

SPEAKING OUT!

Newsletter of the National Pensioners Convention
Minority Elders' Committee
Winter 2019



Time to defend the over 75 TV licence

The NPC has called on the government to take back responsibility for funding the concessionary TV licence for the over 75s, ahead of a protest in March.

The call comes as part of the NPC's response to the BBC's consultation on the future of the concession.

The broadcaster has made it clear that it does not wish to maintain the current arrangement, and is looking at raising the age of eligibility, introducing a means-test or removing the concession altogether.

When the free TV licence was introduced, it was part of a package of measures brought in to offset the UK's low level of state pension.

Today, the state pension is still ranked as 37th out of 37 OECD countries and very little has changed:

Half of all individuals 75 and over are disabled and find it difficult to be active

1 in 4 say the TV is their only companion

18% of all individuals 75 and over live in poverty, compared to 11% of the population as a whole, and the figure is now rising

At least half of all pensioners have an income of less than £12,000 a year, with millions

more receiving incomes of just above that level

There are around three times as many single, older women as men, and they would be disproportionately affected by any change.

It is estimated that losing part (or all) of this concession will mean a further 50,000 individuals being forced into poverty.

In any democracy, access to information is crucial to enable citizens the opportunity to be informed and make decisions.

Means-testing by age or income is also totally unacceptable.

All the evidence shows that the cost far outweighs any savings means-testing may eventually bring.

Crucially, the BBC should take a critical look at itself before it makes a decision that affects the most vulnerable of the older population.

It needs to look at the salaries paid to some of its top employees and on-screen talent and the way in which the Corporation pays independent production companies.

All supporters and affiliates are urged to join the protest on Thursday 7 March, 12 noon, Dept of Media, 100 Parliament Street, London.



GOVERNMENT SHOULD FUND THE OVER 75S' TV LICENCE - NOT THE BBC!

1 IN 4 OLDER PEOPLE ARE LONELY AND RELY ON THEIR TV FOR COMPANY

BBC PLANS WILL PUSH 50,000 MORE PENSIONERS INTO POVERTY

WWW.NPCUK.ORG



Join the NPC demonstration on 7 March 2019 © NPC

Windrush generation still waiting for compensation

Some months ago, information emerged as to the shameful way that the Windrush generation had been treated by the Home Office.

People who arrived in the UK in the late 1940s to work in the NHS and other public services did not have documentation confirming their immigration status and have since faced major difficulties in proving their right to work, to rent property and to access benefits and services to which they are entitled.

On top of this administrative mistake is the human cost, as people were denied medical treatment, put in detention centres, deported and separated from their loved ones.

The government has since apologised to the 57,000+ people in this position and the Home Office started a scheme last May for those affected to help them get the documents they need.

However, action has been painfully slow, with people waiting many weeks for bio-

metric cards and access to services they should have already received.

Now it has emerged that compensation has yet to be paid, and individuals will once again have to find documentary proof towards any claims they wish to make.

Bridgit Sam-Bailey, chair of the NPC Minority Elders' Committee said: "It appears that the government is making it almost impossible for the Windrush generation to get the justice they deserve, by demanding documents they simply don't have."

Remembering everyone in WWI

Bridgit Sam-Bailey, pays tribute to some of those forgotten from WWI history

A Festival of Remembrance was held on 10 November, 2018, at Lewisham's own Broadway Theatre, in the South East of London.

There was scarcely a vacant seat, and attendees featured the Mayor of Lewisham and his predecessor, visiting Mayors from neighbouring Boroughs, the elders of the Borough, teenagers, and young children with their parents.

For me the event resonated with stories I heard from my (late) Father, and my Father's Father on their interactive evenings, my Grandfather smoking his cigar, whilst my Father chain-smoked cigarettes.

Those stories were brought alive by the films and pictures shown during the evening.

Better still were the skits and songs performed by the local Primary Schools and National Theatre Company.

