

Old Grey Matter article for publication Saturday May 27th in the EADT

A Senior Citizens Manifesto

Continuing on the theme of the General Election, the manifesto of the National Pensioners Convention (NPC), highlighted last month, can be seen in full on the NPC website at www.npcuk.org – it proposes not unreasonable demands of a government in charge of the 6th richest nation in the world. Of course the demands apply not just to present pensioners but to give hope to all generations of future pensioners, many of whom are the sons, daughters and grandchildren of present pensioners who would 'inherit' pensioner entitlements, once they reached state pension age. The six manifesto demands are:

- 1 - A state 'living' pension set above the official poverty level at c. £200 a week, 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 free at the point of delivery and without means-testing.
- 3 - Maintenance of universal pensioner benefits such as free bus travel, £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.

Some have argued that the older generation has escaped austerity at the expense of the young, despite the fact that older people are very concerned about their descendents' future, and in many cases, are actively supporting them in some way. Plans to take away benefits such as bus passes or the triple lock are a bit of a red herring, and will not help young people one bit, furthermore they will have a negative effect on all bus users and the economy as a whole.

In reality, NPC say that Britain is not a great place in which to grow old. Our state pension is among one of the least adequate in the western world, our social care system is in crisis with 1.8 million seniors no longer getting the help they need and in the last five years over 141,000 pensioners have died from cold-related illnesses. Going some way to meet those demands would surely make our country better for all concerned and we look forward to candidates addressing these demands at any meeting, interview or hustings they attend.

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