



ISLINGTON PENSIONERS FORUM

The voice of Islington's older community

March 2016 Newsletter

Charity No: 1043081

HOW DO THE PARTIES IN THE LONDON MAYOR ELECTIONS STAND ON ISSUES OF CONCERN TO YOU?

Come to the election hustings on Monday 11th April 2016 2-4 pm

Islington Town Hall Council Chamber

Islington Pensioners Forum is hosting this important meeting for

North London Pensioners

Chair: Kristina Glenn, Director Cripplegate Foundation



Beat the



Winter



Blues



Party

Housing Bill a threat to families and whole communities!

In a meeting room for 50, over 150 people turned up at Islington Town Hall on 9 February for the public meeting on the Housing Bill organised by *Islington Hands Off Our Public Services Coalition* (IHOOPS) and addressed by Councillor James Murray (Council Cabinet Member for Housing).

The discussion was non-stop and passionate on legislation threatening families and whole communities, Council and housing association tenants and also those wanting to buy a home (knowing that they have no hope of getting on the Council list). Older people wanting to down-

size are also in a dilemma with only 6 per cent of new building (nationally) for sheltered homes, and current rented sheltered housing scheduled for sale by the Housing Bill. The meeting decided to set up a *Kill the Housing Bill* campaign, and 30 people turned up a week later to establish a committee and plan the activities.

KILL THE HOUSING BILL!

An Islington "feeder" march 11.15 am at Old Clerkenwell Fire Station

SECURE HOMES FOR ALL CONTROL RENTS



NATIONAL DEMO

Meet 12 noon at Lincolns Inn Fields

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

● The latest news from the junior doctors is that they are to go on a 48hour strike (see Pam Zinkin's report on page five). My first thoughts are that the anti-trade union laws mean that trade unionists do not have the legal right to take strike action in support of each other! But I can't think of a better action to support than that of these junior doctors who spend all their working hours supporting us, our health and our lives!

Well we pensioner-trade unionists are not at work and so we don't flout the law when we support trade union actions! So I ask Islington Pensioner Forum members to support Pam's call: stand side-by-side with the junior doctors on 9-10 March. I know from very recent experience that Pam is right - they care for us and now it's our turn to care for them!

● Electoral boundary changes are about to take place, and this clearly indicates an advantage for the current government as many Labour seats are broken up.

● Reports with documentary evidence on Channel Four News about thousands of pounds of undeclared spending on hotel bills for Conservative Party head office full-time campaign teams in a number of by-elections reveal a colossal illegal overspend (according to election law). Even members of the campaign team and local Conservative Party members have expressed their concern and shock in Channel Four News interviews. This is an eye-opener to millions of people facing huge financial

problems on a number of fronts - cost of fuel, rents, house prices, social care, tuition fees for instance. But what happens next? We are told that the report is now in the hands of the police so watch this space!

● Islington's Council leader, Councillor Richard Watts 'phoned to ask our opinion on Council publications. There are suggestions from Councillor Caroline Russell (Green Party) that the money spent on *Islington Life* should go to the collection and sale of cheap furniture. I told him that I thought that the Council should keep the door-to-door delivery of the magazine so that residents have reports from the Council and have the chance to form an opinion, to respond and have their say if they want to.

● As reported in our last Newsletter the House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee has launched an "intergenerational fairness" Inquiry which is clearly "loaded" against pensioners, saying that we are not affected by the austerity at the expense of younger generations! First of all that is not true, as we all know, but also, what strikes me is that when they say that younger generations cannot expect to get even what we have had in terms of jobs, wages, public services and their future pensions, then that throws a light on the capitalist market system - *the sixth richest country in the world cannot provide a decent future for its young!* I have just read the National Pensioners Convention response in the Inquiry's consultation process, and I urge members to get a copy from IPF (cost 50p) or www.npcuk.org

