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# THE LINK



THE MAGAZINE OF THE RETIRED MEMBERS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE

WINTER 2011 [WWW.CWU.ORG](http://WWW.CWU.ORG)

The background of the lower half of the page is a dramatic image of a black hole. A bright, white, multi-pointed starburst is at the center, surrounded by a dark, circular region. From this center, numerous bright, white streaks radiate outwards, creating a sense of intense light and gravity. The overall color palette is dark blue and black, with the white light providing a stark contrast.

## **CARE FUNDING BLACK HOLE**

Time is running out to find  
£20 billion to pay for elderly  
care homes in the future

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*The next retired members conference is on 19 January 2012 at HQ, motions need to be in by the second week of December.*

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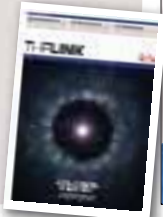
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# PUNISHING PENSIONERS

**BILLY HAYES**  
**GENERAL SECRETARY**



Pensions have become the latest target of the coalition government in its alleged effort to cut the deficit.

The race to the bottom has been clear for all to see, seeking to cut public sector pensions. It is an ongoing scandal that the stealth tax exacted by switching levels of increase in state

and occupational pensions from Retail Price Index to Consumer Price Index has already taken millions out of pensioners' pockets.

As a union we are resisting this latest attack on employees. Why should more pensioners be forced into poverty in order to fund bankers' bonuses?

*Billy Hayes*

## Do they get it?

**KEVIN SLOCOMBE**  
**HEAD OF COMMS**

The detached nature of those who sit around the cabinet table was in evidence recently on a BBC Question Time programme.

Northern Ireland Secretary, Owen Patterson, was asked by a fireman to justify his increase in pension, given the cuts to public sector workers' pensions. The response was "we're all in it together". No we are not, some of us are more "in it" than others.

The duck house and moat owners (MPs) will not be affected by the cuts to pensions but everyone else will. It is important that as trade unionists we keep up the call that this fundamental cut to the living standards of working people will not be tolerated.



*K Slocombe*

## Farewell to Nobby

**BRIAN LEE**  
**EDITOR & RMAC MEMBER**

In this, my first edition as editor, I would like to pay tribute to Rex (Nobby) Clark who sadly passed away in April.

What can I say about Nobby that hasn't already been said? I first met him at a UCW Conference in the 1980s and we became good union comrades. I also had the privilege of serving on the SERTUC Pensioners Network with him. There are only good words to be said about Nobby, who will be sadly missed by us all.

I intend to continue editing the Link in the way that Nobby did, so please send in your ideas, reports and letters.

Could all articles or letters for publication be sent to **The Editor, The Link, c/o The SDGS Department.**



*Brian Lee*

# TARGETED

Retired members are playing a leading role in opposing the cuts

## TONY KEARNS: SENIOR DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY

Tony Kearns, pays tribute to the determination of retired members in resisting the government's unjust cuts agenda. All generations are joining forces in the fight for the rights of working people, and pensioners are an essential line of attack at the battlefield.



### As the officer for the Retired Members

Advisory Committee, one of the things that has struck me, after a lifetime of work and trade union representation, is how committed a large group of our members are to carrying on an active role in retirement.

Nowhere is this more in evidence than in the role retired members are playing in facing up to the attacks being carried out by this government

### All age-groups hit

Today, working people face a real onslaught on their most basic rights. The young are being hit particularly hard with 20 per cent of those aged between 16 and 24 unemployed. The government has done little to address this situation, pressing on with its cuts agenda regardless of the consequences.

Workers' pensions have also been under attack, with government already having secured a substantial cut via its

underhand move to switch the indexation indices from the Retail Price Index to the Consumer Price Index. Further cuts in the pipeline are aimed at increasing the burden on the worker whilst removing obligations from employers.

The long pension holidays that some of these same employers took in past years have been easily passed aside with a little historical amnesia.

### It doesn't add up

There seems to be a basic lack of mathematical capacity at the heart of the coalition government. The deficit will not be cut by simply hacking away at the public services. Loss of jobs will mean a bigger benefits bill and lower overall tax take. This in turn will eclipse any savings made due to cuts,

actually increasing the deficit.