WWI is depicted as one of the deadliest conflicts in the history of the human race in which over 16 million people died.

The war took the lives of an estimated 37 million people including almost 7 million civilians and 10 million military personnel.

We honoured all those who lost their lives in WWI, in particular the men of the 11th Lewisham Battalion of the Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment, many of whom made the ultimate sacrifice while others returned home shell-shocked or badly injured.

The skits acted by the children enlivened the imagination of what took place then, the booms of the canons, the heavy footsteps of the soldiers marching or returning home, the acrid smell of the atmosphere, made the reality of the period most surreal.

Importantly, the programme also honoured the participation of Black and Asian men who took part.

History teaches that the Jamaicans were first to send their sons to England to fight for the Mother Country.

The other West Indians followed suit, and so did the Colony of British Guiana.

One of those was Lieutenant Walter Tull from British Guiana (Guyana). He was one of England's first black footballers, and the first black officer of the British Army to command white troops.

He died aged 29 on the battle fields of WWI near Arras in Northern France.

Of course people from Africa, Pakistan, Bangla-



Guyana's Walter Tull, who became the first Black officer to command white troops © Royal Mail

desh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, with many ethnic backgrounds all fought in WWI, and as many as 74,187 Indian soldiers died, and a comparable number were wounded. Of course the Americans also engaged in WWI, and in those days they were racially segregated.

Nevertheless it was decided to allow African Americans to enlist, and some were even fraudulently arrested as draft dodgers.

By the end of WWI the African Americans had served in the Cavalry, Infantry, Signals, Medical, Engineering, and Artillery Units, as well as Chaplains, Surveyors, Truck Drivers, Chemists, and Intelligence Officers.

The 369 Infantry - "The Harlem Hell Fighters" became the most decorated unit of WWII and served under the command of Eugene Bullard who was highly decorated African-American pilot in the French Flying Corp.

Of course, women also served in WWI although not so much in combat, they were wives supporting their husbands, and those who became heroes, like Edith Cavell.

Cavell was famous for her pronouncement about the war that Patriotism was not enough, she stated, and that she "must have no hatred nor bitterness towards anybody."

She smuggled 200 British, French, and Belgian soldiers out of Belgium during the occupation by the Germans.

She was put on trial when the plot was discovered, and was ultimately executed.

It is unfortunate that the history taught in schools is so incomplete.

A grand NPC day out in Kensington!

Hundreds of people were queueing in the rain at Kensington Town Hall (West London) on 10th November when we arrived in the morning for the annual Commonwealth Fair.

Already the town hall was filled with music, excited talking and laughing, packed to the rafters with people living in Britain but whose roots were spread around the globe.

Most of the stalls exhibited traditional wooden and stone sculptures, pictures, leather goods, necklaces, ornaments clothes and sandals, of their country of origin.

Books, leaflets and brochures displayed photographs of holiday destinations – the blue sea and sand, modern hotels and cities, and together with the aroma of the food stalls and the sound of music from around the world created an exciting and joyful atmosphere.

The National Pensioners Convention campaign stall, drew attention to health and social care problems, the Windrush scandal, the need to organise and stand up for pensioners' basic rights and to build inter-generational solidarity.

Most of the people who came to our stall fully supported our campaigns, and signed our petitions.

They were NHS and public service workers, teachers, communication and transport workers – many were in trade unions, all were angry about the government's scandalous actions against the Windrush generations, all were deeply concerned about the Grenfell Tower disaster and worried about the future of their children and grandchildren.

Can't wait for the next one!

Update on frozen pension campaign in 2019

The frozen pension campaign is now requesting a meeting with the Prime Minister to discuss what action the government may be willing to take to ensure all UK pensioners get an annual rise in their state pension, wherever they live in the world. The NPC is supporting this campaign and will keep you updated.

To receive Speaking Out! newsletter free contact NPC, Marchmont Community Centre, 62 Marchmont St, WC1N 1AB or email info@npcuk.org