South East Region of the TUC Pensioners' Network

Free Seminar: Crisis in Care and Caring

Tuesday 15 March 2016 10am to 3.30 pm : Lunch provided

Speakers:

Barbara Keeley MP – Shadow Minister of Older People, Social Care and Carers

Jan Shortt – Vice President, National Pensioners Convention

To book a place: email dlewis@tuc.org.uk or call 020 7467 1220

Or contact IPF on ipf@talktalkbusiness.net or 020 7226 7687

Winner of the Great British Care Home Award 2015 speaks at Islington's 2016 Dignity Action Day care workers' awards ceremony

VILMA TOLEDO is a staff nurse at Stacey Street Nursing home and a national winner of the annual Great British Care Home Award under the category of Dignity in Care presented at Birmingham International Conference Centre on 24 April 2015. What follows is an edited version of her speech at the Islington Dignity Action Day Awards to care workers on 1 February 2016.

I was, I am and I continue to be greatly humbled and honoured in getting this national award. Numerous people have supported me along the way; I was blessed with an amazing employer and the Borough, elderly clients, colleagues, friends and especially Mila Castillo and her husband.

When I won at Islington's Dignity in Care Awards on 1 February 2014, I didn't suspect that this was the beginning of a new experience to be recognised nationally. My name was put forward to the Great British Care award. This meant going through a panel of two judges who asked different questions about how I make a difference and about dignity champions. I also had to write 50 words about my feelings on being shortlisted. It was very challenging.

Then in January 2015 a miracle – far beyond my comprehension and capability! I was shortlisted for the national award. This time I was put in front of a panel of three judges who bombarded me with questions, and evoked me sharing my personal experiences. Deep inside I was nervous and anxious; there were

butterflies in my stomach, but the judges, whose interest in my skills, potential and experiences working for and with elderly who have Alzheimer's and mental issues, revealed to me their own caring humanness. and I felt their enthusiasm and interest.

No matter what the final outcome, I had reached the final stage of being recognised and had been able to express and share my deepest feelings and experiences, my passion for commitment to serve our elderly friends in Islington.

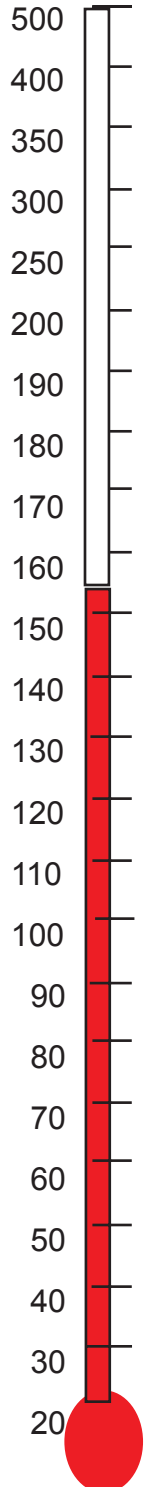
I was one of the six on the shortlist, and the presentation took place at a huge celebration Gala Night. It was a memorable event for everyone. When my name was proclaimed the winner, Mila and her husband looked at me and said: "Vi, you made it, you won!"

I stood up still unbelieving and as though floating in a cloud until I saw my name with "Camden and Islington" flashing on two big screens. In the midst of people's applause I walked to the stage where two prominent people presented me with a uniquely beautiful plaque.

This experience is, for me, a call and an intensifying inspiration for us all to develop the skills we already have and to learn new ones for no other reason than for better care and service in our God-given-mission for the elderly.

Friends, let us continue to support and give life to the Vision and the Mission of Islington Council for our elderly clients. Let us be filled with courage and joy to meet the challenge of full life with them.

THANKS to all those members who have paid their 2016 subs. The £5 a year helps IPF to keep going! So keep the subs coming in!



Forum's straw poll opposes pay-per-view TV

Councillor Raphael Andrews told the Forum meeting on 18 February that he views it as an injustice that pensioners do not have a free TV licence until they are 75.