What all of this adds up to is the latest restructuring of capitalism, aimed entirely at heaping the burden of the economic downturn on ordinary working people. Or put another way making the mass of people pay for the reckless behaviour of bankers and the City of London.

### Your union needs you

The spirit of our retired activists is urgently

needed now to confront this assault on the lives of working people. The resistance is growing. The 500,000 plus people who turned out for the TUC march on 26 March show that people are not going to take this injustice lying down. The next big protest comes with the industrial action planned for the end of November against cuts in pensions.

The movement is growing and will continue to do so until those in government make those who created this crisis pay for the consequences.





Image: Pincasso / Shutterstock

## Royal Mail pension deficit narrows [PENSIONS SPECIAL]

### PENSIONS

Gerry Degaute, Chief Executive of Royal Mail Pensions Trustees, told how the deficit on the pension plan had come down from £10.3 to £7.4 billion over the past two years.

The reduction in the difference between the liabilities of current and deferred pensions and assets was due to improved performance in the stock market. Assets stood at £27 billion compared to liabilities of £34.4 billion.

Proceeds for the funding come from salaries of employees (6%) and a contribution from the employer (17%). This is in addition to investment returns

and £300 million a year that the Post Office has pledged to put into the scheme on an annual basis.

Membership of the pension scheme has continued to fall, with a 7,000 reduction since March 2010, leaving total membership at 432,000.

**£2.9** bn

Reduction in pension deficit over past two years

Now closed, the final salary scheme, known as the defined benefit scheme, is administered by the 11 trustees. Three trustees are nominated by the CWU, one is nominated by CMA (Unite), one elected by the pensioners, five by Royal Mail

and one independent chairman.

Gerry expressed his confidence that members' interests are protected under the Post Office Services Bill. Assets and liabilities will be transferred, probably in 2012, with full protection of past service benefits and a guarantee there will be no future changes to benefits. The scheme will be backed by government.

There could, though, be a potential future problem with EU competition law regarding the government taking over the liabilities—but it remains to be seen what will happen on this question.

Gerry confirmed that the switch from RPI to CPI would be

bad news for pensioners but good news for fund managers in the long term.

On the newly Defined Contribution Plan, Gerry pointed out how the risk is transferred from employer to employee. At the end of their working lives the employee will have to buy an annuity on the open market. There may be help needed with this process. He suggested the CWU needs to become involved.

Some 76% of members have opted for the minimum contributions (3% from the employee and 5% from employer). "Gerry recommended for anyone in this scheme to contribute

to the maximum allowed in order to get the higher employer contribution, then to supplement the fund by taking out Additional Voluntary Contributions," said Graham Wilson, North West retired members' secretary.

Gerry also pointed out that annuity rates have been falling for the past 15 to 20 years. "Typically a 65 year old man might get a pension in the region of £3,000 per year for a fund of £50,000. Add that to the basic state pension of about £5,000 and you still don't clear the poverty level currently reckoned to be £178 per week," said Graham.

## [PENSIONS SPECIAL]

## BT pensioners worse off as a result of CPI switch

## PENSIONS

The deficit on the BT pension scheme has reduced from £9 billion to £3.6 billion over the past couple of years.

During the same period, the number of pensioners has increased by 4,000, while the number of contributing members declined by 5,000.

The deficit has declined due to a combination of factors, including the switch from Retail Price Index (RPI) to Consumer Price Index (CPI) as the measure of inflation for section A/B pensions.

Other contributory factors were favourable investment returns and additional contributions from BT.

Retired members' representative Graham Wilson warned against feeling sorry for BT. "If they hadn't taken contribution holidays when the investments were



Worrying times as pensioners face real income reduction

making significant gains in the late 1980s the fund would be in a better position now, they would not need to be making these contributions and we would have a stronger argument to resist the change to CPI," said Graham.

