



Charity No: 1043081

ISLINGTON PENSIONERS FORUM

The voice of Islington's older community

March 2019 Newsletter

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IPF members take part in delegation to No. 10

A letter signed by 28 Members of Parliament was delivered to No. 10 Downing Street for the Prime Minister on 27 February. This called for an end to frozen British pensions.

550,000 British pensioners — 4 per cent of all recipients of the state pension and half the pensioners living overseas — are adversely affected by the government's frozen pension policy in over 150 countries.

This means that the annual inflationary uprating of the state pension received by UK-based pensioners is denied to people who — after paying taxes and national insurance throughout their working life in the UK — return to their birth country, often to care for loved-ones, or emigrate after retirement to be with children and grandchildren in one of the countries affected.

Working with the International Consortium of British Pensioners, the National Pensioners Convention (NPC) organised the delegation to deliver the MPs' letter. and we in the Islington Pensioners Forum are proud that three of our members were part of this delegation.

Our members, Myrna, Supa and Margaret, and NPC vice president, Ellen were all born in a "frozen pensions" country, and so it was entirely appropriate that they took part on this important occasion.

Free information booklet: NPC 0207 837 6622 Marchmont Community Centre, 62 Marchmont Street, WC1N 1AB
Also see endfrozenpensions.org



From left to right: Tom Devine (NPC London Region), Ellen Lebeth (NPC vice-president) born in South Africa, Myrna Talbot (IPF) born in Guyana, Margaret Harwood (IPF) born in Canada and in front Supa Kusumratana (IPF) born in Thailand. (See box on page four)

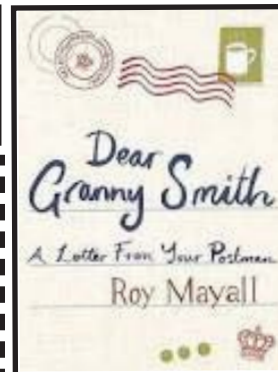
This year we had our "End the Winter Blues" get-together in the Town Hall following our February Forum meeting. Thanks to the sandwich-makers, those who donated biscuits, and to Frances for her scrumptious cakes.

NPC PENSIONERS' PARLIAMENT

10 - 14 June 2019, Winter Gardens, Blackpool

Cost £250 — Pay £10 deposit and spread the cost over the months

BOOKING FORM AND MORE INFORMATION ON PAGE FIVE



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Chapter Eight
'Team Talk'
"a euphemism" —
no team no talk!

A VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

Unfortunately Dave Ward, general secretary of the Communications Workers Union could not speak at our February Forum meeting because he was attending the funeral of one of his union's members. We sent our condolences and will arrange for him to speak at a future meeting.

We therefore discussed a variety of subjects, including the strike and demonstrations of thousands of school children on the previous Friday to make their demands for urgent action on global warming and all sorts of other environmental problems. The Forum decided that a letter would be sent to Islington Tribune expressing our support for the school children.

The letter was sent and published on page 12 of the paper, following which a lead reporter contacted me to suggest a meeting with Nathalie Sowden, who we quoted in our letter. I am now determined to have that meeting, hoping that we can build firmer links with the younger generations who are taking such a positive stand for the future.

Below you will see two photographs which show two of the environmental problems the school children are raising, and at our April Forum meeting we will have a speaker from Friends of the Earth.

It was good to have our "End the Winter Blues" buffet at the end of the Forum meeting, giving members the chance to better get to know each other



a giant tortoise enmeshed in plastic



Lethal exhaust on our roads

Letter published in the Islington Tribune 1 March 2019

At our Islington Pensioners Forum meeting on 21 February, we unanimously welcomed the magnificent stand of the 15,000 children and teenagers who took time out of school on 15 February to demonstrate their concerns about climate change and we congratulate the parents and teachers who supported them. If governments and corporations globally do not take urgent action our children, grandchildren and future generations face a grim and dangerous future.

It was therefore very encouraging to read the article by Nathalie Sowden (Islington Tribune 22 February) who took part in the London demonstration. She says that "[she would] not be able to look her children in the eyes if [she] sat back and did nothing" and that she feels she is "part of an amazing new generation that is ready to take on the burden of overcoming the challenges passed down to [them]".

Action based on that social conscience can build a formidable force for change and we older generations in Islington Pensioners Forum are ready to act in solidarity. We are old, but we are young in heart and have an on-going campaign to unite the generations.

