

THE VETERAN

FOR ALL CWU RETIRED MEMBERS | SUMMER 2025

The communications union



LABOUR'S THREAT FROM PENSIONERS

It wasn't difficult to predict both Labour and the Conservatives would lose support in the recent local, mayoral and regional elections, which took place since the last issue of the *Veteran*.

The Conservatives still haven't recovered from their disastrous recent performance which culminated in the premiership of Rishi Sunak.

Meanwhile, Labour - following its landslide election less than a year ago - chose to shoot itself in the foot by not only taking the winter fuel allowance (WFA) from millions of pensioners, but treat WASPI women, the sick and the disabled as if they are responsible for the financial troubles Labour inherited from the Conservatives.

It has now been reported in the mainstream media that Starmer is now reconsidering revising their decision on the WFA and possibly means testing it so that more less well-off pensioners receive it.

Over 100 Labour MPs are reported to be opposed to the government's attack on benefits and are prepared to vote against proposals.

The government has not only managed to upset millions of those who were already sceptical of them, but millions who have always supported them. As a result, everyone from Reform to Plaid Cymru are benefiting from Labour's decline in areas turning from the party.

Our union has been at the forefront in warning Labour that bad policy choices would have serious consequences, urging them to reconsider if they wanted re-election in four years' time.

It's no good telling the elderly everything will come right in five or ten years because unfortunately, many won't be around then. Many need help now to combat the effect of increasing food, electricity and fuel prices and other increases in the cost of living.

Pensioners are tired of politicians claiming they've increased the state pension in line with the triple lock, when they know this only increases it by the highest rate of inflation, average earnings or 2.5%, which is designed to ensure the state pension doesn't fall behind in terms of inflation or average wage growth.

The reason for the larger than previous increase this financial year is because of the huge increase in prices and necessities.

If Labour want to survive the next four years, they must reconnect with their traditional supporters in Scotland, Wales, the Red Wall Constituencies, the London diaspora and coastal towns.

It couldn't be more simple - their current policies are alienating the very people the party was created to represent, and they need to show humility and change tack.

Norman Candy

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

IGNORING PENSIONERS AT OUR PERIL

From WASPI women to the winter fuel allowance, the government's punitive stance against older people will harm them unless harsh decisions are replaced with progressive choices, writes Labour MP Neil Duncan-Jordan...

Traditionally, many older people don't tend to vote Labour.

But that doesn't mean last July's overwhelming election victory didn't pull in a considerable number of pensioner votes for the party.

All the more worrying, then, is the attitude Labour has taken to this section of the population since coming to power.

Just three weeks into a new Labour government, the chancellor announced a decision to means test the winter fuel allowance, effectively removing the payment from around 10 million pensioners.

The arguments about rich people not needing the payment failed to grasp the value of a universal welfare state - everyone has paid into the system, it's only right it goes to everyone in return.

Sadly, the decision to means-test the winter fuel payment has meant that 750,000 of our poorest pensioners now no longer receive the payment. That is something that must be reversed.

At the beginning of the year, the government also announced that despite the ombudsman finding that the Department for Work and Pensions had made errors, the WASPI women would not receive a single penny in compensation.

There is little doubt some of these women were never formally told by the state they would have to work longer and, as a result, suffered considerable financial losses.

The refusal to pay compensation - especially from several senior cabinet members who had previously campaigned for WASPI women - has been difficult to see, and when parliament debated the issue, I was glad to vote in favour of compensation.

Similarly, social care remains an issue successive governments have placed in a box marked "too difficult". Some time ago, Labour announced a commission under Baroness Casey to examine the sector and how its future funding could be established, set to appear in 2028.

We have had more than 20 commissions and reviews in 20 years into the sector's problems. We already know about inadequate funding, low standards and a poorly-paid workforce.

What we need is a plan to introduce a National Care Service, funded like the NHS, free at the point of delivery.