The trustees report acknowledges that because the scheme was derived from

the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme its increases are subject to the Statutory Increase

“If BT hadn't taken contribution holidays... the fund would be in a better position now”

Order, so a change back to RPI can only be achieved with the agreement of BT.

Graham warns that the switch to CPI is going to have a grave effect on pensions over the coming year. Pensions minister

Steve Webb argued that the triple lock guarantee, that will see the state pension rise in line with earnings, CPI or 2.5 per cent whatever is the greater, will secure pensions. "This is a total denial and lack of understanding of the true impact of CPI on pensions. We're not in a period of high wage inflation nor likely to be for years to come. Pensions are not for this year and the next; they're for the next 10, 20 or 30 years. This change will impact on young families as well as current pensioners," said Graham.



## InBrief

## NPC call to keep fuel rebate

The National Pensioners Convention has criticised the government's decision to remove the fuel duty rebate from coach operating companies that allows them to offer a discounted half-price fare to older and disabled travellers. The concession has existed since 2001, and has proved popular as a way of visiting family and friends across the country. There is a concern that withdrawal will increase social isolation.

## Using public transport stops obesity

A study has shown that older people are less likely to suffer with obesity if they use public transport. Public transport users are 25% less likely to be obese, according to a study published in the *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*. The report argues that the findings provide more evidence to support free bus passes and concessions on public transport.

## Minister for older people

More than 60,000 people have signed a petition calling for a minister to champion the cause of older people in Parliament. The petitioners are hoping to get 100,000 plus signatures to force a House of Commons debate on the subject.

# Head injuries could cause dementia

## HEALTH

Research carried out in Scotland and the US has found a possible link between a single head injury and dementia.

Researchers at the Southern General Hospital in Glasgow and the University of Pennsylvania compared the post-mortem brain tissues of 39 people who had recovered from a head injury to 39 who had never suffered a similar injury.

The study is believed to be the first to find physical abnormalities. It found that a third of

those who had suffered a head injury had abnormalities.

"We know from clinical studies that there is a link between a head injury and developing dementia," said Dr William Stewart, who led the researchers. "What is quite remarkable is that patients who had a head injury had quite large numbers of proteins – or abnormalities – in the brain. That is very similar to what we had seen in older patients and, in particular, people with Alzheimer's. These patients were



in their 40s and 50s and the only thing which marked them apart from the control group was that they had had a head injury."

He continued: "Part of the challenge in dementia is that a lot of the work we do is with people

who already have it. What we do not understand is how they get to this stage and what sets off the process in their brain. What we might be able to do is study patients after a head injury and work out what is happening inside their head."

# End to cheque ban welcomed

## POLICY

The CWU has welcomed the decision of the Payments Council to remove the artificial end to the phasing out of cheques by 2018.

The Payments Council announced that cheques will continue for as long as customers need them and the target for possible closure of the cheque clearing in 2018 has been cancelled.

Nigel Cotgrove, assistant secretary, declared the decision to be "excellent news for our members in cheque clearing."

Nigel referred to a number of contributory factors that brought about the decision, including the campaigning efforts of CWU members as well as representations by groups in society such as the elderly and sole traders who all argued for the retention of cheques.

# Energy firms punishing the poor and vulnerable

## ENERGY

Fuel companies, who supply electricity and gas to millions of UK homes, are making huge gains whilst the poor suffer.

Millions face record increases, with average fuel bills at around £1,300 per year.

In contrast, prices in other parts of Europe are being held down, yet many of these same countries own the companies that

control the energy supply to Britain.

Supplies to about 11 million UK customers come from foreign-owned companies such as Scottish Power, Eon npower and EDF.

Spanish-owned Scottish Power is putting up gas prices by 19% and electricity by 10%. But in Spain, parent company Iberdola, is putting up prices by only 1.5%.

Similarly, npower is expected to

increase prices for UK customers. Yet its German parent company RWE has held gas prices in Germany at 11%.

The wholesale cost of gas has fallen by a third, in three years, yet customers have

had to endure price rises, while the companies have made huge profits.

The government should follow other countries and set a limit on increases fuel companies can charge.