Bob Collins
Chair, Islington Pensioners Forum

Dear Friends,

As the deputy general secretary of the National Pensioners Convention, I will be attending its biennial delegate conference on 12th and 13th March, It is this conference that decides NPC policy and elects its officers. This year the discussion will be on pensions, NHS and social care, the TV licence campaign, digital inclusion, provision of public toilets, environmental issues, NPC organisation and housing. I will give a report to the Forum.

On 28th March the NPC London Region will have its conference; we have two delegates, and can arrange for one or two visitors. If any members are interested to attend, please let us know.

Best wishes, Dot

Dear Granny Smith : Chapter 8 — Team Talk

Last month we published chapter six. Roy ended with: "Once the mail is broken up. . . . once the relationship between a postal worker and his customer has been destroyed, then what. . . ."

Every Tuesdays we have something called a "Team Talk". This is a euphemism, as there is no team, and no one talks.

Us posties just sit there and listen. We chew our nails. We fiddle with our pens. We scratch our arses. We take sips from our coffee, bought just before the proceedings from the vending machine outside. We glance idly round the room to see what's changed.

Once upon a time this was the recreation room. We used to play cards and darts in here. There was a kitchen. You could make a cup of tea or coffee, fry up some bacon and have a bacon sandwich. Also, back in the old days there was a tea club. Before the job was contracted out, when the cleaners all used to be ex-posties, they would collect money every week, and then they would come round to your frames and ask you what you would like. "Tea? Coffee? How would you like it? One sugar or two" No vending machines then. Teas and coffees brought to your frame.

That was what this room was used for back then. For making teas and coffees in. For recreation. For social-ability. For friendship. For banter. For reading newspapers. For relaxing. For chatting. For asking after each other's health. For ordinary unremarkable things that seem like a privilege now.

Nowadays it's only used for Team Talk.

The reason we have Team Talk on a Tuesday is that Tuesday is a lighter day. Mail delivery is a variable business. No two days are the same, Wednesdays and Thursdays are generally heavy days. Mondays and Fridays are average days. Saturday used to be a light day, but has now become a heavy day. We used to leave all the mailsort behind on a Saturday, but these days a lot of the mailsort has been replaced by downstream access mail from the private companies: people like TNT and CityLink. So Saturdays aren't so light any more.

But Tuesdays are. Tuesdays are still light. This is because all the sorting machines in the big metropolitan offices are turned off on Sunday. Nothing passes through the mail system on a Sunday. And come Tuesday this has filtered down to all the delivery offices.

So instead of sorting mail and delivering it, we have Team Talk. It's like going back to your childhood; to school assembly.

The manager stands in front of you and makes various announcements. Sometimes he even tries to make you join in. "So now everyone, hands up, what exactly do

we mean by 'modernisation'?"

We just shuffle about, yawn, tap our feet. What we'd really like to do is get on with our rounds, get the mail out, and go home a little early for a change. Instead of which we are subjected to propaganda.

Because that's what it is really. Team Talk is our weekly propaganda session. Workers' education. Workers' re-orientation. A chance to fill our heads with corporate drivel.

Don't ask me what they are talking about half the time. I'm not paying attention. We get facts and figures and targets. One thing I do remember on a regular basis is a lecture on safety and how to ride your bike.

We are not supposed to bump up and down curbs. We're not supposed to ride one-handed. We're not supposed to scoot our bikes on the pavement. We're not supposed to balance mail on our racks. We're not supposed to carry a mail bag over our shoulder. We're supposed to wear a cycle helmet at all times when the bike is in motion.

You'll have to try to imagine this last point. The helmets are uncomfortable: too hot in summer, cold and wet in winter, so we tend to take them off once we are on our rounds. This is annoying enough as it is, as the helmet gets in the way of the mail, filling up the panniers, or bouncing along on the back of the rack, and we all know that the rule about helmets isn't being instituted for our benefit, but to protect Royal Mail in case of an accident. It's Royal Mail abiding by statutory Health and Safety regulations. It's so Royal Mail can say they have done everything to promote Health and Safety.

But, now, imagine: we have to put the helmet on every time the bike is in motion. We get off our bikes. We pick out a bundle then deliver it. We get tack on our bikes. We cycle to the next stopping point. We get off our bikes again. We deliver another bundle. And on, and on. How many times a day would we be taking off our helmets and putting them back on again?

