NATIONAL EDUCATION UNION

NPC RPORT MARCH 2019

Members of the National Pensioners Convention have protested to the government that it has a duty to fund the TV licence for the over 75s. It is not the responsibility of the BBC It is the main source of companionship and information for millions and especially those who are housebound. For those living on or below the poverty line to have to pay that extra amount for the TV licence would be too much.

The National Free Bus Pass Scheme needs more funding from central government. Local Councils administer it but without sufficient funding everyone may have a bus pass but it is useless without the bus! Sometimes the bus can only be used after 9 am and before 10 pm – not helpful in a rural area. This essential facility is needed by pensioners for health visits – hospital, doctor and dentist – shopping and social activities.

Half a million pensioners living abroad suffer from frozen pensions. I over 150 countries the pension amount is frozen at the level at which people retire to that country. These countries include commonwealth ones. It is especially hard on those who become incapacitated in their retirement and the frozen pension does not cover the cost of care. Again, there is an ongoing campaign in Parliament.

As we all know, Social Care is totally inadequate. People are not helped with their basic needs – washing, dressing, toileting and food. Not everyone has a friend or family member who can act as an unpaid carer. The Green Paper promised by the government has been delayed for the 7th time until after the May elections. The NPC is campaigning for a National Care Service funded from taxation and free at the point of delivery.

Winter deaths, due to fuel poverty, are on the increase. 1.4 million Pensioners suffer from fuel poverty and inadequately heated and insulated housing. The most severely affected are females and those over 85 yrs. It must be remembered that young singles may also find themselves in this housing trap – there have been recent reports in the EDP highlighting some of these appalling rental properties. Affordable housing at both ends of the age spectrum should be an essential government initiative. We campaign each winter on this issue

Meals on Wheels – a quarter of all local councils are now unable, due to financial constraints, to provide this service. Yet it gives a hot meal on a regular basis to the elderly housebound, and it provides a human contact and health check too. Those who take advantage of the service are unable to go out, shop or cook for themselves. It should also be noted that over 33% of over 65s admitted to hospital are suffering from malnutrition. Meals on Wheels should be seen as important as Free School Meals for those in education.

Pensioner poverty is on the increase due to the cost of living rising faster than the pension, changes to the benefit system and the lack of affordable properties to rent or buy. The pension gap between men and women is increasing, so women are worse off even though they live longer.

The NPC campaign on all of the above. Rallies and Marches are held. Petitions are handed in to government and there are regular meetings with parliamentary sub committees.