### European price increases

| Country        | Gas        | Electricity |
|----------------|------------|-------------|
| <b>UK</b>      | <b>18%</b> | <b>11%</b>  |
| <b>Germany</b> | <b>11%</b> | <b>0%</b>   |
| <b>France</b>  | <b>0%</b>  | <b>3%</b>   |
| <b>Spain</b>   | <b>0%</b>  | <b>1.5%</b> |
| <b>Italy</b>   | <b>0%</b>  | <b>0%</b>   |



# AGE SHOULD BE NO BAR IN LIFE

[ISSUE: AGEISM]

**Paul Donovan** on retirement legislation and how ageism, an ever more visible tendency in society over recent years, impacts on employment and retirement

**R**emember the ageist jibes directed at Ming Campbell when he was leader of the Liberal Democrat Party. Then there were the more recent attacks on Justice Secretary, Kenneth Clarke over his being too old to do the job. This comes, ironically, at a time when the elderly have also been gaining more rights.

## Working longer

There have been moves against ageism over recent times, with legislation now preventing employers forcing employees, who want to go on working, to retire. This runs in tandem with the rising level of the state retirement age in terms of pensions.

People are fitter, healthier and live longer so the retirement age must rise goes the mantra. The retirement age is also rising of course, in order that the amount of pension the state and employers have to pay is reduced. Consequently, more people may die in work.

The ability to work on in a job depends to a degree on the type of work. People in jobs that are non labour-intensive may well be able to work on into their 70s. For those who enjoy their work and don't want to give it up, this should be an option. On the other hand, the right to retire must remain sacrosanct.



Image: Yuri Arcurs / Shutterstock

## Retiring when you want to

A determining factor on retirement no doubt is the role work plays in an individual's life. If they enjoy their work, indeed if their whole life is about work then why should they not be allowed to continue?

If on the other hand, the individual has had enough of the drudgery of the daily grind, put in 30 or 40 years in on the wheel of toil and wants to enjoy retirement with family and friends doing other things then that should be an option equally open to them.

It is strange that we live in a

**Above: Enjoying work after 65**

**19%**

**...of the total UK population were over the official retirement age in 2010**

society that so loves to compartmentalise people – the old and the young suffer equally from this conditioning. So while old people get stereotyped as unable to do this or that task, so the young are seen as having their own books, TV programmes and behaving in a particular way.

What is really needed is less compartmentalising according to age or gender and a greater appreciation of the gifts of every individual, whether old or young, black or white, rich or poor. Intergenerational unity is the best way to defeat ageism.



# CARE FUNDING BLACK HOLE

**Brian Lee** reports on the massive hole in budgets for funding elderly care and the need for government and society to consider ways to increase public spending and private spending. Predictions of double the number of over 75 year olds in 2032 means time is running out

**F**inancial experts have discovered a £20 billion black hole in the budget to pay for care homes for the elderly in the future.

Public spending for care homes has topped over £11 billion a year, more than the cost of the 2012 Olympics.

A report from the Personal Social Services Research Unit (PSSRU) warns that taxpayers will have to shell out over £33 billion by 2032 to cope with the increasing population of OAPs.

This news comes after it emerged that the largest care providers in the UK, Southern Cross Healthcare, are on the verge of financial collapse.

## **Fearful future for care**

More than 31,000 elderly people living in 750 care homes have been left facing uncertainties about their future, and taxpayers could be forced to pick up the bill.

Analysts predict the number of people aged over 75 will double in England by 2032 from 4.8 million to 8.7 million.

The PSSRU report says that during the same period the number of people in care homes funded through public spending will increase by 68% from 227,700 to 383,500, while private places will go up to 126% from 106,300 to 239,800. The average cost for one year in a care home is around £26,000.

The report warns that public spending must increase to meet demand. It also says private spending, for privately owned care homes, must also go up from £7.3 billion to £22.4 billion.

## **Nationwide care of elderly**

In order to meet the demand on our already strained care home services, public and private spending must increase from £18.6 billion to £53.5 billion by 2032.