Introduced in 1946 as a temporary measure, many decades later there is now a (little known) consultation on the licence fee, and the BBC's independent report is not expected until December.

In 2014 BBC executives suggested that the fee could be charged on all households

whether or not they own a TV and the government resurrected the idea in 2015. An alternative is pay-per-view subscription.

A straw poll taken at the Forum was heavily in favour of a licence rather than pay-per-view.

Capita is the private company contracted by the BBC to administer and enforce the licence fee.

In England and Wales, there were 178,000 prosecutions in 2013, with 32 people jailed, including pensioners.

Uncertain future of Attendance Allowance

Consultation on the government's plan to give local authorities the responsibility for administering and paying Attendance Allowance (AA) is over and we now await the government's response.

There are some serious concerns for it would represent one of the biggest shifts of resources within the welfare state for 25 years, and a shift of responsibility for welfare policy from central to local government.

At present AA is paid to 1.5million people age 65 and over in the UK, regardless of their personal means. It is seen as a vital support for hundreds of thousands who live independently, but might otherwise need to go into residential care.

Evidence shows that just one in seven AA recipients also get funding for social care, so whilst the two are

part of the same wider questions regarding the care of older people in the community, it is clear that AA plays a distinctive and specific role in enabling many individuals to maintain their independence within their homes rather than experiencing unnecessary or early entry into the residential nursing home sector.

The shift to local authorities would put this important benefit in jeopardy. . . .

- Government cuts are putting Councils under extreme pressure and unless there are legal assurances that AA funds would be ring-fenced and increased annually to remain there for existing and future claimants, they could "disappear".

- Staff cuts leave Councils struggling to carry out many of their functions, and being responsible for AA would mean even greater pressure.

"Frozen British Pensions: The Case for Change"

This pamphlet, published by the International Consortium of British Pensioners and the National Pensioners Convention (NPC), can be ordered from IPF (copies available at the March Forum meeting) – cost £1.

It was launched in the House of Commons on 2 February. Chaired by Sir Roger Gale MP, chair of the All-party Parliamentary Group on Frozen British Pensions., the meeting was attended by representatives of the High Commissions of Canada, St. Vincent and Ghana as well as MPs and active members of pensioner groups affiliated to the NPC.

For some of us it was an eye-opener! We discovered that some 560,000 British state pensioners living overseas (mainly in Commonwealth countries) have their state pension frozen at the level it had reached when they left the UK, even though they had earned their pension through their National Insurance contributions.

So, for instance, if a UK subject decides, on retirement, to live in one of 51 countries including Spain,

Denmark, Israel, the USA, Poland Trinidad and Malta, they are eligible for all the subsequent increases in their state pension, but if they go to live in one of 156 other countries of the world, including Australia, Canada, South Africa, New Zealand, Ghana, India, Pakistan and St. Vincent, they will not receive these increases. This is discrimination!

The point was made that every pensioner who chooses to live abroad saves the country a lot of money by not relying on UK state support if they stay here. The campaign says that £3bn a year is saved in health care, age-related benefits and miscellaneous pension credit; whereas the latest estimate for paying all ex-pats the same pension as they would get in the UK this year is £656 million.

All those people who are considering going back to their country of origin or moving abroad to live near to their children (and grandchildren) who emigrated should look at the list of the 156 frozen pension countries in this pamphlet and join the campaign!

Anne-Marie Jupp and Joyce Heron

February Forum hears about the Noah's Ark Children's Hospice

Rebekah and Pippa explained that this is a community based service, which provides support for 150 children and their families, across North London. The children and young people have life-threatening or life-limiting conditions, many of them neurological. Carers provide some respite for the children's parents, and activities for their siblings. They also organise parent groups to talk and befriend.

Less than 10% of their annual costs of £1.7 million is met by government, though they probably save social services about twice that amount. They hope to start building a hospice in the Barnet area in 2017 when they have raised the necessary funds.

