



GROUP CIRCULAR 757

To: Branches, Groups and Executive Council

19 October 2011

Dear Colleague

1. **RIGHTS IN RETIREMENT - NPC CAMPAIGN WEEK**
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1. RIGHTS IN RETIREMENT - NPC CAMPAIGN WEEK

Further to the report provided under **Item 6 of GC 755**, I have enclosed three copies of the flier produced by the National Pensioners' Convention (NPC), publicising the activities planned for its campaign week on *Rights in Retirement*.

For those planning to attend the NPC Rally in Committee Room 14 of the House of Commons on 26 October 2011, you'll be interested to note that I have been asked to say a few words on the continuing campaign against the RPI/CPI Switch.

2. FUTURE INCREASES IN THE STATE PENSION AGE - GOVERNMENT MAKES CONCESSIONS

Under **Item 5 of GC 748**, I reported that, during the second reading of the current Pensions Bill in the House of Commons, the Secretary of State for Work & Pensions, Iain Duncan-Smith, whilst rejecting amendments to delay the plans to bring forward the increase to the State Pension Age to 66 from April 2020, did state that he *would need to implement the change fairly and manage the transition smoothly; accepted that a relatively small number of women would be particularly affected; and was willing to work to get the transition right.*

In the week before the third reading of the Pensions Bill in the House of Commons on 18 October 2011, Alliance members were asked by way of Newsletter 75 to join forces with Age UK and the NPC in pressing their MPs to vote against the Pensions Bill unless the Government did make some proposals as promised by the Secretary of State for Work & Pensions in the above quote.

In the event, the Government did bend a little in response to the pressure mounted, but only delayed the increase in the State Pension Age to 66 by 6 months to October 2020, which, while welcomed by organisations campaigning on the issue as being a step in the right direction, failed to satisfy very many, including most Opposition Parties who still voted against the Pension Bill, but failed to prevent it passing its final stage in the House of Commons.

However, if further media speculation is to be believed, even more increases in the State Pension Age are likely to be brought forward sooner than anticipated! Under the plans agreed by the last Parliament, in its response to the Turner Enquiry into Pensions, the State Pension Age was due to be increased to 67 in 2036 and to 68 in 2046, ensuring that all those affected had adequate notice of the increases so that they could make adjustments to their financial plans for retirement. The Pensions Minister, Steve Webb MP, is reported to be preparing to propose that the State Pension Age be increased to 67 from 2026, ten years earlier than planned, with similar intentions for an earlier date for the increase in State Pension Age to 68!

So, although campaign pressure has bought some time for hundreds of thousands of future pensioners in delaying the increase in the State Pension Age to 66, significantly more will now have cause to worry about the plans to bring forward the State Pension Age to 67 and 68!

The Campaign Committee, when it meets on 24 November 2011, will be considering how these developments impact upon the instructions set out in **Motion A13/2011** and I will ensure that Groups, Branches and members are kept aware of developments relating to increases in the State Pension Age.

3. COLD WEATHER PAYMENTS FOR WINTER 2011/2012

Enclosed with this Group Circular, you will find three copies of a Note prepared by the House of Commons Library on Cold Weather Payments for Winter 2011/2012. I trust that you will find that this Note not only sets out clearly who will be entitled to what by way of Cold Winter Payments for the coming Winter, but also provides a helpful background to how the Payments have developed over recent decades; the Note should ensure that you have sufficient information to deal with any enquires from members that you may receive on this issue over the next few months.

4. CAMPAIGN [MONTHLY NPC BULLETIN] - OCTOBER 2011 EDITION

I have enclosed, for your information, three copies of the October 2011 edition of *Campaign*, the monthly bulletin of the National Pensioners' Convention (NPC)

5. INVITATION TO MEETING TO FORM A NEW GROUP OF THE NPC IN CORNWALL

I have also enclosed one copy of an invitation to pensioner organisations and supporters of the National Pensioners' Convention in Cornwall to attend a special meeting on 24 November 2011 to formally constitute an NPC Group in Cornwall to represent all pensioner bodies in Cornwall.

Alliance Groups in Cornwall are encouraged to send representatives to this meeting and to encourage those of their members who are individual supporters of the NPC to do likewise.

If you have any questions or require any further information about the matters covered by this Group Circular, please don't hesitate to contact me, either by email at mike.duggan@cspa.co.uk or by telephone on 020 8688 8418 (office)/07884 437690 (mobile).

Yours sincerely

Mike Duggan
General Secretary