Care homes in this country are going to cost more because there is an ageing population and more people to look after. If the extra money needed is not provided, care is going to suffer and so will the elderly.

Before the last election, Labour proposed a National

Care Service on the lines of the NHS to deal with the mounting problems of how to finance our care system.

It would have been paid through a compulsory 10% levy on inheritance estates. But the Conservatives dubbed the idea a death tax and have yet to put together an alternative plan. The government may look to the private sector to bail them out.

## **Private equity concerns**

After Southern Cross announced its financial crisis there is a sense of unease surrounding companies backed by private equity firms, which invest millions only to extract as much profit as possible. Southern Cross has been left in this state due to the actions of the greedy over care for the needy. ►





Image: Elnur / Shutterstock

► Show the elderly that we care. Brian Lee argues that a civilised society must value and care for the elderly...

Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, has been hit with a report on the most pressing social problem of the time – care for our elderly population.

It threatens to blow a big hole in his deficit reduction plans.

The problem is simple enough. We are living longer, we need more care and care costs money.

It has been reported that in 30 years time the number of over 65s in Britain will have grown by six million, or more than 50%.

The pensions bill will be over £30 billion higher and spending on health and care for the elderly will be about £40 billion higher.

These are massive amounts and the question is who pays, and

how? How much do individuals pay and how much does government pay?

Already care for the elderly, or lack of it, is a national disgrace.

Media reports tell of patients left without water or food in hospitals. Then there is the abuse and neglect of private care homes. Even those needing care in their own homes are struggling.

Care bills are spiralling, eating into the savings of those who have worked hard for this country and deserve better.

There are calls for long term care to be funded by the user even if that means selling their home.

If David Cameron's "Big Society" is to mean anything it must be looking after the

elderly. The voluntary sector can only go so far and the government cannot and should not avoid its responsibilities.

Providing and paying for care is a big political problem. But it is not made easier by the government continuing to spend millions on foreign wars.

There are standards by which a country is judged and one of them is the way it cares for its most vulnerable, old and young alike.

A new vision must include looking after our elderly as we would wish to be looked after ourselves. A civilised society demands nothing less.

**[ FOR MORE INFORMATION GO TO  
WWW.CWU.ORG/HANDS-OFF-  
OUR-PENSIONS.HTML ]**

[DEBATE]

# ASSISTED DYING DEBATE TELEVISED

**Paul Donovan** warns that legal assisted dying could quickly become euthanasia, as medical staff make difficult decisions about who can access limited resources

**T**here was much **furor** recently over the BBC's *Choosing to Die* programme, which involved writer Terry Pratchett looking into assisted dying as practiced at the Dignitas centre in Switzerland.

The author was given an hour-long programme to make his very public case for assisted dying. His own interest in the subject arises because he is suffering with Alzheimer's disease and wants to be able to end his life in this country, at a time of his own choosing.

## It all looks so easy

At present this is not permissible under UK law, resulting in those who want to die having to go to Dignitas.

The film followed the path of two people who took that course of action, one a 42 year old multiple sclerosis sufferer, the other, Peter Smedley, a 71 year old motor neurone victim.

There was an attempt at balance in the programme, with another motor neurone sufferer who was receiving palliative care defending the right to live. Also Pratchett's assistant made it clear a number of times that he was not comfortable with the Dignitas process.

The most dangerous thing about the whole programme though was the ease with which it portrayed the dying



Image: Wallenrock / Shutterstock

process. Smedley was filmed taking the poison. He then clasped his throat asking for sustenance before passing into a coma.

## Unbalanced debate

One problem with the assisted dying debate is the lack of balance. The situation of a millionaire writer, able to choose when and where he wants to die is substantially different from that of the elderly person without family or friends alone in a hospital bed. The growing economic pressure over lack of resources will force medical staff to make decisions concerning whose life is worth saving. This is an unfair pressure.

Indeed, according to some

**Above: Assisted dying or effective pain relief?**

healthcare professionals, there is already an unofficial form of euthanasia being practiced in our hospitals.

