**GENERAL SECRETARY REPORT**

**EC 23 SEPTEMBER 2021**

**10.30 am ON ZOOM**

1. **Office/Staff:**

Our Administrator, Margaret Waterfield, resigned her position due to health reasons. During the time Margaret was absent, Jonathan took on extra responsibilities for which we are very grateful.

Looking at the future needs of NPC, the officer team decided that we would combine the information and admin duties under one role and change the title to National Administration & Information Manager. Jonathan is now working full time in that role. Also, as the NPC gets more recognition for its work, it was decided to change the title of our Campaign Officer to reflect the depth of work Bev is doing. Her title is now Public Affairs Manager.

We are in contact with the Community Centre management regarding opening and risk assessments and will act accordingly with NPC staff.

1. **NHS Reform Bill:**

A lot of lobbying has been going on with MPs and also in the House of Lords. Cross party opposition is growing against the Bill, but there is a huge majority in the House of Commons.

As you will see from the report from the NPC Health & Social Care Working Party, a submission has been made to the Public Bills Committee highlighting our concerns, raising questions and offering resolutions. The work of the Committee will end at the beginning of November (may be sooner) and a report sent to the Cabinet.

1. **NHS Digital Data:**

We are concerned that Lord Bethel has stated that he does not intend to communicate with every household in England to inform them about the data collection project. It is a legal requirement to get consent from an individual about the use of their data.

Again, there has been activity in the House of Commons and med-Confidential are monitoring the progress of the criteria. We are all concerned at what may be going on behind closed doors. However, one good thing to come out of this is that Palantir will no longer be given contracts to work in the NHS.

In the meantime, opting out is still the safest way to protect your data. Currently, over 3 million patients have opted out. Those who opted out previously are not part of those figures. As and when we are satisfied the criteria have been met to our satisfaction, patients can opt in if they so wish. The legal case is still in the background and will be used at the appropriate time if necessary.

There is a separate report to officers on the history and where the NPC campaign lies as requested by the EC at the last meeting which has been circulated.

1. **Triple Lock:**

The NPC, TUC and the NUS (students Union) released a joint article on the triple lock and intergenerational solidarity in the face of a government intent on causing conflict between the age groups.

An open letter was sent to all MPs with a copy of the NPC briefing on the History of the Triple Lock urging them to vote against any changes in 2022. Media interest has been high with articles in many national newspapers and interviews on national and local radio.

We also got support from Lord George Foulkes and Lord Nigel Dodds of Duncairn.

Suspending the Triple Lock means pensioners on full state pension lose out to the tune of £11.42 for the old state pension and £14.91 for the new state pension. A 2.5% increase is £3.42 on the old state pension and £4.49 on the new state pension. There are, of course many women who do not have a full state pension and will receive less.

As living costs rise over the next year or so, these losses will accumulate.

The Pensions & Income Working Party discussed how to move forward (see their report).

The information changes frequently and we will give an update at the meeting on where we stand on inflation and the triple lock from the debate in parliament.

1. **Social Care:**

Following the Prime Minister’s address in the House of Commons and his taxation plan to fund care, again media interest has been high. Most of the questions are around the 1.25% NI being unfair to young working people and the levy on working pensioners for care.

The NPC position is that other forms of taxation are available as an alternative to raising NI and applying a levy; for example – Corporation Tax – equalise the level with income tax; abolish Corporation Tax Allowance and abolish the subsidy on pension contributions for the wealthiest (which alone would save £10billion).

The issue of pensioners who work beyond their normal retirement age paying NI is complicated by the fact that NI contributions stop on the day of retirement. To charge NI would not give working pensioners any extra on their pension.

The perception invited by the government is that it is older people who cost the country in care. Not actually true. The cost of care for working age disabled adults has grown more rapidly than those for older people. This uses 50% plus of the social care budget.

Currently, the Health & Social Care Working Party are looking at the detail available from the Prime Minister’s address on social care. A briefing will be available as soon as possible. As you may have guessed, not a great deal of detail, but what is there raises issues not just for older people but everyone who needs care.

1. **Biennial Delegate Conference (BDC):**

Papers for the BDC have been issued. Please make sure you adhere to the deadlines for the various nominations.

1. **Review of NPC:**

At the Regional Secretaries meeting, it was agreed that participation from the Regions would start towards the end of the year. This was to allow regions to slowly bring their members out to meetings and assess the smaller groups and in line with Structure Working Party recommendations. A letter will go out explaining this to National and Regional Affiliates.

1. **Annual Convention:**

A report has been circulated with the latest information we have. The extra Bank Holiday for the Queen’s Platinum Anniversary will be 3 June 2022.

1. **GS Activities:**

* Interviews with Times Radio; BBC Radio 4 Today; Jeremey Vine; BBC Radio Essex (some more than once).
* Interview Three Counties Radio
* Press releases (see Bev’s report)
* Met with Independent Age – opportunities for joint work
* Attended Northern Region Meeting (13 Sept)
* Doctors for the NHS Conference (2 Oct)
* ASLEF (6 Oct)
* North West Annual Conference (8 Oct)
* Yorkshire/Humberside (11 Nov)

**Jan Shortt**

**September 2021**