It's the same with the other rules: not scooting on pavements, not bumping up and down the curb, not cycling one-handed. If we followed these rules we would never be home before teatime.

So, of course, when we are sitting in Team Talk listening to this, we know, and they know — we all know — that none of it will be implemented. We know that if we did this we would be late every day and then hauled up before the manager for "wilful delay".

We know they are just filling the time.

Holocaust Day Memorial Meeting

On the 28th January our Chairman Bob and Committee members Pam and I attended the Holocaust Memorial gathering at the Town Hall.

The audience included many school children from different schools in Islington. A multinational orchestra opened the memorial with a theme of 'No More'.

We heard speakers from the Council and our two MPs Jeremy Corbyn and Emily Thornberry. The daughter of a Holocaust survivor, who is still living in Islington, gave a most moving and detailed account of her father's experiences at different concentration camps and how he survived.

The event was not only to bear witness to the horrors of the Holocaust, but also a reminder of the millions who have died since then in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur. To end the meeting a selection of schoolchildren who had been involved with a history programme on education against discrimination were invited to give a personal commitment towards remembering the Holocaust and helping overcome any kind of racism. They spoke eloquently and with confidence so we felt they would carry on remembering and understanding the destructive power of discrimination.

Annette Thomas

NHS News..... Pam Zinkin

Why does the NHS cost so much?

There are many reasons but one that does not get enough attention is the huge cost of medicines.

This is partly because they may be expensive to develop and produce (although much of the initial research may be university-based) but also because the pharmaceutical industry makes huge profits.

One example is a new medicine used to treat cystic fibrosis, a hereditary lung condition from which children and young adults often died.

The treatment is very promising but the pharma company making it want to charge the NHS over £100,000 a year for each patient, and they would need to take it for life.

The NHS is trying to negotiate a lower cost but the company is resisting. At the same time the Company's directors made more than £15 million in share options but they don't think this is a significant factor in the cost of medicines!! [see meeting advert below, left]]

Pam's regular "NHS News" is very popular among our members, as she opens our eyes to the cuts being imposed on our NHS. So we hope that you will do your best to come to a meeting organised by

KEEP OUR NHS PUBLIC

7 pm Monday 11th March
Islington Town Hall

Find out more about NHS cuts



DIGNITY ACTION DAY 1st FEBRUARY 2019

As you can see from the hats and scarves in the picture, it was a rather cold day when we set up our stall in the Morrison's arcade off the Holloway Road, but we got a good response from shoppers when they heard us ask "Are you worried about social care?" So many had first-hand experience of the problems. We were pleased that Cllr Janet Burgess came to welcome our campaigning; also we knew we were part of a country-wide event with stalls in high streets and hospitals all over the place.

PENSION FROZEN FOR 18 YEARS!

Last month, 94 year-old World War Two veteran Anne Puckridge wrote to the Prime Minister asking if she would grant just 'five minutes' of her time to meet with her so that she could explain her experience of living on a 'frozen pension'. Anne's pension has been 'frozen' at £72.50 for 18 years when she should be receiving £125.95 a week.

PLEASE DON'T BE OFFENDED IF WE RAISE THE QUESTION OF THE IPF ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION OF JUST £5 — IT IS NEEDED FOR THIS MONTHLY NEWSLETTER AND OUR OTHER ACTIVITIES — SEE FORM ON BACK PAGE

Time to save the over 75s' TV licence

The attack on the over 75s free TV licence started when the government handed over responsibility for this to the BBC.

On Thursday 7th March, IPF members will be joining others to protest at the Department of Culture, Media and Sport

The NPC has called on the government to take back responsibility for funding the concessionary TV licence for the over 75s, ahead of a protest in March.

The call comes as part of the NPC's response to the BBC's consultation on the future of the concession.

The broadcaster has made it clear that it does not wish to maintain the current arrangement, and is looking at raising the age of eligibility, introducing a means-test or removing the concession altogether.

When the free TV licence was introduced, it was part of a package of measures brought in to offset the UK's low level of state pension.

Today, the state pension is still ranked as 37th out of 37 OECD countries and very little has changed:

- Half of all individuals 75 and over are disabled and find it difficult to be active
- 1 in 4 say the TV is their only companion
- 18% of all individuals 75 and over live in poverty, compared to 11% of the population

as a whole, and the figure is now rising

- At least half of all pensioners have an income of less than £12,000 a year, with millions more receiving incomes of just above that level
- There are around three times as many single, older women as men, and they would be disproportionately affected by any change

It is estimated that losing part (or all) of this concession will mean a further 50,000 individuals being forced into poverty.

