Old Grey Matter June/July 2023

 A Call for Change

The 2023 National Pensioners Convention (NPC) Annual Conference heard how the failing essential services that older people rely on could be fixed by a fairer tax system. The high cost to government is often given as a reason for not investing more in crisis-hit public services such as the NHS, social care, public transport, and our inadequate state pensions. Indeed government figures from the Prime Minister downwards still say - “We cannot afford it!”
However, opening keynote speaker Robert Palmer, Executive Director of Tax Justice UK informed delegates at the NPCs annual conference in Blackpool on 28th June that a fairer, and more effective UK tax system could be the solution, so it needs to change! He commented: "We all know that public services are on their knees. NHS waiting lists are at record levels, the social care system is breaking down and our roads are crumbling. A transformed tax system would raise the money to invest in the services that older people desperately need. For example, increasing taxes on the super-rich could bring in tens of billions of pounds each year.”
Tax Justice UK, has campaigned with partners to get the government to u-turn on various tax issues three times over the last couple of years. Most recently, they helped successfully fight for a windfall tax on the huge North Sea oil and gas profits.
Before the event, Jan Shortt, NPC General Secretary said: “It is not acceptable for the government to say there’s no money to fix vital services that millions of us rely upon. There is a funding solution, and our members will be interested to hear the case made by Tax Justice UK.”
Delegates including five from the Anglia Region, gathered at the Imperial Hotel, fully endorsed the conclusions reached about modifying the tax system to accommodate the new investment that has to be made to raise the profile and efficacy of the NHS and other public services for the good of all. Meanwhile the numbers of pensioners needing these services is growing steadily making the conclusions drawn ever more needed!
Convention speakers also included: Simon Francis from End Fuel Poverty, John Lister from Keep Our NHS Public, Lord Davies of Brixton on the future of the state pension, and Tom Lowe from the Digital Poverty Alliance on the exclusion of older people from our increasingly online world. Leaders from national organisations like Age UK, Independent Age, Ageing Better, as well as the TUC, Unite the Union and UNISON were also represented apart from the NPC members representing their million plus members around the UK.

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