We must end the appalling unfairness that says a cancer sufferer can have their treatment funded by us all, but someone with dementia must sell their home to pay for their care.

This challenge isn't going to go away - and that's why we need to be prepared to keep on campaigning. I know the CWU's retired members will be ready to do just that.

Neil Duncan-Jordan
Labour MP for Poole

CAMPAIGNING TO WIN IN DOWN

An all-Ireland retired workers' group recently met in big numbers to learn and continue to organise, writes Lawrence C. Huston...

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) North/South Retired Workers Seminar was inaugurated some years ago, with the aim being to connect retired colleagues in both the North and South of Ireland.

Congress affiliates greatly value the solid and continued participation of retired workers in the daily business of the trade union movement and is a great opportunity to meet with like-minded retired workers from the widest cross-section of the movement in Ireland.

This year's event saw the turnout of over 70 delegates, visitors and speakers at the Canal Court Hotel, Newry, County Down. Expertly co-chaired this year by Margaret Galloway (the North) and Jimmy Whelan (the South), the event was a two-day program full discussing and debating current retired members' issues.

The first speaker was Evelyn Hoy, CEO at the Commission for Older People, who described its powers and duties, on respecting residents' rights in care homes report, the new *Are You Ageist?* report, and the wider Campaign for a Commissioner for Older People for Ireland.

Also joining (via Zoom call) was National Pensioners Convention leader Jan Shortt, who outlined the NPC's recent campaigns and lobbying in Westminster. Brian Heading and Dympna McGlade from Unite the Union's retired members then discussed campaigning on the winter fuel payment allowance, ICTU president Justin

McCamphill also contributed, focusing on ICTU's broader agenda for collective bargaining, workers' rights and challenging misogyny and the far-right.

At the seminar gala dinner, Eddie Lynch attended as a guest of honour. Lynch, who recently ended a second term as Northern Ireland Commissioner for Older People, has just been appointed as CEO of the Law Centre (NI), and his contribution was warmly received by delegates and guests.



The second day of the seminar began with Age NI's Head of Advice & Advocacy Brenda Kearns, who spoke on the rights of carers, the support available to retired people on preparing for any eventuality, and including the necessity of a clear, legal will – as well as the support available from trade unions to members.

In his capacity as ICTU's Anti-Racist Workplaces project coordinator, David Carroll discussed his work, offering to

branches and retired members sections his services running workshops and bespoke educational courses on effectively challenging racism.

The seminar was closed by the Labour MP Neil Duncan-Jordan, who joined online from his constituency office in Poole, Dorset. Neil has challenged his own government - on both the winter fuel means-testing and recent welfare cuts, and delegates were happy to hear from him.

The CWU Northern Ireland delegates attending were L. C. Huston (NITB) and M. McAllinden (NIWB) National RM, J. Martin (NIWB) NI Region RM Lead, and R. Guinn & J. Leyton (NITB). Many thanks are extended to all for their full participation in ensuring the success of the event.

Lawrence C. Huston is the former CWU Northern Ireland regional secretary. A more comprehensive report of the event can be accessed at ICTUNI.org



THE LUCKY WINNERS!

NI Region Review Team members John Martin and Lawrence C. Huston pictured with retired members Billy Stanfield and William Bennett who were the lucky winners in the NI Review Questionnaire Ballot.

The presentation, which took place down in Bangor, County Down, followed the successful launch of the review publication by General Secretary Dave Ward at a regional function in Belfast recently.

In congratulating the winners, John Martin said: "The success of the review was down to the full co-operation of the retired members across the Northern Ireland region, and head office are now tasked with implementing the key recommendations it contained."

READERS' LETTERS



Dear Editor,

Name or you're not getting in?

I'm writing on behalf of one of our retired members who, having written to *The Veteran* and receiving no acknowledgement is not surprisingly feeling somewhat disenfranchised.