A collection was taken and donated to Noah's Ark. If you would like to know more, their website is: <http://www.noahsarkhospice.org.uk/>

The spirits in the sky

I would respectfully draw attention to a mistaken assumption that appears to be generally accepted by socialists everywhere. This is the assumption that Clement Attlee was responsible for the creation of the welfare state, and that this occurred following the global war of 1939-45. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The welfare state was definitely created during the period 1908 to 1911. This momentous action was carried out by the radical liberals governed by the Liberal Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith, the original Labour Party led by Ramsay MacDonald and the Irish nationalists led by John Redmond.

The Liberal Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lloyd George introduced a national system of labour exchanges during 1908 and Asquith had Old Age Pensions beginning to be paid by January 1909. However, in January 2010 an election was due, with the main issue being welfare. The Liberal, Labour and Irish Nationalist coalition that had formed to defeat Conservative opposition to welfare held the majority of seats, won the election and began further socialist legislation.

During 1910 Lloyd George promoted a National Insurance Act to finalise a basic welfare Act, but this was opposed by the Lords. Following negotiations with Royalty to appoint more Liberal peers, a further election was held in December 1910 to reduce the power of the House of Lords.

The socialist coalition won the second election, and in 1911 Lloyd George was able to pass the National Insurance Act. The Act initiated insurance against sickness and unemployment to be paid for by the state, the employer and the employee.

It was the original “old brigades” of the Liberals, Labour party and Irish Nationalists that won the battle to provide welfare for the population of England. Those men who won the welfare battle are spirits in the sky now, and their descendants and successors appear scattered and at times off course. At the same time, the super-rich trans-Atlantic imperial capitalist families who support the Conservative Party are still easily recognisable and are using privatisation to oppose welfare on into the twenty-first century.

Alan J. McDonald

News from the junior doctors

Dr. Ed Palmer, who came to talk to our January Forum wrote to tell us about the new rota which Jeremy Hunt (Minister of Health) is trying to impose. He tells us there are some frightening aspects of this rota.

“First, I would be working one in two weekends (i.e. every other weekend). I’m not remotely adverse to hard work, but this does make bringing up a family almost impossible (not to mention very unpleasant).

“Second, numerous ‘days off’ are actually days following a night-shift. The implication is that on my ‘day off’ I would actually be working for the first nine hours – midnight to 9 am!



IPF members support the junior doctors on their picket line with Catherine West MP for Hornsey (previously leader of Islington Council) standing far right and Councillor Gary Heather standing fourth from right with Pam Zinkin in the centre holding the banner.

“Last, we regularly work consecutive weekends on this rota, despite an iron-clad promise from Jeremy Hunt that no doctor would have to work consecutive weekends. In fact, in one part of the rota, I would be working three weekends back-to-back!”

This demonstrates that our concerns regarding patients’ safety, and a fair family life are well founded.

Clearly junior doctors have no choice but to strike on 9-10 March, again maintaining emergency services. It means that some of us may have

operations or appointments postponed, but I (for one) recall that happening without such a good cause! Let’s go to our local Whittington Hospital on those days and show the doctors we care for them as they care for us

Pam Zinkin

Eric Hill (IPF Committee Member) says: “It is an absolute disgrace that older people are being treated so badly in so many areas in what is the sixth richest country in the world”

In 2013 the public sector union UNISON launched the Ethical Care Charter. This went alongside the NATIONAL PENSIONERS CONVENTION Dignity Code. Both aim to uphold the rights and maintain the personal dignity of older people for a healthy and financially secure life. But there is a long way to go.

- Pensions were effectively reduced when the Coalition Government changed the instrument for calculating the yearly increase from the Retail Price Index to the Consumer Price Index. This meant an ongoing reduction in the yearly increase. The current pension of £115.95 per week for a single person is well below the official poverty line and is one of the lowest pensions in the developed world. A figure of around £200 per week for an individual man or woman is now thought to be the sum required to live with dignity and security in old age.

