



# Newsletter

## Pensioners' Parliament 2017

Taking place before the recent deal between the Conservatives and the DUP, there was plenty of robust discussion about the issues presented, especially the concerns about the triple lock pensions and the threat to the winter fuel allowance. This year's Pensioners' Parliament took place on 6-18 June at the Winter Gardens, and was opened by the Mayor of Blackpool. The NPC gave a donation to the Blackpool Civic Trust and attendees were granted



free use of the Blackpool tram network during their stay. There was also a social event hosted by the Unite trade union. In the Parliament itself, there were six workshops: "Is the housing crisis caused by older people?", "Where next for state and occupational pensions?", "Brexit: What does it mean for older people?", "The state of the NHS and social care", "Public transport and the needs of older passengers" and "The future of local pensioner groups. In the housing



workshop, SPAG's Tony O'Brien had the opportunity to speak about Southwark's experience, with the demolition of the Heygate Estate and soon, perhaps, the Aylesbury, in favour of 'regeneration'. National NPC Leader, Neil Duncan-Jordan implied that any suggestion by the media that pensioners have "never had it so good" are erroneous, since inflation is rising (currently 2.9%), leading to stagnated savings in real terms.



Southwark Pensioners Action Group

Affiliated to

# NPC

National Pensioners Convention

**N.B. The next SPAG meeting will take place at SPC on Friday, 1st September, 10:00am - 12:00pm. Topic: Pensions**

July 2017

## After the general election, what now for Pensioners' living standards?

The result of June 8th's General Election has raised many important issues for all Pensioners. The lack of achieving an overall majority for the Conservative Government has changed everything compared to before the election. The government's reliance on its pact with the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) still leaves us with very interesting times. SPAG's opposition to the cuts to our NHS, Schools and Housing, to name a few, still needs to be won. Hopefully now, because we have a Government which is in such a precarious position, we may be in a better position to get them to start to invest some money into our services.

The government has appointed Guy Opperman, the MP for Hexham, as the new Pensions' Minister replacing Richard Harrington. So, we need to watch him closely to see how he performs.

Also, because Government is having to rely on the Democratic Unionist Party for support, it now seems likely that several proposals in their election manifesto concerning pensioners will be dropped. For example, the plan to remove the triple lock from the state pension in 2020 and to means-test the winter fuel allowance from up to 10 million pensioners now seems unlikely to happen.

However, in the Queen's Speech on 21 June it was announced that over the next few months the government would consult on the future funding of social care. On the same day, Damian Green MP, the deputy Prime Minister told the media there would be a cap on the amount of money that people would have to pay for their care – but declined to say what that might be.

The bungled Conservative manifesto pledge on social care and the fact that minister were only told of the plans 24 hours before they were published, as one of the main reasons the party lost support. Nevertheless, we are concerned that this consultation must not allow the government to introduce this discredited and unpopular policy through the backdoor. Either a consultation is open or the government has already made up its mind what it wants to do, and is simply going through the motions.

SPAG remains vigilant and will continue to campaign with the "National Pensioners Convention" to make sure that the case for a tax-funded social care system is fundamental for the protection of all Pensioners benefits.

Tony O' Brien  
SPAG Committee Member  
26<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2017

### **Pensioners Manifesto**

Before the General Election, the National Pensioners' Convention pulled together a six-point manifesto based on previous policies and campaigns:



1. **A state pension set above the official poverty level, at around £200 a week and linked to the triple lock of the higher of earnings, prices or 2.5%.**
2. **Greater funding for the NHS, an end to privatisation in the health service and a national social care system funded from general taxation that is free at the point of delivery and without means-testing.**
3. **Maintenance of universal pensioner benefits such as free bus travel, a £500 winter fuel allowance, free prescriptions and a free TV licence for the over 75s.**
4. **More homes that are both affordable and suitable for everyone, whilst recognising the specific barriers to downsizing that older people face.**
5. **New legal protection for older people from all forms of elder abuse to ensure dignity and raise standards of care.**
6. **A Brexit deal that safeguards the payment of pensions, the EU health insurance card and the rights of those UK pensioners living abroad.**