

THE VETERAN

FOR ALL CWU RETIRED MEMBERS | SPRING 2025



The communications union



FIGHTING FOR RESPECT

Since the last edition of the *Veteran*, the government's campaign against retired people and pensioners has clearly increased.

So too has our efforts to reinstate the Winter Fuel Allowance and secure justice for the WASPI women - two causes that have received wide support from across the union.

But despite this, it is quite clear that Labour in power has no intention of reversing their decisions at this stage, and may go further - indeed, if media speculation is correct, the long-term future of the triple lock might also be under threat.

Hardly a week passes by without a thinktank or politician speculating about the cost of the State Pension appearing in the media, with even the future of the Freedom Pass receiving some press attention.

Following a discussion at our national executive, the CWU has made a donation to the WASPI campaign and we have invited them to address the national executive's next meeting, to which they have agreed.

And although our union and a small number of MPs have been abundantly clear on where they stand on this issue, the relative silence from the wider movement and the TUC has been very disappointing.

It seems clear to me that pensioners and retired people are seen as an easy target for politicians and economists who have blamed what they call 'boomers' for everything from the housing shortage to hospital 'bed blocking'.

If we intend to defend ourselves from these attacks, we need to up our game. The tools at our disposal are limited but start with convincing the wider trade union movement to support us.

More pressure must be put on MPs from all parties to let them know we won't be supporting any MP who doesn't support us.

We also need to convince younger workers that decent state pensions are in their interest, and where possible we should be linking this to their campaigns for decent housing, student debt, better occupational pensions and all issues affecting workers.

I would welcome ideas from members on how we can improve our tactics and invite readers to write in with any ideas they have.

We should never forget that we have paid billions of pounds into the exchequer, in terms of income tax and national insurance, during our working lives. We are entitled to a decent state pension, care in retirement - and respect.



Norman Candy
NEC Lead
Retired Members



READER'S LETTERS Send 150 words or fewer by email, to ncandy@cwu.org or by post to me Norman Candy at CWU, 150 The Broadway, London SW19 1RX

THE £483,000,000,000 QUESTION

In words, four hundred and eighty-three billion pounds. It's a number so large as to be almost meaningless, since it is beyond the comprehension of most people to imagine such an amount of money.

It is, in terms of personal wealth, even in excess of how much the Sieg Heiling "world's richest man" Elon Musk is "worth". It is also the amount of money energy firms have made in profit since 2020, according to data from the End Fuel Poverty Coalition.

The obscenity of it is matched only by the blatant hypocrisy of the current Labour government that stands idly by while they take away your winter fuel allowance, failed to compensate the WASPI women, continues to demonise people with disabilities and retains the poverty inducing two-child benefit cap.

In other words, the extremely rich get a lot richer and you, because of the actions of a Keir Starmer, Angela Rayner and Rachel Reeves-led Government, get poorer. These are not debating points, they are facts.

Despite being promised change - which was the mantra after 14 years of disastrous Tory rule - this government does nothing to stop the so-called energy price cap from rising further. As late as May 2024, according to the Independent, Starmer pledged to cut energy bills "by £400 if Labour wins". Like much else he utters, it was a blatant lie.

The hope of the elderly, the hope of the working class lies not in mealy mouthed repetitions of Labour leaders lying on an industrial scale.

It lies in the collective that is the trade union movement. It lies with a coming together of young and old to demand a better future for all.

These hypocrites at the heart of government are beholden to corporate and military power and the interest on their own citizens, as evidenced by the their actions on the above, don't even come a close second.

Your money, your health and wellbeing, your lives mean nothing as they bow down to corporate greed and warmongers the world over.

Don't wait for these people to come and make your lives better - they won't. Get to your branch meetings, get to your local Labour Party meetings and reject the rich first, everyone else last approach on offer.

The power to force the change is in your hands; to enjoy a long, happy and healthy life, you have to demand it, to campaign for it and to remove from the positions they occupy anyone who doesn't want to go on that journey with you.

Tony Kearns

Tony Kearns
Senior Deputy General
Secretary



LABOUR MPS MUST BACK WASPI WOMEN

After Keir Starmer has reneged on yet another promise by betraying women wronged by pension ages changes, MPs must be pressured to do what's right, writes WASPI chair Angela Madden...

Over the last 10 years, the Women Against State Pension Inequality – or WASPI – campaign has been fighting tooth and nail for justice on behalf of the 3.6 million women who weren't properly told about changes to their state pension age.

In the process of equalising state pension age through the 1995 and 2011 Pension Acts - of which we have no issue - the Department for Work and Pensions failed to notify women born in the 1950s that they would no longer retire at 60.

Some women found out only 18 months before their 60th birthday that their retirement date had been pushed back six years, leaving them little to no time to make alternative plans.

When the Parliamentary Ombudsman vindicated the campaign in March 2024, ordering ministers to apologise and urgently pay compensation, we had the justice almost in the palm of our hand.

With the support of hundreds of Labour MPs in opposition and throughout the general election, we were hopeful that the promises made to us would come to fruition following Labour's landslide victory.

However, on 17th December, giving under an hour's notice to their own MPs, ministers announced that while they accept the Ombudsman's findings of

maladministration and apologised for not properly informing 1950s women, there would be no compensation.

We recognise the country's difficult financial circumstances. But ignoring your own watchdog - who says the system got things wrong - is not the Labour many of us voted for. We'd expect this from Boris Johnson, not Sir Keir Starmer KC.