The legal position as it stands now in this country, since the Director of Public Prosecutions issued his guidelines last year, is the right one. Assisted dying remains illegal, but there is more understanding for those who may have been put in the unenviable position of going along with a relative's desire to die. There is now less appetite to pursue the relatives of the victim through the courts.

Legalising euthanasia is certainly a step too far, especially in a society where it seems that the value of life is constantly being cheapened.

# 27

...the number of British citizens who chose to die with Dignitas in 2009



# CONFERENCE REVIEW

**John Thorne** reports from retired members' fringe meeting at annual conference

**N**ational Pensioners Convention general secretary Dot Gibson has warned that the coalition government's cuts are hitting the elderly hardest.

Addressing the retired members' fringe meeting at annual conference, Dot questioned whether the state pension will ever be above the poverty level, now that the Consumer Prices Index is being used as the indexation indicator.

Dot told how the NPC were prepared to support workers whose pensions were also affected by the changes.

She attacked social care charges for non means-tested pensioners, and expressed total opposition to privatisation of the NHS.

The NPC was also looking into its own structure in order to become more effective in promoting policies and representing members' needs.

Dot remarked on how the CWU allow input from retired members unlike other unions.

Tony Kearns, CWU Senior Deputy General Secretary,

called for more workers in DHL, UPS and other companies to be unionised.

The workers in these companies are being paid lower wages with worse conditions, enabling the owners of these companies to undercut Royal Mail and bid for different contracts.

Tony reported on his involvement in pensions, the workers' collective, standing up against the cuts and working with the homeless as a volunteer.

He had witnessed a rise in older people, women and ethnic minorities becoming homeless in the past 18 months.

Tony said the CWU would respond to the NPC consultation on structure and membership.

Neil Duncan-Jordan, NPC national officer, told how means-testing prevented many from claiming their allowances. Virtually all final salary pension schemes are now dead.

According to the government the change from RPI to CPI is fairer, but over a

10 year period older people would lose £10,000, he estimated.

He suggested that if the green paper for a new state pension of £140 per week were enacted in present form it would lead to a two tier system, as existing pensioners would remain on the current rates.

He said the figure was outdated and would need to be £170 a week to be above today's official poverty level.

Respects were paid to Nobby Clark who sadly passed away in April.

## How pensioners are poorer

- The cumulative effect of the switch from RPI to CPI makes pensioners £710 per year worse off.
- Bus transport schemes have been cut by 20%.
- Some 25% of pensioners have been affected by reduced housing benefits.
- There are cuts to the winter fuel payments and the attack on sheltered housing.

## Motions carried at Conference

### General Conference

#### Motion 1

That this union notes the all out attack on working people and the vital services they rely on by the ConDem coalition. The TUC leader Brendan Barber's call for united campaigning against the cuts. The CWU to work with other trade unions and campaigning organisations to stop the cuts, and calls on the TUC to coordinate a 24 hour general strike.

#### Motion 12

Instructs the NEC to ensure our NHS be protected from any form of privatisation. To use whatever resources are available (Labour Party, TUC, other unions and affiliated organisations) to ensure the NHS remains free at point of delivery.

#### Motion 15

Conference agrees that the present system of monitoring the care and wellbeing of elderly people is not working. A new independent body, the Society for the Protection and Care of Older People, needs to be set up. Conference instructs the NEC to work with the RMAC, NPC and TUC to pursue this policy.

#### Motion 20

Condemned the shocking charges made by care homes and sought to campaign for changes.

#### Motion 26

Conference recognises that it is in the best interests of the membership to maintain pension increases using the RPI rather than the CPI calculation for pension schemes. It therefore instructs the NEC via the RMAC to use all avenues to secure RPI as the continued calculation pension increase orders. This is to include wide

ranging campaigning as is felt necessary to gain a successful conclusion.

\*With the carriage of this motion a letter to branches, No.739/11, was issued on 23/08/11. As part of this campaign, the National Pensioners Convention are asking for all of its affiliates to back the ongoing campaign against the government's decision to weaken both state and occupational pension schemes by switching from the RPI to the CPI and sign the online petition at the link below:  
<http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/1535>

If over 100,000 signatories are secured it may force a parliamentary debate on the issue and the chance for further campaigning. Please therefore sign up and circulate as widely as possible and encourage CWU members and their families to support this campaign.

