

Going to Westminster to Lobby Our MPs

As part of the National Pensioners Convention's (NPC) ongoing campaign to improve the lives of Britain's older generation, the NPC organised a national rally and protest which took place on 27 October 2010. With over 220 brand new MPs now in the House of Commons it was felt important that the NPC makes its policies known.

The aims of the event were to focus attention on the NPC's main campaign priorities:-

- to raise the basic state pension for all to the official poverty level, estimated at £171 a week
- to introduce a National Care Service which will provide free, quality long-term and social care to all in need, funded through general taxation
- to safeguard and protect other existing benefits such as the winter fuel payment, bus pass and free TV licences **AND**
- **to highlight concerns about the level and impact of the Governments cuts in public sector expenditure.**

Over 43 Forum Members went along to Westminster on October 27th to join in a Rally with 1000 other pensioners from across the UK in a packed Methodist Central Hall (standing room only at the back) where speaker after speaker expressed concerns that the proposed cuts in public spending will have a disproportionate effect on millions of older people through loss of pension income and vital care services. Our members then moved over to the Houses of Parliament where they were received by the Right Hon. Joan Ruddock MP and Heidi Alexander MP giving us an opportunity to highlight issues at both a local and national level. Jim Dowd was not in Westminster that day but his constituents were able to address their concerns to our other Lewisham MPs.

Dot Gibson, General Secretary of the NPC, who will be coming along to speak at our forthcoming AGM said; ***“Most commentators now believe that the poorest in our society will pay the highest price for the cuts in public spending. Whether through lower pensions, reduced care services or cuts to winter fuel payments... Rather than declaring that the older generation is a drain on our society, we should recognize that every year pensioners are providing over £30billion worth of unpaid caring, voluntary work and child minding. Yet one in five pensioners still live in poverty and rising costs of food and fuel, combined with record lows in savings returns, mean that pensioners continue to suffer a disproportionate increase in the cost of living”*** ***“After a lifetime of working, older people deserve a decent state pension, proper care when they need it and the right to keep warm in the winter. The coalition government needs to do more to reassure pensioners that their retirement is not under threat”***



The delegation from Lewisham gathering by our coach. (photo credit: Sheila Wilson)



The packed Methodist Central Hall Westminster (photo credit: Haseeb Hussein, National Pensioners Convention)



Kelvin Hopkins MP and Dot Gibson, keynote speakers at the Rally in Central Hall, Westminster (photo credit: Sheila Wilson)