It seemed Labour took a political gamble, thinking WASPI women would simply go away while the issue would trickle to the bottom of the Order Paper. They were wrong.

The outrage from opposition parties and Labour's own MPs, both publicly and privately, has shown the strength of feeling on this injustice across the country.

As the Ombudsman made the highly unusual decision to lay the report before Parliament, he put justice in the hands of all 650 MPs, not just the government. With clear discontent from hundreds of our elected representatives, 3.6 million women and our supporters, it's only right there is a vote on compensation in government time.

We ask all our supporters to email their MP to demand a vote on WASPI compensation using our template found at: www.waspi.co.uk/template-letter-to-urgently-email-your-mp

Angela Madden, Chair of Women Against State Pension Inequality (WASPI) campaign.

WHAT A WASTE

BY PETE KEENLYSIDE

Retired members' committees are valuable because of the years of time and experience found in their ranks. But they could be put to better use, argues former NEC member Pete Keenlyside...

I retired from Royal Mail 11 years ago. Before then I served as a rep at every level of the Union from local to National Executive. So, when people ask me if I'm active in the retired members' committee and I reply "not really", it raises a few eyebrows.

The retired members' committees do a lot of good work. They campaign on issues affecting older people and keep their members in touch with each other. But that wasn't what I wanted to do when I retired. I saw myself still being active in three particular areas.

Helping bring forward and mentoring new and young workplace reps. In my over 50 years in the union I've learnt a lot, mostly from the many mistakes I've made - why not pass on that experience to new people so that they don't make the same ones and give them the confidence to become leaders in their workplace?

Helping the union recruit members in non-core industries. By necessity, recruitment in these areas starts from outside the workplace.

Our existing reps find it difficult to get time off to do this. But that's not a problem for retired members. We're used to talking to people and explaining why they need a union. We used to do it all the time.

Helping the union to campaign on social and political issues. What happens outside the workplace affects our members and, quite rightly, the union takes a view on these and campaigns on them.

But after a hard day at work, most members feel they don't have the time or energy to take part. Us retired members don't have that holding us back anymore. And many of us have decades of experience campaigning on these issues.

Retired members have two valuable features to give the union. Time and experience. In the areas mentioned above and probably in many others, we could offer so much more if only someone would ask us.

But no one ever does. Instead, we're shuffled off to one side to deal with "retired" issues. In the discussions on restructuring, please look at how you could use us in a more effective way. If you do, it'll reap dividends. If you don't, then to quote the late Ian Dury, "What a Waste".

READERS' LETTERS



Dear Editor,

Questions for the Union

I have been amazed at some of the comments on the readers' letters – a lady wanting to vote for a far-right Reform UK, someone with no brains on about Hamas and backing the Israelis in their genocide, and the CWU still playing with Labour instead of standing up to them as they destroy the telecoms network and the union with it.

I speak to many lads working on the network and tell them to join the union to help look after their jobs. A large percentage say they're only being employed till the network has been changed, so why bother.

Others say they were member but thought it was a waste of money being in Labour's pocket. One or two remembered some years back when we went on strike and say they were sold down the drain by the union.

But, as I tell them, if you got off your ass and started working for the union instead of expecting everyone else to fight for them, things could and would change.

And as some say, is the CWU standing up for the NHS or are they going to be all noise and no action? I can't reply on that one.

But when I see the lady that ran the TUC that has ended up in the House of Lords and a member of the Bank of England and did sod all for the miners, dockers or printers as they tell me all noise and no action.

I would by no means be supportive of our union, or any of our members for that matter, supporting the con job lot that are Reform UK.

But with that said, it's very difficult to see what the unions are getting out of their unwavering support for the Labour Party.

Judging from the news, it seems like Labour in government is little different from the Tories, walking back on workers' rights legislation and abandoning important pledges, like to the WASPI women.

It seems like Starmer is only interested in helping the Nazi-infested Ukrainian government fight Russia to the last Ukrainian – or, God forbid, with conscripted soldiers from here – while kids starve and pensioners freeze in his own country.

It does make me worry for the sort of world my grandchildren are going to inherit.

Rather Not Say of Northumbria

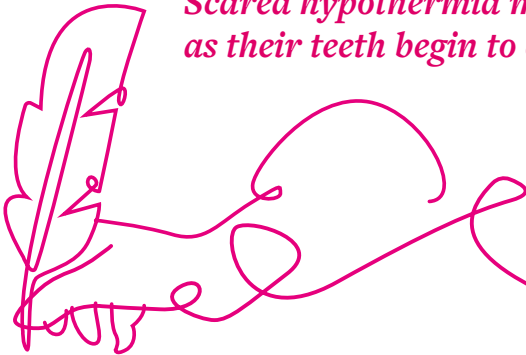
Roland Laycock

Rodney Delivers Shivers

By Ronnie Harrison,

NI Telecoms Branch

*Keir Starmer is a name that some say,
Makes their blood run cold.
(their fingers and toes too.)
Gone are the Red Flag wavers,
replaced by Classic Blue.
And Rachael's not for turning,
some say Labour should be meaner,
As the super-rich get super richer,
paying less tax than their cleaners.
And, while the poor and infirm
wrap up in their layers.
Their mental health don't seem to matter.
Scared hypothermia may be setting in
as their teeth begin to chatter.*



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You can send an email to our membership team at membership@cwu.org to advise them that you'd like your email address added to your membership record. Please include your membership number if you can. You can also call 0208 971 7447 to speak to a member of the team who would be happy to update your record over the phone.