#### Emergency Motion 1

Since the Government announcement on 20 April 2011 the rate of RPI had risen to 4.4%. The effect on the winter fuel allowance, which had already been eroded with the increased gas and electricity costs, has become critical. Conference therefore instructs the NEC to liaise with the RMAC to campaign vigorously against any cuts to this allowance.

#### Rules Revision Conference

#### Amendment 49. Rule 8.10.1

"All elections, for annual contested seats, shall be by a secret ballot of those entitled to vote. Retired members shall not vote".



# REGIONAL ROUNDUPS

## South East

**Rob Downing, South East regional secretary, reports on what has been going on with retired members in the region...**

At the meeting of the South East regional retired members committee held on the 20 July, members received reports from delegates who had attended the National Pensioners' Parliament in Blackpool in June.

Reports included the future of the NHS, the change from Retail Price Index to Consumer Price Index for pensions and care in the community.

At the Parliament, Mike Duggan, general secretary of the CPSA, gave a talk on the effects of the change from RPI to CPI.

He said that both the Tories and the Lib Dems had given assurances before the election that they had no plans to change the pension index for industrial pensions. These promises were broken with the coalition government's first emergency budget.

He told the delegates that the CPSA are to mount a legal challenge against the change from RPI to CPI. (A demonstration was

organised on 25 October outside the Royal Courts of Justice in support of the legal challenge.)

Steve Webb, the pensions minister, told Parliament that there had been regular meeting between the National Pensioners Convention and himself, and these would continue.

He stated that the government had restored the link with earnings and whilst the rate of earnings was low at present, he felt that they would grow in the future.

When asked, given that CPI has been lower than the RPI over past years, how would changing help pensioners? His answer was that as pensions were linked to earnings, it was felt that as earnings rise so will pensions.

When asked would it not be better to have a pension for everyone above the poverty line of £178. He answered this was totally unaffordable.

The committee felt that this summed up the government's attitude to the pensioners of this country.

The committee agreed that we must raise the public's awareness of the problems that not only

affect pensioners of today, but also those of the future.

To this end we have agreed to join as many demonstrations in the South East against the government cuts as possible.

The NPC are organising a week of protest and campaigning during October 24 to 29. Full details are available on their web site [npcuk.org](http://npcuk.org). Why not come and join us on some of these events, make your voice heard.

## North West

**Graham Wilson, secretary of the North West retired members' council, reports...**

North West Region Retired Members will hold their annual forum on 18 November in the Mechanics Institute, Major Street, Manchester starting at 11.

Speakers include Tony Kearns, senior deputy general secretary CWU and Malcolm Rae OBE, ex nurse, ex government advisor on mental health and now a fellow at University of Central Lancashire. There will also be an MP from the North West. Refreshments and buffet lunch will be provided. All members and friends will be very welcome.





## [SPOTLIGHT ON...] LONDON

Brian Lee, secretary of the London retired members' regional committee, reports.

The London region members' regional council met on 21 July. Items on the agenda included the National Pensioners Convention (NPC) training of LiNK representatives for social care. These are people who go into care homes to check on the work carried out. With what has been reported in newspapers and seen on television this cannot come soon enough.

Members reported on their branch activities. Reports on NPC Pensioners' Parliament, CWU rules and general conferences were published in the London Region News/Views number 51.

The ninth London Older People's Assembly was held in City Hall, with Mayor Boris Johnson announcing that the London Freedom Pass was safe. He told how a new contract had been awarded for the administration of the pass. In addition, a new deal had been struck with rail operators for the holders to continue to be able to use their passes on London train services for the next four years.

It was announced that the dates for the CWU general conference next year will be 22 to 26 April at the Bournemouth International Centre. The retired members' fringe meeting will be on Monday 23 April. Due to the conference being brought forward, other conferences will be earlier, so timetables for

motions and amendments have to be submitted much earlier.

