

Campaign!

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

Referendum votes will greet new PM

One of the first items sitting in the in-tray at Number 10 when Gordon Brown finally becomes Prime Minister will be the NPC's age referendum.

Plans are currently being made to ensure that days after Mr Brown takes office, a delegation will take over 75,000 voting papers to Downing Street.

An overwhelming 98% of voters believed the government's policies on pensions, health care, concessionary travel, council tax and post offices were failing Britain's elderly and in need of urgent reform.

In response to this demand, the NPC has called a national rally and lobby of Parliament for Wednesday October 24.

**NPC
National
Lobby
& Rally
24 October
2007**

The aim of the event will be to call for a series of pensioners' rights, in line with the Pensioners' Charter.

A range of speakers including politicians, union officials, health experts and academics will address a rally from 12 noon in the Methodist Central Hall, Westminster - before campaigners go over to the House of Commons to lobby their MPs.

Details of a petition, model letter, Early Day Motion and other campaign materials will be available shortly.

Blackpool 2007 in fighting spirit

Over 2000 delegates from across the country packed the Winter Gardens in Blackpool, for the start of the 15th National Pensioners' Parliament on May 8.

During the opening session, speakers expressed their surprise and anger that the Labour government had been unable to find a substitute to attend in place of Hazel Blears MP, who was at a funeral, and delegates were encouraged to write to the Prime Minister.

After Conservative Nigel Waterson MP and Liberal Democrat David Laws MP outlined their respective views, there was a unanimous vote to only support candidates in elections



who pledged to tackle the serious problems of pensions, health care and concessionary travel faced by millions of older people.

During the three-day event, delegates also passed six parliamentary-style Bills on housing, lifelong learning, healthy living, public services, national insurance and the NHS.

Specialist campaign sessions on the last morning also dealt with tackling poverty, the right to free travel, dignity in care and the media (see over).

The event ended

with a detailed analysis of the failings of the government's existing pensions' policy from the NPC's patron, Prof Alan Walker of Sheffield University.

Joe Harris, NPC general secretary said: "The Pensioners' Parliament is a truly unique event in the pensioner movement's calendar, enabling people to have their say, shape policies and discuss campaigns."

2008's event will be from 3-5 June.

The Pensioners' Parliament remains the largest and most influential gathering of older people in the country
© NPC

For copies of the Bills passed at the Pensioners' Parliament 2007 contact the NPC office

National Pensioners Convention

19-23

Ironmonger Row,
London EC1V 3QN
T: 020-7553-6510
E: admin@npcuk.org
www.npcuk.org

Campaign Dates

June 26-27 - NPC Biennial Delegate Conference, Nottingham University. Delegates from the NPC's national and regional affiliates will elect the Convention's officers for the coming two years and consider a series of motions on various issues.

September 3 - Half-day conference on Pensioners' Rights aimed at minority elders, 2-5pm, Leeds Town Hall. For further information contact the NPC.

October 24 - NPC Lobby of Parliament for Pensioners' Rights. Rally at 12 noon in the Methodist Central Hall, Westminster followed by a lobby of MPs in the House of Commons. Speakers invited include Kate Hoey MP, Kelvin Hopkins MP, Mark Serwotka PCS, Billy Hayes CWU, Pauline Ford RCN and Prof Alan Walker. For further information contact the NPC.

Survey will show social care crisis

This month the NPC will launch a new survey on the issue of social care.

Evidence from around the country already suggests that many local authorities are tightening the access to social care for those with low, moderate and substantial needs because of lack of funds, forcing thousands of older people to rely on family and friends to provide their care.

As a result, only those with critical needs are receiving any help; the cost of which varies depending on the local authority.

Recent cases have also shown that services that were once classed as health care - and provided free - are now being described as social care and are subject to means-testing.

Dr Mary Parkinson, NPC health advisor said: "The aim of the survey is to find out the

state of social care across England by canvassing both local councils and pensioners who are paying for the service."

"It is highly likely that the survey will show that social care is now in crisis and desperately in need of additional government funding."

The NPC will use the evidence from the surveys to highlight its campaign for free long-term and social care for all.

NPC takes action over the media

Pensioners and the media was just one of the lively campaign sessions at this year's Pensioners' Parliament.

Vivian White from BBC's Panorama programme explained the inner workings of the modern media and gave a number of useful tips for getting into the news.

But delegates recognised that the media had only been inter-

ested in covering the event at Blackpool when they thought there would be a row between Hazel Blears and the audience.

In the absence of Ms Blears, the media clearly lost interest.

Following the concern expressed by many pensioners at this lack of media coverage, the NPC now intends to discuss with retired journalists and the NUJ how

best to advise groups about getting their message into their local media.

A special meeting to look at the role of the media and how to use it is also being considered.

Pat Healy, NPC vice president said: "Publicity is one of the keys to raising public awareness and pressure for pensioners' demands; so we must try to get our message in the headlines."

Ageism and learning

At the end of May, the NPC met with Bill Rammell, minister for lifelong learning, to discuss the scrapping of concessionary fees for pensioners taking adult education courses.

Following guidance from the National Institute for Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), many colleges were wrongly advised that it would be illegal to offer concessionary fees on the grounds of age.

But in the meeting with the NPC, Mr Rammell said: "Age related fee concessions may be objectively justified where they are a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim."

The Convention is now keen to ensure that colleges

do not use the NIACE guidelines as a way of saving money, by ending their age-related concessions and introducing means-tested discounts instead.

If you know anyone who would like to receive this bulletin, send their details to the NPC