- The winter fuel allowance is not nearly enough and results in older people having to choose between heating and eating. There were 43,900 pensioner winter deaths in 2014/15 which is completely unacceptable. Energy companies have given a miserly reduction in fuel costs although the price of oil has dropped from over \$100 a barrel to under \$30. These companies put profit as their first and indeed only priority. The allowance has been eroded since 2008 and it's now felt that a figure of around £700 is now a realistic figure.

- Social Care is in crisis. Demand is rising but funding and the number of people in receipt of care are declining. Local Authorities are redefining their criteria for providing Social Care in the community with the result that it now makes it more difficult for people to get the help they need. Those who need just a little help to remain active and independent are getting nothing as the focus is now on people who need critical care. There is a decrease in older people using day care centres and home care and an increase in older people going into supported residential units and nursing homes. Also the cost of



these services has increased dramatically. Not all the older people who moved into residential/nursing care needed to do so. This could be prevented with appropriate and affordable care in the community at an earlier stage; as could older people being admitted unnecessarily to hospital or remaining in hospital long after being ready for discharge. The older population is growing and living longer. Between 2005 and 2016 the over 65's have grown by 19% and the over 85's by 29%. That is why more, not less-funding needs to be put into social care to keep pace with demand and the growing level of unmet need.

- In Islington one area where Social Care has improved is the Home Care Service. Around the country this service is mainly run by private companies whose sole interest is profit and not people, resulting in, for example, users getting only 15 minute visits; home carers on low pay and zero hours contracts and not paid for the time travelling between visits. Unlike the majority of Councils, Islington signed up to UNISON's Ethical Care Charter and this has resulted in their Home Carers getting paid the London Living Wage and also paid for their travelling time. The users of the service are getting visits of up to an hour where necessary. This has resulted in a greatly improved service. Unfortunately, with one exception, this is not the case with regards to Islington's Care Homes as the previous administration tied the Council to 30-year contracts with a private company and it would cost the Council millions of pounds to break these contracts.

- Another factor in keeping older people in the community is suitable homes. 400,000 affordable homes have been promised in the next five years but only 2% (8,000) are specialist homes for older people and people with disabilities. At least 20,000 per year are needed to keep up with demand. The affordable homes target will rely largely on private sector developers and therefore it is extremely doubtful that even the 8,000 target will be met. Also the Mount Pleasant development shows what can happen in reality —

very expensive private homes for sale and broken promises over the number of affordable homes.

● Finally the National Health Service. The 2012 Health and Social Care Act is seen by this Government as the final stage in the systematic dismantling of the NHS; it effectively legislates against free, universal and comprehensive health care. This started in 1989 with PFI (Private Financial Investment) where private companies loaned enormous sums of money at extortionate interest rates.

This has left hospitals crippled by huge and increasing debts. The original cost of hospitals was £11 billion and by 2013 the debt had gone up to £79 billion. The NHS is being starved of funding which is causing staff shortages, bed shortages etc. In my view there is a deliberate strategy by this Government to give the perception that the NHS is failing and it would be better if it was in the hands of private companies.

The 2012 Act disbanded Primary Care Trusts and replaced them with Clinical Commissioning Groups whose main role is to advise on the most profitable



parts of the NHS so they can be cherry-picked by the private sector. However experience of private providers in the NHS-PFI hospitals, treatment centres or the corporate take-over of out-of-hours care has been disastrous. The Government and other vested interests may think the battle is over. It's not!! We are now in a struggle to take back OUR National Health Service.

● It is an absolute disgrace that older people are being treated so badly in so many areas in what is

the sixth richest country in the world. We have a National Dignity Action Day but what we need is National Dignity Action 2016, 2017 and however long it takes to get what we need to live a dignified, healthy and financially secure life. We need to get involved in local actions. We need to link up with other groups in London

and further afield. We need to lobby MPs and Parliament as a whole, to challenge the press when they print distortions in support of this Government. We need to publicise our grievances in whatever way we can . . . INCLUDING DIRECT ACTION.

