

Old Grey Matter article submitted to EADT for publication Saturday 31st March 2018

Lose your vote – you cannot be serious!

News from the March Campaign bulletin of the National Pensioners Convention (NPC) indicates what some celebrities think about senior citizens. Former BBC Newsnight presenter, Jeremy Paxman says over 65s should lose the vote. The former TV presenter doesn't blame a lack of affordable housing for the housing crisis, but older people who bought their homes as they were encouraged to do in the 1950s and 60s. Surely he cannot be serious! However, Paxman hit out at the older generation by blaming them for Britain's housing crisis and describing them as "spoilt children". The 67-year-old claims that buying a house and seeing its value appreciate over the years is the fault of the "baby boomer" generation born after WWII. He believes that because political parties have been scared of the "grey vote" and have pandered to their demands, the answer is to stop people voting at 65. Mr Paxman also stated that he didn't take his winter fuel allowance or state pension. Jan Shortt, NPC general secretary said: "Mr Paxman is completely wrong to suggest that today's housing crisis has been caused by older people, or that the answer is to stop pensioners from voting. Not only has he benefitted from years of having an inflated salary at the BBC, over the last few years he has also seen a reduction in the amount he pays in income tax—but he doesn't seem to be complaining about that." Apparently we are all tarred by the same indiscriminate brush!

April 1st was no fools day in the transport world ten years ago, because this Easter Sunday we celebrate the tenth anniversary of the coming of the Bus Pass concession, for which the NPC campaigned and were instrumental in achieving for the elderly. It has been a popular and worthwhile 'freebie' for seniors, especially where there are good bus routes and services in one's locality, and in some respects for those able to use it, makes up for the abysmal level of our state pension, the worst in Europe we understand. The benefits of the bus pass are multifarious and not the least to help subsidise the costs of providing the service where others have to pay, thus assisting all who use the buses. It enables pensioners to visit local shops to support the local economy and to carry on much volunteering work where it is estimated £10 billion worth of time and skill is contributed to society. It is a factor in reducing loneliness, giving the opportunity to get out, stay active, remain independent and promote well-being so reducing overall NHS and social service costs were there no such scheme. Long may it continue, so the message is 'Carry on using it' so the NPC, and society, can celebrate another ten years of free travel in 2028!

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