The retired members' conference next year will be held on 19 January.

The NPC announced a week of activity from 24 to 29 October. Three protests were arranged. A demonstration to take place outside the Royal Courts of Justice on 25 October in support of the RPI/CPI legal challenge, a rally the next day in Parliament and a march and rally in Sutton on 29 October.

An online petition to 10 Downing Street has been launched by the NPC against the decision to weaken both occupational and state pensions by switching from RPI to CPI. If the petition secures 100,000 signatures it can force a parliamentary debate on this issue. We urge all members, families and supporters to sign the petition. See:

<http://epetitions.gov.uk/petitions/1535>.



AN ONLINE PETITION TO 10 DOWNING STREET HAS BEEN LAUNCHED BY THE NPC AGAINST THE DECISION TO WEAKEN BOTH OCCUPATIONAL AND STATE PENSIONS BY SWITCHING FROM RPI TO CPI

Brian Lee, secretary of the London retired members' regional committee





# NOBBY CLARK 1939-2011

Rex (Nobby) Clark, who was an inspirational union activist, socialist, husband, father and friend to all, sadly passed away on 15th April 2011 after a short illness

**N**obby will be fondly remembered by the CWU nationally, regionally and at branch level for his unflinching trade union ethics, his humility and grace and above all for his friendship to many.

### Lifelong trade unionist

He had been a lifelong member of the trade union movement. Nobby's strength and commitment to his union and other work outside – including on trade's councils, Citizens Advice Bureau, local groups and the pensioners' committees – was an inspiration to many much younger trade unionists including myself.

### Ally, activist and friend

Nobby would tirelessly pursue justice and equality, no matter how hard the task or impossible the outcomes may have seemed. Eastern No 6 Branch officers and representatives would look to Nobby for advice, drawing on his vast wealth of knowledge and common sense. This was also true of the Eastern Region and its branches.

I know for my part that he was a great ally, activist, advisor and friend who will be sadly missed by us all.

Nobby was also a great husband to Gillian

(deceased), father to Alison and Karen and grandfather. In the early days of his life Nobby also served in the Royal Naval D Boat section and enjoyed organising his 'D' Boat Association reunions with his former colleagues.

This involvement was reflected at his funeral with a large turnout of his old comrades from across the UK. There was the lowering of the D Boat Naval flag at half mast and saluting for a departed colleague but never forgotten friend.

### A life well spent

Remembering Nobby's life, his activities and warmth I can only hope, during my time as a trade unionist, to aspire to his level of patience and friendship. I would like to draw on his guidance and advice as I and many others move forward as activists in the trade union.

Perhaps Nobby's character and compassion may be best summed up as "a well spent day brings happy sleep, so a life well spent brings happy death".

To a true friend, colleague, an inspiration never forgotten, remembered and always with us.

By Paul Moffat,  
Eastern Regional Secretary

*Nobby Clark  
1939 – 2011, died aged 72*

### Union & community service

**Kings Lynn Branch Chair  
1977 – 1981**

**Kings Lynn Branch  
Secretary 1981 – 1992**

**Area Health & Safety  
Representative 1985 – 1987**

**ADO Postal 1985 – 1987**

**ADOL 1987 – 1992**

**Unit Representative  
Kings Lynn 1992 – 2004**

**Eastern Regional  
Committee Chair  
1992 – 1996**

**Postal Standing orders  
Committee 1996 – 2003**

**Branch Chair Eastern No 5  
2003 – 2006**

**Retired Members'  
Advisory Committee  
2004 – 2011**

**Eastern Regional Retired  
Members' Secretary  
2005 – 2011**

**Delegate to Conference  
1976 – 2011**

**Branch Retired Members'  
Secretary 2004 – 2011**

**Tutor to Royal Mail  
Induction Schools &  
various CWU schools  
1996 – 2011**

**Employment Tribunal  
Panel**

**Citizens Advice Bureau  
& National Pensioners  
Convention**

**President of Kings  
Lynn Trades Council**

**Lifelong Labour  
Party Member**