Mobility scooters' firm infringes the Competition Act

In a decision dated 27 March 2014 the Office of Fair Trading found that Pride and eight retailers had infringed the Competition Act 1998.

The infringements consisted of entering into agreements and/or participating in concerted practices which had as their object the prevention, restriction or distortion of competition in relation to the supply of mobility scooters in the UK in respect of certain mobility scooters supplied by Pride, prohibiting online advertising of prices below the Recommended Retail Prices ("the Below-RR Online Price Advertising Prohibition").

These infringements were in relation to seven models of Pride mobility scooters: Colt Deluxe, Colt Executive, Colt Plus, Colt Twin, Colt XL8, Colt 9, and

Elite Traveller LC (part of the Go-Go range) and covered at least the period from February 2010 to February 2012. Pride took steps to ensure that retailers understood the consequence of non-compliance; they would be put on a less favourable price structure and were subsequently at risk of being subject to a cessation of supply.

Through solicitors, Leigh Day, the National Pensioners Convention (represented by Dorothy Gibson, General Secretary) is bringing collective proceedings against Pride in the Competition Tribunal, and they invite anybody affected by the infringements set out above to get in touch with Leigh Day on chaan@leighday.co.uk or the NPC on admin@npcuk.org

**National Pensioners Convention Annual Pensioners Parliament
Winter Gardens, Blackpool 14-16 June 2016 : Tickets £10
If you are interested and want to know more please let us know
at the Forum meeting or on 020 7226 7687**

INFORMATION

Every Monday BINGO	1pm at IPF Hall, 1a Providence Court, Providence Place, N1 0RN
FORUM Thursday 17 March	10.30 am at Islington Town Hall. SPEAKER: Eric Gordon of the Camden New Journal and the Islington Tribune
Monday 11th April 2 - 4 pm Islington Town Hall, Council Chamber	MAYORAL HUSTINGS : Hear about, ask question and discuss the parties' policies in the London Mayor elections: Chair, Kristina Glenn,

We want to hear from you.

- Write to Islington Pensioners Forum, 1a Providence Court, Providence Place, N1 0RN
- Call us on: 020 7226 7687 Email us at: ipf@talk-talkbusiness.net
- Office open from 10.30 a.m. -- 2.30 p.m., Tuesday to Thursday, but please call first.
- Sign up for our online newsletter on our website: www.islingtonpensionersforum.co.uk

Presidents:

Jeremy Corbyn MP & Lord Smith of Finsbury

Chair: George Durack **Secretary:** Dot Gibson

Assistant Secretary: Annette Thomas

Treasurer: Eric Hill

Charity No: 1043081

Supported by Cripplegate Foundation & Islington Council

Upper Holloway Station set to close for eight months.

Following demonstrations and a petition, Transport for London (TfL) backed down on the proposed eight-month closure for lift repairs of Caledonian Road Underground Station.

Now TfL has announced the probable eight-month closure of Upper Holloway Station, one of 12 stations to close as part of the replacement of diesel stock with electric trains on the Gospel Oak to Barking Overground line and its extension to Barking Riverside where 11,000 new homes are planned.

TfL says that this development will improve the service on this busy, overcrowded route, but no final decision has been made and they are in discussion with Network Rail looking for a time scale not to cause too much disruption.

Annual subscription to Islington Pensioners Forum £5

Send a cheque or pay by cash or use this Standing Order Form

Please send completed form to:

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To: The Manager.....Bank (Sort Code / /)

Bank address/post code.....

From: (your name and address).....

Please pay the sum of £..... on the day of (month and year) and then yearly thereafter

From my account: Name.....account number.....

To Islington Pensioners Forum, account number 50014279, Co-op Bank, sort code: 08-90-33

Signed..... Date.....