In any democracy, access to information is crucial to enable citizens the opportunity to be informed and make decisions.

Means-testing by age or income is also totally unacceptable.

All the evidence shows that the cost far outweighs any savings means-testing may eventually bring.

Crucially, the BBC should take a critical look at itself before it makes a decision that affects the most vulnerable of the older population.



This page is taken straight from the National Pensioners Convention monthly **Campaign Bulletin!** for pensioner activists. If you would like to receive this bulletin regularly on line, please send a request by email to:

info@npcuk.org

It needs to look at the salaries paid to some of its top employees and on-screen talent and the way in which the Corporation pays independent production companies.

We will report in the next issue of the Newsletter on the 7th March TV licence demonstration.

TO BOOK FOR PENSIONERS' PARLIAMENT 2019 IN BLACKPOOL

10 June: a comfortable coach from Islington Town Hall, returning on 14 June. We will have bed, breakfast & evening meal in the Gresham Hotel just over the road from the Winter Gardens, where Parliament takes place. There are informative sessions on issues of importance to all of us and there is a great social evening in the Winter Gardens ballroom on 12th June

Name.....Address.....

.....Post Code

Tel:..... Email:.....

Enclosed £10 deposit (cheques payable to "IPF")

Send to: Pensioners' Parliament,
IPF, 1a Providence Court, Providence Place, Islington N1 0RN

INFORMATION

BINGO	This is suspended for the time being. We will keep you informed.
Lunch and a chat on Wednesdays	1 pm in IPF Hall, 1a Providence Court, Providence Place N1 0RN
IT and Smart Phones on Wednesdays	3.30 p.m in the IPF Hall, address above
Monday 11th March	7,00 p.m. Islington Town Hall public meeting on NHS (see page four)
Thursday 21 March	10.30 a.m. Forum meeting at Islington Town Hall. Speaker: Arthur Torrington, Director, Windrush Foundation
Thursday 18 April	10.30 a.m. Forum meeting at Islington Town Hall, Speaker from Friends of the Earth

A PETITION TO STOP THE PRIVATISATION OF POST OFFICES

Speaking in the House of Commons, Lisa Nandy MP said: "Just before Christmas we learned that 74 Crown post offices faced closure or franchising to a retail branch, including my local one in Wigan. Taken alongside the 150 that have already been closed or franchised, that represents a staggering loss of 60 per cent of the network in only five years. . . ."

"The Post Office says that it has been consulting, but there is every reason to believe that those consultations are nothing more than a sham. The 2017 wave of closures was announced before Ministers had even bothered to respond to their own consultation, in which

75,000 people had urged them to think again. . . .

"WHSmith advertised for new counter staff — at what was described as the 'fantastic' level of the minimum wage — while the consultation was still going on and before any consultation with trade union representatives about terms and conditions."

Lisa Nandy was supported by a number of MPs and now these MPs and representatives of the Communications Workers Union and the National Pensioners Convention will be presenting a petition at 10 Downing Street on Monday 11th March following a meeting in the House of Commons.

Vulnerable older people in England are at risk of being denied their human rights because of failures in the way the government allocates its resources since budget cuts

After a 13-month inquiry, the global campaign group, Human Rights Watch, has concluded that people are facing physical, financial and psychological hardship and are at risk of being denied adequate help to live independent, dignified lives.

It accuses the government of a lack of oversight of a system which is largely devolved to local councils and voices concern about a 140% increase in adult social care complaints since 2010 following a cut of almost 50% in central government funding for councils.

Under the Care Act 2014 and the Human Rights Act, the government is obliged to ensure people's rights to live independently in the community, to health and to private and family life, but an ageing population, rising care costs and government cuts mean adult social care services face a £1.5bn funding gap by 2019-20.

from the NPC's Campaign News!

NEW MEMBER <input type="checkbox"/>	RENEWING SUB <input type="checkbox"/>
NAME:	
ADDRESS:	
.....	
POST CODE:	
TELE NO:	
EMAIL:	
ANNUAL SUB ENCLOSED.....£5.00	
PLUS DONATION?.....	
Cheque payable to: IPF	Send to:
Islington Pensioners Forum,	
1a Providence Court, Providence Place,	
Islington N1 0RN	
Or hand in at Forum meeting (see above)	