He is a politically active guy who wants to initiate debate. Due to his limited mobility, he considers *The Veteran* the only medium in which he can achieve such debate with his fellow members. He always closes his email with his name and branch, which brings me to point two.

In the latest *Veteran* we have correspondence with a sign off "Rather Not Say" This I consider is an act of cowardice or even political trolling. Who is he hiding from? We should be operating a policy of "No Name, No Branch, No Publish".

We all have views, so let's use *The Veteran* to promote and stimulate debate amongst the retired members. Anonymous contributions do nothing to facilitate this.

John Skelton, CWU Manchester
Combined Branch Retired Members
Secretary

I was interested in Pete Keenlyside's article about how retired members could be used more effectively.

I am also a retired GMB member and they have a system whereby retired members can volunteer to represent members in workplaces where either the union does not have an elected rep or where the union is not recognised. They wrote to all retired members inviting them to join a register if they are prepared to do this, and volunteers are paid travel and expenses.

We could do the same. Ray Ellis set up a group of retired members to act as mentors for tech branch members and it worked well for a while. It seems to have fallen by the wayside, but it might be possible to revive it and make branches aware we have retired members who can act as mentors to new reps or who can give specialist advice.

Perhaps that could be fed into the organisational review?

Dave Percival, Croydon and Sutton

Walking away from WASPIs

Norman, my local MP Dr Becki Cooper (Worthing West) is a newly elected MP. Whilst in opposition she posted a video, which I have, stating that when The Labour Party was elected they would fund the WASPI claims in full.

When push came to shove she was 'diplomatically' absent from the vote which shows her disdain for her local electorate WASPI women & only using it as a sound bite during electioneering.

Eámon AP Crouch

Getting back to Pete

In response to Pete Keenlyside's letter: "man is born free, yet everywhere he is in chains" - the opening line of *The Social Contract* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

We need a socialist party to affiliate to. I can think of two - namely the venerable Socialist Party of Great Britain, and The Socialist Party (formerly Militant). Their philosophy might suit the CWU better. The Labour Party was never a socialist party, although it has exhibited socialist tendencies, notably in 1945.

Robert Craig

In reply to "Rather Not Say of Northumbria", I suggest that a great number of people in Britain are greatly unhappy with the influx of immigrants from the four corners of the world over the last seven decades.

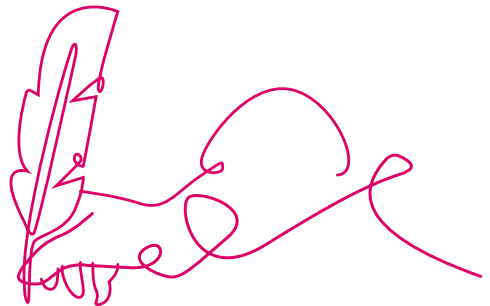
I regard Reform with a jaundiced eye, but nevertheless recognise that it has given an opportunity for the electorate to give the Labour and Conservative parties a good kicking for having ignored them for decades.

This comment is less than the limited 15 words and I look forward to it being published without censorship on whatever grounds. Please publish in entirety or not at all.

John Doy

Rachel Pips Squeaker by Ronnie Harrison, NI Telecoms Branch

*Squeeze the Pips, Make them squeak.
Starmer talk, Doublespeak.
Rachel says, they left a Black Hole
But, no note like that of Byrne.
George Osborne had his go,
Now, it is her turn.
The economy is in ruins,
The disabled are to blame.
Can't tax the super-rich
They'll leave the country,
In their private jets and planes.
Energy providers
Have seen their profits soar,
Half a Trillion quid in five years
As they make more and more.
So, where's the Magic Money Tree?
The one we've seen before.
It appeared in the Pandemic
And when the Banks all crashed.
It was there to save The Market
As The Market ran out of cash.*



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HELP US TO KEEP YOU INFORMED – DO WE HAVE YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS?

If you would like to receive emails from us regarding issues relevant to you, as well as monthly benefits mailings – please provide us with your home email address.

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.