells ring.

But for the elderly those sat alone in their homes there can at times be literally no one who knows they are struggling, when myself and others in Parliament undertook a study of UK hunger we found that there could be up to an estimated 1 million elderly persons withering away from hunger in their homes making the painful choice of whether to eat or put their heating on and who don't know who to contact for help or are too ashamed to ask for it. My gran, if she hadn't had family around her would have been one of those people.

My gran Eleanor Lewell was one of the strongest and bravest people I ever knew, she was and always will be my heroine and every day in everything I do I hope I make her proud.

Gran always said politics wasn't for the likes of her, yet she was one of the most political people I have ever known, she once staged a sit in when I was a new born at our Town Hall to demand my mam and dad got a new home. They did and they still live there to this day.



This strong woman as she got older, lost the use of her legs, her sight and hearing, as her physical health waned so did her mind, gran had dementia and after many stays in hospital and some painful discussions our family made the decision that she needed to be admitted into a care home.

The first home my gran was in she escaped from and was found shivering alone in a field, the second home she was in she seemed happy enough but even then she suffered an injury through carelessness of staff.

If my gran had had carers at home she would've probably only had one or two visits a day, where her getting up, dressed, meal times and bed time would be dictated by the times her care company could come and visit, not when was best for her.

Thing is grans story is not unusual, it is now the norm, in an age of ideologically led savage cuts to health, social care and local Government there is now a predicted funding gap in adult social care of 3.6 billion by 2025. With a staggering seven billion being cut from the budget since 2010.

Age UK are reporting that more than one million people now have at least one unmet social care need, and 400,000 older people as thresholds have tightened are no longer able to access publicly funded social care.

The decimation of public health services has led to 130,000 preventable deaths since 2012 and now for the first time in almost forty years we are actually seeing life expectancy fall.

Residential and care home providers and those organisations that provide home care are openly saying they do

not know how much longer they will manage, because they have realised what many of us have known for a long time, that there is no profit, nor should there be in good social care, that is why it should be run and funded properly by the state.

All Governments have choices, the Tories have, true to form chosen ideologically driven cuts, under the guise of austerity, unfettered privatisation, outsourcing and a rolling back of the state that has impacted on those who need it the most.

The legacy of this Government will be one of deep inequality, they will be remembered for the harm they inflicted on the millions of pensioners whose only crime was to work hard, want a decent retirement and a better world for the generations that follow.

I am proud to stand with you today and join you in that fight, after all I am going to be a pensioner one day myself but besides that obvious vested interest Gran Lewell would never forgive me.

### **Eddie Lynch, Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland**

I have been invited to talk about the role in Northern Ireland. The other commissioner is in Wales. The Commissioner was set up in 2011 and has been in the role for 3 years. Older people campaigned to have a commissioner who was independent from government and had power. I've been working on being a safeguarding champion for older people. The role is appointed by the deputy first minister with a staff of 15. I have to be accountable, but is totally independent.

The Commissioner has legal powers to issue guidance, provide advice, review services and legislation that affects

older people. In particular, I have undertaken the following work:

- Supporting the ageing population. Retain bus pass, winter fuel, tv licence.
- Tackle loneliness in society. People are now realising it shouldn't be accepted and society can do more. Research showing the huge physical and health impact of loneliness. Pressure and focus is needed on this matter.
- Calling for better health and social care. There were concerns in December 2016 about a care home, raised by staff and family members. I launched an investigation, and can compel witnesses and get disclosure. 119 interviews with staff and family members, visitors, authorities. Found 61 findings and 59 recommendations. There was a catalogue of issues about care and examples of poor medicine management, feeding, pressure sores. A shocking and sustained level of poor care. There is now an active police investigation into the care home. As well as a review of the bodies responsible for overseeing the care home. The regulator, health trust and department of health. No independent body would have got to the truth.
- Scams. This is a growing problem in the last 6-7 years and I work closely with the police and set up a Scamwise partnership to raise awareness and protect people.

**Jan Shortt, NPC General Secretary**

Thank you to all the speakers. Thanks to the chairs throughout the PP 2019.

Thanks to the officers and staff. Thanks to the stewards and the Blackpool staff and Council. Thanks to you all for attending. Thanks to the paramedics and St Johns ambulance staff as well.

Round up of the key points arising from the sessions

Housing

- New policy booklet on housing now available. A Housing Working Party being set up to look at working with other organisation.
- Age friendly communities and with inter-dependence living
- Fight for council housing, low cost well insulated homes. End right to buy.

AWOC

- Raise awareness of this issue. It is about families who can't be families. Since Sunday trading no family time. Younger people often have multiple jobs. Young carers.

Social Care

- How do we solve the Social Care crisis? Lack of political will. Each commission says it should be free and paid by taxation. No one is taking ownership which is radical and how we improve quality. Privatisation of NHS services. Future Green paper. People need choice in care.
- Campaigning. We need to focus on what we want and work with other organisations to take up this challenge. Work towards a charter for social care

Intergenerational Fairness

- If the free TV licence is lost, then they will come for something else. The HoL report has already indicated the Winter fuel allowance and bus passes are up for grabs.

- Cant pay wont pay stance? Agreed in the room.
- BBC 2 billion pension hypocrisy in the Daily Mail.
- BBC boycott on 21<sup>st</sup> of June. .
- Argument not with the BBC, but they have made the wrong decision. They are a private corporation and the DWP should be dealing with this social welfare issue.

#### Digital Exclusion

- New Working Party. Mixed make up of different user levels.
- Issues about not allowing everything being online only.
- Disparities between price of online and offline. Example of £280 increased cost

#### Transport

- UCL report about varying ages with active use of bus pass showed that the health positives were great and significant for the amount of money actually spent.

#### Issues arising during the discussion

- Devolution in housing and right to buy has been abolished. Welsh government is positive with local authorities. Local areas building council housing which are intergenerational and inter-dependent living. So efficient that they cost only £60 a year for electricity and gas.
- England should be fighting for a commissioner for older people. Wales was the first, but not one in Scotland. In RoI they had a minister, appointed by government, but it didn't work well because they were a politician and not independent like a commissioner is. Independence is key.

- BBC board accepted this situation 5 years ago. The BBC board are to be condemned. Thanks for the NPC PP2019 and the quick response. This activism will help us get more members, as we are doing things.
- As an academic I think it is important what is going on in the field, so when we talk to people about subjects there is solid knowledge and understanding. We need a mix of people speaking at this event.
- We should abolish the House of Lords and have an elected second chamber that is outside of London.
- We have to speak for people who can't speak out. We need to attract more people. The older generation are a force. We are retired, but we are alive. We have brains and hearts and we can speak. Work in your area. Politicians have to listen to us.
- Scotland can travel on long range coach and bus services. No toilets or toilet breaks. After 3 years Stagecoach agreed to this

#### Ron Douglas, NPC President

Next year, we are planning a change of name from Parliament, to Annual Convention. Blackpool remains the best venue with amenities and accessibility. We are planning to meet with the local council to discuss the future.

The Parliament ended with Rosie Macgregor leading the singing of 'Keep right on to the end of the road'. This was followed by a minute's silence for the Grenfell Tower victims.